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GOING PUBLIC: PEDAGOGY BEYOND THE ACADEMY

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ABSTRACT

Encounters between academic genres and the media in late twentieth-century America produced an amalgam of alternative approaches to teaching and learning, which borrowed as much from 'academic' as from 'popular' models. Whereas earlier versions of academic pedagogy consciously sought to bring the political into the classroom, the opposite became true: the classroom was coming 'out' into public life. Reflecting on instances where interpretive and pedagogical practices from the academy encountered ostensibly more mundane or more popular discourses, this thesis asks in what way did these practices and discourses transform, complicate or illuminate one another.

Developing an argument about the various modes of pedagogy at the nexus of popular and academic discourses, this thesis examines the increasingly unsatisfactory divide in 'intellectual life' between the traditional institutional habitus of a professionalised university existence and the extra-mural 'everyday life' of the academic. Striking attempts to overcome this crippling division are located in the work of feminist public intellectuals, which chapters in this thesis will explore in a series of dialogic exchanges: Toni Morrison's and Oprah Winfrey's collaborative pedagogy in the forum of Oprah's Book Club; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reparative pedagogy in her illness memoir, A Dialogue on Love; and Donna Haraway's reconfiguration of the pedagogical dynamic in the dialogue she constructs between the discourses of science and literature. The pedagogies developed by these feminist academics strive to ameliorate the disadvantages of maintaining a historically superseded 'public/private' split, through distinctive methodological, rhetorical and media strategies. While contradictions, inconsistencies and dilemmas are involved in 'going public', these experimental pedagogical models have the potential to reconfigure the supposedly one-way flow of knowledge from teacher to student, while exploring less rigidly hierarchical and authoritative ways of learning and knowing.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Deirdre Coleman for her supervision and enduring support, which essentially brought this project to completion. It was a seemingly never-ending process, but was at every juncture aided by Deirdre’s good humour, practical advice and clear-sighted input.

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A great deal of what I wrote in the Introduction to this thesis, which in turn, shaped my subsequent argument, drew on my long conversations with two very significant people. Both Ruth Walker and Meredith Wilson managed to choose the right moments to challenge my thinking, and equally the right moments to opt for quiet words of encouragement instead, knowing that, after all, I respond best to kindness. Ruth Walker knows more than anyone does how hard this has been for me. I could not possibly have finished without the support of her loyal friendship and the sustenance of her incisive mind.

Many of the ideas in this thesis also took shape during a particularly productive time in my candidature, while teaching a course on contemporary American prose convened by Melissa Hardie, and over the course of the Anatomies of Violence conference, which I co-convened through the Postgraduate Arts Research Centre at the University of Sydney.

Thanks also to my wise and good cousin Daniel Brass, and to my dear friend Jeannette Stirling, both of whom read large tracts of this thesis and offered insightful observations. Their intellectual input as well as their friendship to me cannot be overstated. I feel lucky to know them both and trust them without reservation.

To Myf, Maeve, Mem, Tessa, Lee, Isolde, Marion, Agnès and Charlie who all, in their way, gave me heart to finish.

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If it’s possible Nan wanted me to finish this thesis even more than I did. Now we can all sleep well at night.
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INTRODUCTION

At a formative stage of my thesis in 2002 when every magazine, road sign or food label appeared to be offering connections for the seemingly disparate strands of my emerging argument, I came across a graffiti-ed message in a women’s bathroom at the University of Sydney. Curiously enough, this graffiti seemed to touch on a whole host of issues central to my thesis. Although brief, it offered a key to reformulating the pedagogical dynamic between teacher and student in a range of contexts. It read:

I learnt today that Oprah is the world’s best rhetorician!
I am so glad I am paying 000’s of $ in HECS!
Thankyou English Dept!

Typically, bathroom graffiti on a university campus occupies an impermanent place for licensed subversion, not to mention a twilight space that is neither fully public nor private. People do not linger over it; they might join the debate by hastily scrawling a rejoinder, but they tend to read and move on and by year’s end the wall is painted over, and offers up a serial ‘blank’ screen for further expressions of dissent. In this case, the rhetorical flourish of the author seemed to have discouraged, at least on the bathroom wall, any direct engagement. It stood alone, unsigned and without additional commentary, apparently all said and done. At the risk of over-reading, I want to start this thesis by teasing out the author’s grievances as a way of framing an analysis about the modern university and its theorisation and practice of pedagogy. Triggered by this graffiti, my analysis of tertiary education starts with the apparent proposition that learning about Oprah Winfrey in a course at the English Department at the University of Sydney is not a good return on a student’s educational investment. There are multiple ways of reading this graffiti which touch on a host of issues to do with studying at
university, some of these specific to the University of Sydney, others more broadly applicable. I concentrate on one aspect here, the revision of the traditional pedagogical compact between teacher and student. The graffiti is of further significance to this thesis; not only concerned with the content of a humanities education, but also forecasting discussion of the pedagogical effort of Oprah Winfrey’s television talkshow. My reading of a particular Australian academic response to American media, culture and contemporary trends in the higher education sector in this introduction will be enlarged in later chapters to consider alternative pedagogical models in the United States that have been opened up in the public space between popular and academic discourse.

It is generally conceded that an increasingly high price is being paid for higher education in Australia. With the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) in 1989, and the increasing corporatisation of universities, a pervasive customer-focus discourse has advocated a ‘value for money’ approach to education. Mobilised by the graffiti quoted above, this truism parleys into an argument that not only is there no foundation for Oprah to be regarded as a world-class ‘rhetorician’, but, more pointedly, that her inclusion on the curriculum is of dubious educational value.

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1 For an overview of opinion with regard to HECS fees, see the range of submissions to ‘The Senate Inquiry into the Capacity of Public Universities to Meet Australia’s Higher Education Needs’ (2001), especially the submission from the Australian Federation of University Women Inc. A number of these submissions make the point that the prohibitive expense of this scheme has rendered higher education more inaccessible, notably for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and Indigenous students. Available online from <http://www.afuw.org.au/HESubm.rtf> [accessed 21 September 2004].


3 For more on Oprah Winfrey’s status as a ‘rhetorician’ see Chapter Three’s discussion of ‘talkshow pedagogy’, in which I will discuss the complex rhetorical moves made by Winfrey to reach a variety of audiences. Although the attribution ‘rhetor’ or ‘rhetorician’ may be read as depreciatory in the sense that Oprah is a ‘speechifier’, it becomes ever more interesting to take the alternate route and read Oprah not only as a ‘master of eloquence or literary expression’, but as a ‘teacher or professor of rhetoric’. These definitions from J.A Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (eds), Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
Embedded in this spontaneous fusion of anti-Oprah and anti-HECS sentiment is a further grievance: that the province of a traditional English Department has been altered beyond recognition by other disciplinary incursions. The English curriculum has been skewed by cultural and media studies, evolving disciplines that essentially repudiate distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture in order to concentrate on popular cultural formations. The graffiti seems to suggest that ‘Oprah’ (the person and the television talkshow program are rhetorically conflated) is unworthy of a place on the university curriculum, most especially on an English literature syllabus, not least because ‘Oprah’ knowledge is something you could otherwise get free, so in that respect being value-less yet costly at university. The English Department at the University of Sydney, it would seem, is lamentably no longer the vanguard, nor even the conservator of English Literature and its culture. Not only have American influences breached its walls, but a particularly insidious brand of American culture at that.

My first assumption was that the author of this dismissive graffiti simply did not understand that cultural studies and other disciplinary incursions throughout the 1980s and 1990s had meant that literary criticism had broadened its text base, increasingly claiming a capacity to read popular cultural texts and sites. Contemporary popular culture and subcultures became legitimate and serious fields of enquiry as they began to problematise the role of ideology and the formation of the subject in mass culture and communication. Such developments opened up the possibility of reading the rhetoric of Oprah’s television talkshow in a way that would not be substantially different from reading canonical literary examples, using similar techniques of close reading and textual analysis (albeit grafted to sociological, historical, and cultural studies techniques and analyses, which were seen to augment the literary critical methodologies). Clearly, though, this student was offended by the incursion of popular culture into her university studies. Why? I was missing something, and later realised what I did not initially understand was something the graffiti author already knew: that Oprah was unquestionably the world’s best ‘rhetoritician’. The graffitist’s objection, then, was about
‘learning’ something she already knew; surely, the university should be a place where, ultimately, students come to learn something they do not actually already know. In a time-honoured version of academic pedagogy, students are meant to be dazzled by the unveiling of some hitherto inaccessible knowledge, kept tantalisingly out of reach. In such a line of argument, the student seeks to honour the tradition of the university as a bastion of ‘highbrow’ knowledge, and expects to be rewarded with the cultural currency that accrues to that knowledge. The author of the graffiti already knew that literature represented cultural capital, and that education was less an outreach or response to the wider world than a mechanism for reproducing inherited class and social distinctions. In this way she was following a line of argument from the French sociologist and proponent of the theory of pedagogical reproduction, Pierre Bourdieu.4 She was never going to be satisfied with the banal and self-evident claim that ‘Oprah is the world’s best rhetorician’, especially if that piece of ‘knowledge’ was transmitted by the sort of pedagogy that characterises the traditional lecture format, namely, where the lecturer is an all-knowing authority whose one-way delivery of information cannot be interrupted, and the student a passive recipient, simply a repository for the teacher’s knowledge.5 At heart, the graffitist was drawing a distinction between seemingly self-evident knowledges—popular, common and commonsensical—and academic regimes of knowledge. She was saying that any student could be an expert, just like Oprah, but that

4 ‘Cultural capital’, a term popularised by Bourdieu, refers to ways of talking, acting, and socialising, as well as language practices, values, and styles of dress and behaviour. It involves knowledge and competency in ‘high cultural’ codes. His account of the institutional and social foundations for pedagogical reproduction is elaborated in Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, trans., Richard Nice, London: Sage, 1990. Bourdieu’s work has also proven useful in accounting for the crucial role of the teacher/student relationship in pedagogical reproduction. Essentially, education involves not only the specific case of the student as reproduction of the teacher but, as Jane Gallop points out, the more general case of the student as ‘impersonation of an educated person’ who takes on and reproduces the style and tastes of class. See Jane Gallop ‘Im-Personation: A Reading in the Guise of an Introduction’, in Jane Gallop (ed), Pedagogy: The Question of Impersonation, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995: 4.

academic learning and its privileges are the reasons why ‘we’ come to university. Seeming contradictions mark the graffitist’s argument here: she seeks to enact a passive student subjectivity, waiting to be enlightened by an all-knowing teacher, while at the same time expressing a resentment at the assumption of such student passivity. The student also appears cannily exasperated at a pedagogical model that cannot value student knowledge. Enduring a one-hour lecture on the rhetorical dexterity of Oprah Winfrey, with no opportunity for debating the subject matter, would not sit well with a student who perceived herself to be critically active.

Although appearing on the campus at the University of Sydney, this example of graffiti usefully illustrates broader dilemmas applicable to other universities and international contexts. I postulate here a generic academy for the purposes of raising general issues that resonate in many academic settings, although the distinctiveness of American and Australian education systems is understood at the outset of this thesis. Chapter One will examine the academic culture central to this thesis—that of the US academy. Had the graffiti appeared on an American university campus, the wording would probably have differed in the detail and my analysis would have had to be attuned to other specific contextual issues, but the central question I ask would have remained apposite: what happens when students are far better versed in certain domains of experience and knowledge than their teachers? Or, in other words, what does it mean when a student becomes aware that they already know what is being taught? It would seem that the relationship between teacher and student is realigned, especially the assumption that pedagogy is at base a one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. The graffiti-ed lament about the inclusion of Oprah on an English syllabus carries with it questions that circle around long-held assumptions about teaching and learning, the relationship between teacher and student, and issues specific to literary pedagogy in the last twenty years. The inclusion of Oprah points to an urgent conflict between pedagogical content and methodology, and raises salient issues about canonicity, the jurisdiction of cultural studies, and the study of popular culture.
Two fundamental questions underpin the graffiti, both of which can be fruitfully explored from a pedagogical angle: what is the study of literature for, and what is the task or place of the modern university? These are almost impossibly large questions, but they form a vital part of coming to terms with the graffitiist's questioning of the (cultural or economic) value of a humanities education, specifically the study of English literature. On the subject of teaching literary criticism in the contemporary US academy, Wahneema Lubiano has observed that, at times, literature seems incompatible with teaching. She means by this that literature is not expected to have a utility in the same way as the teaching of literature. Speaking out of the field of literary critical studies and attentive to questions about the 'slack between certification and employment', Lubiano recognises that:

A lot of my students aren't going to be professors, because they're going to rule the world. For them, literature is cultural capital, and they feel different about its use. But I also have a number of students who are going through a discovery process, so it's hard for me to generalise about students. It's hard for me to answer the question 'What is literature?' when it doesn't have a for at the end of it.

Lubiano's contribution to a roundtable discussion about the teaching of literature in the contemporary US academy takes stock of shifts in student expectations, which have had ongoing ramifications for her teaching. Other contributors to this discussion acknowledge a more student-centred approach to their teaching, and even the prospect of students' evolving 'indigenous standards and canons of expectation'. Lubiano concurs with this point of view; she acknowledges the 'symbolic capital' of her Princeton students but also makes it clear that a range of student expectations will have consequences for her original question 'what is literature?' In light of student...

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7 Wahneema Lubiano in Aimone et al, 'Teaching Literature in the Academy Today': 104.

8 Wahneema Lubiano in Aimone et al, 'Teaching Literature in the Academy Today': 105.
expectation, this question needs to be qualified to 'what use is literature?' and even more pointedly, 'what is the teaching of literature for?' These arguments about the instrumentality of education and of literature—albeit expressed in different national contexts by both the graffitist and Lubiano—come out of an academy once again questioning the traditional role of pedagogy and the practice of the pedagogue; in other words, an academy seeking to understand or even open up alternative teaching and learning strategies. The chapters that follow in this thesis address related issues that focus on what these alternative pedagogies might look like, and how they contend with disciplinary and methodological dilemmas that are already destabilising the traditional architecture of academic pedagogy.

This thesis will attempt to come to terms with the urgent pedagogical questions illustrated by the sample graffiti as it charts the pedagogical, theoretical and cultural practice of three American women academics who have had remarkable influence over their various disciplines, but who are not generally recognised for their pedagogical contributions. So why did I choose them? My argument for doing so will be set up in more detail in Chapter One, but essentially they have been chosen because each attempts to come to terms with, extend, engage and develop experimental modes of pedagogy in public. I will argue that each of these academics has not only developed her own pedagogical theories and practices, but has in her very different way made use of popular culture to construct this model. Additionally Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick are, in their way and in their own fields, highly respected, if not iconic, feminist theoreticians. I read their pedagogical contributions not only as attempts to reconfigure academic pedagogy, but also as outcomes of a process at work in the postmodern university. At first glance, they are not at all alike. Toni Morrison is a celebrated African American writer and public intellectual widely known for novels which challenge canonical thinking in the United States. Significantly, in terms of the argument of this thesis, she is also a professor at Princeton University, a position from which she has contributed to public debates and been influential in generating dialogue between racial
and sexual politics in America. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is another celebrity academic figure who produced landmark texts in the newly emerging discipline of queer studies. Sedgwick’s reflections on what she has termed ‘reparative’ critical practices will become vital to the way in which this thesis employs the term ‘public pedagogy’. Her work speaks to the need to complicate and reconceive the academy’s critical as well as pedagogical practices, which are so often hampered by the ‘policing model’ of criticism, and which have relegated to the margin alternative models of reading, writing, teaching and learning. The third high-profile academic discussed in this thesis, Donna Haraway, writes from the field of the history and philosophy of science, focusing in particular on the nexus between science and literature. The dialogue that Haraway constructs between these discourses is another important attempt to reconfigure a peculiarly pedagogical dynamic.

Central to the practice, if not the theorisation, of Haraway’s, Morrison’s and Sedgwick’s pedagogical models is the primacy of dialogue. Most notably, as I will emphasise, each practitioner has at least one significant interlocutor whose active collaboration serves to undermine conventional notions of the teacher/student relationship, bridging the chasm

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9 Toni Morrison is mainly known for her novel writing, but her profile as a public intellectual has increased over time. She has always contributed to literary discussions of her fiction, and published commentary pieces, but has, with the publication of two edited collections, contributed to extra-literary topics, one on the O.J. Simpson case, and the other on the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill sexual harassment case. See Toni Morrison (ed), Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality, New York: Pantheon Books, 1992; and Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky Lacour (eds), Birth of a Nationhood: Gaze, Script and Spectacle in the O.J. Simpson Case, New York: Pantheon Books, 1997.


between us and them (if not always by design at least ficto-critically and dialogically). For Morrison, this interlocutor is the talkshow host Oprah Winfrey; for Sedgwick, it is her analyst ‘Shannon’; while for Haraway it is her former-student interviewer, Thyrza Nichols Goodeve. In the process of examining specific teaching sites of these three pedagogical theorist practitioners, this thesis traverses some of the boundaries challenged by these women in their invention of new academic subjectivities within the contested space occupied by variations of the teacher/student dyad. The discussion that follows will analyse the various dialogic strategies by which specific domains or situated subjectivities, hitherto oppositional, have been brought into association in ways that might challenge conventional modes of teaching and learning. These include the imaginary separations between the academy and popular forums such as talkback television, public and private lives, and the discourses of affect and critical analysis.

This thesis is centrally concerned with the phenomenon of academics crossing over into the public sphere, developing a version of pedagogy at the borderlands between academia and some version of the genres of popular culture: science fiction, the talkshow, and autobiography or illness memoir. The ‘popular’, for the purposes of this thesis, refers to a range of sites, genres and discourses ‘outside’ the university encompassing the everyday and the public. It also incorporates Michel de Certeau’s understanding that culture resides in the qualities of singular almost unnoticeable everyday actions. It used to be the case that the traffic of popular culture into the university was largely a one-way affair, that is, studying popular culture was more often than not a matter of setting Oprah (instead of, say, Jane Austen) on the curriculum. A glance at higher education curricula of the 1990s finds popular cultural texts (such as

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13 Toni Morrison’s pedagogical theories are exemplified in two teaching sites, at Princeton University where she convenes an Atelier seminar and in the forum of Oprah Winfrey’s television Book Club. Donna Haraway’s pedagogical theories come to light in the course of a series of interviews conducted with a former student. Eve Sedgwick’s online graduate seminars, and pedagogically inflected autobiographical work, specifically her illness memoir A Dialogue on Love, comprise the principal teaching sites from which this thesis draws.

women's magazines or daytime television) featuring in contexts ranging from sociology to modern languages and literature. On the one hand, the challenge of cultural studies to traditional disciplines, like English, clearly contributed to a kind of educational democatisation. Yet simultaneously the dismantling of established canons—which cultural studies demanded—could all too easily mesh with the reshaping of education as a consumer-driven marketplace. In fact Simon During has argued that cultural studies rapidly became popular in large part because of the growing influence of students' preferences on the curriculum. Contemporary educational bureaucracies have, according to During, moved from idealist and collegial models to market, corporate and student-based models. In the contemporary academy, During concluded, a student is no longer a blank repository to be filled by education, but a developed personality making rational choices. In his contribution to such debates, John Frow set the scene differently. He argued that so long as traditional pedagogy as it is practised in the academic humanities holds sway—he defined traditional pedagogy as a situation where the subject matter drives teaching—both literary and cultural studies have a poor future.

The 'popular' has been previously defined by its often antagonistic relation to the academic and to institutionalised readings more generally. It has been linked to theories of mass culture, audience research, spectatorship, and has been mobilised by cultural studies as either provocative and cutting edge, or reactive and sentimental, as the subject demands. In attempting to come to terms with popular culture, academic analysts occupy an ambiguous relationship to their object of study. They reflect on a culture which seems both strange and familiar; part of their own everyday lives but foreign to them. The application of anthropological methodologies such as ethnography to one's own culture (which became increasingly common in popular cultural studies in the

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15 For early reflections on this subject, see Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (eds), Cultural Remix: Theories of Politics and the Popular, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995.
1980s) has been fraught with difficulty, not least because of the temptation to define popular culture as the 'other' of academic culture. One strategy is to see the terms 'popular' and the very idea of 'people' as themselves issues that should be under interrogation. Popular culture can then be used to describe those commodities, activities, and symbolic institutions which construct people and publics—which produce, that is to say, a particular form of collective identity, a particular set of attitudes and practices, a particular sort of recognition, and a particular sense of belonging. In this sense, popular culture is at once a form of address, a symbolising power, and a way of constructing an audience.

Moreover, feminist analyses of popular culture have sought to understand and challenge the hierarchy of categories which elevates the masculine and subordinates the feminine in examining popular culture. For example, Tania Modleski demonstrated how high culture has traditionally been associated with sexist constructions of masculinity and femininity. She describes how high culture (art) is associated with masculinity, production, work, intellect, activity, and writing; while mass culture (popular culture) is associated with femininity, consumption, leisure, emotion, passivity, and reading. Significantly, as writing and reading have been separated in this taxonomy of 'high' and 'low' culture there are implications for the constructions of coherent pedagogical methodologies. In the context of the 1990s curriculum, a potential disjunction emerged between the popular cultural texts chosen and a course's pedagogical methodology. Paul Salzman made an important point on this subject when he argued that the assumption that 'the teaching of cultural studies is at some fundamental level the teaching of popular culture itself, rather than the teaching of a certain methodology' was unproductive. In effect, cultural studies should not try to perpetuate existing readings and pedagogic processes; instead, it should develop a methodology that 'supposes a

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pedagogy in which students are at least as fully in control of much of the subject matter as are the teachers.20 In what amounts to what John Frow has called a sort of 'reverse anthropology', cultural studies potentially opens up a radical form of pedagogy, treating students as informants about popular culture.21 In this way, the methodologies of cultural studies are able to value non-traditional, experiential kinds of knowledge. In turn, students can receive academic recognition for such knowledge and potentially for their extra-curricular experiences. It should be pointed out that commentators like Frow are wary of celebrating cultural studies as a discipline that somehow solves the teacher/student binary, but they certainly see it as fruitfully challenging the existing orthodoxies about teaching and learning in higher education.

So far I have sketched out some of the changes to literary pedagogy following the disciplinary challenges of cultural studies, and the seepage of popular culture through these disciplinary fissures. One outcome of this process of change has been a shift in the theorisation and practice of literary pedagogy. At this point I now overview academic pedagogy in the context of education theory in order to appreciate other ways in which the walls of the elite academy have been breached, and its pedagogical practices challenged. There has of course been a long history of public education theory and initiatives behind this, many of which arose out of social justice movements in order to advance mass education. While mindful of these advances in the field of education, the version of public pedagogy that this thesis ultimately examines is somewhat different. As I have already indicated, the pedagogies I want to address in this thesis draw their inspiration from popular culture in combination with academic genres and specialisations, a methodology informed by both cultural studies and trends in oppositional pedagogy. To arrive at a fuller explanation of how the teacher/student relationship has been refigured by developments in the modern university, it is first

20 This is John Frow's point in 'Literature, Culture, Mirrors'.
necessary to understand the pedagogical models generally employed at universities, and then, more particularly for the purposes of this thesis, the pedagogical models at the heart of literary studies. Literary pedagogy is of course influenced by wider developments in higher education, such as the corporatisation of the university referred to above. There are, moreover, additional disciplinary developments that bear on the teacher/student relationship, which might also account for the restive student subjectivity performed by the piece of graffiti discussed earlier. These include the realignment of some academic disciplines—notably the study of literature—following inroads made by cultural and media studies as well as the promulgation of participatory and student-centred methodologies of education. The following discussion does not offer a comprehensive rendering of education research, but will draw from this field as it impinges on my specific analysis of trends in literary pedagogy in the 1990s and beyond.

In the wake of shifts in cultural studies and education theories, there has been a move from axiomatic and expository learning to more experiential modes, or at least modes that might resurrect devalued forms of (student) knowledge. However, certain ideas about teaching and, in turn, teaching methodology continue to have currency in the contemporary university. While there might be a range of alternative strategies, some of which will be enumerated below, it is more than likely that a student will come across some form of the conventional model which posits the teacher as all-knowing repository of information and the student as a passive recipient. Even if these traditional subject positions are not now, nor arguably ever have been, watertight, their symbolism is central to the performance of pedagogy. My point here is that the pedagogic relationship between teacher and student has always been complex. Dating from the Platonic model

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of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, where the older male teacher was the standard model of intellectual authority, the student was viewed not simply as an empty receptacle, but as having knowledge that the teacher would draw out.\(^{23}\) This classical model relied on a pairing of teacher and student that assumed a relationship which was not reciprocal, but which was determined by a one-way lineage. In a neat linking of education and literary terminology, this relationship has been read as an echo of 'the fiction of the perfect play between the poet and his ideal reader', the lineage depending for its intelligibility on a reduction of what is plural to an 'imagined interplay of paired elements: of poet and tradition, poet and reader, teacher and student'.\(^{24}\) In this sense, pedagogy becomes a form of transference or redaction, relying not only on binary logic but also on a model of transmission commonly used in linguistic and education parlance to signify the flow of information of 'meaning' and 'intention' in the teacher/student contract. Unsurprisingly, the instructional or expository model of lecture-style learning has been a favoured tool.

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, an important figure in public educational thinking and activism in the twentieth century, chose a model of economic exchange to describe this pedagogical relationship.\(^{25}\) Concerned with widespread illiteracy in Latin American countries, Freire made urgent appeals for self-reflexive, egalitarian approaches to mass education. As he saw it, the dominant pedagogical model relied on a relationship between teacher and student in which:

> knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing ...

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which students are the depositaries and the teacher the depositor. Instead of communicating, the

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\(^{25}\) There has been a long history of public education theory and initiatives that have arisen outside the university—as political or social justice movements—to advance mass education. Freire is perhaps the most well known of these pedagogical advocates, and much work has been opened up by his initial publications: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1971; *Education: the Practice of Freedom*, London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1973; *The Politics of Education*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987.
teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise, and repeat.26

Drawing an analogy between teaching and banking, Freire explained that the traditional lecture could be viewed as the delivery of information represented as a set of absolutes to the learner. Freire made a convincing argument that when the student is ‘given’ information as ‘truth’ without being involved in some sort of critical engagement with the material, a polarised relationship is established that reinforces hierarchical inequities between the provider of information and the recipient. The educator who uses this methodology thereby reinforces feelings of powerlessness in the student and, by extension, reinforces the passive acceptance of oppression. Furthermore, if the student only understood his or her place in the world in terms of these polar relationships, any sort of revolution defined by this paradigm might be replaced by another oppressive regime; the oppressed could possibly become the new oppressor.

The solution to this paradox lies in an alternative methodology proposed by Freire. In his ‘radical’ or ‘oppositional’ pedagogy, the relationship between student and teacher must first become a less rigidly hierarchical one in which the student is recognised as already having valuable knowledge and the ability to facilitate his/her own learning. This is accomplished through what Freire refers to as ‘dialogical relations’ and ‘problem-posing education’;27 both students and teacher explore issues as problems for investigation as opposed to facts delivered by the teacher. In this scenario, the teacher’s role changes from that of the repository of knowledge to that of guide and fellow learner. For Freire, the subject matter should be community related, which means not only that it is relevant and familiar to the student, but also that the student’s existing knowledge is valuable, if not essential, to the learning process. In this context, the students are also teachers, in that they know things about the community that the instructor does not necessarily know. This was an important step

26 Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 58.
27 Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 60.
in the ‘liberation’, as Freire envisaged it, of the people, so that their knowledge and ability to develop by helping each other learn through ‘problem-posing’ education gives them a sense of their own power and ability. Students thereby move from passive ‘objects’ to participants in the learning process, ‘subjects’ who actively contribute to and thereby influence what is learned.

Other educators, such as Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux, have more recently taken up the radical pedagogy proposed by Freire.28 This ongoing work provides a theoretical framework for education that criticises traditional educational models as they reinforce existing socio-economic power structures. Despite its focus on transformative education in developing nations, the principles and methodology contained in these approaches constitute significant contributions to the field of adult education more generally. Building on Freire’s earlier landmark theorisation, commentators like McLaren argue for a ‘revolutionary pedagogy’, with an imperative to steer critical pedagogy ‘firmly toward anticapitalist struggle’.29 Such a class-based analysis argues that ‘understanding exploitation as embodied in forms of racist and patriarchal social practices should constitute a central focus of critical pedagogy’.30 Following this, it is therefore not at all surprising that many recent commentators writing about pedagogical developments are attuned to the impact of capitalism and globalisation on the higher education sphere.31

Such oppositional thinking, which contests the teacher/student binary and opens up this relationship to scrutiny as it comes to terms with the power relations at its base, has an obvious appeal to feminist thinking. It can be argued that feminist conceptions of education are similar to Freire’s pedagogy in a variety of ways. Indeed, feminist educators often cite Freire as the educational theorist who comes closest to approaching the goals of feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy shares similar aspirations for individual and societal transformation, a desire for egalitarian classroom relations and for the valuing of experiential learning. In fact, feminist pedagogy has been understood as a branch of ‘radical pedagogy’. Using this as an umbrella term, Jennifer Gore identifies four strands of pedagogy: of the two strands of critical pedagogy, she links the first, which emphasises social vision, with the American educationalist and cultural critic Henry Giroux, and the second, in its concern for the development of explicit instructional practices, with Paulo Freire. Gore identifies the remaining two strands of radical pedagogy with feminist pedagogy, one strand emanating from women’s studies and emphasising a multiplicity of feminisms, and the other emerging

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32 I use the term ‘feminism’ as a banner term to denote a whole host of theories and methodologies. When necessary I will distinguish between the various feminisms from which my argument draws, such as black feminist criticism. A raft of titles on feminist pedagogy, written largely from the context of Education scholarship, includes: Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (eds), Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy, New York: Routledge, 1992; also, edited by Carmen Luke, Feminisms and Pedagogies of Everyday Life, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996; Anne French Dalke, Teaching To Learn/Teaching To Teach: Meditations On The Classroom, New York: Peter Lang, 2002; Mary De Castell and Mary Bryson (eds), Radical In(Ter)Ventions: Identity, Politics, and Differences in Educational Praxis, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997; Amanda Coffey and Sara Delamont, Feminism and The Classroom Teacher: Research, Praxis And Pedagogy, Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2000; and Marlee Mayberry and Ellen C. Rose, Meeting the Challenge: Innovative Feminist Pedagogies in Action, New York: Routledge, 1999.

33 Kathleen Weiler goes so far as to claim that feminist pedagogy as it has developed in the United States provides a ‘historically situated example of [Freire’s] critical pedagogy in practice’, in ‘Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference’, Harvard Educational Review, 61, 4, 1991: 450. Sue Jackson has also given an account of the emergence of feminist theories of education as they have been influenced by the critical pedagogy of Freire et al. See Sue Jackson, ‘Crossing Borders and Changing Pedagogies: from Giroux and Freire to Feminist Theories of Education’, Gender and Education, 9, 4, 1997: 457-467.

34 Kathleen Weiler, ‘Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference’: 450.

35 Giroux, a prolific commentator on education in America, argues for oppositional pedagogies that seek to educate students to take risks, challenge those with power and, while honouring critical traditions, be reflexive about how authority is used in the classroom. See especially his Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers Inc., 1988.

from education studies, dealing with instructional practices from feminist perspectives.\textsuperscript{37} As with Freirean radical pedagogy, or McLaren's insistence on critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is concerned with teaching methods that promote a non-hierarchical relationship. In fact, it has been argued by critics writing out of the field of education research that feminist pedagogy could well be any pedagogy that effects a reformation of the relationship between teacher and student.\textsuperscript{38} It is understood by these critics that feminist pedagogy is centrally concerned with the pivotal teacher/student relationship, as it seeks to challenge traditional pedagogical notions by strategies which call for empowerment, building community, privileging voice, and respecting the diversity of personal experience. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, students have come to expect such pedagogical alternatives as an integration of personal experiences with political analyses or, as Chris Ruggerio puts it as 'affective as well as cognitive expression in the classroom, and a synthesis of our feminist theory and practice'.\textsuperscript{39} Moreover, since feminist pedagogy considers questions of difference, particularly gendered power differences, it might be said to depart from critical pedagogy in that the play of such difference is fundamental. However, several critics emphasise that women do not constitute a unified category, and that marginalisation based on race, class and sexuality, often cuts across any commonality.

In this respect, Freire's work has been usefully extended by critics like bell hooks, who fuse the language of radical education with the tenets of black feminist criticism. hooks contends that it is only within 'anti-racist pedagogy' that there is elaboration of how black women experience marginalisation in higher education, and thus describes what a truly transformative educational experience might involve.\textsuperscript{40} Anti-racist pedagogy, like

\textsuperscript{37} See Jennifer Gore, \textit{The Struggle for Pedagogies: Critical and Feminist Discourses as Regimes of Truth}.


\textsuperscript{39} Chris Ruggiero, 'Teaching Women's Studies': 470.

\textsuperscript{40} bell hooks, \textit{Teaching to Transgress: Education and the Practice of Freedom}, London: Routledge, 1994. hooks has also written a number of other pedagogical titles, most recently an update of sorts to \textit{Teaching to Transgress} entitled \textit{Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope}, New York: Routledge, 2003.
feminist and critical pedagogies, also centres on the idea of experiential learning, in the sense that it starts from the black student's lived experience. Barbara Omolade attests to this methodology when she reflects:

When I am teaching history and politics, my students can bring their experience, insights and questions to classroom discussions. I assist them by adding the factual, analytical and contextual information that illuminates and expands their insights. The method works well to empower students, drawing them out, helping them to make sense of what they already know and have experienced.41

For hooks, critical transformation requires a struggle against a colonising mindset towards 'that historical moment when one begins to think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstances'.42 She suggests that the liberatory ideas that might contribute to this revolve around the politics of race and class.43 Feminist pedagogy is one site, then, for exploring the bringing together of theory and activism. It can be seen as a means by which politics has been imported into classrooms; and it offers strategies for dealing with the practicalities of teaching in a diversity of classroom settings. As hooks observes,

Feminist education—the feminist classroom—is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgement of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university.44

Yet feminist pedagogy as it has been articulated by educationalists cannot completely account for the difficulties experienced by academic feminists when they export these (classroom) politics to the public sphere.

41 Barbara Omolade, 'A Black Feminist Pedagogy', Women's Studies Quarterly, 21, 3 & 4, 1993: 34.
42 bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress: 147.
43 For a consideration of how hooks' methodology has been applied, see Clare Rigg and Kiran Trehan 'Not Critical Enough: Black Women Raise Challenges for Critical Management Learning', Gender Education 11, 2, 1999: 265-280.
This urgent question for feminist pedagogy was raised by a panel discussion involving Hortense Spillers, Susan Lurie, Ann Cvetkovich, Jane Gallop and Tania Modleski, entitled ‘Restoring Feminist Politics to Poststructuralist Critique’. Their discussion spoke to the difficulty faced by academic feminists in extending their politics and practice beyond the academy to the American public sphere. In a linking of pedagogy and political activism, these feminists in many ways echo the sentiments of oppositional pedagogies, contending that too many intellectuals and educators are so disconnected from social movements that they have trouble connecting their work either to pressing public issues or to wider constituencies outside the university. Early feminist practitioners, by importing the personal into the academy, brought a version of public life into the classroom, arguing that such intellectual separation was not only artificial but that ‘the personal is political’. This catch-cry served as the feminist platform for much activist and theoretical work. The difference between early versions of feminist pedagogy that arose out of the field of radical feminism and the later examples articulated by the panel mentioned above show that the catchcry has effectively been reversed: there is currently a professed need to ‘out’ the classroom to public life.

In their very distinct ways, the practitioners this thesis examines have sought to establish relationships—both within the academy, and, pertinentiely, outside the academy—of the non-agonistic and non-paranoid variety. The first of these terms acknowledges Harold Bloom’s theory of agonism in *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism*, as well as his theory of poetic inheritance (which I am extending to the intellectual domain in order to describe the relationships between critics and traditions) expounded in his *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. The second term calls to mind Eve Sedgwick’s contention

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that criticism in the American academy is dominated by paranoid practices. Paranoid reading practices are structured by generalised thinking about paranoia, derived from psychoanalytic and affective studies where paranoia places its faith in exposure. The feminist pedagogues in this thesis—Donna Haraway, Toni Morrison and Eve Sedgwick—each expands the idea of a supposedly one-way flow of knowledge from teacher to student and, for that matter, between literary critics, novels, and canons. One explanation for this alternative approach to pedagogy is the shift in the academy which has been wrought by education theory and activism. It is important to note that many of these radical pedagogical influences have emerged outside the academy. More significantly for this thesis, as my graffiti example made clear, there have been considerable disciplinary changes in the field of literary studies, brought about by cultural studies and also by other discipline-wide aspects of the postmodern academy.

An important part of my larger argument about public pedagogy is a discussion of the American public sphere, and a cascading series of binaries flowing from the public/private split. These are also central to pedagogical performance and to attempts to advance or open up other types of pedagogic space, most particularly through the refashioning of teacher and student subjectivities. In Chapter One, ‘Public Pedagogy’, I will expand the line of argument about trends whereby academics have sought to extend their critical and notably pedagogic practice into the US public sphere, and I will look particularly at public intellectual subjectivity, as it has been augmented by celebrity women academics in their efforts to reach wider constituencies. To this end, it will be necessary to consider some of the forays made by those academic feminists who have been peculiarly placed to address the strictures of academic life. Chapter One will therefore consider the role of the public intellectual, a subjectivity which has had a long life yet whose energy and idiosyncrasy are still of use to academic feminism as a means

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by which to merge politics, pedagogy and poetics. In an attempt to popularise ‘academic’ matter by undertaking intellectual work in the public domain, in many instances in conjunction with their public, academic feminists such as Morrison, Sedgwick and Haraway open up a means to read the traffic between the academy and the everyday as two-way. Chapter One will also go on to refer to several other academic feminists such as Camille Paglia, Susan Sontag, Marjorie Garber and Jane Tompkins who participate in ‘extra-curricular’ occupations and modalities that necessitate extra-academic labour and its application beyond the academy. Each of these subfigures will be used to contextualise and offset the pedagogical projects of principal figures, Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the scholar-thinker Donna Haraway whose work in the field of the history of science has influenced both academic and popular thought. Haraway strongly believes that academics must become much more activist. Without such efforts, she claims that cultural studies runs the risk of becoming ‘domesticated’, turned into just another academic discipline. She argues that ‘The roots of cultural studies that are energising are about remaking worlds, about paying attention to certain kinds of agencies that didn’t get any description before’. Intriguingly, Haraway refers to contemporary science fiction writers in her own theoretical work. Not surprisingly, it turns out that she has influenced these writers as they explore the interfaces between human/machine/animal in articulating a politics of the ‘other’ (whether defined in terms of race, gender, species or technology). I will argue that Haraway is actually attempting to reconfigure pedagogical dynamics in the dialogue she constructs between the discourses of science and literature. To illustrate this, I concentrate on a series of

50 The figure of the public intellectual harks back to Plato’s concept of the ‘poet-pedagogue’ personage. This argument has been usefully re-articulated by Sneja Gunew in ‘Gendered Reading Tactics: Public Intellectuals and Community in Diaspora’, *Resources for Feminist Research*, Fall-Winter, 2001: 57-72.

51 This is a definition of public intellectualism made by Linda Martin Alcoff, ‘Does the Public Intellectual Have Intellectual Integrity?’, *Metaphilosophy* 33, 5, 2002.

interviews between Haraway and one of her former students, Thyrza Nichols Goodeve, published in book form as *How Like A Leaf* (2000). I note how, during the course of the interview, Haraway is drawn into theorising about her own teaching practice in a way that sheds significant light on her claim that science is instructive for literature.

Given her iconic national identity and celebrity, the figure most appropriate to the title 'public intellectual' is Toni Morrison. As this thesis will explore Morrison’s public intellectualism is a foundation for her public pedagogy. Morrison, a successful amalgam of the professor, the novelist, the literary critic and the public intellectual, is a very public figure who often finds herself oscillating between these competing subjectivities. While it is as a novelist that Morrison is best known, I start Chapter Three by considering her pedagogical role, a role that has increasingly inflected her regular public appearances. To date, Morrison’s most far-reaching public appearances have been on Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club. Chapter Three goes on to examine the televisual context of the first run of this astoundingly popular and influential segment of Oprah’s talkshow, a period from 1996-2002 when Morrison was its most featured author. I will spend some time considering the pedagogic role of the Book Club and the television talkshow, although this thesis is ultimately interested in Morrison’s own performance, especially in its collaboration with the interlocutory presence of Oprah Winfrey. Through the increasingly persuasive technologies and avenues of public address, Morrison has been able to generate a good deal of debate concerning issues of race and ethnicity in the United States. Most notably, her public interventions and performances have effected a re-imagination of the relationship between intellectuals and political activity, thereby negotiating a different kind of critical and pedagogical space.

Similarly, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s work has opened up alternative critical and pedagogical spaces in the face of the dominance of institutionalised practices. As I have already indicated, Sedgwick’s work on reparative critical and pedagogic practices will become vital to the sense in which this thesis employs the term ‘public pedagogy’.
Reparative criticism, as Sedgwick envisages it, concerns itself less with the paranoiac policing of literature for its sins and its failings than with an appreciation of its complexities. In this way, it is an antidote to Michel Foucault's modern critic who is the final incarnation of the subject who judges: that is, the subject of certainty whose historical emergence is closely allied to the juridico-legal function of judgement one finds at the basis of what Foucault called disciplinary societies. In Chapter Four, I will address Sedgwick's own illness memoir *A Dialogue on Love*, in which she relates in detail the sessions undertaken with her therapist 'Shannon' for the depression she experienced following the diagnosis of breast cancer. The dialogue consists of Sedgwick's retelling of the therapeutic interaction, excerpts from her therapist's notes and numerous mediating poetic glosses, all of which disrupt the more familiar strains of a prose narrative. Just as Oprah provides an often uneasy interlocutory presence for Morrison, where reciprocity is not always a literal condition of the interview, the dialogue between therapist and patient is always complex and at times more a function of the dialogic narrative than a constituent part of the sessions themselves.

The academy is not a fossilised or sequestered space for Morrison, Sedgwick or Haraway; each seeks through versions of activism to step 'outside' the academy to develop entirely interesting but in a sense also flawed or inconsistent projects. My use of the term 'flawed' here is not intended as a value judgment. On the contrary, as I have already pointed out, I am wary of celebratory readings of feminist intellectuals. Instead, I seek to understand the pedagogical contributions of Morrison, Sedgwick and Haraway as attempts to overcome some of the cumbersome divisions in academic life between the academy and the everyday, high and low culture, and public and private lives. In going public—by crossing over into the public sphere, or engaging in different forms of public

address—these three academics have illuminated the central concern for this thesis: that the divide between the academic on the one hand and the everyday or popular on the other, continues to operate in the conception and reception of contemporary pedagogies, even as those pedagogies attempt to cross over this divide. In reaching out to popular audiences, Morrison, Sedgwick and Haraway each make claims upon their readers; and in enacting a theoretical complexity, they set up an expectation of a similar sense of engagement in return. They build these public versions of pedagogy on their specialist academic knowledge, but they fashion them according to their exchange with the popular genres of the talkshow, the memoir, or science fiction.

As I will illustrate, while Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick each in turn construct dialogue between themselves and a literal interlocutor, they also construct a dialogue between the academy and the public spaces they traverse in their teaching and writing. In the process of examining the specific teaching philosophies and sites of these three pedagogical theorist-practitioners, this thesis navigates some of the boundaries challenged by these women in their invention of new academic subjectivities. The ensuing discussion presents strategies by which specific domains and situated subjectivities have been brought into association in ways that might challenge conventional modes of teaching and learning. These include the customary opposition between the academy and talkback television, public and private lives, and the discourses of affect and academic analysis.
PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

My argument in this thesis focuses public pedagogy as it operates at the nexus of popular and academic genres. Reflecting on instances where interpretive and pedagogical practices from within the academy encounter ostensibly more mundane or more popular discourses, this chapter will consider the ways in which these practices and discourses transform, complicate or illuminate one another. My contention is that academic participation in the public domain is particularly pronounced in the United States; in America, there are distinct genres of academic participation in public,\(^1\) a situation that has yet to develop to such a striking degree in Australia.\(^2\) This is perhaps because, as David Carter has argued, while Australian public intellectual life may be vibrant, it is not diverse: 'the same names recur in the same places having much the same debates. There is a great deal of our public intellectual life not well-represented in the mainstream media and public forums.'\(^3\) This chapter ranges over a host of texts because an explanation of public pedagogy requires illustrations of different forms of intellectualism in America. I will therefore need to consider specific kinds of intellectual work undertaken by academics in

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1 These American forums include most notably journals of opinion such as *Dissent*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and *National Review*; also television appearances on public broadcasting programs; and the increasingly popular genre of academic memoir. There are multiple and counterpublics for intellectual address.


America over the last twenty years, focusing in particular trends in public intellectualism and the influence of cultural studies on the work of the teacher/intellectual. I then grapple with the more recent relevant developments in contemporary public culture in America that contextualise academic and teaching cultures. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to give a thorough and detailed historic account of public intellectualism in America, this chapter will touch on important recent developments in order to highlight a number of case studies in which feminist academics have attempted to overcome some of the strictures of academic life.

This chapter is divided into three sections, with each contributing a case study illustrating the concerns of the respective sections. The first section gives an overview of the role of the public intellectual and his/her potential as a dissenting subject. Following on from some of the issues raised in the Introduction, the objective here is to give some scope for the public intellectual as a border-crossing subjectivity. A recent spate of books and articles bemoaning the decline of the public intellectual is ameliorated by the theoretical work of Edward Said and Hortense Spillers. Some of the most fruitful work of this kind has come out of the field of black public intellectualism as it attempts to re-activate the oppositional energy of the public intellectual. This will be discussed more specifically in the context of Toni Morrison’s project in Chapter Three.

The second section takes up the subject of public culture. This section is primarily concerned to explore avenues for public intellectual address and recent forms of ‘intellectual publics’. It also analyses the public orientation of certain forms of academic discourse, notably the trend to personal or confessional criticism in the 1990s. In this respect, I consider the example of experimental models of pedagogy in the US academy as they are both theorised and rehearsed by a number of celebrity women academics. The public/private binarism continues to structure thinking about the academy and the popular or everyday. The theoretical work of Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant on the notion of an ‘intimate public sphere’ is an important
foundation for an understanding that the public/private divide is an illusion, but it is
an illusion which has very real consequences. Even as the divide between the
intimate and the public seems ever more tenuous, it is the transgression of this divide
that excites fascination. Moreover, this binarism is of enormous influence to the
conception and reception of contemporary pedagogies, even as those pedagogies
attempt to cross over this divide.

The final section of this chapter analyses teaching cultures against the backdrop of
public intellectualism and public culture, with a view to analysing some of the
different pedagogical models that continue to be bound by the institution. For
instance, in 1982 a special issue of the journal *Yale French Studies* devoted to the
subject of literary pedagogy asked some pertinent questions about the teaching of
literature, even posing a reading of teaching ‘as a literary genre’.

Since that time a plethora of articles and studies, sometimes even entire journals, have been dedicated
to the subject. The collected articles in the *Yale French Studies* issue offer axioms and
precepts which enable me to present a schematic view of literary pedagogy in the
early 1980s to the 1990s, a period when the confluence of autobiography, cultural
studies and pedagogy signalled significant changes in the academy, and the way in
which the academy negotiated its relation to the everyday, the popular, and the
public. A 1997 edition of the journal *PMLA*, dedicated to the subject of ‘teaching
literature in the academy today’, will be used as a marker by which to gauge some
of the shifts in thinking (one of the contributors to the volume calls these shifts
‘multiple methodological revolutions’ from the deconstruction-inspired *Yale French

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1 The issue was entitled ‘The Pedagogical Imperative: Teaching as a Literary Genre’, *Yale French Studies*, 63, 1982.
2 The last decade has seen the emergence of journals such as *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* (1993); *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, Cultural Studies* (which continued the *Review of Education* from 1994); *Radical Pedagogy* (1999); *Pedagogy* (2001); and *Journal of Transformative Education* (2003). Some of these journals have arisen out of an interest in pedagogy in education studies, but a number have been prompted by renewed attention to literary pedagogy and others by the attention of cultural studies to teaching methodologies.
3 The entire journal issue of *PMLA* is devoted to the subject, but I will be concentrating on a roundtable
discussion. See Joseph Oran Aimeone, L. Ross Chambers, George L. Levine, Wahneema H. Lubiano,
Frank F. Madden, Mary Louise Pratt, Joseph T. Skerrett, and Donna C. Stanton, ‘Teaching Literature in
4 Mary Louise Pratt in Joseph Oran Aimeone et al., ‘Teaching Literature in the Academy Today: A
Roundtable’. 106.
Studies to the mid-nineties preoccupation with the emergence and impact of cultural studies, canonical rearrangements, and curriculum reform. I then tease out three strands in particular. Firstly, the autobiographical turn in literary criticism throughout the 1990s, which had a bearing on academic teaching cultures and their participation in public. Secondly, developments in performance theory, which attempted to come to terms with the doubleblind created by the discrepancy between what teachers professed (for example, feminist thinking) and how they were positioned (as authoritative and all-knowing), or in other words, between the demands of critical pedagogy and the constraints of postmodern culture. And, thirdly, shifts in academic thinking around the teaching of popular culture, a development already foreshadowed in the Introduction. Each of these trends, all related, form part of a complex backdrop to the pedagogical contributions of Donna Haraway, Toni Morrison and Eve Sedgwick. In later chapters, I will go on to examine issues specific to the disciplines out of which each of these women work, arguing that these have fashioned their pedagogical thinking. For Haraway, this is the history and philosophy of science; for Morrison, African American studies; for Sedgwick, queer studies. In this way, it becomes possible to read these three women as arriving at similar points in their pedagogical theory and practice, even when they are undertaking distinct and seemingly unrelated work.

I. The Public Intellectual

A common if rather generic definition of the public intellectual is of a figure who devotes at least some of his or her time to thinking about and addressing issues of public concern. These issues can be either part of the intellectual's traditional field of study, or topics about which he or she has an opinion to offer. In the course of this thesis, I will distinguish between the more 'generalist' public intellectuals and 'disciplinary' public intellectuals, that is, between the literary critics and pedagogues who address a variety of publics, and the public intellectuals whose work may draw upon literary methodologies and pedagogies, even though they may not identify or

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8 This argument is pursued by Jane Tompkins in 'Pedagogy of the Distressed', College English, 52, 6, 1990: 653-660.
affiliate with literary criticism as it is practised in the academy. Both types of public intellectuals will feature in subsequent chapters of this thesis: of the three theorist-practitioners I concentrate on, Morrison and Sedgwick are academics who practise an avowedly literary-critical academic expertise, while Haraway’s scientific expertise is informed by its meeting point with the literary.

Raymond Williams remarked that the use of the term ‘intellectual’ to denote a ‘particular kind of person, or a person doing a particular kind of work’ dates from the early nineteenth century. The task of the intellectual as critic, arbiter, and legislator was concomitant with new thinking at the end of the eighteenth century about the private, the popular, the scientific and, in literary parlance, with concerns about sensibility, taste, and culture. After the French Revolution’s affiliation of intellectual labour and the labour on the streets, the intellectual comes into greater prominence throughout the nineteenth century. Taking initial shape as a dissenting or revolutionary subjectivity, the intellectual also had another competing identity as an elitist, bourgeois sympathiser. Williams goes on to indicate that after the mid-twentieth-century the word ‘intellectual’ takes on a new, somewhat wider set of associations, many of them having to do with ideology, cultural production, and the capacity for organised thought and learning.

Thomas Bender argues that the term ‘intellectual’ entered international political and cultural discourse in 1898, when it was used by the European supporters of Dreyfus to name themselves and at the same time to claim a new sort of oppositional moral authority. Within a few months, the word appeared in America, in an editorial in The Nation, and by 1900 it was being used in New York’s Lower East Side to refer to those immigrants who formed study groups to incorporate American literature and

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10 Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993: 228. Another very salient point Bender makes here and one which I will pick up on later in the chapter, as well as in the context of the bookclub/middlebrow culture discussion in Chapter Three, is the centrality of literature to the growth not only of public intellectualism in America, but to the emergence of the public sphere.
culture into their lives. In America, the advent and rise of the modern intellectual has been linked to the development of boundaries in academia, which began with the process of professionalism within the ministry and concluded with its later, more powerful echo in disciplinary separation in American universities. However, as Bender's observations reveal, the intellectual has always had an important life outside the academy. William James argued, for instance, that intellectualism was strongly associated with individualism and freedom from the institutions of the church, army and aristocracy. In the mid-twentieth century, Irving Howe, one of the leaders of a group of dissenters—the New York Intellectuals—sought 'to mount a campaign against the new conformity' arguing that it was necessary for intellectuals to be critical of mainstream society. What these early analyses have in common is a sense of the intellectual as peculiarly placed to critique orthodoxies; the public intellectual's power is understood to derive from their being outside the mainstream, and, more pointedly, from their being outside the specialised and elitist confines of the academy.

Much of the historiography on the course of public intellectualism in America focuses on its early fusing of anti-academic rigour with social commentary. A large part of the recent critical lament for the 'last intellectuals' or the decline of public intellectualism can therefore be read as the extension of an enduring argument about the loss of this anti-academic sentiment as the intellectual became entrenched within the academy. Over recent decades, the argument goes, intellectual work in America has become increasingly specialised. During the first half of the twentieth century,

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13 'We “intellectuals” in America must all work to keep our precious birthright, and freedom from these institutions.' William James cited in Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, New York, 1963: 39.
most American intellectuals were not academics, but by the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were hardly any intellectuals who were not academically affiliated. A plethora of recent critical material in this vein makes competing claims for the role of the public intellectual in contemporary America. These studies tend to concentrate on a trajectory of post-Enlightenment demise: in a nostalgic narrative for the ‘last’ or ‘lost’ intellectuals, they decry the obsolescence of the American intellectual. It is indeed ironic that the passage of the ‘professional and technical intelligentsia’ into the academy has in fact risked their remaining ‘locked in the university’; while remaining authoritative, they lack authority to speak in the public domain.

In his somewhat contemptuous assessment of the state of American public intellectualism, Richard Posner adopts a taxonomy which distinguishes the intellectual from the academic, an approach adopted by, among others, Terry Eagleton, who argues that, ‘Academics are concerned with ideas, whereas intellectuals busy themselves with the bearing of ideas on a whole social order’. Eagleton goes on to point out that ‘while academics are largely confined to industrial production units known as universities, intellectuals seek to occupy a more public sphere, as journalists, political commentators and opinion shapers’. Eagleton may well be making an argument in support of the public intellectual but Posner, while

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19 Terry Eagleton, ‘Too Clever by Half’ 48. A.C. Grayling also adopts this taxonomy as he argues that surprisingly few university academics in the English-speaking world are intellectuals ‘in the sense of having wide interests of the mind and deep commitments in moral and political terms, often together with a vocation for deploying these in debate about matters of public concern’. According to Grayling, ‘a university academic is a specialist in a narrow field who publishes, usually in jargon, technical research in journals of interest only to other specialists’. A.C. Grayling ‘Intellectual or Academic?’, Prospect Magazine, January, 1997: 13.
adopting this same taxonomy, argues that academics lose their rigour when they enter the realm of public discourse. He thinks that:

A public intellectual expresses himself in a way that is accessible to the public, and the focus of his expression is on matters of general concern and is reflected in a political or ideological cast. When public intellectuals comment on current affairs, their comments tend to be opinionated, judgmental, and sometimes condescending, and often waspish.  

More recently, Frank Furedi’s *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone?* (2004) has argued along similar lines, pointing out that there has been a ‘decline of the critical universal intellectual, the thinker giving way to the expert, politics yielding to technocracy, and culture and education lapsing into forms of social therapy’.

Of course, it could be considered that these are actually outdated modes of address, and that the publics receptive to this brand of intellectualism no longer exist (an argument I will pursue in the next section). However, the key point to be made at this stage in my discussion is that the public intellectual, as defined by the likes of Posner and Furedi, represents a popular expertise that is devalued by the traditional academy. Russell Jacoby argues along similar lines, pointing out that the academy disparages the popular work of the public intellectual as journalistic and superficial in contrast to specialist academics.

It may be that the definition of public intellectualism needs to be extended or resuscitated in order to move beyond a reading which pits the intellectual and academic in opposition to each other. In other words we need to claim a re-defined space for intellectual work. The question is whether or not the devalued subjectivity of the public intellectual can actually be recuperated. One of the most influential theorisations about intellectuals can be found in Edward Said’s 1993 Reith lectures, published as *Representations of the Intellectual*, in which he advances a definition in

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22 See Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*. 

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sympathy with readings which attest to the public intellectual’s role as a critic of prevailing attitudes. Said’s argument is that:

the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations and whose raison d’être is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.\(^{23}\)

However, Said’s model, as he goes on to explain, does not simply present the public intellectual as a stable vessel for static opinion. Instead, it is one which understands the intellectual as perpetually in exile. He qualifies that he does not have in mind the so-called free-floating intellectual, whose technical competence is on loan for sale to anyone. I am saying, however, that to be as marginal and as undomesticated as someone who is in exile is for an intellectual to be unusually responsive to the traveller rather than the potentate, to the provisional and risky rather than to the habitual, to innovation and experiment rather than the authoritatively given status quo. The exilic intellectual does not respond to the logic of the conventional but to the audacity of daring, and to representing change, to moving on, not standing still.\(^{24}\)

Said uses the rhetoric of margin and centre to claim a centrality of purpose while harnessing the potential of that marginality. At the same time he is acutely aware of the difficulty of sustaining a cohesive intellectual persona. He has a word of caution not only about intellectual forms of public address, but also about their reception. In a more recent forum, Said commented on the fact that, even though the United States is actually full of intellectuals hard at work ‘filling the airwaves, print and cyberspace with their effusions’, the public realm is so taken up with questions of policy and government, as well as considerations of power and authority, that even the idea of an intellectual who is ‘driven neither by a passion for office nor by the ambition to get the ear of someone in power’ is difficult to sustain ‘for more than a second or

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two'. In a lecture for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Said explained that the ‘cult of expertise’ has increasingly structured public discourse, especially in the United States:

In far too many years of appearing on television or being interviewed by journalists I have never not been asked the question ‘what do you think the US should do about such and such an issue?’ I take this to be an index of how the notion of rule has been lodged at the very heart of intellectual practice outside the university. And may I add that it has been a point of principle for me not ever to reply to the question. 

Said makes a distinction here between his preferred mode of oppositional intellectualism and the sort of heroic expertise which claims an authority to comment on all manner of subjects. Despite the spate of books and articles saying that intellectuals no longer exist, Said argues instead that the commercialisation and commodification of everything in the newly globalised economy have simply done away with the old, somewhat romantic-heroic notion of the solitary intellectual. The question then becomes whether it is even worthwhile to proceed with such a contested, outmoded vocabulary, in the contemporary context where the realm of the political and public has expanded so much as to be virtually without borders? Said maintains that there still seems to be a great deal of life in the ideas and the practices of what he terms ‘writer-intellectuals’ (he provisionally connects the two terms) whose work both touches on and is very much a part of the public realm.

Other commentators who have also insisted on a serious role for public intellectual work include Henry Giroux, glossed in the Introduction as someone who ties together the role of pedagogy and public intellectualism. Marjorie Perloff is another case in point. Decrying the trend for late twentieth-century intellectuals to enter the arena of television talkshows or journalism, where their discourse often gets trivialised and co-opted, she attempts to reclaim cultural gravitas, arguing that ‘if intellectual refers to inventors of oppositional and productive habits of thinking I

would posit that the species is alive and well—primarily (and paradoxically) among
the new breed of artists and poets on the boundary. Homi Bhabha similarly
captures the progressive political and pedagogical possibilities of the 'black
intellectual' as a border subject whose marginalised status allows for a critical re-
negotiation of overlapping, contradictory, and diverse public spaces, thereby
opening up possibilities for new forms of solidarity. For Bhabha, living on the
boundary promises more than self-serving, celebratory posturing. Far more
importantly, it offers a rhetorical and political borderline space from which to refuse
the inside/outside duality, and the static divide between margin and centre. Bhabha's claim for the liberatory public intellectualism offered by the 'black
intellectual' is a timely reminder of a whole strain of American public intellectualism
which has in the past been scanted by literary and other historians. For example,
while Richard Posner's *Public Intellectuals: A Study in Decline* (2001) included a line-
up of African American public intellectuals such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., Cornel
West, bell hooks and Toni Morrison, his narrative does not afford space to some of
the most insightful and inventive work of the late twentieth century. Beyond that, as
I will explore in the next section, many of these narratives rely on a rather fixed
version of the public sphere. (Black public intellectualism will indeed form a vital
trajectory for coming to terms with Toni Morrison’s work in Chapter Three.)
Beginning with W.E.B Du Bois, and moving through James Baldwin, Richard Wright,
Harold Cruse, Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West, what this tradition of black
public intellectualism questions is not only the notion of the public intellectual as a

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28 Marjorie Perloff, 'Forum'. (Letter to the Editor) Joseph O. Aimone; John S. Brushwood; Alina Clej; Frances Ferguson; Gerard Genette; Gerald Graff; Stephen Greenblatt; Ihab Hassan; Lawrence D. Kritzman; Dominick LaCapra; Walter D. Mignolo; J. Hills Miller; Marjorie Perloff; Bruce Robbins; Patrick Saveau; Bryan C. Short; Margaret Soltan; Tzvetan Todorov; Howard Young, *PMLA* 112, 5, 1997: 1125.


30 W.E.B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* published in 1903 has been an enormously influential work, seeing black life and history as essential ingredients in the American mix. As I have indicated, earlier commentators such as Thomas Bender and Russell Jacoby had tended to fix on the New York Intellectuals and only gave limited coverage in their accounts to other strains of public intellectualism. For recent commentary on black public intellectualism that redresses this balance, see Jules Chametzky, 'Public intellectuals—now and then', *MELUS*, 29, 3-4, 2004: 211-227; also Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1998.
homogenous category, but beyond that the very notion of intellectual genealogies and traditions.\textsuperscript{31}

The question of intellectualism has been an important one for African American literary criticism. Leading African American academic and cultural critic Cornel West supplements Marxist and Foucauldian paradigms of knowledge with the habit of insurgency as the required performance of the African American intellectual. His answer is a model based on black preaching and musical traditions, a model which also has a certain appeal for Toni Morrison, especially insofar as it redresses the tendency of critics, as Henry Louis Gates has noted, to write ‘primarily for other critics of literature’.\textsuperscript{32} But it is Hortense Spillers’ postdate to Harold Cruse’s 1967 publication, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, which is the most compelling commentary on this topic. Spillers argues that today’s ‘black creative intellectual’ should strive for ‘performative excellence and create a new science of cultural demography, taking African American culture and community as [an] object of knowledge’.\textsuperscript{33} In the absence of a site like Harlem as the designated and undifferentiated locus of community, as it was for Cruse and others before him, Spillers advances a model which mobilises the language of postcolonial and poststructuralist theory to argue that ‘a poetics of travel and exile, a sort of new relation to home that is no longer bound to the specificity of place’ is what the subject must now learn to remember. This model takes account of the ‘contradictory impulse that stamps African American life and thought as an unmistakable ambivalence’.\textsuperscript{34} Spillers articulates her discomfort with West’s earlier model because it requires that the ‘intellectual installed in his/her own autobiographical moment’ be confronted with being ‘in effect interpellated, or summoned as a responsible subject and subjectivity’.\textsuperscript{35} Such a myth of representation, according to Spillers, sustains ‘the idea of the intellectual as a leading and heroic personality rather than a local point of

\textsuperscript{33} Hortense Spillers, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date’, Boundary 2, 21, 1994: 69.
\textsuperscript{34} Hortense Spillers, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date’, 70.
\textsuperscript{35} Hortense Spillers, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date’, 72.
oscillation among contending conceptual claims. Spillers' discussion about the role of the intellectual in the social production of knowledge raises questions about the role of the female/feminist intellectual, not just within patriarchal institutions such as the university, but struggling against the 'invisibility' of African American women to various public discourses.

Sneja Gunew offers a gendered reading of public intellectuals and 'community in diaspora', using the term 'poet-pedagogue' (via Plato and Shelley) as 'part of a taxonomy of terms which attempt to capture the role and function of the public intellectual'. Gunew's work in postcolonial theory provides a foundation for the rendering of the intellectual in these terms, but it also gives her insight into the way in which for many such public intellectuals they have 'projected on to them the burden of formulating and expressing a minority's cultural representations, metaphors, singularity, for the world at large'. What the work of Gunew and others like her destabilises is the traditional gendering of the role of the intellectual as masculine. Contemporary discussions of the 'death of the intellectual' noticeably make limited reference to feminist intellectuals. On the other hand, women in academia have been reluctant to adopt the role of public intellectual as it has been conventionally defined. It seems that there is an anxiety about the contemporary place of the intellectual, as well as about the necessity for the distinction made by some feminists between theory and practice, the intellectual and the activist, and where this might lead. Gunew is hopeful that the public intellectual model of intervention, both at the level of writing and pedagogical practices, has the potential to render elastic the divisions between disciplines and between the academy and the public sphere, bringing together certain critical and pedagogical discourses that have traditionally been kept apart. Yet she also insists on the need to be mindful that the figure of the public intellectual is more complex than clear-cut or celebratory formulation. Against this background, theories of pedagogy have taken up the

36 Hortense Spillers, 'The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date': 82-83.
38 Sneja Gunew, 'Gendered Reading Tactics': 57.
challenge inherent in a critique of intellectualism, to make the transition between the academy and the public.

Later in this chapter, I will analyse the sorts of publics addressed by academics and some of the reasons behind their expressed need to reach ever wider constituencies. For the moment, however, I want to sketch one strain of feminist public intellectualism: the phenomenon of the celebrity academic, specifically the brand of public intellectualism that came to the fore in the 1980s and 1990s and is exemplified by the figure of Camille Paglia. Paglia is one of the more obvious examples of feminist ‘anti-academics’ who have become celebrity cultural commentators on the basis of their ressentiment-style criticism.\(^{39}\) Another is Naomi Wolf, although Paglia would argue passionately that she deserves better company.\(^{40}\) Jennifer Wicke has evocatively called Paglia’s brand of feminism ‘academic feminism’s nagging hangnail’.\(^{41}\) While it is initially tempting to dismiss Paglia’s strident mode of public intervention, this becomes less compelling if you take the view of Wicke that celebrity feminism is actually the ‘mediated nimbus around academic feminism’, and the ‘new locus for feminist discourse, feminist politics, and feminist conflicts’.\(^{42}\) I may have preferred to select a case study enacting the oppositional energy of feminist academics such as bell hooks, but the Paglia example, particularly when it is teamed with a reading of Susan Sontag (as Paglia herself advances), puts in more dramatic relief the traditional models of intellectualism discussed so far. Moreover, such a case study demonstrates not only acts of critical transgression and the potential riches of

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\(^{39}\) My use of ‘resentment’ is informed by Eve Sedgwick’s reading of Nietzsche: ‘Nietzsche, then, is the psychologist who put the scent back into sentimentality ... [a] rather mendacious mechanism rather mysteriously called ressentiment—re-sniffing, one might say as much as “resentment”, or re-tonguing, repalpating’. She points out that the re- prefix marks a space of vicariousness and misrepresentation ‘as sensation brought to the quick with an insulting closeness’. See Eve Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990: 149.


\(^{42}\) Jennifer Wicke, ‘Celebrity Material’: 756
destabilising professional genres of discourse, but pinpoints the contradictions, inconsistencies and dilemmas involved in 'going public'.

**Case Study: Genealogy, agonism, celebrity.**

Finally, she asked, half irritated, half amused, 'What is it you want from me?' I stammered, 'Just to talk to you'. But that was wrong. I wanted to say, 'I'm your successor, dammit, and you don't have the wit to realise it!' It was *All About Eve*, and Sontag was Margot Channing stalked by the new girl.\(^\text{43}\)

In 1973, Paglia was a harried, early-career academic teaching at Bennington College. As chairperson of the Language and Literature division she resolved to bring 'women of achievement' to campus and scored a coup when Susan Sontag accepted an invitation to 'speak about general cultural issues and answer questions afterwards' (*Sontag Bloody Sontag*, pp. 348-9). Paglia had for a long time admired Sontag's essays, and, after seeing her perform at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, envisaged an address that would range over the 'pop' cultural terrain Paglia was increasingly claiming as her own. However, Sontag fell far short of the mark, instead choosing to read from one of her short stories. The lacklustre performance failed to excite the audience and Paglia took the poor reception personally. For Paglia, Sontag's novel writing was an aberration, blighting her essayistic force in a self-conscious attempt to be literary (and European literary at that). As someone who likes her novels big and gutsy, what she terms 'dionysian', Paglia's aesthetic criteria that do not discriminate between *Middlemarch* and *Valley of the Dolls*. It was therefore not the fact that Sontag wrote novels *per se*, as it was the type of novels she wrote, which ultimately, in Paglia's view, detracted from the work she had done best in essay collections such as *Against Interpretation* (1967). What Paglia chiefly admired about these essays was that they revealed Sontag to be 'learned yet anti-academic'; she praised the essays for being 'accessible to an educated general audience, [and helping] to break the stranglehold that the over-

professionalised universities had on "serious" thought in America' ('Sontag Bloody Sontag', p.345).

Sontag's appearance was a failure not only because she failed to live up to Paglia's expectations, which were based on the promise of her earlier performances, but because of a whole series of banal mishaps. Paglia recounts these mishaps in some detail, feeling them to be every bit as painful as the paucity of Sontag's (pop) intellectual content. In fact, the lecture performance proper only rates one paragraph in Paglia's account, a paragraph suffused with Paglia's affective point of view (she recalls her 'sinking heart', 'avoiding glaring eyes' and fantasising about having a heart attack). Bad as Sontag's performance apparently was, the real critique is reserved for Sontag's arrival and the reception following the lecture. Sontag was late; in fact, her chauffeur-driven car arrived with her sleeping soundly in the back seat. Paglia conjectures that Sontag underperformed because she was being paid less than her customary speaking fee, even though this was more than Bennington College usually allowed—both sides taking a very different view of what sort of performance would return 'value for money'; and she seemed under-prepared, reading from thin scraps of paper. Finally, she failed to engage with Paglia on the night or thereafter. Sontag evidently behaved badly on and off the academic stage, but then so too did Paglia in her public recollections of the experience, even though she is, for the most part, self-reflexive about her motives.

The contestatory relationship Camille Paglia envisages between herself and Susan Sontag, an oft-acknowledged influence on her work, is a hallmark of Paglia's brand of intellectualism. In 'Sontag Bloody Sontag', published in the collection Vamps and Tramps, Paglia recounts the demise of her admiration for Sontag, arguably fashioned as an intellectual predecessor. If Paglia ever sought to emulate Sontag it was only with a view to surpassing her, as is right and proper in all stories that hinge on inheritance and lineage. The view of intellectual life as a contest (a 'combat sport' in

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the Bourdieuan vocabulary⁴⁵) is very much to Paglia’s way of thinking, but she
enacts it in a way that is peculiar to her, in marked contrast to the contest envisaged
by Pierre Bourdieu, or by Joan De Jean’s ‘Ancients’ against ‘Moderns’,⁴⁶ or even
Harold Bloom’s anxiety of influence,⁴⁷ to which Paglia is also indebted. The
‘agonism’ Paglia adopts to express her relationship with Sontag finds its perfect
expression in popular culture, a frame of reference that is constantly referred to,
although rarely exemplified directly in her work. It is unsurprising that the narrative
she chooses to illustrate her relationship with Sontag owes more to the dynamics of
fan culture and the allure of the Hollywood movie star than it does to the story of
academic role models and the genealogy of intellectual thought, at least at first
glance. Paglia likens the relationship between herself and Sontag to the relationship
between a film star and her younger sycophantic admirer/rival in the classic Bette
Davis film All About Eve (1950).⁴⁸ In this film, the character of Margot Channing, an
ageing actor whose glory days are ending, makes a rather painful observation about
career succession:

Funny business, a woman’s career. The things you drop on your way up
the ladder so you can move faster. You forget you’ll need them again
when you get back to being a woman. That’s one career all women have
in common, whether we like it or not: being a woman. Sooner or later
we’ve got to work at it, no matter how many other careers we’ve had or
wanted. And, in the last analysis, nothing is any good unless you can
look up just before dinner or turn around in bed—and there he is.
Without that, you’re not a woman. You’re something with a French
provincial office, or a book full of clippings. But you’re not a woman.

Margot Channing’s eventual successor simultaneously emulates and undermines
her: All About Eve is as much about generational change as it is about women’s

⁴⁵ I am referring here to Pierre Bourdieu’s theories about academic life encapsulated in the French film
Sociology as a Combat Sport. A documentary film crew was given access to Bourdieu’s professional and
teaching life and followed him over a period of three years, with the resulting film quite revealing of
Bourdieu’s own combative pedagogical performance. Pierre Carles, dir., La sociologie est un sport de
⁴⁶ Joan De Jean, Ancients Against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siecle, Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1997. Paglia’s Vamps and Tramps was written prior to De Jean’s text, but a
form of ‘ancients’ against ‘moderns’ definitely instructs Paglia’s understanding of contemporary
academia, as it does De Jean’s.
1997.
⁴⁸ Joseph L. Mankiewicz, dir., All About Eve, Twentieth Century Fox, 1950.
ambitions for a career. The film holds particular appeal for someone like Paglia because of her own fixation with her position in relation to her predecessors. Questions of academic inheritance underpin many of her essays, and she repeatedly locates herself within a baby boomer generation whose enjoyment of popular culture is not only intellectual but also visceral. In attempting to identify the reasons for the divergence in scholarship between herself and Sontag, Paglia ultimately concludes that Sontag’s mind ‘moved too slowly’ for her. This difference she attributes to a generational gulf, with Paglia belonging to the ascendant generation whose ‘synapses are electronic and circuitry hyperkinetic’ (‘Sontag Bloody Sontag’, p.353).

Paglia is equally appalled when Sontag reveals in an interview for Time magazine that she has never been interested in popular culture and that she does not own a television set. For Paglia,

television is America, and year by year it is becoming the world. Sontag’s betrayal of pop, to one who has never lost the faith, is unforgivable, since as a graduate student and young teacher, I shoved pop acolytism down people’s throats and took the career hit for it’ (‘Sontag Bloody Sontag’, p.347).

In one breath Paglia feels that Sontag’s separation from the university weakened her work in the end; and in another breath she laments that Sontag’s ‘calculated veering away from popular culture is my gravest charge against her’ (‘Sontag Bloody Sontag’, p.346). Yet Paglia need not have looked far afield to see that Sontag maintains a ‘reserved and contemplative’ view of intellectual life. In a well-publicised interview Sontag had declared:

Think of the things that I don’t do. I don’t appear on television. I don’t write for any newspaper or magazine regularly. I’m not a journalist. I’m not a critic. I’m not a university teacher. I don’t speak out on most public issues. If I wanted to play a pundit role, I would be doing all of these things. Still, the legend goes on. My life is entirely private. My interests are not those of a ‘pop celebrity’.⁴⁹

Paglia’s combative relationship with her intellectual precursors is one particular expression of her intellectualism. However, she also raises important questions about

how to conceive of the relation between popular culture and literary culture: Paglia sees the popular already internal to pedagogy, as it is literally located in the head of academia. For Paglia, as Melissa Hardie has tellingly observed, references to soap operas are not expressions of personal experience but allegorical expositions of a possible model of the way in which the world works.\(^5\) Hardie calls this model enacted by Paglia ‘soap opera pedagogy’, in which television and academia ‘provide the intellectual acumen of the agonist or contestant’.\(^6\) As Paglia herself tells it, the Paglia-Sontag pairing is the story of competing public intellectuals. Having witnessed a period of incremental loss of faith in the academy and its values, Paglia tasks herself with adjudicating and mediating the relation of the academy to the world. The ‘American intellectual’, she says, ‘should mediate between academe and media, past and present’.\(^7\) In Hardie’s formulation, Paglia functions as an agony aunt; she is the ‘irregular pedagogue of the marketplace’, in canny competition with Sontag’s figure of high modern contemplation situated apart from both the academy and popular culture. Paglia’s role as narcissistic and self-revelatory expert offers a model of the academic ‘whose contemplative practices exceed the domain of the academy’.\(^8\) Paglia contends that intellectuals must take strong measures to remain outside the establishment and to avoid what she calls ‘cronyism’. Yet at the same time, Paglia claims that Sontag’s abandonment of academe removed her from the ‘daily challenges, frustrations, scutwork, and ego-leveling routine of teaching, which keep one honest’ (‘Sontag Bloody Sontag’, p.358). This is a familiar contradiction at the heart of many narratives of contemporary academia. How do other academics and public intellectuals cope with those contradictions?

Despite its studied brashness, Paglia’s essay ‘Sontag Bloody Sontag’ contains some astute and timely observations about trends in contemporary academia and the American intellectual pinpointed at the outset to this chapter. The essay is a particularly resonant example of Paglia’s pedagogical views. I would argue that

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\(^5\) Melissa Hardie, ‘Restless: Paglia v Sontag’.
\(^6\) Melissa Hardie, ‘Restless: Paglia v Sontag’: 222.
\(^8\) Melissa Hardie, ‘Restless: Paglia v Sontag’: 222.
Paglia's essays are most interesting when they have a pedagogical focus or when they comment on academia. Her interest in genealogy is evident in her encyclopaedic *Sexual Personae* as it traces its lineage through Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953) which like other exemplary texts serves Paglia as a parallel, yet alternative genealogy. Paglia's understanding of the question of 'influence' takes up Harold Bloom's sense of that term: firstly that the meaning of a poem can only be another poem, and secondly, that the practice of poetic and critical succession proceeds through the critical mis-reading of a precursor. This genealogical thinking has repercussions for the fraught relation between popular culture and academia that Paglia rhetorically conflates or, in effect doubles, because she names Bloom as both teacher and intellectual mentor, a different kind of relationship from that in which she envisages Sontag. Intriguingly, the relationship between Camille Paglia and Susan Sontag is best expressed not as a love letter but as a psychodrama. In her column 'Camille on Campus' for the online magazine *Salon*, Paglia explains that she and Bloom

shared a respect for Freud, a love of great art, a drive for omnivorous learning, an instinct for epic sweep, a contempt for conformist careerism and dainty institutional etiquette and an unembarrassed openness to strong emotion and intellectual risk-taking. I preached the pop gospel to him with Warholite fervor, but at the time he shared Allan Bloom's scorn for pop.56

In other words, Paglia and Bloom's relationship is not combative but collegial. This relationship is of course cast in a new light following the furore occasioned by Naomi Wolf's allegation that Professor Bloom sexually harassed her when she was a Yale undergraduate twenty years ago. In a well-publicised article in the *New York Magazine*, Wolf explains that the incident did not result in a sexual or emotional crisis; what it set off was a moral crisis 'shaking my confidence of the institution I was in'.57 The allegations were newsworthy for obvious reasons, but what intensified

57 Naomi Wolf, 'Silent Treatment'.
that interest was the spectre of Camille Paglia coming out in support of Bloom. She dismissed Wolf’s allegations, claiming that:

It really smacks of the Salem witch-hunts and all the accompanying hysteria. It really grates on me that Naomi Wolf for her entire life has been batting her eyes and booping her boobs in the face of men and made a profession out of courting male attention.58

Paglia’s reading of the Wolf case fits her model of academia as a combat zone. What the Wolf case also clearly demonstrates is the way in which public and private shape the reception of feminist academia, a subject I will return to in the next section. This genre of academic participation—if it can be considered in these terms—has had some airplay in the mainstream media. Sexual harassment cases against leading academics were a feature of media coverage of academia in the 1990s; Jane Gallop’s *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (1997) is another widely known case. Then there are cases in the public arena which also galvanised academic comment, such as the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill sexual harassment case, which was an exercise in how gender, in the instance of African American public figures, routinely gets racialised in American public culture. And, Annette Kolody, among others, has brought attention to the subject of ‘anti-feminist intellectual harassment’ on campus, which continues to have an insidious impact on the material conditions of employment such as tenure and promotion, research funding, and opportunities for pedagogical experimentation.59

From the confrontation with Sontag to the denigration of Wolf, Paglia’s academia is fashioned as a contest. Paglia represents a version of pedagogical excess in the sense that the academic boundaries of propriety and collegiality are exceeded at every turn. She conceives of the popular as already internal to pedagogy and academia, and to this extent she exemplifies some of the most prominent trends in public intellectualism. In contrast, academics like Judith Butler, Martha Nussbaum, Patricia


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Williams and Eve Sedgwick write from a more strictly academic perspective; while they manage to maintain a fan base within the academy, their celebrity also has the power to ‘cross over’. These figures share some of Paglia’s pedagogical excess, but they draw upon different constituencies and very different relationships to inform their pedagogical practice. Bruce Robbins calls them ‘charismatic female lecturers’ whose ‘personal style helps them build constituencies (by hinting at felicitous answers, for example, to the question of how intellectual work matters to life)’. Robbins’ use of the term ‘felicitous’ denotes a manipulativeness and intentionality that these practitioners may not deserve. Robbins also goes on to make the somewhat dubious point that, while these celebrity feminist academics may not possess the intellectual weight of their ‘old boy predecessors’, they nevertheless wield a form of power. Their ‘extraneous and illicit power’ draws its force, he argues, not from academic content but from media celebrity. However, Robbins’ misogynist reading of the replacement within academia of traditionally masculine power groups by feminist scholars means that he is blind to the way in which Williams and Sedgwick appeal to broader constituencies. Bridging intellectual communities, their writings are meaningful in everyday contexts as well as within the confines of the academy.

Clearly issues relating to feminist celebrity academics, public intellectuals, and pedagogical excess provoke vicious criticism. Paglia’s genealogical model may not be the most productive, especially as it reinforces traditional thinking about the passage of intellectualism, but on the other hand it is forward-looking in that it does affirm the attractiveness of popular culture to certain forms of intellectualism. Paglia is engaging in what Michael Bérubé has identified as the need to popularise academic criticism. The Paglia case study is in part an explication of this trend—the drive to render academic thinking and writing more accessible—in the face of community expectations about higher education as it is informed by new corporate models demanding increasingly user-friendly access, and in response to claims that

61 Bruce Robbins, ‘Celeb-Reliance’.
62 Bruce Robbins, ‘Celeb-Reliance’.

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academic language is too specialist. Indeed Bérubé, himself writing out of the
discipline of cultural studies, claims that ultimately cultural theory is in itself already
popular, a claim not too different from that of Paglia. In this reading, cultural studies
translates into academic language a reality that already exists ‘out there’.63 Jeffrey
Wallen makes a counter claim, arguing that the popularising of academic criticism is
not possible or even desirable. Instead, what critics need to do is ‘think publicly—to
think in ways that could sustain, rather than foreclose or discredit, a public
discourse—if they hope to expand their audience and their influence’.64

What is apparent in this discussion is that a disjuncture between the academy and
the everyday is re-produced over again. It reads two currents—the academic flowing
out and the popular flowing in—and makes value judgments based on the success of
the translation, supposing that it is quantifiable. Ultimately, Wallen and Bérubé are
not so far apart, in a discourse that links critics across the spectrum of opinion. Each
fashions a role for the intellectual, worrying that the figuration is dated and therefore
defunct. This anxiety ties them into a troika of presuppositions: first, that intellectuals
have something measurably worthwhile to say; second, that the public constitutes a
potentially democratic sphere into which intellectual voices may reverberate and be
responded to; and third, that information flows directly. In the following section
entitled ‘Public Culture’ I will pursue some of these issues in detail. As I proceed, it
will become clear that the version of public intellectualism of most interest to this
thesis is that which is informed by recent developments and forecasts in cultural
studies, media and autobiography in the American academy. It is a version which
queries what Michael Warner calls

the fantasy of the public intellectual as a necessary function for political
change, where the intellectual is seen as one especially adept at framing
issues for critical discussions and where change results when discussion
encompasses the most extensive possible public in its deliberative agency.65

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See also Bérubé's 'Bite Size Theory: Popularizing Academic Criticism', Social Text, 30, 1993: 84-97.
64 Jeffrey Wallen, Closed Encounters Literary Politics and Public Culture, Minneapolis: University of
Warner offers this thesis a way to conceptualise new understandings of the public intellectual from the point of view of the shifting terrain of the American public sphere. The changing reception for public intellectual work has been commented upon for some time now. Thomas Bender, like Paglia, noted crucial distinctions between an earlier generation and more recent intellectuals who now address multiple audiences. He reflects:

I think intellectuals of an earlier generation, that of the Partisan Review writers of the 1940s and 50s who are so widely taken to be the standard model, had a very specific, but very limited audience. It was an audience very much like the writers with advanced training, but very little enclosed by the protocols of disciplinary professionalism. Ideology and position in public debate counted for more. There was also the overlay of an educated middle class interested in European ideas and politics and the idea of culture. Finally, there was an audience of middlebrow journalists, who drew upon the writing of the intellectuals. The audiences were calibrated by position in the social structure and intellectual hierarchies, while today’s audiences are competing spheres, each presuming the self-sufficiency of a public sphere. The public for intellectuals today is made up of more and more distinct audiences.66

One of the demands facing intellectuals today, perfectly dramatised by the Paglia example, is the desire for popularly read intellectuals.67 This ‘wish’ Michael Warner argues ‘responds in part to the extreme segregation of journalistic and intellectual publics in the United States’.68 They have been segregated, he explains, ‘not just by attitude and style but by the material conditions of circulation’.69 Publics do not exist simply along a continuum from narrow to wide or from specialist to general, elite to popular. They differ in the social conditions that make them possible and to which they are oriented. The United States, Warner agrees, is an extreme case. An ‘American strain of anti-intellectualism’, he charges, has made intellectuals ‘feel like exiles for the past two centuries’, so it is ‘small wonder that many should dream of vindicating themselves through fame, the only currency of respect that really spends

68 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 147.
in America'. Moreover, the intense 'capitalisation of mass culture' in American has meant that the 'media that matter are those whose scale and scarcity of access are most forbidding'. On top of this, Warner goes on to argue that the saturation of universities by commercial and state interests renders academic work in some ways less than public, so that intellectuals there 'come to be either marginalised or functionally incorporated into the management culture of expertise'.

Yet there are many academics, especially in cultural studies, who distrust the claim that journalists and mass media represent the only relevant public. They seek public relevance in a different way; rather than pursuing fame or publicity in a media saturated public, they seek instead to regard all intellectuals as public intellectuals. They aspire to see their own work as intrinsically political, either in the general sense of contested culture or in the narrower sense of having a bearing on common action and state policy. Recognising that academic disciplines, for better or worse, create a functional gap between themselves and political publics, many eschew their disciplines as the context for their writing and thinking. Some do so by leaving the disciplines entirely, writing for publics and lifeworlds outside the academy, but others adapt their academic work and career as much as possible to self-reflexive political modes of practice.

II. Public Culture

This section of this chapter will start by asking questions about what a public is and how it works, and more specifically how publics are constructed by forms of address. The answers to these broader questions will illuminate the issue of how particular intellectual publics have formed in the United States and extended their academic

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70 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 147. There has been some interesting work done on the subject of celebrity intellectualism. See especially David Shumway’s ‘The Star System in Literary Studies’, PMLA 112, no. 1 (1997): 85-100. Shumway takes up the question of celebrity in the literature industry and helped to extend the conversation about public intellectualism in a new direction, and attempts to account for the paradox that today’s ‘stars’ may have substantially less public influence than earlier forms of public intellectual.

71 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 147.

72 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 147.
work beyond the academy. In this section I want to give an indication of the way in which the academy intervenes in the public sphere; the way the academy constitutes a public sphere itself; and finally the way modes of intellectual address can move from the more privatised realm of the academic journal to the meta-public of the television talkshow, a topic that I will return to with my analysis of the public pedagogical model of Toni Morrison in Chapter Three.

Three understandings of ‘public’ will come to light in the following discussion, each with a slightly different inflection. The first is the definition of a public as comprising a body of strangers brought together through their being addressed by a text or genre, or, for my purposes, by a particular style of intellectualism. This basic definition derives from public sphere theory in the work of Jurgen Habermas and more recently by the philosopher Charles Taylor in his work on Modern Social Imaginaries (2004). Taylor defines the public sphere as a ‘common space in which members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus be able to form a common mind about these’. In this way, the public sphere is a space that is extrapolitical, secular, and metatopical. However this is a very neutral definition. Taylor is only too aware that public culture and issues of what constitutes the public and the private are constantly being reshaped, and themselves reshape genres and disciplines which rely on any straightforward binarism between those two spheres. Following this, the second sense of a public is that it is in opposition to a private sphere, a binarism evident at the heart of conceptions of the Enlightenment public sphere, which I would argue still have a bearing on the way in which notions of the public and private continue to structure thinking about the academy and the popular or everyday. Finally, I will consider a third approach, which includes the public orientation of certain forms of academic discourse in the United States, notably the trend to personal or confessional criticism in the 1990s. This third sense of public/publicity builds on the work of Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner to

show how Harbermas’ definition of the political public sphere as an arena for rational-critical debate needs to be augmented by postmodern theories of publics and publicities. In an influential article, Nancy Fraser observed that when public discourse is understood only as ‘a single, comprehensive, overarching public’, members of subordinated groups ‘have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives and strategies’. 75 In fact, Fraser writes, ‘members of subordinated social groups—women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics’, which she goes on to call ‘subaltern counterpublics’. 76 Such a theorisation serves to fruitfully undermine thinking about a unitary public sphere, opting instead for multiple publics. It is in this way that I wish to situate my use of the term ‘public’ in the formulation ‘public pedagogy’.  

Changes in thinking about the public sphere, especially boundaries between private and public, have been profitably broached by feminist discourse and identity politics. The productiveness of the public/private nexus, for feminist thought in particular, has come, according to Eve Sedgwick, ‘not from the confirmation of an original hypothesised homology that male:female::public:private, but from the wealth of its deconstructive deformations’. 77 In recent years the shifting grounds of what may accurately be identified as ‘public’ or ‘private’ in American culture have been, on a number of levels, increasingly difficult to demarcate. This is a well-documented and theorised area. 78 However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will review recent thinking and offer some workable definitions of ‘public sphere’ and ‘public culture’ against which to pit my concept of ‘public pedagogy’. My discussion in this section will be followed by a case study in which recent feminist American academics and cultural critics, notably Marjorie Garber, have sought to express their discomfort  

75 Nancy Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy’, in Craig Calhoun (ed), Habermas and the Public Sphere, Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1992: 123.  
76 Nancy Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’: 123.  
78 For discussion of public sphere theory of this type see the contributions in Craig Calhoun (ed), Habermas and the Public Sphere, Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1992. Nancy Fraser’s contribution is cited above; in the same collection see also, Michael Schudson’s ‘Was There Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When? Reflections on the American Case’.  

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with the bipartite public/private model, a dualism which, despite theoretical advances, still proves compelling.

In the version that has travelled down to us through a Romantic genealogy, the separate spheres of the public and the private have been staked out along gender lines. The public has been read as a masculinised arena of vastness, and the private as a feminised arena of domestic intimacy. Vestiges of that distinction have been at the heart of much literary, historical and political science scholarship since the eighteenth century. In the ensuing discussion, I keep in mind the danger of reproducing a gendered splitting between public and private by emphasising the ways in which both spheres are intimately linked and reciprocally inflect each other in a complex dialectic. The shifts and changes in the meaning of the term 'public' are important. What we call the public sphere, a geo-political space which is traversed by material and symbolic entities—individuals, discourses and goods—no longer exists in the view of many commentators. Structures of intimacy have become central to the public sphere and its 'culture'; in fact, it has been argued that not only is there no longer a space open for public dialogue in the sense of the classical formulation of the public sphere, but there is no longer a private sphere in the contemporary United States, defined by structures of intimacy and inclusivity. However, while the public/private divide is in one sense no more than a rhetorical illusion, it nevertheless draws in its wake real cultural and political effects.

The classical vision of the public sphere presented by Jurgen Habermas stressed that citizens forged a public sphere through their interactions with one another, becoming citizens through their capacity for lateral communication. This Enlightenment public sphere presupposed a segregation of public and private, yet, according to Habermas, the public sphere comprised 'private people gathered together as a public' and furthermore that 'articulating the needs of society within the state, was itself

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79 I am thinking here about the contributions to a special issue of the journal Critical Inquiry, many of which were interested in the state of public/private binarism. See 'Intimacy: A Special Issue', Critical Inquiry, 24, 2, 1998.
considered part of the private realm'. In this view the public sphere, even though it was defined by its exclusivity, could never close itself off entirely. Habermas argued that the public sphere 'always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who—insofar as they were propertied and educated—as readers, listeners and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion'. Habermas confirmed that the subjectivity appropriate to participation in public dialogue had its home, literally, in the sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family. If the public in theory had seemed to include everyone, in practice it always involved complex structures of exclusion—a net effect of the close relation between patriarchal authority and the Enlightenment conception of the public sphere.

In this seminal account of the public sphere, Habermas worked with a narrow, state-centred notion of politics, although he recognised the ways in which a literary public sphere, to take just one example, foreshadowed, shaped and overlapped with the political. Habermas reaffirmed this emphasis in more recent work when he argued that the literary public sphere 'specialised for the articulation of values and world disclosure' is intertwined with the political public sphere. Recent thinking by Michael Warner among others builds on this work by Habermas, and in the process clarifies some definitional inconsistencies. One of Warner's chief insights is that the poetic function of public discourse is misrecognised, chiefly because in the dominant tradition of the public sphere, address to a public is ideologised as rational-critical dialogue. Warner describes how, conventionally, publics are thought to be 'real persons in dyadic author-reader interactions rather than sites of multigeneric circulation'. He goes on to point out that this perception of public discourse as conversation obscures the importance of the poetic functions of both language and

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80 Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: 175-76.
81 Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: 176.
83 See also Craig Calhoun's 'Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Sphere', Public Culture, 14, 1, 2002: 147-171.
84 Michael Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics', Public Culture, 14, 1, 2002: 82.
corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics. Warner argues that much of the art of writing, or of performing in other media for instance, lies in the practical knowledge that there are many different ways of addressing a public, and that each decision about form, style and procedure carries hazards and costs to the kind of public it can define. Warner cautions, though, that while it is tempting to think of publics as something that we make ‘through individual heroism and creative inspiration or through common goodwill’, much of the process necessarily remains ‘invisible to consciousness and to reflective agency’. I will return to Warner’s argument shortly, in the context of how intellectual publics are created through forms of public address. For the moment, however, I want to consider another way in which Habermas’ conception of the public sphere has been revised.

There are anachronisms and archaisms at the heart of any discussion about the public sphere. Reading the public sphere as an arena for the transmission of certain forms and structures of discourse and debate can feel outmoded as Warner and Fraser explore. There are other critics who have similarly argued that Harbermas’ version of the public sphere has become ‘an archaic concept in our postmodern though still national present tense’. Lauren Berlant, for instance, writes about the ‘new’ intimate public sphere of the contemporary United States in which the political public sphere of the United States has in fact become an intimate public sphere, one radically different from the intimate sphere of modernity described by Habermas. Berlant claims that ‘there is no public sphere in the contemporary United States, no context of communication and debate that makes ordinary citizens feel that they share a common public culture, or exercise influence on a state that holds itself accountable to their opinions, critical or otherwise’. Berlant is writing out of literary and cultural studies. Her work has traversed a wide terrain: from the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne, an edition of Critical Inquiry devoted to the subject of intimacy and public culture, to the spectacle of the Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton affair in

85 Michael Warner, ‘Publics and Counterpublics’: 82.
86 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 14
Our Monica Ourselves (2001). For my current purpose, however, I want to concentrate on Berlant’s discussion of sex and citizenship and its production of a certain brand of intimacy in public.

Berlant places the paradoxical promise of the public sphere—its ability to liberate and oppress—at the centre of her arguments concerning the relations between and among competing conceptions of sex and citizenship in the United States today. She notes that the modern American obsession with sex and other putatively intimate matters has much to tell us about recent transformations in American culture. Commentaries that characterise the public sphere as something that threatens intimate life are both accurate to the lived experience of many Americans today and symptomatic of the ways in which that experience is ideologically conditioned and informed. Making the case for a shift from a political public sphere to an intimate public sphere, Berlant conceives of quite a different realm from the intimate sphere of modernity envisaged by Habermas. Where Habermas portrayed this as a domestic space, out of which people ‘produced the sense of their own private uniqueness, a sense of self which became a sense of citizenship only when it was abstracted and alienated in the non-domestic sphere of liberal capitalist culture’, Berlant counters that the intimate public sphere of the contemporary United States renders citizenship a condition of social membership produced by personal acts and values, especially acts originating in or directed toward the family sphere. No longer valuing personhood as something directed toward public life, Berlant points out that ‘contemporary nationalist ideology recognises a public good only in a particularly constricted notion of simultaneously lived private worlds’.

The success of the ‘conservative revolution’ of the last twenty years in America has, Berlant argues, resulted in large part from its production of this intimate public sphere—in which the concept of the political has been strategically narrowed in

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91 Lauren Berlant, ‘Introduction: The Intimate Public Sphere’: 5.
response to the demands of oppositional cultures and social movements. Against such opposition, according to Berlant, ‘neoliberalism pit[s] the complaints not of stereotyped peoples burdened by a national history but icons who have recently lost the protection of their national iconicity.’92 Berlant gives three examples: politicians who are said to have lost their ‘zone of privacy’; ordinary citizens who are said to feel that they have lost access to the American Dream; white and male and heterosexual people of all classes who feel they have lost the respect of their culture, and with it the freedom to feel unmarked. The question Berlant asks is this: why are the ‘most hopeful national pictures of “life” circulating in the public sphere not of adults in everyday life, in public, or in politics, but rather of the most vulnerable minor or virtual citizens—foetuses, children, real and imaginary immigrants?’93 The question presupposes that there is a privatised, intimate core at the very heart of national culture.

Throughout 1998 for instance, the ongoing and obsessive focus on President Clinton’s sex life offered a spectacular example of Berlant’s ‘intimate public sphere’ in which narratives about sex and citizenship came to obsess the national public discourse.94 Other critics offered alternative models for considering this putatively intimate public culture. For example, Loren Glass argued that the trend towards publicising the president’s ‘privates’ exemplified a relatively novel collective space, the ‘pornographic public sphere’.95 Despite arising out of another context, Mark Seltzer’s focus on the overlap of bodies and machines is relevant here, as it extrapolates from the notion of a technological society to a vision of something in which processes of registration, recording, and reproduction break down distinctions between individual and mass, private and public.96 Seltzer characterises American public culture as pathological, marked by what he terms ‘wound culture’. One of the

92 Lauren Berlant, ‘Introduction: The Intimate Public Sphere’: 5.
93 Lauren Berlant, ‘Introduction: The Intimate Public Sphere’: 5.
95 Loren Glass, ‘Publicising the Presidents Privates’.
preconditions of this contemporary wound culture, Seltzer argues, was the emergence of psychology as public culture. For Seltzer, the twentieth century was characterised by the phenomenon of the mass in person; psychology became public culture in the United States with a situation in which the social bordered on the psychiatric.\textsuperscript{97} In his later \textit{Serial Killers} (1998) Seltzer continued this analysis with a conception of machine culture as constituting a pathological public sphere, which sets up the serial killer as an icon of America's wound culture. Where Berlant and others query the iconicity of the most vulnerable minor or virtual citizens, Seltzer reads the public fascination with serial killing as inseparable from the general forms of seriality, collection and counting which are so conspicuous in consumer society at large. But like Berlant, Seltzer identifies forms of intimacy which traverse public culture. He advances an argument about 'stranger intimacy', which he explained was bound up not merely with the conditions of urban proximity in anonymity but also with its counterpart, the emergence of intimacy in public.\textsuperscript{98} The 1990s witnessed several traumatic phenomena in which the intimate breached the public. Articulated by the mass media as variously 'American nervousness', 'future shock', 'prozac nation' and 'trauma culture', these developments were indicative of the way in which this stranger intimacy and its maladies became a version of public culture, and part of Seltzer's pathological public sphere.\textsuperscript{99}

This discussion of an intimate public sphere might seem a universe away from intellectual publics and their various forms of address. But this snapshot of American public cultural icons of the 1990s is important for my analysis of public sphere theory because it was during this decade that material conditions in America provided a context for the turn to the personal in academic scholarship.\textsuperscript{100} Public culture forms a backdrop to certain forms of public intellectual performance and pedagogy which started to get media airplay during this period. The performance of Camille Paglia,

\textsuperscript{98} Mark Seltzer, \textit{Serial Killers}: 43.
\textsuperscript{99} Mark Seltzer, \textit{Serial Killers}: 107.
\textsuperscript{100} For more on this argument in regard to the contemporary unsettling of traditional binaries in the intellectual-affective dialectic, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, \textit{Empire}, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 2000.
for example, is partially explicable in this context: Paglia came to the fore when a host of celebrity, political and literary trends converged around the public/private crux. It can be argued that throughout the 1980s and 1990s, American public culture was distinguished by increasingly intimate admissions. With the advent of talkshow television, culminating in the example of Clinton’s presidential adultery, confession was re-characterised by the spectacularity of its putative intimacy. Whether this was a ‘new’ mass media articulation of intimacy or an emergence of a counterpublic is arguable. Loren Glass, Mark Seltzer and Lauren Berlant each offer some alternative theoretical perspectives on ‘intimacy’ and the sorts of publics engendered by confessional forms of address. They seem to be saying that there was something specific about 1990s public culture in the US which produced peculiar versions of intimacy in public, against and through which particular self-hoods, lives, and subjectivities were produced. Together with Warner, Calhoun and Fraser these approaches enact a wary reading of public culture that allows for my theorisation of the increasingly public culture of confession against the increasing intimacy of public life. Such publics and counterpublics owe something to a discussion of the performative nature of self-representation and identity politics, as well as to re-definitions of intimacy itself. Even as the divide between the intimate and the public seems ever more tenuous, it is the transgression of this divide that excites fascination within what Seltzer has called ‘wound culture’. The frisson of the talkshow, the memoir, or the news report of sexual harassment by a famous professor depends upon a ‘belief’ in the distinction between public and private, even as such events seem to undermine this divide. In effect, this is the tension I am interested in charting in the ensuing discussion of the divide between the academic on the one hand and the everyday or popular on the other. Central to my analysis is the understanding that the divide continues to operate in the conception and reception of contemporary pedagogies, even as those pedagogies attempt to cross over it.

The public/private crux has a bearing on the avenues available for intellectual address and the possibilities for alternative models for academic forms of expression during the 1990s. Within academia, genres of literary confession began to
characterise certain forms of intellectual address, with this period witnessing a surge in autobiographical literary criticism. This surge is historically intelligible in a number of competing intellectual contexts, including deconstruction, postmodernism and theories of performance, as well as the identity politics of 'situatedness' and 'voice'. These competing contexts pointed to a potentially impossible conflation of theory and practice. For instance, defenders of confessional criticism argued that the personal could not be excised from the critical, and so claimed an authority (and the more convincing proponents made this a temporary or strategic claim) in order to express the politics of silencing these latent voices. After all, wasn't all critical writing ultimately personal? In America, this 'confessional criticism' combined rhetorical modes, arguably at odds with each other up until this point, grafting together autobiography, fiction and theory. The identity politics invoked by the confessional critic (who I am treating at this point as an undifferentiated subjectivity) is a product of developments in reader-response criticism, autobiography, feminist literary criticism, postcolonial thinking and postmodern methodologies. A number of edited collections appeared in the early to mid-1990s: The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism (1993); Changing Subjects: The Making of Feminist Literary Criticism (1993); Eloquent Obsessions: Writing Cultural Criticism (1994); and Confessions of the Critics (1996). These anthologies marketed themselves as writing 'against the grain' and as 'boundary crossing'. Thus, they sought to draw attention to, and sometimes experiment with, the dictates of critical writing. Literary critics like Marianna Torgovnick, Cathy Davidson, Jane Tompkins and Alice Kaplan represented one expression of this phenomenon. Even when they were writing in different genres, these critics were fixated with issues such as the validity of subjective interpretation, the fashioning of critical selves, professorial isolation and embodiment, and the politics of academic performance. In recent years, there has been a trend towards single-author volumes, such as those by noted literary critics, Elaine Showalter,

101 On the 'situated' see David Simpson, Situatedness, Or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. See also Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', Feminist Studies, 14, 1988: 575-99. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory about voice became one of the metaphors that best accommodate the conflicting desires of critics who, as Dorothy Hale expresses it, 'want to have their cultural subject and de-essentialise it, too'. See Dorothy Hale, 'Bakhtin in African American Literary Theory', ELH, 61, 1994: 445-471.
Marjorie Garber and Jane Gallop. In their different ways, each of these authors attempted to tackle the subject of teaching in the humanities, as well as changes and trends in literary criticism. 'Personal criticism', 'intimate critique', and 'ficto-criticism' became subtle delineations and subgenres of an emerging field, which sought, in Alice Kaplan's words, to 'communicate outside the ordinary codes of academic language, and to write with feeling'. This seemed a fair enough proposition, especially when autobiographical criticism might conceivably translate successfully to popular audiences. For a whole set of complex reasons the academy seemed to need this broader appeal. Whether it was personal, intimate, or confessional, what each conceptualisation shared was a propensity towards critical self-commentary, self-fashioning, and, at its best, critical self-referentiality.

Before looking at a case study where the literary critic Marjorie Garber articulates some of the dilemmas involved in reaching beyond the academy or 'writing with feeling', I want to revisit Michael Warner's theories of intellectual address and Nancy Fraser's conception of counterpublics in order to further contextualise Garber's work. The contemporary Humanities academy addresses wider publics outside the academy for a number of reasons. These might include heeding the call for the popularising of academic matter, the broadening of a constituency, or becoming 'political'. The avenues of public address traditionally start with the university presses and journals, but, as Michael Warner has observed, these are 'half professional and half public' compromises. Their products are widely available to any stranger who can buy or borrow copies, and in that sense they address publics, but they also 'take care to maintain a close fit between their circulatory ambit and the private realm of the professions'. The private circulation of academic discourse 'could be all to the good in the routine functioning of a discipline', but, as Warner goes on to point out, when disciplines go into decline or into crisis, or when members

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104 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 149.
105 Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics: 149.
for their own reasons seek to use the academic platform to address a different public, the existing routes of circulation prove unsatisfactory. Warner's comments here highlight some of the conditions for public intellectual address, and more particularly for my purposes, the phenomenon of academics stepping beyond the academy to embrace popular modes of criticism and expression. Disciplinary developments and a range of economic and other crises in Literature departments (as I will detail in the next section) structure the avenues for academic participation in public.

While Warner speaks to the conditions which structure the avenues available for thought and writing in the United States, Nancy Fraser tackles the raft of alternative publics which have been created through a combination of material factors, as well as rhetorical devices. Fraser has argued that members of subordinated social groups, 'women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians — have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics'. Fraser has termed these 'subaltern counterpublics', a phrase signalling 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs'. The counterpublic Fraser considers the most 'striking example' in the late twentieth century United States is a 'feminist subaltern counterpublic' with its range of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centres, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places. It is in this public sphere, Fraser argues, that feminists have invented new terms for describing social reality (such as 'sexism' and 'sexual harassment') in order to arm themselves with a language in which to 'recast our needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of our disadvantage in official public spaces'. Both Warner and Fraser provide a

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107 Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere': 123.
108 Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere': 123.
109 Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere': 123.
useful lead-in to the following case study, which charts the emergence of literary critical reading modalities in the public arena.

**Case Study: Reading in Public**

The feminist literary critic and author of *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992) and *Symptoms of Culture* (1998), Marjorie Garber published a critical memoir *Academic Instincts* in 2001. This memoir can be read at one level as an example of the personal turn in academic criticism, professing to be the meeting an articulation of the meeting point of the academic and the instinctual. Commenting on a series of public debates around the subject of reading, and citing both Harold Bloom’s *How to Read and Why?* (2000) and Oprah Winfrey’s televised Book Club, Garber’s *Academic Instincts* also seeks to develop certain reading protocols in public. Taking up the subject of love, Garber makes the claim that for her literary criticism was a ‘lifelong partner’.10 While Garber’s role as a literary critic is a professional vocation, she also exhibits all the enthusiasm and ardour of an amateur, and it is across the professional/amateur divide that she plots her narrative. Garber makes the claims that hers is not a history or a critical analysis of pedagogy, but rather an intervention and a credo, which she insists is understood best as a love letter:

> [Since] in the pages below I will make some observations about the evocation of ‘love’ in the teaching of the humanities, it would be fair to call this a love letter. Sometimes affectionate, always—I hope—passionate and addressed to a lifelong partner and companion, the profession of literary study (*Academic Instincts*, p.xi).

Even though the essay and memoir genres characterise *Academic Instincts*, the spectre of the love letter is never far away. The love letter is a correspondence between

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intimates whose private world is built around their opposition to the outside world. Barthes has considered the rhetorical figure of the love letter as having a special dialectic, 'both blank (encoded) and expressive (charged with longing to signify desire)'.\footnote{Roland Barthes, A Lover's Discourse: Fragments, Penguin, 1990: 157.} By nominating this as her preferred form of address, Garber invokes a vast sentimental discourse of codes and signals. The reader is therefore positioned as vicariously overhearing or eavesdropping, acts which defy the conventions of intellectual propriety. While Garber's rendition is not epistolary in form, the above admission is declarative, and the rhetoric of the love-letter infuses her critical discourse. Confessed and openly declared, Garber's love for literary criticism is something akin to what Derrida imagines in The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond, when he opens up the intimate genre of the love letter more explicitly to the public gaze with an evocation of the postcard as 'an open letter in which the secret appears, but indecipherably'.\footnote{Jacques Derrida, The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987: back cover.}

Garber's somewhat guarded self-confession is ripe for my analysis of the personal turn in criticism and its desire for alternative critical modalities; and also for a reading of the way in which feminist academics in particular have sought to articulate their experience of academia as a negotiation of their personal and professional lives. Garber literally chooses a binary model—amateur/professional—but she attempts to fuse the two to give some account of her own experience. Beyond her revelations, Garber goes on to consider the twin phenomena of Harold Bloom's bestselling critical publication on Shakespeare\footnote{See Harold Bloom, Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human, New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.} and Oprah Winfrey's television Book Club as drawing public attention to a key topic that is relevant to both the professional amateur and the amateur professional: the passion that she locates as central to the field of literary criticism. Oprah, coded in this taxonomy as 'amateur professional', is an advocate of love who, through her Book Club, has reached into the world of expertise centred in the humanities. Bloom, on the other hand, is a
'professional amateur' whose love for literary criticism is given authority by his prolific publishing history within the academy (Academic Instincts, p. 47).

However, despite Garber's claim that Bloom and Winfrey share proximity through their fusion of professional and amateur sensibilities, they are actually very much at odds. Hopes of bringing the academic (Bloom) and the popular (Oprah) together thus prove slight. Whereas Oprah's Book Club develops a reading protocol of self and social improvement (which I will examine in more detail in Chapter Three), Bloom argues that the function of reading is the 'alleviation of loneliness'. In How to Read and Why (2000), published two years after his Shakespeare title, Bloom argues that the pleasures of reading are 'selfish rather than social'. Explaining that he turns to reading as a solitary praxis, rather than as an educational enterprise, Bloom gives a number of reasons as to why and how to read. Fusing Bacon, Johnson and Emerson, Bloom's formula for how to read involves finding 'what comes near to you that can be put to the use of weighing and considering, and that addresses you as though you share the one nature, free of time's tyranny'. Henry Giroux is one of many who have taken Bloom to task for wanting to separate reading as an act of pleasure from reading as a form of self-production that connects the reader to a wider public conversation and involvement in public life. Giroux counters Bloom's model, which argues that the mind should be kept at home until its ignorance has been purged, instead making a case for the social function of reading, insisting that you can improve your neighbourhood by what or how you read. On Giroux's reading, Bloom has depoliticised pedagogy by defining it solely as a form of high-minded diversion, thereby eliminating it as a practice for critical engagement and social transformation.

Garber therefore finds it difficult to resolve the tensions between the amateur and the professional, or indeed of other binaries, such as the academic and the instinctual,
despite her efforts to bridge these by creating a hyphenated category. *Academic Instincts* attempts its own version of 'how to read and why', in which amateur (popular) and professional (academic) reading practices come together. Garber's model of academic practice may want to borrow from both Harold Bloom and Oprah Winfrey, yet these proponents have opposing expectations of reading, a tug-of-war which results in some considerable tension in Garber's own reading protocol. The question of how these models can effectively come together will animate the next section where I take up the subject of literary pedagogy in more detail.

**III. Teaching Cultures**

In 1982 the journal *Yale French Studies* devoted an issue to the subject of literary pedagogy, and what its contributors termed the 'pedagogical imperative'. In doing so they made insightful observations about the way 'we' teach texts as well as the way texts teach 'us'. The collected articles in this volume offer axioms and precepts from which I draw for a schematic view of literary pedagogy from the early 1980s to the 1990s, during which time a confluence of autobiography, cultural studies and pedagogy signalled changes in the academy, and the way in which the academy negotiated its relation to the everyday, the popular and the public. Barbara Johnson, the editor of the collection, made a case for 'negative ignorance', a concept that underpinned other articles in the volume. In a reading of Moliere and Plato, the question of education became for Johnson

the question not of how to transmit but how to suspend knowledge. That question can be understood in both a positive and a negative sense. In a negative sense, not knowing results from repression, whether conscious or unconscious. Such negative ignorance may be the necessary by-product—or even the precondition—of any education whatsoever. But positive ignorance, the pursuit of what it is forever in the act of escaping, the inhabiting of that space where knowledge becomes the obstacle to knowing—that is the pedagogical imperative we can neither fulfil nor disobey.119

Johnson and her co-contributors clearly wrote out of an academy in the flush of Deconstruction; many of the contributions to the journal performed variations on this theme, such as 'The Resistance to Theory', or 'Deconstruction and Radical Teaching'. Yet there were clear modernist and structuralist antecedents to this work too. Earlier literary critics like F.R.Leavis or Lionel Trilling previously asked their own versions of these questions: it is not easy to tell whether the structural shift or crisis in literary criticism begat the critic, or vice versa. Moreover, by the early 1980s, Bakhtinian dialogics had become popular in American academic circles. The use of Bakhtin's theories about novelistic discourse in the context of the Yale French Studies collection opened up the discussion of institution-bound literary pedagogy to questions of culture prior to the disciplinary shape-shifting of the later 1980s and early 1990s, a period which produced theories about hybridity, cultural studies and queer studies.120

Lines of enquiry were therefore in the process of demarcation in this seminal Yale French Studies issue. Within the field of literary pedagogy (as distinguishable from education research and curriculum studies), certain sub-genre constraints were already being observed. In addition to deconstruction-influenced 'negative ignorance', there was an early appearance by Jane Gallop, who would go on to focus on a particular divergence of literary pedagogy that culminated in her 1997 publication Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment.121 In Yale French Studies Jane Gallop made a case for pedagogical erotics.122 From this perspective, she viewed pedagogy as structured by the erotic tension evident in the classic student/teacher relationship, a relationship she understands as an association through desire. The inability to


122 Gallop also has a troubling, erotised fixation with other literary critics: 'I realise that the sets of feelings that I used to have about French men I now have about African American women. Those are the people I feel inadequate in relation to and try to please in my writing. It strikes me that this is not just idiosyncratic'. Jane Gallop quoted in Elizabeth Abel, 'Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation', Critical Inquiry, 19, 3, 1993: 475.
encourage individuality and refusal to view the student/other as anything but a projection of the teacher's desires are commonly ascribed pedagogical traits, but in Gallop's readings this desire could also work the other way, thus opening up the student's desire to a complex area of inquiry. Another contribution to the volume, Shoshana Felman's 'Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable', was a precursor to another foundational line in pedagogical thinking: psychoanalytic readings of the teacher/student relationship. In her later work on 'The Vicissitudes of Teaching' (1995), Felman would argue that pedagogy was animated by trauma.\textsuperscript{123}

So far what the *Yale French Studies* collection represents is the way in which literary pedagogy was being opened up to scrutiny. Each piece builds on an argument about the inconsistencies and complexities of literary pedagogy. Yet it is striking to note that even in this early volume on the pedagogical imperative, the lapse to the 'personal' seemed the only alternative to theoretical analysis. 'Straight' literary criticism sat somewhat uneasily with the rhetoric of self-reflection, partly because the subject matter was introspective, with critics talking about criticism and teachers talking about education. Each critic in the volume is in turn implicated in the discussion so that reading itself becomes an act of pedagogy. Even the mandate 'to read in order to deconstruct' requires learned methodologies, modes of extrapolation, exposition, argument, and examination. As Gallop reflected, the examination 'leads out' or 'drives out' what was cloistered within.\textsuperscript{124} Moreover, this can often take unexpected twists. While the Rousseauian educator is a prudent teacher who proceeds slowly and cautiously, never venturing out into the world of the unknown, the newly envisaged literary pedagogue should be attentive to these traps.\textsuperscript{125} Another contributor to the issue, Neil Hertz, questioned pedagogical methodologies that relied on the relation of teacher to student as a relationship of


\textsuperscript{125} Joan De Jean, 'La Nouvelle Heloïse, or the Case for Pedagogical Deviation', *Yale French Studies*, 63, 1982: 98-116.
descent or lineage, which would only serve to 'reinforce and sustain the fiction of the perfect play between the mind of the poet and his ideal reader'. Hertz argued that the two figures—that of lineage and that of the closed circuit—depend for their intelligibility on a reduction of what is plural to an imagined interplay of paired elements: of poet and tradition, poet and reader, teacher and student. Pedagogy thus becomes a form of redaction.

In his contribution to the debate, Jean-Francois Lyotard related a jaded pedagogy, at once a personal and impersonal experience of the profession of teaching literature. In a self-conscious confessional style, he reflected on teacher-centred models of learning:

When one was younger, one might have wanted to please, or help, or lead by argument or revelation. Now it's all over. You no longer know exactly what's wanted. How can you make others understand what you haven't really understood? 'So you sit down at your desk, and nothing has ever assured you that, by midnight, you will have understood. What if you didn't understand? Or what if it were to take longer than anticipated? What if you were extremely tired? Or what if you entertained the idea that, after all, the antistrophe of Protagoras or another, who gives a damn? Or else, what if you got your hands on a good Italian or American article supplying the interpretation you had imagined yourself giving? In this last case, you're happy, you'll be able to do your course with this article. But at the same time, you're annoyed: there's something you have received and transmitted without transformation, without being transformed by it.

Lyotard's is a bleak view of the profession, of the teacher who has been surpassed by new ideas and methodologies. He identifies a number of pedagogic impulses—the desire to please, help, lead out—but these are thwarted by a general malaise, so that the teacher's methodology is hastily patched together, having more in common in the end with plagiarism, subterfuge, and repetition. Lyotard draws attention to the flawed pedagogue who displays all the hallmarks and clichés of an ill-prepared student—the late night sessions, the repetition of knowledge rather than its

exemplification, the banal, everyday reasons for lacklustre performance. Lyotard, like Hertz before him, invokes a model of transmission commonly used in linguistic and education parlance to signify the flow of information (of 'meaning' and 'intention') in the teacher/student contract. However, as Joan de Jean points out in her article on 'pedagogical deviation',

no teacher can predict the moment when a hand shoots up, signalling a question he or she has never before considered, and a question that introduces an entirely new perspective on the material under consideration. It cuts short what must be every teacher and critic's dream: to find a reading so perfect that no deviation is necessary or possible, a reading that would not be already a deviation.129

Paul De Man also refuses the possibility of a perfect and responsive reading, when he contends that 'no grammatical decoding, however refined, could claim to reach the determining figural dimensions of a text'.130 De Jean concludes that, perhaps because all teachers are necessarily 'masters of deviation', they dread the supplementary swerve that makes a teacher of the student.131 Whether De Jean's Rousseauian educator, Galtop's Sadian pedagogue, or Lyotard's plagiarist these teaching models dread the role shift that creates an authority of the student and its consequence, namely the overturning of the teacher's authority.

The Yale French Studies volume is a forerunner to the literary-critical preoccupations of the 1990s. However, the 1982 critics read pedagogy via a strictly literary lens within the framework of conventional notions of literary criticism influenced as they are by deconstruction. The Yale French Studies contributors ask and answer questions that deal with the assumption of academic and institutionalised reading practices. Their discussion about pedagogy might well require some thinking outside the text and, as noted, some personal observations, but these do not constitute sustained autobiographical interventions. In the 1990s these questions would continue to dog literary pedagogy, but they were cast aside in the context of more pressing concerns

129 Joan De Jean, 'La Nouvelle Héloïse, or the Case for Pedagogical Deviation': 116.
131 Joan De Jean, 'La Nouvelle Héloïse, or the Case for Pedagogical Deviation': 116.
about the future of literary criticism as a discipline. This last issue expanded in the 1990s when other questions about the instrumentality of literature were posed: what is literature for, and what use is literature? These were obviously not completely new questions, but they were being asked in a very different context.

Contemporaneous to the emerging field of autobiographical criticism, as addressed in the preceding section, were debates about perceived crises in the academy. These crises included the state of American higher education and the sorts of pedagogical models it employed, a debate which was later to be articulated as the ‘Culture Wars’. Other crises coming to the fore during this period included the privileges enjoyed by the Ivy League colleges, stresses of campus life, implications of the academic star system, internecine jostling within the Modern Language Association (MLA), as well as sexual harassment cases brought against leading academics. Increasingly, over the past decade, these debates have spilled over into the mainstream media. It seems that the media is a remarkably powerful conduit for debates about gender, race and celebrity within the academy and elsewhere.

What served to unite many of these debates were questions about curriculum and canon formation as well as the recognition that the content of literary education was far from arbitrary. While John Guillory follows Bourdieu to argue persuasively that the canon is ‘not so much the name for a historically stable collection of texts as a sign of a particular crisis in the history of literary criticism within the university’, it seems that in the 1990s it was not ‘only within the university that the critique of the

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canon had currency, in the form of ongoing debate about the syllabus'. In America, canonicity and curriculum formation were important issues of public interest because they were questions intricately linked to race politics. The increasing public profile of authors like Toni Morrison offered a very good example of the way in which discussions of canonicity were opened up to popular discussion.

Within academe, yet still very much linked to public debates on political and social issues, controversy in the shape of the ‘culture wars’ had marked humanities discourses from the late 1960s through the 1990s. The debate in Yale French Studies in 1982, itself stemming from a panoply of social issues and built on the new theoretical bases of deconstructionist philosophies, had by the 1990s manifested in some institutions as struggles over the nature and content of humanities curricula. At this time, departments disputed whether humanities education and curricula ought to remain rooted in a body of shared texts, to be reinterpreted over time or whether cultural content needed to be extended beyond traditional texts. During the later 1980s the role of English literature was destabilised and critical attention started to tilt towards cultural studies. Throughout the 1990s, critics attempted to delimit the scope of this ‘new’ discipline, questioning how cultural studies might be viewed as a discipline when it trod the line between the social sciences and interpretive disciplines but lacked a distinctive methodology of its own.

A 1997 special issue of the journal *PMLA* on the subject of ‘teaching literature in the academy today’ provided a venue in which to discuss some of these increasingly urgent issues. What *PMLA* and a number of other comparable discussions were responding to was the way in which English literature departments were being asked

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136 Some of the most progressive thinking on cultural studies has come out of Australia and the United Kingdom. British cultural studies can be traced through the work of Raymond Williams and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. In Australia, practitioners such as John Frow and Meaghan Morris have made important contributions.

to perform multiple tasks seemingly separate from the straight teaching of literature. In *PMLA* Domna Stanton listed such extra-literary topics as 'language, teaching of writing, and what used to be called civilisation, now called historical studies'. The contributors to the issue therefore started by trying to clarify the role of literary criticism, and what constituted the discipline of English in the 1990s. In a short time they realised that the first question they had to answer was what in fact constitutes literature itself. The discipline conventionally delimited as 'English' had undergone several methodological revolutions, they agreed, so much so that even its object of study could not be taken for granted. Joseph Skerrett asked: 'Why is it that we don't have university departments that recognize everything is literature, everything is text? Why hasn't that model become dominant?'

Of course, inextricably linked to such a discussion of disciplinary changes and curricular shifts was the question of teaching methodology. While there was some consensus on what the teaching of literature involved, there was also dissent. Given that the contributors to the discussion were professionals and academics from community colleges and research universities, they each brought insights from their very different experiences. What they tended to agree on was that 'teaching literature involves teaching a set of reading skills'. Frank Madden argued that the 'better-informed teachers today try to be as student-centred as possible', but worried that 'many of our students have been talked at for a long time and went to sleep years ago', so that quite some effort was needed to 'wake them up and get them involved again'. Others also made the point that the room for pedagogical experimentation was reasonably limited, given the 'fairly conservative only moderately changed system' that existed in the Humanities. But there were signs of change nevertheless. Wahneema Lubiano observed that students were not a unified subject

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138 Companion volumes include a special edition of *College Literature* which hosted a symposium 'The Subject of Pedagogical Politics/The Politics of Publication' in two parts (*College Literature*, 21, 2-3, 1994), and *College English*'s symposium 'English 1999—Brave New University' (*College English*, 61, 6, 1999).


142 Frank Madden in Joseph Aimone et al, 'Teaching Literature in the Academy Today': 103.

that she sought to ‘shape and mold’. Yet she also knew that ‘students reproduce the world’ and in her experience found students ‘more willing to engage if I am willing to engage’.\textsuperscript{144} Joseph Aimone, a graduate student and teacher of composition classes, talked about his personal challenges to traditional pedagogical models:

I use texts that I’ve never taught before, and I start with the students’ interpretations instead of mine. I have students present their papers before we discuss the texts. In this approach, the students evolve indigenous standards and canons of expectations for papers, and they all get to know each other.\textsuperscript{145}

Tellingly, Aimone went on to observe that one of the major deficiencies of graduate education had been that ‘we don’t get to study literature in a way that would allow us to think of ourselves as experts’.\textsuperscript{146} Donna Stanton’s contribution comes closest to explaining why:

Over and beyond literature, it seems to me that we need to get students to think critically about how an ad on television becomes “naturalized” by constant repetition. That may be more important than reading a novel.\textsuperscript{147}

She wonders whether one of the teacher’s primary tasks is not ‘precisely to make sure that the thing we’re supposed to be teaching in literature is not confined to Flaubert, that it “contaminates” every other aspect of culture, including all aspects of popular culture?’.\textsuperscript{148} However, other contributors spoke of the dichotomising of literature and cultural studies, which in Mary Louise Pratt’s opinion was unproductive and also obscured the fact that the study of literature has ‘undergone multiple methodological revolutions since 1970, which have been very enriching’.\textsuperscript{149} The broadening of methodologies and perspectives into which the PMLA debate taps

\textsuperscript{144} Wahneema Lubiano in Joseph Aimone et al, ‘Teaching Literature in the Academy Today’: 108.
\textsuperscript{147} Donna Stanton in Joseph Aimone et al, ‘Teaching Literature in the Academy Today’: 105.
\textsuperscript{149} Mary Louise Pratt in Joseph Aimone et al, ‘Teaching Literature in the Academy Today’: 106.
means that literary pedagogy has had to let go of what Pratt referred to as ‘coverage models’, a source of some crisis because

without coverage models, we don’t know how to talk about accountability anymore. We don’t even know how to define ourselves, since the canon was supposedly the shared corpus.\(^{150}\)

In the current climate I would argue that the question now resolves around how these pedagogical shifts and changes been have theorised in American academic culture and trends in literary criticism.

The following case study exemplifies some of the teaching crises and complexities within the academy enumerated above. I consider two essays by Jane Tompkins: the first an essay entitled ‘Pedagogy of the Distressed’\(^ {151}\) which attempts to move beyond Freirean analyses to advance a performance model of education, and the second, Tompkins’ honest account of her experimental pedagogy described in the essay ‘Let’s Get Lost’, in which she sought to use novels as ‘avenues into the world, rather than a retreat from it’.\(^ {152}\)

**Case study: Performance**

The material context of America in the late twentieth century seems to Jane Tompkins a whole other sphere to the material conditions Paulo Freire was writing out of and addressing in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971). To this end, Tompkins argues that the banking model of education critiqued in Freirean analyses no longer exists. In its absence Tompkins makes a case for a different model which is ‘no less coercive, no less destructive of creativity and self-motivated learning’, what she calls the ‘performance model’.\(^ {153}\) In the essay ‘Pedagogy of the Distressed’, in which she speaks of her own experiences of teaching, Tompkins confesses ‘I had been putting


on a performance whose true goal was not to help the students learn but to perform before them in such a way that they would have a good opinion of me'.\textsuperscript{154} With links to conventional teaching models, this mode of teaching performance makes imposture a central aspect of analysis.

In important ways, Tompkins’ argument here is a precursor to Jane Gallop’s reading of pedagogy as a performance or an impersonation. Pierre Bourdieu’s work has also proven useful in accounting for the crucial role of the teacher/student relationship in pedagogical reproduction. In this view education involves not only the specific case of the student as reproduction of the teacher but, as Jane Gallop points out, the more general case of the student as ‘impersonation of an educated person’ who takes on and reproduces the style and tastes of class.\textsuperscript{155} Extended by later critics, and also known as ‘ironic pedagogy’, this model attempts to come to terms with the double bind created by the discrepancy between what teachers profess (feminist thinking) and how they are positioned (as authoritative and all-knowing); in other words, between the demands of critical pedagogy and the constraints of postmodern culture. In her articulation of the dilemmas of teaching after postmodernism, Pamela Caughie claims that ‘pedagogy is not a methodology but an event’, and that a political approach to teaching involves creating a ‘performative classroom’.\textsuperscript{156} Caughie’s answer is ‘passing’ which she describes as the ‘possibility of pedagogy in a cultural studies classroom’, by which she means to indicate that teaching is performative and cannot be prescribed, rather it happens in the dynamics between teacher and student.\textsuperscript{157} For Caughie, teaching performatively ought to be responsible and risky in dealing with the crisis that is part of teaching literature today.

Jane Tompkins’ essay ‘Let’s Get Lost’ appeared in an edited collection entitled Conessions of the Critics (1996). In the context of the criticism coming to the fore in the

\textsuperscript{154} Jane Tompkins, ‘Pedagogy of the Distressed’: 653.
\textsuperscript{157} Pamela Caughie, Passing and Pedagogy: 67, 13-14.
1990s ‘Let’s Get Lost’ is very much about Tompkins’ personal experience teaching an upper-level seminar on American literature called ‘American Lit Unbound’, in which Tompkins charts her attempts to contend with a performance model and shift towards a performativity in which both students and teachers alike might understand what one is and what one professes. The essay is written in a mix of stream-of-consciousness and confessional styles, which invokes an immediacy and urges textual attachment. It is stylistically a fictive piece, explicit in its avoidance of conventional criticism. Even though the work exposes Tompkins’ errant teaching strategies, such as her failure to meet student expectations, and her vulnerable assertions that she ‘love[d] the course so’ and wanted students to feel the same, Tompkins veers from a critical path. Criticism is the one mode of commentary Tompkins is intent on avoiding, and by criticism I am referring both to the modalities of certain forms of literary criticism and textual detachment, and to practical student evaluation (discussed later).

While Tompkins calls it the ‘best course I ever taught’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.268) the essay is riddled with her anxieties about its reception. When she embarked on her experimental teaching, Tompkins hoped she was ‘putting the performance mentality behind me by putting students at the centre of things’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.268). What she goes on to chart, however, is evidence that despite her best efforts at experimentation and keeping the performance model at bay ‘the students, the ones I’d been so proud of, so happy for, after we’d all done—the singing, playing, shouting, painting—on the last two days they tore the course apart’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p. 269).

The first book on Tompkins’ ‘American Lit Unbound’ syllabus was Melville’s Moby Dick. In the spirit of unboundedness and ‘getting lost’, Tompkins had her students make arrangements for the class to read the book by the sea, so that

Ocracoke (one of the barrier islands on the North Carolina coast) was to introduce us to the sea, or rather, since everyone had seen the ocean before, be a way of realising, physically, something important about Melville’s novel. A chance for Ishmaelian reverie, a combination of water and adventure. (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.270)
Instead of setting an interpretive agenda, Tompkins was happy to let the reading come naturally, so it is not surprising that a large part of the two-day excursion was spent with the students getting to know one another through the divulging of personal details and secrets. Tompkins wanted her students to ‘get lost’ and then ‘maybe to find themselves’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.276). Her goal for the course was to use the set novels as ‘avenues into the world, rather than a retreat from it’ and she fashions a pedagogy that rewards emotional and affective experiences, ‘the kinds that usually get left out’ of the classroom (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.270). She gives graphic details of the road trip the class undertook before arriving at Ocracoke, whereupon students were instructed to 'swim and sun, drink sodas, take walks [and also] to spend time alone' (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p. 271). At night they actually ‘carry out something that looks like a classroom activity’—by a fire on the beach as they take turns singing and playing the guitar, ‘then the assignment: to read or tell about an experience we’ve had with water’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p. 272). The sharing of stories is just what Tompkins is after, ‘somewhat formal, more or less embarrassed, always revealing’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.272). Following a brief account of the students reading Moby-Dick aloud and a final volleyball game, the narrative of the trip comes to an end, and Tompkins’ account turns its attention to the aftermath. On the return, Tompkins notes that the students were particularly energetic, ‘they carry the classes on their shoulders like athletes’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p. 273). Details of ensuing classes are sketchy and two aspects of the pedagogical experimentation now assume some importance. Firstly, Tompkins turns over the attribution of student grades to the students themselves and agrees that credit would be given for every kind of contribution from ‘cutting up vegetables for dinner at Erin’s’ to ‘calling motels’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, pp. 273-4). Secondly, it is agreed that the students take on the critical mantle of evaluating their teacher’s performance. Tompkins had been concerned that the methodologies she adopted were as flawed as the traditional teaching strategies she was seeking to dislodge. In her self-evaluation Tompkins has already asked the questions, ‘is this education?’ and ‘should I have told the students more? Held forth? Given them more to hold onto?’ (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p. 272). Perhaps unsurprisingly the
student evaluations returned a resounding 'yes' to all of these questions. Because the students never had an 'official line' to follow in interpreting *Moby-Dick*, their evaluations expressed something of the tension between the norms of the institution and what their teacher had been attempting. Tompkins had hoped that her 'love' for Melville's language in *Moby-Dick* would carry her teaching through:

I didn't need to prove to anybody that I could discourse about epistemology or make dutiful observations about structure or point of view. This time I would let myself savour and marvel at the unbelievable feats of verbal artistry that the novel contains. ('Let's Get Lost', p. 275)

Evidently the novel needed somewhat more explication than that. It could in fact have been the vehicle for Tompkins to articulate some of her pedagogical dilemmas, even a revisioning of the teacher/student relationship.

Interestingly, in the course of *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick uses the example of Melville's sailing ship, which she says works much like a Shakespearean theatre: 'on shipboard as on the boards, the space for those acts whose performative efficacy depended on their being defined as either private or public had to be delineated and categorised anew for each'.\(^{156}\) In other words, Sedgwick attends to the performative nature of subjectivity, or the way in which Melville's characters have to renegotiate continually their place on board ship, in the course of which a whole series of binaries that hinge on the public/private divide are also reformed. To extend this analysis still further for a moment, before returning to the Tompkins performance, it would be useful to consider here Sedgwick's evocation of the 'proscenium'. In a graduate seminar entitled 'Queer Performativity' Sedgwick uses this term to denote the relationship between public and private spheres.\(^{159}\) The proscenium has a specialised meaning in the theatre as the decorative arch or opening which acts as a

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\(^{156}\) Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*: 110


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threshold between performer and audience, therefore offering a usefully graphic expression for performance outside the theatre. Yoked by Sedgwick to the scene of literary enquiry, the proscenium suggests boundaries between genres: critical and creative writing, private and public address, individual and collaborative production, and literary and non-literary texts. A cascading series of binary oppositions in Sedgwick's work—the relation of heterosexual/homosexual to canonic/noncanonic, cognition/paranoia, direct/vicarious, health/illness, knowledge/ignorance, secrecy/disclosure, sincerity/sentimentality, subject/object—also relies on this invisible proscenium, but the difference between these oppositions can never be securely or intelligibly represented as a difference between two discrete states. I would argue that what Tompkins is in effect advertting to in her classroom is the way in which a certain kind of proscenium marks teaching performance, to the threshold between academic and personal rhetoric, narrative and addictive behaviours, performer and audience. Moreover, Tompkins' essay 'Let's Get Lost' also relies on the proscenium, especially if read in its simplest form as a façade or frame through which private lives are made public, a rhetorical strategy which underpins the genre of autobiography and Tompkins' use of the genre of confessional criticism.

When Tompkins' course 'American Lit Unbound' was in its closing stages she asked her students to reflect on her mode of teaching. In the process she explicitly drew their attention to 'issues of power, authority, fear of performing, learning for yourself versus learning for the teacher' ('Let's Get Lost', p.273). Invited to do so they somewhat inevitably 'turn on her', and she takes this criticism very personally. Tompkins had wanted them to think of her teaching as refreshingly arbitrary and group or student inspired, never dogmatic or restrictive. Yet she found herself essentially caught between teaching models. Even she acknowledged that at times there is a need to 'be right about something', no matter how reticent she was about

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160 See the definition offered by J.A Simpson and E.S.C Weiner (eds), *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989: in the theatre 'the space between the curtain or drop-scene and the orchestra; often including the curtain itself and the arch or framework which holds it'.

imposing those views on her students—'my own children' she calls them in a telling expression of this uneasy power play (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.273). Of course, Tompkins' teacherly authority is itself undermined by her admissions and the confessional style of her essay, yet she chooses to end the piece on an ironic and unsolicited reflection on the course from one of her students. This student writes to Tompkins some time after ‘American Lit Unbound’ had come to an end to confirm that he did in fact finally learn a great deal from the course, above all that he himself was ultimately 'responsible for our course' (‘Let’s Get Lost’, p.280).

In her attempt to fashion a performative pedagogy, the Tompkins case study expresses some of the difficulties involved in teaching literature—and hers was actually a traditional syllabus featuring Melville and Toni Morrison among others. What it brings to the fore is the range of different types of knowledges jostling for a place in the classroom. This recalls my earlier discussion of the ‘knowing’ graffiti student from the Introduction, now overlaid with Pamela Caughie’s sense of passing and performativity in the learning and teaching context. Tompkins was a particularly ‘knowing’ teacher; the trouble was that both teacher and student need to know roughly the same thing for such an ironised performative pedagogy to work successfully. Tompkins knows that hers is a performed authority and that a lot more is going on in her travelling classroom than the study of Moby-Dick, but it survives in the telling as more a pedagogy of self-disclosure.

**Conclusion**

In my overview of teaching cultures, I have attempted to come to terms with some of the changes in literary notions of pedagogy from 1982 through to the mid-1990s, when disciplinary incursions animated thinking about the teacher-student relationship to envisage more complex terms of reference. Over this time, other cultural forms and texts have become legitimate subjects of literary inquiry, including the subject of pedagogy itself.
This chapter has had a three-pronged theoretical approach, setting up a way to read the following chapters on Donna Haraway, Toni Morrison and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick via contemporary trends in academia. A central consideration has been avenues for and modes of academic address, which I started charting through the example of the public intellectual stepping beyond the bounds of the academy, pointing out the diverging examples and traditions of public intellectualism in America. Any discussion of public pedagogy and the phenomenon of academics reaching beyond the academy to address broader publics has to consider current thinking about the public sphere. In the case study of Camille Paglia I drew attention to her merging of certain traditional intellectual models with celebrity academic feminism and popular culture. While Paglia’s is a hyped-up performed intellectualism it is interesting as it illustrates both a response to trends in academia and to the shifting terrain of public culture in the United States. While I will in later chapters go on to explore especially the confessional mode of intellectual work that came to the fore in the 1990s, the Paglia case study compellingly illuminates this public/private breach, and is a striking, if limited example of autobiographic academia.

While Paglia publicly confessed ‘I’m in love with myself, it’s the romance of the century’, a host of other feminist academics also attempted to address the subject of desire, love, compassion—putatively private matters—in the classroom and beyond. In my second case study I looked at the example of Marjorie Garber’s Academic Instincts to frame a reading of other such titles which opened up the possibilities for literary critical writing. It is not, of course, simply feminist academics who have been attentive to these questions, but I have focused on such examples because they raise particularly salient issues to do with gender and performance in academia. For instance, the last section of this chapter on teaching cultures makes a case for the shifting thinking on academic pedagogy, a shift already considered in some detail in the Introduction to this thesis. The Yale French Studies special issue of 1982 signalled some changes in the theorising of pedagogy in the academic humanities. Barbara

162 Camille Paglia, Vamps and Tramps: ix.
Johnson's concept of 'negative ignorance', examples of jaded pedagogy, and Bakhtinian dialogics: these are all important precursors to developments in the 1990s, notably the culture wars, shifts in canonical thinking, and the study of popular culture opening up alternative teaching practices. Offering a very different and updated perspective to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Jane Tompkins' 'Pedagogy of the Distressed' was the case study I used to focus performativity in the classroom, and the often uneasy negotiation of public and private roles between both teacher and student.

This chapter returned to another of the questions raised in the Introduction: 'what is the study of literature for?' As the upcoming chapters will go on to examine, Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick each have a different answer to this question. The pedagogy that each develops is complex and difficult and unable in all cases to overcome some of the binaries between traditional and alternative thinking in and of the academy. The case studies that made up the later half of this chapter attempted to address such binaries by trialling alternative thinking and genres in and out of their classrooms. The point is that these case studies only got so far in their pursuit of innovative approaches to literary criticism. Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick are significant to the argument proposed by this thesis because they rather more successfully theorise and rehearse their own teaching practices and intellectual performances, thus illustrating the ways in which literary pedagogy has moved beyond the academy and into the public arena.
The complex ways in which the academic and popular have been brought into association in the work of feminist academics and public intellectuals, especially by those involved in efforts to re-imagine literary pedagogy, have already been outlined in Chapter One. This chapter will continue to focus on the binaries that structure academic life more generally, but will consider in detail those that have animated the work of Donna Haraway and her pedagogical attempts to build less ‘agonistic’ relations between them. Haraway claims that she writes specifically against a type of technoscientific writing which she describes as ‘overwhelmingly dependent on metaphors of agonism and combat’.

It seems clear that Haraway’s deployment of the term ‘agonism’, as well as her attempts to imagine alternative forms of relationality, recalls the discussion of paranoid critical practices within the academy set up in the Introduction to this thesis, as well as in Chapter One’s analysis of models of combative public intellectualism. The emergence of feminist science studies, in which Haraway has been a key player, has necessitated new ways of thinking about science and gender, to the point that commentators agree there is now a ‘multi-faceted conversation’ taking place which includes feminist scholars from the fields of philosophy, literature and history.

Although influenced by cross-disciplinary trends in the 1980s and 1990s, Haraway’s work is remarkable for its challenging of disciplinary boundaries in the sciences whose demarcations are

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1 See Haraway’s essay ‘The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies’, which says she was writing ‘specifically against aspects of Bruno Latour’s book, Science in Action’, arguing that ‘agonism has been so overemphasised within much technoscience’. See How Like a Leaf: An Interview with Thyrza Goodeve, New York; London: Routledge, 2000: 157. Clearly, Haraway’s work is about redressing the limitations of these metaphors, and not just acknowledging their pervasiveness in scientific discourses, but in intellectual work more generally.


arguably more trenchantly guarded than those in the humanities. Her work also owes much to a range of feminist and other oppositional praxes, as I will tease out in this chapter.

Haraway writes from the field of the history and philosophy of science, focusing in particular on the nexus between science and literature. A great many of her writings have explored the ways in which science can instruct literature and vice versa. Haraway's landmark essay 'A Cyborg Manifesto' is the most often cited, but more recently her book How Like A Leaf (2000) has examined the importance of literary metaphor in her work. As this chapter seeks to clarify, the dialogue that she constructs between the discourses of science and literature contributes an important attempt to reconfigure a peculiarly pedagogical dynamic between them. Haraway also opens up alternative methodologies which have implications for the teacher/student relationship. Haraway, therefore, is a crucial figure to my discussion of public pedagogies not only because she is a public intellectual whose theories of technoscience have enjoyed considerable popular success, but also because her work on such areas as genetic transference blends sentimentalised and scientific discourses. The frisson between the dualisms to which Haraway draws attention — between art and nature, or humanity and machine — turns out to be central to her own interpretive methodology.

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4 I am thinking in particular about her writing about cyborgs, which ties into a popular discourse about human-machine hybrids. Pre-dating the cyborg work, Haraway has articulated her desire to write to multiple audiences: 'I saw monkeys and apes as extremely interesting figures to carry a lot of these discussions [about race politics in the United States, and the 'story-ladens' of science], so I could write about them in a way that would hopefully compel a lot of audiences to want to read it.' See Kum-Kum Bhavnani, 'Shifting the Subject': 23.
The selection of Haraway as an exemplification of pedagogical cross-over for this thesis hinges on a number of factors. Firstly, Haraway’s work in the field of the history and philosophy of science has influenced a range of academic and popular thinking. Haraway references contemporary science fiction writers in her own theoretical work, and in turn influences these writers as they explore the interfaces between human/machine/animal, and as they articulate a politics of the ‘other’, whether that be defined in terms of race, gender, species, or technology. One of the writers with whom Haraway forms a reciprocal arrangement, Octavia Butler, will be examined at the end of this chapter. The popular genre of science fiction is central to an understanding of Haraway’s pedagogy; in fact, Haraway calls science fiction writers like Octavia Butler ‘theorists for cyborgs’.8

Secondly, Haraway argues that academics must become more ‘activist’.9 By this she means academics need to establish networks across a range of disciplines and outside the university so that they can extend the possibilities of their academic work. Without such efforts, Haraway claims, cultural studies runs the risk of becoming ‘domesticated’, of turning into just another academic discipline.10 The appeal of cultural studies to a theorist like Haraway is that it is rooted in social science methodologies, as well as being attentive to new subjectivities. The roots of cultural studies that are ‘energizing’ are not only about ‘remaking worlds’, according to Haraway, but they are ‘about paying attention to certain kinds of agencies that didn’t get any description before’.11 While Haraway is not writing out of the field of literary studies, her insights and methodologies have implications for literary pedagogy, especially when she positions her work within the context of a cultural studies project.

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10 Gary A. Olsen in ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
11 Haraway quoted in Gary A. Olson, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
The third factor that makes Haraway exemplary is her studied avoidance of the inherited dualisms that run deep in Western cultures. Haraway’s cyborgs, for example, disrupt many binary oppositions and rigid categorisations of Enlightenment thought.\textsuperscript{12} Actually, all her writing, as she has recently observed, is committed to ‘swerving and tripping over these bipartite, dualistic traps’, but not in an effort to ‘reverse them or resolve them into supposedly larger wholes’.\textsuperscript{13} Instead, Haraway’s theoretical work is conceived as a site of irony, which she defines as: ‘about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true’.\textsuperscript{14} It is clear that language, discourse, narrative and metaphor are paramount to Haraway’s work. Her favoured trope these days, she notes in her most recent publication, is ‘metaplasm’, by which she means remodelling or remolding.\textsuperscript{15} This chapter will go on to investigate some of the ways in which the animating principle of ‘remodelling’ has informed Haraway’s pedagogic project. I will also look at a number of other such metaphors, particularly those that circle around kinship relations, as Haraway has indicated that she wants her writing to be read as an ‘orthopedic practice for learning how to remold kin links and to help make a kinder and unfamiliar world’.\textsuperscript{16} In what I will go on to describe as a reciprocal or ‘dialogic’ pedagogy, I discuss the ways in which Haraway’s work seeks new forms of relationality between discourses and disciplines, most notably between academic and popular cultures, a topic of ongoing pedagogical import. The chapter that follows is divided into three sections each of which takes up an aspect of Haraway’s pedagogy. The first section deals with Haraway’s theories about hybridised figures like the cyborg and her own self-fashioning as a kind of ‘cyborg teacher’. The second section features an actual dialogic exchange between Haraway and her former student Thyrrza Nichols Goodeve, which rehearses these theories and pedagogies in

\textsuperscript{12} These include ‘self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilised/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man’, Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’: 177.


\textsuperscript{14} Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’: 149.


an interview setting whilst shedding light on Haraway’s claim that science is
instructive for literature. Finally, I consider the sorts of dialogic relations that
Haraway sets up between science and literature via her readings of feminist science
fiction.

Donna Haraway began her teaching career in 1970 in a General Science department
at the University of Hawaii, a position which brought her in touch with a ‘polyethnic
world infinitely tied to indigenous land and cultural struggles, to waves of labor
history through the Pacific, and the history of the military in the Pacific’. Thus she
was exposed to what she has called a ‘bizarre introduction to the historical
positioning of endeavours like biology’.17 What this early teaching experience began
to expose was the racial, geographic, and historical positioning that is inscribed in
scientific endeavours. Even from an early standpoint in her career, Haraway thus
began to conceptualise not only the discourse of science, but her own implications
and intersections within this discourse. Such thinking served as the foundation of her
important essay ‘Situated Knowledges’ (1988) in which she elaborated an argument
about the tension between theory and practice, as well as the necessity to ‘engage
politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality
and not universality is the condition for being heard to make rational knowledge
claims’.18 It was while teaching in the History of Science department at Johns
Hopkins University in 1974 that Haraway attributed her shift to becoming a
‘historian of science’.19 It was also at Johns Hopkins that she began the work that was
later to be published in one of her landmark texts, Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and
Nature in the World of Modern Science (1989). Haraway had begun to think of primates
as ‘figures’, as ‘these germinal entities into which many people’s imaginations are
condensed’.20 She argued that primates inhabit the boundary space between what
counts as nature and culture, a space onto which a number of racial discourses have

17 Kum-Kum Bhavnani, ‘Shifting the Subject’: 20.
19 Kum-Kum Bhavnani, ‘Shifting the Subject’: 22.
20 Kum-Kum Bhavnani, ‘Shifting the Subject: 22
been projected. Haraway was intrigued by the way in which primates were represented in the United States from the 1960s in popular cultures, movies, technical field studies, social psychology, and evolutionary biology. Existing at the boundaries of many constituencies, these creatures ‘figured and carried the meanings of many kinds of stories in their bodies’.\(^{21}\) Haraway went on to write another landmark text in which she elaborated her theories of politics and feminism in the context of technoscience, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), after she moved to her current teaching position on the History of Consciousness and Women’s Studies programs at the University of California in Santa Cruz in 1980.

Haraway’s theoretical work is characterised by an attention to networks, suggesting the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries not only in the personal body but in the body politic. Her work has also notably been characterised by a receptiveness to popular culture. In fact, the cyborg was a place for Haraway to ‘excavate and examine popular culture’,\(^{22}\) including science fiction, and in particular feminist science fiction, as I will go on to explore. Interestingly, pedagogical themes have infused her earliest work, although relatively little of the scholarship on Haraway has paid attention to this important component.\(^{23}\) I would argue that although Haraway may not have written extensive or directly pedagogical tracts, many of her writings and autobiographic reflections include references to her own teaching practice. Furthermore, there is a sense in which her theories about tripping binaries, situating knowledge and permeating boundaries might be explored from a pedagogical angle. In fact, it might well be argued that the nature of the work in which Haraway is engaged necessitates questioning the pedagogical implications. Indeed, any work endeavouring to interrogate received knowledge and

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\(^{21}\) Kum-Kum Bhavnani, ‘Shifting the Subject’: 22.


\(^{23}\) A lot of the scholarship on Haraway focuses on the theoretical and interdisciplinary suggestiveness of her work, but beyond a number of interviews in which Haraway has opened up about her teaching practice, there has been limited critical discussion of Haraway’s pedagogy. For a brief comment on this topic, see Neil Gough, ‘RhizomANTically Becoming-Cyborg: Performing Posthuman Pedagogies’, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36, 3, 2004: 253-265. See also T. Angus, I. Cook and J. Evans, ‘A Manifesto for Cyborg Pedagogy?’, *International Research in Geographical and Environment Education*, 10, 2, 2001: 195-201.
conventionally taught understandings about science and literature would raise such questions.

In the course of this chapter I will range over a number of Haraway’s texts and teaching sites because each forms part of the composite public pedagogy which this thesis attributes to her. Haraway’s efforts to experiment with the modalities of critical writing, as well as her efforts to move beyond dualistic thinking and the sorts of (literary) analyses she undertakes to extrapolate and exemplify her theoretical work: all these form part of a larger pedagogical model. Haraway makes personal autobiographical reflections about her own teaching practice, recalling my earlier examination of the academic propensity towards reflexiveness of this kind. Although this has not previously been the focus of critical attention, Haraway also explicitly theorises about teaching and learning within the larger body of her works. Moreover, her incursions into biological and scientific discourses, her avowed feminist leanings, as well as her overtures to literary criticism: all these can be understood as implicitly pedagogical. Haraway’s cyborg theory, for instance, has potential for imagining alternative relations in academia and beyond, as well as for renewed pedagogical thinking. From another angle it is also possible to trace the ways in which Haraway’s work has been taken up by derivative pedagogies, although these do not fall within the scope of this thesis. It is evident that the figure of the ‘feminist-activist-instructor’ realises a number of Haraway’s theories. Many

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24 Haraway, directing students to analyse her own texts, points out that even if readings do not flow naturally from the text, ‘they must be engaged and produced’. She goes on to stress that ‘most “straight-forward” readings of any text are also situated arguments about fields of meanings and fields of power’. I would argue that this potentially opens up a reading of her texts from a pedagogical angle. In Donna Haraway, ‘Reading Buchi Emecheta: Contests for Women’s Experience in Women’s Studies’, available from <http://humwww.usc.edu/CultStudies/PUBS/Inscriptions/vol_34/DonnaHaraway.html> [accessed 12 June 2005].

of these theories have sought to enact the liberatory potential of feminist networking, such as the border-crossing pedagogical experiences made available through rapidly expanding information technology.

In various ways, it is clear that Haraway's work evidences a conception of pedagogy moving beyond the academy. At the heart of this thesis is a concern with the phenomenon of academics crossing over into the public sphere, developing a version of pedagogy at the borderlands between academia and some version of the genres of public culture. In the case of Haraway this is most evident in her exchange with science fiction. While in the following chapter I examine the overt pedagogical performance of Toni Morrison on Oprah Winfrey's televised book club, Haraway's engagement with her public is less explicit but equally significant. The interactions between academic and popular cultures have contributed to the development of Haraway's alternative pedagogical model, and more specifically to her understanding that science is 'instructive' for literature (and vice versa). While this approach can be found to inform her theoretical work, it also has a more practical pedagogical application. For example, in Modest Witness (1997) Haraway analyses a conventional high school textbook. Insisting on the need to consider the ways in which science and culture are integrated, Haraway asks what would happen if such a textbook were read

in a high school English class to illustrate the structure of foundation narratives as well as in a science class to illustrate the structure of the natural-technical world? And what if the biology text were read in lab classes as itself a moral discourse and not just a science book that has a wannabe chapter on the techniques of moral reasoning? What if the study and crafting of fiction and fact happened explicitly, instead of covertly, in the same room, and in all rooms? Would the graduates of that pedagogy have a keener grasp of what it might take to build a practice of situated knowledges or strong objectivity, where the simultaneously engaging and endangering stories never slipped from the loving grasp within the daily tool kit of on-the-ground techno-science practice?26

Haraway here asks a series of questions that destabilise canonical approaches to both science and English studies. Her challenge recalls my earlier discussion of what constitutes literature in the context of cultural studies debates and their implications for broadening the text base of literary studies. However, Haraway is asking these questions as part of a practical pedagogical task in which she hopes to encapsulate theories about ‘situatedness’ and ‘strong objectivity’, both key conceptualisations for her sense in which biology is a discourse—one in which metaphor and narrative play a central role. Her proposal is for an alternative type of thinking in which both teaching and learning practices are opened up to scrutiny. By querying what graduates of that pedagogy would take away with them, she also demands a pedagogical conversation to take place beyond the classroom.

I. The Promise of Hybrids

The merging of the discourses of genetic engineering with cybernetics and the latest information technologies has resulted in new conceptualisations about human identity and behaviour. The idea that humanity’s genetic ‘coding’ is played out like a computer program by the passive human-machine body has become a common trope in both scientific discourses and in popular culture, with a migration of attributes across the hyphen in human-machine in both directions. Just as humans are increasingly described in mechanistic or cybernetic terms, so too are computers increasingly attributed with human characteristics. They have ‘memory’, they ‘think’, they certainly communicate. For Haraway, the cyborg entity is an ‘ironic political myth’ that includes not only the increasingly familiar high-tech cyborg figures in science-fiction books and films, as well as the technological implants of modern medicine, but also the myriad couplings and alliances that make up personal, social, economic, and political as well as technological identities. By the late twentieth century, Haraway argues that in ‘our time, a mythic time’, we have all become

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'chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs' ('A Cyborg Manifesto': 149). For Haraway, the cyborg is 'our ontology; it gives us our politics' ('A Cyborg Manifesto': 149). In her particular fusion of feminism and politics, the cyborg becomes an effective metaphor for exploring ways of breaking down the nature/culture binary. Haraway demonstrates how the desire to separate these two aspects of the world has become increasingly difficult; through her cyborg theory, she attempts to utilise this border confusion to create new ways of acting. 'A Cyborg Manifesto' therefore uses the culturally charged figure of the hybridised human-machine to construct a postmodern feminism that moves beyond dualisms and beyond the limitations of traditional gender codes, feminism, and politics.

According to Haraway, the cyborg is a 'fiction mapping our social and bodily reality' ('A Cyborg Manifesto': 191). It is a hybrid of machine and organism, a fusion of the organic and the technical forged in particular historical and cultural practices. Existing at the border between nature and technology, the cyborg enables us to theorise the relation between organism and machine, a relation which Haraway insists has for much of the twentieth century been a 'border war' ('A Cyborg Manifesto': 191). According to Haraway, 'Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines' ('A Cyborg Manifesto': 191). Instead, she insists, 'our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert' ('A Cyborg Manifesto': 193-194). The concept of the cyborg is a rejection of rigid boundaries, notably those separating 'human' from 'animal' and 'human' from 'machine'. But cyborgs also crucially provide a third option, beyond a male/female binarism. The existence of another both/and/neither/nor category constitutes what Haraway calls 'multipolar anthropology'. No longer are humans limited to the two dualistic poles of male/female; instead, with the cyborg, there exists a possibility for multipolarity. Like Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of multivocality or Jacques Derrida's notion of decentering, Haraway's cyborg challenges and opens up false, imposed
unities that function as univocality. The cyborg is the fusion of contradictions, differences, and dependencies. As such, it subverts stereotypes and prejudices. Haraway’s cyborg feminism, then, rejects both the single-nature and the dualist views of gender.

The cyborg continues to have special significance for Haraway in later publications where she builds on the work in ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’. For instance, in Modest_Witness and her interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve she elaborates on the cyborg not only as a metaphor but as a cultural figure and critical agent. While Haraway deploys the markers of the cyborg in order to analyse the intersections among nature, culture, gender and science, she also actually identifies as a cyborg and with other such hybrids in her writing and teaching. For instance, in Modest_Witness she presents herself as a vampire, a hybrid figure from whom the cyborg can learn:

The essence of vampires, who normally do their definitive work on wedding nights, is the pollution of natural kinds. They, like me, are preternatural, counternatural. The existence of vampires tropes the purity of lineage, boundary of community, order of sex, closure of race, and clarity of gender ... No wonder queer theorists and novelists alike find the vampire to be familiar kin.

Most striking in this comparison is not just Haraway’s affinity to the ‘counternatural’ vampire figure but to the lineage she invokes for both queer theorists and novelists or fiction writers.

Women, writing and culture are themes that infuse much of Donna Haraway’s work. Writing, both in its larger postmodern sense and in its more narrow material sense, is conceived by her as central to enacting the numerous projects of resisting systems of

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29 George Landow, one of the leading theorists of hypertext, lists the convergences between hypertext theory and contemporary literary criticism making an association between Haraway’s cyborg, Bakhtin’s theory of multivocality, Derrida’s notion of decentering, as well as Julia Kristeva’s intertextuality and Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘nomad thought’. See ‘Hypertext and Multivocality, available from <http://www.cyberartsweb.org/cpace/ht/jhup/multivoc.html> [accessed 25 July 2005].

30 Donna Haraway, Modest_Witness@Second Millennium: 80.
domination—whether in the very uses of discourse itself or in the multiple discourse systems that comprise and constitute social institutions and academic disciplines. Gary Olsen, in an interview with Haraway, quotes her call for a conception of ‘cyborg writing’ that resists authoritative, phallocentric writing practices, foregrounds the writer’s own situatedness in history and writing practice, and makes visible the very ‘apparatus of the production of authority’ that all writers tend to obfuscate. This is not to say that writers must eschew authority, but that in a truly ethical and postmodern stance they must reveal how authority is implicated in discourse. In addition, because writing is inseparable both from its own embodied situatedness and from systems of liberation and domination, ‘literacy’ should be a central concern. As ‘the acquisition of the power to mark the world effectively’, literacy is Haraway insists ‘intimately implicated in projects of domination and freedom’. Citing Paulo Freire as ‘the inescapable ancestor’ and as ‘one of my fathers, or one of my brothers’, Haraway stresses the importance of literacy work to contemporary liberation struggles. Haraway believes, however, that notions of literacy should not be restricted to linguistic literacy. In a technoscientific world, she argues, understanding how the technical and scientific are deeply intertwined with the political forms the crucial first step in resisting systems of domination imposed by hegemonic governmental and corporate entities.

Once it is understood that such disciplines are in the business of producing narratives, it becomes possible to question traditional notions of objectivity that have underpinned scientific discourses, and to see them as a political act that silences other voices and perspectives. Like Sandra Harding, Haraway argues that in fact there are numerous contesting narratives produced by those who have been excluded from the knowledge-making projects of technoscience. She points out that ‘there are many actors in our world who can and ought to have a say in the design of

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31 For an elaboration of this argument, see Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology: Toward a Cyborg Writing’.
32 Haraway quoted in Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
33 Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
the apparatus for the production of scientific knowledge’. Hence, for Haraway, ‘the political project in science and technology is about the engagement of people whose ways of life are at stake in the apparatus of the production of knowledge and systems of action’. Thus, because technoscience is ‘inherently narrative’, because it is ‘inextricably about building stories into the world, building ways of life, building stories and situating subjects in these stories’, the crucial political action that women and people of other marginalised groups must take is to ‘refigure the terms of that story’, to re-narrate, to ‘produce a female symbolic where the practice of making meanings is in relationship to each other, where you’re not simply inheriting the name of the father again and again and again’.

Haraway makes clear that such attempts to re-tell the stories of technoscience are not cynical attempts to replace the dominant stories with those of women, an effort that would only serve to reinscribe hierarchies and systems of domination. Rather, they are efforts to widen the number and kinds of stories that get told and the actors who tell them. She also makes clear that ‘speaking as a woman’, for example, refers to a generic strategy, in that there is no essential unmediated female experience from which to speak:

I think of ‘speaking as X’ as a rhetorical strategy that reflects having built certain kinds of accountability to each other so that this generic move of representation is constantly tested against the ongoing possibility of working effectively together. The only thing that I am against is mistaking these irreducible narrative and generic immersions for the thing itself; the thing I’m against is a kind of idolatry that mistakes the sign for the thing.

As a cultural critic, Haraway is particularly concerned with encouraging political action, not just in areas of technoscience but in all areas of political life. Like bell hooks, Haraway believes that academics must become much more activist. To this

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35 Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
36 Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
37 Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
38 Donna Haraway quoted in Gary A. Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.

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end she identifies herself as a ‘critical intellectual’. In the Bhavnani interview Haraway speaks of the appeal of

a kind of science fictional quality of ‘worlding’, or making another world possible ... Something we didn’t know was possible. Maybe that’s the hope for liberation. Maybe that’s what liberation talk is about. That the established disorder is not necessary. It’s that kind of conclusion that I think we’re about as critical intellectuals—it doesn’t have to be this way.\(^39\)

It is precisely her linking of writing, literacy, and cultural activism that situates Donna Haraway as an influential feminist social critic. And while she does not write as an educationalist, her linking together of writing, literacy and cultural activism attempts to refigure the subjects, objects and modes of communication in education into ‘different kinds of knots’.\(^40\) I argue that Haraway’s work has pedagogical import because it refigures the canon; it draws attention to knowledge production and reception (inside and outside the classroom) even as it moves beyond the academy—physically by reaching and talking to wider audiences, but also in the sense of reaching beyond the academic to interact with other cultures and sets of expertise. Haraway’s pedagogy thus far is a combination of feminist pedagogy, cultural studies and even anti-disciplinary methodologies. It is also a remarkable example of ‘dialogism’, a term that I use to describe how she sets up a dialogue between science and literature in a relationship of reciprocal instruction.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism offers an illuminating approach to the encounter between these contrasting discourses.\(^41\) Moreover, Bakhtin’s emphasis upon the clashing or competitive dynamics between different discourses is clearly germane to a discussion of the often uneasy relationship between the university and its everyday others. In Bakhtin’s model of communication, voices are semantic positions that are both responsive and open to response, with the fundamental unit of language being exchange as each utterance is jointly produced by both speaker

\(^39\) Kum-Kum Bhavnani, ‘Shifting the Subject’: 30.
\(^41\) Dialogism is elaborated by Bakhtin throughout a number of texts, including Rabelais and His World (1965), the four essays that comprise The Dialogic Imagination (1981), Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics (1984), and Speech Genres and Other Late Essays (1986).
and listener. His theory of dialogism entails interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Novelistic discourse is, for Bakhtin, particularly dialogic, not because of the presence of several linguistic styles or social dialects, but because of the dialogical angle at which the styles and dialects are juxtaposed. The author of a ‘hybrid’ text, Bakhtin argues, ‘makes use of someone else’s discourse for his or her own purposes, by inserting a new semantic direction into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own’. Two voices or two semantic intentions therefore appear in Bakhtin’s conception of dialogism or double-voiced discourse. Following this theory, dialogical criticism is characterised by attention to two factors: the larger historical and critical context of a text and, more specifically within a text proper, to a polyphonic heterogeneity. Interestingly, Bakhtin’s own œuvre is dialogical in the way it sets up his analyses in dialogue with previous studies and his own commentaries, as well as in the way in which it invokes different analytical disciplines, whose variety precludes monological conclusions. This incompleteness or open-endedness is an essential condition of dialogism, as Bakhtin argues:

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of the past centuries, can never be stable (finalised, ended once for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue.\(^{\text{43}}\)

Bakhtin’s dialogism theorises the simultaneous co-existence of competing discourses, or a dialogue between voices anticipating and answering one another. The multitude of voices—Bakhtin’s term is ‘heteroglossia’—speak together to form a complex layered dialogue. In effect, every culture is composed of these competing voices: each person becomes typed in discourse, and ‘known’ through a collage of references to


other texts. Just as Haraway seems averse to dialectics, so too is Bakhtin before her: he is more concerned with the tensions of a text, with describing and analysing its dialogical dynamics, than in resolving them, even dialectically, because this would be a form of monologism. Bakhtin’s theories are resonant in Haraway’s insistence that knowledges are socially constructed in very particular contexts, but also in Haraway’s sense of the multiple and hybrid voices that populate discourse.

II. Dialogue, Metaphor and Pedagogy

A genre that has proved particularly appealing to Haraway is the interview format. Taking place in the ambit of the academic circuit, but also occurring in more publicly available spaces, these interviews make Haraway’s theoretically complex writing more accessible.\(^{44}\) Haraway has been interviewed numerous times, but there are four particularly revealing interviews that I discuss in this chapter. The interview with Kum-Kum Bhavnani that I have already made significant use of in the first half of this chapter, was written up for the journal *Feminism and Psychology* in 1993. In this interview Haraway rehearses or enacts her theory of ‘situated knowledge’. The second interview, which I have also used is an exchange with Gary Olsen for the *Journal of Composition Studies* in which Haraway reflected on her writing and teaching practice and made observations about her own teaching performance. The third is more obviously a discussion or debate between Haraway and the spatial geographer David Harvey, where they reflect on their respective teaching and theoretical practice in an attempt, in Harvey’s words, to ‘find some way of relating events and activities that are going on outside of academia and learning to internalise them within our own imaginaries, and within the imaginaries of our students’.\(^{45}\) This interview illustrates how Haraway’s theories emerge out of a meeting point of various discourses and disciplines. It demonstrates the way in which politics and

\(^{44}\) Another interview of note is with Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, ‘Cyborgs at Large: Interview with Donna Haraway’, in Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (eds), *Technoculture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

popular culture travel into the Haraway classroom. The fourth book-length interview, with her former graduate student Thyrza Nicols Goodeve, sets the scene for a discussion of Haraway’s externalisation of the classroom, turning it inside out for our inspection. Considerable space is somewhat uncomfortably afforded to Haraway’s personal relationships, as Goodeve claims that these relationships show how Haraway ‘lives the theory she writes and teaches’. This interview which makes up the book How Like A Leaf, also more than any other, mixes genres: interview, biography, performance, and psychological self-analysis. It offers Haraway a range of communicative options: a way of giving an autobiographic account of her self in dialogue with a literal other, a way of encouraging the modalities of conversational speech, and a way of interrupting the traditional academic monologue. With the publication of How Like A Leaf (2000) Haraway’s work is able to reach a wider audience, condensing her theoretically complex work by giving it an immediacy and everyday vocabulary.

Goodeve has written widely on art theory in publications such as Artforum, and Camerawork, as well as contributing to ‘journals of opinion’ like The Village Voice. She currently teaches at the School of Visual Arts in New York. She completed graduate studies in the History of Consciousness program in the 1980s along with such notable figures as Caren Kaplan, Ruth Frenkenberg, Chela Sandoval, Lata Mani, Katie King and bell hooks, all of whom Haraway cites as former students with whom she conducts an ongoing dialogue. In her 1993 interview with Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Haraway talked enthusiastically about learning from her feminist theory classes, and cited bell hooks in particular as a graduate student who ‘made very effective and courageous interventions in these classes’. Such were hooks’ interventions that Haraway was prompted to ‘pay much more attention to the questions of racism in my discourse and the discourse of people like me’. Haraway’s students have commented in turn on the influence of her pedagogic practice. bell hooks, for one,

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*See <http://www.schoolofvisualarts.edu> [accessed 20 June 2005].

*Kum-Kum Bhavnani, ‘Shifting the Subject’: 20.
recalls the 'fierce debates that took place' and the 'long hours of discussion and processing that [occurred] after class'. Katie King names Haraway as the 'great teacher of my second (a long story) graduate career', remembering the 'focus on materialism that Donna kept repositioning in those feminist theory classrooms in which I swam'. In How Like A Leaf Goodeve regularly emphasises Haraway's teaching profile: in the present tense of their transcribed discussion Haraway teaches 'three highly condensed, back-to-back blocks of graduate and undergraduate courses' (How Like A Leaf, p.3). And Haraway strongly and consistently self-identifies as a teacher; it is in this position and performance that she seems most comfortable in her interaction with Goodeve. Although it is somewhat elided from the interview itself, Goodeve also has a relatively strong teaching profile, although her primary identification in the interview is as a former student of Haraway.

Goodeve acknowledges Haraway as an 'exemplary conversant, teacher, friend and human' (How Like A Leaf, p.2). She praises Haraway's 'unfaltering concentration and devotion to teaching while contributing major books and essays to fields of study ranging from the history of science to feminist theory, anthropology and of course, cyborg studies, which she invented' (How Like A Leaf, pp. 2-3). Early on in the series of interviews that comprise How Like A Leaf Goodeve comments that Haraway is 'almost innately meticulous' in her analysis of class, power, gender and race, and attributes this to the fact that Haraway was 'completely drenched and influenced' by a history of 'capital' in North America (How Like A Leaf, p.12). Goodeve suggests to Haraway that 'you feel this stuff rather than just intellectualise it' and Haraway agrees: 'the histories that we are responding to as scholars and teachers are not abstractions' (How Like A Leaf, p.12). Notable in this exchange are the deferential, borderline sycophantic questions that Goodeve presents to Haraway in order to showcase her achievements. This careful and respectful approach of student to teacher, particularly a celebrity academic, is not unusual: despite the Paglia/Sontag

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8 Kate King, 'Feminism and Writing Technologies': 98.
exchange, it is the norm. What I wish to draw attention to is Haraway’s response: she opens up the question about her own pedagogical theory and practice to include Goodeve, to what ‘we’ are responding to. This exchange sets up a way to read the coalescence of the personal and the professional, the theorist and the activist, the student and the teacher in Haraway’s work.

Their relationship as teacher to student comes up periodically throughout the interview. Not only does the interview offer a chance for self-reflection and an occasion for discussing teaching practice, it assumes the responsibility of translating some of Haraway’s theories for a more general audience. Haraway’s interlocutor is not just a student, but also a fan and a friend who is privy to knowledge about Haraway’s personal life. Goodeve tells Haraway ‘I like to use your books as mnemonic devices to discover chapters in your life’ (How Like A Leaf, p.49). Layered on top of the more conventional pedagogic exchange between revered professor and graduate student, the relationship between Haraway and Goodeve might also be characterised as a dialogue between colleagues and like-minded scholars, a form of exchange that will also be taken up as a point of comparison in Chapter Four’s discussion of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s A Dialogue on Love (1999). Goodeve also has a teaching profile, as I have indicated, although when it comes up in the interview it is Goodeve’s stint teaching on the Whitney Independent Study program (1997-99) that she references. The mutual collaboration between the two participants is evident when Goodeve suggests that Haraway is often wrongfully, even wilfully misread by others, although not implicitly by ‘right-minded’ readers like herself:

(TNG): Do you think your tendency to always see the connectedness of the literal and figural accounts for some of the misinterpretations of your work? I mean some minds aren’t patient enough, or have not been trained to see, the theory in the redescriptions and therefore just can’t see from a standpoint that is simultaneously literal and figurative (How Life A Leaf, p.108).

In response, Haraway rewards Goodeve’s patient interpretation, confirming that her contribution is ‘precisely this sensibility that people are forced to inhabit by virtue of
their encounter with my writing or speaking' (How Life A Leaf, p.108). The interview is a form of public performance and, albeit in written form, attempts to harness the nuances and more pedestrian elements of speech. In a gesture that solidifies the compact between performer and her interlocutor, Haraway explains that her work seems to be more accessible in public performances:

(DH): Actually a lot of people get my stuff through the public performances first and only then find the writing more accessible. I've had this experience frequently because all kinds of issues are possible to perform physically. It is such an intermedia event where voice, gesture, slides, enthusiasm all shape the density of the words. Oddly, I think people can handle the density better in a performance than on the page (How Life A Leaf, p.108).

Goodeve agrees that there are 'tones and gradations and nuances available' in Haraway's performances that are not as readily available in a written text. She even goes so far as to say that Haraway's performance style is almost 'vaudevillian'; her use of irony and humour not only a 'large part of you as a person', but a 'form of theorising' (How Like A Leaf, p.108). Although the interview can be read as a transcript of questions and answers, there are moments when Goodeve intervenes with a first-person account, or when literal interruptions mark the interview, such as when Haraway's partner enters the kitchen and they stop the interview proper to include him in discussion.

In the context of an interview genre in which the dynamics of question and answer structure the exchange, there is an obvious sense of dialogue and reciprocity operating, but Goodeve and Haraway are not always on equal terms, and the dialogue is often a function of the roles that they play, whether as collaborators or in the more conventional teacher/student relationship. Haraway welcomes paraphrase as a sign of prompt learning. Tellingly, Goodeve has written an article on quotation, 'Lipschtick Traces' which she uses as 'an opportunity to descend upon those whose work has been a source for my own quotaholically induced scrawls over the years or
those for whom the quote is a crucial medium’.\(^{52}\) For Goedeve repeating another’s words is more complex than ‘not wanting—or being able to tell “what you know”’. In the hands of a ‘true artisan’, quotation becomes ‘bits of homage or love—thick parcels of new meaning’.\(^{53}\) Goodeve’s quotation and paraphrase of Haraway are therefore not only a clear and overt testament to the latter’s role as a teacher, but to Goodeve’s role as an apprentice. In the interview, Goodeve cites another feminist academic figure, Avital Ronell, who like Haraway, is acknowledged as a pedagogical model.\(^{54}\) Goodeve explains to Haraway that she attended a lecture Ronell gave and was impressed by her criticism of ‘speeded up accelerated kind of learning’ (How Like A Leaf, p.98). Ronell’s preference for a more contemplative, caring kind of reading practice is deployed to validate Goodeve’s reading of Haraway’s meditative writing and thinking. In a series of admissions Goodeve says that one of the most important things she has learned from Haraway is ‘a notion of criticism that moves beyond mere “criticism”, beyond didactic, diagnostic criticality’ (How Like A Leaf, p.110). They are both unanimous in their rejection of the practice of looking for flaws or absences, a feature of current critical and pedagogical methodologies, agreeing that this is a ‘a weird way to learn—in fact seems like the opposite of learning’ (How Like A Leaf, p.111). Haraway particularly objects to that model, preferring to embrace imperfection, doubt, and generative criticality.

In his previous interview, David Harvey had reflected on Haraway’s explicit enjoyment of crossing boundaries in her own academic and non-academic activities:

> For me academic and political work often seems like drudgery and I look at Donna’s work and I think, ‘how can she enjoy it so?’ But she does, and I think we ought to draw inspiration from that. Therefore, for me anyway, situated knowledges and learning to converse, learning those things, is in fact a process of opening self and learning to understanding the geography of the world in a different kind of way.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{55}\) Donna Haraway and David Harvey, ‘Nature, Politics, and Possibilities: 509.'
Goodeve and Haraway return to this subject when Haraway comments directly on her preferred teaching practice in their interview. Apparently, some years ago in one of her ‘Science and Politics’ classes, Haraway had a politically engaged undergraduate student who was part of the home-birth movement and very opposed to medically mediated childbirth. As Haraway recounts, this student wore safety pins on her hat as a symbol of natural childbirth, seeing them as non-medical objects ‘from daily use that signified women’s relationship to their babies that was unmediated by the ultrasound machine, the speculum’ (How Like A Leaf, p.104-5). Goodeve interjects at this point in Haraway’s recollections: ‘The safety pin?! I don’t get it’. Haraway goes on to explain that the class, under her direction, tasked themselves with taking the ‘pin back’ to consider the history of the plastics industry, the steel industry, and the history of the progressive regulation of safety (How Like A Leaf, p.105). In an exercise of what she termed ‘diffraction’ Haraway did not remove the pin from the context in which the student was wearing it and talking about it, but demonstrated that it had in fact many more meanings and contexts. In effect, what Haraway’s pedagogy evidences here and elsewhere is the way in which her ‘examples are the theories’ (How Like A Leaf, p.108).

Goodeve and Haraway discuss the centrality of metaphor in Haraway’s work: ‘I cannot not think through metaphor’, Haraway says, ‘biochemistry and language don’t feel that different to me’ (How Like A Leaf, p.86). In fact, the very title for the book comes from an exchange in which Haraway imagines ‘how like a leaf I am’ drawing attention to the architectural properties and molecular meaning of a leaf as well as with ‘the kinds of instrumentation, interdisciplinarity, and knowledge practices that have gone into the historical possibilities of understanding how I am like a leaf’ (How Like A Leaf, p.132). She talks about the potent join between fact and fiction in scientific discourses, between the literal and the figurative, between the scientific and the expressive. This is important because it takes Haraway’s reflections about her own teaching practice beyond the self-confessional and makes her feminist pedagogy metaphorical and experimental. Her own subjective or ‘private’ experience is thereby situated and historicised to become public.
The blurring of teaching and writing in Haraway’s work is central to her methodology: ‘for me teaching is in many ways the embodiment of the cat’s cradle experience’ (How Like A Leaf, p.163). The game ‘cat’s cradle’ can be played on one’s own hands, but as Haraway explains, it is ‘more interesting to play it with someone else’ (How Like A Leaf, p.163). Like most of the material Goodeve and Haraway range over in their interview, the reference to the children’s game ‘cat’s cradle’ is meaningful within a literal popular cultural context and within an academic frame of reference. In fact in another context Haraway has already cast her methodology of drawing more thickly from feminist and cultural studies as a form of reciprocity best described by this seemingly banal game. In the essay ‘A Game of Cat’s Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies’, Haraway explains that to set up a game of cat’s cradle for ‘science studies aficionado/as who want time off from the video arcade shoot-em-ups of much scholarly practice’, she needs to ‘hold onto two strands that structure all the figures’.56 The first strand or indeed axiom is that ‘feminist, multicultural, antiracist technoscience projects’ do not respect the boundaries of disciplines, institutions, or genres. Such projects, according to Haraway, can and should be located in ‘computer graphics labs as in community meetings, in biomedical worlds as in antitoxics work’, and include popular cultural production as legitimately as scientific research.57 The second strand or axiom is that ‘textual rereading is never enough, even if one defines the text as the world’, by which Haraway means that it is not enough to just read the networks of knowledge production; the point is to reconfigure what counts as knowledge.

Perhaps the most revelatory exchange between Haraway and Goodeve comes when Haraway admits to a recent crisis in confidence in her teaching. She admits to Goodeve that she feels ‘out of date’, an occasion for them to ruminate on the place of politics in the modern curriculum, and the ‘way critical theory has taken the place of much of that kind of [political] action’ that was characteristic of forms of student

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engagement, at least for Haraway’s generation *(How Like A Leaf, p.166).* This seems to be the most compelling reason offered for Haraway’s feeling that she (not her work) is out of date. I quote this particular exchange in full:

TNG: And critical theory is no longer enough; it’s no longer even critical, necessarily.

DH: Absolutely. It sometimes feels dogmatic almost in the religious sense, like a received language that is not their own.

TNG: Right, it is not something learned, or achieved, which comes from discovery. Your generation and mine experienced the discovery of new theoretical languages, new forms and coalitions of politics, different paradigms emerged, new departments sprang up, interdisciplinarity—all of that.

DH: I think what the difference is is that students today have inherited these structures and taken them for granted. But I must admit, since we are discussing this, that I have noticed recently how uncomfortable I am when my students are creating their own languages and perspectives. I really have to stop myself from being dismissive, and take the time to realise that their critical insights are coming out of quite different lives and historical moments and that I need to listen better. You see, for me teaching is in many ways the embodiment of the cat’s cradle experience. One is involved in this interlocking series of knots *(How Like A Leaf, p.166).*

Even though Haraway confesses a disquiet or uneasiness about her teaching methodology, she goes on to make the point that she uses teaching as a way of staying current. Haraway’s admission to being uncomfortable with students creating their own languages and perspectives is therefore part of coming to terms with what it might mean to develop a pedagogical model or methodology that would seek to draw in the student as an informant about traditionally devalued forms of knowledge. Haraway acknowledges her students’ alternatively situated knowledges and ‘critical insights’, understanding that she has to train herself to be receptive to them. In this way she models herself on the graduate students in the History of Consciousness Program whom she cites as particularly alert to the reconfigurings of racial, class, and gender positions of students in classrooms. Haraway has suggested
that her graduates having become teachers are much better at engaging students actively in constructing knowledge in the classroom through any number of mechanisms. Haraway even goes so far as to say that what she knows about pedagogy comes from watching her former and present graduate students, admitting that ‘I’m pretty good at interactive classroom call-and-response work, if you will, but I’m not very good at the kind of really grainy engagement with helping students get to a point where they think of themselves as somehow truly making knowledge’. This work she attributes to her graduate students who are ‘much better at that than I am myself’.  

III. Xenogenesis

Haraway has borrowed the term xenogenesis from the title of a trilogy by African American science fiction writer Octavia Butler. This concept of xenogenesis has proven particularly instructive for Haraway’s theoretical work on genetic reproduction and technoscience. For instance, in Modest_Witness Haraway extrapolates from Butler’s science fiction series to give an account of the ‘OncoMouse’, a scientifically, (xeno)genetically enhanced mouse that has been ‘crafted through the ordinary practices that make metaphor into material fact’ (Modest_Witness, p.79). Tellingly, the Oxford English Dictionary definition suggests that xenogenesis, unlike conventional biological reproduction, produces a genetically altered, or hybridised progeny: ‘(supposed) production of offspring permanently unlike the parent’. It is a singularly suggestive genealogical model, which, like the earlier cyborg figuration, can be re-imagined as profoundly enabling. Haraway therefore mobilises this xenogenetic model of parenting to frame her discussion of new gene technologies, albeit proceeding with some attention to its dangers.

Octavia Butler is a science fiction writer whose novels have enjoyed popular success. From the 1980s onwards there has been an enthusiastic feminist, particularly black

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58 Haraway quoted in an interview with Gary Olsen, ‘Writing, Literacy and Technology’.
feminist, reception of her work in the academy. Butler has enjoyed academic posts of her own, and has given a number of public lectures as part of her involvement with the Greater Philadelphia Women's Studies Consortium, an organisation who sponsored her as a 'scholar in residence' during 2003.\(^6\) While Octavia Butler's science fiction dramatises Haraway's cyborg, this claim might just as easily be made for the work of William Gibson, for instance. So why is it that Haraway regularly returns to Butler's work? Butler is one of a handful of writers who have expressly opened up the gender divide in science fiction with her troubling explorations of kinship, colonisation and reproductive freedom.\(^6\) But the most salient reason for her appeal to Haraway is the way in which Butler's work fuses pedagogy and science fiction. Her appeal resides in the fact that the genre of science fiction in which she writes, speculative fiction, tends to employ overt, almost over-determined pedagogical models.

Haraway draws on Butler's fictional *Xenogenesis* trilogy—*Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), *Imago* (1989)—to extend and develop an argument about embodiment, focusing especially on the creation of genetically altered and thus hybridised peoples and communities. Butler's narratives start with the premise that a nuclear war has almost entirely destroyed the Earth, and traces the interactions between the human survivors and their rescuers, the Oankali. This ancient, alien-looking species has three genders, and more significantly they are genetic engineers who are compelled to interbreed with every 'race' they encounter as they travel through space. For the humans in Butler's narrative, the price of survival is interbreeding with this alien species, an interbreeding that radically transforms both parties. These novels therefore deal with conflicts concerning the 'self' and the 'other', sameness and

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\(^6\) For more on these particular issues in Butler's work, see Justine Larbalestier, *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*, Middleton, Con.: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.
difference. Haraway was fascinated with this fictionalised account of xenogenesis and used it to model her thinking about a range of technoscientific processes and relations.

While Haraway has freely acknowledged her attraction to the novels of science fiction writers and to Octavia Butler's feminist science fiction in particular, what I want to also suggest is that Haraway's kinship with Butler also evolves from Butler's own writerly challenges to canonical genealogies. Even though Haraway makes extended reference to the Xenogenesis series other Butler titles could have been equally instructive, for example her earliest publication Survivor (1978) or her neo-slave narrative Kindred (1979) or her most recent series about narratives of colonisation Parable of the Sower and Parable of the Talents (1998). In each of these novels, Butler's science fiction is strongly influenced by migration narratives of diasporic Black America. They draw from various African American genealogies—a survivor discourse popularised in the autobiographical works of Maya Angelou, the return of the repressed dramatised in the neo-slave narrative, and the nomadism of the migration narrative.

On matters of kinship, I would argue that the genre of science fiction has proven particularly instructive for Haraway, who acknowledges her debt to a host of science fiction writers in addition to Octavia Butler such as Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, John Varley, James Tiptree Jr., Monique Wittig and Vonda McIntyre. These writers are, according to Haraway, 'theorists for cyborgs', as they explore what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds. In her interview with David Harvey, Haraway had explained that the cyborg was not a celebratory figuration, certainly not when it is understood that the literal cyborg was 'born as the cyborg enemy, as the man-machine for extraterrestrial exploration'; but it is from a particularly unpromising position that certain 'cracks in the system of domination can be imagined'. This re-imagining is the work Haraway attributes to feminist science fiction. Science fiction is generically concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between

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63 Donna Haraway and David Harvey, 'A debate with David Harvey and Donna Haraway': 514.
problematic selves and unexpected others, which goes some way to accounting for Haraway’s call for work to be done in the cultural space hinted at by the intersections of science fiction, speculative futures, feminist and antiracist theory, and fictions of science.

My contention is that in a xenogenetic approach to discipline Haraway also wants science to draw more ‘thickly’ from feminist studies and cultural studies, and for feminist studies and cultural studies to approach science. In a later section of the Goodeve interview entitled ‘telepathic teaching’, Haraway commented that she is now working on a ‘study of pedagogy and biology in the liberal arts curriculum within a transnational world context’ (*How Like A Leaf*, p.163). This is an important subject of inquiry for someone whose own teaching and writing tend to merge. Earlier she has reflected that: ‘I know no better strategy to deal with the vermin-infested normality of rational discourse. Just state the obvious. Say what should not have to be said’ (*Modest Witness*, p.253). The methodology of what she calls ‘resolute over-reading’ combined with the later metaphor of the cat’s cradle—a figure for building relationally in a way that is not antagonistic (*How Like A Leaf*, p.156)—is particularly revealing of Haraway’s pedagogical predispositions.

In the light of Haraway’s view that biology is essentially a cultural discourse, it is intriguing to consider the ways in which her language about genetic transference translates to the domains of literary fiction and teaching practice. Her work attempts to read a juncture, not a symmetrical opposition or choice, between empiricism and theory. In an attempt to break the logic of binary opposition, Haraway wants to construct ‘models of solidarity and human unity and difference rooted in friendship, work, partially shared purposes, intractable collective pain, inescapable mortality, and persistent hope’ rather than in rigidly polarised, categorical oppositions.\(^4\) Concepts such as ‘cyborg’, ‘vampire’ and ‘morph’ serve as indices of the partial, fragmentary, multiple, rhizomatic, and diverse in her studies. These figures both locate and critique binarism, for even as they are ‘defined by their categorical

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ambiguity’, these hybrids ‘do not rest easy in boxes labelled good and bad’ (Modest_Witness, p.214). More broadly, Haraway is interested in kinship relations. In the face of advances in technoscience, Haraway wants to know ‘who are my kin?’ In a world she sees as populated by ‘monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools and aliens’, Haraway wonders

how are natural kinds identified in the realms of late-twentieth-century technoscience? What kinds of crosses and offspring count as legitimate and illegitimate, to whom and at what cost? Who are my familiars, my siblings, and what kinds of liveable world are we trying to build? (Modest_Witness, p.52).

Conclusion

Haraway is significant for the way that she brings an interdisciplinary perspective to contemporary feminist theories about the academy, the body, class, community, ecology, identity, sexuality, and technology. Her theories have pedagogical implications for the relations between science and literature. This chapter has considered some of the innovations of Haraway’s pedagogical experiments—from her theoretical work to her reflections on her own teaching practice. From both perspectives Haraway’s melding of an analytic register with a speculative or even fictional mode demonstrates one of the ways in which popular genres and conventions have been appropriated by academic discourses. Haraway’s pedagogue therefore becomes something of an agent or conduit through which knowledge is transmitted and interpreted, through which pedagogy travels from the academy into the public arena and back again. She deploys popular culture not just as an object of enquiry for her academic practice, but through her engagement with ‘popular’ and speculative expertise she fashions a pedagogical methodology at the interface of the academy and the everyday. Haraway understands that these discourses are not always mutually transformed in the encounter. The dialogue she sets up between science and literature, most evident in her deployment of the interview genre owes much to Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. In this way, both the distinctions between and the transformations of the academic and the popular are strategically kept in play.

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Donna Haraway's version of public pedagogy may seem a world away from the focus of this chapter's very public pedagogy—the pedagogical collaboration between Toni Morrison and Oprah Winfrey. Yet Morrison's theorisation and practice of pedagogy, like Haraway's, occurs in a range of settings. Within the university both Morrison and Haraway teach regular classes and maintain academic profiles through the conference and lecture circuit. They write about their teaching philosophies and experiences yet not always in an overt way. Each, though, is attentive to pedagogical questions and more importantly, each identifies herself as a teacher. Both Morrison and Haraway have also stepped beyond the academy to teach in public. Not a great deal has been written about either Haraway's or Morrison's pedagogical profile, which contrasts with the plethora of critical analyses devoted to their theoretical and fictional work. This chapter will chart the way in which Morrison, like Haraway, has contributed to developments in alternative pedagogical thinking, by considering the merging of academic and popular discourses in the example of Oprah Winfrey's talkshow Book Club. In its discussion of Morrison's novel *Paradise*, Oprah's Book Club pedagogy shows up an unresolved (and perhaps irresolvable) tension between the highbrow and the lowbrow. However, this argument is not necessarily at odds with what I have developed elsewhere in this thesis, that is, an examination of how pedagogies travel, how they are transformed by encounters with the popular, and how vice versa, the encounter with the academic transforms the everyday. Overt transformation may not always occur, as the Morrison and Oprah exchange on *Paradise* will in part reveal, but through their dialogic proximity, these two public figures have re-fashioned the way the academic and the popular can coalesce.

In September 1996, Nobel prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison first appeared on Oprah Winfrey's newly launched televised Book Club to profile her novel *Song of*
Solomon (1977). The ensuing and ambitious collaboration between Winfrey and Morrison would culminate in the Book Club’s reading of Morrison’s novel Paradise (1998) in January 1998. Although Morrison would appear after this date to profile two other novels, the Book Club’s reading of Paradise remained its most complex project. This chapter discusses how Winfrey’s talkshow and Morrison’s novelistic and professional personae are brought together in a televised pedagogical model. This model effects a dialogue between domains and subjectivities, hitherto oppositional, which have been brought into association in ways that might challenge conventional modes of teaching and learning. In a reading which takes account of Morrison’s and Winfrey’s pedagogical performances, as well as the challenges of reading and teaching Morrison’s novels in contemporary academia and beyond, this chapter calls into question the separations between the academy and talkback television.

The Book Club has been phenomenally successful and generated a great deal of popular and scholarly interest. After a year’s hiatus and much anticipation, the Book Club began a second incarnation on 18 June 2003, with Oprah choosing to relaunch it with John Steinbeck’s East of Eden (1962). This choice is continuous with the process that selected Morrison, in so far as Steinbeck is a Pulitzer-prize winning author, whose novels appear regularly on the high school curriculum. Yet the second Book Club has not had the same profile as the first. The reading program of classic authors does not seem to have excited the empathy of viewers, even though some of the first Book Club’s reading methodologies are continued intact. Some changes have, however, been instituted. Instead of the author acting as guide and fellow reader, Oprah has invited academics and professionals onto the second series to contribute to the syllabus. A course reader of sorts, with reading questions, historical context,

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1 In the ensuing discussion I will employ ‘Winfrey’ to denote Oprah Winfrey, the person, and Oprah to denote the television talkshow, although my point is that the signifier Oprah is a shorthand often used to encompass both Winfrey’s performance and the television talkshow itself, as well as acting as a sign of authority for the communities that collect around it. I will also capitalise the ‘Book Club’ to denote its brand name function in line with other Oprah enterprises.


3 Subsequent selections are Alan Paton’s Cry the Beloved Country (1948) and Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude (1978).
and author biography, accompanies each new selection. Even though the second Book Club has not generated the same level of interest as the first, there continues to be significant popular engagement with Oprah’s version of reading public. Toni Morrison herself got close to the heart of it when she commented that the Book Club served a vital function in ‘return[ing] the novel to public discourse’, a notable claim in the light of Winfrey’s own endorsement of Morrison’s centrality to the success of the first Book Club.

Four of Morrison’s novels have featured since the inception of the Book Club: Song of Solomon (in October 1996), Paradise (in January 1998), The Bluest Eye (in April 2000) and Sula (in the final show, April 2002). In addition, Winfrey produced a film adaptation of Morrison’s novel Beloved (which she also starred in) during the Book Club’s time-span, which she characterised as ‘a gift, an offering to America’. These two comments by Morrison and Winfrey—about returning the novel to public discourse, and the offering of (a film version of) a novel as a gift to the public—are central to the pedagogical model improvised by Oprah’s Book Club. In this chapter, I explore the sorts of pedagogical models that apply to the teaching of Morrison’s novels both inside and outside the academy. I will first discuss Morrison’s own pedagogical writings, together with the way in which she fashions herself as a teacher in her public performances. I will then discuss how ‘academic’ pedagogies tackle the challenges of reading and teaching Morrison’s work, before proceeding to the site of the television talkshow where a ‘popular’ pedagogy brings together ‘literature’ and ‘public culture’ for a readership which is already politically, socially, and culturally conscious.

Morrison is a particularly successful amalgam of professor, novelist, literary critic and public intellectual, a very public figure who often finds herself oscillating between these competing subjectivities. While it is as a novelist that Morrison is best

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known, her pedagogical role has increasingly inflected her regular public appearances. One of the most basic precepts of Morrison’s public intervention is her conviction that reading should have what she calls a ‘talking life’. Morrison explains that, while reading is solitary, ‘that’s not its only life, it should have a talking life, a discourse that follows it ... novels are for talking about ... engaging with in some powerful way’. If a novel must have a ‘talking life’, it follows that there must also be a strategic audience of heightened consciousness prepared to read, interpret and discuss that work. This does not mean a literary critical agenda should take precedence over other interpretive methodologies. A ‘talking life’ asks more than that. Morrison is saying that talking about novels should not be exclusive to the academy, but part of a wider public dialogue. Returning the novel to public discourse assumes that the novel has been the province of private agendas, locked within the university and thereby only intelligible and meaningful to academic communities through literary critical methodologies. By returning the novel to public discussion, Morrison is not only making claims for the role of the novel, but for the nature of public discussion and debate, which would profit from sustained engagement with novelistic discourse.

For Morrison, the text is not only a personal creation but also a shared utterance within the canon, a conception of the imagination that articulates both individual lived experience and the social dimensions of art. She has called literature a ‘repair mechanism’, one which ‘staunches that wasteful draining away of conscience and memory’. Such thinking recalls Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s ‘reparative’ reading, critical practices which seek alternatives to dominant, ‘paranoid’ models such as those regularly practised in the academy. Sedgwick and Morrison each in turn make claims for literature, most especially the practice of novel reading. Each claim essentially boils down to the fact that literature cannot stand on its own,

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{6}}\] Interestingly, this a point made in the context of Morrison’s involvement with Oprah’s Book Club, although it springs also from her literary criticism. See Toni Morrison Time magazine interview transcript from January 21, 1998. Available from <http://www.pathfinder.com/time/community/transcripts/chatt012198.html> [accessed 7 August 1998].
unadulterated by pedagogy; it must be interpreted, taught, talked about, and engaged with. If literature experiences ‘us as multi-dimensional persons’ and ‘deals with consequences’, as Morrison says it does, it is because the act of an engaged reading requires an exchange of ideas with other people. Novel reading, in its fullest sense, should engage with a wider set of social, historical, political and cultural issues. Morrison does not view art as ‘peripheral, marginal, or mere entertainment’, but as a ‘way to inhabit the world’. These will become indispensable views for a talkshow (and its Book Club) which derives its purpose and authority from the conviction that social acts complete the reading experience. The belief that art should not be the province of an elite is certainly shared by Winfrey’s brand of pedagogy, as we will see, yet it is a view which is difficult to sustain against the old binary legacies of high versus low, academic versus popular, which still threaten the Book Club curriculum.

In Winfrey’s hands, reading and teaching Morrison’s novels can be ‘tantamount to producing a better world’, a view of Morrison also shared by many literary critics. A large amount of still emerging critical material that addresses the teaching of Morrison’s work in contemporary academia taps into the question of whether content-based or form-based pedagogical models best apply. David Simpson is one critic, for example, who questions the sorts of pedagogies that regard Morrison’s novels as an end point in themselves. In recent years, scholarship on Morrison’s work and its relations to pedagogy has fallen into two camps. First there are those who argue that her novels are their own pedagogy, necessarily yielding learning outcomes because their complex narratives and thematics demand critically engaged reading. Then there are those who argue that Morrison’s work demands that certain pedagogies be crafted and attuned in order to take on the novels’ complex thematics of race, subjectivity and memory. While some critics have remarked on the

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transformative possibilities and pedagogical potential of Morrison’s work, others conclude that such content-based pedagogy is unlikely to result in substantive change once the institutional constraints that inhibit a reshaping of academic discourses and the subjectivities they seek to effect are taken into account. The question remains: what is it about Morrison’s work that invites this sort of critical fracture?

It cannot be denied that Morrison’s novels have become canonical and representative texts within the academy, regularly appearing on curricula, and not just in the context of African American studies or black feminist criticism. First and foremost, her early novels were substantial commercial successes, and they have continued to have important talking lives outside the academy. Their inclusion on university curricula, together with a great deal of other African American literature, can be attributed to certain social and political upheavals, all of which have had ramifications for literary studies. Morrison herself called the ‘presence’ of African American literature within the American canon an ‘unspeakable thing unspoken.’ By this Morrison implied that race has always been integral to the formation of the literary canon, underwriting the work of Mark Twain through to Ernest Hemingway. Thus the later ‘inclusion’ of African American works, including her own novels, refocuses debate on marginal art forms and the question of what constitutes ‘canonical’ status. Morrison maintains a strategic dissociation from the persona of the literary critic: ‘I would like to be clear’ she says ‘that I do not bring to these matters solely or even principally the tools of a literary critic’, a gambit allowing her to

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11 Canonicity is a subject Morrison addresses in her own writings, and an issue taken up by black feminist criticism in particular. Barbara Christian, for example, observed that 'in no way is the literature that Morrison, [Paule] Marshall or [Alice] Walker create supported by the academic world. Nor given the political context of our society, do I expect that to change soon. For there is no reason, given who controls these institutions, for them to be anything other than threatened by these writers'. Barbara Christian, 'The Race for Theory', *Cultural Critique* 6, Spring, 1987.
12 Building on initial work begun by James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Cornel West, bell hooks, and Stuart Hall, reviewing the ubiquitous category of whiteness, Morrison's suggestion here amounts to an uncanny haunting.
allege a tacit, institutional critical blindness among literary scholars to the racialised codes in canonical literature. Not only has she acquired canonical status herself but also through that acquisition she now has the power to unsettle prevailing notions of canonicity.

Several questions then become urgent. What happens, then, when Morrison’s work travels (back) out of the academy to a place where more popular, reader-based pedagogies hold sway, a site like Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club? Morrison’s debut novel The Bluest Eye, for example, has now been given another life, revived to bestseller status through Oprah’s Book Club selection, and re-visited by writers like Sapphire and Carolivia Herron. What happens when Morrison’s novel Beloved ‘passes’ once again, this time into the familiar mainstream realm of popular film? What are the implications of this ‘passing’ in terms of Morrison’s position in the academy? These questions are central to my consideration of the public/private binarism and configurations of a public pedagogy.

I. A Talking Life

In addition to her career as a novelist, Morrison has taught at university on and off for many years, dating back to her first teaching role at Texas Southern University in the mid-1960s. Morrison was also an editor for many years with Random House, during which time she wrote three of her eight novels—The Bluest Eye, Sula and Song of Solomon. Moreover, she has published literary critical work such as Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (1992), and edited collections on both the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas sexual harassment hearings and the O.J. Simpson case. All of this work ruminates on the ways in which race and representation intersect in literature and public life. Since winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993,
Morrison's public appearances have escalated, and while she might initially be invited to speak in various public forums because of her novels, she has managed to carve out other 'talking lives' for herself. In recent years Morrison's high profile public appearances have ranged from her address to a major religious convention, her speaking at a seminar hosted by the New York Public Library, a forum moderated by Ed Bradley on America's 60 Minutes program, her rallying with New York intellectuals against President Clinton's impeachment,16 and her eulogy in a special commemorative edition of Vanity Fair magazine following the events of September 11, 2001.

Currently, Morrison occupies the position of Robert F. Goheen Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University, a post she has held since 1989.17 At Princeton she teaches creative writing and participates in the African American Studies program. She also convenes the 'Princeton Atelier', a workshop she designed in order to bring together students and guest artists to collaborate on artistic projects. Despite other obvious claims on her time and attention Morrison has described her academic workload as unremarkable: 'I teach usually two or three courses and I have thesis students, creative writing students, as well as other disciplines, so I have what would be called a full load, with conference and office hours as much as any other faculty member has'.18 While Morrison makes limited reference to her own teaching practice, she makes clear that her critical and fictional writings have pedagogical import. Her literary criticism is particularly resonant with arguments about loss. The loss of a particular experience or subjectivity is a feature of her essay 'Unspeakable Things Unspoken' (1989) and her book Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. It is also a theme visited and re-visited in her novels. Loss, as Morrison conceives it, is central to her communicative and pedagogical imperatives. It comes as no surprise that much of the critical reception of Morrison's work has in turn

17 Also A.D. White Professor-at-large at Cornell University from 1998.
focussed on the thematics of loss in her novels, often via an examination of the historical or genealogical context. By genealogy here, I mean in the first instance, Foucault’s sense of it as a reclaiming of ‘lost’ histories and as rupture and discontinuity, an interpretation of genealogy that has proven theoretically useful to black feminist criticism. Elaborating on how loss figures in her work, Morrison explains that her novels and criticism belong to a body of writings that perform an important witnessing role:

I use the term ‘bear witness’ to explain what my work is for. I have this creepy sensation of loss, like something is either lost, never to be retrieved, or something is about to be lost and will never be retrieved. Because if we don’t know it (what our past is), if we women don’t know it, then nobody in the world knows it—nobody in our civilisation knows it ... But we women, we black women, if we Third-world women in America don’t know it, then it is not known by anyone at all. And I mean that. Then nobody knows it. And somebody has to tell somebody something.

The repetition of ‘somebody’ and ‘something’ in the last line of this quotation above has a powerful effect because the apparent vagueness of these terms underscores the vastness, the impossibility and the necessity of the project all in one. The undesignated ‘somebody’ is more often than not Morrison herself, who has a pedagogical mandate to ‘pass it on’: to impart knowledge, culture, and memories. The ‘something’ to which Morrison refers is a word that holds the place for a demand to produce something like a language in the face of the irreducible violent sublimity of American racism. Lauren Berlant, among others, has suggestively considered Morrison’s work as part of a corpus, a language of ‘entire novels, songs, lyrics, histories, letters, criticism’ that create a ‘decolonised history of the “something” that didn’t happen, the thing to be specified endlessly, just beyond what seems possible’. This is the task of ‘dissident history’. While something of a cliché now, the expression to ‘pass it on’ has especial practical and theoretical import in African American women’s writing and black feminist criticism. The publication

of Morrison's early novels coincided with a burgeoning field of black feminist criticism; her second novel *Sula*, in particular, was read along character lines as a representative text for a newly independent black female subjectivity and sexuality. Along with other African American women's writing of the period, *Sula* dramatised what bell hooks calls 'the talking into thin air, the talking to ears that do not hear you—the talk that is simply not listened to'. Just as she had done in *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison invested authority in female protagonists who had been systematically marginalised and silenced. The rhetorical positioning Morrison employs in her historical fiction works to necessitate textual engagement. The neo-slave novel *Beloved* is characterised by the rhetorical disclaimer 'this is not a story to pass on', which in fact necessitates its passing on. In *Beloved* Morrison draws on slave narrative genres to narrativise the cataclysmic effect of the slave economy on familial, especially mother-daughter, relations where access to matrilineal knowledge is thwarted. While *Beloved* might be the most dramatic example of this thematic, it is also a more general feature of historical novels like *Song of Solomon* where knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next, just as property passes from one generation to the next as a way of ensuring physical continuity. One of the characters of the novel articulates this central message with the expostulation:

Grab this land! Take it, hold it, my brothers, make it, my brothers, shake it, squeeze it, turn it, twist it, beat it, kick it, whip it, stomp it, dig it, plough it, seed it, reap it, rent it, buy it, sell it, own it, build it, multiply it, and pass it on—Can you hear me? Pass it on!23

Much of the critical reception of Morrison's work has taken (and still takes) its cue from Barbara Christian's 1977 study, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition 1892-1976*. In this work, Christian reads African American fiction and black feminist criticism as having similar discursive practices. Christian effectively argues that critical and fictional imperatives in the work of African American women writers coincide in the rhetorical resolve to 'pass it on'. Yet there are critics, such as Hortense Spillers, who have quite rightly taken issue with the idea of an unbroken

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tradition, suggesting rather that African American literary traditions are characterised by their discontinuity.24 Morrison's novel Beloved has been read as an evocation of these themes, with matrilineal descent represented as literally dismembered and irrecoverable. Perhaps this question of the irrecoverable—at the heart of what fixates postmodernism and philosophies of history—is the key to a profitable pedagogy, one which takes issue with scholarship, which insists on the existence of an 'independent reality to be revealed', or with the 'lessons of history' view that the past is a repository of moral learning.

Within the terms of the argument of this thesis, Morrison's punning and complicating of a 'pass it on' pedagogy is understood as foundational not only to her 'talking life' but also to the civic-minded, self-development projects of Oprah Winfrey's talkshow. Revealingly, 'pass it on' is a brand-name feature of Oprah self-help enterprises under the 'Oxygen' rubric and the 'Angel Network' (other trademarks are 'Make the Connection', and 'Get With the Program').25 Oprah enterprises, which include the sponsorship programs, communities and charities, all work literally and metaphorically to 'pass it on' in a pyramid logic where civic good deeds filter out into the wider community. It is tempting to discount Oprah Winfrey's talkshow and to read its discussion of race, identity, and sexuality as a simplistic distillation of more complex arguments. Yet Winfrey's talkshow is a good filter for larger debates about gender, race and celebrity because it does not assume that information flows in a one-way direction. Important issues are disseminated through Winfrey's own praxis, which is modelled on self-revelation and empathetic identification. Her talkshow audience is able to localise and personalise these larger debates, making them meaningful to their own everyday experience through the confessional mode. The television talkshow format engenders an intimate

25 Winfrey established Oprah's Angel Network in 1997 to fund college scholarships for students in financial need. Beginning in April 2000, the Angel Network has been handing out 'Use Your Life' awards every Monday on Winfrey's television show. The awards of $100,000 each are given to people who use their lives to better the lives of others. In June 2001 Winfrey did a tour of self-help seminars entitled 'Live Your Best Life'.

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community of multiple audiences—the studio, the loungeroom at home and a kind of ideal or projected audience—all of which involve complex rhetorical moves on the part of talkshow hosts like Oprah Winfrey as she strives to effect pseudo-immediacy and involvement. Part of Winfrey’s strategy is to combine rhetorical styles: she is the convenor of the town hall meeting, the black preacher, the confessor, the confessee, the teacher, the student. She also mobilises a form of public intellectualism in her role as a ‘rhetoritician’, one of anti-intellectualism.

In 1995 a series of articles published in the American popular press sought to frame the reception of work produced by ‘new’ black intellectuals. To allegations that these new black intellectuals were parochial and intent on ‘celebrity posturing’, Morrison countered that

the questions black intellectuals put to themselves, and to African American students, are not limited and confined to our own community. For the major crises in politics, in government, in practically any social issue in this country, the axis turns on the issue of race... When we take on these issues and problems as black intellectuals, what we are doing is not merely the primary work of enlightening and producing a generation of young black intellectuals. Whatever the flashpoints are, they frequently have to do with amelioration, enhancement or identification of the problems of the entire country. So this is not parochial; it's not marginal; it is not even primarily self-interest.26

The question of intellectualism has been an important one for African American literary criticism. Leading African American academic and cultural critic, Cornel West, supplements Marxist and Foucaultian paradigms of knowledge with the habit of insurgency as the required performance of the African American intellectual. His answer is a model of black preaching and black musical tradition, a model which also has a certain appeal to Morrison, as we shall see, especially insofar as this model redresses the tendency of critics, as Henry Louis Gates has noted, to write ‘primarily for other critics of literature’.27 But it is Hortense Spillers' postdate to Harold Cruse's

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1967 publication, 'The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual', which is most compelling on this topic. Spillers argues that today's 'black creative intellectual' should strive for 'performative excellence and create a new science of cultural demography, taking African American culture and community as [an] object of knowledge'. In the absence of a site like Harlem as the designated and undifferentiated locus of community, as it was for Cruse and others before him, Spillers advances a model which takes account of the 'contradictory impulse that stamps African American life and thought as an unmistakable ambivalence'. Spillers mobilises the language of postcolonial and poststructuralist theory to argue that 'a poetics of travel and exile, a sort of new relation to home that is no longer bound to the specificity of place' is what the subject must now learn to remember. Spillers articulates her discomfort with West's model because it requires that the 'intellectual installed in his/her own autobiographical moment' is confronted with being 'in effect interpellated, or summoned as a responsible subject and subjectivity'. Such a myth of representation, according to Spillers, sustains 'the idea of the intellectual as a leading and heroic personality rather than a local point of oscillation among contending conceptual claims'. Spillers' discussion about the role of the intellectual in the social production of knowledge raises questions about Morrison's public interventions, and about the role of the female/feminist intellectual, not just within patriarchal institutions such as the university, but struggling against the 'invisibility' of African American women to various public discourses.

Spillers' view recalls my discussion of public intellectualism in Chapter One, in particular Sneja Gunew's reading of public intellectuals and community in diaspora. Gunew uses the term 'poet-pedagogue' as 'part of a taxonomy of terms which attempt to capture the role and function of the public intellectual'. The term 'poet-pedagogue' is akin to Spillers' 'creative intellectual' in that it attempts to characterise those writers who have projected on to them the 'burden of formulating and

29 Hortense Spillers, 'The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date': 70
30 Hortense Spillers, 'The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date': 72
expressing a minority's cultural representations, metaphors, singularity, for the world at large.\textsuperscript{32} Morrison is a germane example of the 'poet-pedagogue' or the 'creative intellectual' because the subjectivities of the writer, the public intellectual and the teacher (versed in the pedagogies of the academy) converge in her work. Morrison's public intellectual model of intervention, both at the level of writing and of pedagogical practices, has the potential to render elastic the divisions between disciplines and between the academy and the public sphere, bringing together certain critical and pedagogical discourses traditionally kept apart.

In an article written for the \textit{Michigan Quarterly Review} in 2001, Morrison makes overt her thoughts on teaching, in a theoretical if not methodological sense, by posing the question: 'how can values be taught in the university'?\textsuperscript{33} Assuming not only that values can be taught, but that any self-respecting pedagogy ought to be in the business of transmitting those values, Morrison makes clear the religious underpinnings of modern academia, whereby a 'faculty-cum-clergy' have 'carried their religious principles and preoccupations with them'.\textsuperscript{34} She explains that to teach is to 'examine, evaluate, posit, reinforce', and speaks at length about what she calls the 'response-ability' of teaching in the light of recent changes to the profession, such as the rise of the expert subjectivity, which in many cases has competed with more conventional professorial subjectivities. Morrison explains that one way she communicates value through teaching is 'the material I ask students to read, the dialogue that ensues following those readings, and the threads of argument I nudge students to explore'.\textsuperscript{35} She obviously takes her role as a teacher seriously and has theorised a pedagogy that knows it is 'responsible'. However, just as she punned on the phrase 'pass it on', this 'response-ability' emphasises the dialogic quality of teaching which does not derive from an all-knowing place or assume a transmission model of teaching and learning. Nothing Morrison says here is particularly revelatory, but, as is so often the case, the effect of Morrison's talking about her own


\textsuperscript{34} Toni Morrison, 'How Can Values Be Taught at University?': 273.

\textsuperscript{35} Toni Morrison, 'How Can Values Be Taught at University?': 276.
teaching or writing is to foreclose any substantive critical engagement: she is the final authority when it comes to her own work. When, in the same volume, two critics respond to Morrison’s demand for critical thinking, they are ironically unwilling or unable to engage critically with what Morrison is saying. In response, Thomas J. Cottle (himself a clinical psychologist, sociologist and professor of education) remains content to paraphrase Morrison, effectively parroting his teacher’s words without having digested their meaning or application. It seems fitting that he ends his response by deferring to Morrison—‘should we not commence our lesson, our reflections really, with the concluding words of Toni Morrison’—whom he proceeds to quote at length:

If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime or ménage of regimes will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us.

Cottle’s dogmatic celebration, through a reproduction of Morrison’s views, is one version of the propensity of critics to cite the author and her texts as authoritative. The excerpt with which Cottle closes points to a tendency to view the university as the only legitimate site for certain delimited critical practices. Yet Morrison is actually making a case for the university embracing a wider set of practices and issues which have currency across the traditional borders between high and low, academy and everyday.

The question of how best to teach Morrison’s work has preoccupied an entire school of recent critics. One conference, sponsored by the Toni Morrison Society in mid-2003, entitled ‘Toni Morrison and the Politics of Learning’, brought together academics, secondary school teachers and students to discuss the pedagogical import of

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Morrison’s work, as well as the practicalities of teaching her novels. A selection of paper titles—‘Teaching to Transgress’, ‘Teachers as Conductors’, ‘Freeing the Imagination through Toni Morrison’, ‘Language Matters: Teaching the Unspeakable in Morrison’s Work’—indicates that a certain impossible dualism is a prerequisite for reading and teaching Morrison’s novels. Papers at this conference talked about order and disorder, embracing openness, speaking the unspeakable, taking a cue from Morrison’s own critical work which names the impossibility (and therefore the productiveness) of the presence of African American writing in the canon. The task for curriculum praxis is then to uncover discredited knowledge, reinvent dominant language, and open up alternative ways of knowing. The frame of reference at this conference was confined to Morrison’s fiction. Only briefly was her critical writing noted, and there is hardly one reading of Morrison’s public persona, much less her pedagogical performances. Here, the invocation of Morrison’s authority as an author, teacher and intellectual forecloses debate, as it does elsewhere. Instead of viewing Morrison’s intellectualism as a local point of oscillation among contending conceptual claims (to recall Spillers’ formulation) we are still in the realm of the intellectual as a heroic personality.

Similarly the contributors to a special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* discussed Morrison’s pedagogical import by identifying her as an exemplary writer and mentor-figure, one who has inspired a younger generation, a literary movement of black women writers, as well as a wider public readership. In this instance the role of Morrison’s œuvre, covering her essays, fiction, interviews and public appearances, is taken into account, but the contributors do not really elaborate on the vexed question of what sorts of pedagogical models might best apply to Morrison’s novels. We remain mired in a content-based pedagogy, one which teaches, as its chief objective, the production of ‘a better world’. One contributor to the volume, Susan Edgerton, even argues that learning involves an act of violence, and that the student must reach a personal crisis in order to learn. The nature of the crises brought about

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by a Morrison novel requires that both the teacher and the student seek a ‘personal involvement within the text and within hegemonic culture’. Edgerton seems to be saying that Morrison’s work contains inbuilt mechanisms by which conventional literary criticism must question its methodologies and assumptions. This should happen not just at a macro-level, it is argued, but also at a micro or personal level, because crises and traumas effected by Morrison’s texts at a ‘personal’ level complete and constitute the learning experience. But what if the pedagogy is intrusive, sloppy, or ill-intentioned? Can Morrison’s novels still stand on their own?

II. Atelier Pedagogy

Launched in 1994, the idea for Morrison's Princeton Atelier classes evolved from her own experiences collaborating with Andre Previn on a song cycle, 'Honey and Rue', commissioned by Carnegie Hall for opera star Kathleen Battle. At one level the Atelier seminar is an attempt to redress the view that a student is a blank screen upon which the teacher’s desires and knowledge are projected. The Atelier assumes students' prior learning; indeed skills and knowledge are the chief criteria for selecting students for the seminar program. The Atelier brings together guest artists from different media for an intensive, in-residence collaborative effort with Morrison acting as artistic intermediary between students and guest artists like cellist Yo-Yo Ma, bass player Edgar Meyer, composer Richard Danielpour, theatre and opera director Peter Sellars, film maker Louis Massiah, novelist A.S. Byatt, choreographer Jacques d'Amboise, and novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez. A maximum enrollment of ten to fifteen students participate in the creation of original works of art and artistic performances that are then professionally showcased. In this way, the Atelier aims to

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41 The prerequisites for a recent Atelier included 'students with strong backgrounds in any form of narrative writing including playwriting, screenwriting, and fiction as well as poetry are encouraged to apply'. Available from <http://registrarl.princeton.edu/course/past/Other/CoursTitle.cfm> [accessed 11 March 2004]
bridge the worlds of professional art and academia, thereby reflecting Morrison’s thoughts on learning and creativity.

As I have indicated, Morrison is not often explicit about pedagogy, much less her own teaching practice. However, we can glean some of her principles from the Atelier classes. Morrison conceives of the university as ‘two orders of continuum: the personal and the public’. This oscillation between seemingly disparate principles is a subject for her own teaching practice: ‘if I encourage strictly and only aesthetic readings of literature, then I have left an indelible message of where I place the persuasive, historical aspects of literature’. Second, Morrison has claimed that the Atelier seminar is significant for her personally because it ‘assumes not only that arts is central to a liberal arts education, but that artistic creation is necessary to intellectual life, and critical to the survival and health of the community that nurtures it’. Thirdly, the Atelier is an attempt to make an amateur of the professional, a teacher of the student. Morrison wants to be challenged:

I don’t like to arrive at a certain plateau and stay there. If something isn’t challenging or compelling or new in some way, I lose interest. I like to be in the position of being an amateur in some regard, so that I can learn from people who are not amateurs.

In a larger sense, the experimental nature of an Atelier has the potential to make everybody an amateur; because the professionals cannot see the end result, a form of levelling can occur. Theoretically the demarcation teacher/student, professional/amateur should be called into question by the Atelier methodology. What seems to be even more important in descriptions of the program by former students, campus newsletters, and other Princeton media, is Morrison’s authorial

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4 Toni Morrison, Morrison, ‘How Can Values Be Taught at University?’: 276.


role. In two student evaluations of the program, 'Professor Morrison' gets top billing. The Atelier is described as being 'unlike most courses' largely because it emphasises artistic teamwork with a departure from the lecture-style format, even the tutorial. The first casts Morrison in a rather conventional teacherly role, with a description of the role of the guest artist as offering a practical application of skills and learning:

In the past, Morrison led the first several sessions of the Atelier after which the guest artist(s) arrived and began the final stages of presenting a project. Professor Morrison's sessions are oriented toward theoretical and descriptive approaches to the subject, while the guest artist typically works in a more hands-on mode.  

A second assessment emphasises the collaborative process and the expectation of the independent role to be assumed by students:

Professor Morrison is an able coordinator, and the Atelier she has created is invaluable to aspiring professional artists. This course lacks the structure of regular coursework (weekly assignments and the like), so the planning and the execution is all up to the student. Prof. Morrison is very open to suggestions, and she has excellent advice to give on the pieces in progress. It is difficult to catch her outside the classroom, should one need extra help. Because the purpose of this class is to treat students like professionals, you will be pretty much on your own. This is an excellent class for a disciplined, talented artist.  

Given the large class sizes and lecture-style format which characterise most courses, the Princeton Atelier would seem to offer the best of both worlds for teachers and students alike. Any teacher would surely agree that a smaller group of carefully selected students is a pleasure to teach, and any student would welcome improved access to the teacher. These representations cannot of course be taken as a final statement on the course; they offer personal insights only. What they do point to, however, is the way in which student expectations have been extended by the Atelier pedagogical model. From the online prospectus and reports on the day-to-day running of sessions, it seems clear that there is an emphasis on a collaborative pedagogy, whereby the students are envisaged as a vital part of the creative process.

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Morrison is in some ways still a central authority and certainly in demand as an artistic intermediary both in the classroom and outside that structure. Wanting the teacher to be more available and more accessible is a commonplace experience of student life. The student reviews acknowledge this aspect of university education: that very little of what is learnt at university, or the process of learning itself, has anything to do with textbooks.

III. Talkshow Pedagogy

Work on audience studies has shown that the television audience is ‘not an ontological given, but a socially constituted and institutionally produced category’. More abstractly, the female audience is ‘a discourse, a way of speaking about viewers’. These two insights have particular implications for the phenomenon of the television talkshow, given that it, more than any other televisual genre, has reconfigured the audience as an active participant. Moreover, Winfrey’s talkshow audience is predominantly female.

In the 1990s there was a shift from a modernist scientific paradigm, where the audience is an ‘object of study’, to a cultural studies paradigm, where the audience no longer represents a reality ‘out there’ constitutive of and reserved for the discipline that claimed ownership over it. Developments in media studies and cultural studies have cast the audience as a discursive trope signifying the constantly shifting and radically heterogeneous ways in which meaning is constructed and contested in everyday contexts and in media use and consumption. According to this view, the audience is not a static but an active, heterogeneous phenomenon, constituted through complex speech acts. Once upon a time, television viewing had been considered a private experience, often denigrated for the passivity it presupposed in its audience. But the work of cultural critics has moved us away from such modernist understandings of television audiences, persuading us that

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10 Ian Ang, Living Room Wars: 48.
11 Ian Ang, Living Room Wars: 4.
television itself has undergone massive postmodernisation. In other words, we have moved beyond ideas of the culturally homogenous citizenry and its privatised reception of centralised transmission, to the discursive emergence of the active audience as a sign of heightened cultural contradiction in contemporary society. The talkshow builds on this thinking with its various audiences (in the studio and beyond), defined by their active engagement.

The talkshow relies on the structure of the confession, its testimonial rhetoric and narrative mode of self-development, especially its exponential mode of revealing, uncovering, and disclosing truths. There is a strong sense in which the talkshow confession is rhetorically related to literary, religious and legal confessional modes: sinful episodes in a person’s life are ‘redeemed’ through the act of narrating one’s confessions. It has also been a critical commonplace to read talkshow confession as a form of ‘talking cure’. Oprah Winfrey’s talkshow relies on particular forms of public speech, survivor discourse foremost amongst them. Public confessions of women who have overcome hardship hold particular appeal, and there is a tendency in these to draw on memoir writing as an increasingly widespread form of authorisation. Airing her own troubles, Winfrey clearly provides encouragement for women, in particular, to address their own personal histories. Winfrey’s battle with weight loss and her experience of abuse, gives her the credible authority of lived experience, opening an important avenue of identification with her audience. Responding to trends toward violent confrontation and hyperbole in talkshow television, Winfrey made an announcement in September 1994 that she was discontinuing doing ‘trash TV’. Not only was this a milestone for the show it was a personal milestone for Winfrey. The show’s evolution is measured by the host’s own personal journey.

In addition to its confessional mode and reliance on survivor discourse, Winfrey’s talkshow relies heavily on the discourse of the expert.52 Edward Said has spoken about the worrying rise of the expert subjectivity, as has Morrison herself. The expert

52 Another version of this is the concept of ‘authoritarian populism’, see Stuart Hall, The Hard Road to Renewal, London: Verso, 1988.
as configured on Oprah is in many ways the counterpoint to academic thinking (this recalls Chapter One’s discussion of the academic versus the expert). The expert may demonstrate book-learning, but his/her authority more often than not derives from being schooled by experience. Patricia Mellencamp also makes an important qualification about a shift in the representation of talkshow expertise. Mellencamp imagines daytime talk as the electronic syndicated version of consciousness-raising groups of the women’s movement. In that respect, there has been a shift, Mellencamp argues, away from the arcane world of medicine, psychiatry and law, away from the experts and towards self-help. Such a shift does not preclude expert commentary; the talkshow needs its experts, and shows like Oprah even have in-house experts who make regular appearances. But at important junctures ‘expertise’ now resides with the talkshow audience. The studio audience is involved as a media public whose watching is redefined as a form of participation, thus calling into question distinctions between performing and viewing, producing and consuming. This is not only a matter for the studio audience. Although the talkshow literalises the presence of an active viewing public whose reactions are indispensable to the construction of media events, the talkshow stages an intimacy with its multiple audiences. Drawing from the writings of political scientist, Claude Lefort, Homi Bhabha has attributed this ‘intimacy effect’ to a mechanism of the modern media, that creates a ‘constant illusion of a between us’. The context for Bhabha’s reading is the celebrity life and death of Princess Diana and Gianni Versace, but the notion of an ‘intimacy effect’ is pertinent to other modern media, notably the talkshow. In the case of Oprah this ‘intimacy effect’ produces an hallucinatory moment of reciprocity between the interviewer’s celebrity and the audience’s anonymity. In this way the gap of social division between self and other is concealed not by the ‘illusion of homogeneity’ but by an incitement to participate, to dialogue, to talk, to question. It installs within mass society the limits of a ‘little world’ where everything happens as if each person were already turned towards the other. It provides a hallucination of nearness, which abolishes a sense of distance, strangeness, imperceptibility, of

otherness, and in this way becomes the stage on which the ‘transindivudual’—Princess Diana, Gianni Versace, Oprah Winfrey—becomes both a familiar presence and a phantasmic icon. Winfrey and her audience find a representative and representational image—a sign of public belonging as well as an insignia of authority—in the signifier *Oprah*. This becomes the show’s animating rubric, joining Winfrey and her audience together in the common cause of self-improvement.

What happens then when reading and viewing come together in the talkshow Book Club? How have communities and commonalities of readers been imagined and, in turn, literalised by Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club? In the next section, beyond the question of organised reading practices—be they intuitive or counter-intuitive—I also want to consider the relationship of reading and citizenship in the context of changing literacies and ‘new’ forms of common sense. And, while the Book Club is nostalgic, relying on the cultural authority of the book as a kind of precious collectible, it can also be speculative, its readers adept at ‘new’ technologies and representational systems.

**IV. Book Club Pedagogy**

Oprah’s Book Club profiles a range of quasi-literary selections, many of which have catapulted to bestseller status, certainly faster than expected had it not been for Winfrey’s intervention. Over its six-year life, from September 1996 to May 2002, the Book Club featured forty-six selections from thirty-nine authors.\(^\text{55}\) The Book Club’s readership is initiated into the participatory democracy of talkshow television through a syllabus that it is encouraged to read literally. Its assemblage of reading practices is gleaned from both literary critical and televisual sources and seeks to intuit and identify with a novel’s characters as ‘real’ people. But even though the Book Club privileges the practice of literal reading, there are important junctures at which its readership displays an aptitude for more figural readings.

\(^{55}\) For a list of titles from the 1996-2002 Book Club, see Appendix A.
Morrison's appearance in January 1998 to profile her new novel *Paradise* was her second appearance as a Book Club author. *Song of Solomon*, first published in 1977, had already been revived to bestseller status in 1996 as one of the Book Club's inaugural selections. By the time *The Bluest Eye* was profiled in 2000, Morrison's authorial position was unsurpassed. And by this time too Winfrey had built up her own pedagogical qualifications, despite her claim that she was totally unaware of the effects, if any, she might be bringing to bear on her viewers: 'I always thought I'd be a fourth grade teacher. The fact that I have an effect on anybody is amazing to me'.56

In April 2002 Winfrey announced the end of her Book Club, explaining 'it has become harder and harder to find books on a monthly basis that I feel absolutely compelled to share'.57 This first incarnation of the Book Club closed its series with *Sula*. In other words, Morrison's texts have been bookends for this show, opening and closing the series.

The basic format for the show was instituted early. Winfrey announces the upcoming book at the end of the current Book Club show, giving readers a good month to complete their reading and gear up for discussion. Each selection always entails a personal and compelling recommendation; each is conducive to the sensibilities of a television talkshow audience, supplemented as these are by other *Oprah* media—the *Oprah* website, with its online discussion groups and reading guides, and the *Oprah* magazine. Each author is introduced through a pre-taped interview with Winfrey, and with invited other readers before appearing in person in the studio for 'live' discussion.58 Early episodes experimented with thematised dinner parties, slumber

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57 The show aired 4 April 2002.
58 There is a notable exception, Jonathan Franzen who famously declined to appear to discuss his novel *The Corrections* because he did not want his novel branded by the *Oprah* logo. Franzen identifies as part of a high-art literary tradition, and moreover wants to reach a male audience with his writing. Franzen's thinking seems diametrically opposed to the group-reading ethos of *Oprah's* Book Club. In an essay written for *The New Yorker*, Franzen claimed that the 'electronic apotheosis of mass culture has merely reconfirmed the elitism of literary reading, which was briefly obscured in the novel's heyday. I mourn the eclipse of the cultural authority that literature once possessed, and I rue the onset of an age so anxious that the pleasure of a text becomes difficult to sustain. I don't suppose that many people will give away their TVs. I'm not sure I'll last long myself without buying a new one. But the first lesson reading teaches is how to be alone'. See Jonathan Franzen, 'The Reader in Exile', *The New Yorker*, 3 June, 1995. Reprinted in Jonathan Franzen, *How To Be Alone: Essays*, 164-178, Farrar Straus Giroux, 2002.
parties, ten-pin bowling sessions—Winfrey even turned up at Wal-Mart to profile Billie Lett's *Where The Heart Is*, and Maya Angelou's kitchen to discuss *The Heart of a Woman*—before settling into a more standardised discussion-group setting.

At a glance, Book Club statistics reveal a preference for women writers. These comprise seventy-seven per cent of the selection. African Americans make up fifteen per cent of the total number of authors featured. A number of writers have featured more than once—Morrison appears four times (in addition to making an appearance to discuss Winfrey's film version of her novel *Beloved*), Bill Cosby appears just the once to discuss three children's titles, and Wally Lamb, Kaye Gibbons and Jane Hamilton each appear twice. There is a mix of established, best-selling writers (such as Isabel Allende, Maya Angelou, and Maeve Binchy) and newcomers (debut novels from Edwidge Dandicat, Pearl Cleage, A. Manette Ansay, Janet Fitch, Breena Clarke and Melinda Haynes). Of the books featured from established writers, over half are recently released titles (within the past year). Two non-fiction, autobiographical titles were chosen: Maya Angelou's *The Heart of a Woman*, and *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail* by Malika Ouitker. Apart from Cosby's titles in children's literature, the remaining choices are all novels, largely by American authors—variously characterised as domestic fiction, historical fiction, or romance, and mostly set in late nineteenth or twentieth-century America, with a number set in the rural mid-West, such as *Vinegar Hill*, *A Map of the World*, *Drowning Ruth*, *The Corrections*, *Back Roads*, *Ellen Foster* and *A Virtuous Woman*. Oklahoma is the setting for Morrison's *Paradise* and for Billie Lett's debut novel, *Where the Heart Is*. Only two non-English language choices feature—Isabel Allende's *Daughter of Fortune*, and Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*, translated from Spanish and German respectively. In terms of subject matter, three books deal specifically with war crimes during World War II: *Fall on Your Knees*, *Drowning Ruth*, and *The Reader*. The vast majority of the texts are concerned with

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relationships between women (such as _Tara Road, Where The Heart Is_) and woman-centred subject matter: domestic violence (_Black and Blue, We Were the Mulvaneys_), desertion and divorce (_She's Come Undone, Open House_) and mother-daughter relationships (_Here on Earth, Daughter of Fortune_).

There has been some considerable media backlash around the 'feminisation' of literature occasioned by Winfrey's selections. A loaded and controversial term, the use of 'feminisation' in this context revives Anne Douglas' controversial argument in _The Feminisation of American Culture_ (1977). In this book Douglas adopts a separate spheres discourse of female power to lament the 'well nigh dictatorial power middle-class (white) women exerted over their culture'. 61 Indeed, in 1996, _The New York Times_ reasoned that since so many of Oprah's viewers (and so many fiction buyers) are women, publishers might start to skew their lists towards books that are by and about women. Two arguments are intertwined here: one, the long-standing view that the novel has an undesirable effect on the pliable woman reader, historically troped as both complicit and resistant; and two, the equation of feminisation with a private sphere and a middle-brow culture. 62 Janice Radway's work on the Book-of-the-Month-Club is illuminating here, in which Radway argues that middlebrow culture, so strongly associated with the phenomenon of the book club, is defined by its indiscriminate consumption and, more particularly by, 'the cultural masquerade of the immature, fraudulent, feminised'. 63 Rather than traditionally viewing middlebrow culture as acting to mimic the values of high culture, Radway wants to conceive of the middlebrow (and its book club) as a kind of counterpractice to the high culture tastes and proclivities that have been most insistently legitimated and nurtured in academic English departments. 64 This discussion has important

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repercussions for Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club. The charge of feminisation works much like the corollary ‘oprahification’, a coinage first used in the Wall Street Journal to denote ‘public confession as a form of therapy’. Opahfication has become the routine designation for nothing less than the wholesale makeover of the nation, and then the world. Oprahfication, in that sense, is a term that has slipped its original moorings.

Undoubtedly one of the major issues here is the question of access to education, particularly in a United States historical context, as these issues relate to black histories and white oppression. The academy and its curriculum have traditionally been the province and preservation of certain cultures. Oprah’s Book Club, especially as it profiles Morrison’s novels, is explicitly interested in the question of education. In a Life magazine feature article about the genesis of the Book Club and the importance of reading in her own life, Winfrey overtly conflates reading and citizenship: ‘Getting my library card was like citizenship, it was like American citizenship’. The selection of Morrison’s debut novel, The Bluest Eye, in 2000 reinforces the pedagogical premise of the Book Club, which is to ‘get America reading’. The Bluest Eye begins with the words from the ‘Dick and Jane’ children’s primer, which merge into one another, becoming strangely meaningless but also powerfully resonant and representative of the impact of a racist education over generations. The Bluest Eye specifically records the power of mass visual images, of commercial, educational and filmic representations, to ascribe to the body particular cultural paradigms of aesthetic and moral value. Morrison’s ten-year-old African American narrator, Claudia MacTeer, believes that she is unable to achieve ‘beauty,’ since all the world had determined the blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll, depicted by shops, magazines, newspapers and window signs, to be the ideal.


Even though Winfrey gives the impression of arbitrariness in her selections, Morrison, at least, is an exception. In fact it is obvious fairly early on in the Book Club cycle that there are two different models of authorship at work. The first novel selected was Jacqueline Mitchard’s *The Deep End of the Ocean*. The second, Jane Hamilton’s *The Book of Ruth* followed in a similar vein, but the third selection, Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, was a departure, one which opened up a second distinct, while still complementary, authorship model. The *Deep End of the Ocean* belongs to a category of novels promoted to bestseller status by Winfrey even though a number of these works are by established novelists who have previously written bestsellers. All of the novels following the Mitchard model fit within the framework of talkshow discourse in that they deal with family crises, incest, early pregnancy, the death of a child. They also all take the form of survivor narratives. In *Back Roads* by Tawni O’Dell, for instance, the teenage boy/man protagonist, who has taken on the role of parent to his three younger sisters, finally comes to regard survival as his preeminent talent. And of course there is the autobiographical account of Malika Outkir’s years spent in a desert jail, from which she eventually escaped. The protagonists in these narratives—both real and imagined—enact an ethic of personal responsibility that calls for an individual to author his or her own life. Winfrey explains that authorial intention is central: ‘intention to me is everything. Everything. It rules the world. So I almost always make a point of asking an author, why? What was their intention for writing the book?’

Novels offer avenues for identification and agency in terms of a self-improvement model, much in line with the Oprah Winfrey show deploying the signifier ‘Oprah’ in order to position its viewers as members of an improvable American public. Ann-Marie McDonald’s comments on her novel *Fall On Your Knees* (1996) repeats Book Club tenets, by now firmly in place. Foremost is the necessary compact between reader and writer, as well as the creative inspiration of daily life:

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When I was writing this story, I often would be asked the question, ‘Whom are you writing for?’ For me, it was like there was this reader, this benevolent stranger, whose face I couldn’t quite see. And I’d think, You’re here. You’re waiting. You’ve come. What am I going to give you? What’s going on? Who’s watching this? Whose eyes am I behind? What is she holding? It might be harrowing. I might ask you to go places you would never, ever buy a ticket to go.\textsuperscript{70}

These personal admissions serve to humble the craft of writing, rendering the author more accessible to her readers. Certain reading strategies accrue to this first model of authorship, notably an emphasis on emotionalism and empathy, most often figured through reader identification with plot and character. The novel is read literally as a social document by the Book Club who use its examination of personal crises as a springboard to examine crises in Winfrey’s or otherwise anonymous readers’ lives. In some ways it recalls certain academic pedagogical practices. Take, for example, Jane Tompkins’ experimental pedagogy, which she writes about in the essay ‘Let’s Get Lost’ (considered in Chapter One). In teaching a course entitled ‘American Literature Unbound’, Tompkins sought to use books as ‘avenues into the world, rather than a retreat from it’.\textsuperscript{71} Tompkins’ pedagogy is heavily reliant on empathy and identification. In this way, it not only echoes Book Club reading protocols, but also Martha Nussbaum’s contention that learning from literature might aid the legal practitioner:

Literary works typically invite their readers to put themselves in the place of people of many different kinds and to take on their experiences ... [T]hey promote identification and sympathy ... One may be told many things about people in one’s own society and yet keep that knowledge at a distance. Literary works that promote identification and emotional reaction cut through those self-protective strategies, requiring us to see and to respond to many things that may be difficult to confront.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} ‘Interview with the Author’, available from <http://www.oprah.com/obc/pastbooks/annmarie_macleod/obc_20020405_profile.jsp> [accessed 29 August 2003].


A different authorship model is invoked in the case of Winfrey’s early selection of Maya Angelou’s *The Heart of a Woman*, and, of course, Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*. Angelou and Morrison have each had a profound influence on Winfrey. In Angelou’s case, her appeal has a great deal to do with the appeal of autobiography itself to Winfrey’s talkshow. Her work also has features in common with the survivor discourse, confessional, women-centred model to which Mitchard and McDonald belong. Much of what we identify as autobiography—life stories, first-person narrative testimonies, manifestos, works such as Alice Walker’s *In Search of My Mother’s Garden*, or Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*—have a clearly politicised function, often a feminist emancipatory politics. Angelou’s series of autobiographical works conflate personal history with collective or communal histories—her life, the defiant story of a black woman overcoming incredible hardship, is interwoven with major historical moments. In the case of the fifth instalment of Angelou’s autobiography, *The Heart of a Woman*, the context is the civil rights movement. When the Book Club discusses Angelou’s autobiography, readers identify across racial and cultural differences with a narrative which testifies to lived experience, relies on survivor discourse and modes of African American autobiography, a model of strong independent black womanhood, as well as a promotion of literacy and learning. It is a social rather than a strictly private or personal narrative. Winfrey will also later claim that Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* validates her own experience, thus personalising modes of survivor discourse.\(^7^3\)

The appeal of *Paradise* for the Book Club has much in common with earlier selections of Morrison’s novels, such as *Song of Solomon*, is directly related to the extent to which *Paradise/Oprah* draws on biblical discourse of salvation and a feminised narrative mode, as well as a politics of reconciliation (equanimity), a politics of revolution, and a politics of reessment. However the tutelage Morrison offers is different in kind to any guidance or instruction other Book Club authors may offer or be invited to offer. Princeton, as site of mainstream academy and its various ideological apparati, is the setting for the Book Club’s profile of *Paradise*. This was a

\(^7^3\) See her comments in Marilyn Johnson, ‘Oprah Winfrey: A Life in Books’: 46.
first for the Book Club, a setting markedly different to the dinner table talk and pyjama parties staged to set up discussion of previous selections (including *Song of Solomon* and *The Bluest Eye*). *Paradise* is a departure from the norm on a number of levels, pushing the boundaries of how we ‘read’ the place of popular pedagogy.

The highly nuanced performance rhetoric of talkshow pedagogy, and its politics of interpretation and identification, takes on the subject of race and public culture, but only through recognisable narratives: first-person narrative testimony, and survivor discourse. While self-improvement is always offset against reading for pleasure, I want to suggest nevertheless that the Book Club’s attempted meta-reading of *Paradise* is an effort to translate the untranslatable, reading poetic language, reading race into a life-changing experience. In the *Paradise* episode, as she has done with other Book Club shows, Winfrey effects a studied awareness. She strategically downplays her position as selector, as preeminent reader. She encourages personal, humble author stories and modes of identification between authors and readers. There are gradations of readership with Winfrey at the top, followed by a selection of representative readers who get the chance to speak directly with an author. These readers are chosen for their own personal histories and identifications with both the tale and the author. Winfrey’s authority is subordinate to the authority of the authors, but she steps in and out of that role as needed. It is different story with Morrison, whose brand of authorship does not draw on personal rhetorics.

The *Paradise* show marked a departure because the Book Club’s established reading and pedagogical strategies only function successfully up to a certain point. Morrison’s texts disrupt the distinction between what are considered to be high and low cultural texts. The *Paradise* example reveals that the Book Club’s readership is actually very adept and literate when it comes to the complex workings of culture, televisural discourse, and the phenomenon of celebrity. In fact the Book Club has quite a sophisticated material competence, an ability to read the semiotics of the concrete forms that embody, shape and condition the meaning of texts. But while they ‘get’ *Paradise* on these levels, efforts to read the novel through the usual Book
Club channels—through modes of identification with plot and character, and authenticated life-experience—prove limited. Not only does the example of Oprah’s Book Club reading of Paradise reveal the inadequacy of traditional reading practices, but it also displays the discomfiture of fit between ‘highbrow’ (the academic, the literary), ‘lowlbrow’ (talkshow confessional discourse), and ‘middlebrow’ (the Book Club itself, and book-based expertise).

Paradise is in many ways an aberration, a rather inaccessible, resistant, unsuccessful text. The show itself involved a select group of readers travelling to Princeton University to attend a seminar with Morrison. But despite the efforts of their teachers, not to mention their access to inside information, such as authorial intent, this group of readers did not ‘get’ Paradise. Was it the book itself, which had been the subject of so much criticism in the literary and popular presses, or the reading and teaching strategies employed, or the readers themselves, with whom Winfrey ultimately identified? In the Paradise show, Winfrey fashioned herself as both the teacher and the student whose expertise and knowledge derived solely from the experience of recreational reading. Morrison’s persona was an amalgam of the academic pedagogue and the celebrity author. An analysis of Paradise was clearly not the central concern of the Book Club; rather the show concentrates on the experience of reading, and, most particularly, Winfrey’s role as exemplary reader, a literary correspondent or intermediary.

Winfrey orients the study group discussion by way of explanatory introduction, signalling what Morrison is going to say in the one-on-one interview she conducts with her prior to the class. Winfrey highlights two reading cues, which are really part of the one protocol and a ‘whole new way of experiencing reading and life’: that readers must approach Paradise with an open mind, they must ‘embrace openness’; and that reader disorientation is a good thing and something which Morrison builds into the narrative. Winfrey explains that the experience of reading Paradise is akin to arriving new in town—it takes you some time to orient yourself; or that when you go about the business of everyday life all sorts of spaces, places and times might
converge. What is intriguing about this claim is that embracing disorientation is short-lived because Morrison’s appearances (in interview proper or in the classroom) are punctuated and thereby tightly editorialised by Winfrey’s running commentary. Winfrey’s project is to orient the reader/viewer. Winfrey historicises Paradise, referencing its originary premise that Morrison was intrigued by the all-black towns established in the American West by descendants of slaves. Then follows footage of such towns as they exist today (Langston, Boley, Rentiesville) and interviews with descendants of those founders as an authenticating device. Evidently the way to start to read Paradise is through this kind of plot and character-driven analysis. There is no sense of artifice or staging. Similarly, Winfrey claimed of the Beloved film that ‘the beauty of this movie is that the film is done the way Toni Morrison writes—like life is’.  

Although they may intersect at points, Winfrey’s and Morrison’s positions are at critical cross-purpose, despite the fact that both pedagogies are to some extent informed by the context of talkshow testimony and self-analysis, and associated technologies of address. This brand of teaching and learning is not radical or critical pedagogy, inasmuch as it still draws on reverential power relations between teacher and students. With Winfrey and Morrison, there are all sorts of slippages and tensions going on in the pedagogical performance. Winfrey occupies a mutually shared cultural category with Morrison, that of the African American female public figure. At important junctures Winfrey’s voice shifts between the ‘folksy’ and the ‘professional’, her acquiescence as student complicated by her position as exemplary reader, a sort of literary intermediary, and by her authoritative role in reading, teaching and translating Paradise for her usual audience. All of this is further compounded by her telling admission that she has read the original manuscript of Paradise, thus underscoring her privileged status. Morrison’s and Winfrey’s collaboration, then, is a kind of reciprocal patronage, two prominent African

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74 Oprah Winfrey, Journey to Beloved, Hyperion Press, 1998. Winfrey’s film diary is characteristically revealing of rather personal foibles, such as her disappointment at reading a note from Morrison, who had visited the set to watch Winfrey perform, in which Morrison observes ‘Sethe is not an emotional person, Oprah Winfrey is’.
American women professionals deploying their pedagogical status in order to reinvent, displace and prop up notions of canonicity, problematising existing literary genres in the process.

Paradise centres on the myriad of intimate relations between the inhabitants of the black township of Ruby, Oklahoma, founded along with other towns in the 1890s by descendants of slaves. Morrison has said of Paradise that it is her only novel which deals so directly with religious themes, and here the machinations of Paradise in terms of a haven or promised land are relevant, if in title only. Ruby’s beginnings take on a different slant, however, because its nine founding families, turned away many times by the outside world, meet with a final historical rebuff by richer, lighter-skinned blacks. Such rejection instils a guarded intimacy and self-sufficiency to their community. Ruby is a town preoccupied with the question of who or what is inside and outside its limits. Paradise is loosely structured around the narratives of women, each chapter named after a woman, each woman a resident, at some time or another, at the female convent-turned-commune. The flashback narrative reveals that the seemingly random actions of the gun-wielding men, who are hunting down the inhabitants of the commune in the novel’s opening pages, are the product of amassed history, circumstance and chance. In Paradise, the act of narrating history is literalised in the figure of Anna, the town’s historian.

Morrison’s attempt to make sense of Paradise for her anticipatory and responsive audience readership is, at one level, an effort to decode the sorts of textual codes which have preoccupied a number of severe reviews of the work to date: the nature of its diasporic community, its complex non-linear narrative and prolific viewpoints, which culminate not only in its being arguably unreadable but also its being unteachable.75 Morrison admits to not teaching her own work, but here advances a potentially difficult reading of the text by saying that Paradise is ‘open to all the places in between’, a mode of interpretation which Winfrey has already coined

'embracing openness', explaining that 'race may not play the part we are used to race playing', that she withholds racial information about certain characters in Paradise because of its unreliability. The Book Club's 'neo-talkshow' protocol, however, tackles this claim tangentially if at all. Reading Paradise through Oprah's Book Club, despite participatory modes of discussion, seems largely to be about privileging the author's perspective, effectively reading the author as expert. Part of Winfrey's effort, then, may be read as a middlebrow cultural attempt to cultivate in students a distinct attitude toward culture, that of the open-minded amateur, someone willing, at least momentarily, to subordinate his or her judgement to that of the author-experts.

The televisual economy of the talkshow and the anti-televisual, literary economy of Paradise, where literally news is passed by word of mouth — 'any news we get have to be from somebody telling it face to face' (Paradise, p.21) — are at odds. Likewise, in the Book Club's first anniversary episode, Winfrey and her reader-viewers collude in an ironised anti-television argument. Morrison, acutely aware of the politics of publishing in her role as an editor for many years with Random House, has asserted that 'what cannot be gainsaid is that [Winfrey's] interest in getting other people to read is sincere and it has a profound effect on the reading habits of many in this country. All of us benefit by that kind of effort to get us to turn off the television and to read a serious book'. Morrison continues in a similar vein: 'This summer my plan was to do very selective radio listening, read no newspapers or news magazines and leave my television screen profoundly, mercifully blank. I have been convinced for a long time now that with a few dazzling exceptions, print and visual media have thrown away their freedom and chosen jail instead'. For Morrison, the most overwhelming feature is 'loss of the public', and she has no other recourse but to 'get my news the old fashioned way: conversation, public eavesdropping and word of mouth'. Morrison has followed up such comments with pieces like 'The Talk of the Town' in The New Yorker, which critiques the print and televisual media.

preoccupation with the newsworthy subject of presidential adultery. The rhetorical force of such a statement has an opposite effect, because to take up the subject of President Clinton is surely to understand the publicness of private life. Even to take up the subject of presidential adultery requires its own complex rhetorical positioning, and a studied awareness of irony.

Much as sentimentalised reading practices are the order of the day for the Book Club, we cannot discount the media fluency of the talkshow audience and, by extension, the same audience’s proficient and ironised reading strategies. When a ‘new’ medium is invented, a literate community emerges in time to create a more complex understanding of that technology’s full potential. I am talking about critical media literacy here. When Winfrey revisits classic Book Club moments in the final show, she makes special mention of a member of the studio audience who expressed her distaste for the selected texts. Despite never reading any of the texts, this viewer insists that she loves being a member of the Book Club. Many people are coming to know who these authors are without actually reading their work, which points to the fact that reading and literacy are not solely the province of the written word, for instance in the form of a novel. Book Club members are literate about culture and celebrity. They understand that the text is more than the material object. In this sense it might be claimed that they have a heightened sense of textuality. Such a viewpoint also sheds light on the defensive strategies adopted by some viewers who seek to legitimise their viewing, revealing an awareness of the ideology of mass culture that seeks to denigrate them. It also links up with what Bourdieu has called the popular ‘aesthetic’: an aesthetic that is the opposite of the bourgeois aesthetic in which art is judged according to extremely formal, universalised criteria, totally devoid of subjective passions and pleasures. What matters for the popular aesthetic is the recognition of pleasure, and an awareness that pleasure is personal.

80Ien Ang, Living Room Wars: 185.
Oprah's readers come to *Sula* at the close of the Book Club. In her final program Winfrey talks about the wide-ranging success of the Club, and the reading revolution it initiated. The discussion of *Sula* revolves around Morrison's own comments and explanations—principally that she wrote the novel during 1969-1970, at the cusp of the feminist movement and was responding quite consciously to the rhetoric that insisted women should stop competing. This was not, Morrison insists, the experience of the black community. Here Morrison voices one of the animating precepts of an emergent black feminist criticism, which has been at the heart of relations of mistrust between the feminisms ever since. One of the invited readers, new to *Sula*, only enjoyed it on the second read, when the mother/daughter relationships came to the fore. *Sula* taught her a lot about women and friendship; that reading is not about happy endings, it's about thinking. The other invited readers, one of them a teacher, are in the process of re-reading the novel. Morrison wants the experience of re-reading *Sula* to be like re-visiting a piece of music arranged 'so as you can grow on it'. Morrison concludes that she cannot sell her readers short, enigmatically announcing: 'I know they know'. Winfrey repeats her claim there could not have been a Book Club without Toni Morrison because she afforded a repertoire of novels Winfrey could always rely on.

Barbara Johnson, influenced by Barbara Christian's and Deborah McDowell's seminal readings of *Sula*, remarks on the dissociation of 'aesthetics' and 'rapport', or affect and event in *Sula*. She offers an explication of two words which seem out of place in the text, two words identified by Nel as 'college' words. When Nel discovers her husband in bed with her best friend, she waits for Sula to 'say one of those lovely college words like aesthetic or rapport, which I never understood but which I loved because they sounded so comfortable and firm'. But as Johnson elaborates, 'we never observe a conversation between Sula and Nel that remotely resembles one in which the words "aesthetic" or "rapport" would have occurred'. The disjunction between affect and event, word and body, is understandably acute.

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In addition to coming from another scene, these words contain silent letters, signalling their status as writing, Johnson argues. If aesthetics is taken as the domain of the contemplation of forms, implying detachment and distance, then rapport is taken as the dynamics of connectedness. Rapport becomes a by-word for politics, while aesthetics is a by-word for theory, invoking a familiar double bind where politics and theory are at loggerheads. And indeed, the issue as to whether or not aesthetics is privileged over rapport is a central question of the novel. Johnson concludes that for Morrison it is not a matter of choosing between politics and aesthetics but of ‘recognising the profoundly political nature of the inescapability of the aesthetic within personal, political, and historical life’.\(^2\) Morrison then makes the aesthetic inexplicable from trauma, taboo, and violation. Aesthetics is not necessarily separable from the everyday.

‘College’ signifies the American university system, as well as being a more general reference to the nation’s repositories of knowledge. Aesthetics designates as ‘college’ more fittingly than rapport, although they are both ‘college’ to Nel. For rapport we might chart a trajectory through romanticism and its discourses of sensibility, or the discourse of psychology. But it is as a theory/politics binary that they register for Johnson. The reception of Morrison’s work bears this out: Sula has been, more than any other of Morrison’s novels, taken up as a key black feminist text. It is contemporaneous with the emerging field of black feminist criticism, marked by the foundational criticism of Barbara Smith, Barbara Christian, and Hortense Spillers. And in recent years it has enjoyed something of a revival, being read post-date as a lesbian/queer text—Deborah McDowell advances such a seminal reading as she did in the case of Nella Larson’s Passing, which has since been taken up by Johnson and Butler in their work on performativity.\(^3\) Why does Johnson invoke an either/or rhetoric, and not a continuum? Why this banalisation of politics into an intellectual or activist split? What is it about this text, and Morrison’s writing more generally, that invites personal admissions?

\(^2\) Barbara Johnson, ‘Aesthetics and Rapport in Toni Morrison’s Sula’: 172

V. Literary Questions

We already know certain things about Morrison in public, certain definitions, prohibitions, or permissions, and that while these have been observed in the Winfrey Morrison encounters, certain freedoms and re-definitions have ensued from that relationship of reciprocal patronage. Morrison’s authority is not contested. In other public appearances to discuss *Paradise* this is far from the case. And these examples ultimately serve to offset the pedagogical collaboration between Morrison and Winfrey.

In an Australian example, Morrison appears on a television interview program where her authority is not uncontested, and this example highlights the ways Morrison deals with the contest. In July 1998 prominent Australian journalist Jana Wendt profiled Toni Morrison for the inaugural episode of a now defunct interview program, *Uncensored*. From the outset, there was considerable industry discord about the much-hyped show’s lavish production budget, and whether or not the selected interviewees were sufficiently eminent on the world stage to warrant the attention, financial or otherwise, of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Wendt herself and a projected audience. Morrison was an intriguing choice to launch a show that would go on to profile Germaine Greer, and Madeleine Alibright. The sort of populist interview Wendt sought with Morrison might have seen her invoking the persona of the embodied multicultural woman. Through her recognisable subject position as a European/Australian woman, Wendt could conceivably have solicited Morrison’s complicity in debates about the marginal and canonical, such questions being implicitly and explicitly about race and gender. To a considerable extent, the intertwined formations and histories of those identities regularly constitute them as an unequal couple and this interview was no exception, one term being added to the other as a complicating supplement. The fall-out occasioned by the interview

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84 Others include Jenna Mead’s edited collection, which takes Morrison’s *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power* on the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas sexual harassment case, as a point of departure for a discussion of the pedagogies of public life, if only from the point of view of gender inequities. Jenna Mead (ed), *Bodyjamming: Sexual Harassment, Feminism and Public Life*, Vintage, 1997.
occupied editorial space for some weeks, the circuitous discussion of race an ironic consequence of a largely unwatched program.

Wendt opens the programme by relating a stock media history of Morrison. She tells her audience that Morrison is a distinguished writer who has 'come a long way from being regarded as an exotic author on the periphery', and whose novels 'focus proudly, unwaveringly on the black experience'. Morrison is daughter of a steel worker and the granddaughter of a slave, who has made it to the heights of the literary establishment. Footage of Morrison reading from Paradise (part of the chapter 'Consolata') at the Times and Dillon's Forum in London,\(^5\) audience shots, a book signing, and a flash-back to the 1993 Nobel prize ceremony, precede Wendt's interview with Morrison.

Such staple narratives of the fabled writer, together with the introduction of a post-colonial language of margin and centre, and the equation of race with blackness (which Morrison has already debunked, insisting on the parlance 'not-white' for the duration of the interview) serve to lead up to and amplify the final, and, from Wendt, uncharacteristically clumsy exchange about Morrison's marginalisation of white perspective in her work.

Jana Wendt (JW): And you will maintain this safe place for yourself, for your art? You don't think you will ever change and incorporate white lives in a substantial way?

Toni Morrison (TM): You can't understand how powerfully racist that question is can you? Because you could never ask a white author when are you going to write about black people whether he did or not, or she did or not; even the inquiry comes from a position of being in the centre...

JW: And being used to being in the centre.

TM: ... and being used to being in the centre, and saying you know, "is it ever possible you'll enter the mainstream?" It's inconceivable that where I already am is the mainstream.

\(^5\) Revealingly Wendt reads Paradise as being principally about a colony of traumatised women.
JW: Oh no, I think you are very much in the mainstream, that wasn’t the implication of my question. It’s a question of the subject of your narrative, whether you see any benefit from altering the parameters of your work, clearly there are disadvantages.

TM: Artistic disadvantages. Being an African American writer is sort of like being a Russian writer who writes about Russia in Russian for Russians. Being translated and read by other people is a benefit, but he/she is not obliged to ever consider writing about French people or, or anybody.

JW: We were talking earlier about you being in the mainstream, you sure are in the mainstream when it comes to public acclaim.

TM: I can’t tell you how satisfying it is to know you have earned a readership that is that large. I stood at the border, stood at the edge and claimed it as central, claimed it as central, and let the rest of the world move over to where I was.

Morrison represents her initial impetus to write as being fuelled by ‘another kind of literature’—that she wrote to a black readership, that her primary audience was within, and that she was thereby strategically free from the white gaze. Morrison insists on the currency of this authorial identity politics, which she does not feel is at odds with soliciting a broad readership through the grand-scale literary release of *Paradise* and the film version of *Beloved*. It is an argument she has made many times.

In her interview with Morrison, Wendt struggles to uphold a distinction between ‘real life’ and the ‘literary’, which she later unconvincingly exercises in an attempt to intellectualise this line of questioning after the debacle of the interview. By employing ‘literary’ as an alibi, Wendt explains, ‘I think Morrison either deliberately or accidentally kind of misunderstood what I was getting at. Really my question was more based on, it was a sort of literary question.*6 In other words, Wendt was not asking about real race issues, she was asking about literary race issues—and for Wendt this distinction is more than an arbitrary claim, though it blatantly jars with the interview’s performance of real race issues. Race—read blackness—is taken up

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*6 In an interview for 2BL radio, 7 July 1998.
and talked about in this public domain in a way whiteness is not. Wendt's assertion that she was 'miserunderstood' enacts a whole politics constitutive of a discourse of racism here, that Morrison 'miserunderstood' the authority of this white question, which (implicitly therefore) has the right to be asked. Wendt's articulation of being 'miserunderstood' denotes the privilege of her whiteness, the very privilege which informs her capacity to mis-understand blackness. Wendt's Eurocentric notions of canonicity—why are your characters not white?—elicits Morrison's reprimand, 'you can't understand how powerfully racist that question is can you?' Morrison effectively places Wendt, the respected Australian female journalist, under erasure. Her admonition 'even the inquiry comes from a position of being in the centre' has Wendt studiously echoing, 'and being used to being in the centre'. It is very much a strategic manoeuvre on Morrison's part not only to disclose Wendt's ignorance but to decentralise her in the interviewing process by denying her status and professional cover as interviewer. Wendt's use of 'literary' as an intellectual prop is deceptive on a number of counts, given the essentialist rhetoric and biographical mode relied upon by the interview's line of questioning. Morrison performs a subversively instructive role as she de/personalises the discussion by directly addressing Wendt's position of undisclosed privilege, in an overt sense when she pointedly says, 'what I want you to understand', and less patently, in a crucial exchange when Wendt unceremoniously asks Morrison when it was that 'colour or race became a crucial live issue for [her] as a child'. Morrison's subsequent deliberation on 'white' and 'not-white' discursive status in terms of a coloniser/colonised paradigm adjusts Wendt's terminology, thereby disallowing Wendt the illusion of a neutral position. Morrison refuses to divulge the personal, replying 'for me it may have been....' then proceeds to itemise possible moments of the type of self-recognition Wendt is looking for. The Wendt interview relies on viewing not only Morrison's texts, but also the author herself as a repository of culture, and then seeks to admonish the author for this parochialism. Morrison is having none of it. Any of Wendt's attempts to redact Morrison are turned around, and Wendt becomes an uncomfortable interview subject herself.
Conclusion

There is an obvious contradistinction between the way in which Winfrey and Wendt deploy their professional, journalistic styles in order to co-opt and produce the particularity of populist interview each requires, though both are sensitive to the authority of Morrison not only as a writer but as a public, international literary figure. Morrison's authorial voice works to destabilise the voices of Wendt and Winfrey. Winfrey's collusion with Morrison draws on her own vested authority, most recently notable through her involvement in the film version of *Beloved*, as that film's textual and emotional mother, somewhat in competition with Morrison. For her part, Morrison privileges authorial intent, intervening in 'literary' interpretations of her work, but offers a reading of *Paradise* which insists on narrative openness. This certainly offers a textual invitation to the reader to make the first moves towards a reconception of political subjectivity through examining the fragmented threads of public and personal history. Morrison's leverage to unsettle the canon through her focus on black characterisation, her literary decentering of whiteness through the articulation of black histories, are her the means of engendering the capability to unsettle the fundamental Eurocentric categories that inform the canon.

While speaking race through multiple discourses, there is also the problematic of the intersecting discourses of gender and sexuality, which bolster that public/private illusion. A large part of the undercutting of public and private by Morrison can only be done because of access to discourses of academia. I read Morrison's postmodern literary celebrity as being tied to a combination of populist-sentimental-feminised narrative modes conjoined with the authority of the public intellectual and historical redactor. By aligning herself with Oprah's Book Club, by narrating her novels as audio books and by embracing the film version of her novel *Beloved*, Morrison refashions the role of popular audiences in the construction of her textual and, finally pedagogical, authority.
REPARATIVE PEDAGOGY

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is a celebrity academic figure who has produced landmark texts in the discipline of queer studies. In addition to her literary criticism, such as *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) Sedgwick has also published distinctive autobiographical and poetic works, assembled in the collections *Tendencies* (1993) and *Fat Art Thin Art* (1994).¹ It is often difficult to categorise Sedgwick’s work because essayistic conventions of literary criticism are so often entwined with autobiographical modalities. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on pedagogy in her writings, evidenced in her personal reflections on teaching in her memoir *A Dialogue on Love* (1999), and culminating in the publication of *Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy* in 2003, a more strictly theoretical work in which she explores the pedagogical potential of ‘reparative’ practices.²

Sedgwick has made several appearances in this thesis thus far, from the slight to the more expansive. In the Introduction I hinted at Sedgwick’s conceptualisation of both ‘paranoid’ and ‘reparative’ academic practices as these are elaborated in her essay ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is About You’.³ In Chapter One I made reference to Sedgwick’s unravelling of binary oppositions, such as the public and private, in her early work in *Epistemology of the Closet*. In the context of a study of pedagogy and

performance, Sedgwick’s notion of the proscenium became a useful way of articulating the public/private space of the novel *Moby Dick*, and in a broader sense the larger stage of teaching itself. Chapter One also included reference to Sedgwick in a line-up of celebrity feminist academics who draw from a range of academic constituencies, but whose work has the power to cross over into more broadly public arenas. There is a real sense in which Sedgwick’s work not only bridges intellectual communities, but appeals to wider audiences particularly to the extent that her autobiographical writings are meaningful in everyday contexts as well as within the confines of the academy. The final mention of Sedgwick in Chapter One was in reference to a section on the subject of ‘love’ in academic writing. There I foreshadowed a reading of Sedgwick’s memoir *A Dialogue on Love* in my discussion of comparable academic efforts to extend the possibilities for critical writing. In Chapter Two, in the context of a discussion of Bakhtinian dialogics, I prefigured the way in which *A Dialogue on Love* might widen the various meanings and contexts for academic exchange. I also set the scene for a comparison between Haraway and Sedgwick, a comparison which would show how Sedgwick’s publication of her psychoanalysis in *A Dialogue on Love* specifically refuges a pedagogical dynamic with Haraway’s own dialogue between the discourses of science and literature. In Chapter Three, I referred to the way in which both Eve Sedgwick and Toni Morrison each in turn make claims for literature, particularly the practice of novel reading. Both Morrison and Sedgwick claim that novels must be interpreted, taught, talked about, and engaged with.

In this chapter, I start by exploring the ways in which Sedgwick envisages this engagement as a form of textual attachment, a reading practice traditionally devalued by the academy. As Sedgwick expresses it, the vocabulary for articulating any reader’s reparative motives and positionalities ‘toward a text of a culture has been so sappy, aestheticising, defensive, anti-intellectual, or reactionary that it’s no wonder few critics are willing to describe their acquaintance with such motives’ ⁴ Sedgwick’s reflections on what she has termed ‘reparative’ critical practices are

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⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’: 35.
central to my conceptualisation of 'public pedagogy' because reparative thinking complicates and re-conceives the academy’s critical as well as pedagogical behaviours. Sedgwick is distrustful of the 'infinitely doable teaching protocols of unveiling [that] have become common currency of cultural and historicist studies', protocols that have relegated to the margin alternative models of reading, writing, teaching and learning. In her theoretical as well as her autobiographical work, Sedgwick has sought to open up alternative critical and pedagogical spaces in the face of the dominance of institutional criticism.

In this chapter I will give some background to Sedgwick’s theories about reparation and affect before setting up an argument about the connections between these and her autobiographical writings. I will then go on to address Sedgwick’s own illness memoir A Dialogue on Love. First published as an extract in a special issue of the journal Critical Inquiry in 1998, devoted to the subject of intimacy, it then appeared as a book-length memoir in 1999. In the 1999 book, Sedgwick relates in detail the sessions undertaken with her therapist ‘Shannon’ for the depression she experienced following the diagnosis of breast cancer in the early 1990s. This dialogue consists of Sedgwick’s retelling of the therapeutic interaction, excerpts from her therapist’s notes, and numerous mediating poetic glosses, all of which disrupt the more familiar strains of a prose narrative. Just as Oprah provided an often uneasy interlocutory presence for Morrison, in which reciprocity was not always a literal condition of the interview, the dialogue between therapist (Shannon) and patient (‘Eve’) is always complex and at times more a function of the dialogic narrative than a constituent part of the sessions themselves. This chapter offers the fullest discussion of dialogue; in the most obvious sense, dialogue is the very subject of Sedgwick’s memoir in the exchange she constructs between therapist and patient. Moreover, Sedgwick’s theorisation of dialogue here references, questions, extends, and reinterprets other theories about dialogue, notably Platonic dialogue and Bakhtinian dialogics. It will become clear in my discussion of A Dialogue on Love that dialogue is also

5 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading': 21.
foundational to Sedgwick’s pedagogical model, particularly to the ways in which the ‘academic’ and the ‘personal’ potentially coalesce.

Sedgwick has always been invested and implicated in her literary criticism, so her illness memoir *A Dialogue on Love* is less a departure for her than it would be for other critics. Building on earlier autobiographic work in *Tendencies* (1993) and *Fat Art, Thin Art* (1994), *A Dialogue on Love* ties together Sedgwick’s scholarship on queer studies and therapy discourses: ‘the work is about sex and love and desire, so it’s bound to be involving at that intimate level’ she writes.⁷ Opening in 1992, *A Dialogue on Love* is contemporaneous with the foundational queer studies text *Epistemology of the Closet* as well as ‘White Glasses’, Sedgwick’s work on AIDS and literature.⁸ The essay ‘White Glasses’ is an important precursor to *A Dialogue on Love* as is ‘A Poem Is Being Written’ which, in telescoped form, rehearses many of the themes later unravelled in *A Dialogue on Love*. One level of meaning for ‘White Glasses’ is to read it as an illness memoir, which Sedgwick writes about the death of her friend Michael Lynch, in which the genres of memoir, conference paper and eulogy come together. Moreover, in this early essay Sedgwick broaches the subject of her own recently diagnosed illness. Her admission about her breast cancer in the context of this essay is revelatory on a number of levels:

Unreflecting, I formed my identity as the prospective writer of this piece around the obituary presumption that my own frame for speaking, the margin of my survival and exemption, was the clearest thing in the world. In fact it was totally opaque: Michael didn’t die; and I wasn’t healthy: within the space of a couple of weeks, we were dealing with a breathtaking revival of Michael’s energy, alertness, appetite—also with my unexpected diagnosis with a breast cancer already metastasized to several lymph nodes. So I got everything wrong.⁹

Sedgwick’s discomfort is articulated as a crisis of authority and self-knowledge. In a similar tenor but in an entirely different frame of reference ‘A Poem is Being Written’

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⁷ *A Dialogue on Love*: 6. All subsequent references cited in text.
ruminates on the discomfort occasioned not by an illness subjectivity, but by the pain of teaching and 'studenting':

'I'm teaching writing now', I said, 'isn't it uncanny the authoritativeness of puppy genius, and so distant'.

No wonder we're uncomfortable, I meant: the pain of teaching being so akin the pain of studenting, of envy and arousal.\(^{10}\)

Both teaching and illness are affective genres for Sedgwick, and it is in A Dialogue on Love that they come together. This memoir could be considered the most popular or public of Sedgwick's writing. It follows the conventions of an illness memoir being a first-person account of depression, one which mobilises a version of survivor discourse to ruminate on the heightened sense of 'self' occasioned by the experience of having one's selfhood under erasure. The illness persona can set the author apart from the everyday, and this separation can strengthen his/her resolve to pass unnoticed in society. However, Sedgwick brings other talents to the genre which inflect the text's re-imagining of the public/private self. My approach to Sedgwick's use of this popular genre is twofold. A Dialogue on Love is intelligible as part of Sedgwick's oeuvre and via her own theories of reparative criticism and affect. I also want to approach A Dialogue on Love as an illness memoir in its own right because this is another way in which to read Sedgwick's pedagogy as a form of cure. I will position Sedgwick's contribution to the genre through an examination of two comparative illness memoirs: the best-selling, paradigmatic Listening to Prozac (1993) by Peter Kramer, and the lesser known, although equally important addition to the genre, Spasm: A Memoir with Lies (2000) by Lauren Slater. In some ways both Kramer and Slater could be considered academic cross-over figures in that they both have academic profiles, but this is not the central reason for their texts being chosen to illuminate A Dialogue on Love. I am not making a comparison of Sedgwick, Slater and Kramer as public pedagogues. My reading of Listening to Prozac and Spasm will serve

\(^{10}\) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'A Poem is Being Written', in Tendencies: 189.
to contextualise Sedgwick’s project in a different way to reading *A Dialogue on Love* via Sedgwick’s own theories about illness, reparation and affect. In tandem the two approaches will illuminate the ways in which Sedgwick goes beyond the academy to reconfigure the possibilities for academic criticism and pedagogy.

I. Repair

It is perhaps not surprising that Sedgwick’s students report a serious attachment to their teacher. Rafael Campo has opined ‘I was under the influence of Eve Sedgwick whose instruction, as any of her students will report, is the most potent of all aphrodisiacs.’ And, in no less evocative terms, James Kincaid has recently articulated his attachment:

> Now I know why no one in love with Eve Sedgwick (all of us) can write about her. Consider that—‘write about her’—we are all able to write and we all are inspired by her; it’s the about we trip over. Who can find the distance or wants to? We all write to Eve or, more exactly, she writes to us. Better yet (I should have said this right off), we write with her. With Eve, it’s always we.

Sedgwick offers herself up in many ways as a kind of role model to students, doctors, her correspondents, other critics and teachers. The recent collection, *Regarding Sedgwick* (2002), featuring essays by Judith Butler, Nancy Miller and Lauren Berlant, attests to the profound influence of Sedgwick’s critical theories. Gradations of devotion come to a climax in James Kincaid’s love letter ‘When Whippoorwills Call’ from which I have just quoted. The essays ruminate on Sedgwick’s pedagogy, critical theory and memoir-writing, and themselves enact the critical experimentation Sedgwick invites. This invitation is not limited to literary critics. In another forum, Sedgwick has explored the shifting grounds of possibility for graduate students’ pre-professional and professional writing. The syllabus for one of her graduate seminars explains that

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as the ambitions of literary criticism become more expansive and searching under the influence of deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, popular culture, and liberatory theoretical movements around race, colonialism, and sexuality, there is increased room for experimentation and reflexiveness in the modalities of critical writing, as well.\textsuperscript{13}

This particular course ultimately aims to prepare students to produce professionally publishable writing that will change the current profile of what is publishable in the profession. Sedgwick’s own writings could well be their template. She contends that there is increased room for experimentation and reflexiveness in the modalities of critical writing, especially now that boundaries between, for example, critical and creative writing, or between private and public address, are subject to exploration. Moreover, Sedgwick is critically interested in the way that the paths of both allo-identification (identification with people different from you) and auto-identification (identification with people like you) are just as ‘likely to be strange and recalcitrant’ in critical writing as they are in everyday life.\textsuperscript{14}

As I have indicated, Sedgwick’s theories on reparative critical practices are elaborated in the essay, ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’, in which she argues that dominant modes of academic criticism have drifted into an essentially paranoid suspicion of textual attachment. In her polemic against critical criticism, Sedgwick seeks to articulate and legitimate a loose array of alternative commentary forms among queer academics, which she groups under the name ‘reparative reading’. Reparative practices share an attachment to texts; they are ways of reading that have been demonised as uncritical. Reparative criticism, as Sedgwick envisages it, concerns itself less with the paranoid policing of literature for its sins and its failings than with an appreciation of its complexities. In this way, it is an antidote to Michel Foucault’s modern critic who is the final incarnation of the subject who judges: that is, the subject of certainty whose historical emergence is closely allied to


\textsuperscript{14} Eve Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology of the Closet}: 59.
the juridico-legal function of judgement one finds at the basis of what Foucault called
disciplinary societies.\textsuperscript{15}

Sedgwick wants readers, students and critics to begin thinking not just about
‘nondualistic thought’ but about ‘nondualistic pedagogy’.\textsuperscript{16} In her most recent book
*Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy* (2003) Sedgwick introduces the idea
of the ‘beside’ as a potential means of thwarting binary thinking.\textsuperscript{17} In *Touching Feeling*
Sedgwick addresses all sorts of affective experiences, ranging from her own illness to
paranoid and reparative pedagogies, from shame and queer theory to literary
analyses. A ‘disturbingly large amount of theory’, Sedgwick argues seems explicitly
to ‘undertake the proliferation of only one affect, or maybe two, of whatever kind—
whether ecstasy, sublimity, self-shattering, jouissance, suspicion or horror’.\textsuperscript{18}
Sedgwick attempts to show that it is time for theorists to get beyond dualistic
thinking, to the place of the ‘beside’, which reflects phenomenologically the ways in
which affects work. Sedgwick proposes a move beyond paranoid readings (such as
those reflective of Paul Ricoeur’s insistence on suspicion\textsuperscript{19}) to more reparative ones.
Here she draws on the work of Melanie Klein, who suggested that reparative
practices move alongside the paranoid.\textsuperscript{20} *Touching Feeling* documents something of a
shift in Sedgwick’s approach, from an emphasis on critical practices in the essay
‘Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading’ to an explicit discussion of how pedagogy is
implicated in any discussion of such practices. The essay ‘Paranoid Reading,
Reparative Reading’ is reproduced in *Touching Feeling*, but it now reverberates
amidst essays entitled ‘Interlude, Pedagogic’ and ‘Pedagogy of Buddhism’. Sedgwick

\textsuperscript{15} This is a point made by Gregg Lambert, building on the work of Foucault’s famous essay ‘What is an
Author?’ See Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’ in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays
Lambert, ‘On the Uses and Abuses of Literature for Life: Gilles Deleuze and the Literary Clinic’,
University Press, 2003: 1
\textsuperscript{17} Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*: 8
\textsuperscript{18} Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*: 146
\textsuperscript{19} For example, see Ricoeur’s *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press,
1974.
now suggests that paranoid pedagogy cannot tolerate surprises, yet a reparative pedagogy embraces them: 'To a reparatively positional reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise. Because there are terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones'. 21 When pedagogies are open to surprise, they are open to alternative readings—and therefore, in the context of this thesis, receptive to alternative knowledges.

Sedgwick’s sense of her own achievement, as she expresses it in A Dialogue on Love is of leading a life where ‘work and love are impossible to tell apart’. 22 For many academics, there is a definite attraction in keeping personal and professional lives apart, even in just a strategic sense, yet Sedgwick’s case demonstrates that this is impossible on a number of levels. Indeed her critical work has always been about the way that literature and sex, literature and desire, literature and love, are impossible to tell apart. As Paul Kelleher puts it

Sedgwick brings out scenes in which only by habit could one discern sexuality and literature as two distinct figures, so interchangeable are their profiles, so wonderfully mistakeable are they for one another. 23

Such entanglements might well apply to other examples discussed in this thesis notably Toni Morrison’s critical writings and pedagogical practice argue for an everyday language or ‘public discourse’ for the novel (although not via the conventions of autobiography). Like Haraway and Morrison, Sedgwick identifies as a teacher 24—her academic affiliation is an important backdrop to her engagement with the public, especially to the extent that her academic reading elevates reading practices above the recreational, and indeed recoups the so-called recreational as an academic province. I want to extend the analysis broached in Chapter Three, about sentimental reading formations, such as those envisaged in popular formats like Oprah’s Book Club draw from an academic as well as a popular cultural perspective.

How might texts like A Dialogue on Love oscillate between institutional sites of critical

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21 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Touching Feeling: 146.
22 A Dialogue on Love: 23.
23 Paul Kelleher, 'If Love Were All: Reading Sedgwick Sentimentally', in Regarding Sedgwick: 143.
24 Having taught for many years at Duke University, Sedgwick currently teaches English at the CUNY Graduate Centre.
inquiry, public intellectualism and readerly interpretation? A Dialogue on Love seeks a performance mode that aesthetically signposts its mixing of expository and narrative (or ‘academic’ and ‘personal’) rhetoric; it achieves this as an illness memoir written by a stellar academic, but also as part of Sedgwick’s wider project which seeks to set up a dialogue between critical and uncritical readings.

II. Prozac and Its Metaphors

Many critics tend to read Sedgwick’s creative or poetic work via the touchstone of her own critical theories, but I have elected to read Sedgwick’s therapy memoir A Dialogue on Love in the first instance via other illness memoirs, and the two I have chosen fall within the post-Prozac era. This methodology allows me to consider the various ways in which Sedgwick fuses illness memoir with other forms of writing. Sedgwick, together with the two illness memoirists I will now consider, goes some way towards answering the question posed by John Schlib: how will the invention of Prozac and similar drugs figure in the rhetoric and ‘subjects’ of pedagogy, autobiography and therapy in the future?25 In A Dialogue on Love, Sedgwick immerses herself in the affective genre of the illness memoir which allows a tying together of the ‘critical’ and ‘uncritical’ and an exploration of their often uneasy co-existence.

Writing about depression-related illnesses has had a notable life throughout the twentieth century, concomitant with psychoanalytic talking cures, but the genre of the illness memoir has morphed in other directions following the advent of antidepressant drugs such as Prozac. A treatment for depression since the 1980s, Prozac has occasioned a shift in understanding not only about depressive illnesses but also about concepts of self and subjectivity.26 The post in ‘post-Prozac’ works, like

contested definitions of postmodernism, not only to delineate a timeframe but to
denote 'new' narrative modes for thinking and writing about depression-related
illnesses.

In this section I will discuss Peter Kramer’s *Listening to Prozac* (1994) where the
Prozac Doctor (Kramer himself is Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Brown
University) weaves a history of the drug, with case history vignettes of his patients.
Then I consider Lauren Slater’s *Spasm: A Memoir With Lies* (2002) which calls into
question the so-called discrete subjectivities of ‘patient’ and ‘therapist’.27 More
particularly, in Slater’s case I consider the phenomenon of the disorderly narrative
and the unreliable narrator, harnessed by Slater to subvert the integrity and
authenticity of the illness subjectivity. Neither Kramer nor Slater is a literary critic
like Sedgwick, but in so far as their memoirs offer an important alloy of science and
literature, they can be very fruitfully linked to Sedgwick’s *A Dialogue on Love*. In the
course of examining these memoirs I ask a series of questions. How might we
account for the proliferation and popularity of illness memoirs over the last twenty
years, and more to the point, the proliferation of illness memoirs about depression?28
What has depression come to signify? What are its animating metaphors? How is it
represented in popular and literary texts? What is it teaching us? In the first instance,
I advance an argument that pits Prozac and narratives about the Prozac ‘cure’ against
more conventional therapy treatment regimes and narratives. The two figures I take
as ‘representative’ of these approaches are Kramer and Sedgwick. The schema gets
complicated, however, because Kramer and Sedgwick are not really at odds. It is far
less profitable to read them as respective proponents of Prozac (where the therapist’s
role is diminished, even supplanted by the drug) and Therapy (where the

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and Edward Shorter, ‘From Freud to Prozac’, in *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the

27 I choose to use ‘therapist’ and ‘patient’ over ‘analyst’ and ‘analysand’ because these tend to be the
terms used in the illness memoirs I examine.

28 Since 1990, to name a few: Elizabeth Wurtzel, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America*, A Memoir
relationship between therapist and patient is centre-stage and Prozac relegated to the margins) than it is to read the confluence of these two treatment regimes in their narratives. For instance, if I plan to read Kramer's thesis as enabling for a feminist politics, what might be the ramifications for Sedgwick's approach? In its dramatisation of the role a literary critic might play in her treatment, is Sedgwick's *A Dialogue on Love* any less emancipatory? In dealing with these questions, I will revisit some revealing trends in academic writing in the 1990s, a decade that was marked by a propensity for sentimentalised discourses and autobiographical critique. While I may read Sedgwick (and for that matter Kramer) via this critical discourse, I am not suggesting that Sedgwick's autobiographical work conforms to these trends. Sedgwick's theoretical and fictional work has always been about the proscenium between public and private; to this extent, her writings call into question that very dichotomy. Sedgwick's account of her therapy following a depression, ostensibly occasioned by a diagnosis of breast cancer, narrativised in *A Dialogue on Love*, is an idiosyncratic addition to the genre. Sedgwick grapples with the view that illness is its own pedagogy. Thus, she initially takes comfort in the administering or ministering of conventional pedagogies to alleviate her depression. In *A Dialogue on Love* her 'Eve' persona is versed in the pedagogies of everyday life, but her choice of pedagogy draws equally on literary models and therapy discourses.

In the late twentieth century, an increasing number of cultural commentators began to see widespread depression and other mental 'illnesses' in the West as a symptom of a dysfunctional society, a psychological manifestation of the alienation of the self and its true needs and desires in a hypermodern, capitalist, global culture. The spectre of depression and people's attempts to accommodate it, have been staples of the talkshow circuit, especially in the wider context of self-help methodologies. Notably, Oprah Winfrey's version of the talkshow format has been read by critics across a wide spectrum of opinion as a 'new' form of 'talking cure'. The coinage 'oprahification' is now used to denote public confession as a form of therapy. Public confession and the culture of therapy have also enjoyed a 'talking life' in the

academy, not least because of traditional associations of intellectualism and melancholia. From Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1624) onwards, melancholics were held to be particularly suited to the pursuit of scholarship.\(^{30}\) Consequently it was also held that those who engaged in intellectual pursuits were particularly prone to falling into a melancholic condition.\(^{31}\) While the term ‘melancholia’ may since have been eclipsed by ‘depression’, the residual link between creativity and the melancholic temperament endures. The apparent proliferation of Prozac use in the academic humanities and the entertainment professions (Rundle cites figures of up to fifty per cent’)\(^{32}\) offers a rich site of convergence of the everyday experience of depressive illness and academic contemplative practices.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the vicarious public/private space of talkshow confessional discourse as an intersection of ‘high’ and ‘popular’ modes. This chapter takes up another brand of confessional discourse similarly characterised by spectacle and spectacular admissions: the intimate therapeutic relationship. As we have seen, the talkshow confession is characterised by its testimonial rhetoric and narrative mode of self-development, exponentially revealing, uncovering, and disclosing truths. Inasmuch as it is an interview genre, the encounter between therapist and patient likewise relies on the structure of the confessional narrative. Illness memoirists reveal vulnerabilities well beyond those occasioned by their illness. The illness memoir draws on the phenomenon of the confession—in all its secular, legal, therapeutic, and literary breadth. There is also a strong sense in which the confessional rhetoric of the illness memoir serves a pedagogic purpose. In this sense illness memoirs resemble a confessional genre that dates back to St Augustine’s account of a sinful early life, and Rousseau’s secular confessions in the eighteenth century, where the act of narrating his sins paves the way to redemption. The literary confession of most relevance to this discussion, however, belongs to the early nineteenth century. What *Listening to Prozac, Spasm* and *A Dialogue on Love* have in


\(^{31}\) Guy Rundle, ‘Learning from Prozac’: 20.

\(^{32}\) Guy Rundle, ‘Learning from Prozac’: 29.
common is a certain brand of confessional discourse, which actually draws less from Oprah than from the romantic texts of Thomas De Quincey.  

De Quincey’s Confessions of An English Opium Eater (1821) sets up a compact between reader and writer (he directly addresses his reader in the preface ‘From the Author to the Reader’) by a series of preliminary confessions and their promise of a revelation of visceral truths. The text then proceeds to document the pleasurable and painful psychological effects of opium. De Quincey’s childhood experiences become symbolic visions and his narrative bears the hallmarks of novelistic innovation, particularly his emphasis on the internalised psychology of the individual. True to Romantic aesthetics of the dark sublime, De Quincey’s confession takes account of painful as well as pleasurable perceptions, not least of which is fear. According to this theory, terror was thought to have a more powerful effect on the self than pleasure. The relation of pleasure and pain to anticipatory learning is an important feature of today’s psychological and psychoanalytic disciplines.

Foucault’s work on confession is also pertinent to this discussion. For Foucault the genealogical relationship between the development of confession in church liturgy and the formation of the modern subject is especially relevant to the modern obedient subject, who internalises guilt and authority. So, for example, confession is Western society’s favoured apparatus for the surfacing and verification of the truth of an individual’s sexuality. Foucault drew a strong link between forms of legal and therapeutic confession, each of which relies on an interview format where certain protocols are observed, chiefly that the interviewer is in an authoritative position. It has been frequently observed that Freud’s talking cure also drew on both confession and interview rhetoric to figure the analyst as a quasi-detective, who created order and meaning out of a disorganised narrative, and out of the disorganised personality.

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of the pathologised subject. Although Freud was certainly aware of the difference between psychoanalytic discourse and the discourse of the novelist, it may be claimed that both the analyst and analysand operate much like *dramatis personae* in a larger organising narrative. The analyst-clinician quite often relies on other models, such as narratives and (partial) interpretive methodologies borrowed from history or literary studies. The analyst’s authorship of a case history effectively silenced the patient’s own narrative, to which the patient may have only intermittent or illicit access. In other words, the process of analysis provided by the psychoanalyst structured the telling of the story he/she elicited. The order in which the story came together inevitably revealed the condition of the patient/storyteller. But the desire for the analyst to classify his or her patient’s pathology, and then, for the protection of society, to coax the patient towards self-recognition of that pathology, is a movement which inevitably disabled the free compact of analyst and analysand upon which Freudian analysis is based. Concomitant with the advent of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century, literary confessions parlayed into the more familiar autobiographical narrative, a recent feature of which has been the questioning of the supposedly transparent form and the heroic personality of the autobiographical subject. Sedgwick’s own work in *Epistemology of the Closet*, where she extrapolated the trope of the closet, the passing narrative, and the phenomenon of the open secret in relation to homosexuality, is a touchstone here, as it has been for other theorists and disciplines.

The illness memoir of which *A Dialogue On Love* is an example marks a shift away from discourse about melancholia towards discourse about depression. Discourses about melancholia have proved enduring from Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholia* to Julia Kristeva’s *Black Sun*, but during the twentieth century melancholia was supplanted, although not entirely or discretely, by depression. A number of

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commentators lament the shift, because as Susan Sontag observed in her decidedly non-autobiographical essay *Illness and Its Metaphors* (1978), depression was 'melancholia minus its charms—the animation, the fits'. Sontag's *Illness As Metaphor* and its follow-up, *Aids and Its Metaphors*, extrapolated the symbolically laden discourse about illness. These two texts also instituted certain assumptions about illness whereby trading in metaphors propagated 'new' metaphors in turn. Sontag unravelled the metaphoric associations of cancer and tuberculosis, then in the later publication turned her attention to the HIV and AIDS era. In *Illness As Metaphor*, Sontag cast illness as the 'night side of life' and as a more 'onerous citizenship', exploring a range of both literary and political discourses in which illness figured (*Illness As Metaphor*, p.3). She traced the literary associations of disease from the ancients, who often made disease an instrument of divine wrath, through to the nineteenth century where the notion that disease fits the patient's character as the punishment fits the sinner was replaced by the notion that disease expressed character and was a 'product of the will' (*Illness As Metaphor*, p.43). This latter reasoning which saw disease as a 'product of the will' became particularly resonant in the twentieth century. While tuberculosis was foremost a 'disease of passion' Sontag speculated that cancer was generally thought to be an inappropriate disease for romantic characters—the controlling metaphors for cancer were not drawn from economics but from the language of warfare (*Illness As Metaphor*, p.64). The antagonism which Sontag charted between representations of tuberculosis and representations of cancer, ran parallel to the shift from the romantic notion of melancholy to unromantic depression. Moreover, Sontag's periodisation ironically mirrors Camille Paglia's rhetoric of career succession, with its view that certain versions of literary criticism or certain forms of self-knowledge are superseded by new forms of the ascendant generation.

So, what sets the illness memoir on depression and the Prozac narrative apart from earlier illness memoirs, such as narratives about cancer? Throughout the 1990s a

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number of autobiographical works, novels, and self-help titles attempted to come to
terms with a subjectivity traumatised, not only by depression, but by its cure. Works
such as Susanna Kaysen’s Girl Interrupted (1993), Elizabeth Wurtzel’s Prozac Nation
(1994), and Lauren Slater’s Prozac Diary (1998) articulated a wider phenomenon
appearing in the popular press as ‘American nervousness’, ‘future shock’, ‘prozac
nation’, and ‘trauma culture’ in which (in Mark Seltzer’s words) ‘stranger intimacy
and its maladies became a version of public culture, part of this pathological public
sphere’.41 The phenomenon of ‘cure’ or resolution in these memoirs, written in the
main by women, relied on a different set of ministrations than those Sontag charted.42

Peter Kramer, author of Listening to Prozac, takes a cue from Sontag with his seeming
preference for literary notions of melancholia over scientific depression. Much of the
commentary about Prozac, from both its supporters and its detractors, makes the
point that there is a certain hollowing out of self for the Prozac user. In Listening to
Prozac, Kramer not only observes his patients, he listens to the drug. It is a technique
at some remove from the ‘talking cure’ in which the psychoanalyst as an exemplary
listener fashions case histories, and is more in tune with methodologies of cultural
critique. Chapter One recounted some of these methodologies and the difficulties
they face (the valuing of non-traditional, experiential kinds of knowledge; models of
learning which call the teacher/student dualism into question). Prozac challenges
conventional thinking about depression and questions of selfhood, contributing to
the new models of self-understanding which have challenged the humanistic forms
holding sway in public culture from the 1950s through to the 1980s. The belief that
depression is the result of an overproduction of serotonin, thereby treatable by the
correct dose of serotonin inhibitor,43 is part of a wider sense in which people have

There are many other titles, including short stories—Pagan Kennedy’s ‘Shrinks’ and Lauren Slater’s
‘Black Swans’—and essayistic interventions. There are fewer examples of African American women
writing memoirs about depression, although MeriNana-Ama Danquah’s Willow Weep for Me: A Black
Woman’s Journey Through Depression (1998) is one such example.
42 Again there are important exceptions where male writers have tackled the subject of depressive
illnesses, but the Prozac phenomenon as it is charted here has a female/feminist focus.
43 Prozac is a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) used to treat depression, bulimia, obsessive
compulsive disorders (OCD) and severe symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMDD). This
medication works by helping to restore the balance of certain natural chemicals in the brain.

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come to think of themselves as, in Guy Rundle’s words, ‘digitalised machines’. Kramer is not so enamoured of this type of self-conception, but he does notice the tendency in himself as well as his patients, to begin viewing apparently innocuous personality traits as pathological if they disappeared following Prozac treatment.

Kramer’s starting point is a surprising clinical observation: when he prescribed Prozac to patients who were only mildly depressed, the patients occasionally responded so positively to the drug that they felt ‘better than well’. He realised Prozac was doing more than just treating depression—it was provoking subtle changes in his patients’ personality and behaviour that allowed them to function better in daily life and in their interaction in public culture. According to Kramer, Prozac is tailored not to offer release from everyday consciousness but rather to provide support for it. The patients treated by Kramer want to be ‘normal’; in this sense Prozac seems to offer a companionable support for the extraordinariness of the everyday. Prozac is also cast as an instructor, from which the doctor listens and learns. In Kramer’s formulation, Prozac itself supplants the talking cure, and overturns one of its axioms. Kramer believes that Prozac proves psychoanalysis to be wrong in attributing adult misery to childhood psychological trauma. He does not look for clues in childhood, as others have before him. Instead, Kramer is first and foremost instructed by Prozac.

Blending literary devices and narratives, case study vignettes, popular science and biography, Listening to Prozac is a rather pensive examination of the effects of Prozac on a number of mildly depressed patients who, following treatment, experience remarkable personality transformations. It opens with the story of Tess, stuck in a compulsive and self-destructive affair. Tess responds so well to Prozac that she is able to walk away from that damaging relationship. Such cases lead Kramer to question whether the medicated or unmedicated version is the person’s ‘real’ self. Kramer listens to his patients’ accounts ‘with the ear of a literary critic in search of a

subtext'. It is unsurprising to learn that Kramer trained as a literary critic before becoming a psychoanalyst. Kramer's other books also make literary critical overtures. For instance, in _Moments of Engagement: Intimate Psychotherapy in a Technological Age_ (1989), for instance, he is just as attentive to narrative, striving for a dialogic feel; even when he relies on case histories there are (self)revelatory encounters with patients. He admits 'I know I saw in psychoanalysis a literary romance ... secretly I hoped to retain the very same intellectual sensibility I was in theory abandoning for a handcraft'. In an advice book _Should You Leave?_ (1997), published after _Listening to Prozac_, Kramer offers a style of advice different from Freud or self-help literature. Pushing the limits of traditional 'silent therapy', Kramer explains that _Should You Leave?_ is written in the manner of second person fiction: 'I like the oddness of second person, how partly you're drawn in and partly you're kept at a distance because clearly it's not you. I think that's one of the virtues of second-person fiction: doublessness of perspective. The book is for me a move toward writing fiction'. Since then he has written a novel, entitled _Spectacular Happiness_ (2001).

In _Listening to Prozac_, Kramer's interest is piqued by genre and narrative, an interest which involves listening to the text, detecting and interpreting literary meaning from everyday life. He talks about the 'genre of self-esteem', which he regards as the most autobiographical of traits, employing the metaphor of 'proprioception' to explicate low self-esteem, which he identifies as an almost neurological inability to locate the self (_Listening to Prozac_, p.204). The _Oxford English Dictionary_ defines a proprioceptor as 'any sensory structure which receives stimuli arising within the tissues (other, usually, than the viscera)'. So proprioception means the reception of information by these proprioceptors and its interpretation. By proprioception, Kramer broadly means interpretation, but it is clear he places literary interpretation on an equal

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49 Simpson and Weiner (eds), _Oxford English Dictionary_.
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footing with more traditional scientific methods. He reveals the way neurochemicals
tell stories (Listening to Prozac, p 21). He also explores the role of neurochemicals such
as opium, lithium, and imipramine in the genesis of Prozac. He subscribes to a
complicated biological narrative, paying heed to Freud's reading of hysteria and
other such neurological symptoms as metaphorical, even poetical expressions of
repressed psychological conflicts.

Literature and history are clear models for Kramer. Listening to Prozac is littered with
literary references and themes: Marlowe's Tamburlaine (10), Goethe's young Werther
(20), Phileas Fogg; Edmunde Gosse and the Bloomsbury Group (41), the writerly
persona of Primo Levi (142), The Glass Menagerie (191), Graham Greene (225), Jean
Paul Sartre (244), Charles Dickens, Walter Piercy (250), Octavio Paz, Thomas De
Quincey, Kubla Khan, and the romantic imagination (270), and Lionel Trilling (276).
There are also numerous allusions to literary themes, such as sensitivity (67),
character, temperament (148), and mother/daughter relations (201). Yet the most
striking feature of Kramer's literary references is their conventionality. It is not an
extension, for example, to be referencing Goethe's Young Werther when he is
attempting to explicate the fragile lives of his own young Werthers, whose romantic
imaginations have an uneasy life in everyday America. In a narrative that introduces
the dramatis personae as a series of authentic selves with heightened literary sensibility,
what remains unconventional is Kramer's treatment of Prozac as a protagonist.

Feminist critics, in particular, have responded positively to the agency suggested by
Kramer's claim that depression is neurological. Kramer explicitly argues that
antidepressants are a 'feminist drug, liberating and empowering' (Listening to Prozac,
p.40). One of the most compelling arguments in support of this has been made by
Elizabeth Wilson. Wilson finds Kramer's thesis, despite its being the object of
sustained feminist reproach for its reductive account of subjectivity, to in fact be
potentially and profoundly enabling for feminist politics.50 By placing psychical

50 See Elizabeth A. Wilson, Neural Geographies: Feminism and the Microstructure of Cognition, New York:
effects in an intimate alliance with the anatomical configurations of the nervous system. Wilson argues that Kramer's model elucidates one particular mode of neurology's 'articulate nature'. This means that not only is depression neurological, neurology is depressive. Rather than simply leading to or facilitating depression, neurological matter itself may become weakened, neurasthenic, and depressive. Not simply the effect of extra-neurological events, and not simply the regulator of extra-neurological events, this weakened and depressed neurology instantiates the literate, generative, and sometimes melancholic nature of biological matter in general. In one sense, then, biological understandings may learn from literary understandings of melancholia and depression.

In a radio interview conducted at the time of the book's release in Australia, Kramer addressed the controversy occasioned by his book, especially concern about Prozac bypassing conventional treatments. While grand claims are made that Prozac turns pessimists into optimists, thus altering the core of human personality, Kramer is careful to arrest what he calls the 'restless discussion' accompanying the book's reception, aiming instead to generate a more thoughtful conversation. In Kramer's experience, Prozac brings forth characteristics not typically identified as biological 'for the sake of small losses'. Prozac works best for people 'inhibited by biological vulnerability', but he is also careful to indicate that Prozac favours the therapeutically prepared mind. After the interview this proposition was assented to by a number of callers, many of whom agreed that Prozac is most effective when taken in tandem with therapy. An appearance on Oprah Winfrey's television talkshow put Kramer's ethic of listening to the test quite literally. Kramer was joined by Peter Breggin, author of Talking Back to Prozac, to make up two sides of the Prozac debate. Yet Oprah's Prozac-talking audience members disqualify both experts for having only an 'academic' knowledge of depression. The Prozac talkshow effects an anti-intellectual sensibility, unlike attempts by Oprah's Book Club to effect a studied

81 Angela Catterns, 'Prozac (Sound Recording)', Sydney: ABC Radio Tapes, 1995. In the interview this was expressed as a debate between disciplines—where cosmetic pharmacology is at odds with psychoanalytic talking cures—and also within Kramer's field of psychiatry.


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literary expertise, as we have seen in the case of Paradise. The argument that critics like Breggin misread Listening to Prozac, because in many ways it is best read with a novel reader’s ear, holds no sway with this particular audience.\textsuperscript{53}

Narratives about Prozac and treatment regimes for depression in the late twentieth century mark a representational shift. To recall the terminology of Chapter One, Sontag has been surpassed not by Paglia but by Prozac, at least as Kramer conceives of the drug as meaningful, interpretive, and enabling. If Kramer’s observation is that Prozac has replaced the therapist, it has not yet replaced the therapist-author, someone with a well-stocked literary mind able to read and interpret the effects of the drug. Kramer is an authorial figure in Listening to Prozac. He talks widely about the book’s (and the drug’s) reception and interpretation, in terms that are not so far removed from the dynamics of Book Club television where the author is a substantive presence. Shortly we shall see that, for Sedgwick, literary critique is a fundamental part of the therapy process. But instead of turning her readers’ attention to Prozac, as Kramer has done, Sedgwick chooses a different medical and pedagogical administration. Prozac is relegated to the margins of her therapy. Before going on to Sedgwick, though, I want to review another illness memoirist, one whose narrative is energised by her position as both therapist and patient. For my purposes, the example of Lauren Slater offers a useful bridge back to Sedgwick from Kramer.

III. Lying

Lauren Slater is a prolific reviewer and essayist, and a trained psychologist whose brand of candid admission lends itself to a particular kind of confessional memoir. Over the last nine years she has published several autobiographical works: Welcome to My Country: Journeys into the World of a Therapist and Her Patients, Prozac Diary,\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} Peter Breggin, Talking Back to Prozac.

and *Lying: A Metaphorical Memoir* (released in Australia as *Spasm: A Memoir With Lies*).55

*Spasm* confronts the genre of the illness memoir, and memoir more generally by taking a slippery stance on the illness identity. If we are in any doubt that *Spasm* is an unpredictable tale, Slater’s narrator ‘Lauren Jean’ announces from the outset ‘I exaggerate’.56 Here metaphor is a strategy of ‘desperation, not decoration’ (*Spasm*, p.215). *Spasm* is a departure from Slater’s earlier *Prozac Diary*, which, while written by an accredited psychologist, draws heavily on the language of pop-psychology, science and literature. *Spasm* on the other hand starts with the authoritative authenticity of the illness survivor tale before slipping into a far more exaggerated form of memoir. The title plays on two meanings of the word ‘tale’—narrative and lie, the poetic and the prosaic. Following recent criticism of *Spasm*, Slater asks: ‘Is the illness memoir as a form just a crooked cheap shot at writers who can’t conjure up a novel?’57 This ‘now-fading brat pack’, as Slater calls illness memoirists,

need not struggle with all the possibilities of point of view—first person, close third person, alternate voices—because their tales are relentlessly singular. And how much easier is it to dramatise the syringe of the psychosis than it is to conjure up the haunting emptiness of Don DeLillo suburbia or the poverty of Jean Toomer’s inner city.56

 Conjuring is a telling choice of word. ‘Lauren-Jean’, the protagonist in *Spasm* possesses precisely this novelistic habit, her conjuring at once a creative defect, a meta-symptom of her ‘epilepsy’, and an acute awareness of genre.

*Spasm* opens with a literary introduction by the possibly bogus Hayward (think Wayward) Krieger, which (dis)orients us from the outset: we are in the realm of

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56 In an effort to separate the authorial persona from the narratorial persona, and thereby trouble autobiographical protocols, ‘Lauren-Jean’ will appear in quotations marks in the text. This tactic will also be used when discussing Eve Sedgwick’s memoir to emphasise the performance of the narrator ‘Eve’ in that text.


58 Lauren Slater, ‘One Nation Under the Weather’. 

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unreliable narration, and the pre-eminence of metaphor.59 Patricia Parker’s work on the metaphor of exaggeration, surplus, excess has resonance here,60 as does Susan Stewart’s work on gigantism, especially her contention that lying is ‘gigantism in language’.

‘Lauren-Jean’ tells us, ‘I have epilepsy, or I feel I have epilepsy, or I wish I had epilepsy, so I could find a way of explaining the dirty, spastic glittering place I had in my mother’s heart’. Throughout Spasm the diagnosis and misdiagnosis of epilepsy, depression, bipolar disorder, and Munchausen’s syndrome and the radical treatments ‘Lauren-Jean’ undergoes, such as the corpus callosumy, are graphic metaphors for a divided sense of self. So too is Slater’s use of the passing narrative, that archetypal metaphor, indeed the very definition of metaphor itself. A whole raft of illness memoirs—Prozac, compulsive disorder, and therapist—employ a passing narrative. There is cultural capital in confessing and confessionals, and in the outing of illness in illness memoirs. In this respect these narratives invoke a familiar proscenium between public and private, and a protocol of unveiling ‘identity’ through the outing of one’s illness.

Passing is commonly supposed to be the effect of ‘closetedness’, whose paradoxical qualities Sedgwick articulates in her description of the phenomenon as ‘a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence—not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it’.62 Passing speaks of a secret behind a closed door, which it opens as a space of difference in the heart of the same, disrupting identity. Sometimes that something is one’s self, as the focus of an almost nameless anxiety narrows to one’s own image, in what Sedgwick calls ‘circuits of intimate denigration’, and one finds oneself—and not the other—in the closet. But to find oneself there in the closet is already to come out, to name one’s doubts and fears.

62 Eve Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet: 3.
and repudiate them together with the old identity as a disguise, which deceived no one. Coming out and mimicry are critical practices, which currently interest many activists and scholars. However, Spasm is an attempt not only to describe the patient’s contradictory desire to pass as normal while simultaneously seeking to draw attention to a body marked by illness; it also enacts a kind of passing narrative at the structural level. Slater’s is an illness memoir passing as a self-help title, a novel, and an essay.

Slater goes on at length about Spasm as a non-fiction memoir—but this is not a new concept in the realm of autobiographical scholarship, and not ‘a new and unsettling idea’ despite Slater’s claims to the contrary. Even in early examples of the form, fiction and non-fiction merge. Informed by postmodern theories of publicity and privacy, autobiography understands the uneasy fictionalisation of fact. Slater relies on a tested narrative of the mother and daughter relationship (doubly so because the mother of ‘Lauren-Jean’ is figured as the derivative writer of maxims). Hers is also a tourist narrative. Although set in Barbados, the specificities of place are never spelled out. Barbados is the blank screen for the playing out of the primary mother-daughter relationship. In increments, ‘Lauren Jean’ reveals the history of her epilepsy, in time-honoured narrative format: from origin myths—‘that night I had my first seizure’ (Spasm, p.19)—to her studied awareness of the traps of the epilepsy narrative, paralleled by the carefully chosen literary borrowings and narratives used to propel the story, with Dostoevsky and William James important figures. Slater owns that she draws from William James’ two senses of ‘will’—the second of which is ‘willingness’ instead of ‘wilfulness’. When recounting events in her childhood ‘Lauren Jean’ spells out her predilection for indecisive narrative:

that was the night I started to steal. Maybe I’m wrong, maybe I really started to steal a few days after that, or a few weeks before, maybe it’s just certain narrative demands, a need for neatness compelling me to say that was the night or and this surely led to this, my life a long link of daisies, a bolt of cloth unbroken, I wish it were.

Slater refers to the 'proven link between epilepsy, auras and creativity' (*Spasm*, p.112). There is an *Esquire Magazine* interview, and Slater continues to mix genres, 'excerpting' from *The British Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, and *The Annals of Psychiatry*. In a section entitled 'Learning How to Fall' 'Lauren Jean' acknowledges generous borrowing from the essayist Leonard Kriegel's *Falling into Life*. Certain narratives, she says, 'demand addictions' (*Spasm*, p.68). Then there are the direct appeals to the reader—at one point we are coaxed to buy other Slater publications. Finally we arrive at the case history of 'Lauren Jean' in full—Chapter Five's 'The Biopsychological Consequences of a Corpus Callosumy in the Paediatric Patient' ('If memory serves me correctly', she qualifies). This is followed by a romance sub-plot in which a young scholar/writer in the making earns the sexual patronage of a well-known American author: 'Lauren Jean' slept with Christopher Marin or rather 'Lauren Jean's words slept with him' (*Spasm*, p.138). Again 'Lauren Jean' directly addresses the reader here, 'Dear reader, I put myself in your hands, in his hands', consciously echoing Jane Eyre's famous address 'dear reader, I married him'. A tale of pedagogical duplicity and sexual harassment, it could easily have harnessed the narrative, but we are always in the twilight zone of the never quite fictional, never quite non-fictional. Until Chapter Seven, entitled 'How to Market This Book', the narrator concludes that the marketing strategy must favour the non-fictional over the fictional: 'Thus myself, My memoir please. Non fiction, please':

This is a difficult book, I know. There was or was not a cherry tree. The seizures are real or something else. I am epileptic or I have Munchausen's. For marketing purposes, we have to decide. We have to call it fiction or we have to call it fact, because there's a bookstore term for something in between, grey matter (*Spasm*, p.215)

The proscenium between fictional and non-fictional, secrecy and disclosure, and health and illness continues to structure Slater’s memoir to the last. What, then, are the symbolic (or literary) resolutions for 'Lauren Jean'? In her earlier work such as *Welcome to My Country* Slater's therapist envisages herself, and is perceived as, a stranger, with a temporary visitor’s visa. In her follow up to this memoir, *Prozac*
Diary the therapy experience comes a lot closer to home, where ‘cure is complex, disorienting, a re-visioning of the self, either subtle or stark [a] new strange planet pressing in’. In Spasm we are in the realm of a kind of obsessive auto-identification. In the Afterword Slater claims that ‘medicine itself, is the ultimate narrative’. Medicine makes the illness readable (or critiques it), textualises it in case notes, or interprets it by a biological response to Prozac. In Slater’s reading, illness contaminates this narrative, making it untrustworthy and febrile. Yet far from stripping the illness memoir of its authority, the net effect of Spasm is to reinstate stock depictions of epilepsy as themselves untrustworthy and febrile.

IV. Transformative Attention

Sedgwick’s own writing participates in an attempt to be critically reflexive, not in a gratuitously autobiographic way, unlike some of the early practitioners of academic confession examined in Chapter One, but by dramatising the pitfalls of what she calls reparative and paranoid reading and writing. As I have indicated, practices of paranoid reading are structured by more generalised thinking about paranoia, derived from psychoanalytic and affective studies whereby paranoia places its faith in exposure. Paranoiac pedagogy works in a similar way to demystify via narrative, and Sedgwick speculates that ‘maybe that’s why paranoid knowing is so inescapably narrative’. In A Dialogue on Love, Sedgwick pits herself against the conventions of narrative therapy, distinguishing her own behaviour as ‘addictive’ or ‘non-narrative’. Yet A Dialogue on Love is still something of a departure even for Sedgwick. It is at times a mix of rather banal observations yet it also attempts a fusion of critical and creative modalities. Read in the context of recent illness memoirs written over the last decade, as well as via the lens of Sedgwick’s teaching practice. A Dialogue on Love becomes more suggestive if read as a coincidence of pedagogy, autobiography and criticism. A Dialogue on Love might be said to begin where the poet H.D. left off in

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64 Lauren Slater, Prozac Diary: 4.
65 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’: 17.
her *Tribute to Freud.* H.D. gave up writing a journal of her sessions with Freud after he told her such note-taking was antithetical to her treatment. Notably, although Freud instructed H.D. not to write during her therapy, she took every opportunity to circumvent his instructions. In fact, the book over which she agonised, *Tribute to Freud,* is in part an edition of notes that she took, as well as diary entries and letters to friends, written during this prohibited period. Freud was in a sense passing on a methodology to H.D. He was keen to have literary figures pick up his ideas, and H.D. certainly fashioned herself as his successor, a poetic disciple or pupil rather than a patient. H.D envisaged herself as introducing psychoanalysis into the fields of literature, poetry and cinema. It is uncertain how Freud conceptualised her presence in his sessions. At one point in *Tribute to Freud* H.D. recounts how Freud shocked her by his assumption or accusation of her falling in love with him, something that had not crossed her mind. Their interaction is remarkable and noteworthy because it is the only extant record of Freud’s therapeutic (or pedagogic) practice from the perspective of the patient.

The notion of writing as therapy has been popular over time in a wide range of emancipatory feminist thought. In H.D.’s case, part of the transgressiveness derives from secret recordings and reportage; writing is a hidden, forbidden activity. But for Sedgwick, writing is an acknowledged constituent in her treatment. In *A Dialogue on Love* Sedgwick identifies as a literary critic—to the reader as well as her therapist, Shannon—somewhat sooner than she might. Her intellectual occupation is at odds with Shannon’s ‘gift for guyish banalisation’ (*A Dialogue on Love,* p.5). And the prospect of being paraphrased by Shannon, or as she later admits, by students or other critics, prompts Sedgwick to explain: ‘asking is great, I like it—but when someone paraphrases in that routine way, I feel as though my own words are being set aside, disrespected’ (*A Dialogue on Love,* p.8). These sorts of prohibitions structure the interactions of ‘Eve’ with her therapist, part of a psychology of pedagogy, or pedagogy of psychology towards which Sedgwick has turned her critical eye. Tellingly she locates pedagogy in the therapy encounter, and other recent critical

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acquisitions, such as Buddhism: 'I'm loving how pedagogy—the psychology of it—turns up at the centre of everything in Tibetan Buddhism. It feels so haimish' (A Dialogue on Love, p.214).

As I noted above, an extract from A Dialogue on Love first appeared in a 1998 edition of the journal Critical Inquiry devoted to the subject of intimacy.67 Sedgwick's addition to the Intimacy collection takes the subject matter more literally (and more creatively) than other pieces, which are essayistic reflections on the axiom that 'there is nothing more public than privacy'.68 A Dialogue on Love serves as the 'proud culmination' of Sedgwick's intellectual life, where, in her own words, 'work and love are impossible to tell apart' (A Dialogue on Love, p.23). Not only does Sedgwick's admission invoke a literary discourse about love that stretches back to Plato, but it foreshadows more recent critical interventions into the field through Barthes' A Lovers' Discourse to bell hooks' All About Love, Lauren Berlant's ongoing work on the putative intimacy of the public sphere, and Marjorie Garber's recent exercise in public intellectualism, Academic Instincts. Grouping these critics together is somewhat arbitrary, because while 'love', or its byword 'intimacy', may be the subject of their critique, each is more or less loyal to genre. Only Sedgwick's is a therapy memoir as such.

Sedgwick and the other contributors find intellectual validation in the collection of essays on intimacy, some of which are openly melancholic. Berlant's introduction to the subject of intimacy politics, models of subject formation, and what she has termed the 'intimate public sphere', is animated by a discussion of therapy and depression. She calls therapy a witnessing genre. Invoking a range of associations of the 'eye-witness', witnessing is granted a special place in autobiographical discourse. Examples include giving witness (accounts of the Holocaust would fall into this category) and testifying (a common mode in slave narratives and an important rhetorical device in African American literature more generally). By including

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therapy as a witnessing genre, Berlant is pointing to the primacy of the visual and the nature of relations engendered by confession in the light of the television talkshow and its mass mediated intimacy. Relations between desire and therapy have become internal to the modern, mass-mediated sense of intimacy. Berlant says that intimacy builds worlds, creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation. The works in the *Intimacy* collection, including Sedgwick’s, seek in Berlant’s terms to understand the pedagogies that encourage people to identify having a life with having an intimate life. They track the processes by which intimate lives absorb and repel the rhetoric, laws, ethics, and ideologies of the hegemonic public sphere, but also personalise the effects of the public sphere and reproduce a fantasy that private life is the real in contrast to collective life: the surreal, the elsewhere, the fallen, the irrelevant.  

*A Dialogue on Love* opens with something of a conundrum. It is as a patient that ‘Eve’ wants to emerge. She signals some surprise at this chosen subjectivity, but there is ample room for ‘Eve’ to explore a range of personas. Throughout *A Dialogue on Love*, Sedgwick is variously ‘Eve’ (most often used to designate the grown-up academic), the infantilised ‘Evie’ (when she talks about herself as a child, or invokes her parents, or when she colludes with her psychotherapist to minister to the wayward patient) and ‘E’ (when edited and notated by her psychotherapist). Each variation is a subtle and not so subtle shift in persona, chipping away at the copiousness of ‘Eve’.

Melancholic and depressed after a breast cancer scare, ‘Eve’ has shopped around for doctors who measure up to her scholarly designs. She employs a confessional mode—complete with diary-style entries—in all its rhetorical narrative familiarity, to effect a made-to-order intimacy with her chosen psychoanalyst, Shannon. ‘Eve’ herself calls this intimacy effect ‘haimish’, by which she means homely or unpretentious. Her candid admissions seem both tentative and crafty, working in a rhetorically similar way to the sequences of admissions and disavowals in other autobiographical confessional narratives and illness memoirs I have examined.

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70 As distinct from Kramer’s psychiatry and its cosmetic pharmacology, and Slater’s psychology.
where both the abstract clinical case study and the contemporary 'culture of therapy' are invoked. But Sedgwick is trying for something else here. The conditional tense and mixing of tenses throughout gives immediacy to the narrative, a quality which also enacts Barthes' sense of 'remembrance' in A Lovers' Discourse where the present tense intervenes.\footnote{See Roland Barthes, A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments, trans., Richard Howard, Penguin, 1990: 217.}

The dialogue consists of Sedgwick's retelling of therapeutic interactions, excerpts from her therapist's notes, and numerous mediating poetic glosses. Poetic inserts disrupt the more familiar strains of a prose narrative. These poetic disruptions are in the form of 'haiku' as Sedgwick herself explains—a prose/poetry form of a seventeenth-century Japanese travel narrative. The haiku functions as a means of expressing the collaboration between therapist and patient in an apparently less conventional literary mode than the recent spate of illness memoirs, or for that matter the clinical case study. The poetic glosses are meant to enact reflection. In this way they perform a creative as well as an editorial function. Sedgwick's narrative is also fashioned after Robert Merrill's 'prose of departure',\footnote{James Merrill and Marilyn Hacker are both featured on Sedgwick's 'Queer Performativity' course. Week six's 'Modularity' draws on Hacker's Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons and James Merrill's 'Prose of Departure', from The Inner Room as students are asked to focus on the effects involved when more or less discrete units of the same form (sonnet, haiku) keep happening again and again.} as well as (more obviously) the literary form of Platonic dialogue. The attention to dialogue serves to set Sedgwick's memoir apart from a range of other illness memoirs where confession is more often than not a monologue of the self. The poetic glosses and attention to dialogue anticipate reciprocity, or at least a range of proliferating viewpoints. In that way, dialogue is as much a subject or object of the inquiry as love will prove to be. As Lauren Berlant has observed intimacy creates worlds. In A Dialogue on Love intimacy is the condition of dialogue and the therapeutic compact between patient and therapist.

If one level of meaning for the text is its status as a dialogue, in the context of literary theories about dialogue (in addition to Plato, I am thinking about Bakhtin), what are its formal properties? In Bakhtin's model of communication, voices are semantic
positions responsive and open to response. The fundamental unit of language is exchange; with each utterance jointly produced by speaker and listener. His theory of dialogism entails interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Novelistic discourse is, for Bakhtin, especially dialogic, not because of the presence of several linguistic styles or social dialects, but on account of the dialogical angle at which the styles and dialects are juxtaposed and counterposed in a work. According to Bakhtin, the author of a 'hybrid' text 'makes use of someone else's discourse for his or her own purposes, by inserting a new semantic direction into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own'.73 Such a discourse must be perceived as belonging to someone else. Bakhtin's conception of dialogism or double-voiced discourse requires that two semantic intentions appear, two voices. Also relevant to the question of whether or not Sedgwick's dialogue subscribes to Bakhtinian precepts is Bakhtin's insistence that the project of overcoming alien discourse is unending—that the human psyche is engaged in a lifelong dialogue with someone else's discourse (be it individual or generic).

It appears that Sedgwick might have adopted a dialogue form because she does not consider her own views as final, but at times the oscillating viewpoint between 'Eve' and her therapist Shannon does not read much like a dialogue, although in Bakhtin's terms it would be dialogic. Shannon is permitted limited licence at times, and even in the latter stages of A Dialogue on Love, for instance when the upper case 'voice' of Shannon is increasingly prevalent, 'Eve' still manages to proliferate, edit, comment, and notate. There is a copious quality to the 'Eve' persona, in Patricia Parker's sense of that term.74 The autobiographical narrative, the therapeutic case study, or the illness memoir, is at heart a survivor's tale. In this way, A Dialogue on Love works as a reversal of Kramer's therapist narrative. Whereas Kramer makes contemplative observation of his patients' public/private gestures, Shannon is mediated and editorialised to the reader via 'Eve'. 'Eve' listens to Shannon listening to 'Eve'. Just like 'Lauren Jean' before her, 'Eve' mediates everywhere and everyone. Even

74 Patricia Parker, Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property.
Sedgwick’s attempts to play with the familiar bathetic forms of memoir and illness—through poetic disruptions and mixing of styles—serve to reinforce the copiousness of the persona ‘Eve’, as she has been drawn true to life. Another correlation between the ‘Eve’ persona and ‘Lauren Jean’ is the figure of biblical Eve, and by association the phenomenon of the fallen woman.75

In A Dialogue on Love, Sedgwick seeks to capture the transformative possibilities of sometimes banal, sometimes profound interactions with Shannon. All these moments represent a conflation of Sedgwick’s theoretical interests: habits, addiction, narrative, therapy, queer studies, intimacy, ressentiment. The everyday or personal habitus is a theoretically constituted subject of analytical inquiry for ‘Eve’. Sedgwick wants to advance alternative models and theories for the tradition of reflecting on habit, defined elsewhere as a

version of repeated action that moves not toward metaphysical absolutes but toward interrelations of the action and the self acting with the bodily habitats, the apprelling habit, the sheltering habitation, everything that marks the traces of that habit on a world that the metaphysical absolutes would have left a vacuum.76

The charge of intellectualisation comes up early on in the therapeutic encounter. Interviewing Shannon as prospective therapist, ‘Eve’ elaborates on previous unsuccessful sessions with a woman therapist where in ‘hideously stylised scenes the woman would demand that I stop thinking and start telling her my feelings instead’ (A Dialogue on Love, p.6). This admission elicits a self-reflective remark from Shannon, ‘did I just do that to you’, whereupon ‘Eve’ neatly confirms that she thought Shannon was ‘asking something substantive, not just paraphrasing me for my own benefit’. Shannon is interrogative. In what becomes symptomatic of their early dealings at least, Shannon reveals ‘It’s true. I was asking. Okay. I’ll have to think a little more about it, but I expect I can probably agree to that one’ (A Dialogue on Love, p.8). ‘Eve’

75 In Listening to Prozac, Kramer also quotes from Coleridge’s Kubla Khan, and the Eve-like woman ‘wailing for her demon lover’.
more or less says to Shannon ‘no echoing or mirroring please’. ‘Eve’ does not want Shannon to be like her graduate school shrinks who would ‘transparently fish for the transferational testimonials that were never forthcoming’ (A Dialogue on Love, p.51). She wants her therapist to have graduated from that; she also wants Shannon to be her age or older. But she has to return regularly to the problem of Shannon’s stupidity, to the sense ‘Eve’ has that he is ‘doing this wrong’. He surprises her with his interpretations and summations, but she tells him she is gradually letting go because she likes Shannon listening to her, even if he doesn’t listen well. Later, when ‘Eve’ has started therapy proper with Shannon, these encounters crop up regularly:

Shannon: ‘It’s just so much easier for me to envision things in discrete parts. But when you come along and smudge up the barriers, and it’s really different. It’s important for you to keep doing that—I really think I am getting it’.


Yet she does ‘say’ it, if not aloud or to Shannon. Later, she expresses more doubts about Shannon’s theoretical and practical adeptness:

I’m slowly coming to think of [Shannon] as a ‘bit of a slob’. I’m embarrassed partly for him, convinced he’s doing this wrong. Unspeakably anxious, as well, for myself, left all alone (it feels like) with way too much responsibility. How, in such loose-knit colloquy, to find a place for my desire? Or anger? (A Dialogue on Love, p.43).

Sedgwick’s intellectualism is basically a pedagogical excess, an over-doing-it, a kind of advanced paraphrasing, at odds with the more pedestrian paraphrasing which she charges is the hallmark of the therapist’s intervention. Sedgwick wants to tell Shannon ‘I could adore you, but you won’t think enough ... Don’t you care what garbage comes out of your mouth?’ (A Dialogue on Love, p.41). Slowly, incrementally, Shannon shows signs of learning. In one of their sessions, he tells ‘Eve’ that he has spent some time thinking about something she has said, to which ‘Eve’ cannot help but reply that ‘I exist on weekends’, surely the definitive teacher response, a disingenuous claim she seems to share with confessional critics of the 1990s—
'students are always shocked when they come upon their teachers out of school: incredible! The teachers actually have a life apart from the classroom'. When 'Eve' rejoices in Shannon's recognition that she exists on weekends, she appears quintessentially teacherly: first, because teachers always hope their students are able to envisage them as people, with full lives, which impinge on but do not derail their classroom activities; second, because teachers want to impress their students, and the mystery about what she gets up to on the weekend bolsters her authority, which has already been augmented and undermined by the coalescence of the public and the private, the personal and the professional in her career. It seems sentimental and needy, but 'Eve' does want to be liked by her latest fan.

At important junctures, Shannon's case-notes give some perspective on his patient's critical habits: 'the only way out seems to be her intellectual activity—to do continual solitary work on whatever with her mind' (A Dialogue on Love, p.54), or when Shannon 'gets' her 'insistence on both/and thinking rather than either/or'. 'Eve's subjectivity as patient is complicated by her subjectivity as teacher. Sedgwick's gaze is numinous; she makes people—she mainly refers to her students but this attention has clear implications for other relationships—feel special through her attention. Her way of paying attention, as we have already seen, is 'addictive, non-narrative' (A Dialogue on Love, p. 109), not predictable or sequential, but predictably sought after. After talking about her intellectual life, and specifically the adulation she receives at conferences, Shannon suggests to 'Eve' that she is a 'transformative power' in people's lives. 'Eve' finds it difficult to respond, and when Shannon repeats the observation, this time with reference to Eve's relationship with her father—I'm wondering whether he would come to those scenes hoping to obtain this kind of transformative attention from you' (A Dialogue on Love, p. 163)—'Eve' is again silenced, 'breathless' in fact.

Literary criticism proper is an important touchstone for 'Eve', but she also demonstrates a familiarity with the discourses of psychotherapy and psychology. The use of childhood as a source narrative is a principle of psychotherapy. Kramer was not so keen on this method of profiling but Slater and now Sedgwick are not inclined to dismiss it. 'Eve' and Shannon delve into childhood for clues to later behaviours and habits. Shannon's note on 'Eve' brings this to the fore:

When E experiences paranoia it feels alien rather than syntonic—she is interested in the [Christopher] Bollas concept of "genera", something you figure out early that becomes the node of later critical skills (A Dialogue on Love, p.125).

It is more than likely that 'Eve' has crafted her own reading list, and that Bollas has not been recommended to her by Shannon. 'Eve' reads Bollas now as she has read the psychologist Sylvan Tomkins in the past, this time as a direct adjunct to the therapy experience. Tomkins' work has become increasingly important to Sedgwick's own thinking about the convergence of the discourses of literary study and psychology in that Tomkins developed a theory about the relation of affects to learning. Affect is, according to Tomkins, part of a larger cognitive system that does not operate on the command control principles that are usually assumed in discussions of cognition, but rather as a series of distributed functions, which include affect, sensory perception and memory. Where an emotion is 'the content of a specific identity', an affect is 'the inherence of an emotion in the body'. Tomkins considers shame, along with interest, surprise, joy, anger, fear, distress, disgust, and in his later writings, contempt (dissmell) to be the basic set of affects. Writing, in this model, is a 'burning out the fear response'. For Tomkins, affect theory describes the inefficiency of the fit between the affect system and the cognitive system, and between either of

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these and the drive system. It is this factor that enables learning, development, continuity, and differentiation.

Sedgwick also embraces Bollas' concept of a result he calls 'extractive introjection' something she admires in Shannon—a 'queer avoirdupois'—the ability to respect and enjoy an idiom not his own (A Dialogue on Love, p.161), which she herself exemplifies in her work on Tomkins. Shannon will never approach the theoretical copiousness of Eve, but there is an equality of function between them, 'Shannon's avowal of my functioning as something of a transformational object for him as he does for me' (A Dialogue on Love, p.167). 'Eve' extrapolates from Winnicott's well-known image of 'holding' to characterise the therapeutic relation which she later takes up as a reciprocity aware of its explicit pedagogical relation (A Dialogue on Love, p.66, p.165).

'Eve' does not want to relinquish intellectual authority to Shannon (or anyone else). She conceives of Shannon as both teacher and student, and then duplicates this model for thinking about her relationship with her mother. As 'Lauren-Jean' does in Spasm (Lauren Jean's mother was a writer of maxims, a pedagogical authority her daughter has surpassed, not only by growing up but by professionally overtaking her), 'Eve' talks about her mother's career as a teacher of high school English. Eve's mother and father have very different minds; her mother is more figural, her father more literal-minded. As Shannon notes: 'Mom's pleasure, pride in inventiveness and not being "literal-minded", vis-à-vis Father as pedantic, literal-minded' (A Dialogue on Love, p.28). In important ways, Eve's adult relationship with her mother mirrors the therapeutic relationship: 'For sure it gives a freshness to our adult encounters! The freshness of slow learners'. While 'Eve' 'used to have so much/ contempt for middle-/brow culture' she speaks of a shared utopianism between her mother and her own teacherly practice:

We do share all kinds of values, the dream of being surrounded by students who are friends.
and vice versa
and making space happen for
intimate reading
pleasure within that
grim surround of public lives
and resentment—(Dialogue, p.34)

She goes on to envisage her bond with her mother as a therapy relationship, in which Eve is the therapist/tutor (and I am drawing on the wider meaning of tutelage here, as an office or function of instruction, as well as the condition of being under protection or guardianship). In turn, parentage also structures the relationship between therapist and patient. ‘Eve’ proceeds with a teacherly patience, knowing Shannon’s usual methodologies are set to be exceeded. It is also a model Sedgwick employs to collaborate with co-parent Shannon in ‘what-are-we-going-to-do-about-Eve’ conversations, ‘half exasperated and half impressed with her resistance to the pedagogies we’re used to administering’ (A Dialogue on Love, p.59).

Eve’s interpretive, teaching and intellectual life is characterised by a series of personal permissions and prohibitions. Shannon is an exemplary therapist (standing in for Prozac) but it is ‘Eve’ who mediates here via her own brand of self-reflexiveness. Shannon is ‘both myself and not / the place where talking / to someone else is also / talking to myself’ (A Dialogue on Love, p.115). She writes to a friend (Tim) relating an incident where she has observed Shannon entering the building which houses his offices; he treads the same path she had done moments earlier, and repairs some upturned soil she had dislodged in her clumsiness. In the book she quotes Tim’s reply at length, and curiously chooses to end with this reply in the excerpted piece for inclusion in the Critical Inquiry special issue on intimacy:

Far from tedious I find the image of Shannon bending over to pick up mulch—the same that you had dislodged, in falling, if I have understood you—not knowing it was you who had dislodged it, to have the power of something in De Quincey—or perhaps the film noir version of De Quincey, that I carry around in my head. An immediate, involuntary substitution: anonymous shrinks, doing reparative work—in their spare time.
Such sentiment may well apply to the reparative work of (not so anonymous) literary theorists doing therapy memoirs in their spare time. The book ends with Shannon's notes—'Eve' is waiting to be told when to stop, 'I can imagine the voice telling her she can stop'. So it does. The book literally stops, but not with a promised physical death, only a metaphorical one. Both Shannon and 'Eve' 'exist on weekends'.

Regarding Sedgwick, a collection of essays which pays homage to Sedgwick's instructiveness, includes a number of contributions that take their own autobiographical cue from Sedgwick. Nancy Miller models her essay 'Reviewing Eve' on Sedgwick's own autobiographical performances in A Dialogue on Love, from which she learns. She takes her cue also from 'A Poem is Being Written' in which Sedgwick recounts a motivation behind her work: 'a fantasy that readers or hearers would be variously—in anger, identification, pleasure, envy, “permission”, exclusion—stimulated to write accounts “like” this one (whatever that means) of their own, and share those'. Miller has also written a memoir about her father's illness entitled, Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a Parent's Death (1996). The 'death pedagogy' occasioned by Miller's close encounters with her father's illness and the way it intersected with her professional teaching life occasioned all sorts of autobiographical urges. Miller combines the more descriptive elements with essayistic analysis:

As I write myself into and out of other stories, in counterpoint to dramas lived on other stages, scenes from my personal history take on new significance. Can my story—or yours—ever be more than that: a dialogue enacted with other selves (Bequest and Betrayal, p.1).

Miller uses italics for her autobiographical interludes and 'normal' text for the critical analysis. The italicised text stands out as being interesting, immensely readable but not authoritative in the same way as the essayistic text. It is marked as different and separate. Miller refers to many other texts that have influenced her own in a kind of

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generational or familial sense: Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, in which Barthes engenders his mother by caring for her during her illness; as well as other academics reflecting on familial relations—for example, Simone de Beauvoir and Philip Roth. Miller's is a conventional autobiographical examination on locating the self in a family genealogy, called into crisis because Miller's parents are dying and she has no children of her own. She asks: 'what happens to our idea of self when there is no generation to follow, when we are childless?' She speaks about the need for language to enable exchange between generations, an exchange that 'bypasses the body and the family: bonds of paper, not only bonds of blood'. We are also 'connected by books', she says, and the 'friendships that grow out of them' (*Bequest and Betrayal*, p.xii). The literary critic in Miller thinks that writing will fix it and feels that she must now reread herself:

Memoirs about the loss of parents show how enmeshed in the family plot we have been and the price for our complicity in its stories. The death of parents forces us to rethink our lives, to reread ourselves. We read for what we need to find. Sometimes we also find what we didn't know we needed (*Bequest and Betrayal*, p.xiii).

In Sedgwick's terms this is articulated as the 'apparent tautology of learning what you already know'. Sedgwick's illness memoir combines the modalities of the literary critic, the pedagogue, the patient, the doctor, and a host of other subjectivities. *A Dialogue on Love* invokes the literary-trained ear of Peter Kramer's Prozac doctor. Eve's illness pedagogy is also a collaboration of treatments. Yet it also invokes the excess and grandiosity of Lauren Slater's affective account of illness and identity. The illness memoir's autobiographic mode, and Sedgwick's use of this mode of address in particular, doubles the effects of the demarcation of public from private by showing how this binarism is erotically exploited as it is generically transformed.

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60 Eve Sedgwick, *Touching, Feeling*: 166.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have been concerned with the pedagogical site of illness and its ‘cure’, and more particularly the intimacy effect generated by the confessional genre. This chapter could well have been called ‘Cure’. That title would have captured a number of senses in which Eve Sedgwick has deployed reparative critical and pedagogic modes in a range of texts and sites. Another more pedestrian instance can be seen at the end of A Dialogue On Love, with Shannon acting out his reparative therapy when he suspects no one is watching. The illness memoir uses a public/private shorthand, a form of proscenium. It turns the inside out, invokes private, intimate worlds, and outs their secrets. Shannon and ‘Eve’ enact many of Sedgwick’s pedagogical precepts. Theirs is a ‘collaborative archaeology’, with movements back and forth between personal history and a larger, social history—including evocations of different private and public spaces, different personalities, and different bodies experienced from the outside and the inside.

Sedgwick’s work is always turned towards itself. In A Dialogue on Love the book turns towards the dialogue ‘Eve’ is having with herself, but beyond that with Shannon, and with the multiple readers who also regard Sedgwick. For Sedgwick pedagogy is ultimately a form of cure. Her work allows a consideration of the contest between academic postmodernity and the dailyness and unruliness of actual, institutionalised intellectual life. In particular her work demonstrates the myriad ways in which the classroom, in all of its manifestations, fits more than a reformatory model of explanation and operation. In Sedgwick’s work, reparative and paranoid styles of thought can be entwined, the knots of one being a source of the other’s unravelling.
CONCLUSION

In the late twentieth century, shifts in cultural studies and education theories promised a move from expository learning to more experiential modes. In the wake of such developments this thesis has charted a number of pedagogical revisions to the literary-critical conventions of 'how to read and why'.\(^1\) Donna Haraway has been committed to extending disciplinary boundaries and to a form of what she has termed 'over-reading', Toni Morrison has fashioned a pedagogy that wants to return the novel to public discourse, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has advocated a reparative reading practice, one that does not separate the recreational from the academic. This thesis has examined not only the archetypal relation of teacher to student, but also the ways in which pedagogy and pedagogical relationships have been brought to bear on interview genres, the therapeutic encounter, analytic inquiry, literary texts themselves, as well as more peculiar or indifferent sites. To that end, I have focused on the revelatory moments when well-known theorists, critics, and novelists are caught in the act of teaching, or talking about their teaching. However, secondary figures such as Camille Paglia have also been interesting—not for her avowedly narcissistic and grandiose commentary, but for her insight into certain pedagogical models, particularly those at the interface of the academy and the everyday, or more accurately, the academy revealed as having its own unruly everyday. This intersection of public celebrity and the academy that occurs alongside academics applying literary critical tools and pedagogies to their own lives has been a central pivot to my argument.

\(^1\) This is Harold Bloom's formulation in *How to Read and Why*, New York: Scribner, 2000.
In conclusion, I want to consider the performance of one final figure in a case study which takes me back to an Australian reading of American academic culture, the context from which this thesis was produced. This final example is a public lecture recently given by Judith Butler in Sydney entitled 'Giving an Account of Oneself'. Butler's lecture performance is significant to my reading because it ties together some of the recent endeavours by American feminist academics to reach beyond the academy, and some of the complications that arise from such a performance.

Butler's talk is full of rich material but I want to concentrate on its delivery, or the rhetoric it employs. She spoke about the ethical responsibility to account for the suffering of others—as a US citizen, among other subject categories—but also what her own thoughts were on her position as an American public intellectual.

'Giving an Account of Oneself' was anticipated with quite some interest, not least because its title promised an autobiographical performance. The burning question was what would Butler's version of autobiographia looks like? Straightaway she addressed herself to the self-focus promised in the title: she explained that, however indefinite, one's address is always in response to, or directed towards someone else. There is no such thing, Butler told her audience, of an 'us' without a 'you'. Speech acts not only address an 'other', but in speaking there are always others 'who address me'. In her earlier publication Gender Trouble (1990), Butler had been concerned to examine the self produced through active construction; at that time, she says, the meaning of performativity. In recent years, however, the nature of her ethical and political work on the public responsiveness to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, has shifted this focus from constructions of the 'self' in Gender Trouble to constructions of 'you' or the 'other' addressed in later studies such as Precarious Life (2004). In Precarious Life Butler asks in what way does the 'I' come into

1 Judith Butler's public lecture 'Giving An Account of Oneself' held at Angel Place, Sydney, 18 June 2005 was sponsored by the College of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences and the Narrative, Discourse and Pedagogy Research Concentration at the University of Western Sydney.
being by virtue of its responsiveness to others, and more pointedly in the case of an analysis of the photos of Iraqi prisoners being tortured at the hands of their American captors, to the suffering of others. In her opening remarks, Butler was signaling that she could not give an account of herself without giving an account of (the suffering of) others, conflating the pronoun 'us' with the US. The bulk of her lecture, then, comprised a reading of the photos of Abu Graib prisoners, chiefly of the way in they have been rendered meaningful or perceptible by their contextual framing. For Butler, one of the over-riding frames was the differential norms of the human/inhuman.

Butler’s version of giving an account of herself, then, is not autobiographic in Jane Gallop’s or Camille Paglia’s parlance, nor does it approximate Sedgwick’s publication of her own psychoanalysis, but in its own way it is no less revealing. It makes sense within the Butler oeuvre, as she herself indicated, that her theoretical focus has shifted towards the other and away from the self. Yet more significantly for my purposes, Butler took the opportunity of the public lecture to give an account of herself as a US citizen. Such thinking recalls the literary critic Elaine Scarry’s contention that there is nothing about being an academic that exempts you from the normal obligations of citizenship. Scarry’s comment here is a direct response to criticism she had received when she wrote a meticulously researched piece advancing a possible theory for an airline crash. ‘The Fall of Egypt Air 990’ appeared in the New York Review of Books in 2000 and occasioned a great deal of comment about intellectual and disciplinary propriety. How was it that a literary critic could become expert in a vastly different field? It is not surprising that Scarry has considered her seminal work on pain and torture, The Body in Pain (1985), which has been taken up by a range of disciplines, to be an antidote to the failures of literature (and in the light of ‘The Fall of Egypt Air’ arguably now to literary criticism). Judith Butler’s Sydney lecture performance is therefore partly explicable via Scarry’s experience in bringing specialised training to public arenas.

The university has historically operated under complex structures of exclusion and inclusion. Nevertheless, these are ultimately unsustainable dichotomies. This thesis has examined the way a few selected intellectuals have breached these dichotomies and whose own work has been paradoxically enabled by virtue of their being 'outside in the teaching machine', to use Gayatri Spivak's conceptualisation. The splicing of the 'theoretical' and the 'activist' in such intellectual intervention potentially enables new forms of relationship between critics and the texts they read and teach. Within the university Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick each maintain academic profiles and teach regular classes, but their respective theorisation and practice of pedagogy is not limited to the academy: it occurs in a range of public and private settings. My analysis has made it clear that each of these theorist-practitioners is attentive to pedagogical questions within the specific context of their own projects. However, each is also writing or speaking from a discipline that has challenged canonical thinking and, in a generic way, is also peculiarly attentive to pedagogy. For Haraway, the history and philosophy of science offers a space from which to understand the metaphoric and narrative aspects of biological discourse, as well as a platform for interdisciplinary work, or even as she has called for 'anti-disciplinary' practices. For Morrison, the methodology of an African American studies program combines with her own novelistic interventions to enable a form of 'dissident' practice. And for Sedgwick, the discipline of queer studies offers an array of approaches for challenging orthodox literary criticism, which for her cluster around 'popular' previously devalued modes of attachment and reparation.

What this thesis has attempted to do is consider the pedagogical theorisation and practice of Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick, and chart the way in which they have each contributed to developments in alternative pedagogical thinking. I have read their projects not only as attempts to reconfigure pedagogy, but also as outcomes of a process at work in the postmodern university. The pedagogical models theorised and enacted by

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these feminist academics are distinctive ways of energising and re-articulating academic pedagogy in response to disciplinary changes. In each chapter I chose to illustrate this by looking at the significant ways in which each pedagogical model sets the academic and the popular in dialogue. The various achievements of their respective revisions to a conventional pedagogical model might be summarised as follows:

- the practitioners in this thesis share an openness about pedagogical practice, and in several instances a very public display of their pedagogy, beyond the academy. In the broadest sense, they each conceive of pedagogy as a practice not limited to the classroom.
- these pedagogies do not assume that expertise resides in the university, in fact they actively engage with and drawn from radical expertise outside the university, and in doing so reach wider constituencies.
- Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick have all been attentive to the ways in which academic English has been opened up to sociological disciplines, such as cultural and media studies. One of the outcomes of this process has been an acknowledgement of the traffic of popular culture in and out of the university.
- the pedagogical models developed by these featured academics draw from academic and popular discourses. The academic study of popular culture has been a mixed bag. Many critics have attested to the dilemmas in the academic study of popular culture, especially in the practice of English departments. While some might celebrate cultural studies methodologies as a form of ‘reverse anthropology’, this can be unproductive if all it does it privilege student knowledge at the sake of other knowledges.
- they reconfigure the teacher/student dyad in a number of ways. Knowledge production is not seen as a one-way transmission from teacher to student, rather the student (whether Winfrey, Van Wey, or Goodeve) is a fully functioning, potentially collaborative, sometimes argumentative participant in the learning process.
central to the practice, if not the theorisation, of Haraway's, Morrison's and Sedgwick's pedagogical models is the primacy of dialogue. Most notably, as I have emphasised, each practitioner has at least one significant interlocutor whose active collaboration serves to undermine conventional notions of the teacher/student relationship, bridging the chasm between us and them (if not always by design at least ficto-critically and dialogically).

- they share a feminist pedagogical emphasis on activism, as well as other identifiably feminist methodologies. They seek to challenge traditional pedagogical notions by strategies which call for empowerment, building community, privileging voice, and respecting the diversity of personal experience. In this way, they have integrated personal experiences with political analyses, or affective as well as cognitive expression in the classroom.

Even though the Introduction posed an argument about feminist pedagogy and the attempts to re-articulate and extend conventional models of pedagogy, the examples I have chosen to concentrate on in this thesis are for the most part only partially explicable in terms of a feminist pedagogy argument. If I had wanted to argue for a celebratory, liberatory pedagogical praxis I would not have chosen to concentrate on the pedagogical examples of Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick, although this is not to discount their oppositional potential for feminist pedagogy. However, they would certainly not be the most obvious examples, so I would have featured figures like bell hooks against a selection of other feminist educationalists. But find that Something else is going on in the public performances of Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick, something that is specific to their own projects, but also about the wider academy. I therefore argue that they need to be read in the context out of which they are writing and performing. However, I found that not one of the traditions or trends I have traced in this thesis can completely account for their work. Cultural studies trends may well illuminate the ways in which canonical thinking in literary studies has been challenged. Similarly, an understanding public intellectualism in America accounts for some of the work of recent celebrity feminist
academics, but this model can be limiting if it is predicated on heroic modes of address. At the end of the day, while these trends may contribute to a model of public pedagogy, in many ways they often throw up more complications than resolutions.

Ultimately, Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick have been selected for this thesis because they are developing entirely interesting, but in a sense also flawed or inconsistent pedagogic projects in public. As I have explained earlier, I do not use the term ‘flawed’ as a value judgment. Rather, I am wary of celebratory readings and want to understand their pedagogical contributions as attempts to overcome some of the cumbersome divisions in academic life. Teaching can be fraught and discomforting; it is hard work and harder still to do well. In opening their pedagogy to public view, Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick do not always hit the right notes. In previous chapters I have presented Haraway confessing her fear of teaching new students, Morrison enacting a professorial authority which has the potential to foreclose debate, and Sedgwick snapping at her interlocutor Shannon for his shortcomings as a literary critic. But surely that is just the point. This thesis has charted the ways in which certain pedagogies are thrown into relief by ‘going public’—showing up the dilemmas, inconsistencies and disjunctions involved in such a move. The examples of Haraway, Morrison and Sedgwick are compelling and powerful because they do not resile from these conflicts, and they do not completely overcome them either. In going public, by crossing over into the public sphere, or by engaging in different forms of address these three academics have attempted to redress certain pedagogical, critical or institutional conventions. They build these public versions of pedagogy on specialist academic knowledge, but also as I have argued on what they encounter in their exchange with popular genres.
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APPENDIX

Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club titles

In order of appearance by announcement date, with annotations where relevant:

  Announced 17 September 1996.
  First novel by Mitchard, a former newspaper reporter.
  Adapted to film, starring Michelle Pfeiffer in 1999.

  Announced 10 October 1996.
  Awarded the 1989 PEN/Hemingway Foundation award for best first novel.

*Song of Solomon* (1977) by Toni Morrison
  Announced 18 October 1996.

*She’s Come Undone* (1992) by Wally Lamb
  Lamb is a prize-winning teacher and author.

*Stones from the River* (1994) by Ursula Hegi
  Announced 28 February 1997.

*The Rapture of Canaan* (1995) by Sheri Reynolds
  Announced 8 April 1997.

*The Heart of a Woman* (1981) by Maya Angelou
  First non-fiction title to be chosen.

*Songs In Ordinary Time* (1995) by Mary McGarry Morris

*A Lesson Before Dying* (1993) by Ernest J. Gaines
  Announced 22 September 1997
Ellen Foster (1987) and A Virtuous Woman (1989) by Kaye Gibbons
Announced 27 October 1997.
Ellen Foster was Gibbons' first novel, and like A Virtuous Woman, published several years before Book Club selection.

Announced 8 December 1997.
The only children's titles to feature on Oprah's Book Club, although the talkshow regularly features other books, including children's titles.

Paradise (1998) by Toni Morrison
This newly released novel was the Book Club's second Morrison selection.

Here on Earth (1997) by Alice Hoffman
Announced 6 March 1998.
Bestselling author of Practical Magic.

Black and Blue (1998) by Anna Quindlen
Author of previous bestselling titles, including children's literature.

Breath, Eyes, Memory (1994) by Edwidge Danticat
First novel by young West Indian writer.

I Know This Much Is True (1998) by Wally Lamb
The second of Lamb's novels to feature.

What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day (1997) by Pearl Cleage
Debut novel.

Midwives (1997) by Chris Bohjalian
Author of four previous novels.
   Announced 7 December 1998.
   Previously published short story writer and university creative writing teacher.

*Jewel* by Bret Lott (1991)

*The Reader* (1997) by Bernhard Schlink (Trans., Carol Brown Janeway)
   Announced 26 February 1999.
   First non-American title to be chosen.

   Announced 31 March 1999.
   Best-selling author.

*White Oleander* (1999) by Janet Fitch
   Announced 6 May 1999.
   Debut novel.

*Mother of Pearl* (1999) by Melinda Haynes
   Debut novel.

*River, Cross My Heart* (1999) by Breena Clarke
   Announced 14 October 1999.
   Debut novel.

*Tara Road* (1998) by Maeve Binchy
   Announced 9 September 1999.
   Bestselling Irish author.

*Vinegar Hill* (1994) by A. Manette Ansay
   Debut novel.

*A Map of the World* (1994) by Jane Hamilton
   Announced 3 December 1999.
   Second Book Club appearance by Hamilton.
Gap Creek (1999) by Robert Morgan
   Award-winning writer teaches at Cornell University.

Daughter of Fortune (1999) by Isabel Allende (Trans., Margaret Sayers Peden)

Back Roads (2000) by Tawni O'Dell

The Bluest Eye (1970) by Toni Morrison
   Announced 27 April 2000.
   Morrison's third Book Club appearance.

While I Was Gone (1999) by Sue Miller

The Poisonwood Bible (1998) by Barbara Kingsolver
   Announced 23 June 2000.
   First novel, but has written previously for The New York Times and The Nation.

Open House (2000) by Elizabeth Berg
   Announced 23 August 2000.
   Bestselling author.

Drowning Ruth (2000) by Christina Schwarz

   Announced 16 November 2000.

We Were The Mulvaneys (1996) by Joyce Carol Oates

Icy Sparks (1998) by Gwyn Hyman Rubio

Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail (2001) by Malika Oufkir (Trans., Ros Schwatrz)
   Only the second non-fiction title to be chosen.

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Cane River (2001) by Lalita Tademy

The Corrections (2001) by Jonathan Franzen
Pulitzer-prize winning author.
An aberrant selection for the Book Club, Franzen declined to participate and even wrote out against the celebritisation of authors that the Book Club engages in.

A Fine Balance (1996) by Rohinton Mistry
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize.
Born in Bombay.

Fall On Your Knees (1996) by Ann-Marie MacDonald
Bestselling author.

Sula (1972) by Toni Morrison
Announced 5 April 2002.
The Book Club’s final selection, before its revival in August 2003 with the selection of John Steinbeck’s 1952 novel East of Eden.