

On transpedagogy: Recent experiments at the intersection of art and pedagogy

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Publication Date:

2018

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/21070>

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On transpedagogy

Recent experiments at the intersection of art and pedagogy

Melinda Evelyn Reid

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

2018



University of New South Wales

School of Art & Design

Faculty of Art & Design

Thesis/Dissertation Sheet

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Faculty	:	Faculty of Art & Design
School	:	School of Art & Design
Thesis Title	:	On transpedagogy: Recent experiments at the intersection of art and pedagogy

Abstract 350 words maximum: (PLEASE TYPE)

Transpedagogy is a contemporary transdisciplinary practice that combines aspects of socially engaged art with elements of radical educational practices. The results of this practice are often temporary alternative learning centres facilitated by artists, curators, or collectives. These projects frequently involve collaboration or cooperation with a pre-existing community or one drawn together by the transpedagogical project itself.

I understand transpedagogy as a potentially intersectional feminist practice in its departure from educational norms that contribute to oppressive circumstances. Transpedagogical projects regularly rely on modes of sharing and developing knowledge that reject the key features of neoliberalised education. Instead of prioritising heavily managed, vocational, and profitable training regimes, transpedagogies tend to embrace modes of knowledge production that are without explicit usefulness or marketability. This often includes socially engaged and cooperative modes of learning designed to explore ideas with critical, community-building, or ambiguous purposes.

In my thesis, I argue that transpedagogical projects inhabit an interesting liminal space that is both art and education. This is a space that can facilitate affective social encounters with knowledge, often to urge critical engagement with social issues. I analyse three examples of transpedagogical works that have recently taken place in Australia in this thesis: Song-Ming Ang's *Guilty Pleasures* (2007-), Keg de Souza's *Redfern: School of Displacement* (2016), and Kelly Doley's *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists* (2012).

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Acknowledgments

I am deeply thankful to a number of people who have cared for me and helped me shape my thesis over the last few years: Astrid Lorange, Gay McDonald, and Tim Gregory (who have all taught me much more than this thesis contains); Samuel Johnson and Lyndal Keevers (proof-readers par excellence and QC confidantes); Alexandra Mitchell, Monica Hyde, and Katie Purnell (support and hugs); Annie Murney, Gem Antonelli, Nesh Mora, Tai Mitsuji, Em Galicek, Natalya Hughes, and Nick Shearer (arty comrades); Lachlan Ford, Sophie Beland, Michael Tran, Dylan Kelly, Risa Nagel, Theo Grey, Nico Berger, Jess Hallet-Hook, Ernest Cheng, Alex Parsons, and Mama Kay (for a beautiful year among mountains); Ellen Spadon, Laura Wingrove, Harrison Fleming, Olivia Bandler-Llewellyn, Annaliese Griffith-Jones, Maigen Lilley, Scott Southam, Sinéad MacLaughlin, Sean Smith, Sam Bowles, Chantelle Coluccio, Chris Holobrodjski, Ali Nooriafashar, Louise Reincastle, and Adrian Walthew (for company, coffees, and skype calls); Kelly Doley, Keg de Souza, Song-Ming Ang, and Margaret Montoya (for generosity at crucial moments); Robin Bowles Reid, Don Reid, Natalie Reid, Amelia Reid, and Margaret Bowles (my home regardless of where I land); and Dominic Logel (a well of patience and warmth).

Abstract

Transpedagogy is a contemporary transdisciplinary practice that combines aspects of socially engaged art with elements of radical educational practices. The results of this practice are often temporary alternative learning centres facilitated by artists, curators, or collectives. These projects frequently involve collaboration or cooperation with a pre-existing community or one drawn together by the transpedagogical project itself.

I understand transpedagogy as a potentially intersectional feminist practice in its departure from educational norms that contribute to oppressive circumstances. Transpedagogical projects regularly rely on modes of sharing and developing knowledge that reject the key features of neoliberalised education. Instead of prioritising heavily managed, vocational, and profitable training regimes, transpedagogies tend to embrace modes of knowledge production that are without explicit usefulness or marketability. This often includes socially engaged and cooperative modes of learning designed to explore ideas with critical, community-building, or ambiguous purposes.

In my thesis, I argue that transpedagogical projects inhabit an interesting liminal space that is both art and education. This is a space that can facilitate affective social encounters with knowledge, often to urge critical engagement with social issues. I analyse three examples of transpedagogical works that have recently taken place in Australia in this thesis: Song-Ming Ang's *Guilty Pleasures* (2007-), Keg de Souza's *Redfern: School of Displacement* (2016), and Kelly Doley's *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists* (2012).

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Introduction

Milk crates among other things

I keep thinking about something that was said to me at a party about a year ago. I was talking with Chris, a civil engineer and friend since high school with a propensity for playful discussions (and arguments). After asking about my thesis, Chris bantered that my research had basically become about “art and milk crates.” The line still makes me laugh, and for some reason this moment has stayed with me.

Perhaps the relatively long gestational period of a thesis is in part to blame; at times, my thesis has felt less like an exterior object and more like an abstract internal organ (and a rather porous and sensitive one at that). This organ has absorbed a number of insights – some ultimately more relevant than others – from art spaces, classrooms, and friends’ living rooms over the last few years. On other days, my thesis has acted more like a filter through which everyday encounters get sieved. Otherwise mundane material became stickier than usual if it related (even vaguely) to my developing project. My filter has caught a number of things and saved them for later. Sometimes months later.

There was something so unexpectedly apt about Chris’s ‘milk crates’ jab. It felt like the kind of quick riff an ‘art-world insider’ (to borrow Pablo Helguera’s term) would make, not because actual milk crates appear in the types of projects that I have been writing about, but because milk crates could

signify multiple elements of my thesis at once: the clustering of ‘chairs’ used to create temporary circles of dialogue and communal spaces; the lack of funding for experimental art or educational projects and therefore seating beyond what is on hand or improvised; the use of structures that are accessible, transportable, and repeatable.¹ I have found myself increasingly interested in such things lately.

The period in which I became interested in so-called milk crates was also the period that I became increasingly interested in teaching and learning, and the complexities of doing both at once. I was offered my first tertiary teaching role during my first semester of postgraduate study. As a result, I was teaching while I was learning.

Teaching is something that I have wanted to do since I was young. I have an embarrassingly soft spot for kind or eccentric teacher characters. When I was eight years old, I dressed up as Ms Frizzle from *The Magic School Bus* book series for ‘Book Week.’ The same year, I had a ‘What Do You Want to be When You Grow Up?’ themed birthday party. I went as a teacher. I also grew up with multiple educators in my family and encountered a number of passionate teachers throughout primary and secondary school.² I adored learning in the environments that they created.

While I thrived in formal education, my younger sister did not. For my sister, school was a source of intense anxiety and depressive episodes. The structure of the Higher School Certificate was not conducive to improving her mental health, and the services set up to ‘help’ her through high school were

¹ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books), 6.

² There are many teachers that I remember with warmth from high school in particular. I had a year 8 English teacher (Mr Dempsey) who facilitated an early encounter with feminist thinking. My art teachers (Mr Lewis, Ms Dawson, and Ms Minogue) were stealthy feminists who ensured that we – classes of largely young women – learnt about many women artists who were not included in the set syllabi. My ancient history teacher (Ms Vidler) catalysed an ongoing interest in ancient Minoan art and my year 12 English teacher (Ms Cutting) had a contagious love of writing.

often unapproachable or impractical for a mentally ill teenager.³ Today, my sister is thriving, but she has had to learn how to do so outside of traditional educational institutions for the most part. Through her experiences, my family learnt that the Australian education system was not designed with every body (every brain, in particular) in mind.

This remained clear to me while studying art theory at university. As an undergraduate, I found myself often occupying one of two roles in tutorials: either I was a ‘talker’ – a student that contributed to class discussions fairly comfortably and regularly – or I was a keen listener or ‘nodder’ – an active, but quiet participatory mode to which I often defaulted. The earlier emerged in tutorials in which the lecturer or tutor managed to cultivate a space within which I felt I could identify with the material and speak openly. The latter quieter version of myself, on the other hand, rarely spoke up in tutorials. In these situations, I was pacified by the formality of the situation, the seemingly concrete canons of art history, the weight of institutional devices measuring my abilities (and the impact of such measurements on my future movements within academic and art circles), and the wealth of information that I did not know and was sometimes made to feel that I should (somehow) already know.

As an undergraduate student, learning was often a very internal experience. I could be moved deeply by my teachers and the knowledge that was being shared, but was generally shy with my perspectives and feared terribly the embarrassment of saying something ‘wrong,’ especially in the presence of an academic or artist that I admired. Instead, I preferred to listen and internalise, think through the ideas and respond out loud only if I felt as if I had something novel to say. I used assessments to express how much I enjoyed the courses that excited me, going over word limits constantly and footnoting totally unnecessary tangents that I encountered in my research. As

³ The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is an award received at the end of the final year of Australian secondary education. It requires students to participate in multiple rounds of competitive tests and produce major research or creative portfolios under the optic of university admissions.

a result, courses that awarded a mark based on in-class participation would worry me; I was very engaged, but not always as a talker. I was more of a nodder, writer, or listener.

As I began to teach and learn simultaneously, I viewed my undergraduate experiences through a different lens. Experiencing the effort involved in developing classes in which students were willing to engage and dialogue with one another made me wish that I could travel back in time and become a more consistent talker for the sake of all of my tutors. Simultaneously, however, I also began to view my classrooms through the lens of a recent (often quiet) graduate with a sister who had struggled in formal educational settings. I could recognise elements of my sister or myself in many of my students and wanted to create spaces that would make us feel comfortable. Unsurprisingly perhaps, I have wound up writing about projects that create educational spaces that stray away from institutional norms that exclude or paralyse some students. I have found myself drawn to artists, curators, and collectives that produce inviting alternatives.

The milk crates in question: Transpedagogy

The cluster of works that I am interested in constitute the primary expressions of the category of transpedagogy. This practice might be understood as a combination of radical pedagogy and socially engaged art, or as a branch of radical pedagogy actioned through socially engaged art tactics, or perhaps as a branch of socially engaged art that borrows heavily from radical pedagogy. As a result, transpedagogy inhabits an interesting liminal space that is both art and education, but never quite one or the other entirely. Given the transdisciplinarianism of this type of work, I generally resist using the terms ‘artworks’ and ‘schools’ to describe transpedagogical works in this thesis. Rather, I favour the more flexible and encompassing term ‘projects.’

Michel de Certeau’s distinction between place and space is useful for beginning to imagine what constitutes transpedagogical work. For de Certeau,

a place is a stable setting in which elements are arranged “*beside* one another, each situated in its own ‘proper’ and distinct location.”⁴ A space, by contrast, “exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables.”⁵ As a result, a space is “composed of intersections of mobile elements ... actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it.”⁶ Transpedagogical projects form dynamic spaces that sit at the intersection of socially engaged art and radical pedagogy, instigated by the assembling together of a group of interested individuals.

Broadly, these spaces are made distinct by their facilitation of activities that allow knowledge to be shared or created. This means, then, that transpedagogical spaces are not demarcated by a fixed location, but rather the development of a social environment that (usually) fosters critical thinking and learning. My approach to the character of transpedagogical spaces is perhaps quite similar to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s understanding of study as any social activity in which some sort of shared “intellectual practice” is at work, be it “talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, [or] some irreducible convergence of all three.”⁷ These works differ from delegated performance artworks in which pedagogy might be used to ‘prepare’ participants for a project.⁸ In a transpedagogical work, the learning or preparatory moment *is* the project itself rather than a process that occurs beforehand.

A transpedagogical project is therefore a social situation that could be formed under many circumstances and under various pretences. Transpedagogical projects may vary in duration and set up; a project may exist over a prolonged period in a set location (such as a course or school run by an

⁴ Michel de Certeau, “The Practice of Everyday Life (Extracts),” in *Hétérotopies/Heterotopias*, eds. Lionel Bovier and Mai-Thu Perret (Genève: JRP Editions, 2000), 113.

⁵ de Certeau, 113.

⁶ de Certeau, 113.

⁷ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe, New York, and Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013), 110.

⁸ For further discussion of delegated performance art see Claire Bishop’s chapter on the topic, “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity” in *Artificial Hells* (2012).

informal institution led by an artist or collective), or it may constitute something more fleeting and temporary (such as a one-off performance). While some transpedagogical works self-identify as such – taking on the accoutrements of a pre-existing structure, such as the title of ‘school,’ use of recognisable classroom objects (such as chalkboards or educational signage), or production of a syllabus – others *become* transpedagogical, developing learning situations without necessarily intending to do so. While these projects are often facilitated by artists, curators, or collectives, they often involve collaboration or cooperation with a pre-existing community or one drawn together by the transpedagogical project itself.

Transpedagogy has emerged out of the apparent ‘pedagogical turn’ (or ‘educational turn’) and against the tide of neoliberalised education (a condition that compounds pre-existing problems in normative hierarchical modes of educating with the desires of neoliberalism, something that I will return to throughout this thesis). Since the 2000s, interest has been growing in the intersection of art and education, a shift that has come to be known as the pedagogical turn. A spread of notable recent publications have been produced on the subject, some of which precede my project and others which have been published over the course of my PhD candidature.⁹ Then there is the rising number of galleries producing symposiums and programs with an educational

⁹ See: Felicity Allen, *Education* (2011); BFMAPhD, “Artists Report Back: A National Study on the Lives of Arts Graduates and Working Artists” (2014); Claire Bishop, “The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy” (2007) and “Pedagogic art” in *Artificial Hells* (2012); Ken Ehrlich, *Art, Architecture, Pedagogy: Experiments in Learning* (2010); Abu El Dahab et al, *Notes For An Art School* (2006); Pablo Helguera, “Notes Towards a Transpedagogy” (2010); Jan Jagodzinski, *Visual Art and Education in an Era of Designer Capitalism: Deconstructing the Oral Eye* (2010); Cath Lambert, “Psycho classrooms: teaching as a work of art” (2011); Eszter Lázár, “Educational Turn” (2012); Kristina Lee Podesva “A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art” (2007); Suhail Malik “Educations Sentimental and Unsentimental: Repositioning the Politics of Art and Education” (2012); Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010); Johan Pas et al, *CONTRADICTIONS & PRO-POSITIONS: Art And/as Education, Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp* (2014); Sarah Pierce, *The Paraeducation Department* (2006, a collaborative effort by the TENT. and Witte de With organisations); Irit Rogoff “Turning” (2006) and “Academy as Potentiality” (2006); Sam Thorne, “New Schools” (2012) and *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education* (2017); *Art & Education* (a joint venture led by *e-flux* and *Artforum* which collects and distributes news about projects that intersect art and education); special issue 14 of *e-flux* which was guest edited by Irit Rogoff and featured articles on the ‘educational turn’ (March 2010); and multiple issues of *Tkh: Journal for Performing Arts Theory*, including issues 14 and 23 organised around the themes “Self Managed Educational System in Art (s-o-s project)” (November 2007) and “Commons/Undercommons in Art, Education, Work..” (April 2016).

focus.¹⁰ Additionally, a number of texts have recently been published that share ‘lessons’ that can be learnt from artists and designers.¹¹ Another symptom of this turn – and the focus of this thesis – is the growth in transpedagogical projects. Some of these projects are created by emergent artists or groups, like the Copenhagen Free University and Mobile Akademie, that have formed specifically to develop transpedagogical projects. Others have been produced by figures with well-established artistic practices. Marina Abramović, for example, has recently dabbled in transpedagogy through investment in the production of a floating institute – plans to build a static school/gallery stalled in late 2017 – called the Marina Abramović Institute for the Preservation of Performance Art.¹²

Transpedagogy might also be described as a practice that responds to forms of education that reproduce oppressive relations, thoughts, and norms. In particular, many transpedagogical works critique the neoliberalisation of education. I make this judgment because transpedagogical projects often rely on modes of sharing and developing knowledge that refuse the logics and values of neoliberalism. By neoliberalism, I am referring to a socioeconomic condition (which emerged during the 1960s, strengthened during the 1980s, and remains dominant in many western nations) that supports economic policies that back private property rights, free market capitalism, and free trade, as well as patterns of social behaviour that fuel aggressive competition,

¹⁰ Examples include: *Rethinking Arts Education for the 21st Century* conference (Tate Museum, London, 2005); *United Nations Plaza* (Berlin, 2006); *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y* (Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2006); the *Nought to Sixty* salon panel “You Talkin’ to me? Why art is turning to education” (Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2008); Paul Butler’s *Reverse Pedagogy* residences (2008 - ongoing); *Transpedagogy: Contemporary Art and the Vehicles of Education* (MoMA, New York, 2009); *Schooling and De-Schooling* (Hayward Gallery, 2009); Alternative Art School Fair 2016 (Brooklyn); *Didactic Tools* workshop (Fremantle Arts Centre, Perth, 2015-2016); *What do we teach, how do we learn?* symposium organised by Melissa Ratliff for the Biennale of Sydney (2018); and Remy Low’s series of *Pedagogical Experiments* (Artspace, Sydney, 2018);

¹¹ Recent examples include Marshall Henrichs and Project Project’s expanded reprint of *Blueprint for Counter Education* (2016) which extends the original 1970 design-led curriculum into a box set of books and posters, Rebecca Morrill’s *AKADEMIE X: Lessons in Art + Life* (2015) which provides an assortment of ‘lessons’ provided by contemporary artist ‘tutors,’ and Dushko Petrovich and Roger White’s *Draw it with Your Eyes Closed: The Art of the Art Assignment* (2012), a collection of short do-it-yourself assessments provided by artists.

¹² Benjamin Sutton, “What Happened to the \$2.2M Marina Abramović Raised to Build Her Institute?” *Hyperallergic*, last modified 13 November 2017, <https://hyperallergic.com/411422/marina-abramovic-institute-money/>.

individualism, and profit accumulation. Instead of prioritising heavily managed, vocational, and profitable training regimes, transpedagogies tend to embrace modes of knowledge production that are without explicit usefulness or marketability. This often includes socially engaged modes of cooperating and radical pedagogical modes of learning that are blended to create spaces in which ideas with critical, community-building, or ambiguous purposes can be explored. This element of transpedagogy is perhaps reflective of a greater wave of interest in the impacts of neoliberalism on higher education.¹³ The neoliberalisation of art schools in particular has become an object of much recent critical inquiry.¹⁴

It seems that transpedagogy acts as a sort of alternative education. However, if transpedagogy is an alternative to formal educational routes, then it must be understood as one that is not structurally sound; transpedagogy facilitates fleeting and transient encounters with knowledge. They are often temporary events that do not offer certifications that are comparable with those offered by official educational sites. The rewards of transpedagogy are not designed to help participants compete in a traditional meritocracy.

Rather, transpedagogical projects often serve different goals. I understand transpedagogy as a potentially intersectional feminist practice in its departure from educational norms that bolster limiting hierarchies and

¹³ See: Virginie Bobin, *Composing Differences: Imagining New Models for Knowledge Production and Exchange* (2015); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (2015); Matthew Clarke's "The (absent) politics of neo-liberal education policy" (2012); Raewyn Connell, "The neoliberal cascade and education: an essay on the market agenda and its consequences" (2013); Jeffrey R. Di Leo, *Higher Education Under Late Capitalism: Identity, Conduct, and the Neoliberal Condition* (2017); Thomas Frank, "Academy Fight Song" (2013); Henry A. Giroux, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* (2014); Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013); and Gerald Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity* (2013).

¹⁴ See: Felicity Allen, "Creativity v. Education" (2013); Brad Buckley and John Conomos, *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy* (2009); Ken Ehrlich, *Art, Architecture, Pedagogy: Experiments in Learning* (2010); Okwui Enwezor, Stephan Dilleuth, and Irit Rogoff, "Schools of Thought" (2006); Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, *Teaching Art in the Neoliberal Realm: Realism versus Cynicism* (2012); Steven Henry Madoff, *Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century* (2009); Dushko Petrovich and Roger White, *Draw it with Your Eyes Closed: The Art of the Art Assignment* (2012); Michael Rustin, "The neoliberal university and its alternatives" (2016); Rebecca Morrill, *AKADEMIE X: Lessons in Art + Life* (2015); and Katy Siegel, "Lifelong Learning" (2013). There have also been numerous articles published by *Artforum*, *e-flux journal*, and *Frieze* on recent crises at numerous art schools.

power structures that contribute to oppressive circumstances. In other words, transpedagogy is a means of ‘doing’ feminism. My interest in these projects follows my research into works that facilitate intersectional feminist thinking and discussions. By intersectional feminism, I refer to a politics that tackles sexism as a form of oppression that is always intersecting other issues, such as racism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism (among others). This is a politics that requires both action and a great amount of critical thinking: a speculative, exploratory, questioning, analytical, and sometimes antagonistic mode of engaging with social reality.

Since transpedagogy meets at the intersection of socially engaged art and radical pedagogy, it is somewhat removed from the figurative and autobiographical traditions that have been – and continue to be – more readily associated with feminist aesthetics. Mira Schor argues that feminist content is “easier to perceive when iconographic analyses of representation and image-based narratives can be brought to bear on the work.”¹⁵ Indeed, recognising feminist work can become difficult when the artist or collective is working at a remove from the intimate rawness and bodily representations that have become intertwined with conventional understandings of feminist art.

Interestingly, intersectional feminists tend to favour metaphorical non-human imagery or geometric diagrams when discussing gender and sexism. Crenshaw’s image of multiple vehicles in a car accident is perhaps the most well-known.¹⁶ In recent discussions, she has also employed imagery of the Grand Canyon (“the intersectionality canyon” which has been borrowed by multiple feminist authors) and the act of wearing many hats at once.¹⁷ Cooking

¹⁵ Mira Schor, “Some Notes on Women and Abstraction and a Curious Case History: Alice Neel as a Great Abstract Painter,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (2006): 133.

¹⁶ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1243.

¹⁷ Olena Hankivsky, *Intersectionality 101* (Vancouver: The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, 2014), 4; Ange-Marie Hancock, *Solidarity Politics for Millennials: A Guide to Ending the Oppression Olympics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 47; Southbank Centre, *Kimberlé Crenshaw – On intersectionality – keynote WOW 2016*, online video, 30 minutes 46 seconds, 14 March 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DW4HLgYPIA>.

metaphors (such as Lisa Bowleg's cake batter imagery and Julia S. Jordan-Zachery's description of marble cake), allusions to the structure of a fly's eye (the favoured metaphor of Lynn Weber), and descriptions of kaleidoscopic patterns (employed by Patricia L. Easteal) have also been used by intersectional feminists.¹⁸ Wheels, Venn diagrams, stick figures with lines that intersect their bodies, circles with criss-crossing lines, and mind maps are also common features of articles that explain the logics of intersectional thinking.¹⁹ Intersectionality thus leans towards abstraction when it visualises gender and oppression, leaving behind essentialist traditions that relied heavily on (usually cisgender, white) women's bodies to represent at times both the subject and impacts of sexism.

Transpedagogy is perhaps reflective of this turn toward abstraction in feminist thinking. While transpedagogy continues feminist traditions of exploring embodied experiences, it does not attempt to represent such experiences through a representation of a singular gendered body. Rather, transpedagogues tend to favour immaterial practices – usually cooperative acts and conversations – that cluster multiple people together to explore a social issue in a shared space. These practices allow sexism (among other intersecting issues, such as education, histories, ideologies, and oppression) to remain somewhat abstract; instead of reducing complex issues down to the impressions they leave on a singular recognisable body, transpedagogues attempt to keep the flexibility and multifariousness of social problems – in other words, their potential to impact different bodies in different ways – intact.

¹⁸ Lisa Bowleg, "Once You've Blended the Cake, You Can't Take the Parts Back to the Main Ingredients": Black Gay and Bisexual Men's Descriptions and Experiences of Intersectionality," *Sex Roles* 68, issue 11 (June 2013): 754-759; Julia S. Jordan-Zachery, "Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who Is Black? A Few Thoughts on the Meaning of Intersectionality," *Politics Gender* 3, no. 2, (2007): 261; Lynn Weber, "Through a fly's eyes: Addressing diversity in our creative, research, and scholarly endeavours" (keynote at University-Wide Student Creativity, Research, and Scholarship Symposium, SUNY-Geneseo, New York, April, 2007); Patricia L. Easteal, "Looking through the Prevailing Kaleidoscope: Women Victims of Violence and Intersectionality," *Sister in Law, A Feminist Law Review* 6 (2002): 180-181.

¹⁹ Hankivsky, 4-8.

‘Radical’ is approached in this project as a term that denotes a practice that proposes a new idea, overhauls a pre-existing model to create an innovative substitute, or departs from major traditions in favour of change. In transpedagogy, this often translates as the development of a novel educational structure that rejects formal (often neoliberal) educational norms. Radicality is not understood as an immanently progressive term or a synonym for critical or experimental here. While many transpedagogical projects incorporate elements of radical pedagogy – a discipline which sometimes treats ‘radical’ as an encompassing term for multiple progressive and critical pedagogies – it should be noted that the radicality of a transpedagogy – the ability of a practice to deviate profoundly from given norms – is never assumed. For this reason, radicality only emerges in some transpedagogical projects.

To adequately approach an understanding of transpedagogy, I will explore some fields of knowledge that seem to merge or overlap in transpedagogical projects – intersectional feminism, socially engaged art, and radical pedagogy – in the first three chapters of my thesis. In the first chapter, I will define intersectional feminism (the interrogatory position and theoretical framework of this thesis) as well as neoliberalism (the dominant ideological framework within which transpedagogical projects take place and respond to). In the second chapter, I will discuss one of the root disciplines of transpedagogy, socially engaged art, before describing and historicising the development of transpedagogy more broadly. I will then turn to describe the other root discipline of transpedagogy, radical pedagogy, in the third chapter, with particular focus on techniques and theories that often appear to be at work in transpedagogical projects. These chapters should be read as introductions to some of the major events and practices that have informed transpedagogical work.

The remaining chapters will be dedicated to close analysis of three case studies. My first case study is Kelly Doley’s *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists* (2012), a work that will provide an opportunity to discuss the status of

transpedagogical documents, the dynamic of a confrontational lesson, and importance of vulnerability in feminist dialogue. The second case study, Keg de Souza's *Redfern: School of Displacement* (2016), provides a space in which to consider the benefits of learning 'in situ' about racism and gentrification through dialogue informed by lived experience for an active listening audience. In my third and final case study, Song-Ming Ang's *Guilty Pleasures* (2007-), I will explore how confessional dialogue, an interesting naff category of objects, and conflicting feelings might create a space that facilitates critical pleasure. In these case study chapters, I will focus on the pedagogical, social, and affective dynamics of these works and attempt to complicate some assumptions regarding 'active' engagement as well as the types of affective environments that facilitate acts of learning and critical thinking.

The aim of my project is not to create a rigid 'checklist' of qualities necessary to create an ideal transpedagogy. The work of Doley, de Souza, and Ang are included here not as exemplary demonstrations of transpedagogical standards, but rather to think through the limits of transpedagogical practices and hitches encountered while developing alternative learning spaces. In other words, each case study included in this thesis is imperfect. These projects are encountered as part of artistic oeuvres that are ongoing. In some cases, the transpedagogical works included in this thesis have acted as opportunities for self-reflection and reconsideration of practice on the part of the facilitating artist. This thesis acts as an attempt to explore a practice that is recent and at times unruly. Simultaneously, this thesis is about a practice that continues a tradition of artistic practitioners experimenting with ideas and relational modes – or as Chris suggests, art and milk crates – that non-art settings cannot yet handle.

Chapter I

Intersectional feminism and the neoliberalisation of education

There are two political frameworks that play central roles in my research. The first is the interrogatory politics and theoretical framework of my thesis: intersectional feminism. The second is an offshoot of neoliberalism and one of the core critical concerns for transpedagogy: the neoliberalisation of education.

Intersectional feminism is not only interested in reshaping society. It is also dedicated to reforming feminism itself. Feminism is a politics dedicated to disrupting sexism, patriarchies, androcentric norms, and male solidarity, among other structures, that exclude, and oppress women (as well as gender fluid and non-binary folk). Since the 1980s, intersectional thinking has spurred some significant interruptions to feminisms that have been limited by white supremacist, heteronormative, classist, and ableist assumptions – among other hegemonic forces – at various moments of feminist thinking and action. Intersectional feminism is an interrogatory feminism that prioritises critical thinking about understandings of gender, identity groups, oppression, social privilege, and disadvantage. Intersectional feminism is interested in recognising the structures that uphold exclusionary, discriminatory, and sometimes violently oppressive norms. Education (among other means of

knowledge building) has been a central concern for feminism for centuries.¹ For intersectional feminists, these concerns persist in the era of neoliberalised education.

Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne suggest that because “capitalism doesn’t know how to deal with the immeasurability of the educational process,” it has had to transform these processes into objects that can be managed and marketed.² Indeed, the era of neoliberalised education is the era in which formal higher education is increasingly fashioned to support individualistic, profit-based ventures.³ The impact of neoliberalism on education is also noticeable in the ‘hardification’ of creative disciplines, growth of managerial staff, and normalisation of anxious feelings in academic environments. If education is understood as a structure that shares ideas, values, and hierarchies that are internalised and normalised in a society, then the neoliberalisation of education must be viewed as an intimidating development for intersectional feminists, artistic practitioners, and other groups operating in educational settings with goals that do not match those of neoliberals.⁴

In this chapter, I will argue that intersectional feminism can be taken up through critical responses to neoliberalism, including transpedagogical alternatives to formal education. In the first half of this chapter, I will outline some of the core theoretical interventions that have been made by

¹ Feminist education-based activism includes campaigns to ensure all young girls receive an education for the sake of an education (rather than a strictly vocational education geared towards domestic work), enrolment of young women in universities, inclusion of women in male-dominated disciplines (for example, STEM streams of study), development of feminist pedagogies, creation of journals and organisations that support women’s research (such as the *English Women’s Journal*), and the formalisation of a range of arts and humanities disciplines that address various types of oppression (including, but not limited to, gender studies, critical race theory, queer theory, and critical disability studies).

² Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, “Introduction: The Catering Regime,” in *Teaching Art in the Neoliberal Realm: Realism versus Cynicism*, eds. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2012), 6.

³ For clarity, there are a number of terms that I will be using to refer to the various sites where higher education might take place, such as universities, facilities, institutions, academies, schools, and so on. While I recognise that these spaces may operate differently, they are all impacted by the limitations created by neoliberalism.

⁴ Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, “Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens,” in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 2; Kim A. Case and Desdmona Rios, “Infusing Intersectionality: Complicating the Psychology of Women Course,” in *Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice*, ed. Kim A. Case (New York: Routledge, 2017), 84.

intersectional feminism. In the second, I will explore some of the problems that neoliberalism and neoliberalised education are creating for intersectional feminists.

Feminism

In 'Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)' (2010), Sara Ahmed claims that her feminist politics developed out of a cognitive gap within herself: a gap between how she felt she should feel and how she actually felt about aspects of social reality.⁵ This experience of internal ruptures is echoed in one of Jacques Rancière's 'Ten Theses on Politics (2001):

[Politics] does not simply presuppose the rupture of 'normal' distribution of positions between the one who exercise power and the one subject to it. It also requires a rupture in the idea that there are dispositions 'proper' to such classifications.⁶

Like Ahmed, Rancière describes political commitment as something that can spur critical thinking about existing forms of oppression as well as normative responses to (that is, ignorance of) oppressive situations. Rancière adds that thinking about society through a critical political lens can also dismantle the seemingly given logic that hierarchies as we know them need to exist at all.

It is from the position that political commitment involves wilful, critical interpretation of and action upon the world that I approach a definition of feminism. Feminism might be thought of as a politics that asserts that patriarchal, capitalist, white supremacist, heteronormative, cissexist, classist, ableist (and so on) codes of 'normal' are oppressive and limiting structures that must be dismantled. Additionally, feminism critiques the structures –

⁵ Sara Ahmed, "Feminist Killjoys," *S&F Online* 8, no. 3 (Summer 2010): n.p, accessed 8 March 2015, http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/print_ahmed.htm.

⁶ Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3, (2001): n.p., accessed 4 February 2016, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/32639>.

ideological, historical, moral, corporate, and otherwise – that uphold narratives that normalise difference as an inherent or natural source of disadvantage for certain groups of people. As Ahmed suggests, feminism involves being “willing to go against a social order,” a decision that often results in feeling the “force” of social norms colliding against one’s own beliefs, much like swimming against a strong riptide that swells into deeper seas.⁷

Intersectional feminism as revision and critique of essentialism

An intersectional feminist approach acknowledges that gender does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, intersectional feminism attempts to recognise the spectrum of bodies that are impacted not only by patriarchal norms, but also by capitalism and imperialism (among many other powerful forces). Intersectional thinking, therefore, marks a substantial revision of essentialist understandings of gender as well as other identity categories. Essentialism is often associated with the work of some (but certainly not all) ‘second wave’ feminists.⁸ When the history of feminism is recounted, it is often done so by grouping feminist activity into three eras or ‘waves’ of activism and writing. Generally, ‘first wave’ feminism is associated with late 19th century-early 20th century feminist activities, including campaigns for voting, divorce, and labour rights. ‘Second wave’ feminism is bookended by the 1960s and 1980s, a period marked by increased interest in bodily autonomy, sexual and reproductive rights, and explorations of femininity. The contemporary period, or ‘third wave,’ of feminism is usually given the start date of the 1990s, and is distinguished by a turn towards activism that prioritises diversity and inclusion.⁹ I would like to

⁷ Ahmed, n.p.

⁸ I use the qualifier ‘some’ with purpose here. Not all feminists of the second wave approached gender differences as innate or stable. Many second wave feminists perceived gender as an unnatural binary produced through a series of socialised and internalised habits, expectations, and learnt limitations. This attitude might be understood as a precedent for contemporary feminisms that employ a similar approach to gender, but with a more non-binary, fluid, and spectral understanding of gender identity.

⁹ Some feminists argue that a tonal shift has taken place over the decade which may denote a new wave – a ‘fourth wave’ – of feminist activism which concentrate heavily on technology-based activism with a focus on anti-rape and anti-sexual assault campaigns in particular.

note here that I reluctantly use the wave model to specify periods of feminist activity. Problematically, the wave model suggests that feminism is tidal in its relevance and activity. It also tends to centre such periods of activity around the actions of mostly white heterosexual middle-class able-bodied feminists, leaving the significant work of many socialist feminists, queer feminists, anti-racist feminists (including black feminists and womanists), crip feminists, and the first intersectional feminists (who were almost exclusively women of colour), among others, swept to the fringes of feminist histories.¹⁰

An essentialist understanding of gender depends on similarity, rather than difference, to group people together. Alison Stone summarises that much like universalism, essentialism assumes that there are inherent or socially accepted essences that are shared by all people in a particular group.¹¹ Essentialist feminists made attempts to unite women based on what were believed to be common experiences or ailments. These issues were thought by such feminists to be caused by a seemingly stable cluster of physical or social features supposedly possessed by and available to all women.

Often these seemingly essential characteristics were based on the complex entanglement of several ideas, including an understanding of gender as binary (that people are either women or men), the presumption of sexual desire as always heterosexual (that women are only attracted to men, and vice versa), and, perhaps most importantly, that biology is destiny (that one gender consistently maps onto only one group of sex organs and traits).¹² This final assumption is often termed biological essentialism. Biological essentialists argue that sex and gender are intertwined. Therefore, all women can be said to be biologically female (that is to say, possess vaginas, ovaries, and breasts) and subject to, at some time in their life, menstruation, childbirth, and menopause.

¹⁰ Crip feminism refers to the intersection of crip theory/critical disability studies and feminism.

¹¹ Alison Stone, "On the Genealogy of Women: a Defence of Anti-Essentialism," in *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*, eds. Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 86-87.

¹² See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," (1996).

This, of course, only speaks to the lives of some cisgender women (who are assigned female identities at birth and identify as women). Gender, from an essentialist position, is seemingly natural and concrete. It is an expression of femaleness that leads women to engage in specific social roles and to exhibit certain cultural tendencies. This perspective forces not only gender and biology, but also desire, responsibilities, and behaviours into reductive sexist and heteronormative oppositions.¹³

Problematically, essentialist feminists also often isolate sexism from other forms of oppression. Essentialist feminists, as a result, often comfortably define feminism as a synonym for ‘gender equality’ which presumes a fixed gender binary. Like an essentialist understanding of gender, equality feminism often favours a cissexist, whitewashed, heteronormative, classist notion of equality. In this model, the measuring tape used to calculate the distance between ‘oppressed’ and ‘well off’ is often stretched between an imagined straight white cisgender man and an imagined straight white cisgender woman. In other words, essentialist feminists assume that women may be subject to sexism – be it political, social, cultural, or economic – but often fail to consider that some women might be simultaneously impacted by heterosexism, racism, transphobia, classism, or ableism. Towards the end of her viral TED talk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provides the following dictionary-style definition that is typical of the essentialist ‘equality model’ of feminism: “Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.”¹⁴ Typical of the ‘equality model,’ this definition calls upon an understanding of gender that is binary and synonymous with sex as well as an

¹³ It should be noted, however, that there have been some recent attempts to challenge the sex-gender distinction that propose critical means of engaging with biological information without reverting to biological essentialist thinking, such as Elizabeth A. Wilson’s *Gut Feminism* (2015).

¹⁴ Ngozi Adichie actually redefines feminism in her own terms following this definition. However this section of her talk is not nearly as well known nor as frequently quoted. She deviates slightly from the quoted dictionary definition, but the notion of gender as binary remains firmly intact: “My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, ‘Yes, there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better.’ All of us, women and men, must do better” (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), 47-48).

understanding of oppression as singular, rather than multiple.¹⁵ In essentialist conceptions of womanhood and ‘equality model’ feminism, gender becomes easily entangled with femaleness, whiteness, middle classness, and straightness. As a result, ‘equality feminism’ is sometimes also referred to as ‘white feminism’ or ‘white liberal feminism’ for its narrow scope of attention.

Intersectionality, by contrast, emphasises that difference is perhaps the only constant. Lana Wånggren and Karin Sellberg argue that intersectionality might be differentiated from essentialism by understanding intersectionality as a politics based on ‘dissensus’ and essentialism as lodged in ‘consensus;’ both Rancièrian terms, dissensus refers to a structure that “gives place for numerous differences, both real and imagined” and encourages “consensual critical engagement[s] or friction” while consensus demands the sameness of all concerned parties.¹⁶ While intersectional feminism can tolerate multidimensionality and diversity, essentialism often cannot.

Intersectional feminism

Kimberlé Crenshaw pioneered the term intersectionality during the late 1980s at Harvard School of Law, one of the sites of anti-racist activism that would catalyse the development of critical race theory (CRT).¹⁷ Initially, the concept of intersectionality was developed by Crenshaw to describe the multiple and co-occurring oppressions that prevented African American women from being

¹⁵ Adichie’s slip is not unique. Mainstream feminism often errs on the side of the equality model. For example, during a recent flash of public interest in the gender wage gap – largely in response to Hillary Clinton’s run for the United States Presidency in 2016 – American commentators often failed to note how this gap widens for people of colour, people without access to education, or people living with a perceived disability.

¹⁶ Lana Wånggren and Karin Sellberg, “Intersectionality and dissensus: a negotiation of the feminist classroom,” *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31, issue 5/6 (2012): 544.

¹⁷ Margaret Montoya argues that there are three plausible “origin stories” for CRT: the first is that it emerged out of an ‘alternative course’ formed by the Third World Coalition at Harvard in 1983 following the resignation of Derrick Bell; the second story is that CRT developed out of student-led protests during the late 1980s that called for more diverse teaching staff and students at Berkeley (which spread to other major institutions, including Yale); in the third story, papers published after a ‘race’ themed Conference of Critical Legal Studies in Los Angeles in 1987 produced the foundational thinking of CRT. Montoya suggests that, of course, it is likely that CRT is a product of all of these events. (Margaret Montoya, “Critical Race Theory: An Examination of Race in the Law,” (presentation, La Alizana Alliance Harvard Latino Law Conference, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, 19 February 2016).)

adequately represented under American law and within feminist frameworks. Crenshaw argued that as a result of limited exploration of intragroup differences within racial minorities and gender categories, African American women were often marginalised, if not totally ignored, by various institutions and strains of feminist activism.¹⁸ This moved Crenshaw to suggest that discrimination sometimes takes place like a car crash at an intersection involving many vehicles travelling from multiple directions.¹⁹ Jasbir Puar highlights that what is emphasised in Crenshaw's imagery is that discrimination and oppression are sometimes the result of multiple domineering social forces colliding at once.²⁰

Intersectional thinking and action, however, predates its formalisation into a framework during the 1980s. It is possible to identify moments of intersectional action in many places since the 19th century. For brevity, I will provide only a few examples. During the antebellum era (1850s-1860s), Angelina and Sarah Grimké (white suffragettes known as the 'Grimké sisters') worked with Sojourner Truth (an African American abolitionist) to raise awareness and fuel the momentum needed to acquire voting rights for all women across the United States, not just educated white women.²¹ During the second wave of feminism, anti-racist feminism and socialist feminists were among other groups who began exploring the complex intersections of race, class, and gender. Faith Bandler (an Australian South Sea Islander feminist and anti-racist activist) became a central figure in Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander rights activism. Most notably, Bandler was a leading figure in the 1967 referendum campaign to remove two racially discriminatory clauses

¹⁸ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1243.

¹⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, issue 1 (1989): 149.

²⁰ Jasbir K. Puar, "'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory," *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 59.

²¹ Nancy Hoffman, "Teaching about Slavery, the Abolitionist Movement, and Women's Suffrage," *Women's Quarterly Studies* 14, no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer, 1986): 2.

from the Australian constitution. Bandler regularly attributed her entry into activism to Aboriginal Australian activist Pearl Gibbs, a woman who told her on one occasion, “you’re not free until we are.”²² Similarly, in texts and pamphlets produced by Red Collective, cultural (or communist) revolution and feminist revolution were emphasized as co-dependent. In Red Collective’s *Politics of Sexuality in Capitalism* (1973), for example, it is argued that women cannot be liberated from limiting gender roles without a total redistribution of affective and domestic labour.²³ These examples are among many other moments of intersectional thinking or acting that precede the formalisation of intersectional feminism.

The outcomes of intersectional thinking are manifold. Firstly, it is assumed in intersectional theory that “there is no actual body” that is a member of only one identity category.²⁴ A body is never ‘just a woman’ or ‘just Australian,’ it is multiple identities at once. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, there are many visual metaphors used to illustrate an intersectional understanding of identity, from abstract diagrams to the sedimentary layers of the Grand Canyon. I visualise identity as similar to the changing patterns that appear at the end of a turning kaleidoscope. As a kaleidoscope is peered through and turned, mirrors reflect and refract pieces of colourful plastic overlapping and falling into various patterns, like a moving mosaic of shifting tesserae. Like the patterns created by these colourful pieces, a person’s identity is the product of simultaneous membership with multiple identity categories. The tesserae that make up an individual’s identity may include their gender, race, class, sexuality, perceived (dis)abilities, cisgender or transgender status, education, occupation, skin colour, ethnicity, weight, politics, and religious

²² “National Aboriginal Reconciliation Conference: Aboriginal activists discuss the struggle for rights in the past and possibilities of the future; anniversary of 1967 referendum on equal rights for Aborigines,” *PM*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, perf. Monica Attard, Faith Bandler, Matt Peakcock, and Noel Pearson, 27 May 1997.

²³ Red Collective, *Politics of Sexuality in Capitalism* (London: Blackrose Publishing, 1973), 44-47.

²⁴ Arun Saldanha, “Politics and difference,” in *Taking Place: Nonrepresentational Theories and Human Geography*, eds. Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 289.

beliefs among many other fragments. Importantly, unlike a fixed mosaic, the patterns in a kaleidoscope change; a certain colour or shape might sometimes dominate and at others fall into obscurity. Similarly, a person's association with certain identity groups may fluctuate in visibility and significance depending on their appearance as well as their movement through different places, socio-cultural surroundings, and historical shifts.

The social positions and privileges that a subject is privy to are also often multiple and overlapping. Social privilege is therefore perhaps best understood not as a 'free pass' through all of life's difficulties, but rather as a lack of specific negative experiences. Therefore, privilege is the inexperience of certain acts of exclusion and abrasion, subtle or obvious, that might diminish a person's options, sense of self-worth, and safety, to name a few. While memberships with some identity categories may provide degrees of social privilege, others may leave a person more susceptible to negative experiences. Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy illustrate this situation with a hypothetical figure:

[C]onsider a White woman who lives in poverty. While she will face many *class* barriers, she will not face *racism*. Yet a poor White woman – while not facing *racism* – will likely face barriers related to her gender – *sexism* – that a poor White *man* will not. For example, she will be more likely to be held responsible for the care of her children, she will be more likely to earn less than a man, and she will be more at risk for male violence, all of which increase the burden of poverty.²⁵

Through their analysis of the living conditions of an imagined white poverty-stricken woman, DiAngelo and Sensoy demonstrate how a person may be

²⁵ Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy, "Leaning In: A Student's Guide to Engaging Constructively with Social Justice Content," *Radical Pedagogy* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2014): n. p., accessed 9 March 2015, http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy.org/Leaning_In_A_Students_Guide_To_Engaging_Constructively_With_Social_Justice_Content.html.

simultaneously excluded from and have access to various social privileges. In their example, the woman's whiteness removes the threat of racism, but her gender and class status leave her vulnerable to sexist and classist treatment. Privilege is not something that remains static once obtained. Rather, it is slippery and impacted by all coexisting facets of one's identity.

It is important to note that social privilege – including that which is provided by whiteness, cisgender maleness, employment, education, being 'able bodied,' or leading a heteronormative life – is strengthened when a person possesses multiple forms at once. Since some forms of social privilege rely on how one is perceived, bearing the appearance of particular qualities can be enough to regularly protect a person from certain negative experiences. For example, a man who appears to be white, cisgender, and 'able bodied' simultaneously benefits from patriarchal structures, white supremacy, heteronormative assumptions, and ableism. In intersectional feminism, it is recognised that these criss-crossing facets of identity can boost and complicate a person's social standing.

The second output of intersectional theory is that an identity category cannot be condensed to a number of essentials without making potentially alienating assumptions. An identity category refers to a group of people who share a specific quality, such as gender identity, racial identity, or sexual orientation. Like individual identities, identity categories themselves are fragmentary and multidimensional. They are shaped by multiple memberships with – or exclusions from – many communities at once. As such, activism and theories that rely on all women possessing certain qualities – be it physicalities, such as 'curves,' ovaries, or breasts, or experiences such as white privilege, motherhood, or marriage – are often limiting.

Two shifts have directed this change. The first is that many feminists – aside from some liberal feminists and transphobic 'feminist' groups (such as 'TERFs': Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) – have accepted that many conventional features of womanhood rely on a number of cissexist and

heterosexist assumptions (among many others). The second is the realisation by many feminists that sexism impacts not only women, but men who do not conform to the most readily accepted forms of masculinity (that is to say, people who do not exude white aggressive heterosexual career-focused able-bodied cisgender iterations of manhood) as well as non-binary, genderqueer, agender, or gender fluid individuals. Both shifts are largely indebted to the activism and academic work of anti-racist, queer, and Marxist feminists to name a few. As such, the conversation has shifted away from growing a sisterhood of sameness to celebrating difference and employing nuanced dialogue about intragroup differences.

The third tenet of intersectionality concerns how oppression/s operate. Instead of assuming different forms of oppression as always separate from another – operating in parallel lines that never touch – intersectional feminists accept that some oppressive situations are the products of multiple intersecting oppressive forces – instances where multiple strands have coalesced to create a knotted obstacle. Patricia Hill Collins suggests that subjugation is often maintained by a “matrix of domination” while Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza imagines this notion as a “kyriarchy”: a complex system of powerful privileged bodies that maintain sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism (among other forms of oppression) while often strengthening one another.²⁶

The critical lens of intersectional feminism is useful for not only rethinking the structure and maintenance of gender, identity, and identity groups, but also oppressive conditions. To fully understand oppressive realities as complexes of multiple intersecting forces, it is necessary for intersectional feminists to address things that often go unseen, namely invisible matrices of power and domination. Central to intersectional feminism is an ability to

²⁶ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 227-228; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Feminist studies in religion and a radical democratic ethos,” *Religion and Theology* 2, no. 2 (1995): 142.

observe how hidden mechanisms – ideologies and systems of power – are expressed by more conspicuous bodies – corporations, governments, and institutions – which maintain what is seemingly given, real, right, deviant, useful, unimportant, strange, dangerous, or acceptable.

Education under neoliberalism

In its transmutation of all human acts into potentially profitable enterprises, neoliberalism has had a noticeable impact on education. This development continues (and, in some cases, accelerates) pre-existing educational operations that have supported state, corporate, and military interests. Henry Giroux argues that in the United States in particular, the interlocking of military, industrial, and academic bodies at the service of the state has been a problem since the early years of the Cold War. During this period, Senator William Fulbright noted that a “military-industrial-academic complex” was forming – an amended version of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s well known military-industrial complex – that, as Giroux describes, observed “the creeping influence” of the American government, the commercial sector and for-profit military industries (such as arms dealers) over higher academics.²⁷ Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira argue that higher education as we know it today continues to be “firmly embedded in global structures of repression [and] militarism” in addition to neoliberalism.²⁸ While the instrumentalisation of intellectual activity by powerful bodies is not a new development, higher education has taken on a new character with the advancement of neoliberalism.

The goals and priorities of neoliberalism have created a condition that goes by a number of names, including “academic capitalism,” “collegiate

²⁷ Henry A. Giroux, *University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 7-13, 72.

²⁸ Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, “Introduction: The Imperial University: Race, War, and the Nation-State,” in *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*, eds. Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3, ProQuest Ebook Central.

capitalism,” and “the neoliberalisation of education.”²⁹ I prefer the latter term and its variants to refer to the normalisation of neoliberal economics and attitudes within higher education.³⁰ The core characteristics of neoliberalised education include:

- (1) the integration of neoliberal logics into university operations;
- (2) the treatment of educational facilities and communities as businesses and partakers in a business;
- (3) the hardification of various disciplines of study;
- (4) the growth of a management class within educational facilities; and
- (5) the normalisation of practical relationships and anxious feelings in educational spaces.

Ultimately, neoliberalism creates a situation in which it has become normal to gauge the worth of an education against the measuring stick of capitalist utility: *how are you going to make money with that degree?* A neoliberal education is one that prioritises that which is measurable, useful, and profitable. I will expand on these five characteristics in the paragraphs to follow.

(1) Neoliberal logics

²⁹ See: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (2014); Thomas Frank, “Academy Fight Song” (2013); Richard Münch, *Academic Capitalism: Universities in the Global Struggle for Excellence* (2014); Pascal Gielen, “Artistic Praxis and the Neoliberalization of the Educational Space,” (2013); Myra Marx Ferree and Kathrin Zippel, “Gender Equality in the Age of Academic Capitalism: Cassandra and Pollyanna Interpret University Restructuring” (2015); Ewa Majewska, “The Common in the Time of Creative Reproductions: On Gerald Raunig’s Factories of Industries of Creativity” (2015); Kristina Lee Podesva, “A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art” (2007); Amy Scott Metcalfe and Shelia Slaughter, “The Differential Effects of Academic Capitalism on Women in the Academy” (2008); Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie’s *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (1997); Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (2004) and “The Academic Capitalist Knowledge Learning Regime” (2008); and Sam Thorne, *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education* (2017).

³⁰ Neoliberalism arguably has also profoundly influenced the operation of pre-school, primary, and secondary education. However, since most transpedagogical works are developed as alternative universities or invite the participation of adults, I have decided to focus on neoliberalism in relation to higher education/adult-level education.

Neoliberalism has significantly shaped many western societies since the 1960s and 1970s and more acutely since the 1980s and 1990s.³¹ I approach neoliberalism as an ideology – a system of ideas that forms a framework or lens of perception – that impacts all manner of life choices and activities. David Harvey argues that neoliberalism is generally characterised by “strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.”³² However, neoliberalism can shape shift from a type of economics into political policies, or social and cultural norms. It is also often self-contradictory; neoliberalism is both pervasive and invisible, economically liberal while socially conservative, interested in innovation yet slow to part with tradition.

Unlike intersectional feminism – a lens that one wilfully *chooses* to critically and actively perceive the world through – neoliberalism is a dominant discourse or ideology. It is the ‘default’ perception of the world and its contents. Wendy Bowles et al describe the operation of dominant discourses and ideologies as akin to seeing the world through tinted lenses that the wearer has forgotten that they are wearing; unbeknownst to the wearer, their perception of their surroundings has been distorted.³³ George Monbiot has spoken to the invisibility of neoliberalism, arguing that “the ideology that dominates our lives has, for most of us, no name.”³⁴ Chris Kraus has argued that this “erasure of causality is one of the triumphs of totalitarian capitalism” because “if everything just “is,” [then] all action becomes pointless.”³⁵ Neoliberalism’s invisibility is central to its success. If neoliberalism is not

³¹ Shelia Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 1;

³² David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

³³ Wendy Bowles et al., *Ethical practice in social work: An applied approach* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 11.

³⁴ George Monbiot, “Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems,” *The Guardian*, last modified 15 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>.

³⁵ Chris Kraus, “For Everything Theory There is a Novel,” in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Space in Southern California*, ed. Géraldine Gourbe (Annecy and Lescheraines: ESAAA Editions and Shelter Press, 2015), 133.

‘known’ or recognisable, then it cannot be challenged. As Paulo Freire suggested, naming the world is central to knowing and questioning the world.³⁶

In addition to its invisible pervasiveness, discussions of neoliberalism are complicated by its status as a contested concept. This can make it difficult to whittle down neoliberalism to a neat list of political economic characteristics and sociocultural consequences (or vice versa). As Astrid Lorange points out, ‘neoliberalism’ has been used to describe a variety of economic and social phenomena, including: the last few decades of capitalist economic and cultural shifts; globalisation (the increasingly unequal transnational flow and spread of capital, conglomerates, and trade); a politics that privileges individualism and the free market capitalist logic of competition; and the normalisation of capitalist ideals (that is to say, the normalisation of drawing profit wherever and whenever possible, a goal that incentivises individuals to make not only workplace activities, but personal interactions, relationships, and leisure time additional opportunities for entrepreneurialism).³⁷

Given the reach of neoliberalism’s influence – shaping economic, political, cultural, and social life over the last forty or so years – it is easy to feel, as Lorange suggests, that the term neoliberalism is “at once impotent (because it can describe everything) and potent (because it describes everything).”³⁸ This issue seems to pervade arguments presented by both proponents and critics of neoliberalism. Elizabeth Prügl suggests that ‘neoliberalism’ is perhaps overused as an “explanatory hammer that fits all nails, used to account for a multiplicity of contemporary phenomena.”³⁹ Likewise, Elizabeth Evans suggests that neoliberalists themselves rarely

³⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 88.

³⁷ Astrid Lorange, “Creativity and lyric address,” *TEXT 40* (April 2017): 2-3, accessed 1 May 2017, <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue40/content.htm>.

³⁸ Lorange, 3.

³⁹ Elizabeth Prügl, “Neoliberalising Feminism,” *New Political Economy* 20, no. 4 (2015): 616.

“defend neoliberalism qua neoliberalism” and reluctantly use the word itself, but rather defend its values as ‘common sense.’⁴⁰

However, a lack of neoliberals self-identifying as neoliberals should not be taken as a sign of the term’s uselessness, but rather of its diagnostic usefulness; self-use of the term would risk drawing attention to the ideology and therefore its status as something that has been constructed and can therefore be deconstructed. This is not unlike conservatives or members of the so-called ‘alt right’ replacing terms that point too directly to the oppressive foundations of their power – such as ‘sexism,’ ‘patriarchy,’ ‘racism,’ or ‘white supremacy’ – with more palatable ideas – such as ‘tradition,’ ‘family values,’ ‘racial insensitivity,’ or ‘populism’ – transforming major narratives of oppression into minor social differences. Pierre Bourdieu has also attended to this feature of neoliberalism, claiming that this ideology “presents itself as a chain of constraints” that must be adhered to, but gains much of its force from “the political and economic strength of those whose interests it defends.”⁴¹ In other words, neoliberalism maintains its power by being made invisible or seemingly natural, rather than a group of conditions created by people who benefit from such conditions. With the invisibility and flexibility of neoliberalism kept in mind, it is possible to draw out some common goals and ideals found among many neoliberal theories and practices, including free market capitalism, individualism, and deregulated competitive activity.

Laissez-faire free market capitalism

As the word itself suggests, neoliberalism acts as an extension, in many ways, of liberalism’s preferences and values, including policies and practices that support a capitalist free market economy on a local, international, and personal level. It should be noted, however, that these extensions are often of classical

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Evans, *The Politics of Third Wave Feminisms: Neoliberalism, Intersectionality, and the State in Britain and the US* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 41.

⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of our Time*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press and The New Press, 1998), 97.

or laissez-faire economic liberalism, rather than reform liberalism. There is not room to fully explore the differences between the two here, but a core difference that should be noted concerns the market.

The laissez-faire liberal approach to the economy constitutes, as Conrad Waligorski explains, a “leave things alone philosophy” in which it is assumed that the market is a natural and self-regulatory system that fairly rewards every person in accordance with their level of “contribution to the welfare of others.”⁴² Reform liberals, on the other hand, believe that people and governments can – and should – intervene to ensure that economic forces avoid the “disorder, inequality, and injustice” that an unrestricted market can create.⁴³ Like laissez-faire economic liberalism, neoliberalism also approaches the market as a self-correcting organic system.⁴⁴ Similar observations regarding neoliberalism are to be found elsewhere; Shelia Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie argue that the success of a market that is “impersonal, disembodied, and inexorable” is central to the neoliberal model of governance.⁴⁵ Likewise, Bourdieu defines neoliberalism as a return to a conservative politics that “repackag[es] ... the oldest ideas of the oldest capitalist nations” as a new system that focuses on systems that prioritise profits, progress, rationality, and economics.⁴⁶

The resurgence of laissez-faire economics under the guise of neoliberalism is a consequence, in part, of a new form of transnational capital that has developed in the ‘information age.’ Bourdieu notes that while globalisation is often understood as the progressively global mobility of capital, it is really “a justificatory myth” that covers up the increasing power and international reach of a small group of dominant wealthy nations over all

⁴² Conrad Waligorski, *Liberal Economics and Democracy: Keynes, Galbraith, Thurow, and Reich* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1997), 5-6.

⁴³ Waligorski, 5-6.

⁴⁴ Waligorski, 4.

⁴⁵ Slaughter and Leslie, 34.

⁴⁶ Bourdieu, 54, 35.

others.⁴⁷ In other words, globalisation gives the appearance of a post-Cold War condition in which cultures, ideas, art, people, and fiscal capital are being moved freely and equally around the world. However, international cultural and economic exchanges often occur unequally and exploitatively, providing opportunities for neocolonial capitalist ventures.⁴⁸ Additionally, products and customs that are produced by the working classes of the ‘global south’ are not valued nor exchanged as much as those that come from wealthier classes and nations.⁴⁹ The austere economic policies of neoliberalism that encourage deregulated capitalist exchanges on a local and national level mirror the unequal international flows of capital that sustain globalisation and neocolonialism.

Neoliberalism’s embrace of capitalist logics also sprouts a social condition, an apparent order of things, that centres self-actualisation around profit accumulation on a continuous personal level. Wendy Brown writes that as a governing system of reason, neoliberalism “transmogrifies every human domain and endeavour, along with humans themselves, according to a specific image of the economic” until all “spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized.”⁵⁰ In crude terms, a neoliberal life is situated around acts of money making. As a result, the metrics, values, and desires normalised in a neoliberal society tend to reflect the logics of capital gain: that which makes money is worth pursuing, while that which does not is a waste of time.

This neoliberal code of conduct creates an atmosphere that can make it difficult to pursue (and easy to dismiss) acts with only loose attachments to

⁴⁷ Bourdieu, 38.

⁴⁸ Neocolonialism refers to a recent pattern of powerful wealthy classes from various nations forming alliances in order to control and intervene in the activities and wellbeing of the less powerful classes of their nations. (William H. Blanchard, *Neocolonialism American Style, 1960-2000* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 5-6; Stephen Shalom, *The United States and the Philippines: A Study of Neocolonialism* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), xiv-xv.)

⁴⁹ I have used the imperfect term ‘global south’ here which, like other words used to divide nations into classes, problematically orders states in a hierarchy that favours traditional wealthy industries, ‘western’ culture, and capitalist innovation.

⁵⁰ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2015), 9-10.

profitable behaviour, such as activism, caring for the mental or physical health of oneself or others, engaging in acts of enjoyment, lingering, sleeping, developing creative practices, nestling into relationships and communities, or learning for the sake of learning. By the same standard, these same acts may become more appealing under neoliberalism if they develop productive or lucrative qualities. Given the omnipresence of this type of thinking, it is perhaps understandable that Mark Fisher would suggest that it is “easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism.”⁵¹

Individualism and freedom

In addition to free market capitalism, neoliberalism renews liberalism’s endorsement of a doctrine of individualism and freedom. These two values are often entangled: to be an individual one must be able to act freely, and to act freely one must be able to act individually. While definitions of freedom (as well as obstacles to freedom) seem to vary between specific theorists, neoliberal freedom generally concerns an individual’s ability to pursue what they wish – usually competitively and, therefore, without the invention of the state – for their own individual benefit. Harvey argues that within a neoliberal framework, people are encouraged to advance themselves through “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills.”⁵² He also observes that individual freedom achieved through participation in a free marketplace is a “cardinal feature” of neoliberalism.⁵³ Likewise, Bowles et al define neoliberal liberty as “the absence of any form of restraint, including legal sanctions, which may prevent a person from acting as they wish ... [and] having control over what they do and knowing best how to advance their own happiness.”⁵⁴ Similarly, Waligorski argues that in neoliberalism, freedom is attainable when “self-interested individuals” are able to “compete in market or market-like

⁵¹ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Ropley: Zero Books, 2009), 2.

⁵² Harvey, 2.

⁵³ Harvey, 7.

⁵⁴ Bowles et al., 12.

situations.”⁵⁵ It seems to be imperative in neoliberal societies that entrepreneurialism and competitive individual activity be viewed as acceptable modes of achieving success as well as personal goals in and of themselves.

Neoliberal individualism and freedom therefore depend on a person’s ability to consume and produce in an environment that encourages rivalry rather than cooperation. Evans argues that in so doing, neoliberalism has managed to effectively co-opt concepts that are also central to feminism – namely, freedom, choice, and empowerment – at the service of life narratives that value engagement with consumerism. She argues that ‘freedom’ has become a matter of being capable of vying for capital and profitable lifestyles, ‘choice’ has become confused with ‘consumer options’ between available services and goods within the marketplace rather than a matter of agency, while ‘empowerment’ “manifests itself through entrepreneurialism and consumerism” (that is to say, through individual accumulation of valuable capital that provides power, influence, and access to more consumer choices) rather than profound change to a person’s social positionality.⁵⁶ These terms could be grouped with other concepts that have also been coopted – such as ‘diversity,’ ‘wellbeing,’ and ‘innovation’ to name a few – or entirely fashioned – such as ‘ethical consumption’ or ‘productive stress’ – to produce a lingo that renders neoliberalism apparently socially engaged and its faults unspeakable.⁵⁷ In its repurposing of once radical terms, neoliberal discourse can make it difficult to create meaningful dialogue that is critical of neoliberalism without becoming bogged in neoliberal understandings of once progressive terms.

Under an ideology that valorises individual action, it can also become difficult to maintain the radicality of forms of resistance, including rejection of individualism through collaboration, cooperation, or strategies that encourage

⁵⁵ Waligorski, 4.

⁵⁶ Evans, 42.

⁵⁷ See Sara Ahmed’s critique of diversity measures in “The Language of Diversity” (2007), William Davies’s exploration of wellbeing-based capitalist ventures in *The Happiness Industry* (2015), and Holly Lewis’s discussion of ‘ethical consumption’ in *The Politics of Everybody* (2016).

en masse participation in an activity. Despite neoliberalism's encouragement of an ethos of 'every man for himself,' neoliberalism (among other preceding iterations of capitalism) paradoxically depends on the participation of individuals in various forms of teamwork – in offices, factories, firms, institutions, governments, family units, or peer groups – as well as participation in neoliberal norms by society at large in order to keep capitalist life running.⁵⁸ Katja Čičgoj, Stefan Apostolou-Hölscher, and Martina Rusham propose that while collaboration has been a mode of resistance and a critical tool in the past, it is also now a common "requirement" of neoliberal societies.⁵⁹ A similar position is articulated by Noor Afshan Mirza and Brad Butler who suggest that "(non)participation" might be a critical activist practice in neoliberal societies.⁶⁰ However, I would contend that any discussion of participation requires a close of analysis of *who* is participating at the service of *whom*, as well as the prevailing circumstances and type of participation engaged therein. It is difficult to state some forms of participation as always critical and others always passive, particularly when participation is often social and cultural, and therefore dynamic and changeable. This is especially so in societies – especially neoliberal societies – in which speaking and acting are everyday mundane acts (privileges) for some, and unimaginable for others. The politics of (and distinctions between) collaboration, cooperation, and various types of participation will be returned to repeatedly in this thesis.

⁵⁸ I use the male pronouns purposefully here to cite the continual return by neoliberal governments, corporations, and institutions to structures and traditions that have supported patriarchies and privileged the wellbeing of usually white, middle class, heterosexual cisgender men above other citizens.

⁵⁹ Katja Čičgoj, Stefan Apostolou-Hölscher, and Martina Rusham, "The Inflexions of the Undercommons, Lingering Ghosts: (Un)Answered Questions, (Un)Present Speakers, (Un)Read Books and Readers?" *Inflexions* 8 (April 2015): n. p., accessed 18 May 2016, http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/radicalpedagogy/n8_tangent_cicigojapostolou-holscherrusham.html.

⁶⁰ Noor Afshan Mirza and Brad Butler, "The Museum of Non Participation," *The Museum of Non Participation*, last modified 2018, <http://www.museumofnonparticipation.org/index.php>.

Competition as economic solution to social problems

Competition is perceived under neoliberalism as a regulating and organising phenomena that prevents individuals from harming one another and keeps business dealings fair.⁶¹ The government, by contrast, is viewed as a state body that should play a limited part in facilitating social relations or business transactions, if any. In other words, a competitive deregulated market is perceived as capable of solving all social and business-related problems.⁶² Slaughter and Leslie explain that in neoliberalism, intervening governments are often viewed as a “drag on economic growth” or a stall on the operation of the private sector which, by contrast, is the “engine of competition.”⁶³ As such, in neoliberalism, individual behaviour is regulated not by the government, but by market competition.

Since neoliberal governments prioritise profitability, individual responsibility, and non-interventionist approaches to social problems, they are often willing to reduce corporate taxes and regulation in order to allow businesses to operate “unfettered” and competitively.⁶⁴ Additionally, neoliberal states are also quick to reduce or cut programs that do not reap large profits, rebranding such programs as undesirable handouts.

Social welfare and entitlement programs are often susceptible to such cuts. As a result, vulnerable or marginalised communities may lose important supportive services – such as health care, clinics, educational structures, shelters, forms of parental leave or childcare, mental health lifelines, and arts centres – that free such communities from burdens that they are born into, or challenges that are unexpectedly encountered. Without such services, Chandra Tapalde Mohanty argues that neoliberal states tend to criminalise, incarcerate, and impoverish economically and socially vulnerable communities while allowing more privileged communities to gain further “mobility and

⁶¹ Waligorski, 5.

⁶² Bowles et al, 12.

⁶³ Slaughter and Leslie, 34

⁶⁴ Slaughter and Leslie, 34.

cosmopolitanism.”⁶⁵ Despite neoliberalism’s professed commitment to individual freedom for all, neoliberal policies and ‘bootstrapism’ tends to only suit persons who do not require social or welfare services.⁶⁶ This is a problem that has foundations in liberal thought which also ultimately conceives of liberty as conditional, not universal.⁶⁷

Individualism and competition also create an environment that is hostile to collective action, collaboration, and cooperation. Neoliberalism’s encouragement of individualistic tendencies and focus on competitive market-based remedies for social issues impacts the ability of advocacy and activist groups to effectively mobilise, form communities based around shared experiences, and create responses that deal with inequality on a structural (rather than individual) level.⁶⁸ The collaborative and supportive relationships that advocacy depends on – which often require empathy between different communities – are not needed in neoliberalism. In fact, as Evans argues, neoliberalism benefits from individuals learning to ‘other’ those that surround them in order to compete against and exploit them more easily. Additionally, Evans comments that neoliberalism’s “belief in self-autonomy, self-reliance and self-discipline is the very means by which to pre-empt [collective] resistance to the state.”⁶⁹

Neoliberalism’s encouragement of individualistic competitive market tendencies is also prevalent outside of government behaviour. Corporations under neoliberalism can be identified as engaging in practices that are

⁶⁵ Chandra Tapalde Mohanty, “Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique,” *Signs* 38, no.4 (Summer 2013): 970.

⁶⁶ The idea that ‘pulling oneself up by the bootstraps’ (engaging in individual hard work) will result in success (financial security) is advice that works best when an individual happens to possess a very white, cisgender, heteronormative, able-bodied, middle class, educated, ‘neurotypical,’ and/or capitalist-sympathising pair of boots to pull on every day. In other words, individual freedom comes easier to persons who are born into a degree (or multiple degrees) of social or economic privilege than to others who lack such privileges under neoliberalism.

⁶⁷ As Domenico Losurdo argues, some of the founding thinkers of liberal thought were complicit in the enslavement of African American subjects, oppression of First Nations peoples, and the suppression of women’s rights. (Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 6, 202, 323.)

⁶⁸ Evans, 42-47.

⁶⁹ Evans, 45.

predatory (exploitative and plundering, often by powerful bodies of less influential communities), cannibalistic (as seen in the consumption of corporates by other corporates to form powerful conglomerates), and self-centred (encouraging of ventures that could result in personal gain or profit rather than community uplift). Such inclinations are noticeable in the business ventures and philosophy of online shopping conglomerate, *Amazon*. In recent years, the large company has begun to buy out small independent book stores (which have been replaced and rebranded as *Amazon Books* stores, a process that is about to be repeated with the recently acquired *Whole Foods Market* supermarkets), once competing online stores (such as *AbeBooks* and *The Book Depository*), and social media websites with commodity marketing potential (including *Goodreads* and *IMDb*). Amazon CEO, Jeff Bezos maintains an “it’s always Day One” philosophy that pushes an agenda of ‘surprising’ customers with new products; Bezos recently commented on the new quick delivery service *Prime* that “no customer ever asked Amazon to create the Prime membership program, but it sure turns out they wanted it.”⁷⁰ Bezos has also boasted about prioritising “results ... not process,” quickly integrating trends into the company’s services, and making decisions quickly through a process called “disagree and commit.”⁷¹ Bezos’s business model – which thrives on devouring the competition and prioritises speed and sales over attending to actual needs or harmonious decisions – is only one example of deregulated neoliberal individualism in corporate practice. Interestingly, it seems that instead of spurring competition between business players, a neoliberal landscape seems to encourage businesses to ‘fight to the death’ and ultimately aim to destroy, rather than coexist with, their rivals.

Harvey observes that while neoliberalism could be understood “either as a *utopian* project” that reorganises international capitalism into an ideal model

⁷⁰ Daniel B. Kline, “Jeff Bezos says it will always be “Day 1” at Amazon,” *USA Today*, last modified 14 April 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2017/04/14/jeff-bezos-says-it-will-always-be-day-1-at-amazon/100411054/>.

⁷¹ Kline, “Jeff Bezos says it will always be “Day 1” at Amazon.”

or “as a *political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites,” it is the latter that has “dominated” since the late twentieth century.⁷² While the core principles that I have outlined – free markets, individual freedom, and competition – generally characterise neoliberalism, it should be noted that they are, as Harvey observes, “either abandoned or become so twisted as to be unrecognizable” when the stability of wealthy or powerful groups are threatened.⁷³ Such interventions often solidify patriarchal, heteronormative, and religiously conservative structures. While the ‘twists’ may differ between states and companies, neoliberalism allows powerful bodies to default to policies and strategies that uphold – rather than demolish – obstacles that impede vulnerable groups and solidify structures that support those who can aggressively accumulate capital.

Slaughter and Leslie have documented that since the 1980s, neoliberalism has had major consequences for higher education in many ‘western’ nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.⁷⁴ Following neoliberal policies, resources that were funding welfare programs in these countries were pushed towards enabling tax cuts for businesses and tech innovation through research and development conducted by military or individual researchers.⁷⁵ During the same period, debt reduction policies were created to balance government budgets and entitlement programs expanded (meaning there were more entitlement programs to consider). Over time, less and less public money has been put at the disposal of higher education institutions.⁷⁶ As a result, higher education has had to find other

⁷² Harvey, 19.

⁷³ Government intervention, of course, occurs frequently and quietly to maintain economic and social status quos. For example, the ‘bailing out’ of several banks by US government after the global financial crisis of 2008. (Harvey, 19.)

⁷⁴ Connell argues that 1987 can be pinpointed as the moment that neoliberalism was “injected ... into every sector of the education system” in Australia with the appointment of John Dawkins as Federal Minister for Education. (Raewyn Connell, “The neoliberal cascade and education: an essay on the market agenda and its consequences,” *Critical Studies in Education* 54, no. 2 (2013): 104)

⁷⁵ Slaughter and Leslie, 36-37.

⁷⁶ Slaughter and Leslie, 37.

means of funding. Any attempts to reverse this depression in higher education resources is complicated by the ideological values that have been imparted by dominant neoliberal discourse – deregulation, individualism, and competition – which discourages governments from intervening in the funding of education.

Myra Marx Ferree and Kathrin Zippel argue that while the “meaning and purposes” of universities are complicated and often contested, and contemporary universities continue to prioritise many of the values of liberalism – including “individualism, modernity, democracy, [and] humanism” – they identify neoliberal universities as concerned primarily with “efficiency, productivity, managerialism, [and] scientific technological control.”⁷⁷ Lowered funding and neoliberal hostility to anything close to a ‘handout’ has already dramatically changed the core values of many universities. The result is a culture of educating that is subject to the whims of laissez-faire free markets, privatisation, and competitive free trade. These are forces that act as the undertow that shapes and maintains the neoliberalisation of education.

(2) Running a business

It is often concluded in discussions of education under neoliberalism that this process ultimately transforms institutions into businesses, education into a commodity or investment, and students into consumers. Gielen and De Bruyne, for example, liken contemporary neoliberalised educational institutions to catering businesses that

are expected to deliver knowledge that is made-to-measure and meets the demands of its clients or potential students. Even the contents of a discipline, however classic, nowadays have a limited shelf life, subjected as they are to quickly changing demands in the labour market. The transfer of knowledge and

⁷⁷ Myra Marx Ferree and Kathrin Zippel, “Gender Equality in the Age of Academic Capitalism: Cassandra and Pollyanna Interpret University Restructuring,” *Social Politics* 22, no. 4 (2015): 563.

the learning process are literally custom-made to fit modules and competencies, which in turn are neatly divided into precisely calculated hours of contact. The students/consumers can then file a complaint when either the promised quality or quantity is not delivered at all or not in time. They are also subjected to consumer and satisfaction questionnaires in all sorts of interim educational assessments or audits.⁷⁸

The investment made by this particular group of consumers is not made to accumulate knowledge, but rather to gain access – an apparent direct pathway – into a vocation and profitable career. Irit Rogoff describes this as a “neoliberal myth” that has been “swallowed” by mainstream education.⁷⁹ Gielen and De Bruyne summarise that the only guarantee of formal education today is “delivering [within] the norm,” containing the outputs of education within the constraints and desires of neoliberalism.⁸⁰

Important additions to these conclusions have been made by Slaughter and Rhoades, who argue that neoliberalism also turns the educational institution into a marketer, not only of itself, but also of the values and ideals of neoliberal capitalism.⁸¹ They add that student consumers (once enrolled in their purchased education) become a “captive market” that can be sold university-branded commodities, negotiated for use by external companies, and eventually “present[ed]” to employers as an “output/product.”⁸² By this reading of education under neoliberalism, students quickly move from having agency and subjecthood – or at least, a type of neoliberal subjecthood defined by access to consumer choice between universities and their products – to objectification through commodification.

⁷⁸ Gielen and De Bruyne, 2.

⁷⁹ Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, *The Open Academy: Irit Rogoff*, online video, 1 hour 38 minutes, 21 February 2012, <https://vimeo.com/37180261>.

⁸⁰ Gielen and De Bruyne, 2-3.

⁸¹ Shelia Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 1.

⁸² Slaughter and Rhoades, 1.

There seems to be an expectation of a return on investment (ROI) on all sides here. For students, the expectation is that some sort of profitable end (namely, a vocation or otherwise profitable pathway) will be met after completing, for example, a degree. Meanwhile for educational facilities, there lies the expectation that in exchange for educating said students, a profit will be made.

The transformation of educational facilities into skill development centres or school-to-vocation pipelines is reflective of the neoliberalisation of educational facilities. To prove cultural worth and ensure survival in competition for, as Raewyn Connell argues, the “marks and money” of students, educational sites have had to mutate into business-like environments.⁸³ This profit-driven, competitive, business-like atmosphere is noticeable in a number of trends, such as: hikes in student fees (which insinuate a ‘consumer model’ of learning); austerity measures; increasing reliance on competitive testing to allocate enrolments (among other forms of “rationing,” as Connell describes, that create hierarchies of schools and students);⁸⁴ growing dependence on a flexible casual workforce (Pierre Bourdieu argues that neoliberalism is the era of “the absolute reign of flexibility”); marketing of degrees as career pathways rather than learning experiences; cross-institutional standardisation of educational programs that bulldoze differences in disciplinary needs (perhaps exemplified by the Bologna Accord);⁸⁵ use of funds to hire ‘starchitects’ to build marketable modern buildings; development of close relations between educational facilities and

⁸³ Connell, 103.

⁸⁴ Connell, 106.

⁸⁵ The Bologna Accord (also known as the Bologna Process) is a process that standardises university programs and unifies evaluative measures across the European Union. Since 1998, forty-eight EU countries have declared their willingness to participate in the objectives of the Bologna Accord. Ewa Majewska argues that this bureaucratic approach to education prioritises development of “quickly measureable products” over “debate and processual approaches.” (Ewa Majewska, “The Common in the Time of Creative Reproductions: On Gerald Raunig’s Factories of Industries of Creativity,” *e-flux journal* 62 (February 2015): n.p., accessed 2 April 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/62/60977/the-common-in-the-time-of-creative-reproductions-on-gerald-raunig-s-factories-of-knowledge-industries-of-creativity/>; “Members,” *Bologna Process*, last modified 21 March 2018, <http://www.ehea.info/pid34250/members.html>)

lucrative industries; and, amalgamations of smaller schools and departments with larger institutions (such as the increasingly common absorption of art schools by their associated universities since the 1990s) to make management easier.⁸⁶

(3) 'Hardification'

It has become increasingly common for large corporations to turn to university research to discover potentially marketable ideas and technologies that can compete globally.⁸⁷ In turn, universities are turning to corporations to organise means of accumulating financial support. As a result, close ties are being created between multinational corporations and educational institutions. These are ties that are rewarded in neoliberal societies; for example, in Australia, there is a separate category of grants – the 'Linkage Projects Scheme' – provided by the Australian Research Council to support collaborations between researchers and government bodies, businesses, industries, or other 'end-users' (usually, a group or individual who wish to turn knowledge into a commercial product).⁸⁸ Les Levidow argues that relations between outside companies and corporates with educational facilities, programs, or services are "justified as improving quality and efficiency," but that such relationships often push "commercial values and vocational skills" on to students and schools.⁸⁹ Academies have become sites in which the interests and main players of neoliberalism – the wealthy and powerful – can be attended to through marketing opportunities hidden inside, for example, corporate partnerships, work experience placements, and internships.

⁸⁶ Brad Buckley and John Conomos, "The Australian research Council Funding Model Condemns Art Schools to a Bleak Future," in *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy*, eds. Brad Buckley and John Conomos (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009), 87; Pierre Bourdieu, 97.

⁸⁷ Slaughter and Leslie, 6.

⁸⁸ "Linkage Program," *Australian Government: Australia Research Council*, last modified 12 June 2018, <http://www.arc.gov.au/linkage-projects>.

⁸⁹ Les Levidow, "Neoliberal Agendas for Higher Education," in *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, eds. Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2005), 156.

However, corporate investments in research are not made charitably or spread equally across disciplines, departments, or schools. Rather, as Richard Münch observes, “investments in research are made according to the yardstick of short-term profit expectations.”⁹⁰ He argues that, consequentially, “currently profitable research [and] topical themes” are over-invested, while “high risk research that takes place outside large groups, outside the mainstream, contrary to fashion trends, and off the tracks of applied research” is often left under-invested.⁹¹ In other words, the survival of research depends on its proximity to ‘trendy’ ideas and commodities, or other appealing means of quickly procuring capital. Wesley Shumar claims that as a result, educational objects in the era of neoliberalism are subject to commodification so that names of academics, text titles, concepts, and notions are reduced to “commodity signs, or things to be circulated and exchanged for the value of their appearance, not for substance.”⁹² Likewise, Claire Bishop argues that under neoliberalism, “the benchmark is no longer excellence, but market success: if the content attracts students, and therefore income, it is justified.”⁹³ As a result, what an academic or an idea communicates is second to their ability to convert knowledge into capital.⁹⁴

Since the neoliberalisation of education is the process by which knowledge production becomes profit production, studies that err on production of objects or information that can ensure short term capital gain become more favourable – and therefore, fundable – than studies that do not. This has created an imbalance in funding, support, and influence between different disciplines and their facilities. Higher education institutions are increasingly directing what funding they do receive towards marketable fields

⁹⁰ Richard Münch, *Academic Capitalism: Universities in the Global Struggle for Excellence* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 253.

⁹¹ Münch, 253.

⁹² Wesley Shumar, *College for Sale: A Critique of the Commodification of Higher Education* (London and Washington D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1997), 23-24.

⁹³ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2012), 268.

⁹⁴ Shumar, 24.

that promise scientific or technological innovation and, as a result, further financing from corporations and companies with vested interests in such fields.⁹⁵ Slaughter and Leslie argue that since globalisation, “science-based products and processes” that can be marketed more easily than others have been turned to more regularly than other areas by multinationals attempting to invest in a competitive edge.⁹⁶ Similar trends are noticeable in studies related to business and management of finances.⁹⁷ In other words, under the pressures created by globalisation and neoliberalism, educational institutions have drifted quickly towards a type of corporatisation, commercialisation, and bureaucratisation that may keep the more patentable and sellable areas of the ‘hard sciences’ (often referred to as STEM: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as well as other marketable fields of study (such as business management or advertising) afloat – when it suits the interests of the investing company, that is – but has left the less profitable branches of study – namely, the humanities and arts – struggling for recognition, validation, or funding. It should be noted this is an affliction that is not limited to the arts and humanities; there are many fields of research within STEM that are also threatened by neoliberal logics of learning. However, the arts and humanities are effected acutely and thus form the focus of my analysis here.

In an attempt to attract support, enrolment, and interest, many disciplines have undergone a process of hardification. Hardification refers to the practices through which academic disciplines engage with – or, at least, develop an identity that suggests engagement with – methodologies that mimic those of the hard sciences and other marketable fields of study. This

⁹⁵ For example, in a survey of American university funding the by National Science Foundation, it is clear that research and development funding had been concentrated towards medical sciences, biological sciences, and engineering during the 2015 financial year. (Ronda Britt, “Universities Report Fourth Straight Year of Declining Federal R&D Funding in FR 2015,” *InfoBrief, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics* 17-303 (November 2016): 1-6, accessed 1 June 2017, <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17303/>)

⁹⁶ Slaughter and Leslie, 6.

⁹⁷ For example, in an Australian study of research financing conducted by Universities Australia in 2015, business research was shown to receive more financial support than other fields of study. (Universities Australia, *Higher Education and Research Facts and Figures* (Canberra: Universities Australia, 2015), 19.)

might include developing projects or courses that prioritise usefulness, objectivity, efficiency, transparency, patentability, applicability, employability, or production of measurable, marketable results and skills. Hardification also supports the previously discussed transformation of education into a ‘career move,’ rather than an opportunity to engage in learning for the sake of appeasing curiosity without a specific objective or application in mind for whatever knowledge is acquired. Hardification seems to inform Connell’s argument that neoliberalism has “a definite view of education ... as human capital formation” that attends only to the “skills and attitudes needed by a productive workforce.”⁹⁸

Neoliberalism thrives off sensibilities that do not necessarily gel with the research methods that are favoured by people in experimental fields. The arts and humanities – although an immensely varied body of disciplines and fields of study – are united in an interest in people: the many ways that we might behave, perceive, experience, create, record, socialise, organise, think, and feel. Studies of such things are not necessarily immediately useful or marketable. Nor are they created using approaches that prioritise measurability or objective findings.

Neoliberalism’s prioritisation of efficiency and austerity has left practitioners of the arts and humanities (both within institutions and outside) with only two options: ‘harden’ up, or get cut. Cuts to arts funding, in particular, seem to be increasing in commonality amongst neoliberal governments. For example, over the last decade of neoliberal governance, deep cuts have been made to funding for Australian art educational programs, a huge number of performing and visual arts organisations, grants, and arts schools.⁹⁹ In Sydney, these changes have been felt acutely. In 2008, the

⁹⁸ Connell, 104.

⁹⁹ See Alison Croggon, “Culture crisis” (2016) and “The 70% drop in Australia Council grants for individual artists is staggering” (2016); Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, “Trouble at Sydney’s art schools” (2016); Alex McKinnon, “Australia proves that cutting arts funding can unite the creative community, not destroy it” (2017); Julian Meyrick, “University cutes – dire implications for the creative arts” (2017); and Deborah Stone, “65 arts organisations lose funding from Australia Council” (2016).

University of Western Sydney's art school was shut down. In 2016, attempts were made to amalgamate three of Sydney's major art schools: Sydney College of the Arts, the National School of Art, and the University of New South Wales: Art & Design (formerly the College Of Fine Arts, a name change that signalled a smaller amalgamation of the art school into university). Recent cuts to Australia Council grants have resulted in a 70% drop in individual artist grants since 2013 as well as the defunding of 65 arts organisations, many of which supported experimental and transdisciplinary artmaking, such as Force Majeure, the Australian Experimental Art Foundation, and PACT Centre for Emerging Artists. Such grants and organisations are often crucial for continuing an artistic practice after art school (if one has been able to make the 'risky' investment of art school in the first place). Meanwhile, unpaid internships, unpaid work experience, volunteer positions, and traineeships – among other 'opportunities' that are often only paid in so-called 'exposure' – seem to proliferate, a situation that serves as the background of Mike Monterio's recent *CreativeMornings* talk, 'Fuck You, Pay Me' (2011).¹⁰⁰

The swing of higher education towards prioritising wealth accumulation over facilitation of a broad liberal education has potentially accentuated a pre-existing gap between "the two cultures" (as C. P. Snow put it in 1959) between more applicable, marketable hard sciences and more creative, experimental disciplines in the arts and humanities.¹⁰¹ For practitioners working within creative disciplines that waver in profitability – including artists, art educators, and art students – neoliberal values and policies can lead to the disintegration of important supportive structures, such as art schools, organisations, and federal funding.

¹⁰⁰ The talk took place originally in 2011, but has since been uploaded onto YouTube. (CreativeMornings HQ, Mike Monterio: *F*ck You, Pay Me*, online video, 38 minutes 39 seconds, 7 July 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVklVRt6c1U>.)

¹⁰¹ Buckley and Conomos, 87.

(4) Administration

Wendy Brown argues that “schemes of organization and control” used by “profit-seeking corporation[s]” has been imported by many public sector bodies, including education.¹⁰² An increase in administrative bodies that fastidiously measure and manage resources used in educational spaces is reflective of this development. The hardification of creative, experimental or otherwise immeasurable fields of study has been compounded and maintained by an increase in bureaucratic and managerial monitoring of the performance of teaching faculty and students to ensure the efficient spread of resources and financial support.¹⁰³

Gielen and De Bruyne argue that this aspect of neoliberalised education reveals an interesting gap between liberalism and neoliberalism; while liberals were “optimistic” about a human ability to act freely in order to build a better world, neoliberals are markedly less optimistic, if not extremely suspicious of the ways in which individuals choose to use their freedom.¹⁰⁴ For this reason, Connell argues that neoliberal governments implement systems of ‘remote control’ actioned through “funding mechanisms, testing systems, certification, audit, and surveillance systems” as well as increased pressure to ‘teach to tests’ which makes it increasingly difficult for faculty to make autonomous – let alone, potentially radical – pedagogical choices.¹⁰⁵

Benjamin Ginsberg notes that between 1975 and 2005, the number of full-time teaching staff hired by universities grew by approximately 51% in the United States, an increase that parallels rising student enrolments over time. During the same period, however, university administrators grew by 85% while ‘other professionals’ – defined by Ginsberg as people who are not administrators per se, but nevertheless “work for the administration and serve

¹⁰² Brown, 101.

¹⁰³ Slaughter and Leslie, 36-39.

¹⁰⁴ Gielen and De Bruyne, 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ Connell, 108.

as its arms, legs, eyes, ears, and mouthpieces” – grew by 240%.¹⁰⁶ To explain these extraordinary increases in managerial staff, Ginsberg points to “growth-driven demand, governmental mandates, and faculty preferences” as well as “efforts by administrators to aggrandize their own roles in academic life.”¹⁰⁷ Thomas Frank notes that it is “deeply ironic” that at the heart of many higher educational institutions now sit managers who are dedicated to managerial theory, “a notorious form of pseudo knowledge.”¹⁰⁸ Both Ginsberg and Connell note that since these administrative bodies often impede (or are at least perceived as intruding on) academic processes, there is palatable hostility in many universities between academics and managerial staff.¹⁰⁹

(5) Neoliberal feelings

Bishop argues that increased bureaucratisation has not only impacted the ethos of education, but also the affective environments considered most appropriate and efficient for teaching and learning.¹¹⁰ Jeffrey R. Di Leo similarly argues that economic austerity – and monitoring of that austerity – among educational institutions has offset a culture of heightened ‘emotional austerity.’¹¹¹ Di Leo suggests that within this culture, “austere emotions” that impel “gravity, strictness, seriousness, and solemnity” are encouraged much more readily than others.¹¹² Similarly, Connell argues that under neoliberalism, there is increased pressure for teachers to maintain a type of “professionalism” that prioritises exchanges of “practical know-how” above all else.¹¹³ Multiple authors investigating workplace affects suggest that ‘serious feelings’ have become

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25.

¹⁰⁷ Ginsberg, 32-33.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Frank, “Academy Fight Song,” *Baffler* 23, (August 2013): n.p., accessed 15 March 2018, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/academy-fight-song>.

¹⁰⁹ Connell, 102; Ginsberg, 32.

¹¹⁰ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 268-269.

¹¹¹ Jeffrey R. Di Leo, *Higher Education Under Late Capitalism: Identity, Conduct, and the Neoliberal Condition* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 7-8.

¹¹² Di Leo, *Higher Education Under Late Capitalism*, 8-9.

¹¹³ Connell, 108.

common “representative emotions,” feelings that are considered apt for work and reflective of the aims of the related corporation, institution, or organisation.¹¹⁴ Charlotte Bloch has argued that in their optimal form, representative emotions are often actually “an ‘absence of feeling’.”¹¹⁵ Di Leo disagrees with this conclusion somewhat and suggests that such feelings tend to be “cold and frosty,” rather than absent.¹¹⁶ For Di Leo, these emotions are the “telos of neoliberal academe” which operates best when students and teachers are “passive, docile, compliant, and submissive.”¹¹⁷ Ironically for Di Leo, this marks a departure from the traditional liberal championing of universities as centres of impassioned critical dialogue.¹¹⁸

However, another increasingly common phenomena in neoliberalised educational spaces is the prevalence of depressed, anxious subjects. What is recognised by Bloch and Di Leo as coldness or affectlessness is reframed by Lauren Berlant. She argues that feelings of apparent detachment, including “affectlessness, apathy, coolness, cynicism, and so on,” are not so much demonstrations of dissociation but rather “constitute ongoing relations of sociality.”¹¹⁹ In other words, these feelings are the new normal; depressive feelings are a primary feature of neoliberal social environments because variations of uneasy feelings – including misery and mental illness – have become commonplace.¹²⁰ In an article aptly titled, ‘Anxious? Depressed? You might be suffering from capitalism’ (2015), Seth Prins et al argue that socio-economic status contributes substantially to one’s likelihood of experiencing

¹¹⁴ See Helena Flam, “Corporate Emotions and Emotions in Corporations,” *The Sociological Review* 50, issue 2 (2002): 92; Charlotte Bloch, *Passion and Paranoia: Emotions and the Culture of Emotion in Academia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 10; and Di Leo, *Higher Education Under Late Capitalism*, 8-9.

¹¹⁵ Bloch, 10.

¹¹⁶ Di Leo, *Higher Education Under Late Capitalism*, 10.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey R. Di Leo, *Corporate Humanities in Higher Education: Moving Beyond the Neoliberal Academy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), ix.

¹¹⁸ Di Leo, *Corporate Humanities in Higher Education*, ix.

¹¹⁹ Lauren Berlant, “Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss and the Senses,” *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 63 (2007/2008): 35.

¹²⁰ This is not to say, however, that depressive feelings (which might also manifest as the absence of feelings) are not also at once also bodily or can be approached as issues of medicine and science.

despair or mental illness.¹²¹ With the threat of job insecurity (masked as flexibility) and burden of debt almost continuous for many faculty members and students engaged in creative or experimental studies, it is perhaps unsurprising that despair and desperation are common feelings in neoliberalised educational spaces.¹²² These are feelings that, as Ann Cvetkovich argues, can turn the old call to arms “what is to be done?” into “an expression of futility.”¹²³

What’s intersectional feminism got to do with it?

Neoliberalism and neoliberalised education are conditions that are of interest for intersectional feminists for several reasons. Firstly, neoliberalism directly impacts institution-based studies of intersectional feminism and its intersecting disciplines of critical thought. This includes, but is not limited to, gender studies, critical race theory, queer theory, and critical disability studies, as well as some streams of art theory, history, literature, psychology, and educational studies, many of which are firmly situated outside of the ‘hard sciences.’¹²⁴ Without funding or validation, these disciplines cannot continue to produce work that supports intersectional feminist thinking and action.

Secondly, education (and its related forms of labour) remains an important site for feminist advocacy and activism. Many intersectional feminists highlight pedagogy, scholarship, and education among the structures

¹²¹ Seth J. Prins, Lisa M. Bates, Katherine M. Keyes, and Carles Muntaner, “Anxious? Depressed? You might be suffering from capitalism: Contradictory class locations and the prevalence of depression and anxiety in the United States,” *Social Health Illn* 37, no. 8 (November 2015): 1352-1372.

¹²² Another increasingly normalised phenomena at tertiary educational institutions (among other workplaces) are efforts to develop workplace resilience among staff and students through, for example, wellness programs, mediation events, mindfulness exercises, and mental health support groups. While these activities may appear supportive, they also further normalise chronic fatigue and mental illness among workers under neoliberalism. These programs encourage workers to adapt to their toxic surroundings on an individual level, rather than campaign for change to the structural workplace problems that create the need for resilience programs in the first place.

¹²³ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 111.

¹²⁴ This is not to say, however, that intersectional feminism cannot be actioned through technological, engineering, scientific or medical advancements. However, historically these have not been the bedrocks of feminist theory and action. Tech and science, in particular, have histories of actively shunning women which, combined with traditional gender roles and expectations, continue to have ramifications today for the treatment of women in STEM.

that can uphold or threaten oppressive norms.¹²⁵ In Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana's discussions of intersectional feminism, for example, knowledge production is a central concern.¹²⁶ They suggest that both academic intersectional feminists and activists aim to:

(1) reformulate the world of ideas so that it incorporates the many contradictory and overlapping ways that human life is experienced; (2) convey this knowledge by rethinking curricula and promoting institutional change in higher education institutions; (3) apply the knowledge in an effort to create a society in which all voices are heard; and (4) advocate for public policies that are responsive to multiple voices.¹²⁷

Thornton Dill and Zambrana also argue that intersectional feminism approaches activism, critical analysis, theory, and pedagogy as interrelated components that all contribute to bodies of knowledge that can encourage (or discourage) social change.¹²⁸ Education, as Shumar suggests, is a powerful "mechanism for exclusion," one that can "sanction some [ideas and practices] and ... discourage others."¹²⁹

As previously outlined, neoliberalised academies have a tendency to favour profitable forms of research produced by disciplines that tend to lean towards objectivity, empirical measurability, and utility. Meanwhile, arts and humanities research – which tends to explore many issues central to intersectional feminist thinking – gravitates towards subjective experience, emergent theories and practices, marginalised disciplines, inclusionary

¹²⁵ See Kim A. Case, "Toward an Intersectional Pedagogy: Engaged Learning for Social Justice" (2017); Elizabeth Evans, *The Politics of Third Wave Feminisms: Neoliberalism, Intersectionality, and the State in Britain and the US* (2015); Patrick R. Granka, "Undoing the Psychology of Gender: Intersectional Feminism and Social Science Pedagogy" (2017; Lisa Nyberg and Johanna Gustavsson, "Radical Pedagogy" (2015); and Lana Wånggren and Karin Sellberg, "Intersectionality and dissensus: a negotiation of the feminist classroom" (2012).

¹²⁶ Thornton Dill and Zambrana, 1-2.

¹²⁷ Thornton Dill and Zambrana, 2.

¹²⁸ Thornton Dill and Zambrana, 1.

¹²⁹ Shumar, 21.

measures, and experimentations. Many of these practices do not guarantee quick profits and are therefore less likely to be supported readily under neoliberalism. Lack of support and funding for these activities threatens the existence of important interventions into education, such as multi-vocal accounts of histories and narratives, development of diverse student bodies and staff, critical thinking, speculative and experimental studies, as well as creation of experiences, artworks, and communities.

Significantly, the neoliberalisation of education also threatens the continuation of attempts by intersectional feminists in the arts and humanities to reorient discussions of oppression and its related concepts around those who have lived experience of inequality. This project involves changing the subjects and agents who lie at the centre of conversations, prioritising diverse voices, highlighting maligned issues and making them important points of discussion, establishing support for knowledge outside of what is useful (and therefore, often, profitable or attends to dominant ideological desires and aims), shaking up 'common knowledge,' and encouraging modes of knowledge production that support such ventures. These projects require the dismantlement of neoliberal attitudes as well as related practices that bolster structures that prevent maligned voices from entering academies, such as 'meritocracies' and the recycling of traditional canons and curricula that over-represent privileged voices.

The third reason that neoliberalised education is an intersectional feminist issue relates to its obstruction or prevention of certain non-traditional forms of knowledge production that are central to intersectional feminist thinking. Intersectional feminism originated from and operates through transdisciplinary experimental thinking. Intersectionality was initially developed out of insights drawn from gender studies, legal studies, and (then emergent) critical race theory, as well as activism and arts combatting sexism

and racism.¹³⁰ Thornton Dill and Zambrana assert that to develop intersectional feminist thinking further, disciplinary boundaries might require some degree of collapse in order to combat the “compartmentalization and fixity of ideas” that can prevent the development of emerging transdisciplinary fields, practices, ideas, and theories that can work through intersections and complications.¹³¹ Instead of moving from ‘one box of books’ to another, intersectional feminist thinking and action requires spaces that allow for collisions of ideas and experimentation.

Fourthly and finally, neoliberalised education seems to have created a culture of austere or depressive feelings that involves affective labour, but empties it of its radical potential. This problem is perhaps one of the more complicated to unpack since it involves affects, labour, authenticity, and performance. I approach affect as an umbrella term for various types of feelings. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg suggest that affect “arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*” – somewhere between an individual’s agency and actions – and could be understood as a “force” that is at once “intimate and impersonal” as well as public and social.¹³² Here I will briefly address some significant facets of affect theory – emotion, indeterminate feelings, and the sociality of affect – before returning to the issue of affective labour.

Emotions are internal experiences that can be articulated. Emotions are considered by Bruce Massumi as a narration of affect: a consciously perceived experience which often simplifies the complexity of affects for the benefit of a more digestible – even pre-empted – plotline of causes and effects.¹³³ Emotions are, as Lisa Blackman suggests, more “shareable (mimetic)” and “sticky” than

¹³⁰ Thornton Dill and Zambrana, 2.

¹³¹ Thornton Dill and Zambrana, 2.

¹³² Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1-2.

¹³³ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 25; Patricia T. Clough, “The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no.1 (2008): 3.

affects.¹³⁴ Such feelings may range from major cathartic experiences to minor twinges.¹³⁵ Therefore, affects constitute not only utterable pre-emotional or aesthetic experiences, but also indeterminate feelings that may be flighty, subtle, yet tangible responses to people and places that are more difficult to coherently express. Patricia Clough suggests that these feelings are often unintentionally experienced.¹³⁶ Similarly, Lisa Blackman suggests that affect is “non-cognitive, (...) non-conscious, non-representational, incorporeal and immaterial.”¹³⁷ Affects therefore include feelings that we are conscious of, but which are sometimes too layered or too specific to adequately express in the form of emotions. Affects therefore feel deeply personal and internal.

Affects can also be social and shareable. Rephrasing Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s understanding of affect, Wånggren and Sellberg argue that affect is a force “that allows each subject to partially become its other.”¹³⁸ In an essay that seeks to answer the question, ‘Is happiness contagious?’, Blackman suggests that rather than catching emotions from each other through body language or kind words, it is emotions that catch us.¹³⁹ Tracing the historiography of affective ‘contagion,’ Blackman suggests that the transmission of feelings occurs through a complex of relations that bodies are continually involved in – such as judgment, identification, movement, and so on – and change depending on internal feelings and the character of any given time or space.¹⁴⁰ In another iteration of affect as a social phenomenon, Seigworth and Gregg suggest that affects seem to gather “across both

¹³⁴ Lisa Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (Los Angeles, London, and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2012), 4.

¹³⁵ The latter have been explored by Sianne Ngai who argues that even ambivalent or contradictory “weak affects” – feelings that do not move us to immediate action or facilitate some sort of profound emotional release – remain powerful, especially when tugged at by the types of cuteness, zaniness, and interesting imagery favoured in late capitalist consumerism. (Adam Jasper and Sianne Ngai, “Our Aesthetic Categories: An Interview with Sianne Ngai,” *Cabinet*, 43 (Fall 2011): n.p., accessed 10 March 2016, http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/43/jasper_ngai.php.)

¹³⁶ Clough, 1-2.

¹³⁷ Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies*, 4.

¹³⁸ Wånggren and Sellberg, 550.

¹³⁹ Lisa Blackman, “Is happiness contagious?” *New Foundations* 63, no.1 (2007): 16.

¹⁴⁰ Blackman, “Is happiness contagious?” 29.

relatedness and interruptions in relatedness” between bodies.¹⁴¹ Bodies, here, are defined by their “potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect” rather than their possession of an “outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary.”¹⁴² Affect, perhaps, is a sign of connection or engagement between bodies. This includes moments where bodies dismiss or disparage one another; disagreement is far from disengagement.

When we impress our emotions and responses on each other, it is a complicated negotiation of conscious decisions and immediate expressions that range from the manageable to the unexpected. Wånggren and Sellberg suggest that through affective transactions – social exchanges in which affects spread from one person to another – feelings can permeate from one person into others.¹⁴³

Affects seem to be fluctuating, often layered, and shareable ephemera that can influence a person or group’s psychic and emotional disposition. When these affects are controlled or limited to a particular group of ‘okayed’ emotional responses two things are at work: affective labour and a hierarchy of feelings associated with particular acts. In Michael Hardt’s 1999 essay on affective labour, he describes this type of labour – also known as emotional labour – as foundational in the construction of communities, a type of work that involves care and kinship for others.¹⁴⁴ For Hardt, affective labour is characterised by processes that “produce collective subjectivities, produce sociality, and ultimately produce society itself.”¹⁴⁵ Arlie Russell Hochschild puts forward a simplified definition of this type of labour by comparing the work of a flight attendant with that of a factory floor worker:

The work done by the boy in the wallpaper factory called for a coordination of mind and arm, mind and finger, and mind and shoulder. We refer to it simply

¹⁴¹ Seigworth and Gregg, 2.

¹⁴² Seigworth and Gregg, 2.

¹⁴³ Wånggren and Sellberg, 550.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Hardt, “Affective Labor,” *boundary 2* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 89.

¹⁴⁵ Hardt, 89.

as physical labor. The flight attendant does physical labor when she pushes heavy meal carts through the aisles, and she does mental work when she prepares for and actually organizes emergency landings and evacuations. But in the course of doing this physical and mental labor, she is also doing ... *emotional labor*. This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a course of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality.¹⁴⁶

While traditional notions of labour often assume the exhaustion of the body through repetitious exercises to create concrete end products, affective labour (among other forms of immaterial labour) focuses on the use of the body of the worker to produce intangible things, such as emotions, knowledge, or concepts. Additionally, it is important to note that Hochschild approaches affective labour with the sense that there is a degree of performance required; for Hochschild, affective work involves actively calling upon or compartmentalising certain emotions for the benefit of the people encountered while working.¹⁴⁷ Under neoliberalism, this type of affective labour appears to become more common and expected.

Practices of manipulating or shutting off certain emotions, however, contrasts with affective labour that operates as a practice of care: the processes involved in experiencing emotions communally, providing support, and understanding. This version of affective labour is less productive – in a capitalist sense – and more concerned with maintaining wellbeing and relationships. This type of affective labour has historically been characterised

¹⁴⁶ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 6-7.

¹⁴⁷ Of course, this type of activity is not limited to spaces of work. Everyday encounters and communications are littered with instances of managing emotions through small gestures, such as the use of emojis to shape the tone of a text message.

as feminine and, as a result, often disparaged; Eleanor Massie, for example, argues that the work involved in holding together a family, relationships, among other forms of domestic and emotional labours, have been traditionally sidelined or disregarded as unimportant ‘women’s work.’ Such work has often been unrecognised and underpaid (if paid at all).¹⁴⁸ Like education, there have been numerous feminist critiques made of capitalism and its exploitation of women as affective labourers.¹⁴⁹ When this work is co-opted for the benefit of profit accumulation, affective labour loses its connection to care. Instead, it becomes a managerial skill, a means of ensuring efficiency by ‘not wasting time’ on ‘inappropriate’ workplace feelings. Additionally, corporatised affective labour continues a process of maligning traits perceived as feminine, like emotionality or conviviality, as inferior and inappropriate for public spheres.

As previously underscored, intersectional feminist thinking often not only requires a great amount of critical thinking, but also understanding, cooperation, and empathy. Affective labour is a central practice in developing intersectional feminist communities that rely on understanding, rather than sameness, to work together. As such, barring some emotions from learning spaces can prevent some opportunities for being moved by knowledge. When it comes to pedagogy, affective labour might be reclaimed as a radical practice by reinstating its caring faculties. Therefore, recognising or addressing emotional objects within a classroom space might be more radical than quashing or avoiding material that might create strong affects. Ironically, care may also be a more efficient practice than blocking certain emotions; as bell hooks argues, failing to recognise the emotions present in a classroom “does not change the

¹⁴⁸ Eleanor Massie, “Love Songs and Awkwardness: Non-Professional Performers and Affective Labour,” *Performance Paradigm* 11 (2015): 60.

¹⁴⁹ For example, see Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1972), Heidi I. Hartmann’s “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union” (1979), Johanna Oksala’s “Affective Labor and Feminist Politics,” (2016), Martha Rosler’s “For an Art against the Mythology of Everyday Life” (1979), Kathi Weeks’s *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (2011) and “Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics” (2007), and Iris Young’s “Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of Dual Systems Theory” (1981).

reality that their presence overdetermines the conditions where learning can occur.”¹⁵⁰

However, any hierarchy of ‘learning feelings’ – feelings thought to make lessons more effective – is vulnerable to inadequacy since there is a diversity of affects that may condition a student to engage in a classroom, radical or normative. On this issue, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has commented:

It’s really, really hard, and really, really interesting to try and figure out what actual relations empowerment comes from. [...] Sometimes what makes somebody able to speak in the short term might do the opposite in the long term; what absolutely shuts somebody up for the two hours of the class or for the fourteen weeks of the semester, a year later can move them into a relation of identification that is empowering for them. [...] I know that it’s not true that people are just empowered when they feel good. I also know that people who feel shitty are not being empowered. Reading and listening and responding back are complicated acts, and what one is doing in becoming entitled to a role of speaker is fraught with huge gaps that are inhabited by ambition, shame, desire, fun. ... On the other hand, there’s just never not a lot of weird transferential shit around teaching and learning, even when the process is going one way, never mind when it’s going in all different directions.¹⁵¹

Here, Sedgwick identifies that in both traditional (“one way”) and radical modes of learning and teaching (“all different directions”), the emotions and types of relationships needed to develop empowering lessons are varied; an optimistic ‘one size fits all’ approach to teaching that prioritises happiness and immediate validation within a classroom may not always result in profound change. Additionally, sharing feelings within a classroom does not necessarily mean that seriousness or other ‘representative feelings’ will not be

¹⁵⁰ bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 133.

¹⁵¹ Sarah Chinn, Mario DiGangi, and Patrick Horrigan, “A Talk With Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,” *PRE/TEXT* 13, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1992): 92-93.

encountered or are always less genuine than other ‘nonrepresentative feelings,’ such as excitement or outrage. Also, the affective environment that may prepare one student to pick up a skill, think critically, or learn may make another switch off entirely. Nevertheless, the pedagogical act of allowing a spectrum of feelings to be part of the learning process suggests a departure from an environment of indifference or normalised anxiety for the purpose of accumulating profit more efficiently.¹⁵²

Transpedagogy as intersectional feminist response to neoliberalised education

As Ferree and Zippel argue, it is important for feminist advocates of alternatives to education under neoliberalism to be wary of not only the hierarchies and limitations created by neoliberal universities, but also of the models that came before. In other words, feminists must not fall into a nostalgic return to liberal education which has already required much revision by feminists, anti-racist activists, among other advocates who have disrupted educational inequalities.¹⁵³ Ferree and Zippel assert that both liberalism and neoliberalism only open to women who can compete in the “biased terms” of these ideologies.¹⁵⁴

What seems to be needed now is an alternative. Bourdieu writes that “against [the] narrow, short-term economics [of neoliberalism],” those who wilfully reject oppressive norms “need to put forward an *economics of happiness*, which would take note of all the profits, individual and collective, material and symbolic, associated with activity.”¹⁵⁵ To combat the ideological values of neoliberalism, a variety of types of profit must be made recognisable and valuable. This is important for practitioners, activists, artists, teachers, and

¹⁵² In French, there is a term, *sangfroid*, for this type of composure. It translates literally to “cold blood” or “ice blood.”

¹⁵³ Ferree and Zippel, 521-526

¹⁵⁴ Ferree and Zippel, 562.

¹⁵⁵ Bourdieu, 40.

researchers, among others, who produce benefits that are often more experiential than monetary. The profits that come out of research, objects, artworks, or experiences with latent usefulness or little utility at all might instead create enrichment, enjoyment, boredom, understanding, contextualisation, sympathy, warning signs, or meaningful affective experiences.

Relatedly, Rogoff suggests that what is needed now in the face of education systems that have internalised neoliberal values is a pedagogy that is “not preoccupied with succeeding but with trying.”¹⁵⁶ She adds that normalised aims, such as “knowledge transfer and knowledge assessment, professionalization, quantifiable outcomes and marketability” must be swapped for “potentiality, actualization, access and contemporaneity.”¹⁵⁷ A pedagogy is needed that acts less as a training centre that promises the development of skills that can be instrumentalised in profitable ways, and more as a space in which knowledge is pursued that may not yet possess a specific application or has not yet been legitimised as useful or wanted under capitalism. This is, of course, a tall order in the face of the neoliberalisation of education.

These limits are precisely the reason why some alternatives might be best tested outside the realm of formal institutional education. I suggest that one such a space of potentiality is being approached by transpedagogy. Functioning as a response to recent shifts in education, art, and feminist praxis (as well as other forms of advocacy and activism), transpedagogy is a transdisciplinary practice that sits at the intersection of education and art. In transpedagogy, the aim is – even if only temporarily – to consider, share, create, mull over, develop, and engage with methods of learning and teaching that are otherwise difficult to maintain under neoliberalism. These projects create and share knowledge that is often the product of critical thinking,

¹⁵⁶ Irit Rogoff, “Academy as Potentiality,” *Zehar* 60/61 (2007): 6.

¹⁵⁷ Rogoff, 6.

experimentation, and affective exchanges. In its rejection of neoliberal norms, transpedagogical works often operate outside of, or in tense relation with, higher education institutions and institutionally acceptable practices. Intersectional feminist interventions in education in the form of transpedagogy are not the first of their sort, but rather another iteration of an ongoing struggle towards restructuring and re-imagining education and society. As Emily Pethick suggests, transpedagogical works create opportunities “to think about (and sometimes even enact) the possibilities for change, if only on a micro-level.”¹⁵⁸ Transpedagogy is not *the* answer to neoliberalised education, but it is *an* alternative. It is this alternative that I will turn to in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁸ Emily Pethick, “Resisting Institutionalization,” in *Education*, ed. Felicity Allen, (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2011), 193.

Chapter II

Transpedagogy

Over the last three decades, art has apparently taken a few ‘turns.’ In the 1990s, art took a ‘social turn’ when a surge in practitioners of – and attention to – participatory or socially engaged performance art appeared to take place.¹ More recently, it has been widely claimed that art has taken a ‘pedagogical turn’ since the early 2000s.² This turn marks an increase in projects, programs, and other social ephemera that sit at the intersection of art and education. However, the combination of artistic experiences with educational practices – or, more broadly, aesthetic experience with knowledge production and sharing – is not novel. Educational practices that are artistic and artistic practices that are educational have been used for millennia, and certainly seemed to spike during the twentieth century.³ The metaphor of a turn – which suggests

¹ Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” *Artforum* 44, no.6 (2006): 180.

² This is not an exhaustive list, but for recent discussions of the pedagogical or educational turn, see Felicity Allen’s “Art: Education” (2011), Claire Bishop’s *Artificial Hells* (2012) and “The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy” (2007), Amanda Cachia’s “Disability, Curating, and the Educational Turn...” (2014), Gerald Graff’s “The Pedagogical Turn” (1994), Janna Graham’s “Between a Pedagogical Turn and a Hard Place: Thinking with Conditions” (2010), Rita L. Irwin and Dónal O’Donoghue’s “Encountering Pedagogy through Relational Art Practices” (2012), Nadine M. Kalin’s “(de)Fending Art Education Through the Pedagogical Turn” (2012), Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson’s reader *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010), Kristina Lee Podesva’s “A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art” (2007), Helen Reed’s “Bad Education: Helen Reed interviews Pablo Helguera,” (2013), and Irit Rogoff’s “Turning” (2008).

³ This is the case if we consider symbolic images, glyphs, and icons (among many other forms of ancient visual communication) as examples of art and assume that communication is an educational experience (since it involves the transmission of events, ideas, and information).

movement in a new direction – might mischaracterise what is perhaps a *return* – a passage back to something familiar. Out of this return, a transdisciplinary practice known as transpedagogy has emerged.

In this chapter I will outline some of the core characteristics of transpedagogy: its social dimensions, rejection of neoliberal educational norms through radical pedagogical techniques, and use of online and printed documentation. I will also point to the histories, ideologies, and innovations that have shaped these characteristics. This will involve tracing moments of consensus among theorists and historians currently discussing transpedagogy – particularly in regard to the historical precedents responsible for the scope of transdisciplinary, cooperative, dematerialised art practices that are embraced by transpedagogy today – as well as some potentially political omissions – namely, feminist artists, like Judy Chicago and Suzanne Lacy, who blended activism, education, and art during the 1970s, but are often overlooked in narratives of transpedagogical development. I will also consider transpedagogy as a critical response to the neoliberalisation of education (which transforms education into a measurable, manageable, and profitable experience) as well as changes to communication and interaction since the advent of Web 2.0 (a more reciprocal, user-led era of internet usage).

Terminology

Transpedagogy has gone by (and continues to go by) a number of names, a problem that has also beset discussions of socially engaged art. Transpedagogy has been variously named since its emergence in the 2000s. In some texts, transpedagogical projects are not distinguished from other forms of participatory artistic practices and therefore fall under the umbrella of socially engaged art (or one of its synonyms, such as social practice, participatory art, dialogical art, community practice, relational art, or some other term used for

works in which viewers become participants).⁴ Some theorists have attempted to develop unique terms for what is often seen as socially engaged art with an educational bent; Claire Bishop and Cath Lambert both use the term “pedagogic art,” while Peio Aguirre classifies these works, seemingly interchangeably, as “art-educational” or “art-pedagogical” projects.⁵ Gregory Sholette has approached these projects as part of a greater trend of “mockstitutions.”⁶ Lengthier phrases, such as Kristina Lee Podesva’s “artists who appropriate education as a medium for art making,” are also common.⁷ Another recent addition to this group of terms is Sam Thorne’s phrase: “self-organized education projects.”⁸ A term that has gained some traction – and will be employed in this thesis – is Pablo Helguera’s preferred nomenclature, “transpedagogy.”⁹

Helguera – a socially engaged artist, educator, and director of adult art education programs at MoMA – devised the term in 2006 to describe a practice that differed from other forms of socially engaged art in its construction of distinctively educational experiences. Helguera’s term appears to have taken off following his facilitation of a symposium hosted by MoMA in 2008, *Transpedagogy: Contemporary Art and the Vehicles of Education*. This oft-cited event explored contemporary art practices drawing together collaborative art and alternative pedagogies.¹⁰ His term has since been used by a small group of

⁴ Socially engaged art has been referred to by a mountain of names that cite often subtle theoretical differences. A comprehensive list of alternative terms for socially engaged art has already been compiled by Bishop in “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents” (2006).

⁵ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2012), 241; 27; Cath Lambert, “Psycho classrooms: teaching as a work of art,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 1 (2011): 27; Peio Aguirre, “Education with Innovations: Beyond Art-Pedagogical Projects,” in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, eds. Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson (London and Amsterdam: Open Editions and de Appel, 2010), 174-175.

⁶ Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London and New York: Pluto Press, 2011), 170.

⁷ Kristina Lee Podesva, “A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art,” *Filip* 6 (2007): n.p., accessed 1 March 2016, <https://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>.

⁸ Sam Thorne, “Introduction: Art School Confidential,” in *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education*, ed. Sam Thorne (New York: Sternberg Press, 2017), 25.

⁹ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 77.

¹⁰ See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (2012); Tania Bruguera, “On transpedagogy with Pablo Helguera” (2009); Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey, “Towards a Performative Trans-Pedagogy: Critical Approaches for

theorists and artists, including Tania Bruguera, Vikki Chalklin, Tom Finkelpearl, Marianne Mulvey, Helen Reed, Katy Siegel, Stephanie Springgay, Sam Thorne, and Sarah R. Truman, to refer to projects in which participants and the facilitating artist/s engage with pedagogical processes – usually radical pedagogical processes – to develop and share critical ideas, skills, and knowledge.¹¹ Like socially engaged artworks, a transpedagogical project is the event itself. While objects or records may be made purposefully or incidentally along the way, the process and experience of creating and sharing knowledge is the main work.

In addition to being an established (albeit, minor) term in art theory, I have chosen to use the term transpedagogy because it also alludes to the transdisciplinary characteristics of the practice quite clearly. The prefix ‘trans’ points to a state of transformation, of moving from one place to another, forming connections between seemingly separate places and practices.¹² Henceforth, transpedagogy will be used in this thesis to refer to transdisciplinary practices that knit together performative (usually socially engaged) artistic practices with radical pedagogical methods of sharing and producing knowledge. Another way to phrase this would be that transpedagogy is a branch of socially engaged art in which radical pedagogy is the core

Learning and Teaching in Art and Performance” (2016); Tom Finkelpearl *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (2013); Helen Reed, “Bad Education: Helen Reed interviews Pablo Helguera,” (2013); Katy Siegel, “Lifelong Learning” (2013), Stephanie Springgay, “The Pedagogical Impulse: Aberrant Residencies and Classroom Ecologies” (2013); and Sarah E. Truman and Stephanie Springgay, “The Primacy of Movement in Research-Creation: New Materialist Approaches to Art Research and Pedagogy” (2015).

¹¹ See Tania Bruguera, “On transpedagogy with Pablo Helguera” (2009); Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey, “Towards a Performative Trans-Pedagogy: Critical Approaches for Learning and Teaching in Art and Performance” (2016); Tom Finkelpearl *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (2013); Helen Reed, “Bad Education: Helen Reed interviews Pablo Helguera,” (2013); Katy Siegel, “Lifelong Learning” (2013); Stephanie Springgay, “The Pedagogical Impulse: Aberrant Residencies and Classroom Ecologies” (2013); and Sarah E. Truman and Stephanie Springgay, “The Primacy of Movement in Research-Creation: New Materialist Approaches to Art Research and Pedagogy” (2015).

¹² When I use the term transpedagogy to describe this area of my research among peers and other researchers, I am sometimes met with the assumption that I am investigating pedagogies concerned with transgender issues specifically. The oppression of transgender people, insights offered by trans theory, and work of transfeminists are of concern in my thesis. However, the ‘trans’ of transpedagogy is not used in this instance to refer to the rights and experiences of people who are transgender. Rather, this prefix is used to draw attention to the transdisciplinary character of this practice.

medium, or as a form of radical pedagogy developed through socially engaged art tactics. For this reason, mapping transpedagogy can be difficult; transpedagogy is a practice that sits at the overlap of two disciplines of critical engagement, but could also be imagined as a strand of either of its root disciplines. It is at once art and education, but never quite one or the other in isolation.

Like many practices that involve combining two or more disciplines, there is sometimes a noticeable tilt in examples of transpedagogy towards one of the incorporated practices. This may be because a discipline has been more influential or integral to the transpedagogue's – a practitioner of transpedagogy – practice (such as, living, working, and identifying as a pedagogue rather than an artist). Sometimes another discipline is walked into incidentally, creating an unintentional transdisciplinary project. In my study, I have steered my research towards projects that bend towards socially engaged art in form, and radical pedagogy in agenda and method; I have become more involved in transpedagogical projects that have been exhibited as art, produced by artists, or participated in as artworks. In other words, I have favoured examples and case studies that could be described as “artist-initiated projects.”¹³ While this chapter and most of my thesis reflects this direction of inquiry, I believe that the logic of transpedagogy could easily be flipped, resulting in a radical pedagogical practice that employs socially engaged methods.

Literature on transpedagogy

While transpedagogy is an art practice that draws upon a variety of established disciplines, histories, and artistic practices, it remains a small and emerging field. Discussions of transpedagogy often appear in texts on socially engaged practice. However, while Claire Bishop, Nicolas Bourriaud, Grant Kester, Nato

¹³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 355.

Thompson, and Tom Finkelpearl have all briefly described or mentioned projects that could be identified as transpedagogical in their texts, only Bishop has engaged in a thorough exploration of this type of work.¹⁴ Cath Lambert claims that transpedagogical practices have also been largely neglected in studies of radical pedagogy.¹⁵ Helguera has even argued that “there is no written history of pedagogy as art.”¹⁶

However, this statement made in 2010 by Helguera overlooks previous explorations of the intersection of education and art in the work of, to name a few, Friedrich Schiller, John Dewey, Paul Klee, and Robert Filliou (with a number of collaborators, including John Cage and Allan Kaprow).¹⁷ More recently, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, bell hooks, and Taeyoon Choi have made cases for art education (as well as education that involves art) as an important critical practice.¹⁸ hooks, for example, argues that “[l]earning to see and appreciate the presence of beauty is an act of resistance in a culture of domination that recognises the production of a pervasive feeling of lack, both material and spiritual, as a useful colonising strategy.”¹⁹ However, as Helguera was perhaps suggesting, there does not appear to be many texts recounting the development of specifically transpedagogical practices.

This may seem strange considering the rapid rate at which socially engaged art, in its many forms, has become a popular topic in art theoretical circles, journals, symposia, and classrooms. On the other hand, the sudden interest in collaborative performative practices like socially engaged art may

¹⁴ For Bishop's texts on transpedagogy – which are referred to as ‘pedagogic projects’ in her work – see the final chapter of *Artificial Hells* (2012), “Pedagogic Projects: ‘How do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a work of art?’” and an article published a year before Helguera's symposium, “The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy” (2007).

¹⁵ Lambert, 27

¹⁶ Pablo Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” in *Art, Architecture, Pedagogy: Experiments in Learning*, ed. Ken Ehrlich (San Francisco: Blurb, 2010), 101.

¹⁷ See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795); John Dewey, “Art as Experience” (1934); Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1972), and Robert Filliou et al, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts* (1970).

¹⁸ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (2012), bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (1995), and Taeyoon Choi, “Teaching as Art” (2017).

¹⁹ bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 124.

explain why transpedagogy is not commonly distinguished as a unique practice; in order to remain relatively up to date, sometimes there is only enough time (or funds) for brief definitions rather than in-depth research. Additionally, Bishop claims that pedagogically inclined artists represent a “marginal” group in contemporary art.²⁰ Indeed, transpedagogy does appear to be a minor artistic category practised by a small group of scattered artists. Some artists and theorists have even attempted to create partial lists of transpedagogical works. Examples of such lists include Sam Thorne’s “Self-Organized Schools since 1999: A Partial Chronology” (2017), Anton Vidokle’s “Incomplete Chronology of Experimental Art Schools” included in the post-Manifesta 6 publication *Notes for an Art School* (2006), and Carson Salter’s *TEACHABLE FILE*, an online catalogue of “alternative art schools” and “education-as-art” projects. This suggests that transpedagogy is occurring on a small enough scale that examples can be catalogued with a relative degree of thoroughness. Also, transpedagogy could be easily misrecognised as a group of one-off socially engaged art events that happened to incorporate educational tools, rather than examples of a growing genre of art. After all, transpedagogical works do often share many similarities with other forms of socially engaged art (an element of this practice that I will return to in the coming pages).

Simultaneously, transpedagogy bears unique transdisciplinary experiential qualities that are not necessarily found in other forms of socially engaged art. Podesva has developed a list of ten “shared concerns and characteristics” that distinguish transpedagogical works from other social practices.²¹ She observes that transpedagogical works often posit the following:

1. A school structure that operates as a social medium.
2. A dependence on collaborative production.

²⁰ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 242

²¹ Podesva, n.p.

3. A tendency toward process (versus object) based production.
4. An aleatory or open nature.
5. An ongoing and potentially endless temporality.
6. A free space for learning.
7. A post-hierarchical learning environment where there are no teachers, just co-participants.
8. A preference for exploratory, experimental, and multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge production.
9. An awareness of the instrumentalization of the academy [by neoliberalism].
10. A virtual space for the communication and distribution of ideas.²²

From this list, transpedagogy can be understood as a practice that is interested in dramatically reimagining how knowledge is produced and shared. Podesva's list echoes observations made by other artists, theorists, and curators who have also explored transpedagogy. Reflecting on this body of literature, I will now turn to explore the core concerns, histories, and cultural shifts that have shaped transpedagogy.²³

Characteristics 1 through 3: Social medium, collaboration, cooperation, and dematerialisation

Podesva's first three observations regarding the character of transpedagogical practice – prioritisation of social engagement, group authorship, and dematerialised practice – reflect transpedagogy's proximity to socially engaged art. Bishop argues that socially engaged work is symptomatic of the aforementioned social turn: a tendency since the 1990s to produce participatory projects that disrupt conventional understandings of the artist,

²² Podesva, n.p.

²³ As previously underscored, transpedagogy goes by a number of terms. This can make for a confusing review of pre-existing literature. For clarity, I will be using the term 'transpedagogy' wherever possible as a synonym for other terms that appeared in the original texts surveyed in the next section of this chapter.

art object, and of the role of spectators.²⁴ Potentially marketable art objects and the individual ‘genius artist’ are replaced with social tasks and mixed groups of artists and non-artists. This can be understood as a rejection of neoliberal individualism, but also as an attempt to undo the pacifying effects of – not to mention violence and complacency caused by – capitalist consumer culture. Nato Thompson refers to this facet of socially engaged art as a reaction to “the alienating effects of spectacle.”²⁵ Here, spectacle refers to capitalist systems of mediating social relations through images, an idea that derives from Guy Debord’s theories in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Bishop argues that socially engaged art is generally concerned with at least one of three principal objectives: social repair through direct interaction and participation of viewers; democratisation of authorship through collaboration or cooperation; and/or empowerment of spectatorship through collective activity.²⁶ I will now briefly synthesise and critique some of the core discussions that have taken place regarding these three objectives which often interrelate and overlap.

The first characteristic that unites most socially engaged works is an interest in facilitating some degree of social interaction between participants, often with the hope of creating ‘positive’ social exchanges, perhaps even a temporary community, that leaves the participant affected or impacted in some way. Socially engaged art is made distinct by the participation of viewers in the work itself, allowing participants to influence the dynamics and outcomes of the artwork. In socially engaged works, art is collectively produced by people associated with some degree of practical or theoretical artistic expertise – for example, an artist, curator, writer, or some such – alongside people from other disciplines or backgrounds with various levels of artistic knowledge – such as members of the general public, gallery patrons, students, as well as people from

²⁴ Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” 180.

²⁵ Nato Thompson, “Living as Form,” in *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*, ed. Nato Thompson (New York and Cambridge, Mass.: Creative Time and The MIT Press, 2012), 21.

²⁶ Claire Bishop, “Viewers as Producers,” in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Art Gallery and The MIT Press, 2006), 12.

spheres generally distanced from the visual arts. These acts of participation might be quick – such as a short kiss shared with one of the members of the Barbara Cleveland collective (formerly Brown Council) in *Performance Fee* (2012) – or last for lengthy stretches, if not the full duration, of the work – such as Paul Chan’s *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* (2007) in which some participants took part in months of workshoping before performing Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. However, when I suggest that art is made, I am not inferring that a traditional art object is created by the participating group. Rather, it is the making itself – the process – that is the artwork. For Bourriaud, relational work (his preferred term for socially engaged art) is formed in “a state of encounter.”²⁷

It seems that socially engaged artworks rely on social interactions, a particularly volatile and changeable material. To maintain interest, reciprocal exchanges, and commitment to single idea or activity requires careful management of group dynamics among what is often a diverse cluster of people. Socially engaged art is therefore a temporary, multifarious, fluctuating ‘object:’ a social experience with durational, affective, and political qualities.²⁸

The second agenda common to many socially engaged artworks for Bishop concerns authorship and democratisation of the experience of art. In these collectively produced works, she argues that spectators are encouraged to become active co-creators as a means of investing viewers in not only social interaction, but also in addressing specific societal issues. Unlike other encounters with art, socially engaged work allows viewers to “answer back” immediately to the artist (or other attendees) and take part in the artmaking process.²⁹

²⁷ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, and Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002), 18.

²⁸ Since the social turn in art, art criticism seems to have responded with what Bishop describes as an “ethical turn” in which practices that involve exploitation or misrepresentation of any collaborating parties are treated with little tolerance, while ethical models of collaboration are commended. (Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 18-26.)

²⁹ Grant Kester, “The Device Laid Bare: On Some Limitations in Current Art Criticism,” *e-flux* 50 (2013): n.p., accessed 2 April 2014, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/50/59990/the-device-laid-bare-on-some-limitations-in-current-art-criticism/>.

Among critics of socially engaged art, there appears to be agreement that in order to develop an engaging work, participants must be invited to take part as makers who are potentially as creatively and politically informed as the facilitating artist or collective.³⁰ Kester argues that characterising non-artists as ignorant of the world is “patronis[ing]” and a misinformed gesture.³¹ Bishop, arguing through Jacques Rancière, suggests that what participation may achieve is in fact the return of spectators to their “normal situation”: critically engaged with the world.³² However, artists and participants can be critically engaged equals while fulfilling different roles. Without suggesting that one party is more ‘in the know’ than the other, artists and participants often bring different ideas, types of skills, and levels of influence into a socially engaged artwork. Hierarchies are not oppressive by default; they become oppressive if they transform into rigid and exploitative relations. Jo Freeman warns against political engagement strategies that call for a flattened structure or structurelessness; she argues that without a radical new model in place, the more familiar and rehearsed oppressive model only returns.³³ As Podesva argues about transpedagogical works in particular, what makes works that confront power relations insightful is their “reinvention” of broken hierarchical systems and sites.³⁴

Tom Finkelpearl argues that it is useful to think of socially engaged art as more cooperative than collaborative. He suggests three reasons for this choice. The first – and perhaps most convincing – is that cooperation suggests that people have worked together on a project, rather than initiated it together.³⁵ Indeed, socially engaged works rarely involve an artist consulting with every participant throughout every stage of imagining, preparing, and

³⁰ Oliver Davis, *Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2010), 154-155.

³¹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 26.

³² Bishop, “Viewers as Producers,” 16.

³³ Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2013): 242-244.

³⁴ Podesva, n.p.

³⁵ Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 6.

setting up the work. Additionally, the orchestrating artist is often ultimately recognised as *the* author of the project. This complicates socially engaged art's claims to co-authorship.

Secondly, for Finkelpearl, 'cooperation' refers to an inherent human ability; "we are a hypercooperative species," he claims, citing a number of recent studies in different social and evolutionary fields.³⁶ While humans might *tend* to be social beings – some people after all are not capable or willing to socially cooperate under certain circumstances, be it due to illness, (dis)ability, miscommunication, shyness, or as an act of protest – it should also be noted that cooperation has a long history as an anti-capitalist strategy that is actively taken up in order to reject the individualistic tendencies encouraged by capitalism as 'natural.' In other words, it matters less whether social engagement is natural or performed; what makes cooperation radical is its creation of communal spaces under the spectre of an ideology that promotes individualistic tendencies. Finkelpearl suggests that this is one of the features of socially engaged art that makes it stimulating: it requires people to work together and tap back into a willingness to partake in a cooperative act.³⁷ Finally, Finkelpearl's favouring of 'cooperation' over 'collaboration' is explained through his interpretation of the Deweyan pragmatist belief that democracy requires "not ... intersubjective speech but ... cooperative action for joint problem solving."³⁸

Despite their differing perceptions of collaboration and cooperation, both Bishop and Finkelpearl argue – to varying degrees – that socially engaged art often aims to develop democratic social events. What is perhaps overlooked in this area of socially engaged literature is that democracy itself is not always ideal in practice, nor is it a static logic. Democracy is made up of problematic, highly imbalanced exchanges as well as potentially meaningful consultations

³⁶ Finkelpearl, 6.

³⁷ Finkelpearl, 6.

³⁸ Finkelpearl, 345.

between those who represent and those who are represented. In other words, democracy does not necessarily result in positive, engaging, or otherwise inviting social exchanges. Additionally, democracy does not refer to a singular order, but rather a spectrum of governing practices. As Wendy Brown explains, understandings of democracy range from “free elections to free markets, from protests against dictators to law and order.”³⁹ She notes that this is not a new problem in democratic theory; Plato and Aristotle were in disagreement over the character of ancient Athenian *demos/kratia* (“rule by the people”); while Plato viewed democracy as “proximate to anarchy,” Aristotle interpreted a democratic society as one “ruled by the poor.”⁴⁰ While democracy can be ideal, it should be noted that its invocation does not promise better social relations.

So, rather than suggest that socially engaged art flattens the hierarchies that exist between artists and participants, or interpret inviting in participants as the same as co-authoring a work, I would rather suggest that socially engaged art often makes these relations interesting – that is to say, makes them worth further consideration and analysis – and perhaps a *little* flexible. The smallness of this flexibility does not mean that it is insignificant; the social ramifications of even a small change can be cause for continued thinking or conversations. Even when a socially engaged work has gone a little ‘pear-shaped,’ participants may walk away feeling some tension, awkwardness, embarrassment, or disappointment that resides in their minds for some time after the work has ended. Such affects and memories can leave a mark that acts as grounds for continued learning. Like any form of art, the affects and impact of socially engaged art are multiple, layered, and might stem from seemingly trivial moments or cathartic exchanges.

There are, of course, some works that do manage to share authorship or dramatically invert hierarchies through collaborations sustained throughout the artmaking process. For this reason, I will be using the terms ‘collaboration’

³⁹ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2015), 18.

⁴⁰ Brown, 19.

and ‘cooperation’ carefully: ‘collaboration’ will be used to refer to instances in which a work has been instigated by an artist or collective as well as participants, while ‘cooperation’ will describe work in which participants take part in a situation that has been organised only by the artist or collective.

The third goal often associated with socially engaged art is empowerment of participants or, in other words, the development of a work that encourages participants to enact changes in social reality after partaking in symbolic artistic actions.⁴¹ In socially engaged art, it is hoped that by instigating direct engagement between groups of people, the pacifying effects of capitalism and neoliberalism might be disrupted and spur future thoughtful and critical interactions, exchanges that Thompson suggests are crucial for “genuine interpersonal human relationships.”⁴² Similarly, Bishop argues that an art of “action” that engages directly with ‘reality’ is needed in order to re-humanise society.⁴³

Within these goals lie a number of sticky assumptions. Hal Foster convincingly argues that the notion of community sometimes takes on a “utopian tinge” in socially engaged art literature.⁴⁴ There also seems to be a tendency in discussions of socially engaged art to conflate activity with participation, and participation with engagement. Also common are attempts to separate symbolic gestures from ‘useful’ projects. Helguera, for example, argues that a distinction can and should be made between socially engaged artworks that are symbolic and those that involve an “actual practice” of some sort.⁴⁵ There are also frequent endorsements of in-person interactions that sometimes verges on disconnectionist thinking.⁴⁶ Many writers in the field of

⁴¹ Bishop, “Viewers as Producers,” 12.

⁴² Thompson, 21

⁴³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 11.

⁴⁴ Hal Foster, “Chat Rooms,” in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Art Gallery and The MIT Press, 2006), 194.

⁴⁵ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 5.

⁴⁶ Disconnectionists invest in a type of digital dualism that asserts offline social engagement as ‘real’ and virtual encounters as ‘not real.’ For examples of disconnectionist writing, see Sherry Turkle’s *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011) and *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk In a Digital Age* (1995).

socially engaged art occupy multiple contradictory positions regarding these issues, sharing common enthusiasm for socially engaged art's potential to affect and move participants while remaining sceptical and critical of its limitations. This is an aspect of socially engaged art that resurfaces in the transpedagogical literature that I will address later in this chapter.

From socially engaged art, transpedagogy appears to borrow a number of qualities: 'liveness' (since both tend to take place as live interactive events), social exchanges and the involvement of participants, use of an activity or goal that requires cooperation as a device for organising and socialising participants, and an interest in ultimately empowering participants (often through critical thinking). Unsurprisingly then, transpedagogy is regularly identified as an art practice that is related to, yet distinct from, socially engaged art or as a subset of socially engaged art. Helguera defines transpedagogy as a distinct form of socially engaged art in which an artist or collective "blend[s] educational processes with art making."⁴⁷ He differentiates transpedagogy from formal art education, what he associates with the teaching of art making and art criticism at educational institutions.⁴⁸ For Helguera, transpedagogy is always an artwork, rather than a practice conducted as part of a system of formal education.

Similarly, Podesva argues that transpedagogical work is usually organised by artists who use educational forms, such as schools, seminars, and reading groups.⁴⁹ In chorus, Bishop recognises transpedagogy as an art practice in which artists use "tropes of education as both a method and a form."⁵⁰ Thorne suggests that these are projects that are generally artist-led.⁵¹ However, I picture socially engaged art as a large tree trunk that has many branches, one of which is transpedagogy. In the chapters to follow, I will analyse three

⁴⁷ Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 99.

⁴⁸ Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 99.

⁴⁹ Podesva, n.p.

⁵⁰ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 242.

⁵¹ Sam Thorne, "Introduction: Art School Confidential," in *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education*, ed. Sam Thorne (New York: Sternberg Press, 2017), 30-31.

examples of transpedagogical works that have been led by artists: Kelly Doley's *The Learning Centre: Two Feminist* (2012), Keg de Souza's *Redfern: School of Displacement* (2016), and Song-Ming Ang's *Guilty Pleasures* (2007 – ongoing).⁵² These works are cooperative and dynamic, each involving an artist facilitating activities that encourage exchanges of knowledge, experiences, and ideas.

For Bishop, artworks only make up one of two types of transpedagogical projects that have flourished since the educational turn.⁵³ In addition to artworks, Bishop argues that many curators and museum educators have had to expand their responsibilities to include organising workshops, classes, transdisciplinary workshops, networking events, research clusters, and conferences that build relationships between universities, the general public, and art institutions.⁵⁴ Aguirre argues that these practices constitute a new type of “critical curating” that has become increasingly common since the pedagogical turn; he argues that “almost every cultural institution” now ensures that there is a budget and team of personnel dedicated to creating collaborative educational programmes.⁵⁵ Unlike Helguera and Podesva who approach transpedagogy as an off shoot of socially engaged art, some writers – including Paul O'Neill, Mick Wilson, Vikki Chalklin, and Marianne Mulvey – also consider the work of some curators as demonstrations of transpedagogical practice.⁵⁶ Many contemporary examples of transpedagogical projects led by curators take the form of masterclasses, workshops, conferences, or symposia. Sometimes these are collaboratively produced with artists as well as participants.⁵⁷ Examples include the *Around the Outside* initiative (2015 –

⁵² For more examples of transpedagogical artworks, see the previously mentioned lists curated by Thorne, Salter, and Vidokle.

⁵³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells* 242.

⁵⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 242.

⁵⁵ Aguirre, 175.

⁵⁶ See Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, *Curating the Educational Turn* (2010) and Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey, “Towards a Performative Trans-Pedagogy: Critical Approaches for Learning and Teaching in Art and Performance” (2016).

⁵⁷ These types of transpedagogical events often follow (or occur as part of) artist residencies, such as *The Pedagogical Impulse* research project (Toronto, Canada). It is also interesting to note there are a number of artist or volunteer-run spaces that currently facilitate transpedagogical work regularly, such as The Red

ongoing) hosted by Firstdraft (Sydney) – in which circle talking is often used to invite discussion between artists and attendees inside the gallery – and the collaboratively produced *Rehearsals: Eight Acts on the Politics of Listening* (2013–2014)) – a series of debates hosted in a living room-style space inside Tensta konsthall (Stockholm).

Since transpedagogy is a transdisciplinary practice it is perhaps unsurprising that it can take many forms and, depending on the project, vary its emphasis towards (or and away from) artistic, curatorial, or pedagogical practice. While some transpedagogical projects are ‘easy’ to identify because they are referred to as an alternative ‘school’ or ‘academy,’ other instances possess a more experiential relationship with transpedagogy. That is to say, they provide an experience in which knowledge is created or shared, but may not necessarily identify as a ‘school.’ However, in every instance, transpedagogical projects share an interest in social engagement, collaboration and/or cooperation, and sharing ideas.

Feminist art histories and transpedagogy

In texts on transpedagogy, an artistic lineage has been traced (perhaps predictably) through various experimental arts and art schools of the twentieth century to explain transpedagogy’s transdisciplinary, dematerialised, and collaborative nature. Conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s regularly bookends the beginning of narratives of transpedagogical development. In these narratives, Joseph Beuys is often cited as a foundational figure.⁵⁸ Beuys’s experiments with educational structures were limited, but notable. At *documenta 5* in 1972, Beuys organised (what would now be recognised as) a socially engaged work in which he debated with attendees about electoral

Rattler (Sydney), École Temporaire (multiple locations across Europe), Machine Project (Los Angeles), Former West (Berlin), One Salon (San Francisco), the Red Victorian (San Francisco), and Sundown Salon (Los Angeles).

⁵⁸ See Claire Bishop, “The New Masters of Liberal Arts...” (2007) and *Artificial Hells* (2012); Pablo Helguera, “Notes Towards a transpedagogy” (2010); Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, “Introduction” (2010); and Kristina Lee Podesva, “A Pedagogical Turn...” (2007).

reform (*Bureau for Direct Democracy*). In the same year, he held two “lecture actions” at the Tate and Whitechapel Galleries in London. Beuys took notes on blackboards that were intended to continue the conversations that occurred during the performances when exhibited at later dates.⁵⁹ In 1977 at *documenta 6*, he set up the *Free International University*: a series of interdisciplinary workshops facilitated collaboratively by Beuys, unionists, lawyers, economists, politicians, journalists, community volunteers, educators, actors, musicians, young artists, and sociologists. In addition to his lecture actions, Beuys also held a short tenure at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie teaching ‘monumental sculpture.’ He was fired after his first year of teaching after opening his classes to anyone wishing to attend them – an act that was in defiance of the academy’s strict entry requirements – and leading a sit in with several student applicants at the university’s admissions office.⁶⁰ In response, Beuys set up his own organisation, the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research (FIU). In an interview with Willoughby Sharp in 1969, Beuys quipped, “To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is the waste product, a demonstration.”⁶¹

Beuys’s pedagogically inclined work, however, has been critiqued. By the time Beuys had begun to experiment with educational work, he had already established himself as a provocative performance artist. Jan Verwoert argues that Beuys was often imagined as a “visionary, spiritual authority or healer in full agreement with the modern myth of the artist as messianic figure.”⁶² This shamanistic identity carried over into Beuys’s pedagogical work. Bishop argues that Beuys was known for destroying or physically attacking students’ works “if

⁵⁹ Podesva, n.p.

⁶⁰ Lucrezia De Domizio Durini, *The Felt Hat, Joseph Beuys, A Life Told*, trans. Howard Rodger Mac Lean (Milano: Parole di Charta, 1997), 83.

⁶¹ Willoughby Sharp, ““An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” *Artforum*, November 1969,” in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 121.

⁶² Jan Verwoert, “The Boss: On the Unresolved Question of Authority in Joseph Beuys’ Oeuvre and Public Image,” *e-flux* 1 (December 2008): n.p., accessed 21 May 2017, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/01/68485/the-boss-on-the-unresolved-question-of-authority-in-joseph-beuys-oeuvre-and-public-image/>.

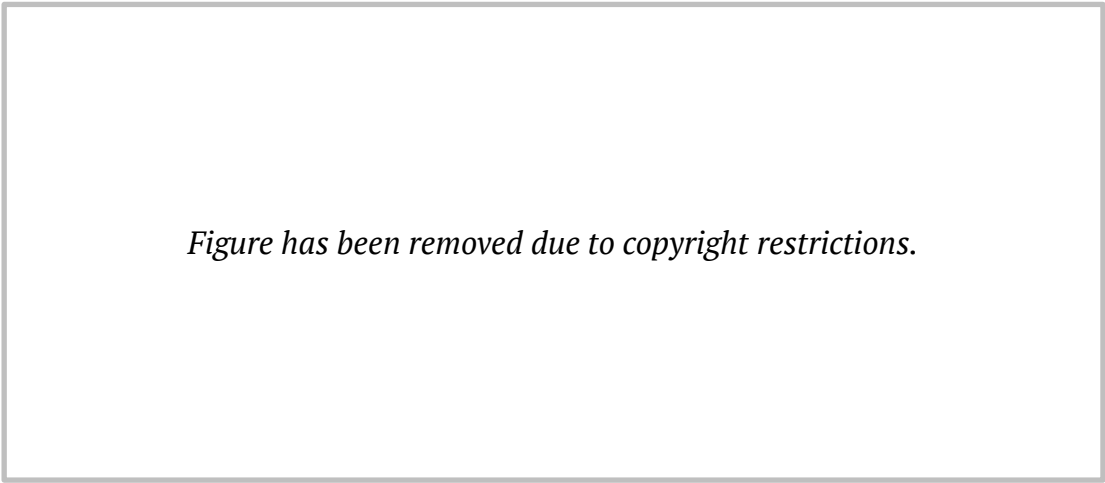


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Figure 1.

Joseph Beuys, poster advertising the *Free International University*, *Discussione con Beuys – Fondazione per la rinascita dell'agricoltura*, 1978, print on paper, 633 x 933 mm, Tate/National Galleries of Scotland.

a point needed to be made” while Podesva asserts that although Beuys was interested in equality, his works “hinged upon *his* persona and ... beliefs in the sensitivity and sophistication of the art and teacher.”⁶³

These critiques do not negate the significance of Beuys’s work. Podesva and Bishop both emphasise that Beuys did invite participation by his viewers and students in a manner that attempted to include them in conversations and classes in ways that were highly unusual in (if not in complete disregard for) institutional structures. Importantly, Bishop argues Beuys’s art experiments were radical for the 1970s since it “was not yet possible to conceptualise public discussion as an artistic activity.”⁶⁴ Additionally, Beuys’s creation of an alternative institution pre-empts more recent transpedagogical ‘schools’ by many decades.

Lucrezia De Domizio Durini argues that among Beuys’s fundamental beliefs regarding creativity was a commitment to seeking out “an alternative path, to both capitalism and consumerism” that would create a new model for social order “in which human faculties are achieved in their completeness.”⁶⁵ Coupled with Beuys’s famous belief that every person is an ‘artist’ (that every person is capable of artistry), this aspect of Beuys’s thinking echoes Paulo Freire’s (and later, hooks’s) argument that both students and teachers must be treated as ‘whole’ subjects; instead of treating students as vessels and teachers as dispensaries of knowledge, they must both be approached as complicated and capable individuals.⁶⁶ These are ideas that remain appealing for contemporary transpedagogues.

Along with Beuys, Helguera highlights Marcel Broodthaers as another influential conceptual art figure for transpedagogy. He summarises that transpedagogy borrows contrasting elements from these two conceptual artists; from Beuys, his earnest and, perhaps, utopian belief that society could

⁶³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 245; Podesva, n.p.

⁶⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 245.

⁶⁵ De Domizio Durini, 85.

⁶⁶ De Domizio Durini, 83.

be changed through art; from Broodthaers, his humour, often deployed through what Helguera views as his insincere and ironic employment of art in order to critique its transformative claims.⁶⁷ Allan Kaprow also appears in Helguera's narrative, but only briefly.⁶⁸ In addition to Beuys and Broodthaers, Bishop points to Lygia Clark, Jef Geys, and Luis Camnitzer as "important precursors for contemporary artists" given that for all of these artists, "education was – or continues to be – a central concern in their work."⁶⁹ The Artist Placement Group (or The APG) is also central to the histories developed by Bishop and Springgay.⁷⁰

Some writers have suggested that transpedagogy also has roots in institutional critique. Podesva, for example, argues that transpedagogy is a direct extension of institutional critique and, therefore, another iteration of site specific work.⁷¹ Other writers cite the influence of institutional critique through mention of particularly well known figures, such as Andrea Fraser who appears in the writing of Dave Beech and Helguera.⁷² Beech also directs attention to the work of Janet Cardiff, Baby Asante, and Tim Brennan as foundational for transpedagogy.⁷³ Helguera's other examples of influential practitioners of institutional critique include Fred Wilson, David Wilson, and Goran Dvorjic.⁷⁴ The place of institutional critique in a narrative of transpedagogical development is perhaps unsurprising given its attention to site-specific relations of power.

⁶⁷ Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 102-103

⁶⁸ Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 102.

⁶⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 243.

⁷⁰ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 163-177; Stephanie Springgay, "The Pedagogical Impulse: Aberrant Residencies and Classroom Ecologies," *C Magazine* 118 (Autumn 2013): n.p., accessed November 2016, <http://cmagazine.com/issues/119/the-pedagogical-impulse-aberrant-residencies-and-classroom-ecology>.

⁷¹ Podesva, n.p.

⁷² Dave Beech, "Weberian Lessons: Art Pedagogy and Managerialism," in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010),

48; Pablo Helguera, "Transpedagogy," in *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education*, ed. Sam Thorne (New York: Sternberg Press, 2017), 116-135; Pablo Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 103.

⁷³ Beech, 48.

⁷⁴ Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 102-103.

Other narratives follow more theatrical developments – Aguirre, for example, traces elements of transpedagogical practices back to Bertolt Brecht’s work – while some follow the work of artists associated with identity politics – Bishop, O’Neill and Wilson, Helguera, and Thorne all mention Tim Rollins and the Kids of Survival as well as the work of Adrian Piper.⁷⁵ Suzanne Lacy is also mentioned a handful of texts, but often only in passing.⁷⁶ Marco Scotini pays little attention to conceptualism, institutional critique, theatre, or identity politics in his discussion of transpedagogical works. Instead, he draws attention to aspects of the politics and philosophies of the Situationists that resonate with recent transpedagogical work, particularly the Situationists’ merging of art and life to create reactions to capitalism that can be lived rather than observed.⁷⁷

The influence of radical pedagogical shifts on transpedagogical art is also addressed in both Bishop and Helguera’s texts. Bishop observes that artistic and educational traditions seemed to rupture simultaneously during the 1960s.⁷⁸ While the art object was dematerialising and the rumblings of institutional critique were beginning in the 1960s, radical pedagogy began to gain some traction. For Bishop, these events both represented a breakdown of pre-existing relational hierarchies (student-teacher and viewer-artist) as well as a turn towards participation as a mode of empowering partakers. These parallel moments of institutional critique occurred through cooperative transdisciplinary practices (in the case of art) and the development and publication of critical approaches to pedagogy (in the case of education). One of the more significant moments of this period came in 1968 with the

⁷⁵ Aguirre, 179-183; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 243; Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, “introduction,” in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, eds. Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010) 20; Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” 104; Thorne, 36;

⁷⁶ Podesva, n.p.; Thorne, 36; Helen Reed “Bad Education: Helen Reed interviews Pablo Helguera,” *The Pedagogical Impulse* (2013): n.p., accessed 18 July 2016, <https://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/a-bad-education-helen-reed-interviews-pablo-helguera/>.

⁷⁷ Marco Scotini, “The Disobedient Class: Bottom-up Academies and Affirmative Education,” in *Teaching in the Neoliberal Realm: Realism versus Cynicism*, eds. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2012), 198.

⁷⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 267.

publication of Freire's foundational *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.⁷⁹ Significantly, in this text Freire argued for the implementation of a dialogical non-hierarchical pedagogy in which teachers and students cooperatively create "acts of [critical] cognition, not transferrals of information."⁸⁰ In 1970, Freire's text was translated and published in English, broadening its reach. For Bishop, these shifts galvanised another development of this period: the formation of a number of experimental art schools and art education practices that implemented radical pedagogies.

The Staaliches Bauhaus (German art and design school and centre of the Bauhaus movement; 1919-1933) and Black Mountain College (American Deweyean liberal arts college; 1933-1957) are identified by Helguera as two of the "most influential" schools of collaborative, cross disciplinary art practices of this period.⁸¹ However, in Helguera's texts on transpedagogy, he quickly pivots away from discussing the Bauhaus school or Black Mountain, suggesting that knowledge of the practices that emerged from these places is already well-trodden territory.⁸² In addition to the Bauhaus and Black Mountain, Sam Thorne examines the foundations of Russian constructivism to find two more potentially important precedents for experimental art schooling: the UNOVIS group within the Vitebsk People's Art School (formed in 1919 by Kazimir Malevich) and the "Soviet Bauhaus," VkhUTEMAS (the Higher State Artistic and Technical Studios in Moscow which opened in 1920 and was staffed by El Lissitzky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Lyubov Popova).⁸³ Steven Henry Madoff also motions to these experiments, but notes that they often met "disastrous

⁷⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 267.

⁸⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 79-80.

⁸¹ Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 101.

⁸² While the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College have been widely discussed as hubs for conceptual artistic leaps and radical pedagogical developments during the mid-twentieth century in Europe and USA, it should be noted that these schools have not been investigated as sites of transpedagogical work specifically. (Helguera, "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy," 101.)

⁸³ Thorne, 32.

endings,” with core teaching artists often exiled, schools closed by oppressive states, or artistic works censored.⁸⁴

Often missing from all these narratives is the work of feminist art educators and artists who by the 1970s were using cooperative, dematerialised, radical teaching and artmaking practices. The significance of feminist projects – or the political angle of feminist projects – has often been muted or only touched upon in popular discussions of socially engaged work. Artworld sexism still impinges art criticism and art history. In Helena Reckitt’s recent review of texts on relational aesthetics (her preferred term for socially engaged art), she claims that feminist projects have been largely left absent or inadequately addressed in some of the canonical texts on socially engaged art.⁸⁵ In particular, she accuses Bourriaud and Bishop of not including enough women artists in their texts, and of tip-toeing around the political agendas of some of their case studies.⁸⁶ In many of the texts that I have synthesised in this chapter, women – and, in particular, feminist women – do not seem to have been regularly included as influential figures of transpedagogy’s development.

This is not a problem that is unique to the fields of transpedagogy or socially engaged art; narratives of, for relevant example, conceptual art and institutional critique are among many others that still tend to focus on the work of men aside from, as Maura Reilly argued recently, “a few [women] superstars or token achiever[s].”⁸⁷ Conceptual art and institutional critique were both important moments of development for feminist artists; Lisa Tickney argues that conceptualism encouraged a number of attitudes that came to be central to feminist thinking and action, namely “deconstruction, as a tool

⁸⁴ Steven Henry Madoff, “States of Exception,” in *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)*, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2009), 280

⁸⁵ Helena Reckitt, “Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics,” in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, eds. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 138-140.

⁸⁶ Reckitt was referring to the content of Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) and Bishop’s *Artificial Hells* (2012) and *Participation* reader (2006). (Reckitt, 138-140.)

⁸⁷ Maura Reilly, “Taking the Measure of Sexism: Facts, Figures, and Fixes,” *ArtNews*, last modified 26 May 2015, <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/>.

tuned to the analysis of cultural meanings and effects (especially around gender and sexuality); practice as a new political aesthetic (often combining images and texts); and attitude as a confident staking out of the grounds (supported by a shared conversational community).”⁸⁸

Similarly, artists who were critical of institutions were often not only involved in reflecting on artworld conventions and the sites that administer them (such as galleries, museums, archives, libraries, and universities), but also investigated oppressive aspects of social reality that fed into institutional hierarchies and structures. Blake Stimson associates the first years of institutional critique with a period of general suspicion of all institutions: “Jim Crow, the military-industrial complex, patriarchy, the Man, and a host of other such perceived and actual hegemons.”⁸⁹ Feminism, likewise, has long been involved in questioning structures, ideas, and ideologies that bolster sexist and otherwise oppressive standards that come to be accepted, repeated, and normalised by institutions. However, as previously highlighted, the concerns and work of men still dominate these narratives in art history.

Sara Ahmed contends that citation is one of the many means by which women are excluded from academic fields. She argues that citation is an effective means of setting up disciplines and, therefore, the people who these disciplines favour and reproduce as the subjects of important shifts and developments.⁹⁰ The disciplines of art history and art theory are of no exception. However, in these fields, this problem extends beyond academics to women artists, critics, historians, teachers, curators, and writers. Without frequent citation and discussion, these women either become marginalised from major conversations and histories or disappear altogether.

⁸⁸ Lisa Tickney, “Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution, 2008,” in *Education*, ed. Felicity Allen (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2011), 143.

⁸⁹ Blake Stimson, “What was institutional critique?” in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2011), 20.

⁹⁰ Sara Ahmed, “Making Feminist Points,” *Feminist Killjoys* (blog), posted 11 September 2013, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/>.

As Felicity Allen argues, women artists, teachers, and ‘second wave’ feminists have only “registered” as “highly significant” in very recent narratives of transpedagogical development.⁹¹ This is reflected in the recent publication of a number of texts that focus on or feature the work of feminist women in developing critical collaborative and cooperative art practices and art educational models.⁹² However, texts that highlight feminist projects that have ushered in collaborative, experimental, educational art practices or link feminist work to contemporary transpedagogical work remain scarce.

In short, the exclusion – or muting – of women’s and feminists’ contributions to transpedagogical practices is not entirely due to the scarcity and newness of literature on transpedagogy as a distinct practice. Rather, this is a problem that is compounded by the infrequent citation of women artists and feminist work, and (until very recently) the lack of texts that recognise the pedagogical and artistic practices of feminist practitioners as precedents of transpedagogical work. Here, I would like to draw attention to two feminist women who have not yet been properly addressed in the canon of transpedagogical development: Judy Chicago and Suzanne Lacy. Their works are inserted not as ‘perfect’ precursors of transpedagogical work – perfect examples rarely exist – but rather as practices that have been extended upon, revised, or repeated in contemporary transpedagogical works. While Chicago developed a separatist feminist art pedagogy that encouraged cooperative class practices, Lacy should be recognised for her use of both cooperative and collaborative processes to create an expanded public pedagogy (an early iteration perhaps of socially engaged art). Both Chicago and Lacy’s entry into

⁹¹ Felicity Allen, “Art: Education,” in *Education*, ed. Felicity Allen (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2011), 13.

⁹² Examples include Felicity Allen’s *Education* reader (2011), Virginie Bobin’s *Composing Differences: Imagining New Models for Knowledge Production and Exchange* (2015), Judy Chicago’s *Institutional Time: A Critique of Studio Art Education* (2014), Judith Dancoff’s documentary *Judy Chicago & the California Girls* (2016), Géraldine Gourbe’s *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Space in Southern California* (2015), Suzanne Lacy’s *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995), Janet Sarbanes’s “A Community of Artists: Radical Pedagogy at CalArts, 1969-72” (2014), and Jayne Wark’s *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America* (2006).

transpedagogical practices came out of observing the need for practices that confronted institutional sexism and sexual violence against women.

Judy Chicago

As a proponent of feminist consciousness-raising sessions, cathartic performance art, and feminist art communities, Chicago is a significant figure of West Coast second wave feminism. Chicago's first teaching post, the 'Fresno Program' (1970-1971), was an off-campus collection of visual arts courses facilitated by California State University. This program would lead directly to Chicago's collaborative teaching venture with Miriam Schapiro at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts): the Feminist Art Program (FAP, 1971-1973). Like the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, CalArts is an oft-cited institution for its alumni and radical pedagogical experiments, but neither CalArts nor Chicago's pedagogical work have been discussed in detail for their connections to contemporary transpedagogy.

'The Fresno Program' operated on the logic of separatist feminism. Chicago claims that the program came about after she observed the need for a 'women only' art course at California State after witnessing many of her women students becoming more assertive once they became the majority or only gender in attendance of her classes.⁹³ Additionally, sexist attitudes were rife among art schools; blunt sexist statements – such as sculptor Reg Butler's suggestion to Slade students in 1961 that a woman can only become a "vital creative artist" by ceasing to be a woman – were not uncommon.⁹⁴ Chicago felt that by facilitating a space in which women could explore, rather than suppress, their gender identity, they may have a greater chance of succeeding as professional artists.⁹⁵

⁹³ Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1975), 72.

⁹⁴ Tickney, 142.

⁹⁵ *Judy Chicago & the California Girls*, directed by Judith Dancoff (2007; Los Angeles: California Girls Productions, 2016), online video, 25 minutes, <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/judychicago?autoplay=1>.

Chicago decided to find a separate off-campus location for the class in Fresno. Prior to finding a suitable space, the cohort met in students' living rooms, basements, and over dinners.⁹⁶ Once a space was found, Chicago and the students renovated the space to contain a kitchen, a 'rap room,' an office, a large studio space, as well as painting and drawing rooms. Chicago claims that in addition to preparing the students to create art, she wanted the women to learn a number of practical skills that would give them a degree of independence.⁹⁷ We might think of Chicago's women-only studio as similar to a 'safe space': a site in which a community can meet without feeling threatened for sharing particular identity characteristics.⁹⁸

In the 'rap room,' Chicago began to establish a practice that she has recognised in retrospect as a type of consciousness raising (CR). CR is a method of developing critical awareness of social issues through group discussions of common lived experiences that reveal the personal impact of oppressive structures. When employed by second wave feminists, CR often played out through 'circle talking': a method in which students sit in the round with the teacher and speak one by one on a given issue. Many of the experiences shared in second wave feminist CR sessions related to sexist expectations, sexuality, abortion, domestic violence, sexual assault, and rape. Jayne Wark summarises that the significance of CR for feminism lies in its use to encourage women to question patriarchal values, trust fellow women as "reliable allies," and come to understand the personal as political (a central project of the second wave).⁹⁹ Wark argues that understanding the personal as political was not an attempt to collapse these two categories, but rather a step towards understanding how ideologies shape both categories as well as the ways in which these two

⁹⁶ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 75, 86.

⁹⁷ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 83-84.

⁹⁸ Such spaces – in addition to 'trigger warnings' and 'content warnings' – have recently become a contentious topic amongst many North American universities which are divided over whether to support or discourage such spaces.

⁹⁹ Jayne Wark, *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America* (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 25, 91.

constructions “intersect and often clash.”¹⁰⁰ For Chicago, the CR sessions were an opportunity to band the class together through common personal narratives and a shared politics. Since CR involved encouraging all students to speak while ‘going around the circle,’ Chicago felt that CR was also an effective means of encouraging students to contribute who were not accustomed to having the opportunity or feeling comfortable enough – or valued enough – to talk during classes.¹⁰¹

Chicago argues that like gender roles, rigid teacher/student roles prevent meaningful classroom discussions and collaborations.¹⁰² To avoid becoming the sole speaker during the classes – or, as she puts it, “laying a rap on [the students]” – she would post questions and wait (sometimes for long painful periods) for a student to respond. Once a student responded, Chicago would invite other students into the discussion until “the whole group was *talking to each other*.”¹⁰³ Chicago recalls that when the students were slow to respond, she would tell them that she “was prepared to sit through the entire class time in silence if they didn’t want to participate” because she “was not prepared to talk *at* them.”¹⁰⁴ To further encourage collaboration in the classroom, Chicago would set group projects, invite the students to organise the studio schedule, and encourage the students to bond with one another more so than Chicago herself.¹⁰⁵ For Chicago, creating dialogue and collaboration between her students was fundamental for the creation of a thriving classroom community. It was also an attempt to prevent the class from slipping into a conventional teacher-student hierarchy; by encouraging the students to rely on each other, rather than Chicago, the class would develop confidence in their own ideas as well as those of their women peers.

¹⁰⁰ J. Wark, 26.

¹⁰¹ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 77

¹⁰² Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 76.

¹⁰³ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 76.

¹⁰⁵ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 85

Out of Chicago's prioritisation of narrative-sharing and dialogue grew a desire among the students to role play situations with one another to find means of effectively responding to sexist interactions and conversations. After a role play session turned to focus on the students' experiences of street harassment, Chicago set a project for the students, requesting that they respond in any form regarding the issue of street (un)safety. Many of the students chose to create informal "crude but cathartic" performances that confronted common anxieties, relatable everyday experiences of sexism, as well as traumatic assaults.¹⁰⁶ Chicago recounts that these performances were intensely emotional, but also the most engaging work created while in Fresno.¹⁰⁷ Chicago maintains that she while never actively encouraged her students to use performative methods, she also felt that performing everyday concerns was "an openly female-oriented art."¹⁰⁸ The use of role play and performance led to two crucial developments in Chicago's pedagogy. The first was to seek a supportive teaching partnership with Miriam Schapiro. The second was to continue encouraging the women to use material from their everyday lives to make what she called 'content-based art,' often resulting in autobiographical performance art.¹⁰⁹

In turn, Chicago's classes became informed by a 'content-based pedagogy' which emphasised artmaking that produced a personal (and therefore political) message. In addition to performances, a number of students began creating paintings, drawings, or sculptures that featured 'central core imagery' – allusions to cisgender women's bodies, often in the form of euphemistic images, such as flowers, or vague curvatures. Chicago recalls that many of her students "naturally" drifted towards such imagery, "filling" works "with vaginas, uteruses, ovaries, and breasts."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ J. Wark, *Radical Gestures*, 53.

¹⁰⁷ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 78-82.

¹⁰⁸ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Karen Keifer-Boyd, "From Content to Form: Judy Chicago's Pedagogy with Reflections by Judy Chicago," *Studies in Art Education* 48, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 136.

¹¹⁰ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 89.

Additionally, Chicago set out to provide her students with art histories informed by the work of women artists. This involved the development of a reading group, research clusters, seminars, provision of texts written by and about women, as well as local library visits. During these excursions, Chicago encouraged her students to make lists of all of the women artists they could find in the library collections. The resulting lists were transformed into an archive at CalArts, the first of its kind documenting West Coast women artists.¹¹¹ Chicago's pedagogical work has itself since been archived both online and onsite by the Penn State University Libraries.¹¹²

By the second half of the year in Fresno, Chicago's pedagogy had solidified into a system of consciousness raising exercises, group work, art history development, and content-based artmaking.¹¹³ When Chicago moved to CalArts in late 1971, she attempted to reproduce the Fresno Program with Schapiro in the form of the Feminist Art Program (FAP). Unfortunately, the FAP began to collapse in its second year and closed after a third. However, the program proved to be an influential experiment during its first year, resulting most notably in the production of *Womanhouse* (1972).¹¹⁴

Like the 'Fresno Program,' the FAP was housed inside its own separate studio (the 'Feminist Studio'), continued to use practices central to Chicago's content-based pedagogy, and resulted in a number of collaborative performative works. However, unlike the preceding program, the new Feminist Studio was located within the institution (something that Chicago would later attribute to the FAP's short lifespan) and the course was fully co-taught by Chicago and Schapiro.¹¹⁵ While the co-teaching set up allowed the FAP to

¹¹¹ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 86.

¹¹² The Judy Chicago Art Education Collection @ Penn State documents Chicago's early and later iterations of her pedagogical practice in addition to other feminist art education projects.

¹¹³ Joanna M. Zangara, "The US feminist art movement: a selective annotated bibliography," *Reference Services Review* 30, issue 1 (2002): 50.

¹¹⁴ See Lili Reynaud-Dewar's "Vagabond (Feminist Notes on Victims, Opponents, The Educationally Repressed, and the Sites of their Contestation)" (2016) for a thorough discussion of the significance of *Womanhouse*.

¹¹⁵ Leading the FAP were two teachers and two teaching assistants: Chicago taught performance art, Schapiro ran classes on drawing and painting, Faith Wilding led CR groups and journal writing sessions, and Paula

maintain, as Schapiro describes, a “more circular, more womb-like” model of dialogue that encouraged “friendship, mentorship, and sisterhood” between teachers and students, former student Paula Harper argues that Schapiro and Chicago did not always agree how to best approach the students; while Chicago focussed on helping women come to terms with the struggle of being a woman artist, Schapiro was more interested in developing a “nurturing” environment.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Harper argues that both Chicago and Schapiro did not intend to teach the women how to make art but rather develop the resilience required to be a woman artist.¹¹⁷

Beverly Naidus claims that the Fresno and CalArts programs were a “watershed moment” for many West Coast feminist art students.¹¹⁸ Ripple effects included women students meeting together more frequently and organising demands, including affirmative action on campuses, bigger budgets for women-only art programs and art shows, as well as more performances and poetry nights that featured the work of women.¹¹⁹ During and immediately following Chicago’s teaching posts, she co-founded Womanspace and the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW). Following her resignation from CalArts in 1973, Womanspace and the FSW were moved into the Woman’s Building in Los Angeles which came to be a significant hub for feminist activity.¹²⁰

While Chicago’s pedagogy set a notable precedent for transdisciplinary feminist art education and community development, it is also marked by two issues. The first is Chicago’s (and, at CalArts, Schapiro’s) reliance on the

Harper facilitated art history classes. (Keifer-Boyd, 136; Paula Harper, “The First Feminist Art Program: A View from the 1980s,” *Signs* 10, no.4 (Summer 1985): 764.)

¹¹⁶ Harper, 765.

¹¹⁷ Harper, 764.

¹¹⁸ Beverly Naidus, “Profile: Beverly Naidus’s Feminist Activist Art Pedagogy: Unleashed and Engaged,” *NWSA Journal* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 138.

¹¹⁹ Naidus, 138.

¹²⁰ The building housed a number of feminist initiatives. This included galleries that represented women artists, a feminist bookstore, a number of feminist journals, the Associated Women’s Press, Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), art history courses, and spaces that could be hired out to feminist collectives and groups (notably political groups, including NOW and the Women’s Liberation Union, were frequent users of spaces made available by the Woman’s Building). (Lucy R. Lippard, *The Pink Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 84-86.)

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Figure 2.

Maria Karras, *Judy Chicago (standing) and students at an evening feminist studio workshop lecture by Berkeley political scientist Isabel Marcus Pitchard, CA. 1973, 1973*, photographic print, Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Mass.

essentialist assumptions about the experiences of their students, leading to an over emphasis of central core imagery or the existence of other artistic tendencies – such as addressing the everyday through performance – as somehow intrinsically “female.”¹²¹ Chicago’s celebration of central core imagery – among other art forms that she viewed as ‘natural’ for her students *because they were women* – drastically simplifies, if not limits, the spectrum of feminist aesthetics and capabilities of women artists. Naidus recalls attending a class run by two artists influenced by Chicago’s pedagogy in the late 1970s; during the class, a consciousness raising workshop was followed by a critique of all of the women’s art in which work that contained central core imagery was praised, while “all other subject matter, be it landscape or portrait,” was labelled ‘patriarchal.’¹²²

Chicago argues that her students turned to such imagery because they finally felt safe to express an inner womanliness that was otherwise discouraged.¹²³ While Chicago might have rightly sensed that her women art students were not given the same support or artistic freedom as their male counterparts, central core imagery was potentially turned to by some of her students out of cissexist assumptions about women’s bodies that were commonly held during the 1960s-70s. For this same reason, Chicago’s pedagogy often prioritised the experiences and work of white, straight, cisgender, ‘able bodied’ women. However, Chicago also went to great efforts to confront elements of heteronormativity in her teaching, continually encouraging her students to think critically about gender roles and social expectations that lead to unhappy domestic lives and unsatisfying, sometimes abusive, relationships.

It is perhaps important to note that Chicago was teaching during a period in which modernist aesthetics and formalist art critics were quickly

¹²¹ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 80.

¹²² Naidus, 138.

¹²³ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 91.

solidifying male dominated schools of artmaking – such as abstract expressionism – into highly respected forms.¹²⁴ Clement Greenberg, for example, held a particularly influential penchant for the work of Jackson Pollock, Kenneth Noland, and Morris Louis, unapologetically returned to the work of ‘old masters’ to formulate arguments, and often overemphasised the achievements of ‘western’ civilisation in his writing.¹²⁵ While I am reluctant to suggest that historical context excuses exclusionary tactics, it should be noted that figuration and representational models of artmaking were perhaps employed to reject a patriarchal status quo.

The second problem in Chicago’s pedagogy parallels an issue faced by Beuys: her fame. Like Beuys, Chicago was already an established artist by the time she became a teacher. Additionally, she entered the classroom as a member of a network of reputable artists. Lacy – who was taught by Chicago at Fresno and CalArts – recalls that for a period in the 1970s, it seemed that “people often knew each other” in the Californian art scene, the likes of which included Allan Kaprow and John Baldessari.¹²⁶ Members of interesting yet insular communities often carry the collective social power and influence of an exciting group of people in addition to their own reputation. Keifer-Boyd notes that despite Chicago’s awareness of and many attempts to shed some of her teacherly power by encouraging meaningful relationships between students and sharing control over scheduling and artmaking choices, Chicago’s experience and fame would sometimes still intimidate her students.¹²⁷ Chicago has herself admitted to overestimating the “emotional strength” of some students, receiving complaints about making decisions without enough of her

¹²⁴ J. Wark, *Radical Gestures*, 27

¹²⁵ Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. C. Harrison and P. Wood, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 774-5.

¹²⁶ Elana Mann, Suzanne Lacy, and Leslie Labowitz-Starus, “Between Radical Art and Critical Pedagogy,” in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Space in Southern California*, ed. Géraldine Gourbe (Annecy and Lescheraines: ESAAA Editions and Shelter Press, 2015), 39.

¹²⁷ Keifer-Boyd, 139.

students' input, and being slow at times to realise the impacts of her influential critiques of students' work.¹²⁸

Nevertheless, during her posts at Fresno and CalArts, Chicago experimented with some techniques – including teaching in separatist non-institutional environments (from living rooms to student-built studios), creating a content-based pedagogy that prioritised student experience and dialogue, and instigating women-focussed art history lessons – marked an important departure from art educational norms, working explicitly to address the challenges that women artists (particularly, young women art students) face inside and outside art institutions. Despite its crudeness and cissexist tendencies, content-based artmaking encouraged students to reclaim personal experience as important political artmaking material and develop supportive communities. Chicago's pedagogical experiments should be recognised as an important precedent for feminist art education and transpedagogical work.

Suzanne Lacy

Lacy's relevance to a discussion of transpedagogical work is evident across her oeuvre. Lacy has maintained a dematerialised, social practice that invites cooperation between different groups of people and members of the media since the late 1970s.¹²⁹ Lacy has also helped lay the theoretical groundwork for discussions of socially engaged art and transpedagogy. This includes publication of *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* in 1995, a text edited by Lacy which collected together texts from artists and theorists on 'new genre public art' (a proposed term for what would now be recognised as socially engaged art produced between the 1970s and 1990s).¹³⁰ However, here I will

¹²⁸ Judy Chicago, *Institutional Time: A Critique of Studio Art Education* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2014), 138; Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 73.

¹²⁹ Fabio Cavallucci, "Collaboration, participation, media connection: art as public space," *Suzanne Lacy: Gender Agendas*, ed. Ilaria Bombelli (Milano: Mousse Publishing, 2015), 5-6.

¹³⁰ In 1989, Lacy took part in the 'City Sites: Artists and Urban Strategies' program of lectures and symposia which investigated the connections between artists working in public spaces using social practices. *Mapping the Margins* was an output of this symposia.

focus on a work that has been foundational to Lacy's practice: *Three Weeks in May* (1977), Lacy's first foray into new genre public art. At the time, Lacy referred to this work as 'expanded public pedagogy,' a combination of feminist activism, performance art, radical pedagogy, media-directed events, and collaborative artmaking. After *Three Weeks in May*, Lacy engaged in decades of collaborative work – most notably with Leslie Labowitz-Starus – as well as later socially engaged artworks, publications, and events.

Three Weeks in May, involved a three-week installation and performance program that publicly addressed rape and violence against women in the Los Angeles area. To produce the thirty events that made up the three-week program, Lacy managed to coordinate a huge body of collaborators which included artists, events coordinators, designers, writers, rape hotline workers, activists, elected officials, self-defence teachers, police, and reporters. A combination of public and gallery-based installations and events took place across Los Angeles: inside a mall two maps were installed (one marked with the locations of rapes that had taken place across Los Angeles and another locating women's centres); city sidewalks were chalked with body outlines and declarations that announced to passing pedestrians that they were close to locations where women had been raped; and on the steps of City Hall a self-defence class was facilitated.

Simultaneously, the Studio Watts Workshop's Garage Gallery hosted a three-part gallery program, *She Who Would Fly*. The first phase of the gallery program consisted of a series of CR sessions in which gallery visitors described or wrote down experiences of sexual assault. The second was a private ritualistic ceremony for friends of Lacy who had been raped. The final phase was a confronting participatory event that was open to the public. For the event, the gallery space was covered with testimonies from victims of sexual violence and watched over by a lamb carcass with feathery wings suspended from the ceiling. For the duration of the event, four nude women sat perched on a beam above the entry to the gallery. Their presence was that of vulture-

like guardians seemingly ready to attack (or defend) if necessary. The three-week event was well covered by print and televised media as a result of Lacy's efforts to situate much of the works either in or open to the public sphere, as well as her initiative to invite reporters and television crews directly to the programmed events.

Three Weeks in May reflects Lacy's long standing involvement in anti-sexual violence advocacy. Prior to *Three Weeks in May*, Lacy had been involved in anti-rape activism and addressed sexual violence in performance works, such as *Ablutions* (1972) and *One Woman Shows* (1975). Lacy was also frequently a witness to testimonies and cathartic performances about sexual violence performed by her peers at Fresno, CalArts, and the FSW (nearly a quarter of whom, according to Lacy, had been raped or sexually assaulted).¹³¹

During the 1970s in the United States (among many other countries), rape often remained an invisible crime to the public eye unless it resulted in a homicide or was so violent that it became a widely reported case. At this time in the United States, discussions of rape in the media were extremely rare, and if they did occur, a set of 'rape myths' were often maintained to minimise the seriousness of the crime (namely, that the victim had somehow invited the assault, that the rape could be somehow rationalised, or that the attacker possessed absolving traits, such as an ivy league education or positive relations with other women).¹³² Well into the 1980s, women were expected to prove that they had 'resisted' their attack by showing police their injuries when reporting that they had been raped.¹³³ Campaigns to remove exemptions for marital rape from common law began in the late 1970s in the United States, but it took until 1993 for all fifty states to recognise marital rape as a crime.¹³⁴ Rape continues to be a stigmatised subject, and insinuations that a victim's behaviour or

¹³¹ Mann, Lacy, and Labowitz-Starus, 38.

¹³² Katie M. Edwards et al., "Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-level Presence, and Implications for Change," *Sex Roles* 65 (2011): 761.

¹³³ Barrie Levy, *Women and Violence: Seal Studies* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 130.

¹³⁴ Jill Elaine Hasday, "Contest and Consent: A Legal History of Marital Rape," *California Law Review* 88, issue 5 (October 2000): 1376.




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Figure 3.

Suzanne Lacy, *Rape Maps* from *Three Weeks in May*, 1977, installation and performance, multiple locations, Los Angeles.

clothes have somehow ‘motivated’ an attack – an issue that is today referred to as ‘victim blaming’ – are still common.¹³⁵ Merrill D. Smith argues that it is only over the last few years that survivors, scholars, and doctors have begun to discuss rape and its consequences with more freedom in public.¹³⁶

Three Weeks in May was typical of Lacy’s earliest iterations of new genre public art – then expanded public pedagogy – in its use of elements of activist art, feminist rituals, radical pedagogical tools, and employment of mass media.¹³⁷ Anne Marsh argues that activist performance art is usually discernible in two forms. One is very similar to institutional critique as it often involves socially engaged performances or community-based projects in which attempts are made to challenge artworld elitism. The second is characterised by solo or group works concerned with a singular political issue, sometimes manifested as demonstrations against specific policies.¹³⁸ While *Three Weeks in May* was clearly a single-issue artwork, the three week program had multiple purposes: to draw attention to the existence of and commonality of rape in Los Angeles, to create links between various organisations and individuals interested in preventing sexual violence, and to provide spaces and means for rape survivors to discuss their experiences and the after-effects of being sexually attacked.

To address the latter of these three goals, Lacy turned to the language of rituals. Feminist ritual performances often repurposed mythic or supernatural histories – such as stories of witchcraft, ancient matriarchal cultures, goddesses, and fertility figures – to create transformative rituals in which a primal connecting feminine power was summoned or a spiritual persona of some sort was inhabited by the performing artist/s.¹³⁹ Like autobiographical

¹³⁵ In a particularly gross example, an attorney suggested during a trial in 2012 that an 11 year old rape victim had seduced a gang of rapists like a spider luring in prey. See Amanda Marcotte’s article “Defense Attorney Blames 11-Year-Old Rape Victim Because That’s His Job” (2012).

¹³⁶ Merrill D. Smith, *Encyclopaedia of Rape* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), x.

¹³⁷ Other important influences for Lacy’s work includes media theory (particular the work of Marshall McLuhan), Brechtian epic theatre, and Lacy’s background in social work.

¹³⁸ Anne Marsh, *Body and Self: Performance Art in Australia, 1969-1992*, (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 133-135.

¹³⁹ This type of work, particularly during the 1970s sometimes resulted in insensitive appropriations of aspects of marginalised cultures by white women artists.

performance work, rituals were often used to create cathartic experiences and move through difficult personal experiences. These were often private or closed ceremonies with limited, if any, audience.¹⁴⁰ There are aspects of Lacy's work that certainly appear ritualistic, especially the private purging ceremony facilitated by Lacy for her friends, the installation of a slain lamb with its biblical links to innocence and sacrifice, as well as the four guarding women who might be understood as the spirits of victims, guardians, or – as attending art critic Jeff Kelley described the women – “avenging angels” watching over the installation.¹⁴¹

Lacy's *Three Weeks in May* also created what Marsh describes as a ‘useful ritual’: a set of actions that establish traditions that can be repeated by communities.¹⁴² After assisting Lacy over the course of *Three Weeks in May*, fellow activist artist Leslie Labowitz-Starus sought out the FWS and Lacy to begin creating collaborative work together. The two artists continued working in a manner that involved a number of contributors, both from within and outside the Californian feminist art community. One of Lacy and Labowitz-Starus's first collaborative works, *In Mourning and In Rage* (1977) was conceived of in the wake of intense media coverage of the rape and murder of multiple women by the ‘Hillside Stranglers’ during the late 1970s.¹⁴³ Extending on the cooperative, media-directed practices Lacy had used to facilitate *Three Weeks in May*, Lacy and Labowitz-Starus developed a public funerary art event that involved activists, artists, reporters, politicians, and volunteers. After *In Mourning and In Rage*, the participants were invited to form a coalition. This organisation – the Ariadne Social Art Network – facilitated art classes at the Woman's Building, collected writings composed by members of Ariadne, and

¹⁴⁰ Moira Roth, *The Amazing Decade, Women and Performance Art in America, 1970-1980* (Los Angeles: Astro Artz, 1983), 22-23.

¹⁴¹ Jeff Kelley, “The Body Politics of Suzanne Lacy,” in *But is it art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, ed. Nina Felshin (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 238.

¹⁴² Marsh, *Body and Self*, 114.

¹⁴³ By 1978, ten young women from various socio-economic and racial backgrounds had been raped, tortured, and murdered by Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono Jr. (Dirk C. Gibson, *Serial Murder and Media Circuses* (Wesport and London: Praeger, 2006), 73-90)

regrouped to participate in future cooperative projects created by Lacy and Labowitz-Starus.

Three Weeks in May borrowed from traditions that were telling of Lacy's exposure to feminist pedagogies at CalArts and the FSW. While a student of the Fresno Program and FAP, Lacy took part in Chicago's CR-style classes. This method appeared to have been reused to gather personal testimonies and build meaningful relationships during the first night of *She Who Would Fly* in which circle talking structured the format of discussions.

Lacy was also interested in the pedagogical potential of mass media. This was first explored by "hijacking" mass media (which included print media, television broadcasts, and photographic journalism) to teach "the general public ... particularly the television-watching public" (in addition to art communities that attended live performances) about feminist concerns.¹⁴⁴ When Labowitz-Starus became Lacy's collaborator, they further developed the possibility of a mass media-led feminist pedagogy that could reach a large portion of society at once. Lacy recalls that she and Labowitz-Starus

came together around this notion of "public pedagogy," although we didn't call it that at the time. We were aware that we were constructing ways for society to learn and platforms for acting on new knowledge. We specifically thought about how art could enter the public realm around these important issues of violence against women, and what art could actually offer. Did we think an artwork would actually stop a rape? No, but we thought we could educate policy makers and law enforcers and build coalitions between artists and women's organizations. It was art, activism, and mass audience education.¹⁴⁵

For Lacy and Labowitz-Starus, inviting journalists and news teams to document their work presented an opportunity to effectively educate a wider audience

¹⁴⁴ Vivien Green Fryd, "Suzanne Lacy's Three Weeks in May: Feminist Activist Performance Art as "Expanded Public Pedagogy,"" *NWSA Journal* 19, no.1 (Spring 2007): 23-28.

¹⁴⁵ Mann, Lacy, and Labowitz-Starus, 44.

and potentially galvanise more people in power into action against rape and violence.¹⁴⁶ Over the course of their collaborative work, Lacy and Labowitz-Starus published essays in which they documented their experiences in collaborative artmaking, provided advice for gaining the attention of the media, called for the removal of media imagery that condoned violence against women, and urged other artists to get involved in creating art that stimulated collective action.¹⁴⁷ These texts could be understood as additional invitations into anti-rape activism as well as educational texts on Lacy and Labowitz-Starus's ideas and work.

In its earliest form, Lacy's practice was already engaged with strategies that have informed contemporary transpedagogy. At its core, *Three Weeks in May* depended on social cooperation and collaboration to address confronting issues, strategies that continue to appear in contemporary transpedagogical work. Like Chicago, Lacy also experimented with unconventional settings, CR sessions, and performance art to drive social engagement. Lacy also employed elements of feminist activist art and created 'useful rituals' that could be repeated to broaden communities. Lacy's attention to the reach of print and televisual media is very similar to contemporary transpedagogy's tendency to use online tools to spread the availability of ideas that transpire over the course of an artwork (an aspect of transpedagogy that I will return to at the end of this chapter).

Drawing attention to Chicago and Lacy's work in a narrative of transpedagogical development not only highlights the influence of their practices, but also the work of other women – such as feminist pedagogues, theorists, autobiographical performance artists, activist artists, performers of feminist rituals, anti-rape campaigners, and so on – upon whom Chicago and Lacy's practices have been built. Chicago and Lacy do not represent the full

¹⁴⁶ Mann, Lacy, and Labowitz-Starus, 44.

¹⁴⁷ These essays were recently reprinted in Lacy's *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics, 1974-2007* (2010).

spectrum of feminist or activist practices that have informed transpedagogy, but their work contains some key strategies that have informed the social, collaborative, cooperative, and dematerialised elements of contemporary transpedagogy.¹⁴⁸

Characteristics 4 through 9: Aleatory, endless, free, post-hierarchical, experimental learning

Helguera suggests that both socially engaged artworks and transpedagogies ultimately create experiences. In socially engaged artworks, experiences are developed “without any other agenda than to merge the artwork into daily life, purposely ambiguous and open to any reading.”¹⁴⁹ In other words, socially engaged art often lacks a distinct purpose or goal aside from socialisation between participants and artists. However, in a transpedagogical work, the nature of experience changes and is “redefined”:

While participation remains central, it is usually structured so as to create ... an experience that specifically leads to the construction of knowledge, or, in a larger sense, to the production of culture. It is true that many, if not most, education artworks are produced precisely with the goal of undermining the traditional conventions of educational structures and refuse to commit to anything remotely resembling “learning outcomes” or “goals” due to the fear of appearing doctrinaire or didactic.¹⁵⁰

In short, transpedagogy is distinct because it creates experiences with educational agendas. Importantly, Helguera argues that this educational

¹⁴⁸ Other interesting precedents include performance artworks that involve an artist didactically teaching a particular skill – for example, Adrian Piper’s *Funk Lessons* (1983), a series of performance lectures dedicated to developing an appreciation for music and dance cultures produced by African American people – and initiatives run by activist groups to encourage vulnerable communities to engage with educational sites – such as the Black Panthers’ Free Breakfast for Children program (1969) which was set up to feed children from poverty-stricken African American families and encourage school attendance.

¹⁴⁹ Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” 105.

¹⁵⁰ Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” 106.

agenda is played out in transpedagogies using new or critical modes of learning. He goes on to argue that this is done not only to maintain transpedagogy's proximity to art, but to prevent it from melting into pre-existing neoliberal educational structures which (as outlined in greater detail in the previous chapter) favour measurable outcomes and useful goals.

Bishop identifies that greater investment by higher education in activities with high chances of resulting in a profit, including “entrepreneurial research activities, encouraging partnerships with industry, increased student participation at lower national cost, and incentivising the recruitment of high-fee-paying overseas students” has resulted in institutions being organised around the production of knowledge that can be patented, immediately utilised, quantified, or turned towards a specific vocation.¹⁵¹ What this has created, argues Podesva, are hierarchies of education and knowledge that do not readily support “collaborative, speculative, (...) qualitative, [or] experimental” approaches to learning.¹⁵² These are, of course, the very methodologies that art – especially transpedagogy – and humanities research often favours.

Bishop suggests that education under neoliberalism has also seen the “hyper-bureaucratisation” of educational institutions in western capitalist nations.¹⁵³ She argues that experimental content and engaging delivery become second to learning outcomes, assessable criteria, reports, standardised procedures, transferable credit points, bureaucracy training, career development plans, student surveys, course outlines that prove the worth of skills for ‘the future,’ quality assurance, timetabling, room costing, and faculty sensitivity training.¹⁵⁴ In addition to this extensive paper trail, the neoliberalisation of education is noticeable in its approach to students as consumers, and education as a financial investment or ‘career move.’ This

¹⁵¹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 268.

¹⁵² Podesva, n.p.

¹⁵³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 285.

¹⁵⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 268-269.

leaves little room for creative or critical thinking that constitutes learning for the pleasure of discovery, or knowledge for knowledge's sake. Daniel Pink's famous assertion that the "MFA is the new MBA" alludes to neoliberal attitudes regarding education: a Master of Fine Arts is attractive, but only in its capacity to provide useful business and selling tools, like design thinking and marketing skills.¹⁵⁵ Stefano Harney argues that universities are quickly becoming the place where study – understood as a practice of learning and sharing material with others without an objective – is most unlikely to occur.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, debt accumulation becomes a certainty.¹⁵⁷ Bishop argues that, ultimately, universities operating under the constraints of neoliberalism operate as a powerful means of "train[ing] subjects for life under global capitalism, initiating students into a lifetime of debt, while coercing staff into ever more burdensome forms of administrative accountability and disciplinary monitoring."¹⁵⁸ Neoliberalised institutions push corporatisation and marketability over quality of education, relationships, and experiences within universities.

In many accounts of transpedagogical development, contemporary projects are often read as responses to the squeeze of higher education by neoliberalism. Nadine M. Kalin follows a similar line of argument to Helguera in her suggestion that transpedagogical works sometimes use a pre-existing educational "failure" – such as the Bologna Accord – as a "starting point" for developing a pedagogical alternative.¹⁵⁹ Katy Siegel approaches transpedagogy as a synonymous with "deschooling" (or rather, a departure from the practices

¹⁵⁵ Philip Kennicott, "'Daniel Pink and the Economic Model of Creativity,' *The Washington Post*, last modified 2 April 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2008/04/01/AR2008040102435.html>

¹⁵⁶ Stefano Harney, *Stefano Harney on Study (Interview July 2011, Part 5)*, online video, 5 minutes 27 seconds, 8 July 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wloBdY72do>.

¹⁵⁷ This argument forms the central theme of Harney's recent collaboration with Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013).

¹⁵⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 269

¹⁵⁹ Nadine M. Kalin, "(de)Fending Art Education Through the Pedagogical Turn," *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 32 (2012): 44.

of traditional schools).¹⁶⁰ Likewise, Thorne points to “collegiate capitalism” and its normalisation of student debt and corporatised universities as a characterising feature of the twenty first century, one that has been responded to by artists leading transpedagogical projects.¹⁶¹ Helguera, Kalin, Siegel, and Thorne’s observations mirror points four to nine of Podesva’s list which speak to the politically engaged aspect of transpedagogy: its rejection of neoliberal standards of teaching in favour of radical pedagogical alternatives.¹⁶²

As I will explore further in the next chapter, radical pedagogues often aim to dismantle oppressive classroom hierarchies, validate and encourage student input and participation, and develop meaningful relationships within the classroom (a community). Like radical pedagogies, socially engaged models of artmaking encourage artists and participants to interact with one another, enter into open dialogues about difficult matters, and develop meaningful relationships.¹⁶³ The principles that radical pedagogy and socially engaged art share are reflected in transpedagogy: firstly, through their shared interest in creating non-traditional encounters with knowledge; secondly, in their common interest in the participation of persons normally left inert in educational or artistic situations; and, thirdly, through their shared emancipatory intentions. By borrowing radical pedagogical techniques, transpedagogy becomes a practice in which learning, teaching, creating, and knowing are not privileged acts, but rather responsibilities that should be shared by all.

The use of radical pedagogical methods to organise transpedagogical work has also been observed in many texts on transpedagogy. Freire is frequently cited in transpedagogical literature, either as a source of inspiration by practising transpedagogues or as a radical pedagogical figurehead whose

¹⁶⁰ Katy Siegel, “Lifelong Learning,” *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*, eds. Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanne Hudson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 416.

¹⁶¹ Thorne, 42.

¹⁶² For Podesva, this critique should also be extended to institutions of art.

¹⁶³ The obvious parallels that can be drawn between these two practices will be explored further in the next chapter.

theories resonate with socially engaged practices.¹⁶⁴ For example, Bishop draws a parallel between radical pedagogical principles, particularly those employed by Freire, and the techniques used in some socially engaged work, including transpedagogy.¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, Kester's preferred term for socially engaged art – dialogical art – borrows directly from Freire's work (as well as that of Mikhail Bakhtin).¹⁶⁶

As encouraged in radical pedagogy, transpedagogies also often redefine the places, time periods, and subjects associated with 'knowledge.' For Podesva, transpedagogues approach learning as a practice that does not necessarily belong to the realm and schedule of the academy, but rather as something that can take place anywhere and every day, hopefully, for the rest of one's life.¹⁶⁷ Anton Vidokle claims that transpedagogy, as an artistic practice, reflects Freire's argument that schools should not be understood as the exclusive site of all knowledge production.¹⁶⁸ This reflects another radical pedagogical principle: that critical thinking skills should be developed that can be returned to everyday, not just for the duration of a one-off event.

Correspondingly, Kalin argues that in transpedagogical projects, experiences like "not-knowing, exposure to error, subverting the commercial value of knowledge, along with curriculum and syllabi-free gatherings" are favoured over systems that treat knowledge as "bureaucratized, an object hardened into certainty, measurable, and alienated from volition, emotion, intuition, or corporeality."¹⁶⁹ Irit Rogoff suggests that this is perhaps easier to

¹⁶⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 266; Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey, "Towards a Performative Trans-Pedagogy: Critical Approaches for Learning and Teaching in Art and Performance," *Performance Matters* 2, no. 1 (2016): 64; Finkelpearl, 180-209; Gerald Graff, "The Pedagogical Turn," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 27, no.1 (Spring 1994): 67; Lambert, 33-41; Lisa Nyberg and Johanna Gustavsson, *Do the Right Thing*, trans. Adriana Saserin (Stockholm/Malmö: Malmö Free University for Women, 2011), 47-48; O'Neill and Wilson, 20-21.

¹⁶⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 267.

¹⁶⁶ Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 10.

¹⁶⁷ Podesva, n.p.

¹⁶⁸ Anton Vidokle, "School as Exhibition in a Divided City," in *Notes For An Art School*. eds. Abu El Dahab, Mai, Anton Vidokle, and Florian Waldvogel (Nicosia: Dexter/Sinister, 2006), 17.

¹⁶⁹ Kalin, 44.

attempt in an artwork than it is in educational institutions given that the artworld is perceived as having special “permissions” to experiment with alternatives.¹⁷⁰ Transpedagogy seems to be a practice of reinvention that uses experimental and speculative approaches to learning to explicitly or quietly reject neoliberalised standards of education.

Characteristic 10: Virtual distribution of ideas

The final tenet put forward by Podesva is that transpedagogues often document and distribute the knowledge developed during the work. These documents often take the form of texts that are printed or published online either to accompany or follow their projects. These texts do not attempt to duplicate the full affects and details of the live performance/s. Rather, these documents serve as pedagogical texts in their own right, often summarising or emphasising key moments or ideas developed and shared during the transpedagogical project. Sometimes these texts also provide self-reflexive evaluations made by the transpedagogue and/or participants after the project has concluded, providing ideas and positions that have been worked through later in addition to immediate affective responses to and recounts of the event itself.

For Bishop, a ‘first audience’ – those who witness an event in person – is always present for both art and education, but a ‘second audience’ – subsequent viewers of the event through documentary images, film, descriptions, critiques, stories, or rumours – is much more difficult for educational events (including transpedagogical ones) to reach. For this reason, Bishop argues that the “most successful” examples of transpedagogy manage to reach both types of audience.¹⁷¹

This line of argument somewhat recalls the language of the liveness debates of performance art. Crudely, performance theorists involved in the

¹⁷⁰ Irit Rogoff, “FREE,” *e-flux journal* 14, (March 2010): n.p., accessed 3 April 2015, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61311/free/>.

¹⁷¹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 272.

liveness debates seek to dispel or support the claim that performance art can only be experienced by being present for the original live work.¹⁷² When it comes to pedagogical and transpedagogical events, Bishop argues that if you had to ‘be there,’ the work is of limited success. It seems that the more people who have access to the ideas developed and shared, the ‘better’ the transpedagogy. For Bishop, these documents are significant because they “keep open the possibility that *everyone* can learn something from these projects.”¹⁷³ This aspect of transpedagogy could be interpreted as another rejection of the norms of neoliberalised education, replacing exclusionary modes of knowledge distribution with more open and accessible ones where possible.

Online documentation of transpedagogical projects is particularly common. This is perhaps unsurprising given transpedagogy’s contemporaneousness with the development of ‘Web 2.0.’ Su Baker suggest that the internet of Web 2.0 is made distinguishable by its facilitation of online social interaction and the adaption of web-based tools by users to create and share self-made content.¹⁷⁴ Susanna Paasonen argues that while user-generated content was one of the core characteristics of Web 1.0 – particularly in the form of personal websites, online forums, news sites, and web-based journals – it did not facilitate interactions on social media.¹⁷⁵ Paasonen suggests that a short list of online tools that demonstrate the sociality of Web 2.0 includes “blogs, wikis, online communities, social networking sites, podcasts and different publishing platforms in and for the internet economy.”¹⁷⁶ Baker argues that this change has dramatically impacted the ways

¹⁷² The liveness debates surround the ontology of performance art and, by extension, how to understand the status of performance documents and traces. For additional texts exploring this debate, see Philip Auslander’s *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (1999), Anne Marsh’s *Performance Ritual Document* (2014), and Rebecca Schneider’s *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011).

¹⁷³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 272.

¹⁷⁴ Su Baker, “Art School 2.0: Art Schools in the Information Age or Reciprocal Relations and the Art of the Possible,” in *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy*, eds. Brad Buckley and John Conomos (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), 30-31.

¹⁷⁵ Susanna Paasonen, “Labors of love: netporn, Web 2.0 and the meanings of amateurism,” *New Media & Society* 12, no. 8 (2010), 1306.

¹⁷⁶ Paasonen, 1299.

in which information and knowledge are accessed and developed, particularly for students.¹⁷⁷

Web 2.0 has also ushered in a new era of utilisation (and sometimes weaponisation) of the online tools by corporations and disciplinary bodies, such as governments and intelligence agencies, to exploit vulnerable individuals. For example, the Trump administration recently proposed analysing the social media accounts of potential immigrants and refugees travelling to the United States as part of its (now abandoned) “extreme vetting” policy.¹⁷⁸ These developments have been met with waves of online activism (including ‘hacktivism’ and ‘hashtag activism’).¹⁷⁹ Pushback is also noticeable in the increase in politically engaged online publications since the advent of Web 2.0, including magazines, journals, and radical educational blogs operating online.¹⁸⁰

It should be noted that not all educators or artists have the means to produce documentation nor are these always easily accessible. For example, three of the works that will be closely examined in this thesis were documented or partially performed through complementary texts: Ang’s *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* (2011), de Souza’s *Redfern School of Displacement* (2017), and Doley’s blog *twofeminists.com* (2012-2018). De Souza had to self-publish her works, but found circulation among a variety of large and small book outlets. Doley’s blog was (until recently) easily available online.¹⁸¹ Ang’s text can only be ordered through the relatively small press house, Motto. Nevertheless, the increase of uploaded documents and production of accompanying texts provides these

¹⁷⁷ Baker, 30-31

¹⁷⁸ Greg Myre, “Trump Administration Weighs Increased Scrutiny of Refugees’ Social Media,” *National Public Radio*, last modified 24 February 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/02/24/516867413/trump-administration-weighs-increased-scrutiny-of-refugees-social-media>.

¹⁷⁹ Hacktivism and hashtag activism are both forms of political engagement that are conducted online. The earlier usually involves the hijacking of an institutional databases or code by an anonymous activist group or individual. The latter involves the development of social media hashtags to draw communities together online and spread awareness of a social issue.

¹⁸⁰ Examples include *Prole.info*, *The New Inquiry*, *Tiger Beatdown*, *Radical Pedagogy*, *Inflexions*, *Tick Journal*, and *Tranzit*.

¹⁸¹ However, this would of course be compromised if I was without access to a computer or the internet, which is the case for a large portion of the world’s population.

educational moments with images and words that can be returned to and shared.

Critiques and divisions

Despite these uniting characteristics, some writers argue that different practices exist within the category of transpedagogy. In Rogoff and Bishop's texts on transpedagogical practices, divisions are made between works that only appropriate the aesthetics of pedagogy and works that, as Bishop writes, result in "more generative intersections of art and education."¹⁸² Helguera makes a similar division not only in relation to transpedagogical projects, but in regard to all socially engaged art. However, the outputs of his claims are slightly different to those made by Bishop. He suggests that there are "symbolic" works – artworks that create representations of a social service – and "actual practice" – artworks that are useful or 'actually' become the represented service.¹⁸³ To illustrate, a symbolic work might repurpose the aesthetics of a hospital, while *The Women on Waves* (2001– ongoing) project lead by Rebecca Gomperts might fit the description of an 'actual practice' since it 'actually' facilitates safe abortions, provides information on sexual health, and campaigns for women's rights.

I am reluctant to accept this separation of the representational from the actual given that the two are often entangled and that seemingly representational work might possess latent usefulness. Also, Helguera's separation of representational from actual seems to insinuate that 'realness' is dependent on usefulness, a sentiment that seems to echo the goals of neoliberalised education which, as Podesva writes, prioritises immediately useful and marketable events over speculative or qualitative experiences.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, there are many transpedagogical works that both engage with a

¹⁸² Irit Rogoff, "Turning," in *e-flux journal* 0, (November 2008): n.p., accessed 3 April 2015, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/>; Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 242.

¹⁸³ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 5.

¹⁸⁴ Podesva, n.p.

pedagogical aesthetic and generate a pedagogical experience.¹⁸⁵ There is also the issue of varied responses: what may be immediately useful to one participant may not serve a specific purpose for another; what may move one participant may leave others bored and disengaged.

Bishop is also sceptical of interpretations of socially engaged art – which, here, I understand as including transpedagogy – as entirely removed from artistry (and therefore aesthetic judgements) or overly capable of social intervention (which carries an expectation of usefulness). Informing her position is Rancière’s argument that art is at once autonomous (removed from “instrumental rationality”) and heteronomous (blurred with life and politics).¹⁸⁶ Art that is overtly political represents a moment in which these two interpretations of art – which, for Rancière, are only “apparently antithetical” – create a “productive contradiction.”¹⁸⁷ Since transpedagogy seems to be firmly committed to imagining alternatives to neoliberalised education, perhaps transpedagogy could also be imagined as an example of this artistic two-sided coin, simultaneously jabbing at social reality while remaining contained within the safe ‘testing laboratory’ of art.

Another issue that produces tension concerns hierarchies and how effectively they can be subverted or abandoned in transpedagogies. Kalin argues that while transpedagogues can achieve some interesting experiments, they tend to rely on “elementary and populist” understandings of education, casting educators as “toiling public servant[s] without agency bound by the regulations set by the state” and artists as “autonomous cultural producer[s] with unique abilities to expose power, unburdened by the controls of neoliberal

¹⁸⁵ For example, in Kelly Doley’s *The Learning Centre: Manifestos for Living* (2010), objects commonly associated with school classrooms and study spaces were installed inside the Tin Sheds Gallery in Sydney where the ‘lessons’ were conducted. This included blackboards, a desk, clock, and shelves used to store notes, books, and folders.

¹⁸⁶ Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” 183.

¹⁸⁷ Davis, 152-153.

institutions.”¹⁸⁸ Helguera similarly asserts that the assumption that normative education cannot encourage critical thinking is a “misinterpretation.”¹⁸⁹

As I will explore further in the next chapter, the space of the classroom is sometimes a hindrance for radical pedagogues as it is riddled with stunting power relations and expectations. However, radical pedagogies that play out as art or transdisciplinary projects are not necessarily free of all hierarchies – which, as previously argued, is often not the aim or possible in the first place – once they are situated outside the classroom (or subvert the classroom through the introduction of performative tactics). Instead, they become susceptible to the structures of another environment: the artworld. As such, alternative educators and educational projects can become vulnerable to collapse and co-option, especially if they are dependent on the accessibility and influence of a larger institution with its own politics and goals.

Transpedagogies are not immune to this issue. Transpedagogical work can be coopted by neoliberalism and result in projects that implement, rather than refute, the more oppressive elements of the institutions and ideologies they attempt to critique.¹⁹⁰ For example, while some artist-run workshops can result in potentially interesting transpedagogical experiences that open up dialogue and ideas for both the facilitators and participants, these events can be exploitative. Such events might run on unpaid labour, can be the result of a forced culture of ‘giving back’ to the facilitating institution, or recede into traditional classroom hierarchies if run in an environment hostile to experimentation or without a stable contingency plan in place to maintain a dynamic and open environment.

However, even if transpedagogy is the product of a huge misreading of the current state of education (as Kalin suggests) or an exaggerated understanding of the damage caused by neoliberalism, does it matter?

¹⁸⁸ Kalin, 45

¹⁸⁹ Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” 101.

¹⁹⁰ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 242.

Regardless of whether transpedagogues have accurately or distortedly interpreted the roles of and regulations faced by educators and students, the result has been an array of innovative propositions for alternative educational spaces. As Helguera argues, if transpedagogues have oversimplified or inflated the impacts of neoliberalism, transpedagogy then becomes a “productive misinterpretation” of existing educational structures.¹⁹¹ Since this “misuse” produces engaging learning opportunities, it hardly matters whether transpedagogues have misunderstood how education under neoliberalism operates. In any case, transpedagogy manages to engage with educational theories and practices in speculative and sometimes exciting ways, tapping into the performativity of learning and envisaging knowledge as a collectively produced object.

Old book, new chapter

Often facilitated by artists, curators, and collectives, transpedagogy prioritises collaborative, cooperative, and participatory modes of learning. Kaija Kaitavuori suggests that “rather than signifying a new turn” art of the pedagogical turn – including transpedagogy – “is only a new chapter in an old book.”¹⁹² Some of the ‘chapters’ that precede transpedagogy have received more attention than others. While widely discussed dematerialised practices that developed during the twentieth century, like conceptual art and institutional critique, are foundational to transpedagogy, there are other historical precedents that have been overlooked. Feminist educational and artistic developments – such as those pursued by Chicago and Lacy – also haunt contemporary transpedagogical practices. However, in many narratives of transpedagogy, feminist projects have not been readily explored at length. Long standing issues – such as citational sexism and gender-specific blind

¹⁹¹ Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” 100-101

¹⁹² Kaija Kaitavuori, “Introduction,” in *It's all Mediating: Outlining and Incorporating the Roles of Curating and Education in the Exhibition Context*, eds. Kaija Kaitavuori, Laura Kokkonen, and Nora Sternfeld (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), xiii.

spots in art history narratives – paired with transpedagogy’s newness as a field with few texts published on the topic to date, have left transpedagogy susceptible to formalisation through histories and traditions that favour male-dominated canons and narratives. Ironically, this is the type of educational practice – centralisation of historically privileged voices and narratives – that transpedagogical works often challenge.

Contemporary transpedagogy also critiques and reimagines how to teach, learn, and share ideas against the tide of neoliberalised education. The methods used often mirror radical pedagogical practices, investigating methods of learning and bodies of knowledge that are often maligned. To draw in a wider reach of participants – or as Bishop suggests, a second audience – transpedagogical projects are often documented and shared, usually online or in print, allowing for subsequent engagement with these projects by additional participants. As such, participation in contemporary transpedagogical projects seems to constitute a wide variety of acts, from joining a conversation led by an artist to accessing documents online. In the last two chapters, I have discussed transpedagogy’s political and artistic informants. In the next chapter, I turn to a final key informant: radical pedagogy.

Chapter III

Radical pedagogy

In this chapter, I will continue an argument that I began in the previous chapter: that transpedagogy is, in part, derived from radical pedagogical theories and practices. The field of radical pedagogy clusters together a group of distinct theories and practices of teaching and learning that are made similar by their common interest in encouraging critical thinking through dialogical or otherwise unconventional relational strategies. Radical pedagogues believe that social change must begin with a transformation of the classroom itself, the types of knowledge shared in educational spaces, as well as the ways in which that sharing occurs. As such, transpedagogues borrowing from radical pedagogy take part in rejecting a number of weighty educational traditions, expectations, canons, and hierarchies.

This chapter will provide additional histories that inform transpedagogy's engagement with dialogical and other participatory means of learning as well as its turn toward practices that reject neoliberal educational norms. Radical pedagogies or pedagogues are often only mentioned in passing in texts that narrate the development of transpedagogy.¹ As argued in the

¹ See Felicity Allen, "Art: Education" (2011); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (2012); Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey, "Towards a Performative Trans-Pedagogy: Critical Approaches for Learning and Teaching in Art and Performance" (2016); Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made* (2012), Lisa Nyberg and Johanna Gustavsson, *Do the Right Thing* (2011); Gerald Graff, "The Pedagogical Turn" (1994); Pablo Helguera, "Notes Toward a

previous chapter, narratives of transpedagogical development tend to focus on the dematerialised, social aspects of transpedagogy and therefore recite a canon of conceptualists, practitioners of institutional critique, and socially engaged artists to formulate an art historical arc for transpedagogy's development. However, it is clear that transpedagogy has been shaped not only by artistic developments, but also by pedagogies that have broken with conventional approaches to teaching and learning. Here, I argue that recent transpedagogical work appropriates elements of radical pedagogies to create temporary anti-neoliberal alternatives.

This chapter will be dedicated to mapping some of the influential radical pedagogues and practices that have shaped transpedagogical work. I will first outline some of the major strands of radical pedagogy – critical pedagogies, feminist pedagogies, intersectional pedagogy, and social justice education – before exploring some overlapping concerns and practices – critical thinking, knowledge production, classroom hierarchies, student participation, dialogue, community building, and empowerment.

The neoliberal tide

Henry Giroux describes the neoliberalisation of education as observable in the “willingness [of educational institutions] to mimic corporate culture” and parallel the socioeconomic ideological goals of the state.² It has become apparent over the last few decades that higher education is increasingly supporting projects, research methods, disciplines, managerial structures, corporate links, gatekeeping tactics, and rhetoric that favour research with immediate usefulness, high likelihood of profit return, and sturdy marketability. This neoliberalised culture of education creates little space for pursuits of knowledge with creative, ambiguous or non-instrumental purposes,

Transpedagogy” (2010); Cath Lambert, “Psycho classrooms: teaching as a work of art” (2011); Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, “Introduction” (2010); and Johan Pas, “The Artist in Search of an Academy: Radical Pedagogies of the Sixties and Seventies” (2014).

² Henry A. Giroux, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 17.

often for a niche audience that is not capable of spinning a large profit or appealing to a mass market. For Claire Bishop, neoliberalised education contorts and manages students in such a way that they learn, above all else, to “dance in step with the dominant tune” of neoliberalism.³

This tune – which marches to the beat of free market capitalism, individualism, and competition – can be difficult to resist; as Mark Fisher argues, capitalism operates today not just through spectacular advertising or otherwise attractive imagery, but as a “pervasive atmosphere, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining action and thought.”⁴ Therefore, to think and act critically in the era of neoliberalism is to question everything that is made to appear ‘real,’ default, or normal.

Unlike an education that is formatted to suit the goals and values of neoliberalism, radical pedagogy focuses on developing meaningful relationships between people and their ideas, learning for the sake of learning rather than training for a paid vocation, and challenging oppressive structures that are seemingly concrete. bell hooks argues that education should be a practice of “draw[ing] out” something from within a student, not squashing a student to fit social norms.⁵ This echoes Paulo Freire’s claim that education is tied up in “a universal human ethic” that “calls us out of and beyond ourselves.”⁶ While not all radical pedagogues practice with the same hopefulness found in the work of hooks or Freire, radical pedagogy is often a practice of reaching beyond what is given or accepted and arriving at a more complex, critical understanding of our social world.

³ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2012), 269.

⁴ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Ropley: Zero Books, 2009), 16.

⁵ bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 130.

⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, trans. Patrick Clarke (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 25.

Mapping radical pedagogy

Radical pedagogy is not a singular body of practices and theories of teaching and learning, but rather constitutes a breadth of approaches to confronting social inequalities, knowledge, and educational institutions with criticality. As such, radical pedagogies often espouse strategies that parallel the aims of a number of critical discourses that may have anti-racist, Marxist, feminist, and post-colonialist social goals to name a few. As a result, the field of radical pedagogy has been mapped to include, overlap, or exclude other radical pedagogies, such as critical and feminist pedagogies, at various junctures by different theorists. This is complicated by the slipperiness of some common terms – namely, ‘radical,’ ‘critical,’ and ‘feminist’ – which have been used to refer to distinct pedagogical practices by some and interchangeably by others. While Jennifer M. Gore, for example, argues that critical pedagogies and feminist pedagogies are separate radical pedagogies that are “neither adversaries nor allies,” Giroux equates radical pedagogy with critical pedagogy since any radical education must involve critique.⁷ hooks, by contrast, uses the term ‘radical pedagogy’ to include critical and feminist pedagogies.⁸

In *The Struggle for Pedagogies: Critical and Feminist Discourses as Regimes of Truth* (1993), Gore suggests that radical pedagogy could be approached as an umbrella term for a collection of fragmented pedagogies that are connected through shared commitment to emancipatory and democratic practices of schooling.⁹ She argues that radical pedagogy can be split into strands of critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. For Gore, radical pedagogy does not refer to a singular practice, but rather a collection of alternatives to mainstream, normative pedagogies. While Gore’s map is a useful point of departure, it is not a comprehensive guide. Since the publication of Gore’s text in 1993, another

⁷ Jennifer M. Gore, *The Struggle for Pedagogies: Critical and Feminist Discourses as Regimes of Truth* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 50; Henry A. Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (New York and London: Routledge 1996), 10-11.

⁸ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 9.

⁹ Gore, 15.

two influential radical pedagogies have emerged: social justice education and intersectional feminist pedagogy. These recently formulated strands of intersectional teaching are included in my understanding of the radical pedagogical terrain.

In recent critiques of radical pedagogy and its contents, it has been claimed that in order to ameliorate some of the issues that arise out of singular radical pedagogical theories and practices – ranging from accusations of indistinct politics with vague claims of emancipation, to political ‘tunnel vision’ and exclusionary practices – it is useful to draw upon multiple radical theories and practices at once to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the character of radical pedagogy. Giroux, for example, argues that while discourses like modernism and feminism are significant pedagogical developments, they are “theoretically inadequate” in isolation.¹⁰ Giroux argues that when each of these discourses are

posited in terms of the interconnections between *both* their differences and the common ground they share for being mutually correcting ... offer critical educators a rich theoretical and political opportunity for rethinking the relationship between schooling and democracy.¹¹

By sharing insights between specific political pedagogies, a broader critical pedagogical practice might be approached that is able to correct issues that have arisen out of each individual practice.

Patti Lather similarly asserts that there are “contradictory voices, counter narratives, and competing understandings” that exist within the field of critical pedagogy.¹² For Lather, however, critical pedagogy requires

¹⁰ Henry A. Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (New York and London: Routledge 1992), 42.

¹¹ Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, 42.

¹² Patti Lather, “Critical Pedagogy and its Complicities: A Praxis of Stuck Places,” *Educational Theory* 48, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 488.

“disciplining ... with some feminist pedagogy.”¹³ She argues that feminist pedagogies are not “the answer” to all of critical pedagogies’ problems, but rather can be set up as

an effort to avoid enclosure via discontinuity and multiplicities of language ... to keep in play the very heterogeneity that is, perhaps, the central resource for getting through the struck places of contemporary critical pedagogy.¹⁴

For Lather, being mindful of the many radical pedagogical voices and the insights that they offer can be an effective means of critiquing and improving critical pedagogy. Developing a multi-vocal understanding of radical pedagogy – that accepts contradictions, overlaps, and discontinuities as intrinsic to the field – is a complicated project, but it is one that perhaps provides the most accurate reflection of the educational theories and practices appropriated by transpedagogues.

This is noticeable not only in revisionist critiques of radical pedagogies – including the insights offered by Giroux and Lather – but also in a degree of slippage that occurs between radical pedagogical disciplines. Historical referents and insights, for example, are often shared between pedagogies since a number of the emancipatory and critical ideas stem from a range of commonly sought voices. For example, a number of critical pedagogues have been referenced by feminist educators attempting to develop more inclusive means of educating. Foundational critical pedagogue Paulo Freire is regularly cited in feminist texts that explore pedagogical concerns.¹⁵ Peggy Welch argues that while feminist academic work is its own discipline, it can occur “within

¹³ Lather, 489.

¹⁴ Lather, 488.

¹⁵ Examples of such texts include Audre Lorde’s “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” (1980), bell hooks’s *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), Géraldine Gourbe’s “The Pedagogy of Art as Agency” (2015), Lisa Nyberg and Johanna Gustavsson’s “Radical Pedagogy” (2011), Griselda Pollock’s “Opened, Closed and Opening: Reflections on Feminist Pedagogy in a UK University” (2010), and Peggy Welch’s “Is a Feminist Pedagogy Possible?” (1994).

established disciplines.”¹⁶ Similarly, as I expressed in the first chapter of this thesis, elements of intersectional feminism can be practiced in (and gains insights from) a number of fields, such as critical race theory, critical disability studies, or queer theory.

The transdisciplinary tendencies of radical pedagogues are also observable in their use of similar language to describe their concerns and aims. For example, a number of contemporary feminist pedagogues – some explicitly identifying as intersectional feminists, others identifiable as such through their attempts to be more inclusive than their essentialist predecessors – describe their practices in ways that mirror the rhetoric of critical pedagogies. Lena Wånggren and Karin Sellberg, for example, describe feminist pedagogy as a “politically and socially engaged pedagogy that approaches oppression as multilinear, multifarious, and fluctuating.”¹⁷ Similarly, Rachael A. Robinson-Kelig et al suggest that an education is made feminist when a class manages to do away with hierarchical teacher-student relations, assert student experience and knowledge as valuable, and cultivate critical thinking inside and outside the classroom.¹⁸ These are goals that are found in other critical pedagogies. Similarities are also produced out of different radical pedagogies developing out of common foundations. The non-pedagogical philosophies, theologies, and politics that influenced Freire – which Paul V. Taylor identifies as an amalgamation of Aristotelian thought, French sociology, Catholicism, and international Marxism – reappears in the pedagogical work of bell hooks, who has extended many of Freire’s ideas through her own anti-racist feminism and interest in the Buddhist teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh.¹⁹

¹⁶ Peggy Welch, “Is a Feminist Pedagogy Possible?” in *Changing the Subject: Women in Higher Education*, eds. Saue Davis, Cathy Lubelska, and Jocey Quinn (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), 149.

¹⁷ Lana Wånggren and Karin Sellberg, “Intersectionality and dissensus: a negotiation of the feminist classroom,” *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31, issue 5/6 (2012): 545.

¹⁸ Rachael A. Robinson-Keilig et al, “Feminist Pedagogy in Action: Photovoice as an Experiential Class Project,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2014): 292.

¹⁹ Paul V. Taylor, *The Texts of Paulo Freire* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), 34-35; bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 14-15.

I am most interested in radical pedagogues who appear to have informed the work of transpedagogues. As such, this review of radical pedagogical literature will not be exhaustive, but rather focus on some major points of divergence and overlap between radical pedagogies as well as shared practices that appear in transpedagogical work. While this will involve collapsing some distinctions (the major strands of radical pedagogy tend to splinter into further categories of radical pedagogical practices), it is for the benefit of approaching an understanding of the pedagogical elements of the greater alternative practice – transpedagogy – at the centre of this thesis. I will first briefly describe the major strands of radical pedagogy: critical, feminist, intersectional, and social justice pedagogies. I will then explore some of the common concerns and practices.

Critical pedagogy

Lather describes critical pedagogy as a ‘large tent’ of pedagogical theories and practices that approaches education as a project of democratic reform and social justice.²⁰ Critical pedagogy approaches power, hierarchies, as well as socio-economic and cultural norms that shape societies (including those that create systems of education) with deep suspicion. Shirley R. Steinberg argues that critical pedagogy is, in short, a pedagogy of insubordination.²¹ In critical pedagogy, practices that prioritise the voices of students through multi-directional dialogue are used to encourage scepticism and critical thinking.

Gore argues that when critical pedagogies are categorised, there is a tendency to do so in accordance with specific influential practitioners, rather than political discourses.²² This may be because, as Elizabeth Ellsworth claims, many critical pedagogues resist specifying their “particular theoretical

²⁰ Lather, 487-490.

²¹ Shirley R. Steinberg, “Where are we now?” in *Critical Pedagogy: Where are We Now?* eds. Peter McLaren and Joe L. Kincheloe (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2007), ix.

²² Gore, 33.

constructs” until they are in an actual classroom.²³ In her critique of critical pedagogy, Ellsworth – who identifies herself as an anti-racist pedagogue – argues that using the term ‘critical’ hides the true politics that motivate critical pedagogues. For Ellsworth, this term “strip[s] discussions of classroom practices of [their] historical context and political position,” leaving the political priorities of critical pedagogy abstract and inaccessible.²⁴ As a result, historians and theorists who attempt to map the field of critical pedagogy do so in accordance with broad goals associated with specific figures. Gore, for example, divides critical pedagogy into two strands: one follows the practices of Giroux – who Gore associates with an emphasis on “social vision” and change beyond the classroom – while the other is driven by the work of Freire – who Gore links with development of practical teaching strategies.²⁵

While Gore uses two significant figures to map the variety of approaches that exist within critical pedagogy, it is also possible to differentiate critical pedagogies in relation to their approach to utopia. For many radical pedagogues, education is viewed as a vehicle for experiences and ideas that can transform how schools and, as a result, societies operate. However, there are a variety of positions regarding the possibility and “revolutionary perfectibility” of a non-oppressive social reality or utopia.²⁶ As a result, critical pedagogies can be differentiated based on the degree of belief (or doubt) placed in the ability of education to transform social reality.

Lather’s comparison of the critical pedagogies of Peter McLaren (which is optimistic in its utopianism) and Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (which is wary of pedagogies that make utopian promises) is demonstrative of this approach to mapping the critical pedagogical terrain. Lather argues that while McLaren and Gur-Ze’ev are united by a shared sense that critical pedagogy has failed – that is, that

²³ Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy,” *Harvard Educational Review* 59, no. 3 (August 1989): 300.

²⁴ Ellsworth, 300-301.

²⁵ Sue Jackson, “Crossing borders and changing pedagogies: From Giroux and Freire to feminist theories of education,” *Gender and Education* 9, no.4 (December 1997): 457.

²⁶ Lather, 492.

critical pedagogies have not transformed individuals enough through a radical education to rid society of oppressive structures – they interpret this failure differently. According to Lather, McLaren’s pedagogy is fuelled by a positive utopianism that continues to seek emancipation through development of “[critical] consciousness, identity, knowledge, and praxis.”²⁷ This approach is perhaps the most recognisable form of critical pedagogy in its prioritisation of creating spaces driven by the possibility and potentiality for eventual transformation of societies.²⁸ Others who share in these goals include Giroux, Chandra Tapalde Mohanty, Donald Macedo, Herb Kohl, and, of course, Freire.

Freire’s ‘problem-posing education’ is a useful base from which to build an understanding of positive utopian critical pedagogy. He is also one of the more recognisable educational informants of transpedagogical works. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire lays out the core principles and practices that would reappear throughout his work. In this volume, Freire suggests that conventional educational models are like a “banking system” in which knowledge is deposited by teachers into empty students. For Freire, this is an oppressive system that positions teachers as thinking active subjects and students as receptive passive objects.²⁹ This hierarchy leaves students accustomed to oppressive norms when they leave school which leave them unmotivated to challenge oppressive social structures. Importantly, oppression is a dehumanising force that must be first recognised before it can be fought in Freire’s thinking.³⁰ However, the discovery of oppression does not equate to freedom; freedom must be worked towards.³¹ For Freire, his pedagogy centres on a praxis of “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.”³²

²⁷ Lather, 489.

²⁸ Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, 10-11.

²⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 30.

³⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 47-48.

³¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 49.

³² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 52.

This pedagogy does not do the work of freeing people from oppression, but rather prepares them to “collectively free themselves.”³³

In Freirean pedagogy, critical thinking appears to be strongly tied to an ability to view society and thinking itself as malleable, and the seemingly invulnerable power held by oppressors as deconstructable.³⁴ The role of problem posing education is to encourage students to realise that what seems to be normal is often unstable, constructed, and can be transformed.³⁵ The role of a problem-posing teacher is therefore to represent the world “not as a lecture, but as a problem,” emphasising that the state of the world is fluctuating and problematic, rather than stable and acceptable.³⁶ At the centre of this work lies Freire’s concept of *conscientização* (“critical consciousness”): a state of seeing and being in the world in which contradictions and oppressive aspects of social reality become clear.³⁷ Freire argues that critical thinking is a process by which people begin to understand they are in a mutable situation, rather than a concrete unchangeable reality.

To dismantle some of the traditional power relations in a classroom that prevent critical thinking, Freire argues that students have to be humanised.³⁸ Freire argues that students must not be treated as “listening objects,” but rather as knowledgeable and critically capable. Therefore, critical pedagogues are responsible not for the transfer of knowledge, but rather the creation of situations in which knowledge might be produced together.³⁹ The role of this type of pedagogue is to encourage students to use and extend their pre-existing skills and forms of intelligence. To manage this, Freire suggests that a “permanent relationship of dialogue” must be set up that recognises students’

³³ Peter McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 175.

³⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 64.

³⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 108-109.

³⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 108.

³⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35.

³⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 68.

³⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 30.

subjectivities.⁴⁰ Problem-posing education – which he describes as “dialogical par excellence” – was originally intended to intervene in what Freire saw as a major issue faced by poverty stricken rural families: a “culture of silence” and illiteracy that prevented them from expressing and transforming their circumstances.⁴¹ However, for Freire, this practice became a foundational process for all teachers and students, one that he believed needed to be maintained even after social reality had transformed to preserve the ultimate goal of “permanent liberation.”⁴²

By contrast, Gur-Ze’ev approaches more emancipatory critical pedagogical practices, like Freire’s, as ultimately illusionary and dogmatic in their idealism.⁴³ Ellsworth similarly asserts that critical pedagogical literature that exaggerates its ability to deconstruct hierarchies and empower students actually spreads “repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination” within educational institutions.⁴⁴ Lather argues that Gur-Ze’ev urges pedagogues to observe the “limits of dialogue” in loosening the tight grip of hierarchies.⁴⁵ While there is no escape from towering orders and oppressive realities for Gur-Ze’ev, he does view spiritual transcendence, critical reflection, and self-realisation as nevertheless meaningful alternative educational practices.⁴⁶ Gur-Ze’ev and Ellsworth’s critiques are useful for reconsidering some of the claims made by positive utopian critical pedagogues. However, as Freire counters, fatalistic thinking potentially works to the advantage of neoliberalism. Freire argues that pessimism in educational practice only leads back to pedagogies that adapt students to social reality (and therefore

⁴⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 68.

⁴¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 109, 30.

⁴² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 54.

⁴³ Lather, 492.

⁴⁴ Ellsworth, 298.

⁴⁵ Lather, 492-493; Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, *Diasporic Philosophy and Counter-Education* (Rotterdam, Boston, and Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2010), 155.

⁴⁶ Lather, 493.

oppressive neoliberal expectations), rather than encourage students to adapt social reality to their desires and needs.⁴⁷

Feminist pedagogy

Sue Jackson argues that much of critical pedagogy “fits comfortably” within feminist pedagogical theories and practices; like critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy also strives for more egalitarian relationships in classrooms, validates student experiences as means of procuring knowledge, and acts out a desire for social transformation.⁴⁸ Also, like critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy does not represent a singular practice, but rather a diverse field of politically engaged pedagogies. Most feminist pedagogies, however, can be united by their interest in undermining the ideas, structures, and oppressive histories that support sexism, misogyny, and other related forms of patriarchal supremacy (which includes, but is not limited to, androcentricity, male solidarity, myths of reverse sexism, heterosexist conceptions of gender, and rape culture) by encouraging students to think and act with criticality.

The field has been mapped in multiple ways to observe the variety of practices encapsulated within feminist pedagogy. Each map of feminist pedagogy could be overlaid with the others to form a complex understanding of the variety of approaches to teaching and learning in a feminist manner. The first is provided by Gore who proposes that feminist pedagogy can also be split into two strands. Unlike critical pedagogy – which she divides by specific practitioners – feminist pedagogy is divided by their origins. Gore argues that one strand of feminist pedagogy has emerged out of gender studies while the other strand has developed out of educational studies.⁴⁹ Both strands, however, are transdisciplinary; in both cases, the originating discipline – gender studies

⁴⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Jackson, 458.

⁴⁹ Jackson, 457.

or educational studies – sought to pair with the other to form a feminist pedagogical practice.

In a second map, feminist pedagogy could be divided in accordance with the base politics of the pedagogue (that is to say, the type of feminist politics to which the pedagogue subscribes). Since there are many types of feminism, there are multiple approaches to feminist pedagogy.⁵⁰ Gore argues that by the 1990s, pedagogies built out of the politics of liberal feminism or radical feminism – groups that are dominated by, and tend to focus on the experiences of, white cisgender middle class women – have received the most academic attention.⁵¹ As a result, feminist pedagogy – when mistaken for a united field of study and practice – is often assumed to take the form of its liberal or radical subdivisions. For this reason, the term ‘feminist pedagogy’ often connotes the essentialist foundations of liberal and radical pedagogies that do not characterise the practices of many other feminist pedagogies (namely, social justice education and intersectional pedagogy).

To say that liberal and radical feminist pedagogies share essentialist core assumptions is to argue that both pedagogies tend to accept gender as binary, encourage teachers to treat young men and women differently in the classroom in accordance with gender norms, and disregard the impacts of other social realities that may impact students, such as racism, heterosexism, or classism. These practices risk recreating limiting understandings of gender and gendered oppression, and pay little attention to other forms of oppression that might complicate a student’s education, thereby squashing differences and perhaps discouraging avenues of critical thinking. In short, both liberal and radical feminist pedagogies assume that sexism can be addressed in isolation. While issues such as misogyny and internalised misogyny, patriarchal

⁵⁰ To date, there has been liberal feminism, socialist feminism, antiracist feminism (also known as black feminism or womanism), queer feminism, radical feminism (also known as trans-exclusionary feminism), ecofeminism, crip feminism, transnational feminism, and intersectional feminism. This list is not exhaustive.

⁵¹ Gore, 19.

oppression, gender roles, and gender expression are core to any feminist politics or education, these issues do not exist in a vacuum.

A third approach to differentiating feminist pedagogies – particularly, feminist art pedagogies – from each other was devised by Georgia Collins in 1981. The dividing issue among feminist pedagogies, for Collins, concerns their treatment of the ‘feminine sensibility.’ Feminine sensibility refers to an artist’s “capacity or predisposition” to express culturally determined “feminine characteristics” in their work, such as “passivity, dependence, delicacy, ineffectualness, and a lack of seriousness and commitment.”⁵² Collins argues that while men have been historically rewarded for displaying such characteristics in art, the feminine sensibility has been called on to demean, stereotype, and undermine the work of women artists.⁵³ In the sphere of art education, feminist pedagogy can be separated into three different practices that align with different approaches to the feminine sensibility: separatist, integrationist, and pluralist. Before elaborating on these three pedagogies, it should be noted that each is limited by a binary understanding of gender – that is to say, the assumption that there is no fluidity when it comes to gender, that there are only men and women.

Integrationist feminist pedagogy rejects the concept of the feminine sensibility as a sexist construct and encourages teachers to neither “expect [nor] demand” art students to perform differently based on their gender.⁵⁴ Pluralism has a more complicated relationship with the notion of a feminine sensibility; Collins argues that pluralists simultaneously critique the assumption that women naturally engage in a particular aesthetic, but also encourage expression of seemingly feminine characteristics. For pluralists, the feminine sensibility is approached as an arbitrary group of characteristics that can be expressed by any artist regardless of their gender. Some pluralists argue

⁵² Georgia Collins, “Feminist Approaches to Art Education,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 15, no. 2 (April 1981): 84.

⁵³ Collins, 84-85.

⁵⁴ Collins, 88.

that all artists should develop “a balance of masculine and feminine characteristics ... to cultivate an androgynous sensibility.”⁵⁵ However, this approach seems somewhat muddled since pluralists appear to do away with gender constructs while also maintaining the very same constructs in order to blend them. Elements of integrationist and pluralist feminist pedagogies have been developed further in social justice education and intersectional pedagogy.

However, the most recognisable form of ‘feminist pedagogy’ remains the separatist approach. This may be because separatist teaching was a common practice among second wave liberal and radical feminist art pedagogues. Carole Woodlock argues that separatist feminist teaching is limited by its tendency to encourage particular forms of art practice based on the gender of the students.⁵⁶ For second wave separatists, the feminine sensibility was an authentic, natural predisposition for all women artists that had been discriminated against by the western art world for millennia.⁵⁷ Separatism in this context encourages the segregation of women students from men as well as the creation of new structures – syllabi, institutions, and theories, for example – that find merit in expressions of the feminine sensibility. Collins suggests that while the separatist approach commendably discouraged students from devaluing artistic traditions that have been maligned for their association with femininity, it should perhaps be critiqued for encouraging students to view art practices as gender specific and certain gendered behaviours as biologically determined.⁵⁸ The early art pedagogical work of Judy Chicago in California during the early 1970s – explored at length in the previous chapter – featured a separatist approach to teaching young women artists. Illustrative of a separatist approach, Chicago often encouraged many of her students to be critical of gendered roles, expectations, and norms, but also reinstated many

⁵⁵ Collins, 91.

⁵⁶ Carole Woodlock, “Looking at Feminist Pedagogies- What is Seen in the Literature and What is Seen in an Art Education Studio/Classroom,” *Marilyn Zurmuehlen’s Working Papers in Art Education 1994-1995* 13, issue 1 (1995): 8.

⁵⁷ Collins, 89.

⁵⁸ Collins, 89-90.

other heteronormative ideals and the apparent naturalness of a feminine sensibility.

In addition to the overrepresentation of liberal and radical separatist education, another problem that is often encountered while mining feminist pedagogical history is a tendency by some theorists to suggest that teaching in a feminist manner is a case of simply slotting feminism into pre-existing means of teaching. Linda Forrest and Freda Rosenberg, for example, describe feminist pedagogy as “the fusion of feminist values into the process and methods of teaching.”⁵⁹ To a certain degree, this sentiment might reflect feminist pedagogy accurately; feminist pedagogues do turn to feminist politics and goals to guide methods of sharing knowledge. However, this ‘just add water’ approach to feminist pedagogy seems to gloss over how dramatically a politically engaged pedagogy must re-choreograph the processes, assumptions, patterns of communication, relationships, and thinking skills demanded in a classroom situation to make it a pedagogy that is not only feminist in intent, but feminist in method.

To achieve this, feminist pedagogues, like critical pedagogues, often aim to create critical dialogue between students and teachers. Feminist pedagogues have been responsible for popularising some major practices that are used by many radical pedagogues, such as circle teaching. Interestingly, this is a strategy that is also encouraged (to a degree) in some normative educational settings to increase student engagement.⁶⁰ This strategy requires students to sit together in a circle and take turns discussing their work or engaging in ‘active listening’ (in which students focus on the speaker and nonverbally acknowledge what is being said). These practices developed out of feminist

⁵⁹ Linda Forrest and Freda Rosenberg, “A review of the feminist pedagogy literature: The neglected child of feminist psychology,” *Applied & Preventative Psychology* 6 (1997): 179; Karen Keifer-Boyd, “From Content to Form: Judy Chicago’s Pedagogy with Reflections by Judy Chicago,” *Studies in Art Education* 48, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 137-8

⁶⁰ For example, the Yale Center for Teaching and Learning encourages seating arrangements that borrow from the principles of more radical iterations of circle teaching. (“Classroom Seating Arrangements,” *Yale Center for Teaching and Learning*, last modified 2018, <https://ctl.yale.edu/ClassroomSeatingArrangements>.)

confessional consciousness raising (or CR) groups and exercises that became commonly used during the 1960s and 1970s. In these groups, personal experiences were linked to the wider oppressive phenomena of sexism and misogyny. Miriam Shapiro argues that CR sessions were significant because “privately held feelings imagined to be personally held ‘hang-ups’ turn[ed] out to be everyone’s feelings, and it [became] possible to act together” and develop responses, artworks, and actions.⁶¹ CR was an important feminist practice of encouraging empathy, collectivity, and critical awareness that continues to permeate the practices of a number of transpedagogues who invite personal narratives and experiences into their work.

Feminist pedagogues have also provided important critiques of some pedagogical literature, drawing attention to institutions and authors who have reproduced sexist literary traditions and power relations by describing the subjects and agents of change in their texts as male. Adrienne Rich argues that use of such language is “no semantic game or trivial accident of language,” but is rather almost performative, turning potentially radical pedagogies into “breeding ground[s] not of humanism but of masculine privilege.”⁶² In other words, defaulting to male pronouns is no insignificant blind spot: it compromises the inclusivity of a pedagogy. Freire, for example has been criticised by hooks for creating a “phallocentric paradigm of liberation” in which there seems to be a slippage between patriarchal privilege and freedom.⁶³ Many critical pedagogues, including Freire, have amended their writing style in response to such critiques.⁶⁴ hooks argues that despite their reliance on

⁶¹ Miriam Shapiro, “The Education of Women as Artists (1972),” in *Feminism Art Theory, An Anthology, 1968-2014*, ed. Hilary Robinson (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2015), 106-7.

⁶² Adrienne Rich, “Toward a Woman-Centred University,” in *Education*, ed. Felicity Allen (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2011), 57.

⁶³ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 48-49.

⁶⁴ In the first pages of his survey of Freire’s work, Paul V. Taylor includes a note on Freire’s sexist language and argues that the “essential meaning” of Freire’s work is not lost by replacing androcentric pronouns with genderless ones. He adds that through correspondences with Freire, it has become clear to Taylor that Freire did not intend to “cause offence” and has been exploring more inclusive language and encouraging anti-sexist translations of his work since the 1970s. (Taylor, v.)

androcentric imagery and subjects, the radicalism and insightfulness of critical pedagogues should not be overlooked by feminist pedagogues.⁶⁵

Like other radical pedagogies, the focus of a feminist education is not singular. Rather, the critical thinking skills used to rethink and reposition gender and sexism are also used to question other problems that impact society. This criticality has become more disciplined since the 1980s with the formalisation of intersectional feminism. hooks argues convincingly that a feminist classroom is a place where students become not only better scholars or artists, but are also provided with the tools to carefully interrogate pedagogical and social structures.⁶⁶ Rich similarly suggests that feminist education is charged with redeveloping a critical way of perceiving and experiencing the world.⁶⁷ In feminist pedagogy, critical thinking and learning are treated as lifelong practices, not just exercises that end when students leave the classroom.

To illustrate the principles of a contemporary feminist pedagogy, I turn to hooks's hybrid practice, 'engaged pedagogy.'⁶⁸ hooks defines engaged pedagogy as the result of the "mutually illuminating interplay of anticolonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies," an attitude that could also be interpreted as intersectional.⁶⁹ Her practice draws upon the work of Thich Nhat Hanh, feminist educators, and, most significantly, Freire, a figure who, as previously discussed, she often simultaneously admires and critiques. hooks's teaching strategy aims to achieve the "self-actualization" of both students and teachers.⁷⁰ In other words, hooks's practice strives for the fulfilment of students' and teachers' potential and skills. Additionally, hooks, like Freire, desires an educational system that will ultimately empower her students.

⁶⁵ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 50.

⁶⁶ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 6.

⁶⁷ Adrienne Rich, "Toward a Woman-centred University," 58-59.

⁶⁸ This pedagogy is described at length by hooks in her *Teaching* trilogy: *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003), and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (2010).

⁶⁹ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 10.

⁷⁰ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 22.

Critical thinking – or “actively analysing,” as she puts it – is the skill that ultimately makes “education the practice of freedom” for hooks.⁷¹

At the core of her engaged pedagogy is a commitment to creating classroom situations in which student participation is encouraged and valued. For hooks this is not unique to her practice, but rather a general rule of thumb for most radical pedagogies. She argues that any radical pedagogy “must insist that everyone’s presence is acknowledged” and must go beyond insisting such an attitude through words; rather, as hooks writes, “it has to be demonstrated through pedagogical practices.”⁷² hooks suggests that this can be demonstrated by allowing the emotions of students into the classroom, prioritising the wellbeing of all participants, encouraging classroom relationships that embrace the ‘wholeness’ of all participants (and therefore destabilise traditional classroom hierarchies), and urging open dialogue between students and teachers that foster critical thinking.

hooks argues that classrooms can be – and often should be – moody, if not intensely emotional, spaces. Such spaces, for hooks, vary in atmosphere from the comfortable and to the risky. However, her most returned to affects are that of excitement and affection. In her oft-quoted introduction to *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), hooks describes the experience of being changed by ideas as sometimes “pure pleasure” and at others akin to entering a “danger zone.”⁷³ In this same text, she calls for a rereading of excitement not as a potential disruption to critical thinking, rather as that which can “stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement.”⁷⁴ For hooks, joy is a powerful means of encouraging students to open up to new ideas and perspectives.⁷⁵

hooks argues that while engaged pedagogy is as holistic and progressive as the work of her critical pedagogical referents – Hanh, feminist teachers, and

⁷¹ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 6-20.

⁷² hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 8.

⁷³ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 3.

⁷⁴ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 7.

⁷⁵ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 19-20.

Freire – her practice is made distinct by its emphasis on the importance of the wellbeing of both teachers and students, something that she argues is absent in the work of many other critical pedagogies.⁷⁶ For this reason, hooks argues that engaged pedagogy can be much more taxing than other forms of critical or feminist pedagogy.⁷⁷ However, this pedagogy, while potentially deeply moving, does not aim to act as a form of group therapy.⁷⁸ Rather, hooks argues that a pedagogical practice that affirms emotional wellbeing is a practice of love and caring, not curing.⁷⁹

Also central to hooks's approach to teaching is the creation of meaningful complex connections between teachers and students that transgress expected hierarchical, distanced teacher-student relationships. In order to transgress such boundaries, hooks suggests that teachers approach students as if the potential always exists to mutually “respond to [each other's] unique beings, even if the situation does not allow the full emergence of a relationship based on mutual recognition,” as it is in a meaningful friendship.⁸⁰ For hooks, it is empowering for students to see their teachers as vulnerable and completely present in the classroom. As such, hooks argues that in an engaged pedagogy, teachers always share and confess as often as students are asked to do so. She suggests that teachers who bring narratives and lived experiences into the classroom present themselves as ‘whole’ rather than as “all-knowing, silent interrogators.”⁸¹ For hooks, teachers who are able to manage this type of vulnerability may succeed in encouraging students to also provide confessional narratives and, as a result, interact in ways that provide understanding of one another's experiences, sensitivities, and abilities. hooks's argument is not unlike Freire's insistence that every person in a classroom must be humanised,

⁷⁶ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 15.

⁷⁷ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 15.

⁷⁸ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 19.

⁷⁹ hooks, *Teaching Community*, 131-133.

⁸⁰ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 13.

⁸¹ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 21.

and that students, in particular, must be treated as people, not empty objects that need filling.

Intersectional pedagogy

Many formative critical pedagogies can be read as intersectional practices due to their incidental or purposeful engagement in critical approaches to intersecting issues. Many critical pedagogues do not speak directly to a particular social struggle or problem, but rather to multiple power relations that oppress groups of people. When considering the politics and complications of multiple identities struggling against many forms of oppression at once, it can be difficult – and perhaps impossible – to pin point only a singular struggle or politics (one of Ellsworth's criticisms of critical pedagogy).⁸²

Some preceding critical pedagogues and feminist pedagogues could be viewed as reaching for intersectional thinking given their investment in thinking critically and broadly. Since self-identification as an 'intersectional feminist' by authors of radical pedagogical theory is a recent development – as is the theory of intersectionality itself – any re-labelling of 'this critical pedagogy' or 'that feminist pedagogy' as intersectional – or as 'anticipatory of intersectional thinking' – would be done with the benefit of retrospect. I hesitate to do so because I do not wish to credit critical pedagogies or feminist pedagogies with the development of intersectional theory; intersectional feminism emerged out of work conducted by (almost exclusively) African American anti-racist feminists, law scholars, and critical race theorists. This lineage is particularly important to keep intact here because the experiences and concerns of African American women academics – among other scholars of colour – are often maligned or excluded from academic narratives. What can be said, however, is that some radical pedagogues who precede the formalisation

⁸² Ellsworth, 300-301.

of intersectional thinking – specifically those who encourage transdisciplinary approaches that borrow from multiple pedagogies and perspectives – could be viewed as important historical referents whose work has been extended and disciplined by intersectional feminist thinkers and pedagogues.

Like most critical and feminist pedagogies, both intersectional pedagogy and social justice education value practices that de-hierarchise teacher-student relationships, encourage student input, and nurture supportive communities. Kim A. Case argues that intersectional pedagogy also attempts to engage students with intersectional thinking and multiple social justice issues.⁸³ Additionally, intersectional pedagogies place particular emphasis on developing empathetic relationships between diverse groups of people.

Like the other radical pedagogies surveyed in this chapter, critical thinking also lies at the heart of intersectional pedagogy. Instead of encouraging general criticality, both intersectional and social justice pedagogies use an intersectional feminist framework to form an understanding of oppression. This political framework provides a critical lens and disciplined method for understanding identity and oppression. The theory of intersectionality – which I explored in the first chapter of this thesis – argues that identities, identity groups, and oppressive social environments are often made up of complex intersections of various histories, communities, and powerful social forces. It is through this critical lens that struggles over agency, social privilege, and resistance to cultural norms are understood in intersectional pedagogy.

Demonstrative of this approach in intersectional pedagogy are the ‘Name Narratives’ exercise and the ‘C’est La Vie: The Game of Social Life’ activity. The ‘Name Narratives’ exercise is frequently employed by Margaret Montoya, Irene Vasquez, and Diana Martínez. When Montoya conducts the name narratives exercise, she begins by inviting the students to research the

⁸³ Kim A. Case, “Toward an Intersectional Pedagogy: Engaged Learning for Social Justice,” in *Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice*, ed. Kim A. Case (New York: Routledge, 2017), 12-17.

origins of their full names to create a ‘name narrative.’ The students are encouraged to speak with their families and refer to secondary texts to develop an informed narrative that includes not only the familial significance of their name, but also the social, cultural, and economic associations created by their names. The students then report back to the class and share their findings with one another. Montoya argues that the exercise requires “intimate and personal dialogue” to create an experience in which “all voices and experiences are valued.”⁸⁴ When conducted carefully, Montoya argues that the exercise often enables students to discover information about the ways in which race, class, sexuality, and intimate relationships all shape their own identities as well as the identities of others, a skill that Montoya calls “cultural competency.”⁸⁵ She also suggests that despite the expected variations in quality and depth of research across the classes, students often feel “inspired” by the activity.⁸⁶ The logic of this exercise could be compared to Peggy McIntosh’s methodology of ‘unpacking’ the contents of identity like a ‘knapsack.’⁸⁷ Montoya’s exercise also validates student experience as worthy of critical examination and valuable for understanding greater intersecting social forces. Montoya argues that what this pedagogical tool achieves is appreciation of “difference not sameness.”⁸⁸ As such, ‘Name Narratives’ could be understood as ‘consciousness-raising’ – for its encouragement of storytelling and critical analysis – but with an intersectional twist.

Kosha D. Bramesfeld’s ‘C’Est La Vie’ game is similar to Montoya’s exercise in its use of narratives to develop empathy and awareness of intersecting issues. However, Bramesfeld’s game uses fabricated identities and is directed towards students who struggle to understand the difficulties faced

⁸⁴ Margaret Montoya, Irene Morris Vasquez, and Diana V. Martínez, “Name Narratives: A Tool for Examining and Cultivating Identity,” *Chicana/o Latina/o Law Review* 32, no. 2 (2014): 121.

⁸⁵ Montoya, Vasquez, and Martínez, 122.

⁸⁶ Montoya, Vasquez, & Martínez 121

⁸⁷ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies,” *Working Paper* 189 (1988): 1-2.

⁸⁸ Montoya, Vasquez, & Martínez, 121

by members of oppressed identity groups. Bramesfeld's game is essentially a role-play exercise in which students must formulate a strategy to overcome a complicated scenario using only the imagined resources and demographic limitations set by assigned character profiles. The character profiles contain an assortment of identities, each with their own combination of memberships to different identity groups based on gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and citizenship status with differing levels of community support.⁸⁹ While this game runs the risk of 'oppression tourism' by providing privileged individuals with a temporary excursion into struggle and oppression, Bramesfeld argues that role playing the complexities of privilege and oppression in a 'safe' environment is an effective means of encouraging privileged persons to re-examine how social privilege operates and recognise how severely its absence can limit a person's choices.⁹⁰

Social justice education

Like intersectional pedagogy, social justice education extends on principles set up by critical pedagogies while filling in some of the gaps left by liberal and radical feminist pedagogies. Like intersectional pedagogy, social justice education uses an intersectional framework for critiquing knowledge, social inequalities, and educational institutions.⁹¹ Social justice educators assume that education always has a political agenda and therefore – quietly or explicitly – influences the dominant cultural expectations and roles

⁸⁹ Kosha D. Bramesfeld and Arla Good, "C'est La Vie! The Game of Social Life: Using an Intersectionality Approach to Teach About Privilege and Structural Inequality," *Teaching of Psychology* 43, no.4 (2016): 295-296; Kosha D. Bramesfeld, "C'est La Vie: The Game of Social Life; A Role-Playing Game for Teaching about Privilege, Oppression, and Intersectionality," *Office of Teaching Resources in Psychology*, (Toronto: Ryerson University Department of Psychology, 2015), 6-7, accessed 23 May 2017, <http://teachpsych.org/page-1603066>.

⁹⁰ Bramesfeld, 5.

⁹¹ Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy, "Leaning In: A Student's Guide to Engaging Constructively with Social Justice Content," *Radical Pedagogy* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2014): n. p., accessed 9 March 2015, http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy.org/Leaning_In_A_Students_Guide_To_Engaging_Constructively_With_Social_Justice_Content.html.

maintained by members of society.⁹² For social justice educators, the ultimate goal is to ensure that all members of all identity groups in society have equal access to opportunities and resources. Lee Anne Bell argues that social justice educators “envision a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others).”⁹³

Dennis Francis and Adré le Roux argue that a common misconception concerning social justice education is that it is only for students who come from marginalised identity groups (namely, students of colour); rather, social justice education is interested in preparing a variety of students to recognise their own privileges, lacks, and critical abilities so that they might engage critically with their own circumstances as well as oppressive situations that limit others.⁹⁴ Robin DiAngelo, and Özlem Sensoy argue that this is a challenging pedagogical practice and that there are a number of obstacles that often prevent students from constructively grappling with challenging political material. Examples of issues include students bearing “under-developed” learning skills, misunderstanding theoretical ambiguities, and relying on anecdotal evidence.⁹⁵ Similarly, Case argues that intersectional thinking about oppression can be a confronting activity for students and that sometimes humour and non-threatening media – like cartoons – can be useful means of engaging students with social justice issues.⁹⁶

A particularly interesting strand of social justice education is what Megan Boler and Michalinos Zembylas refer to as a ‘pedagogy of discomfort.’⁹⁷

⁹² Megan Boler and Michalinos Zembylas, “Discomforting Truths: The Emotional Terrain of Understanding Differences,” in *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Justice*, ed. Peter Pericles Trifonas (New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 111.

⁹³ Lee Anne Bell, “Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education,” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd edition, eds. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin (Florence: Routledge, 2007), 1.

⁹⁴ Dennis Francis and Adré le Roux, “Teaching for social justice education: the intersection between identity, critical agency, and social justice education,” *South African Journal of Education* 3 (2011): 301.

⁹⁵ DiAngelo and Sensoy, n.p.

⁹⁶ Case, 12.

⁹⁷ Michalinos Zembylas, “‘Pedagogy of discomfort’ and its ethical implications: the tensions of ethical violence in social justice education,” *Ethics and Education* 10, no. 2 (2015): 163; Boler and Zembylas, 108.

This approach contrasts with Case's emphasis on setting students at ease through humorous media. In a pedagogy of discomfort, a student's 'comfort zone' – viewed as a construct of liberal individualism – is approached as a collection of normalised positions and accepted ideals occupied by the student which are not necessarily taken by choice, but by "virtue of hegemony."⁹⁸ Boler and Zembylas argue that the comfort zone "reflects emotional investments that by and large remain unexamined because they have been woven into the everyday fabric of what is considered common sense."⁹⁹ A pedagogy of discomfort, therefore, aims to challenge students' comfort zones through critical thinking in 'safe spaces' – understood as places in which uncomfortable feelings are not avoided and rather utilised to encourage critical evaluations – and affective labour – in particular, confrontation of presuppositions and the making of oneself vulnerable to complicated feelings.¹⁰⁰ This practice encourages participants to develop empathy for one another and motivate resistance against norms that prioritise the comfort of privileged identities over that of perceived minorities.

The pedagogies discussed in this chapter – critical pedagogies, feminist pedagogies, intersectional pedagogy and social justice education – constitute some of the major categories of radical pedagogical practice that have informed transpedagogy. However, this is not to say that there are no other forms of radical pedagogy that may have provided important insights. Additional influential alternatives to academic neoliberal practices include public pedagogy, queer pedagogy, critical disability pedagogy, and critical race pedagogy. There are also key texts that provide interesting critiques of education that resist easy categorisation, such as Melora Koepke's 'Towards a Pedagogy of Moments' (2015), Fred Moten and Harney Stefano's *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013), and Jacques Rancière's

⁹⁸ Boler and Zembylas, 108.

⁹⁹ Boler and Zembylas, 108.

¹⁰⁰ Bowler and Zembylas, 108; Zembylas, 166.

The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation (1991).¹⁰¹

There is not space here to elaborate on each of these individual pedagogies sufficiently. However, in the spirit of creating a multi-vocal, transdisciplinary understanding of radical pedagogy that is inclusive of small and large alternative educational praxes, I have included insights from these texts in the following section that correspond with other common features of radical pedagogies.

In this next section of this chapter, I will explore some shared concerns that permeate through the literature on radical pedagogy: critical thinking, learning, and knowledge. I will then turn to some practices that are shared among most radical pedagogies: disruption of classroom hierarchies, validation of student input, use of dialogue, and creation of a meaningful community within the classroom. These concerns and practices often feed into and out of one another.

Critical thinking

Radical pedagogies are united in their interest in affirming the critical capabilities of both students and teachers. Freire claims that in “banking system” models of education, students are moulded to suit the world; in critical pedagogical situations, it is the world that must be reshaped.¹⁰² Similarly, Rich proposes that a successful feminist education can encourage students to refuse, rather than comply with, accepted patriarchal norms.¹⁰³ In intersectional pedagogy and social justice education, this new way of seeing must extend not only to oppression based on gender, but also race, class, sexuality, perceived disabilities, religious affiliations and political values, among many other categories. Being critically conscious involves challenging norms and

¹⁰¹ Rancière’s text has been highlighted as a potentially important theoretical informant for transpedagogues in Felicity Allen’s *Education* volume (2011), Simon Shiekh’s “Letter to Jane (Investigation of a Function)” (2010), and Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson’s introduction to *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010).

¹⁰² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 74.

¹⁰³ Adrienne Rich, “Taking women students seriously,” in *Gendered Subjects: The Dynamics of Feminist Teaching*, eds. Margo Culley and Catherine Portuges (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 28

institutions that regulate knowledge and social exchanges shared both inside the classroom and outside of it.

Here it is perhaps important to distinguish ‘learning’ from ‘critical thinking’: while the two are certainly related and often co-occur, it is possible to learn – that is, to internalise, memorise, or reproduce – information without consuming it critically – that is, to analyse or question it while grappling with it. In radical pedagogies, criticality can breed productive dissatisfaction with the status quo and spur a desire to reinvent the world. Freire, for example, wrote of *conscientização* (critical consciousness) as a state of seeing and being in the world in which contradictions and oppressive aspects of social reality become clear.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Razmig Keucheyan suggests that critical thinking often has a social and political dimension as it involves challenging pre-existing orders.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps it is useful to think of critical thinking as a mode of handling ideas that embraces a degree of uncertainty as part of the thinking process, or, as Rudi Laermans suggests, a kind of “knowing that actually includes its negation, so its not-knowing” as part of the procedure of understanding the subject at hand.¹⁰⁶

For Giroux, critique is central to a radical education. This specific critical practice involves “questioning ... presuppositions” in order to create an environment of possibility. In conversation with Tom Finkelpearl, Grant Kester points out that critique is often mistaken for negative thinking, or “simple negation of any and all organized systems of knowledge.”¹⁰⁷ For Kester, critique is rather a practice of observing “contradictions and compromises.”¹⁰⁸ Finkelpearl adds that in an expanded understanding of criticality, interpretations that are creative and novel should also be central.¹⁰⁹ Here,

¹⁰⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Razmig Keucheyan, *The Left Hemisphere: Mapping Critical Theory Today*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 2.

¹⁰⁶ Rudi Laermans, “Teaching theory and the art of not-knowing,” *Krisis* 1 (2012): 70.

¹⁰⁷ Finkelpearl, 116-118.

¹⁰⁸ Finkelpearl, 116-118.

¹⁰⁹ Finkelpearl, 118

critique is understood as a practice of asking questions, observing details, and allowing for incongruities to exist within a single text or experience.

There are, however, critics of the practice of critique and its transformative potential. Chris Kraus has recently argued that critiques that fail to “describe the present situation as accurately as possible” or provide “a sense of how the present has arrived” are “a waste of energy.”¹¹⁰ For Kraus, critique is a somewhat outdated mode of questioning institutions that risks erasing, rather than documenting, how ideologies like advanced capitalism have come into being.¹¹¹ For Kraus, critique speaks from the “same place of power” that institutions hold.¹¹² Hito Steyerl occupies a similar position to Kraus. She argues that after two ‘waves’ of institutional critique practices – the first resulting in the integration of institutional critique into institutions and a second pushing better representation of minorities within institutions – we have arrived at a complex third moment in which

critics [are integrated] into precarity, into flexibilised working structures within temporary project structures and freelancer work within cultural industries. And in the worst cases, those spectacles of criticism are the decoration of large enterprises of economic colonialism such as in the colonisation of Eastern Europe by the same institutions which are producing the conceptual art in these regions.¹¹³

In other words, while criticism of institutional structures may continue, the position and power of critics has been made uncertain by precarious working conditions and the employment of critics at the service of powerful institutions working towards neoliberal and neocolonial goals, such as galleries, companies,

¹¹⁰ Annette Weisser and Chris Kraus, “For Every Theory There is a Novel,” in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Space in Southern California*, ed. Géraldine Gourbe (Annecy and Lescheraines: ESAAA Editions and Shelter Press, 2015), 133.

¹¹¹ Weisser and Kraus, 133.

¹¹² Weisser and Kraus, 132.

¹¹³ Hito Steyerl, “The Institution of Critique,” *Transversal* 1 (2006): n.p., accessed 21 May 2017, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/steyerl/en>.

or educational facilities. This negates the critical thinking that may be contained within ‘critiques’ made in these conditions; instead of revealing the ideologies and structures that institutions support, these critics take part in disguising an institution’s participation in prevailing ideologies and oppressive structures. For radical pedagogues, it is therefore important to remain critical of – and encourage students to be aware of – not only outside events and norms, but of the systems of privileges, power, and control that exist within the institutions to which they are attached.

Learning and knowledge

Learning can also be a critical practice depending on the knowledge – or content – that is shared. Hacktivist McKenzie Wark differentiates knowledge from information: while information is strictly utilitarian in purpose, knowledge can be transformative.¹¹⁴ While binaries often turn out to be inadequate, it is important to note that some forms of knowledge are supported more readily by neoliberalised structures than others. The types of knowledge valued under neoliberalism might be best understood as a spectrum that reaches from practical knowledge – which might be akin to Wark’s understanding of information as ideas with explicit and profitable application that are valued and supported in neoliberalised education – towards latent knowledge – ideas that are yet to make themselves obviously useful, exist without clear objective, or are gained for the purpose of being understood rather than applied or to increase capital.

Moten and Stefano are particularly interested in the latter category of knowledge and its production. Moten and Stefano approach study as an act of communally sharing various types of knowledge, including information, ideas, concepts, histories, narratives, perspectives, and theories. However, they believe that study can only really occur when such objects are gained without a

¹¹⁴ McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Publishing, 2004), par. 48.

specific purpose in mind, without intention of creating a final draft, without a defined objective.¹¹⁵ In other words, study only occurs when one is learning for the sake of learning. By this logic, neoliberalised education prohibits this type of learning given that all learnt objects under neoliberalism need to be ultimately useful. Unsurprisingly, Moten and Stefano approach study as something that often occurs outside the classroom: around dinner tables, in passing moments on the street, in short conversations with friends.

Part of the project of radical pedagogy is to ensure that the ideas and histories of members of marginalised groups are not treated as insignificant or peripheral. It should be noted that such academic norms are sieved not only through the politics of neoliberalism, but also through hierarchies of gender, race, sexuality, and so forth. In most well-established disciplines, there are sets of taught objects that are privileged, political, and policed. Examples of such objects include modern canons, assumed classics, foundational texts, seemingly central. Consequentially, marginalised narratives, figures, and ideas considered ‘outside’ the common referents and ‘in-jokes’ of a discipline are pushed outside of importance and usefulness. Critiques of normalised sexism, racism, heterosexism, and so on in academia have been multiple and ongoing: Linda Nochlin questioned the lack of recorded “great women artists” in 1971, Adrienne Rich referred to heterosexuality as practically “compulsory” in 1980, and in 2009 Margaret Montoya argued that ‘merit’ is often mistaken for being able “to perform whiteness.”¹¹⁶

Learning about or through certain critical fields of study can be a radical practice when the terrain itself comprises of narratives and experiences that have been excavated through critical study and thought. For example, while the

¹¹⁵ Stefano Harney, *Stefano Harney on Study (Interview July 2011, Part 5)*, online video, 5 minutes 27 seconds, 8 July 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wloBdY72do>.

¹¹⁶ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” in *Art and Sexual Politics: Women’s Liberation, Women Artists, and Art History*, eds. Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1971), 1; Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” in *Feminism & Sexuality*, eds. Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 130; Margaret Montoya, Christine Zuni Cruz, and Gene Grant, “Narrative Braids: Performing Racial Literacy,” *American Indian Law Review* 33, no. 1 (2009): 172.

‘history wars’ of the 1990s and 2000s among Australian academics, historians, and politicians did not necessarily develop novel practices of discussing colonisation, the debates did draw attention to narratives of Australian colonisation that had been largely marginalised, namely histories that included the commonality of violence, rape, and abuse suffered by Indigenous Australians at the hands of English colonisers and later governments. Acknowledging colonial violence can be a critical act in itself given that this information disrupts normalised historical narratives which tend to glaze over such details and defer to the ‘victories’ of colonisers rather than the traumatic experiences of colonised peoples. Learning can be a critical practice when the content being taught has latent usefulness – thereby rejecting neoliberal norms of profitable, immediate use – or has been produced using a critical lens or framework – rejecting normalised exclusionary hierarchies of knowledge.

However, a pedagogy that shares radical knowledge through normative lessons might be radical in content but regressive in practice. While feminism maybe be – and often is – explicitly addressed by radical pedagogues, this is not necessarily a distinguishing feature of radical pedagogy. Feminism can be taught and discussed in settings that use techniques that only reaffirm oppressive traditions. A radical classroom needs to reframe how social and political relations operate. Therefore, in addition to practising education as an opportunity to encourage criticality of society, institutions, and hierarchies of knowledge, a radical pedagogy also encourages teaching and learning practices that transform the roles and acts expected in a classroom.

Complicating hierarchies: teachers as facilitators

The radical pedagogies included in this chapter are made similar in their use of three broad practices that I will use the remainder of this chapter to explore: firstly, disruption of normative classroom relations that tend to position teachers powerful and knowledgeable and students passive and empty; secondly, validation of student knowledge, thereby asserting that students are

capable of knowing and critiquing oppressive aspects of social reality; thirdly, creation of a classroom community that prioritises open and free communication and meaningful relationships. These practices disrupt classrooms norms to produce different learning relationships between teachers and students that might urge critical engagement.

To provoke critical thinking, a number of the radical pedagogues included in this chapter argue that students must be given some degree of power within the classroom. Therefore, the roles of students and teachers must be rewritten. When entering a traditional classroom, knowledge is often assumed as restricted to a single figure – the teacher – and as something that is yet to be consumed by the rest of the participants – the students. In radical pedagogy, these classroom power relations are reorganised to enable multiple directions for information to flow, as opposed to a unilateral relation in which knowledge passes solely from teacher to student. In other words, radical pedagogy requires a dynamic between students and teachers that allows for dialogue. This requires a change in role for both teachers and students.

Across radical pedagogical approaches, there seems to be consensus that all parties in the room need to be giving and receiving. A radical pedagogue seems to act more as a facilitator rather than a dispenser of ideas. For Freire, radical classrooms require the creation of new roles – teacher-students and student-teachers – which make all participants responsible for teaching one another.¹¹⁷ For Freire, this is possible because all knowledge – be it methodically developed or procured from lived experience – comes from the same place: curiosity.¹¹⁸ Renee Sandell suggests that in effective feminist pedagogies, teachers take on the role not of an authoritarian, but rather a contributor who can provide mediation, structure, and issues for discussion.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Carolyn M. Shrewsbury suggests that in feminist classrooms, a

¹¹⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 80.

¹¹⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 37.

¹¹⁹ Renee Sandell, "The Liberating Relevance of Feminist Pedagogy," *Studies in Art Education* 32, no.3 (Spring 2011): 181.

“participatory, democratic process” should be used to share power and knowledge-creation capabilities.¹²⁰ Relatedly, Melora Koepke suggests that being a teacher in this type of setting requires taking on “multiple subjectivities” at once: that of teacher, student, citizen, and parent.¹²¹ hooks also describes the role of the teacher in an engaged classroom as multiple and active; she suggests that to successfully teach in this manner, a teacher must do more than “simply [stand] in front of the class reading.”¹²² Instead, the teacher has to become an active observer and worker in the room. hooks argues that while teaching, she feels the need to “be listening, (...) recording,” and “thinking beyond that moment.”¹²³ Flexible roles combined with the expectation of reciprocated interest creates an environment that encourages mutual engagement and therefore shared responsibility for the development of knowledge.

Validating student input and knowledge

To continue to disrupt neoliberal educational norms, the expectations of students must also change. Freire suggests that in order to change the world, one must first be able to know and name the world.¹²⁴ It is therefore important that students take part in the act of naming. In agreement, hooks suggests that teachers and students need to work together in an open atmosphere, be it through humorous, confrontational, or loving exchanges. What is important for hooks is that ideas move between all participants so that they feel worthy of using their individual voice and ideas.¹²⁵ Like Freire and hooks, Rancière asserts that students must be spoken with as equals, rather than addressed as ignorant

¹²⁰ Carolyn M. Shrewsbury, “What Is Feminist Pedagogy?” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1/2 (1997): 167.

¹²¹ Melora Koepke, “Towards a Pedagogy of Moments,” *Inflexions* 8, (April 2015): 159, accessed 8 July 2015, <http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/radicalpedagogy/main.html#Koepke>.

¹²² hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 157.

¹²³ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 157.

¹²⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 88.

¹²⁵ hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 21.

subjects.¹²⁶ To create this dynamic, a radical pedagogue may sometimes require the suggestions, ideas, personal experiences, and emotions of students to enter the classroom. This can warm teacher-student relationships, but also validate students' individual perspectives and, ultimately, ability to perceive the world critically.

To make potentially difficult ideas more accessible and engaging, it is sometimes helpful to depart from a familiar starting point. In addition to confessional practices – which I will return to later in this thesis – some radical pedagogues incorporate content that has gained traction in popular culture into their lessons. This is not a new practice; in 1980, Joe Kincheloe suggested that teachers should embrace televisual culture as a source of social cohesion between students and teachers as well as a useful tool for developing critical communication skills.¹²⁷ In recent years, this approach seems to have been embraced not only in regard to television programs, but also popular music and internet culture. Nailia Keleta-Mae, for example, wrote a drama course that centred on gender, race, and Beyoncé Knowles for the University of Waterloo, Ontario. In this course, Keleta-Mae employs Knowles's album *Beyoncé* (2013) as a case study in black feminist perspectives and critical race theory.¹²⁸ For Keleta-Mae, the first run of the 'Beyoncé course' was a "deeply impactful and informative teaching experience" because her students entered the classroom "as stakeholders in the subject matter" as many were well versed in Knowles's popular discography.¹²⁹ As a result, the students were able to use a common subject to develop new critical perspectives.¹³⁰ Similar courses have been devised around other figures of popular culture, including Kendrick Lamar and

¹²⁶ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 11.

¹²⁷ Joe Kincheloe, "TV Is Here To Stay: Use It," *The Clearing House* 54, no. 1 (September 1980): 44-45.

¹²⁸ Nailia Keleta-Mae, "Drama 282 takes a closer look at music superstar Beyoncé," *University of Waterloo*, last modified 3 June 2015, <https://uwaterloo.ca/drama-speech-communication/news/drama-282-takes-closer-look-music-superstar-beyonce>.

¹²⁹ "Get What's Mine: "Formation" Changes the Way We Listen to Beyonce Forever," *Noisey*, last modified 8 Feb 2016, <http://noisey.vice.com/blog/beyonce-formation-op-ed-super-bowl-performance-2016>.

¹³⁰ "Get What's Mine: "Formation" Changes the Way We Listen to Beyonce Forever."

Kanye West.¹³¹ *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) now sits at the centre of its own feminist discipline ('Buffy studies') and has inspired a critical journal, *Slayage*. Courses on post-porn studies are perhaps similar in their focus on popular accessible phenomena that intersects a number of current social issues.¹³² Adair Rounthwaite observes that these courses share commonalities with Freire's use of relatable generative themes that foster student engagement through employment of discussions set around 'everyday' matter.¹³³ Leading a class in this manner – guided by relatable or recognisable material – can set a room at ease, generate some excitement, and set the stage for critical thinking.

Inviting individual experiences to permeate lessons can also lead to students recognising their own experiences of fragmentation as a result of patriarchal, capitalist, and imperialistic (among other) forms of exploitation. What is learnt by students is that they are capable of identifying oppression in their own terms and that their field research into the character of social reality is valuable.¹³⁴ In radical pedagogies, knowledge is treated as something that can be constructed and discovered together, rather than something possessed and gifted by a teacher.

As previously argued, normative neoliberalised educational models tend to overemphasise the value of specific forms of information, methodologies, and resources. In such environments, vocational training or memorisation of 'the correct answers' to pass specific tests and meet the requirements of standardised assessments is encouraged. In radical classrooms, the aim is to

¹³¹ "Kendrick Lamar Online: Mapping the Digital Terrain of Hip Hop" was offered at Grinnell College (Grinnell, Iowa) and "The Politics of Kanye West: Black Genius and Sonic Aesthetics" could be enrolled in at Washington University (St Louis, Missouri).

¹³² Post-pornography studies (sometimes 'porn studies') is a subject area concerned with critically engaging with the politics and cultures associated with sexuality, embodiment, desire, and representations thereof. See Tim Gregory and Astrid Lorange, "Teaching Post-Pornography" (2018).

¹³³ Adair Rounthwaite, *Asking the Audience: Participatory Art in 1980s New York* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 79.

¹³⁴ Margo Culley et al, "The politics of nurturance," in *Gendered Subjects: The Dynamics of Feminist Teaching*, eds. Margo Culley and Catherine Portuges (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 19; Sandell, 180.

redevelop a critical way of perceiving and experiencing immediate experiences as well as the wider world.¹³⁵

Dialogue and listening

In radical pedagogy, dialogue is also used to draw teachers and students into flexible, critical roles. Dialoguing involves actively listening and speaking with other individuals to share and develop ideas. There is a difference between ‘talking with’ another person and being ‘talked at’. To be ‘spoken at’ suggests an action in which speech has moved in a single direction towards an unchanging location. The pedagogical practice of talking at students is something I often think of as ‘bulldozing’: a situation in which a teaching figure talks at students about a topic without leaving room for small moments of participation on the students’ behalf.¹³⁶ Such small moments might include questions, pauses for thinking (which is often required for digestion of complex ideas), or intervals in which requests can be made for further definitions, rephrased ideas, or suggestions for further research. Bulldozing might occur unintentionally because it is an entirely normalised practice; teachers have been traditionally assumed as the primary source of knowledge in the classroom and students have learnt to expect didacticism.

By contrast, the practice of talking with students suggests a multi-directional and collaborative practice of sharing ideas. This mode of communicating allows for – and hopefully encourages – students to question and further discuss the ideas permeating the pedagogical experience. In an ideal dialogical situation, every participant has the opportunity to shape shift from the position of speaker to listener if they choose. For critical pedagogues, this type of dialogue is a core component of an engaging and empowering educational experience. For Freire in particular, the most humanising mode of

¹³⁵ However, since many educational institutions are subject to national or state-wide standardised testing – such as the Higher School Certificate (or HSC) in Australia – it can be difficult for radical pedagogues teaching in such environments to educate without encountering some degree of normative testing or assessment.

¹³⁶ There are, of course, also situations where a student or group of students may ‘bulldoze’ their classmates.

teaching is dialoguing with students.¹³⁷ As such, the role of teacher is to represent the world “not as a lecture, but as a problem,” emphasising that contemporary issues are unresolved and therefore open for students to engage with.¹³⁸ Likewise, in hooks’s work, dialogue is repeatedly returned to as a central practice. She argues that unlike a large lecture hall in which students may be lulled into a state “where they listen but do not hear,” settings that allow for dialogue leave participants more vulnerable, but also required to engage in a dynamic of reciprocated engagement.¹³⁹ Dialogue is also used by both radical pedagogues and transpedagogues to structure published texts. For example, in her chapter on Freire in *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks imagines herself (Gloria Watkins) and her “writing voice” (bell hooks) having a chat about Freire. In the field of transpedagogy, interviews are a common format used to develop theoretical discussions about this emerging practice.¹⁴⁰

However, it should be noted that participation in dialogue is something that can also occur quietly, sometimes with little obvious externalisation or verbalisation of coherent critical thoughts. Critical thinking is not always accompanied by articulation or decisive action. Listening, gazing, and small movements (such as nodding) – not to mention actions that occur after the learning moment itself (such as writing, painting, or drawing among other means of giving forms to concepts) – are also means of engaging critically. hooks suggests that the value of some forms of teaching, like lectures, that largely require quiet participation on the behalf of students, is that they often prepare students for learning that “will take place somewhere else, at another time, away from performance and spectacle.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 65.

¹³⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 109.

¹³⁹ hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 66.

¹⁴⁰ For example, see Tania Bruguera’s “On transpedagogy with Pablo Helguera” (2009), Tom Finkelpearl’s *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (2013), and Helen Reed’s “Bad Education: Helen Reed interviews Pablo Helguera,” (2013).

¹⁴¹ hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 68.

Listening can act as a means of opening up oneself to new perspectives and ways of thinking.¹⁴² On the open-mindedness that listening can facilitate, John Dewey writes that

open-mindedness is not the same as empty mindedness. To hang out a sign saying, 'Come right in; there is no one at home' is not the equivalent of hospitality. But there is a kind of passivity, willingness to let experience accumulate and sink in and ripen, which is an essential of development.¹⁴³

For Dewey, activities that encourage demonstrations of open-mindedness are also opportunities to grapple with novel ideas. In listening and taking in new information, there lies the possibility of learning, ruminating, or perhaps rethinking assumptions previously taken to be solid facts.

Listening can be an important step towards researching and thinking in an intersectional mode in particular. Celeste Liddle suggests that:

Intersectionality is the politics of discussion. [...] This discussion involves listening as much as it involves talking. [...] What scares the hell out of the patriarchy is that we might start to dominate the dialogue after years of trying to keep us in the background.¹⁴⁴

Here, the “us” that Liddle refers to are Aboriginal Australian feminists. Aboriginal Australian women – let alone Aboriginal feminist women – are dramatically underrepresented in Australian politics, popular media, and – among many other discourses – feminist literature. For activists, teachers, or students living with degrees of social or economic privilege, listening and

¹⁴² Petra Bauer and Sofia Wiberg, “Protocol 1, Rehearsals: Eight Acts on the Politics of Listening,” in *Art and the F Word: Reflections on the Browning of Europe*, eds. Maria Lind and What, How & for Whom/WHW (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 270.

¹⁴³ John Dewey, “Democracy and Education,” in *Education*, ed. Felicity Allen (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2011), 30-31.

¹⁴⁴ “FM[X]: What Would A Feminist Methodology Sound Like?” *Liquid Architecture*, last modified 2018, <http://www.liquidarchitecture.org.au/artists/celeste-liddle/>.

deferring to marginalised voices can be a quiet mode of demonstrating solidarity.¹⁴⁵

Before (or instead of) engaging in dialogue through spoken words, students might also use small quiet movements to acknowledge participation in critical thinking. The subtle gestures of active listening – such as, eye contact, nodding, or perfunctory sounds of agreement (such as “mm,” “uh huh,” or “yeah”) – may not communicate the exact thoughts of a participant, but they are suggestive of a moment of recognition of what is being heard. These acts can also be important modes of supporting a speaker’s ideas.

The gaze – and in particular, the reciprocated gaze – has been the focus of much art historical discussion. John Berger argues that “the eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully credible that we are part of the visible world.” For Berger, what he referred to as “the reciprocal nature of vision” was more important than spoken communication.¹⁴⁶ For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, gestures associated with shaming and rejection – including the refusal of the gaze – can transform an identity.¹⁴⁷ Body language that communicates rejection of a person also has the ability to suggest the rejection of ideas and experiences.

By contrast, acts that suggest agreement or acceptance can help an idea resonate amongst participants. Montoya refers to subtle performances of agreement – such as maintaining a directed gaze, snapping fingers after an interesting statement, or quick murmurs of agreement – are important means of “echoing” a disposition. Of course, as Montoya has also suggested, the gestures of active listening or echoing can be performed in the absence of internal critical thought or movement from one position to another.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, these are potentially supportive, subtle means of engaging in

¹⁴⁵ The politics of listening will be returned to at greater length in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

¹⁴⁶ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 9.

¹⁴⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity, Henry James’s ‘The Art of the Novel,’” *GLQ* 1 (1993): 12.

¹⁴⁸ Margaret Montoya, “Latinx Advocacy: In/Different Spaces,” (presentation at La Alianza Harvard Latinx Law Conference, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, 28 January 2017).

dialogue that do not require spoken words. Dialogue can be, as Freire suggests, an important means of encouraging students to take part in the task of naming and describing oppressive structures. However, I also believe that such dialogue cannot take place without also inviting an engaged mode of listening and contemplating.

Developing a meaningful classroom community

Many radical pedagogues also encourage criticality by changing the purpose of the class itself. This component of radical teaching and learning involves encouraging the development of meaningful relationships – perhaps even a community – within the classroom, however informal or institutional that space may be. By meaningful classroom relations, I am referring to relationships that one wants to thrive and that have negative impacts if they crumble. Relationships that energise, determine self-worth, and recognise the wholeness of both students and teachers involve recognition of the complications that may exist in the lives of students and teachers that take place outside the classroom. For this to occur, students and teachers must try to understand, empathise with, and perhaps even develop friendships with one another. In other words, classroom relationships must be more than transactional and passing.

This involves practising teaching as an affective labour and allowing emotions to enter the learning space. This can be challenging because, as hooks suggests, the “heart” and “mind” – or rather, emotions and learning – are often viewed as mutually exclusive organs in education.¹⁴⁹ However, for radical pedagogues, a classroom based in open, emotional dialogue can result in a range of productive, emotional encounters with knowledge. This includes heated exchanges; Steinberg argues that facilitating arguments and disagreements is an important practice which encourages students to express

¹⁴⁹ bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 127.

discontent and suspicion.¹⁵⁰ This particular aspect of radical pedagogy does not mesh easily with neoliberalised educating environments that are often designed to support practical and efficient – rather than caring or passionate – academic relationships.

Radical pedagogy's interest in developing relationships and communities also rejects neoliberalised education's prioritisation of teaching at the service of a specific profitable outcome. For Koepke, conventional classroom relations can result in both teachers and students "contort[ing]" themselves to fit particular roles and methods. For Koepke, these forced performances of conventional relationships and practices muffle individuality and creativity, encouraging teachers and students to ultimately aim for "professionalization" – gaining skills for a specific paid vocation – instead of, as hooks would recommend, "self-actualization" – the fulfilment of one's potential, whatever that may be.¹⁵¹ Radical pedagogy approaches education as a social and enriching experience in and of itself.

Empowerment and lifelong learning

Ultimately, radical pedagogues are interested in redeveloping students' critical thinking skills as part of a larger project of empowering people. Empowerment requires profound social change. This often includes a redistribution of power and authority that destroys limitations experienced by oppressed groups.¹⁵² As such, the goal of empowerment almost always requires continued work beyond the confines of a classroom.

For this reason, critical thinking and learning are habits for radical pedagogues, rather than short exercises encouraged within educational institutions. Freire urges that a successful pedagogy approaches people as unfinished and in a constant state of becoming in a likewise incomplete social

¹⁵⁰ Steinberg, x.

¹⁵¹ Koepke, 156; bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 21-22.

¹⁵² Andrea Cornwall, Gideon, Jasmine, and Kalpana Wilson, "Introduction: Reclaiming Feminism: Gender and Neoliberalism," *IDS Bulletin* 39, no. 6 (December 2008): 4

reality.¹⁵³ In agreement with Freire, Koepke suggests that critical thinking may begin in the classroom, but continues out in the wider world where “learning and doing become indistinguishable from each other.”¹⁵⁴ As a result, people are in a constant state of becoming as they continually observe, learn, and question their surroundings. The role of radical pedagogy is not to change society as a whole in a single motion, but rather through encouraging small changes in thinking and acting. These make up the minutiae that builds intolerance and action against normalised oppressive structures, limiting expectations, and unequal spreads of power in societies.

Transdisciplinary educating and utopia

The elements that transpedagogy borrows from radical pedagogy mirror many of the practices appropriated from socially engaged art. Both aim to facilitate encounters with ideas that challenge hierarchies and invite participation or cooperation of some sort. Both practices also necessitate an attendee (be it a student or viewer who witnesses or takes part in the knowledge being shared), an author of sorts (an artist or teacher who creates or facilitates an encounter with knowledge) as well as an act (the development of an artwork or class) in which ideas are shared. Additionally, both radical pedagogy and socially engaged art facilitate communication between figures with different roles (artists and viewers, teachers and students). Furthermore, both socially engaged artworks and radical pedagogical classrooms can act as ‘safe’ testing laboratories within which radical means of cooperating might be attempted. These are spaces in which critical thoughts and experiences – both convivial and uncomfortable – are encouraged that might not be as well received or attempted in other spaces.

Both socially engaged art and radical pedagogy also share an expectation that is difficult to meet: the creation of (eventually) empowering experiences

¹⁵³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 84.

¹⁵⁴ Koepke, 158-159.

and discussions. One of the criticisms that I have of both the literature on socially engaged art and radical pedagogy is a tendency among some authors to overestimate – or perhaps over-invest in and therefore evaluate in accordance with – the ability of an artist or educator to emancipate, empower, or otherwise drastically change the social status of participants and, in so doing, fuel the transformation of oppressive societies into utopias of some sort. While a socially engaged artwork or radical pedagogy may change the terms under which particular people engage with one another, such experiences often occur in spaces that are inhabited only temporarily and that are separated – literally or culturally – from other social spaces. So far, artworks and pedagogies have only managed to create temporary micro utopias (or, as Claire Bishop might suggest, “artificial hells”).¹⁵⁵

Given these similarities, I could suggest that socially engaged art is a radical pedagogical practice or vice versa.¹⁵⁶ However, I would have to overlook some major features that separate the sphere of art from that of education as well as some of the special qualities of transpedagogy. For one, the importance of reaching utopia – or, in less dramatic terms, managing to accomplish something useful or that has ramifications in social reality – differs between art and education. While objects shared in the sphere of art are often received with the expectation of some level of ambiguity that requires interpretation and analysis, objects that are shared in the sphere of education are generally charged with the responsibility of the transmission of ideas or skills. Another way to phrase this is that artworks are generally expected to be interesting enough to view or participate in, while education is expected to share information that can be internalised and eventually applied.

Given its use of performative tactics and operation usually within (or overlapping) the sphere of art, transpedagogy is given a special autonomy from

¹⁵⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 6, 73.

¹⁵⁶ Another option is to argue that the integration of socially engaged art and radical pedagogy is a likely development given their similarities.

other radical pedagogies that are practiced as part of education programs. This split is not intended to suggest that radical pedagogies practiced in institutions or as part of formal educations are less provocative than those practiced as artworks or projects, but rather only to suggest that they differ in medium and therefore in reception (that is to say, that they do not carry the same responsibilities or expectation of usefulness). In a sense, transpedagogy's link to the artworld rescues it from needing to fulfil the same utopian expectations of radical pedagogies that take place strictly in the sphere of education.

Additionally, while one could attempt to argue that all art is already pedagogical (and all education potentially artistic), this would not account for the issues that arise out of a practice, like transpedagogy, that brings “education [into] confrontation with the problem of its own *representability*” as Peio Aguirre argues.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Bishop suggests that pedagogic art (her preferred term for transpedagogy) highlights that one of the differences between art and education lies in its reception: while art is made to be viewed and re-viewed, education “has no image.”¹⁵⁸ Aguirre echoes this argument:

Art colonises everything. Its appetite is voracious. However, education resists the production of its own representation; you cannot represent education, since education is, in itself, an act of communication between several people in the process of exchanging their own skills, disabilities and dysfunctionalities. When a photographic camera is inserted into an educational setting, or when someone takes a step back to portray a learning scene, then all the invisible architecture that supports communication, transference, the corporality of the voice, or even just silence, is suddenly eradicated.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Peio Aguirre, “Education with Innovation: Beyond Art-Pedagogical Projects,” in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, edited by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London and Amsterdam: Open Editions and de Appel, 2010), 179.

¹⁵⁸ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 241.

¹⁵⁹ Aguirre, 179.

For Aguirre, art cannot produce the same social architecture that education does. Here he seems to argue for a split between ‘actual’ education and representations of education, a position that echoes Helguera’s reading of socially engaged works as split into two categories: ‘actual’ centres of activity and those that only represent such centres.¹⁶⁰ As argued in the previous chapter, this is a neat split that I do not accept, especially in the case of transpedagogy.

Since transpedagogy is a social practice – one that relies on dialogue, presence, doing, and distributed or accessible documentation that encourages further engagement – it does not operate in the same manner as a static photograph of an educational moment. The photograph that Aguirre describes is inanimate; transpedagogies operate through acts that require live participants who can create the gatherings and conversations that constitute these unique projects. Transpedagogy, in other words, is simultaneously an artwork *and* an education: it creates a representation of education by *being* a form of education.

More specifically, transpedagogy creates a critical representation of education through employment of radical pedagogical tactics. Lisa Nyberg and Joanna Gustavasson argue that a radical education is made unique by “*how we learn, how we understand, how we use knowledge and who defines what is worth knowing.*”¹⁶¹ Despite representing a varied field of approaches to alternative methods of sharing knowledge, with different politics and varying degrees of utopic aims, radical pedagogies often return to similar practices that value collaborative or cooperative approaches to disrupting oppressive patterns in education. This includes methods that prioritise facilitation over transmission, student participation (in its many forms) over mere student

¹⁶⁰ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 5.

¹⁶¹ Lisa Nyberg and Johanna Gustavsson, “Radical Pedagogy,” in *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology, 1986-2014*, ed. Hilary Robinson (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 124.

attendance, dialogue over bulldozing, communities over vocations, and empowerment and lifelong critical thinking over memorisation of the ‘correct’ or most profitable answers. In the next three chapters, I will analyse some transpedagogical projects that illustrate how these tactics are being created by artists to develop alternative educational spaces: Kelly Doley’s *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists* (2012), Keg de Souza’s *Redfern: School of Displacement* (2016), and Song-Ming Ang’s *Guilty Pleasures* (2007-).

Chapter IV

Kelly Doley's learning centre

The Learning Centre: Two Feminists was facilitated by Kelly Doley over a fortnight in 2012. The work was one of several installed in West Space (Melbourne, Australia) for *No Reasonable Offer Refused*, a group show curated by Liang Luscombe and Patrice Sharkey around practitioners experimenting with alternative modes of exchanging creative work and knowledge. *Two Feminists* took the format of an intensive one-on-one course on feminism taught by sixteen different participants who were invited by Doley to teach her something about feminism. The 'teachers' included writers (Jenny Menthol, Karen Pickering, Clementine Ford, and Kyla McFarlane), academics (Anne Marsh, Terri Bird, Karen Green, Georgie Proud, Kate Rigby, Odette Marie Kelada, and Beth Muldoon), and artists (Rebecca Clyde, Elvis 'The CoUNTess' Richardson, Kenny Pittock, Deborah Strutt, and Chris Scuito).

In the reading nook of the gallery, Doley installed a learning space with just enough signifiers to recall a traditional classroom: a desk, two chairs (one on either side of the desk so Doley could face her teacher), a blackboard, some chalk, and bookshelves housing feminist texts. Before each lesson, Doley set a sandwich board by the reading nook to announce the time and teacher of the next class. Most of the lessons were conversational, the invited teacher using their time slot to discuss something pertinent to then-contemporary dialogues

about Australian feminism/s. At the end of each day of the project, Doley wrote reflective blog posts (published on *twofeminists.com*) that recounted the lessons that she had just received. In exchange for their knowledge, Doley painted each of her participants a small portrait. These portraits were displayed in the gallery as traces of the conversations that had taken place before being gifted to each participant at the close of *No Reasonable Offer Refused*.

Two Feminists was not the first of its sort for Doley. In 2010, Doley organised her first learning centre, *The Learning Centre: Manifestos for Living*. She returned to the learning centre format over 2011-12 to facilitate *The Learning Centre: Fremantle*.¹ After *Two Feminists*, Doley cofounded Sunday School – a collective dedicated to producing feminist histories – with Diana Smith. Most recently, Doley has begun to facilitate a series of ‘assemblies’ – *Assembl/ies for Alternative Futures* – the first of which, *Coven*, took place in 2016. In 2019, Doley will be hosting *Feminist South*, an assemblage of reading groups, residences, and talks that explore Asia Pacific feminist art. In the projects that have preceded and followed *Two Feminists*, Doley has also produced textual works and saved various traces of the conversations that she has facilitated. For example, the tweets that were published by @Alt_Futures (a Twitter bot developed to record snippets of the conversations that took place during *Coven*) remain online today.²

On first look, *Two Feminists* appears to be a relatively typical transpedagogical project. Doley’s work is transdisciplinary (that is, bridges together elements of radical pedagogy and socially engaged art) and seems to

¹ *The Learning Centre: Manifestos for Living* and *The Learning Centre: Fremantle* were developed to collect and acknowledge the expertise of different members of the general public. Like *Two Feminists*, the ‘teachers’ invited into these learning centres were volunteers who provided knowledge on a topic of their choosing. The lessons provided during the performances resulted in a broad sweep of local interests, from gardening to paranormal phenomena.

² Many of these tweets were written by participating poet, Amy Ireland. The tweets recorded only short phrases spoken during the conversations. Out of context, they read as prophetic or comedic. Examples include: “future education system is abandoned [sic.],” “respect and recognition of difference,” and “80 year old soup.”

Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 4.

Kelly Doley, classroom nook installed for *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists*, 2012, installation, live performance, and blog, West Space, Melbourne. Documentation: Kelly Doley.




Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 5.

Kelly Doley (with Odette Marie Kelada), *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists*, 2012, installation, live performance, and blog, West Space, Melbourne. Documentation: Kelly Doley.

create a learning space that rejects features of neoliberal institutions. Furthermore, Doley's blogged documentation of the work provides both a reflective record of the knowledge that was shared as well as links to additional educational resources.

However, Doley's work also differs from the other examples of transpedagogy facilitated by Keg de Souza and Song-Ming Ang that I have included in this thesis. Firstly, the core documentation of *Two Feminists* – Doley's blog, *twofeminists.com* – has recently become inaccessible, while the texts associated with de Souza and Ang's projects remain available. Secondly, I was able to attend both de Souza and Ang's projects 'in person.' Doley's *Two Feminists*, on the other hand, is analysed here primarily through the blog posts that document the work. As a result, my approach to *Two Feminists* differs from that employed in the next two chapters. In this chapter, it has been necessary to observe (and sometimes imagine) *Two Feminists* in two forms: in its current inaccessible condition and as it originally operated.

For these reasons, I have split this chapter into two parts. In the first half of this chapter, I will address the work as it exists today and discuss two of the major constraints that have shaped my analysis: the increasingly inaccessible state of *Two Feminists* and the character of the central document of the work, *twofeminists.com*. In the second part of this chapter, I turn to focus on the social and pedagogical features of *Two Feminists*. This part of the chapter will feature a more traditional transpedagogical analysis that attends to the live dynamics of the work as recorded in Doley's blog. I will look closely at Doley's employment of the learning centre model, the use of art as a teaching fee, and dialogical lessons to create a space that could facilitate both convivial exchanges as well as unexpectedly confrontational lessons. The first half of this chapter – which is dedicated to exploring some of the constraints encountered while 'reading' Doley's project – informs the second half – that is, what can be read about Doley's work in spite of such constraints. This is a chapter that is as much about how we access and understand the role of

transpedagogical documents as it is about forming interpretations of transpedagogical projects through such documents.

Part one: A disappearing project

Some twenty-five years ago, Peggy Phelan claimed that performance art becomes itself through disappearance.³ While writing this chapter, Doley's *Two Feminists* seemed to perform a variation of Phelan's theory by becoming an increasingly inaccessible artwork. This disappearing act began at West Space. Although Doley had advertised the lessons and hoped that visitors of West Space would walk by the reading nook and pause to listen in on the lessons, aside from herself and the invited participants, the work had a limited live audience; most of the people who witnessed the lessons often only passed by or watched from afar for a few moments. Given the placement of the work in a reading nook, it is possible that the people who did pass by assumed that Doley was engaged in a private conversation rather than an open project. *Two Feminists* therefore did not possess a traditional transpedagogical 'class' of live attendees.

Belated online attendance, however, was made possible with Doley's development of *twofeminists.com*. This blog – which is the most detailed documentation of the work – was written by Doley over the duration of the original two week transpedagogical experiment. The entries seem to have been written quickly, stream of consciousness style, with little editing undertaken. The subtitle below the website header describes the blog contents as “everything learnt about feminism from 16 strangers.”⁴ Each entry is a combination of text written by Doley from her perspective, photographs of the performance, and hyperlinks to relevant sources or references made during the lesson. Each post opens with a photograph of Doley sitting with her

³ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

⁴ Kelly Doley, “Two Feminists,” *Two Feminists* (blog), October 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/>.

participating teacher and closes with another of Doley's painted portrait of the participant.

The blog has decayed somewhat over time in the ways that websites tend to disintegrate. Most notably, some of the hyperlinks have broken down as webpages have been moved or updated. For example, a hyperlink that would have once taken the user to, presumably, an excerpt of Karen Green's *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400-1700* (2014) now takes the user to a general webpage about authors from Monash University. Another hyperlink that would have taken the user to an article written by Clementine Ford now brings the reader to a '404 Error' page.⁵ However, the user interface remains relatively glitch free and many of the other hyperlinks (mostly to Wikipedia pages) remain current, leaving the blog relatively useable. As a result, Doley's performance has potentially been engaged with by a number of in-the-know artistic 'netizens.'⁶

While I was writing this chapter, I was informed by Doley that she planned to make the blog private. As I had been told to expect, *twofeminists.com* was made accessible only by invite or request at the discretion of the artist in January 2018. The current state of the blog blocks general online access to the work, preventing further audiences from engaging with the knowledge that was shared during the original lessons. However, Doley kindly shared access to the blog with me for the purpose of completing this chapter. The blog's disappearance nevertheless presented me with an unexpected challenge in forming an analysis of *Two Feminists*: a major piece of documentation (that seems to have been an important avenue of observation and participation) had suddenly become inaccessible to everyone except for me.⁷

⁵ "Monash Authors," *Monash University*, last modified 2018, <https://www.monash.edu/library/collections/special/monash-authors>.

⁶ A netizen is an internet user: a citizen of the internet

⁷ Rigorous academic research into the average shelf life of a blog or website seems to be in short supply. While bloggers, media producers, and web design companies have produced 'articles' on online life expectancy, they are often self-published with the impetus of ultimately selling a product (such as web

However, as the performances were fading into the past and the blog into online obscurity, I discovered that *Two Feminists* might have already reappeared elsewhere. In 2014, Doley created *Things Learnt About Feminism #1-95*, a representation of the insights gained in the aftermath of the *Two Feminists* conversations. *Things Learnt* is often installed as a grid of ninety-five fluorescent posters that display a range of feminist demands and slogans written in bold black permanent marker. Some of the posters provide intersectional critiques of previous exclusionary feminisms (“Second wave feminism: it’s a white middleclass thing!” reads one poster, while another points to a shift away from biological essentialism with the question “Central core no more?”), others seem more vague and humanist (“Believe in the good of human beings,” “Let’s judge ourselves as people”), some seem to pay homage to previous waves of activism (such as “Remember the Black Womens Action Group,” “Mary Wollstonecraft: Fighting the good fight since 1790,” and “Remember the suffragettes!”), while others draw attention to specific feminist issues such as labour (“All work considered equal,” “Capitalism: It’s a patriarchal thing!”), rape culture (“Personal safety no matter what I wear”), androcentrism (“Male genius rules the art park”), education (“Add autonomous equal education & minus restrictive guardianship!”), and futurity (“Reimagine new systems, ok!”). The posters present a selection of the various attitudes – sometimes contradictory, others complementary – that exist within contemporary feminism.

Things Learnt was still being exhibited in Australian galleries at the time of the blog’s closure. I wondered if the artwork was referential enough to create another avenue of access to the knowledge built and shared in *Two Feminists*. It seemed plausible enough; the title of the work insinuated that an educational moment had taken place and that the posters displayed what had been “learnt” about feminism. Additionally, when exhibited and discussed in print, the work

services provided by the publishing company or individual). This makes it difficult to ascertain if Doley’s *twofeminists.com* had an above or below average lifespan.

was sometimes explicitly contextualised as a follow up to *Two Feminists*. For *Yes and No: Things Learnt About Feminism* (2014) – an exhibition of Doley’s posters at Boxcopy (Brisbane, Australia) – Amelia Groom opens the catalogue essay by explaining that the displayed slogans

are traces from a series of exchanges [Doley] had with 16 people, two years ago. In 2012, she initiated a project called *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists* (...). Over three weeks, she invited 16 strangers to come and teach her about feminism, putting herself in a position of pupil and host.⁸

Groom goes on to describe the viewers of the exhibition at Boxcopy as “belated eavesdroppers on Doley’s lessons.”⁹ On the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery’s webpage dedicated to its recent acquisition of *Thing Learnt*, the work is similarly described as a ‘translation’ of the conversations Doley had during *Two Feminists*.¹⁰ In Anna Dunnill’s review of *Things Learnt* for *Art Guide*, she mentions *Two Feminists* briefly to explain the origins of Doley’s series of posters.¹¹ In a more recent group exhibition at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), *Unfinished Business: Perspectives on art and feminisms* (2017-2018), Doley’s posters were exhibited in a towering grid on a partition wall that led to the exhibition space. While there were no descriptive wall texts included in the exhibition, the catalogue included multiple essays that provided short analyses of the included works. Doley’s was discussed in four of the essays, two of which described the posters as a by-product of *Two Feminists*.¹² Reading these texts, there seemed to be a pattern developing, a

⁸ Amelia Groom, “~A,” *Kelly Doley, Yes and No: Things Learnt About Feminism*, (Brisbane: Boxcopy, 2014), n.p.

⁹ Groom, n.p.

¹⁰ “Kelly Doley: Things Learnt About Feminism,” *The University of Western Australia, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery*, last modified 20 September 2016, <http://www.lwgallery.uwa.edu.au/exhibitions/past/2016/kellydoley>.

¹¹ Anna Dunnill, “Kelly Doley’s posters present 95 Things Learnt About Feminism,” *Art Guide Australia*, last modified 7 October 2016, <http://artguide.com.au/kelly-doleys-posters-present-95-things-learnt-about-feminism>.

¹² Max Delany, “Unfinished Business,” in *Unfinished Business: Perspectives on art and feminism*, eds. Max Delany and Annika Kristensen (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2017), 14; Vikki McInnes, “I Can’t Believe I Still Have to Protest This Fucking Shit,” in *Unfinished Business: Perspectives on art and feminism*, eds. Max Delany and Annika Kristensen (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2017), 39.

narrative that situates the posters as representative of a body of ideas that had flowed out of *Two Feminists* and into *Things Learnt*.

Given the commonality of invocations of *Two Feminists* in discussions of the posters, I wondered if *Things Learnt* might invite a hypothetical viewer with no knowledge of *Two Feminists* to perhaps imagine a pedagogical moment or conversation from which the short insights had been gleaned. Essentially, I pondered if *Things Learnt* might prompt the viewer to picture a preceding event like *Two Feminists*. However, when I viewed the posters ‘in person’ at the ACCA for the first time, a different chord was struck. Instead of imagining conversations – conversations that I *knew* had occurred since I was already aware of *Two Feminists* – I was instead reminded of protest placards.¹³

While a protest can be a demand for a conversation, it is not necessarily the conversational moment itself. Protests and demonstrations may vary in tone and purpose (from strikes to riots), but this type of social exchange is often different to a moment of dialogue. In an ideal situation, a conversation is a potentially multi-directional, polyvocal exchange in which all parties are able to express and internalise one another’s ideas (through speech or other social acts).¹⁴ A protest almost always involves a power imbalance in which the protesting group talks *at* a large powerful institution, often without promise of being heard or acknowledged. I make this distinction not because one is necessarily ‘better’ than the other – many conversations are trivial, and many

¹³ More specifically, I thought of the signs that had I seen held up by members of the New York crowd of the Women’s Day March in 2017. While there were clusters of protesters with intersectional interests, much of imagery of the Women’s Day Marches was dominated by pink ‘pussy power’ hats and vagina-centred slogans (one of the most common phrases painted onto placards was “This pussy grabs back”). This regression to dated biological essentialist ideas and central core imagery was perhaps reflective of the content of the infamous ‘Access Hollywood tape’ (which featured Donald Trump boasting about sexually assaulting women) that became the centre of a media storm during the 2016 US Presidential Election. While the protest placards were similarly brightly coloured and decorated with punchy statements, Doley’s posters communicate a much more multifaceted, intersectional feminism than some of the exclusionary feminist attitudes that dominated the 2017 Women’s March.

¹⁴ This reading of protest and dialogue is reflective of the feminist and radical pedagogical approaches to democratic dialogue discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. For further reading on these approaches, see Wendy Brown’s *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (2015), Andrea Cornwall and Anne Marie Goetz’s “Democratizing democracy: Feminist perspectives” (2005), Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), and Barbara Houston’s “Democratic Dialogue: Who Takes Responsibility?” (2004).

protests are complex – but because they are different forms of communication, and Doley’s signs only recalled one of them. As a result, *Things Learnt* creates a gap rather than a clear link between the posters and the work from which they stemmed.¹⁵ *Things Learnt* did not provide the avenue of access to *Two Feminists* that I hoped it would.

So, it seems that *Two Feminists* is disappearing despite having had three potential ports of access: live observation during the fortnight of the original run of the learning centre, online engagement (the visiting and pursuing of Doley’s blog) sometime over the six years that *twofeminists.com* remained live, or indirect contact with *Two Feminists* through a viewing of *Things Learnt*. However, all of these access points were either unused or became unusable: the initial run of *Two Feminists* at West Space has come to an end and was apparently little attended; *twofeminists.com* has recently been made inaccessible; and, while *Two Feminists* is sometimes described in the texts that accompany *Things Learnt*, the performance is not explicitly documented by the posters nor necessarily imagined when standing before them.

With this disappearance comes the issue of limited ongoing accessibility. For a project that was, in part, geared towards making feminist knowledge accessible, this could be viewed as something of an issue. Ongoing accessibility to ideas – especially in the current era of increasing student fees, paywalls and subscription requirements, standardised testing, and other tactics that limit access to knowledge – might be one of the core concerns of a transpedagogue attempting to build an alternative method of circulating knowledge.¹⁶ As a result, limited access to a work which announces itself and

¹⁵ While I did not imagine the conversations that took place during *Two Feminists* while viewing *Things Learnt* myself, it is possible that another person might conceive of a dialogical moment that might produce the texts that appear on Doley’s placards.

¹⁶ For further reading on these issues, see Raewyn Connell’s “The neoliberal cascade and education: an essay on the market agenda and its consequences” (2013), John Holmwood’s “Commercial enclosure: Whatever happened to open access?” (2013), and Daniel Saunders’s “The Impact of Neoliberalism on College Students” (2007).

its contents as feminist could compromise the degree to which Doley's project resists neoliberal norms of learning.

However, the problem of decreased accessibility over time impacts many transpedagogical projects and, in extension, many artworks, performance or not. Works that are performed through social interactions – even tests of endurance – eventually come to an end of some sort. Additionally, practices of publishing, distributing, and reproducing documentation change over time in accordance with cultural and technical developments. These are changes that many artists do not have the means to prevent. As result, some forms of knowledge dissemination simply become obsolete or impossible for the artist to maintain. It is also worth noting that artistic practices, like transpedagogy, that rely on a medium as unpredictable as social interaction are perhaps stronger when they maintain a degree of flexibility; in this case, the work perhaps became less about preserving feminist knowledge and more about Doley's experiences as a student within her own learning centre. For these reasons, accessibility to documentation (among other educational resources) developed by transpedagogical projects might be approached as something that is important yet difficult to preserve. As a result, documentation accessibility may an inadequate means-test for assessing the 'success' of a transpedagogical project.

Twofeminists.com

The slow disappearance of *Two Feminists* resulted in my possessing of an unusual (and unexpectedly exclusive) vantage point of the artwork. Since Doley gave me access to her blog while producing this thesis, I was able to engage with its appearance and operation as if it were still openly accessible (or, as if I were a viewer of the blog during the six years that it remained online). For clarity, I describe the blog in present tense throughout much of this chapter, but recognise that for all other visitors of the blog, the website is now an object

of the past or an inaccessible webpage; new visitors to *twofeminists.com* are now greeted with a locked gate: “This site is marked private by its owner.”¹⁷

The homepage of Doley’s blog is framed by a black navigation bar, a staple feature of blogs hosted on the Wordpress platform. Underneath, a grid of images have been laid out that provide brief glimpses into some of themes of Doley’s classes: a map of Australia showing the hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations that existed before colonisation; a photograph of a teenage Jenny Menthol with tears streaming down her face; a crude cartoon of former prime minister Julia Gillard drawn by Larry Pickering; a woman in a bikini seemingly sliced in half; a piece of packaging for ‘whitening cream;’ Linda Marrinon’s *What I Must Bear* (1982); and a photograph of *Rookie* editor, Tavi Gevinson overlaid with the words, “ASK A TEEN.” When clicked, the image reveals the name of a participant and a number that corresponds to the order of the participant’s appearance in the project. When clicked again, the user is taken to the blog post detailing Doley’s encounter with the selected participant.

Unlike other forms of performance art, transpedagogy seems to place greater emphasis on creating and distributing documents. As I described in the second chapter, transpedagogical works often initially take place as a live event organised to facilitate experimental cooperative creation and distribution of knowledge. The act of distribution, however, continues after the close of the live event in the form of a printed or otherwise published document, often made available on site at the location of the transpedagogical event, at book stores, or, most commonly, online. In transpedagogy, these documents are often used to remember the goings on of the alternative school facilitated by the artist and to reach a ‘second audience,’ as Claire Bishop describes, of potential ‘students’ who were not able to attend the original live event, but can access (and sometimes build on) the ideas shared during the tenure of the

¹⁷ This is the first sentence of a longer message that appears when one visits *twofeminists.com* without granted accessed.

original project.¹⁸ Websites are increasingly common forms of documentation and distribution for transpedagogues. Among the many examples of transpedagogical projects which maintain – or previously maintained – an online presence are Ryan Gander’s Fairfield International, Francisco Camacho Herrea’s *Fulltopia*, the School of Apocalypse, the Copenhagen Free University, the Black School: Harlem, the projects of the BFAMFAPhD collective, and the AltMFA program.¹⁹ By producing a document that disseminates knowledge accessibly, transpedagogy is a practice that interrupts privatised access to educational experiences. The creation of this virtual or printed text is a common feature that distinguishes many transpedagogical works from its socially engaged art and radical pedagogical roots; neither root practice prioritises a second audience in the same manner as transpedagogy.

In her blog, Doley appears aware of the potential second audience reading about *Two Feminists*. In the blog posts, Doley describes one event after another in past tense as if the reader was not at the lessons to observe the events for themselves. Additionally, Doley provides the reader with hyperlinks, often after the phrase “can be found here,” directing the reader to take action online and to pursue the references made by the teachers at *Two Feminists*. As a result, Doley seems to be addressing an unknown blog viewer who (1) did not attend the performance, and thus requires a detailed recount of the events, and (2) is invited ‘now’ – in the moment of reading – to take part in a learning experience of their own. The resulting tone is that of both a narrator – a storyteller who recounts a series of events to a listener or reader – and of a facilitator – a mediator of knowledge. Like a catalogue essay, a published blog written in these voices assumes a readership. As a result, the blog reads as a

¹⁸ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2012), 272.

¹⁹ *Fairfield International*, last modified 2018, <http://fairfieldinternational.co.uk/>; *Fulltopia*, last modified 2018, <http://www.fulltopia.com/account/dashboard.php>; *School of Apocalypse*, last modified Fall 2017, <https://www.schoolofapocalypse.org/>; *Copenhagen Free University*, last modified 2007, <http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk/menuuk.html#>; *The Black School*, last modified 2018, <http://theblack.school/>; BFAMFAPhD, *BFAMFAPhD*, last modified 2018, <http://bfamfaphd.com/>; *AltMFA*, last modified 2017, <http://altmfa.blogspot.com.au/>.

learning device that records Doley's reflections and invites further knowledge creation beyond the original conversations. The blog could be understood as serving as an informal online course that provides lessons (through blogged recounts) that can be taken belatedly.

Another set of documents that operates in this manner are the blackboards that Doley preserved from *Two Feminists*. Perhaps as an homage to the pedagogical experiments conducted by Joseph Beuys, Doley has kept the blackboards and preserved the last statements written on their surfaces by each participant. As of yet, the blackboards (now archived as a collection, *Blackboards 2010-2013*) have not been exhibited, but images of them sometimes appear in Doley's blog posts. There seems to be a desire here, as with the blog, to preserve objects that contain traces of the original conversations that can be returned to later and potentially reopen an educational experience that began six years ago through new audiences of belated pedagogical subjects.

In transpedagogical works like Doley's, the document is rarely an afterthought or strictly a record keeping tool. Rather, transpedagogical documents are created to operate as potential autonomous extensions of live engagement with the knowledge created on site at the transpedagogue's temporary alternative school. They are extensions of a pedagogical investment in accessible and experimental knowledge. As a result, 'liveness' and 'realness' – the concerns of the liveness debates which I will address briefly momentarily – become less important issues than accessibility and usability; the better equipped the document is to facilitate ongoing encounters with the pedagogy and disseminate the ideas at work in the transpedagogy, the more reflective the document is of an art practice critically engaged with knowledge production. Reaching for *Two Feminists* – a social event – through *twofeminists.com* – a piece of documentation – has not been an obstacle, but rather an opportunity to explore what a documentation-based experience of a transpedagogical work might actually offer. Since websites seem to be increasingly common in

transpedagogy and form the primary entry point to *Two Feminists*, it seems sensible to explore the status and role of these digital objects as documents and/or portals of access to the works themselves.

Representing dialogue through a monologue

Doley's blog is an imperfect articulation of transpedagogical principles. Like other pieces of documentation of performances that involve many participants, Doley's blog represents only a single experience of a social encounter; it converts a polyvocal dialogical moment into monologue. Some of Doley's blog posts read much like lecture notes: one piece of shared information followed by another without much reflection. Others, however, read as fluid first person recollections from the day that has just passed with the artist's affective responses woven into the narrative. In most posts, Doley wavers between listing the information that has been shared by her teachers and recording emotionally frank anecdotes about the atmosphere and exchanges that characterise the lesson.

The register of Doley's writing is somewhat fictocritical in its blurring of feminist critique with her own affective responses to each teacher's presence and perspectives. Amanda Nettelbeck describes fictocriticism as a hybrid literary form that incorporates aspects of perceived opposing modes of writing: subjectivity and objectivity; speculation and explication; interiority and exteriority; the creative and the critical.²⁰ By drawing together autobiographical or imagined experiences with critical theory, fictocritics create, rather than explicate, meaning.²¹ Katrina Schlunke and Anne Brewster suggest that, for a fictocritic, satisfaction is not found through "being right" but rather through

²⁰ Amanda Nettelbeck, "Notes Towards an Introduction," in *The Space between: Australian women writing fictocriticism*, eds. Amanda Nettelbeck and Heather Kerr (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1998), 3-4

²¹ Nettelbeck, 2.

“be[ing] ‘got’.”²² As such, a fictocritical register can make complex politics and critical theories accessible through stories inflected with the writer’s subjective experiences.

Reading the blog, one gets a strong sense of Doley’s internal monologue (her personal affective landscape) during the lessons. Doley reads as a friendly, critically engaged listener who wants to connect with her participants, but not at the expense of critiques (if they emerge). For example, Doley notes that she took a liking to Odette Marie Kelada upon arrival because she was wearing a proppaNOW t shirt for the lesson, a gesture of support for Aboriginal Australian contemporary art that Doley appreciated.²³ During her lesson with Jenny Menthol, Doley records the names of several magazines Menthol recommends, but remarks that she finds two of the recommendations – *Frankie* and *Yen* – to be “big fat yawn[s]” because they wrap “everything in a hand knitted tea cosy.”²⁴ Like a protagonist in an epistolary novel, Doley’s experiences unfold in instalments, each lesson on feminism providing another peak into Doley’s internal politics and cultural predilections.

Doley’s authorship presents a problem in reading *Two Feminists*: the blog does not record the potentially jarring, interruptive, or supportive feelings of the participants, aside from those noticed and recounted by the artist. Doley seems to have been wary of these potential omissions; each blog post begins with a disclaimer that describes the views expressed in the blog as her own, based on her “memories and thoughts” after each lesson which “do not necessarily represent the views of each participant.”²⁵ Although thoughtfully and often emphatically written, the blogs can only provide one perspective of

²² Katrina Schlunke and Anne Brewster, “We Four: Fictocriticism Again,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 19, no. 3 (2005): 394.

²³ proppaNOW is a collective of contemporary Aboriginal Australian artists.

²⁴ Kelly Doley, “#16 Jenny Menthol,” *Two Feminists* (blog), 22 October 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/10/22/16-jenny-menthol/>.

²⁵ This disclaimer first appears the beginning of Doley’s post recounting her lesson with Anne Marsh. (Kelly Doley, “#1 Anne Marsh,” *Two Feminists* (blog), 21 September 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/09/21/1-anne-marsh/>.)

the lessons, a perspective that may not necessarily represent the experience of all involved.

There is one blog post, however, that appears to have been amended in an attempt to include some feedback provided by one of the participating teachers. At the end of a post recounting a lesson provided by artist Kenny Pittock, Doley includes the following postscript:

ADDITION: After further conversations with Kenny he has told me that he feels he comes off unsympathetically to feminism in my accounts of the lesson and he wanted to make clear that the blackboard was written in humour, an effective tool he asserts, “to discuss the flaws in certain serious situations.”²⁶

This additional remark – added to the blog post after its original publication on *twofeminists.com* – suggests that Pittock contacted Doley regarding his representation on the blog.

While Pittock does not read as ‘unsympathetic’ to feminist issues in the original blog post, he does seem somewhat muddled. In her original recount of the lesson, Doley describes the conversation with Pittock as somewhat disorganised, moving from stories about a mouldy banana toted by Pittock to the lesson (the banana was signed some years ago by a member of Guerrilla Girls), to stories of overheard sexist attitudes, to a quick mention of Chris Kraus’s *I Love Dick* (1997). Towards the end of the post, Doley writes that “as a joke, [Pittock] did this,” before inserting a photograph of the learning centre’s blackboard where the words “GUYS ARE JUST BETTER” have been written in chalk by Pittock.²⁷ Doley summarises that the conversation with Pittock was reflective of “quite a surface engagement with feminism.”²⁸

²⁶ Kelly Doley, “#3 Kenny Pittock,” *Two Feminists* (blog), 21 September 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/09/21/3-kenny-pittock/>.

²⁷ Doley, “#3 Kenny Pittock.”

²⁸ Doley, “#3 Kenny Pittock.”




Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 6.

Kelly Doley (with Kenny Pittock), documentation of blackboard used by Kenny Pittock during *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists*, 2012, installation, live performance, and blog, West Space, Melbourne. Documentation: Kelly Doley.

Doley's assessment of Pittock's lesson as 'surface level' might read as a blunt delivery of a fair judgment. However, Pittock's intentions are left blurry because his perspectives (aside from those disclosed in Doley's addition) are absent from the blog post; it is from Doley's perspective that we experience the lessons. It is also possible that there may have been subtle social cues – such as, body language, tone of voice, mood, and so forth – that influenced the trajectory of this lesson that went undocumented by Doley.

Should we dismiss an experience of Doley's work based on her blog because they are subjective and singular? After all, subjectivity, experience, and narrative are all important tools for radical pedagogues, particularly those with an intersectional feminist lean, who approach lived experience as important learning material. In Doley's blogs, subjective experience is implemented as somewhat reliable – or at least, interesting – source material for creating a document of a transpedagogical work. In doing so, trust is placed in lived experience, feelings, and memories to represent an event.

This might be interpreted as a turn away from the objectivity and measurability of other means of record creation and knowledge production that often dominate formal learning environments. Doley's blog writing is quite a departure from the 'hardifying' processes often forced upon, for example, art schools and artists when applying for grants or funding. Such applications often require the applicant to represent and measure their work using metrics designed for STEM research, not experimental artistic practices, which can result in a 'square peg, round hole' situation that does not suit creative outputs. For example, the Australia Research Council (ARC) currently requires educational institutions to produce Engagement and Impact Statements which report on the efficiency of their supported organisations according to 'objective' evidence – such as cost-benefit analyses and quantities of end-users – which often do not articulate the conceptual or artistic significance of

creative endeavours.²⁹ Instead of adhering to such models of measurability and objectivity, Doley treats her subjective memories as a meaningful foundation for building a record of a learning experience.

The subjectivity and singularity with which the blog posts have been written is also reflective of the somewhat fictocritical character of Doley's writing. As Schlunke and Brewster argue, the inclusion of the pronoun 'I' in fictocritical writing acknowledges the "unreliability" of the writer as well as their possession of a particular socioeconomic position. They add that the 'I' of a fictocritic acts as a call "to see the truths of power in the tiny scratches on our skins" and to recognise the political in that which is personal and particular.³⁰ Doley's blog entries make for engaging pedagogical texts because they address the various affects encountered while learning – the ways in which ideas can overwhelm, excite, and sometimes flatline – from a particular perspective that can be attached to by the reader.

Simultaneously, however, Doley's experience of *Two Feminists* dominates the blog reader's interpretation of the once-social artwork. This does not leave much room for varied accounts of a shared experience. This is especially problematic when one considers the varying degrees of social positionality and life opportunities – due to racial identity, level and type of education, artistic recognition, and so forth – afforded by the invited speakers.³¹ Perhaps a more collaboratively or cooperatively produced record may have prevented Doley from ultimately (and maybe unintentionally) speaking on behalf of all of her participants.

This aspect of Doley's blog perhaps draws us into the rhetoric of the liveness debates in which subjective, singularly produced documents have long

²⁹ Engagement and Impact Statements were introduced by the Australian Government in 2015 as part of its National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA).

³⁰ Schlunke and Brewster, 394.

³¹ Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy, "Leaning In: A Student's Guide to Engaging Constructively with Social Justice Content," *Radical Pedagogy* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2014): n. p., accessed 9 March 2015, http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy.org/Leaning_In_A_Students_Guide_To_Engaging_Constructively_With_Social_Justice_Content.html.

been a concern for performance art theorists. The liveness debates are an ontological argument concerning performance art (which I approach quite broadly as art that involves humans performing acts individually or in clusters, before or with a live audience, or for a recording device – usually a camera – which creates footage that can be observed after the initial act) and its documents. For Adair Rounthwaite, affect (and therefore ‘liveness’), is core to experiencing the aesthetic of social practices, like socially engaged art and transpedagogy, which are defined by processes that are “inseparable from the social field.”³² Rounthwaite argues that while live works are “perpetually susceptible to bracketing off in documentation, in discourse, and even in experience,” they “will always be provisional and incomplete” once reduced to these bracketed formats.³³ In other words, exchanges of feelings, ideas, and knowledge between conversing humans – ‘the social field’ that Rounthwaite writes of – is a core feature of performed works. For Rounthwaite, an experience of a performance is only comprehensive – but not necessarily ‘better’ – if this social field is experienced live.

There are echoes of Phelan’s enduring definition of performance art here; for Phelan, the moment that a performance is “saved, recorded, [or] documented” it becomes something else entirely other than a performance.³⁴ For theorists like Rounthwaite and Phelan, ‘liveness’ matters in building an informed understanding of a performed work. For them, documents are incapable of reproducing all of the affective minutiae that was shared by those who were there. However, neither Rounthwaite nor Phelan believe that documents cannot produce a meaningful encounter with a performance. Rather, what is at stake is that a live experience differs profoundly from that of a document.

³² Adair Rounthwaite, *Asking the Audience: Participatory Art in 1980s New York* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 23.

³³ Rounthwaite, 23.

³⁴ Phelan, 146.

Additionally, for Phelan, once entered into the cycle of representation and reproduction, the art in question becomes vulnerable to capitalist logics of distribution which can limit audience access.³⁵ From this perspective, performance art documentation potentially negates one of the more radical aspects of performance art: its resistance of the urge to produce a traditional valuable art object which can be traded as a marketable art commodity. However, ironically, Phelan's argument replaces one form of exclusion with another; the problem shifts from being able to purchase and possess the performance to being able to attend the performance in order to have a holistic experience with the art in question.

It is interesting that a practice as ephemeral as performance art draws out a desire among some theorists and historians for a concrete narrative or an impenetrable version of events produced only through lived experience and memory, an anxiety perhaps produced by performance art's lack of a traditional static unchanging art object. Ironically, when a seemingly more stable object – such as a piece of documentation – becomes part of the process of interpretation, it can be interpreted as too stable or too removed from a live moment to formulate an analysis of the performance art in question.

This 'side' of the liveness debates is not only concerned with photographs and videos of performances, but also written documentation of performance art. Rounthwaite notes that there are often affective lacks when reading translations of conversations into texts. Rounthwaite notes that transcripts can objectify their "content, discourse, and logos, with the white noise of vocal affect strained out" and that published transcripts "often have a strange, disjointed quality, their redacted form floating at a distance from the affective logic and cohesion" of the social moments to which they belong.³⁶ Indeed, written documents, like Doley's *twofeminists.com*, often do not capture

³⁵ Jill Lane and Marcial Godoy-Anativia, "Unsettling Visuality," *emisférica* 7, no.1 (2010): n. p., accessed 1 March 2018, <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-71/71-editorial-remarks>.

³⁶ Rounthwaite, 23.

the full emotionality of a past moment. However, memories and live experiences are not always coherent and full; they are also vulnerable to distractions, partial recollections, and other mental work that might ‘edit’ out details of lived experiences.

This brings us to the ‘other side’ of the liveness debates where theorists suggest that liveness and its affects should not be understood as a unique element of a live viewing of a performed work. Both Philip Auslander and Diana Smith share an investment in Walter Benjamin’s work, particularly his theses concerning the recollection of history. In his ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ (written in 1940) Benjamin argues that calling upon a past moment is not an attempt to “recognize it ‘the way it really was’” but rather to “seize hold of a memory as it flashes up” at a moment of present urgency.³⁷ Smith reiterates Benjamin’s position as a process of remembering or imaging historical events as an attempt to “restag[e] those events here and now in order to think about what’s happening here and now.”³⁸ The past is called upon and often reshaped to suit what is needed in the present. As a result, memory is not infallible, it is mouldable.

Similarly, Auslander suggests that grappling with a live artwork often “does not consist of revealing an objective truth inherent in it, waiting to be discovered,” but rather is an event or process that often involves a “performance in the present ... in which we take part.”³⁹ Auslander, like Smith, refers to Benjamin’s work while theorising his approach to documentation. He turns to a small section of ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (written 1936) in which Benjamin describes a photograph as capable of meeting “the beholder halfway” and reactivat[ing] the object

³⁷ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257.

³⁸ Diana Smith, “The Sea Monsters of the Past and the Flying Saucers of Yesterday: A short history of performance art,” (presentation at Performance Presence/Video Time, Adelaide Central School of Art, Adelaide, 15 May 2015).

³⁹ Philip Auslander, “Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance Art Documentation,” in *Kunsten A Falle: Lessons in the Art of Falling*, ed. Jonas Ekeborg (Horten: Preus Museum, 2009), 95.

reproduced” in the printed image in the beholder’s “own particular situation.”⁴⁰ For Auslander, documentation might spark an “imaginative recreation of a performance” as a means of knowledge retrieval.⁴¹ Similarly, recollecting (piecing together memory) and retelling an event are processes in which we might re-perform or reformulate what we have experienced. Both memories and documentation potentially filter out any number of facets of the ‘objective’ version of the live performance. As a result, a live experience of a work is not necessarily more holistic than one had through documentation.

Both sides of the liveness debates seem to agree that writing about or studying art history – or any sort of history for that matter – is like attempting to piece together a narrative that is always too detailed, broken, or multiple to ever completely reproduce. The urge to document, distribute, analyse, confer over, discuss, re-perform, and recreate artworks perhaps speaks to a common desire amongst art historians to resurrect ‘the dead’ (both symbolic and literal) over and over, to somehow share in their experiences and keep their stories alive. The point of disagreement between the two sides of the liveness debate seems to concern not only the ontology of performance art, but also the fullness of memory and documentation, as well as the level of affective and imaginative reconstructive work involved in recollecting memories or viewing documents. If one understands documents as evocative, moving objects that promote creative re-performances of a past moment, they begin to share some experiential qualities with a memory revisited of a live event, blurring the operations of internal memories with those of external documents.

As previously underscored, the role of transpedagogical documents differs somewhat from other performance art documents. While anxieties regarding the fullness of documentation remain, there seems to be a shift in emphasis in transpedagogical theory and practices. There appears to be a move

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 220-221.

⁴¹ Auslander, 95.

away from producing a document in order to evoke the full character of the performance and toward producing a document that can distribute the knowledge shared during a performance, preferably in a manner that is accessible and reflective of the pedagogy practiced by those present at the original event. In so doing, the radical principles of the transpedagogical performance are evoked. Therefore, a transpedagogical document reproduces the ‘feel’ of the live project by reproducing the pedagogy and politics of the work in the methodology of the publication.

Two Feminists initially produced knowledge about feminism through cooperative, polyvocal means: conversations had by Doley with several different participants who provided different, sometimes conflicting perspectives on feminism. The blog reveals the cooperative nature of *Two Feminists* in content, but not in methodology. The cooperatively produced lessons are ultimately internalised and documented by only Doley on her blog (and later transformed into the statements that appear in *Things Learnt*), which positions her as both the author of the most accessible record of the knowledge shared during the lessons as well as the primary beneficiary of the lessons. This does not reflect the collaborative, conversational pedagogical model implemented by Doley at her learning centre.

The blogged documentation of *Two Feminists* perhaps reveals a breakdown in Doley’s praxis. In radical pedagogical theory, we find Paulo Freire’s understanding of praxis in a series of short equations recorded as a footnote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970): reflection minus action equals verbalism; action minus reflection equals activism; action plus reflection equals words, work, and ultimately praxis.⁴² In short, a praxis – a combination of action and reflection upon the world – is required to avoid empty gestures and talk with no walk. Relatedly, Pascal Gielen argues that what matters in an artistic praxis is

⁴² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 87.

not only the correct balance of theory and practice but also the way in which they interact with each other. Ideally, material reality is explored through theoretical knowledge and theoretical insights that are, when necessary, corrected in a tactile way.⁴³

Reflecting on transpedagogical practices, Gielen concludes that a unified praxis might be thought of as embodied knowledge, a state in which theory (be it ideas or politics) is renewed and rearticulated through the material actions and choices undertaken by the body or a group of people together.⁴⁴

It seems that the singularity and subjectiveness of Doley's recounts are both an asset and an issue for this example of transpedagogical documentation. The document is problematic not because it lacks liveness (since live experiences, like documents, are also always incomplete), but because it does not reflect the pedagogical practices and politics that were at work during the initial run of *Two Feminists* at West Space. Some aspects of the blog – its engaging, affective language and reliance on lived experience – reflect the critical principles borrowed from feminist, radical pedagogical, and anti-neoliberal frameworks that were embodied at *Two Feminists*. However, the blog also seems to run into issues – namely, the representation of a diverse body of voices by one seemingly more privileged voice and replacement of a polyvocal practice with a monologue – that signal a separation of Doley's critical intentions from the ultimate output.

Part two: A feminist learning centre

While *Two Feminists* and *twofeminists.com* have been impacted by issues in accessibility and sustained critical praxis, it nevertheless captures some of the features of an experiment in feminist knowledge production that are worth

⁴³ Pascal Gielen, "Artist, Praxis and the Neoliberalization of the Educational Space," in *teaching Art in the Neoliberal Realm: Realism versus Cynicism*, eds. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2012), 17.

⁴⁴ Gielen, 17.

further analysis. In the case of *Two Feminists*, such a space was created through use of an alternative schooling model (the learning centre) with a history of building supportive communities, implementation of an alternative exchange regime in which art could be swapped for knowledge, and the employment of dialogue (a tactic that is, as I described in the previous chapter, central for many pedagogues who aim to liberate, humanise, and empower their subjects). These are all tactics that depart from those of neoliberal institutions, capitalism more generally, and top down hierarchised learning.

Learning centres

Averil Evans McClelland notes that while formal education is often reduced to schooling (education that takes place over a defined period of time in a set institution), informal education often seems to mean “everything else.”⁴⁵ The terrain of ‘everything else’ is sprawling and growing; Hal A. Lawson and Dolf van Veen argue that “community schools, community learning centers, multi-service schools, and extended-service schools” are among the informal educational facilities that share enough defining features to be identified as part of a “growing international movement to develop new designs for schools.”⁴⁶ These structures might be understood as places that facilitate what is referred to as ‘lifelong learning’: education undertaken often as an adult after compulsory schooling to further one’s development.⁴⁷ It is from the terrain of ‘everything else’ that Doley’s *Two Feminists* found its original format.

However, informality should not be mistaken as synonymous with radicality. Lifelong learning structures waver in their aims from neoliberal,

⁴⁵ Averil Evans McClelland, *The Education of Women in the United States: A Guide to Theory, Teaching and Research* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 5.

⁴⁶ Hal A. Lawson and Dolf van Veen, “Introduction,” in *Developing Community Schools, Community Learning Centers, Extended-service Schools and Multi-service Schools: International Exemplars for Practice, Policy and Research*, eds. Hal A. Lawson and Dolf van Veen (Cham, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, and London: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 2.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that the explanation of lifelong learning that I have included here is not definitive. See David Aspin, John Collard, and Judith Chapman’s “Lifelong learning in Australia” (2000) and David Aspin and Judith Chapman’s “Towards a Philosophy of Lifelong Learning” (2001) for further discussion of the multiple uses of the term.

vocation-oriented skill building with the ultimate goal of capital gain, to more radical pedagogical models which value critical engagement with ideas, learning for the sake of learning, community building, and personal enrichment. David Aspin, John Collard, and Judith Chapman argue that Australian education policy makers seem to borrow goals from both ends of the spectrum, but tend to revert to neoliberal objectives; they write that “continued access to education and training [for all Australians] is seen as an investment in the future: a pre-condition for economic advance, democracy and social cohesion, and a significant factor in increasing personal development and growth.”⁴⁸ Therefore, the value of informal education, like its formal counterpart, can also be reduced to (and therefore informed by) questions of financial return and marketability.

There are, however, some learning centres that are formed as alternative, often informal means of building access to education, usually for a specific community that has become socially and/or economically vulnerable, and therefore likely to miss out on a fulfilling education. Examples of such learning centres in Australia include the Migrant Women’s Learning Centre (once a part of Collingwood TAFE, now the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE), Eora College (a creative arts centre that was originally founded and attended only by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists), and the growing phenomena of ‘Men’s Sheds’ (such as Fremanshed and Donald Men’s Shed in Western Australia, both of which facilitate support networks, access to affordable housing, and learning opportunities for groups of men who are socially and/or geographically isolated). There are also, of course, learning centres that are developed by larger formal educational institutions to support its student body. One example among many of this sort is the University of New South Wales Learning Centre, an on-campus service that provides assistance –

⁴⁸ David Aspin, John Collard, and Judith Chapman, “Lifelong learning in Australia,” in *Lifelong Learning: Education Across the Lifespan*, eds. John Field and Mal Leicester (London and New York: Routledge Falmer, 2000), 171.

when possible, given the frequent lack of resources and time to attend to every student in need of help – to university students struggling with language or academic skills.⁴⁹ Informal learning centres, it seems, often respond to both a lack of educational opportunity as well as a need for greater support of communities of people that have slipped through the cracks of larger institutions.

Likewise, Doley's learning centre seemed to respond to a social need. In this case, *Two Feminists* was designed to drive ongoing feminist dialogue about sexism (among other intersecting issues) in Australian society.⁵⁰ The early 2010s was a period of seemingly increased visibility of both feminism and sexism in Australia, perhaps partially due to widespread public scrutiny of the leadership of Julia Gillard (Australia's first woman prime minister). Gillard was the subject of much critical and disparaging discourse. Anne Summers and Ana Stevenson have both conducted detailed analyses of media representations, online portrayals, and of the language used to laud and critique Gillard during her prime ministership.⁵¹ Both conclude that Gillard was frequently the subject of sexism; Stevenson argues that Gillard was often presented as "somehow lacking because of [the] immutable fact" that she was a woman while Summers argues that if Gillard were an employee in any other position, she would have been able to launch a formidable case seeking recognition of workplace abuse and mistreatment.⁵²

⁴⁹ "Welcome to the Learning Centre," *UNSW Sydney, The Learning Centre*, last modified 20 June 2018, <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/>; Barry Golding, "Men's sheds, community learning and public policy," in *Gender, Masculinities and Lifelong Learning*, eds. Marion Bowl, Robert Tobias, Jennifer Leahy, Graeme Ferguson, and Jeffrey Gage (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 127.

⁵⁰ For further discussion of the term 'postfeminist' and its multiple (potentially confusing) interpretations, see Ann Braithwaite's "Politics of/and Backlash" (2004), Ann Brooks's *Postfeminisms: Feminism, cultural theory and cultural forms* (1997), Mary Douglas Vavrus's *Post-feminist News: Political Women in Media Culture* (2002), Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991), Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford's "Interview with Elaine Showalter" (2004), and Amanda D. Lotz's "Communicating Third-Wave Feminism and New Social Movements: Challenges for the Next Century of Feminist Endeavour" (2003).

⁵¹ Anne Summers has produced an 'R rated' appendix of representations of Gillard which can be accessed online. See Anne Summers, "Her Rights at Work (R-rated version)," *Anne Summers*, last modified 2018, <http://www.annesummers.com.au/speeches/her-rights-at-work-r-rated-version/>.

⁵² Ana Stevenson, "Making Gender Divisive: 'Post-Feminism', Sexism and Media Representations of Julia Gillard," *Burgmann Journal* 2, (2013): 60; Anne Summers, "Her Rights at Work (R-rated version)," *Anne Summers*, last modified 2018, <http://www.annesummers.com.au/speeches/her-rights-at-work-r-rated-version/>.

Gillard becomes the focus of Terri Bird's lesson in *Two Feminists*. The day prior to Bird's lesson, Gillard had labelled then-opposition leader (and later prime minister), Tony Abbott as a misogynist during a parliamentary debate (a moment that has come to be known as 'the misogyny speech'). In the blog post recounting this lesson, Doley describes how she and Bird both felt that Gillard's speech had been received with "very little support" locally, but was quickly picked up as inspirational by international media outlets.⁵³

In another lesson, Doley speaks with Karen Pickering, a writer whose lesson dove into another public affair that further contextualises Doley's desire for a feminist school: the Jill Meagher case.⁵⁴ The day of Pickering's lesson, it had been announced that Meagher was no longer being treated as a missing person, but a victim of rape and murder. The case was a point of national outcry which drew attention (briefly) to the ongoing issue of violence against women (a precursor perhaps to the level of attention to sexual harassment that the #MeToo movement would spark in 2017). In the recount of the lesson, it is clear that both Doley and Pickering had been affected by the case; instead of her usual disclaimer about the blogs containing subjective recollections, Doley opens her post about Pickering's lesson by writing that she had needed more time than usual to digest the lesson which had left her feeling "overwhelmed" and "nauseous."⁵⁵ She also notes that Pickering opened the lesson by admitting to Doley that she had spent the morning crying.⁵⁶ For many people – Doley and Pickering included – the case was a confronting reminder of the commonality of threats to women's personal safety.

⁵³ Kelly Doley, "#13 Terri Bird," *Two Feminists* (blog), 20 October 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/10/20/13-terri-bird/>.

⁵⁴ Jill Meagher was a 29 year old Irish-Australian woman who was raped and murdered in Melbourne, Victoria in September 2012 while walking home from a bar at night. Meagher was initially reported as a missing person. Her body was not discovered until her killer was arrested a week after her disappearance. The length of the search and violence involved in the case led to a public outpouring of grief, including memorial marches organised to commemorate Meagher and raise awareness about violence against women in both Ireland and Australia.

⁵⁵ Kelly Doley, "#9 Karen Pickering," *Two Feminists* (blog), 29 September 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/09/29/10-karen-pickering/>.

⁵⁶ Doley, "#9 Karen Pickering."

In part, Doley's informal educational centre created a space for feminist knowledge and discussions that perhaps felt unwanted and dampened. The range of topics broached – which included women in leadership, violence against women, Aboriginal feminisms, feminist art 'herstories,' feminist publications, male allies, workplace harassment, and ecofeminism – gives a sense of a desire to cover as much ground as possible, to give time and space to a variety of Australian feminists voices, and to produce critical feminist dialogue in an Australia that – despite (but also precisely because of) the gender of its then-prime minister – perhaps felt more patriarchal than ever. As I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, intersectional feminism is perhaps characterised more often by dissensus, rather than wide consensus.⁵⁷ This is something that can be appreciated by reading Doley's collection of blogs which paint feminism as a dynamic, sometimes contradictory, polyvocal political force.

Art for knowledge

When *Two Feminists* took place, it was as part of a group show of installations – *No Reasonable Offer Refused* – that shared a common interest in playing with acts of exchange. In the exhibition catalogue, curators Luscombe and Sharkey describe the show as a response to the following question:

if the laws of economics and its frequently quantitative, less-than-human insights are removed from everyday life, how can artists visualise a system whose core dynamics are generously abstracted beyond our personal levels of understanding?⁵⁸

In this group show, the unspoken economic ideology – neoliberal capitalism – is approached as an all-encompassing objectifying force that is difficult to

⁵⁷ Lana Wänggren and Karin Sellberg, "Intersectionality and dissensus: a negotiation of the feminist classroom," *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31, issue 5/6 (2012): 544.

⁵⁸ Liang Luscombe and Patrice Sharkey, "No Reasonable Offer Refused," in *No Reasonable Offer Refused*, eds. Liang Luscombe and Patrice Sharkey (Melbourne: West Space, 2012), 3.

entirely evacuate from one's creative life. In an attempt to toy with the norms of a creative education under neoliberalism, Doley replaced a traditional monetary fee with a small artwork, giving each participant a small acrylic portrait in exchange for their knowledge.

This choice may mark a departure from neoliberal educating norms that have resulted in escalating tuition fees. This issue has become central to many critiques of neoliberalised education and resulted in some recent high profile crises in art education in particular.⁵⁹ After 150 years of tuition free education, Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art was forced to begin charging student fees in 2015 which led to protests and heavy public criticism.⁶⁰ In 2016, the entire class enrolled in the MFA graduate program at the University of Southern California's Roski School of Art and Design walked out over dramatic changes to funding and program structuring, leading to protests and the resignation of numerous academics.⁶¹ In 2018, 51 of the 54 students enrolled in Columbia University's MFA program demanded a full refund of their 2017-18 tuition fees citing the poor state of the university's studios in Prentiss Hall.⁶² These are only examples of the economic burdens and problems created by the neoliberalisation of tertiary study.

⁵⁹ See Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (2015); Raewyn Connell, "The neoliberal cascade and education: an essay on the market agenda and its consequences" (2013); Okwui Enwezor, Stephan Dilleuth, and Irit Rogoff, "Schools of Thought" (2006); Thomas Frank "Academy Fight Song" (2013); Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, "Introduction: The Catering Regime," (2012); Sara Lehrer et al., "Class Dismissed: A Roundtable on Art School, USC, and Cooper Union" (2015); Gerald Raunig's *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creation* (2013); and Sam Thorne, "Introduction: Art School Confidential" (2017).

⁶⁰ This decision was reversed only recently in March of 2018 when it was announced that the school intended to return to its founding free education model within the next ten years. ("News: Cooper Union Announces Plan to Restore Free Tuition," *Artforum*, last modified 16 March 2018, <https://www.artforum.com/news/cooper-union-announces-plan-to-restore-free-tuition-74635>.)

⁶¹ Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer et al. "Class Dismissed: A Roundtable on Art School, USC, and Cooper Union," *Artforum*, last modified October 2015, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201508/sarah-lehrer-graiwer-introduction-helen-molesworth-mike-essl-jory-rabinovitz-lee-relvas-amanda-ross-ho-victoria-sobel-frances-stark-a-l-steiner-charlie-white-54967>.

⁶² The fees were approximately USD\$64, 000, some USD\$30, 000 more expensive than an MFA at Yale. (Eli Lee, "Falling into a state of disrepair: A&S faculty endure crumbling ceilings, flood," *Columbia Spectator*, last modified 9 March 2017, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2017/03/09/falling-into-a-state-of-disrepair-aamps-faculty-endure-crumbling-ceilings-floods/>.; Benjamin Sutton, "Columbia University MFA Students Demand Tuition Refunds," *Hyperallergic*, last modified 30 April 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/440469/columbia-university-mfa-students-demand-tuition-refunds/>.; Juliette Verlaque, "With decrepit facilities and missing faculty, MFA Visual Arts students demand tuition refund,"

Doley's learning centre seems to be removed from the increasingly normalised 'consumer model' of education, in which knowledge and ideas – and with it, the people who facilitate its dissemination – are valuable insofar as they are being bought. This is a model that normalises attitudes towards education as a commodity that can be possessed, can be competitively valued (that 'you get what you pay for' depending on the institution or person who is teaching), or can be a waste of one's investment if some sort of pay back is not received (that there are educational outputs that prove a student has gotten 'their money's worth'). Instead of a tuition fee, Doley gives her participants a painted portrait. On one hand, Doley is still paying a student fee in the form of the paintings. This may create the sense that Doley is indebted to her teachers, that the knowledge that they bring to *Two Feminists* is not a gift, but must be repaid somehow. On the other hand, the portraits appear to be more tokens of appreciation than objects intended to accumulate the monetary value of her participants' knowledge (which cannot be measured). The painting seems to be a courtesy, rather than an attempt to 'pay off' her student debt.

Dialogue

As I have already explored at length in this thesis, one of the primary features of radical pedagogy is employment of classroom dialogue. For Paulo Freire, a pedagogy that encourages teachers to become more student-like – in their ability to listen to and internalise information – and students more like teachers – in their ability to guide and participate in dialogue about a given issue – is a freeing pedagogy, one that will encourage students to voice their critical thoughts.⁶³ A similar practice is found in histories of feminist activism in which consciousness raising circles provided valuable means of sharing experiences, forming meaningful communities, and encouraging solidarity. In

Columbia Spectator, last modified 30 April 2018, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2018/04/30/with-decrepit-facilities-and-missing-faculty-mfa-visual-arts-students-demand-tuition-refund/>.)

⁶³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 75

socially engaged art and transpedagogy, organised dialogue remains a common tactic of interest.⁶⁴

According to Doley's blogs, it seems that she engaged in a range of participatory acts, sometimes conversing with her teachers and in other lessons choosing to listen silently. In her entry about her lesson with Elvis 'The CoUNTess' Richardson on women in the local art scene, she describes herself as "feverishly interjecting with questions" out of excitement.⁶⁵ By contrast, in the blog recounting her lesson with Kelada on Aboriginal Australian feminists, the structure seems to have changed, with Doley occupying a listening role for most of the lesson.⁶⁶ Doley's changing participatory acts perhaps reflects the range of social positioning and expertise possessed by her teachers; in scenarios in which Doley approached a theme from a place of shared experience or knowledge with her teacher – which appeared to be the case during her lessons with Richardson – she engaged in a dialogue. In other moments – such as Kelada's lesson – Doley she took on a listening role, perhaps in an attempt to make space for perspectives that often goes unheard.

Doley's participation in the work – spoken or silent – at times possessed a degree of artistic authority that attending participants often did not. Since Doley was not just a participant, but an artist-student, even her silent participation could exude a degree of authorial influence. In her lesson with Pittock, this is especially apparent. In the blog post on this lesson, Doley claims that Pittock would often wait for an encouraging nod of approval or similar gesture of acceptance after making some sort of political claim.⁶⁷ As John Berger, Homi K. Bhabha, bell hooks, Amelia Jones, Laura Mulvey, Jean-Paul

⁶⁴ See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012); Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (2011) and "Notes Toward a Transpedagogy" (2010); Grant Kester, *Conversations Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004); and Sam Thorne, "Introduction: Art School Confidential" (2017).

⁶⁵ Kelly Doley, "#6 The CoUNTess," *Two Feminists* (blog), 28 September 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/09/28/7-the-countess/>.

⁶⁶ Doley, "#9 Karen Pickering.," Kelly Doley, "14 Odette Marie Kelada," *Two Feminists* (blog), 21 October 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/10/21/14-odette-marie-kelada/>.

⁶⁷ Doley, "#3 Kenny Pittock."

Sartre, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick – to name a few – have articulated, one’s gaze is a powerful signal that can stir a sense of recognition or exclusion, acceptance or rejection, subjectification or objectification.⁶⁸ Pittock’s search for a gaze of acknowledgment from Doley places the latter in a powerful position in their classroom relationship in which she becomes the authority (the one to impress) on the matter at hand. Since Pittock was a young male artist (with a somewhat naïve, but developing understanding of feminism) at the time of his participation, it is perhaps understandable that he would feel unsure of his place in a work that announced itself as a feminist learning centre while seated opposite the author of the work itself: a locally established feminist artist.

The issue of authority also pervades Doley’s curation of her dialoguing partners. According to one of Doley’s blog posts, the participating teachers were found through a combination of call outs, emailed invitations, GumTree advertisements, and Facebook requests.⁶⁹ Doley describes this combination as important because it meant that she “[got] participants [that she] would never expect.”⁷⁰ The range of teachers who ultimately provide lessons at *Two Feminists* range in discipline, but many hold traditional markers of educational merit and expertise. At the time of the performance, nearly half of the participants were affiliated with large tertiary educational institutions, either as faculty or postgraduate students.⁷¹ Many of the other teachers – aside from Pittock – were established artists or writers who possessed gallery representation, published works, or other recognisable markers of creative success. Pablo Helguera would perhaps describe these people as “art-world

⁶⁸ See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972); Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (1998); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (2012); bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” (2015); Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (2003); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*” (1993).

⁶⁹ GumTree is an Australian online marketplace – much like Ebay or Etsy – where Australian users can buy and offer objects and services to locals. (Doley, “14 Odette Marie Kelada.”)

⁷⁰ Doley, “14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

⁷¹ These participants are Anne Marsh, Terri Bird, Karen Green, Odette Marie Kelada, Beth Muldoon, Georgie Proud, and Kate Rigby.

insiders.”⁷² While the conventional credentials of most of Doley’s teachers does not lessen the value of the knowledge provided by these women – in fact, we could read their willingness to provide an unconventionally waged lesson on a feminist issue as a radical act of knowledge sharing under capitalism – their easily recognisable signs of educatedness perhaps make them fairly normative choices of teachers, somewhat recreating a traditional teacher-student hierarchy. While Doley’s revolving cast of teachers represented a diverse group of feminist persuasions, what was perhaps lacking were figures who had gained their insights through non-traditional, periphery, or informal means of learning.

Confrontation

Reading through Doley’s blog posts, it seems that the stage was largely set for and resulted in convivial lessons. Often Doley speaks admiringly of her teachers. Of her lesson with Deborah Strutt, for example, Doley writes: “So much to take in! What an amazing woman!”⁷³ While she articulates this feeling explicitly in this entry, it is an attitude that pervades many of her recounts. While the structure of *Two Feminists* often paved the way for ‘serious’ yet enjoyable lessons, it also resulted in a few unexpectedly confrontational moments where some amount of discord or dissent unfolded. One of these confronting moments – Doley’s lesson with Kelada – is particularly interesting to me because it seems that it was not orchestrated by the artist, but rather emerged unexpectedly out of her artistic choices.

This marks a departure from some norms of socially engaged art and its related practices. Pablo Helguera argues that in confrontational socially engaged works – and, I would add, transpedagogical works – it is presumed

⁷² Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 6.

⁷³ Kelly Doley, “#2 Deborah Strutt,” *Two Feminists* (blog), 21 September 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/09/21/2-deborah-strutt/>.

that “certain statements cannot be negotiated openly or directly with the public, and so people have to be forced into the experience through a series of steps that are firmly in control of the artist.”⁷⁴ Indeed, many confrontational works are the product of an uncomfortable situation organised by the artist to evoke strong reactions.⁷⁵ In *Two Feminists*, however, Doley did not appear to employ a confrontational *approach*. Rather, confrontation erupted unexpectedly.

A useful analogue to Helguera’s notion of a confrontational approach is found in the work of Charles R. Garoian’s writing on classroom discussion. He argues that in a classroom, there are two types of “crises in knowledge” – moments of argumentation – that might arise: “an awkward unfamiliar event that *emerges unexpectedly* and disrupts normalcy in the classroom” or “as a polemic, an awkward, unfamiliar event that is *intentionally initiated* as an experiment to disrupt normalcy.”⁷⁶ These two forms of confrontation – “an emergent crisis and an intentionally induced crisis” – are differentiated by – as in Helguera’s model of confrontation – the role of the facilitator and whether or not they have designed the confrontational atmosphere.⁷⁷ In both scenarios, Garoian argues, a crisis can draw those involved into a vulnerable state where explosive criticality and unpredictability reign.⁷⁸ I have chosen to look closely at one of the unexpected confrontations that occurred in Doley’s work not because it represents the dominant affects of the artwork, but because her exchange with Kelada created some of the most engaging critical moments in the work.

Before I discuss the lesson with Kelada in more detail, it should be noted that while Doley did not intentionally provoke any of her participants into

⁷⁴ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 64.

⁷⁵ This approach is apparent in some of the work of Andrea Fraser, Regina José Galindo, Frances Barrett, Fiona McGregor, Tania Bruguera, and Santiago Sierra to name a few.

⁷⁶ Charles R. Garoian, “In the Event That Art and Teaching Encounter,” *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research* 56, no. 1 (2014): 388.

⁷⁷ Garoian, 389.

⁷⁸ Garoian, 389.

confrontations, there are elements of the learning centre model, art-for-knowledge exchanges, and dialogical methodology of the lessons that might have lent themselves to the facilitation of heated exchanges. Firstly, it should come as no surprise that a learning centre designed to spur feminist dialogue could result in a combination of convivial and confronting exchanges. While some of the topics could give way to well-founded anger, others could be approached with humour. Additionally, since feminism is a ‘broad church’ – with some branches more intersectional than others – it is unlikely that Doley felt that every teacher’s attitude would complement those of their colleagues, yielding further opportunities for debates and arguments. However, Doley did not invite any of her teachers to dialogue with one another in person.

As a result, any intragroup conflicts within the teaching body of *Two Feminists* occurs indirectly. Perhaps the most stark example of this in Doley’s project is Ford’s response to a statement left on the blackboard from Pickering’s lesson which had taken place the day before. The phrase left on the board read: “Feminism by Stealth.” When Pickering wrote the statement, she explained that her approach to feminism was to “make it fun so that it does not feel like work” and that sometimes it might be necessary to “trick people into” learning about oppression.⁷⁹ Ford takes immediate issue with this approach and suggests that the period of referring to sexism or feminism in coded terms – such as ‘the f-word’ and so on – has now passed, and that the early 2010s was more the age of “feminism by non-stealth” and being “mad as hell.”⁸⁰

A second element of Doley’s project that may have lent itself to confrontational exchanges was her use of an alternative payment scenario. This may have been interpreted by the teachers as an invitation to challenge other aspects of normative educational environments – such as the format and tone of a lesson – and push the intentions of Doley’s project. For example, at one

⁷⁹ Doley, “#9 Karen Pickering.”

⁸⁰ Kelly Doley, “#8 Clementine Ford,” *Two Feminists* (blog), 29 September 2012, <https://twofeminists.wordpress.com/2012/09/29/9-clementine-ford/>.

juncture of *Two Feminists*, the paintings became an opportunity for a participating teacher to create some unexpected tension. Perhaps speaking to the issue of ongoing overrepresentation of white feminists in feminist dialogues, one of the participants, Beth Muldoon, asks Doley to paint a portrait of Bobbi Sykes, an Aboriginal Australian activist and poet, instead of herself (a white Australian woman) in return for the lesson that she provides on Aboriginal Australian activism. Here Muldoon deviates from Doley's structure slightly, using her moment of recognition – the painted portrait – to draw attention to an overlooked feminist figure.

Thirdly, Doley's investment in dialogical lessons provided a form through which confrontational exchanges could easily occur. Since social interactions and feelings can be unpredictable and can run particularly high during political discussions, the chances of participants clashing within a transpedagogical work can escalate quickly. Additionally, Doley was playing a rather flexible role within her temporary feminist learning centre. During the conversations at West Space, Doley took on a student-like role, effectively playing the part of artist and pedagogical subject (student) at once. When Doley turns to write her blogs, she transitions into the role of artist-teacher, producing a document that might allow a second audience to learn through her learning about feminism. This is somewhat unusual in transpedagogy. Most transpedagogues take up roles that position them as facilitators, rather than students, of social exchanges that produce knowledge in their own works (a dynamic that unfolds in the works produced by de Souza and Ang that I discuss in the next two chapters). While Doley maintains a degree of creative control during the conversations – having set up the educational space and terms under which her participants take part in the work and will ultimately be documented – she seems to have had less influence over the general direction and affective atmosphere of the lessons. The combination of feminist learning centre set up, alternative fee scheme, and pedagogical role taken up by Doley

all created a space that ultimately facilitated both congenial and confrontational pedagogical exchanges.

Hot moments and parrhēsia

Since the confrontational moments in *Two Feminists* were not planned, they carry the adrenaline rush of unforeseen risk. Lee Warren refers to such moments of sudden, often emotionally intense, confrontational discussions as ‘hot moments.’⁸¹ I borrow Warren’s term for this particular type of classroom dynamic with some caveats. For Warren, a hot moment involves an exchange that “threatens to rupture the social fabric that [the teacher] has worked to create,” often as a result of a student saying something that could be found offensive.⁸² I deviate here; while offensiveness can (and should) provoke a strong response, a hot moment can also arise out of a strongly worded critique or moment of speculative thinking that another classroom participant finds challenging. For Warren, it is the “duty” of the teacher to respond to hot moments in a way that maintains the structure of the classroom.⁸³ While I agree that teachers are perhaps often positioned with the most amount of influence or power to do so, one hopes that in a radical classroom, students also feel empowered enough to take part in resolving the issue at hand. Additionally, this might be achieved without entirely returning to the old ‘fabric’ of the classroom especially if the structure of the classroom could be rectified to make passionate discussions more manageable. A further clarification that I wish to include here is that a hot moment is not the same as a triggering moment.⁸⁴ I make this qualification in light of recent discussions

⁸¹ Lee Warren, “Hot Moments in the Classroom,” *Harvard University, The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning*, last modified 7 February 2018, <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/hot-moments>.

⁸² Warren, “Hot Moments in the Classroom.”

⁸³ Warren, “Hot Moments in the Classroom.”

⁸⁴ While a hot moment – a flush of unexpected emotional debate – is a manageable, encodeable moment (in that it can be eventually processed, thought about, and internalised), a triggering moment – something that produces a posttraumatic stress response – can be interruptive in a dysfunctional, useless manner; a moment that returns a student – or teacher, for that matter – to a traumatic event is paralysing. Unlike a hot moment of heated, engaged debate, a triggering moment shifts the mood for the afflicted party from social engagement to basic survival, preventing critical creative engagement in the classroom.

regarding the place of ‘content warnings’ (also known as ‘trigger warnings’ which signpost potentially sensitive information that may cause an intense psychological response) in teaching spaces (in particular, tertiary level educational spaces like colleges or universities) and because hot moments and triggering moments share a degree of risk and ambiguity.⁸⁵

For Michel Foucault, there is a particular type of truth telling known as parrhēsia which, as Matan Oram suggests, can be equated with free speech and open discourse that occurs in public.⁸⁶ However, this act of speaking is particularised by frankness, risk of endangerment, communication of criticism (either of the interlocutor or speaker), and wilfulness (that is, speaking out of a sense of ‘duty,’ rather than coercion).⁸⁷ John Kelsey associates parrhēsia with “telling the truth from below, and daring to offend power.”⁸⁸ As a result, this practice of truth telling often occurs without invitation, is interruptive to regular rhythms of socialising or producing, and upsets governing hierarchies.⁸⁹ It is this type of hot moment that I am particularly interested in.

Kelsey, unlike Oram, approaches Foucault’s interpretation of parrhēsia through his interest in socially engaged art. He argues that since socially engaged art is being made during a period in which creative practices easily waver “unsteadily between their most liberating and recuperative possibilities,” parrhēsia might be a necessary element of dialogical artworks aiming to transform the relationships between individuals and the institutions that they come into contact with.⁹⁰ Kelsey also suggests that ‘mute parrhēsia’ – essentially, silence – can be similarly disruptive if one “clam[s] up precisely

⁸⁵ See David Schaper, “University of Chicago Tells Freshmen It Does Not Support ‘Trigger Warnings,’” *National Public Radio*, last modified 26 August 2016, <https://www.npr.org/2016/08/26/491531869/university-of-chicago-tells-freshmen-it-does-not-support-trigger-warnings>.; Ideas Desk, “University of Chicago: ‘We Do Not Support So-Called trigger Warnings,’” *TIME*, last modified 25 August 2016, <http://time.com/4466021/uchicago-trigger-warnings/>.

⁸⁶ Matan Oram, *Modernity and Crisis in the Thought of Michel Foucault: The Totality of Reason* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 89.

⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 11-20.

⁸⁸ John Kelsey, “Escape from Discussion Island,” in *Social Medium: Artists Writing, 2000-2015*, ed. Jennifer Liese (Brooklyn: Paper Monument, 2016), 70.

⁸⁹ Kelsey, 72-74.

⁹⁰ Kelsey, 74.

when speech is most expected” in order to prevent the continuation of the “normal productive relations that determine our convivial context.”⁹¹ In other words, disruption is not always best created through speech; sometimes it is created through quiet (a mode of being that I will return to in the next chapter on de Souza’s work). Whatever form it takes, Kelsey claims that parrhēsia is almost always confronting and has the ability to hurt “either the speaker or the addressee or both” since a social relation often has to be disturbed in order to speak a new truth.⁹²

I will now explore in a detail the heated parrhēsiatic dynamic of Doley’s lesson with Kelada, a lecturer from the University of Melbourne’s department of Indigenous Studies. During the lesson, a conversation about power turns to focus on the format of *Two Feminists* itself. Kelada suggests that *Two Feminists* might reproduce some normative educational hierarchies. She points to the structure of the lessons (here, Kelada describes Doley sitting listening in silence rather than in dialogue with her teacher) and suggests that the participants have been vetted in accordance with traditional markers of educated privilege. Doley writes that Kelada

began to ask when did she ... tick the right boxes to be chosen for this project? How did she get into positions of privilege and power as opposed to others and why did I choose to speak to her? Was it because she teaches at a university which demarcates her as a reliable source of knowledge?⁹³

Kelada adds that elements of Doley’s set-up – her employment of objects that signify a traditional classroom in particular – bolster the more normative elements of her pedagogy.⁹⁴ In the blog post, Doley wonders if the format of the lessons possesses some problems and if a different structure – one that

⁹¹ Kelsey, 72.

⁹² Kelsey, 71.

⁹³ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

⁹⁴ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

encouraged sharing stories and experiences – might have made for “a more feminist approach.”⁹⁵

Helguera suggests that the “greatest strength” of confrontation “is in raising questions, not in providing answers.”⁹⁶ Following Kelada’s observations, Doley seems to enter into a debate with herself about the pedagogy that her artwork employs. She counters her previous self-critique with the following rebuttal:

I consciously ask and invite people of accredited ‘knowledge’ such as university [lecturers] and specialists in the field, that is true. But part of *The Learning Centre* model is actively seeking out unrepresented voices too by placing advertisements [online] where the ad or request gets shared and recommended by random people (...). The classroom installation, replete with blackboard, desk and clock is a conscious decision to reference the symbology of a ‘classroom’. As this is first and foremost an artwork, not a social science project, its focus is aesthetics. (...) [The] signifiers of power that Odette identified were constructed by the artist.⁹⁷

What Doley seems to be emphasising here is that she has tried to make some radical pedagogical choices – her use of the learning centre model and her attempts to pull a diverse group of teachers – to create a transpedagogical artwork, rather than an ‘actual’ schooling centre. The signifiers that Kelada identifies as regressive seem to be emptied of their power for Doley because they have been selected by an artist to produce an artwork, rather than an actual classroom. As I have described in the previous chapters, transpedagogical works sit in an unusual liminal space that is not quite education nor artwork, but rather both at once. While this may free a transpedagogy from some of the conventional expectations of formal

⁹⁵ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

⁹⁶ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 59.

⁹⁷ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

education, it does not mean that the pedagogical decisions made by the facilitator are without consequences (pedagogical, artistic, or otherwise). While Doley may have chosen the classroom objects to connote a space of learning, they contribute to the greater dynamics of the artwork that she builds with her participants through social interactions. As such, the social implications of those objects matter and are especially important given the critical thinking environment that Doley was trying to cultivate in *Two Feminists*.

After discussing her pedagogical choices, Doley returns to her narration of the lesson. Doley describes Kelada turning her critique on an artwork included in Christopher Scuito's *Shop Shop* (2012), a street market stall style installation that was set in the space adjacent to *Two Feminists* in West Space. Kelada singles out a piece installed in *Shop Shop*: a canvas bag that had been screen-printed with a paparazzi snap of African American rapper Lil' Kim smiling in a short white dress. Under the image of Lil' Kim, the words 'SUCK MY COCK' have been scrawled by the artist in capital letters. The combination of image and caption could read as provocative – if the caption is understood as words spoken by Lil' Kim, it challenges some conventions of sexualised speech – or sexually objectifying – following a more heteronormative rubric, the caption could be understood as a sexual demand made by an active male subject (the artist, Scuito) to pacify the depicted woman (Lil' Kim).

Doley recounts Kelada walking over to the work in *Shop Shop* and being joined by Scuito who was in the gallery at the time. She narrates that

[Scuito] ... came over [and Kelada] asked him to explain this image (...). I watched Chris flounder and look uncomfortable, trying to 'explain himself'. I felt so awkward and compromised by this situation that I just walked away. (...) I actually regret this. I was so worried about making Chris feel uncomfortable by putting him on the spot that I couldn't even focus on what Odette was

saying (...). I wished that I had stuck around and asked Odette what she thought of the image in relation to the critique of whiteness.⁹⁸

At the conclusion of the post, Doley reflects that she

really enjoyed [the] lesson from Odette because she came in and turned everything on its side, me and my obsession with structure included. It was challenging to see her ‘break the rules’ so to speak and take what we had been talking about and put it onto the entire gallery, pulling another artist up on it. I think this is very gutsy and strong.⁹⁹

bell hooks argues that a radical education can draw a student into a place that is both enthralling and hazardous because to be “changed by ideas [can be] pure pleasure,” but placing oneself in a situation where one might intercept ideas that run counter to whatever one has become accustomed to involve placing oneself in a risky situation, a “danger zone” of colliding ideas.¹⁰⁰ It seems that Doley found herself in a ‘danger zone’ of her own unintentional design during her lesson with Kelada. The exchanges recorded by Doley clearly made her initially uncomfortable, but ultimately appear to have been transformative for her. Unfortunately, however, we do not know how Kelada was impacted by the lesson emotionally or intellectually. In spite of this lack, the moment of unexpected confrontation creates an engaging disruption to an otherwise fairly convivial record (the blog) of Doley’s project.

What is also interesting about this lesson is that it reveals that there is a ‘fourth wall’ for projects based in social practices like transpedagogy, and that this wall sometimes only becomes noticeable once it has been broken. Doley clearly became uneasy when Kelada began to question her methods and more

⁹⁸ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

⁹⁹ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

¹⁰⁰ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 3

so when Kelada approached Scuito. She writes in her recount of the lesson that it was “one thing to have these discussions about the critique of power onto my own work, it was another to turn it outside of the arranged contract of a lesson between me and the participant.”¹⁰¹ The moments of confrontation in Doley’s work reveal that when a given order is challenged – be it the autonomy of art or the sexual objectification of women of colour – it can be a deeply uncomfortable, but significant teaching moment; interruptions are precisely what are needed in some learning situations to leave a critical mark. Given the direction of her later works – which are much clearer in their intersectional politics – it seems that the conversations at *Two Feminists* may have raised some important questions for Doley.

Vulnerability

What is also revealed in this blog post is that modes of critical exchange, like intersectional feminist dialogue, often demand vulnerability. Confrontation often arises when one is unable to fully understand the other in a given moment. A confrontation can take a person to a strange place within themselves where a seemingly immovable object is probed by an outside force. This immovable object is like a lump of clay that has dried in a certain shape. When a confrontation occurs, it is as if this dried out clay is being fashioned into a different position before it has been made malleable enough to accept the new shape. Depending on the amount of time that the clay has been left to dry or the type of clay used, it may require more moisture and handling to make the clay kneadable again. If the clay is some piece of ourselves – say, a viewpoint or idea that has developed out of the limits of one’s experiences in the world and accumulated knowledge – then perhaps vulnerability might be the rescuing liquid. Some lumps of clay harden for a reason – say, due to systemic racism, histories of white feminisms excluding women of colour, or lived experience of racism – and other lumps are more important to re-

¹⁰¹ Doley, “#14 Odette Marie Kelada.”

articulate than others – say, transforming a lump of white guilt or middle class privilege into a figure of critical awareness.

Vulnerability is crucial for critical thinking. Rather than a sign of weakness – which we might take to insinuate the absence of resolve or steadfast values, of being ‘a doormat’ – vulnerability can be a source of critical strength, a kind of mental and emotional porousness that lends itself well to absorbing feelings and outside ideas. For hooks, vulnerability is an immensely useful form of openness that can help students and teachers move beyond affective obstacles – such as stubbornness or shame – and toward a livelier classroom dynamic.¹⁰² There are a variety of feelings that can create vulnerability and are useful in and of themselves for critical thinking; Ann Cvetkovich argues that feelings that are often associated with failure – which might precede or create vulnerability, such as despair and shame – are often approached as “getting in the way of politics or needing to be converted to something more active in order to become politics” when in fact such feelings are already political and active responses.¹⁰³ Doley becomes a very hooksian participant when she admits regretting her immediate reaction and uses her experience to see the value in Kelada’s perspective.

The importance of the blog as a pedagogical tool for Doley is perhaps most apparent in her post on Kelada’s lesson. By regularly recounting every lesson, Doley gave herself time to reflect and write about realisations made after the lesson itself, express disappointments, and come up with alternative responses to complicated situations. In short, the blog acts as space to mould her lump of clay, be vulnerable, and reflect critically.

Given the potential existence of a second audience to this blog between 2012-18, the blog also becomes a teaching tool. This positions Doley perhaps much closer to a vulnerable teacher-student who is moving between states of learning (from the experience at West Space and through critical reflection)

¹⁰² bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 20-21

¹⁰³ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 110.

and teaching (through her online posts directed to an assumed reader). Doley's vulnerability and openness in her blogs are assets. They allow her to produce a document that acts as a type of intersectional feminist process journal in which the readers can observe moments of critical insight that develop her politics into a more nuanced feminism that can be internalised by the reader.

Leaving the learning centre behind

Doley's temporary feminist learning centre is a case of an imperfect transpedagogy. While *Two Feminists* facilitated a series of dialogues that included multiple perspectives on the urgency and foci of contemporary feminism in Australia, documentation of the initial dialogues as well as elements of the pedagogical practices engaged with during *Two Feminists* produced some issues. Radical pedagogues – critical, feminist, and otherwise – tend to agree that knowledge is best made through means that are somewhat democratised, shareable, and interactive. When learning becomes an inaccessible experience, education becomes a technology of power, a source of status that can be used to exploit, exclude, and oppress. As a project geared towards production of an educational alternative, *Two Feminists* could be interpreted as a learning centre that has not been particularly resilient in terms of maintaining an accessible log of feminist knowledge.

Additionally, Doley's solo authorship of the blog results in the reduction of a polyvocal project to a singular perspective. As a result, the voices that enter the project as representatives of minorities – such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians – are inevitably subject to interpretation by Doley's voice which carries the privilege of a dominant social category (that of a white Australian). This issue is compounded by Doley's position as the core student (and later documenter) of her own school and the disappearance of the blog from general view. These circumstances leave Doley as the primary beneficiary and interpreter of the educational encounters that took place during *Two Feminists*.

However, there are some accomplishments within Doley's project that should be noted. While it remained live, Doley's blog was an engaging transpedagogical document that captured a generous amount of feminist knowledge and some of the more complicated affects that can arise within a classroom space. Additionally, Doley manages to maintain a degree of emotional and intellectual vulnerability during her project, demonstrating an openness to new and sometimes confronting ideas. This position seems to be a potentially transformative mode of engaging in intersectional feminist conversations. Her internalisation of the lessons provided during *Two Feminists* is evident not only in her blog, but also in her later work, *Things Learnt* which marks, as the title insists, what has been learnt from her experiences.

While her recent decision to close down *twofeminists.com* has created some problems in accessibility, this choice could also be read as evidence of continuing critical thought. Freire argues that while normative educational systems try "to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness," more radical forms of education push "for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality."¹⁰⁴ Perhaps, in actuality, Doley's turn toward other projects is a more critical move than keeping *Two Feminists* accessible. In allowing *Two Feminists* to slowly disappear, Doley seems to be making interventions in her own artistic practice and politics, letting go of a work that no longer represents her ideas and instead maintaining and exhibiting others that reflect a more intersectional feminism.

¹⁰⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 81.

Chapter V

Keg de Souza's temporary school

As part of the 20th Biennale of Sydney in 2016, Australian artist Keg de Souza set up the *Redfern: School of Displacement*, a 'school' predicated on the importance of listeners with degrees of social and economic privilege sharing an hour with speakers who possess lived experience of dispossession and displacement. The name of this school refers to its location in Redfern, an area just south of the central business district of Sydney, Australia. Redfern is synonymous with urban Aboriginality; it is home to a significant and visible Aboriginal Australian community. The name of this inner city suburb is that of its colonisers. The original name for this area – like much of the cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – has been displaced. In the years since 1788 (the year that Australia was invaded and colonised), Redfern has witnessed many clashes over Aboriginal Australian land and citizen rights, a fight which continues today.¹ The suburb developed a reputation as a dangerous place stagnated by the crises of its residents. This reputation often cloaks racism and classism – among other oppressive conditions that stem from over two hundred years of subjugation of Aboriginal Australians by colonisers, governments, and other powerful bodies – in the

¹ Kay Anderson, "Reflections on Redfern," *Australian Cultural Geographies*, ed. Elaine Stratford (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999), 70.

language of capitalist suburban renewal (otherwise known as gentrification); by the 1990s, Redfern was a violent slum in need of ‘revitalisation’ before the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games; today it’s an ‘edgy up-and-coming’ inner city cultural centre undergoing civic ‘improvement.’²

If we read between the lines of violence and ‘edginess,’ however, we find other stories: that of Redfern as stolen land, a place that contains a history of mistreatment of Aboriginal Australian residents by law enforcement and corporations, as well as a legacy of anti-racist activism and significant organised responses to oppressive structures. *Redfern: School of Displacement* brings these overlooked histories of displacement, dispossession, and advocacy to the fore of its ‘lessons,’ creating space for people involved in ongoing efforts to acknowledge and rectify Australia’s strained race relations to speak and be heard. Over two months, the *Redfern: School of Displacement* (which will be referred to henceforth as the *School* or *RSD*) facilitated talks, tours, and the development of further reading materials (that would eventuate into a publication) that dove beneath the mainstream narratives of decay and degeneracy.³

In a flyer distributed amongst attendees of the *RSD*, the aims and pedagogical practices of the temporary school were outlined:

Redfern School of Displacement aims to cultivate local knowledge about globally relevant issues of displacement through a series of discussions and tours. (...) The *School* focuses on collective learning and knowledge production. *RSD* emphasises that learning should not be confined to institutions and instead become more inclusive, accessible and connected to community. (...) Marginalised voices that are often displaced from mainstream dialogue are at

² For examples of the mainstream language used to describe and advertise gentrifying suburbs, see *Vogue*, *Lonely Planet*, or any number of travel blogs which demonstrate how to make a recently socially segregated area sound alluring. For example, in Christina Pérez’s “Could One of These 8 Up-and-Coming Neighborhoods Be the Next Williamsburg?” (2017), phrases like “youthful vibe” and “forward-thinking” are used instead of ‘gentrification.’

³ The *RSD*’s tenure lasted from 20th March – 28th May, 2016.

the centre of the *RSD*. Participants attending the school are requested to acknowledge their personal privileges and actively make space for “other” voices. (...) It is more meaningful to learn about a place, whilst in the place. *Redfern School of Displacement* extends the idea that situated learning occurs through actively lived experience.⁴

In short, the *RSD* intended to create and share knowledge that operates outside the (neoliberal) limitations placed on (and reproduced by) traditional educational institutions, explore displacement collectively through dialogue that validates the experiences and knowledge of marginalised groups of people, and practice learning about a place in situ. In this chapter, I will focus on how these three intentions were met in practice. I will begin with de Souza’s creation of a temporary alternative learning space, then explore the importance of the site of the *RSD*, before turning to focus on the social dynamics of the talks with particular attention paid to de Souza’s facilitation of conversations between people with lived experiences of alterity before a Biennale audience who participated largely by listening.

Before I look closely at the *RSD*, it should be noted that the original event was made up of multiple ‘parts’: a temporary installation (*We Built This City*, 2016) in which to house the *School*, a series of talks hosted inside the installation, a series of ‘excursions’ around Sydney (*Redfern-Waterloo Tour of Beauty*), and a text, *Redfern School of Displacement* (2017), which has been published and distributed online by All Thumbs Press (de Souza’s own small press). Like other transpedagogical publications, the text documents and elaborates on the issues discussed over the course of the *RSD*’s existence. While each of these pieces of the *RSD* are significant, I am most interested in the talks that took place during the *RSD*’s tenure in Redfern.⁵ Instead of making

⁴ Keg de Souza, *Redfern School of Displacement* (Redfern: All Thumbs Press, 2016), n.p.

⁵ For detailed descriptions and analyses of the *Tour of Beauty*, see Lucas Ihlein, “Art as Situated Experience” (2007) and “Complexity, Aesthetics and Gentrification: the Tour of Beauty” (2009); Eve Vincent “Tour of Beauty” (2017); and Tim Wright, “Our eyes are constantly adjusting” (2017).

general observations about the collection of talks, I have decided to focus on the final talk facilitated by de Souza, 'Dispossession and displacement: land, language-shift and cultural safety,' which will act as a case study of the pedagogical and social practices encouraged at the *RSD*.

1. Learning outside of neoliberal educational institutions

To facilitate her transpedagogical work, de Souza built a temporary school house, *We Built This City* (2016). This installation stood inside a warehouse space at 16 Vine Street in Redfern. This warehouse was one of the Biennale of Sydney's 'in-between spaces.' These spaces made up a group of 'floating embassies' set in temporary spaces that were among a network of larger 'embassies' set in established art institutions dotted around the city of Sydney, such as the 'Embassy of Non-Participation' at Artspace, 'Embassy of Disappearance' at Carriageworks, and 'Embassy of Spirits' at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. While the institutions carried on operating as art galleries after the close of the Biennale, the sites of the floating embassies were returned to their original purposes: as empty warehouse space in Redfern, as a billboard in Surry Hills, and, in the case of one in-between space in Chippendale, as a void between two residential buildings.

We Built This City was a colourful 'supertent' constructed using pieces of deconstructed tents that had been sewn or taped together, ranging from fluorescent pinks to camouflage greens, with various window shapes and sizes, pockets, and zippers left visible. The result was a rainbow geodesic dome of camping gear. The natural light that came through the warehouse windows and into *We Built This City* illuminated the colourful weatherproof material of the tents. Large tartan storage bags filled with hessian blankets were scattered around the space in an imperfect circle, acting as seats for participants. The tartan bags were made of durable plastic that rustled loudly and easily whenever a participant sat or repositioned themselves. As a result, stillness

(and slight discomfort from trying to maintain it) was required of the participants.

While sitting inside the supertent, I was struck by the geometric patterns created by the patchwork of tent parts. Two conflicting referents came to mind. At first, I was reminded of the large parachutes that small children play with in groups at preschools and kindergartens. I have a memory of playing a game with one of these parachutes as a child with my pre-school class. We were spread evenly around the edge of a large circular parachute. The chute was then lifted over our heads so that we could run underneath and pull the edge of the chute down behind us. The parachute, temporarily inflated, became a mushroom-like structure which could be sat underneath for only a few seconds before the parachute began to deflate and gently float back down to the ground. Sitting inside of *We Built This City*, I felt as if I was sitting under a parachute caught at the precious moment of peak inflation.

I was then struck by the second contrasting thought, a very different group of referents: activist tent embassies, hastily built refugee camps, and ‘tent cities’ inhabited by homeless people. These enclosures differ from those entered into voluntarily (say, on a camping trip); these are places that are populated by people who are forced into refuge to take a stand or to find safety, often the victims of displacement caused by violence or gentrification, forced to live in clusters of tents and salvaged fabric. The connection to displaced persons was emphasised after one of the participants commented that ‘refugee bag’ was a colloquialism for the tartan bags we were seated on. Like its camping gear construction materials, *We Built This City* also acted as temporary housing, this time for a temporary alternative school.

The combination of the playful with the confronting is common in de Souza’s oeuvre. De Souza has created jumping castle-like inflatables to house picnics dedicated to discussing colonisation and its expression through changing food habits (*Temporary Places, Edible Spaces*, 2014 - ongoing). For a series of discussions about looming gentrifying forces and ghost stories, de

Souza set up a large puffy tent with a glow in the dark interior in an Indonesian squatter settlement (*If There's Something Strange in Your Neighbourhood*, 2014). de Souza has also created a see-through marquee manufactured from vacuum sealed bags containing different foods consumed across Australian history, from native flora to mass processed spreads, which then was used to host discussions about Australian food cultures (*Changing Courses*, 2017). In her most recent installation, de Souza developed environments made from netball skirts, venetian blinds, and sports carnival ribbons to house circular talks on radical pedagogies as well as educational experiments (*Common Knowledge and Learning Curves*, 2018).

The talks

During each talk at the *RSD*, de Souza invited two predesignated speakers – “co-ranters” as de Souza described them – to talk from research and lived experience (almost always a combination of the two) on a chosen theme.⁶ At the final ‘class’ of the *RSD*, de Souza engaged in a conversation with Quandamooka woman and artist, Megan Cope and Scottish Gaelic academic from the Isle of Skye, James Oliver to explore how language can colonise, exclude, and eradicate indigenous peoples. De Souza, Cope, Oliver, and the attendees all sat together in a circle on the blanket-stuffed tartan bags. Once the supertent was relatively full, de Souza introduced herself and the invited speakers. The conversation that followed was casual, meandering from topic to topic, at times confronting and depressing in its themes – like many discussions of racist histories and politics, this talk involved recognising histories of (as well as the structures that maintain) violence and mistreatment of indigenous peoples – but concluded with a sense of hopefulness for a less discriminatory future for indigenous peoples.

Both Cope and Oliver described language as a significant facet of

⁶ Keg de Souza, “Keg de Souza,” (presentation, UTS PSM Guest Lecture Series, University of Technology, Sydney, 18 April 2016).

Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 7.

Keg de Souza, *We Built This City*, 2016, tents, tape, and storage bags, 16 Vine Street, Redfern.

Documentation: Ben Symons.




Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 8.

Keg de Souza, *We Built This City*, 2016, tents, tape, and storage bags, 16 Vine Street, Redfern.

Documentation: Ben Symons.

identity and crucial to maintaining the sovereignty and dignity of indigenous peoples. They also agreed that loss or protection of a language can often mean the difference between the disappearance or survival of a culture. Cope and Oliver dominated the conversation, discussing their ideas and experiences over the course of an hour, while de Souza played a more minor facilitatory role. From time to time, de Souza would ask Cope and Oliver questions about their research, invite comparisons, draw contrasts, and check if attendees had any questions about the content of the conversation. Only a handful of attendees asked questions, most of which came at the conclusion of the talk. These attendees expressed interest in Cope and Oliver's research and expressed how confronting the information felt, much of it new for the audience. Most of the attendees, however, seemed to prefer to remain still and listen intently to de Souza, Cope, and Oliver. While sitting at this talk, I felt that the role of the attendees was to bear witness to, rather than direct, the conversation at hand.

In the flyer for the *RSD*, de Souza suggests that her *School* is not the building, but is rather made by the talks and tours. The classroom space – the space in which knowledge is built and shared – is not created by the presence of a building, but rather by the presence of people in dialogue. Here, a school is a social structure, a gathering, of interested persons. The use of 'school' in the title of the work is perhaps much like its use to denote a literary or artistic genre, movement, or period: 'school' does not refer to a literal building, but rather a cluster of people who are practising, thinking, making, or doing in a shared manner and/or space. The *RSD*, like other transpedagogical projects, exists not as a formal institution, but rather as a temporary meeting place to share ideas – usually ideas that are not given ample space in pre-existing educational institutions. Perhaps what is renewed here is a sense that, as Adair Rounthwaite suggests, education exists “not only as physical places like schools and museums but also ... as a social world of discursive practices.”⁷

⁷ Adair Rounthwaite, *Asking the Audience: Participatory Art in 1980s New York* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 76.

This methodology places de Souza squarely within the usual conventions of transpedagogical artmaking which often seeks alternatives to neoliberal educational goals and practices. In an interview with Shane McGrath, de Souza described the *RSD* as a space in which to highlight “marginal, political and experimental” voices and ideas.⁸ In accordance with these aims, de Souza seems to favour radical pedagogical techniques over those found in neoliberal educational institutions. Among her cited influences, de Souza has pointed to bell hooks as a guiding radical pedagogue.⁹ As explored in previous chapters, hooks is an anti-racist feminist theorist who has embraced and expanded on the work of Paulo Freire. While I will explore perhaps the most distinct radical pedagogical feature of de Souza’s transpedagogy – the prioritisation of marginalised voices with lived experience – later in this chapter, there are two other radical pedagogical elements that I would like to note here: the use of Freirean generative themes and adaptation of modified feminist consciousness raising and circle teaching procedures.

Generative themes

In much of de Souza’s work, conversations are organised around addressing colonisation and gentrification. These expansive issues are often brought up in her works through dialogue inducing topics, perhaps akin to what Freire terms “generative themes” (also known as “meaningful thematics”) which are explored through “thematic investigation[s].”¹⁰ Generative themes address the major social phenomena that characterise each ‘epoch’ (or, a select period of time), such as “ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges” as well as their dialectical opposites which come into being through “people in their relations with the world.”¹¹ Freire imagines such epochal themes as dynamic

⁸ Shane McGrath and Keg de Souza, “A Wicked Problem,” *Not Evenly Distributed* (blog), 30 May 2016, <https://medium.com/not-evenly-distributed/a-wicked-problem-bd4ddd8583ad>.

⁹ Keg de Souza, “Keg de Souza,” (presentation, UTS PSM Guest Lecture Series, University of Technology, Sydney, 18 April 2016).

¹⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 96-110.

¹¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 97-106.

“concentric circles, moving from the general to the particular,” potentially splintering into many variations upon the same theme throughout societies that may be perceived or felt in different ways by various groups.¹² Freire argues that although these diversifications upon the same theme may not be perceived “in their true significance” by all members of a society, this does not mean that the theme does not impact or exist in the lives of all people in that society; rather, the apparent nonexistence of a theme for some people in a society suggests that they are “still submerged” in oppressive norms, perhaps enabled by a certain degree of social and/or economic privilege, which prevents them from critically perceiving the operations of the epochal theme.¹³

Discussion of generative themes unearths how various epochal themes – which we might imagine as ideological shifts, trends, tendencies, and other changeable, yet regulated social phenomena – are experienced by different people. Mariana Souto-Manning suggests that Freirean generative themes can be thought of as “codifications of complex experiences in the lives of ... participants” that have “political significance and are likely to generate considerable dialogue geared towards action.”¹⁴ Freire argues that generative themes must help students realise that oppressive situations are not static and distant objects; they often leak into their own social situations.¹⁵ Thematic investigation of generative themes requires all persons involved to become “co-investigators” who explore how meaningful thematics exist in their own lives as well as the lives of others. Ultimately, for Freire, generative themes should help students find links between major epochal themes, come to understand them as problems that require critical thinking and action, and develop a meaningful understanding of their thematic universe (or “historical-cultural context”).¹⁶ For this reason, generative themes are often expansive,

¹² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 103.

¹³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 103.

¹⁴ Mariana Souto-Manning, *Freire, Teaching, and Learning: Culture Circles Across Contexts* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010), 36.

¹⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 107.

¹⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 107-108.

perhaps provocative, and yet, as Rounthwaite observes, characterised by an “everydayness” that all people should be able to somehow relate.¹⁷

During the *RSD*’s programming (and across much of de Souza’s oeuvre) there appears to be a tendency to invite dialogue through an issue with generative potential.¹⁸ At the *RSD*, the chosen topics included language, racism, colonisation, gentrification, climate change, conflict, and dispossession. At each talk, these themes were explored through more specific avenues of oppression. At the final talk, for example, Cope and Oliver explored linguistic eradication as an expression of colonial control through oppressive cultural hierarchies that limit use and dissemination of certain types of communication. The conversation operated much like the concentric circle that Freire imagines, starting at the more general issues before moving toward specific, concrete examples of linguistic dispossession and racist policy-making.

Particular focus was given to the destruction of Aboriginal languages in Australia during the conversation. After introducing Cope and Oliver, de Souza opened the conversation with a general thesis statement: “Control over language is intrinsically tied to colonial oppression and hierarchical power structures.”¹⁹ She then added a general metaphor for thinking about the operation of language, comparing it to a weed that invasively colonises a space and kills off the native plants until it becomes the dominant vegetation. De Souza then handed the conversation over to Cope who described her recent art practice. Cope had been intervening with contemporary maps of Australia by

¹⁷ Rounthwaite, 79.

¹⁸ De Souza often uses food to spark these thematically driven conversations. For example, in de Souza’s series of picnics *Temporary Places, Edible Spaces* (2014 -), finger foods are served that map histories of production, eating habits, class, and social privilege that are particular to the location of the picnic. To date, these picnics have been held in London, the Isle of Skye, and New York. A similar practice was used in her recent *Changing Courses* (2017), in which a variety of traditional Indigenous Australian meals, multicultural dishes, and examples of contemporary Australian cuisine were served during conversations about food production and cultural sharing in Australia.

¹⁹ Keg de Souza, Megan Cope, and James Oliver, “Dispossession and displacement through enforced and prioritised language, edited by James Oliver, transcribed from *RSD* event 28th May 2016,” in *Redfern School of Displacement* (Redfern: All Thumbs Press, 2017) n.p.

removing European place names and restoring the original Aboriginal names. She argued that many places in Australia go by an “anglicised corruption or even imported names from other places.”²⁰ Cope’s research is reflective of work being conducted by other activists and researchers in the area who are unearthing a number of problems in correcting Australian place names, such as use of incorrect spellings of Aboriginal place names, use of formal or informal European names despite Aboriginal place names being known, and lack of recognition of areas that have Aboriginal place names but no European name.²¹ Oliver entered the conversation to provide complementary commentary and introduce some additional broad theses regarding the significance of language that were returned to throughout the talk, including the argument that language is an important means of carrying stories and that language can “be used as [a] tool to reduce” or increase “our understanding and sense of the world.”²²

As we reached the smallest concentric circles generated by the overarching theme of the talk, the speakers offered particular incidents that have demonstrated how the enforcement of the English language has impacted the ways in which certain groups of people move through Australian places. Specific examples of tactics that have been used to displace and exclude were turned to, varying from apparently innocuous acts (such as erecting street signs and other infrastructure in English) to more blatantly racist acts (such as assimilation policies that have fragmented families and the rhetoric used to describe ethnic minorities in Australia). Cope spoke about mourning the loss of Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island) as it existed before it was rezoned to facilitate mining. Oliver recalled two recent episodes of conservative politics in which the ability to speak fluent English has been conflated with general literacy

²⁰ De Souza, Cope, and Oliver, n.p.

²¹ Tony Birch, “‘Nothing has changes’: the making and unmaking of Koori culture,” in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michele Grossman (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 147.

²² De Souza, Cope, and Oliver, n.p.

skills: firstly, Liberal MP Peter Dutton's racist description of refugees as "illiterate migrants" and, secondly, the creation of laws that prevent members of parliament from speaking in languages that are not English, including Aboriginal languages. De Souza noted that these recent occurrences were darkly ironic given that Australia does not have a recognised national language.²³ Without collapsing the distinctions between their varied experiences, de Souza, Cope, and Oliver were able to explore how a large thematic operated in various ways in different parts of society.

Circle talking

The use of a circular seating arrangement at the *RSD* seemed to act as a nod to feminist consciousness raising (CR) and circle talking. However, neither dialogical method was implemented in full by de Souza. Both CR sessions and circle talking tend to 'go around the circle' in order to give every attending person an opportunity to be heard. The *RSD* instead relied on attendees either volunteering relevant comments or questions as the conversation flowed between de Souza, Cope, and Oliver, or asking questions during the three occasions at which de Souza invited the attendees to contribute. The first of these 'checks' for questions occurred about halfway through the talk, but none of the attendees expressed a desire to add to the conversation. The second occurred after an attendee motioned that they wanted to ask a question. The final moment came at the close of the talk which led to three attendees making comments.

When attendees did speak, the conversation often turned to personal experiences linked with the greater generative theme at hand, not unlike a more traditional CR session. The attendees who spoke at the close of the talk often opened their questions with a description of an experience that involved actively engaging with Aboriginal Australian history. The first talked briefly

²³ De Souza, Cope, and Oliver, n.p.

Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 9.

Keg de Souza (with Megan Cope and James Oliver), *Redfern: School of Displacement*, 2016, performance, 16 Vine Street, Redfern. Documentation: Melinda Reid.

about having previously taken a class with Stan Grant in the Wurundjeri language and being “blown away” by the number of words that existed in Wurundjeri for different types of shadows. The second described catching a story on the radio about an Adelaide-based Aboriginal language group that had all but disappeared, aside from some recordings of the language made unexpectedly by some missionaries. These short contributions express empathy and connection to the ideas shared by the speakers.

de Souza’s circle structure perhaps reflects a more intersectional revision of second wave CR practices. Instead of every person being given equal opportunity (seemingly) to contribute by speaking, de Souza’s talks drove focus towards the voices of specific members of her circle, initiating and maintaining the majority of the conversation between herself and collaborating figures from marginalised communities. This small change draws attention to a false assumption that can shape CR sessions and circle talking (among other forms of group discussion): that every person is as capable and willing to speak as each other, and, if an opportunity is thrust upon them, will choose to speak if they have something to say. This assumption also finds itself in socially engaged art regarding participation. This assumption is based on another assumption: that everyone can participate in the same manner and if they do not, they are choosing not to.

Any invitation to speak or otherwise participate comes with problems. Firstly, the common understanding of participation relies on ableist assumptions; plenty of people cannot physically speak or move (not by ‘able-bodied’ standards of what constitutes a talking or moving body anyway). There are also an increasing number (and growing societal awareness) of people afflicted by ‘invisible disabilities,’ such as chronic pain or mental illness – depression and anxiety, for instance – which can result in social engagement becoming a stomach churning notion.²⁴ The ‘opportunity’ to participate for

²⁴ For further discussion of ‘invisible disabilities’ and their prevalence, see Jean M. Twenge’s “Time Period and Birth Cohort Differences in Depressive Symptoms in the U.S., 1982-2013” (2014), Sheldon Cohen and Denise

some can halt critical engagement altogether. Despite encouraging involvement and inclusion, the possibility of participating can result in feelings of, paradoxically, exclusion and alienation.

Secondly, seemingly passive habits may be developed as a result of regular social exclusion, rather than choice. This may be due to membership with a perceived minority, gendered expectations, mental illness, or some other situation that leaves an individual vulnerable to normalised everyday acts of rejection (such as micro-aggressions).²⁵ Societal erasure can also take place through limited (and if provided, often lack lustre) representations of bodies that sit outside whiteness, cisgenderness, heteronormativity, and so on. Similar problems may be faced by people who are allied with or sympathise with the experiences of marginalised groups. This is an issue that I will return to later in this chapter.

Thirdly, some people may not speak up because they are shy with their critical perspectives. These people tend to record and listen before rebutting. In Rounthwaite's description of the roundtables facilitated by Group Material during the *Democracy* exhibition (1989), she notes that then-dean of the visual arts department of the California Institute of the Arts, Catherine Lord "stayed quiet and ate cherries" for the duration of the discussion that she attended at *Democracy*.²⁶ A few months after the close of the show, Lord penned a lengthy essay-letter to Group Material (later published in 1990) in which she described *Democracy* as an engaging response to Reagan-era cuts to arts education funding.²⁷ Not being forthcoming with new ideas in a participatory situation is not so much a sign of someone being incapable of critical thought, but rather a

Janicki-Deverts's "Who's Stressed? Distributions of Psychological Stress in the United States in Probability Samples from 1983, 2006, and 2009" (2012), and David Lester's "Hopelessness in undergraduate students around the world: A review" (2013).

²⁵ A micro-aggression is a subtle or indirect act of discrimination – spoken, behaved, or facilitated through development of a hostile environment – against a member of a marginalised group of people.

²⁶ Rounthwaite, 80.

²⁷ Rounthwaite, 81.

hint that the participatory situation has been designed to only suit certain types of participation.

Rather than reproduce a CR/circle talking structure that assumes every person will and can speak when invited, de Souza instead formats the talks in such a way that affords specific persons from marginalised communities a space and time to talk without unwanted interruption. This was managed without cutting off the potential for any attendee to engage with – or, at least, be seen and heard by – the whole seated group if they chose to speak; one of the virtues of circular seating is the creation of an open centre space into which one can see and be seen, listen and be heard.

2. Learning in situ: Redfern

In biology, something is in situ when tested in its intended environment. In chemistry, a substance is in situ when it is part of the reaction taking place. In archaeology, a relic that is in situ has been left in its found position in its original location. In all scenarios, the object of study is approached not in isolation or from afar, but rather on location, surrounded by other elements that might impact, transform, and contextualise its study. The *RSD*, likewise, conducted its work inside the social, cultural, and economic landscape with which it concerned itself, allowing for a study of Redfern from within Redfern itself: a study of dispossession upon stolen land. This sets up the methodology of the *RSD* as akin to fieldwork, encouraging dialogue about the ongoing struggles faced by Aboriginal Australians in a place that has witnessed the ways in which racism explodes or slowly leaks into society – from violent outbreaks to the more insidious changes managed through gentrification – as well as struggles for recognition and reconciliation.

Large scale migration of Aboriginal people from rural areas towards (or back into) Sydney suburbs, including Redfern, increased during the 1920s-50s.²⁸

²⁸ Anne-Maree Whitaker, *Pictorial History: South Sydney* (Alexandria: Kingsclear Books, 2002), 84; Marcia Langton, "Urbanizing Aborigines: the social scientists' great deception," *Social alternatives* 2, no. 2 (1981): 16.

While an Aboriginal population has remained in Redfern since these migrations, it should be noted that this community accounts for a tiny percentage – according to the 2016 census, only 2% – of the suburb’s population.²⁹ Nevertheless, Redfern maintains a general reputation as an urban suburb with a visible Indigenous population. Areas like Redfern that are perceived to possess a population dominated by a minority – particularly one that is afflicted by racial stereotyping, poor representation, and limited by institutional structures modelled to favour the privileges afforded to the dominating racial group – are often subject to negative (usually ahistorical) perceptions.

Dorothy Hewett recalls Redfern’s reputation as that of a “ghetto for thieves, no-hopers and standover men” when she lived there during the 1950s.³⁰ Kay Anderson noted that in 1998, the common image of Redfern was one of “crime, poverty, substance abuse, truancy, vandalism, youth disaffection, and despair,” disproportionately attributed to its Aboriginal Australian population.³¹ She adds that Redfern is widely understood as an infamous site of “racialized poverty.”³² In a photographic essay published by *Vice* in 2013 titled ‘Photos of the Bad Part of Town,’ Redfern was the only Australian city included.³³

Portrayals of Redfern by media figures and law enforcement agents have often been naïve and favoured narratives of Redfern as a troubled neighbourhood, a slum, or dangerous ‘ghetto.’³⁴ This version of Redfern – one which has become synonymous with struggling people of colour in Australia –

²⁹ This is actually a fall from the population recorded in the 1991 census which documented just under 5% of the Redfern population as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. It is important to remember, however, that census statistics regarding Aboriginal identity – like many other marginalised identities – can be inaccurate due to inability or wilful resistance to identifying oneself.

³⁰ Dorothy Hewett, *Wild Card: An Autobiography, 1923-1958* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1990), 171.

³¹ Kay Anderson, “Sites of Difference: Beyond a Cultural Politics of Race Polarity,” in *Cities of Difference*, eds. Ruth Fincher and Jane M. Jacobs (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998), 213.

³² Anderson, “Sites of Difference: Beyond a Cultural Politics of Race Polarity,” 211.

³³ Glen Coco, “Photos of the Bad Part of Town,” *Vice*, last modified 14 September 2013, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ppmejm/the-bad-part-of-town.

³⁴ Anderson, “Reflections on Redfern,” 76.

is also called upon when needed to connote a community in crisis, an affective backdrop for broad reaches (some perhaps genuine, others to a lesser degree) for reconciliation. Redfern Park, for example, was the site of Paul Keating's 'Redfern Address' in 1992.³⁵ These discourses have also quietly shaped calls to 'renew' – a euphemism for 'gentrify' regularly used by institutional bodies – Redfern through residential clearances and remodelling of certain areas into 'cultural hubs.'

These discourses bury racism, classism, scare mongering, and capitalism under an apparent concern for the safety of a central metropolitan suburb and the wider population of Aboriginal Australians.³⁶ In other words, what is often missing from these narratives is an enormous amount of context and critical awareness of the histories, institutional bodies, and attitudes that maintain many of the difficulties that afflict Aboriginal people both in Redfern and around Australia. Therefore, in order to understand the complexities of the social and political landscape of the setting of the *RSD* as well as some of the content of the talks that took place, some knowledge of Australian history is perhaps first required.

Before settling into a brief overview of this history, I would like to acknowledge my position as an outsider looking in. Marcia Langton argues that "the assumptions that all [Aboriginal Australians] are alike ... without regard to cultural variation, history, gender, sexual preference and so on" is akin to "a demand for censorship" or a "'right' way to be Aboriginal."³⁷ Much of the discussion to follow has been written and researched with Langton's words kept in mind. The following exploration of Redfern's significance has been pieced together with a sincere desire to avoid flattening the differences or

³⁵ The 'Redfern Address' was the first speech delivered by an Australian Prime Minister that explicitly acknowledged that European colonisation and racist policies implemented by Australian governments were to blame for some of the social injustices faced by Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander people.

³⁶ For example, see Alexandra Back, "Shutters to come down on Redfern's rough reputation (2011) and Benedict Brook, "The transformation of a no-go area to one of Australia's most sought-after suburbs" (2015).

³⁷ Marcia Langton, "Aboriginal art and film: the politics of representation," in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michele Grossman (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 115.

experiences (many of which, I would like to emphasise, involve traumatic events that require much more nuance and remembrance than there is room to perform here) that are contained in the histories that are referenced in the following pages.³⁸ While the histories that I include together here are the result of an extended period of research, they are narratives that attendees of the *RSD* talks, like most Australians, were likely to have possessed some awareness and interpretation of, to varying degrees of detail and intimacy.

National narratives

The frame of reference for the *RSD* is large; the conversations facilitated at the *School* traversed into issues that stem from the consequences of the invasion and colonisation of Australia by Great Britain in 1788. The sovereignty of Aboriginal people over Australian land – which extends sixty five thousand years into the past and continues into the present – was never ceded, properly recognised, nor signed over or negotiated with these colonisers.³⁹ Instead, Australia was proclaimed *terra nullius* (“land belonging to no one”) and re-established as a penal colony under British rule.

Prior to 1788, the area that is now known as Redfern was under the care of the Gadigal people. After colonisation, Gadigal people – like many who lived close to the bays where invading British colonisers began landing – were exposed to illnesses and diseases to which they had no immunity. During the Frontier Wars (1780 – 1880), many Aboriginal people were killed. The total number of victims is not known, but is being slowly approached through recent

³⁸ Aboriginal Australian thinkers attending to the trauma and lasting impacts of colonisation include – but is certainly not limited to – Celeste Liddle (an Arrente Australian feminist writer who runs the *Rantings of an Aboriginal Feminist* blog), Lisa Bellear (a late Goernpil poet and photographer), Pat Dugeon (a Bardi person and professor of Indigenous studies), Odette Marie Keldada (an Anglo-Egyptian academic who lectures in Indigenous studies), Pat O'Shane (a member of the Yalangi people and Australia's first Aboriginal Australian magistrate), Aileen Moreton-Robinson (a Goenpul woman and Indigenous Studies professor), Marcia Langton (Professor and Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies), Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly Kath Walker, a Minijerriba poet and activist), and Irene Watson (a Tanganekald and Meintangk woman and law professor).

³⁹ This estimation is based on recent findings at the Madjedbebe rock shelter in Mirarr Country (east of Darwin). For the full results of the excavation, see Chris Clarkson et al, “Human occupation of northern Australia by 65,000 years ago” (2017).

studies, such as Lyndall Ryan's research which has resulted in an interactive map of massacre sites that is now available online.⁴⁰ Massacres, however, of Aboriginal people – not to mention rapes, sexual abuse, enslavement of children and adults, and kidnappings – were not isolated to the Frontier Wars; massacres (among other forms of mistreatment) have been documented as occurring as recently as the 1920s.⁴¹ While it is not known exactly how many Aboriginal Australians have died as a result of the invasion of Australia, the estimations are often damning; while Fred Alexander claims that the national Aboriginal population fell to one fifth of its original size by 1939, Noel Butlin suggests that by the 1920s, the Aboriginal population may have declined by as much as 96% in some regions of Australia.⁴²

Henry Reynolds argues that while the violence waged against Aboriginal Australians during the Frontier Wars (and years following) does not neatly fit the definitions laid out in the Genocide Convention (which were drawn up with a different horror in mind – the Jewish Holocaust), a new definition should be created that recognises the unique level of cultural destruction and loss of lives suffered by Aboriginal Australians.⁴³ For example, prior to colonisation, there were over 250 different Aboriginal languages spoken in Australia (which, according to Jeanie Bell, can be broken into as many as five or six hundred dialects).⁴⁴ In 2017, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) estimated that only 120 languages are still being spoken today with many at risk of disappearing.⁴⁵ In 2008, it was reported that

⁴⁰ Lyndall Ryan et al., "Colonial Frontier Massacres in Central and Eastern Australia 1788-1930," *The University of Newcastle*, last modified 2018, <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>.

⁴¹ John Harris, "The Myth of the Humane Colonisation of Aboriginal Australia," *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003): 89; Shirleene Robinson, *Something like Slavery: Queensland's Aboriginal Child Workers, 1842-1945* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 68-94.

⁴² Noel Butlin, *Our original aggression: Aboriginal populations of southeastern Australia, 1788 – 1850* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983).

⁴³ Fred Alexander, *Australia Since Federation: A Narrative and Critical Analysis* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd, 1967), 318; Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013), 156.

⁴⁴ De Souza, Cope, and Oliver, n.p.; Jeanie Bell, "Australian's Indigenous languages," in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michele Grossman (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 162.

⁴⁵ "Indigenous Australian Languages," *AIATSIS: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*, last modified 2 July 2018, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/indigenous-australian-languages>.

only ten of these languages were “healthy enough” enough to be taught in New South Wales schools.⁴⁶

After Australia federated as a nation in 1901, Aboriginal Australians were subject to a variety of oppressive assimilation policies. This marked a turn away from the popular theses espoused by pseudoscientists and commentators (informed by pseudosciences like polygenism, craniology, physiognomy, and racial determinism) during the mid 1800s that Aboriginal people were a ‘doomed race,’ “diagnosed” with “unimproveability” and destined to ‘die out.’⁴⁷ Instead, policies were created that would forcibly assimilate Aboriginal people into Europeanised Australian ways of living. Between 1910 and the 1970s, it is estimated in the *Bringing Them Home* report (1997) that up to one in three Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families to be “absorb[ed] ... into white society.”⁴⁸ These children – the ‘Stolen Generations’ – were often removed by force or through coercion under the pretence of concern for their wellbeing and a desire for the children to receive an education. However, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson has documented, many children were removed under falsified circumstances, sent to missions or orphanages, fostered or adopted by non-Indigenous families, became domestic servants, or sent to centres designed specifically for the institutionalisation of Aboriginal and mixed race children.⁴⁹ The vast majority of children who were forcibly taken away from their families were not removed as a result of proven neglect, but rather for their Aboriginality.⁵⁰ These forcible removals were made to ensure that these children were, in essence, raised ‘white.’

⁴⁶ “Volumes offer new hope for languages,” *Koori Mail* 439 (19 November 2008): 30.

⁴⁷ Kay Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 144-145.

⁴⁸ It should be noted however that in some parts of Australia, the number of families impacted was far higher than the national average. Western Australia, for example, was a state in which “not one” Aboriginal Australian family remained intact. There were also areas where children were forcibly removed or kidnapped from their families as early as the 1840s. (Ronald Wilson, *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families Report* (Sydney: Sterling Press Pty. Ltd., 1997), 37, 177.)

⁴⁹ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up To The White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), 8, 22-27.

⁵⁰ Wilson, 11.

The consequences of stealing children from their families are multiple and often long lasting. Many children removed from their families – one tenth of boys and one third of girls – were sexually abused by institutional authorities or their adoptive non-Indigenous families.⁵¹ Many of these children struggled with socialising and developed learning difficulties. They were left much more vulnerable to serious physical and mental health issues as adults than other Australians.⁵² While a governmental apology was delivered in 2008, the impacts of the trauma and intergenerational trauma caused by the forced removal of children on Aboriginal families and communities are ongoing and have not yet been properly acknowledged by all involved institutions – such as police forces, churches, and schools – nor has there been delivery of appropriate reparations, compensation, educational reforms, or enduring traditions of remembrance.⁵³

Centuries of mistreatment have not been without resistance and activism on the part of Aboriginal Australians. These acts have been accompanied (sometimes) by moments of solidarity and (mostly symbolic) steps made toward reconciliation by allied non-Indigenous Australians. In 1938, a group of Aboriginal men observed the first Day of Mourning protest at Australian Hall, Sydney to coincide with the sesquicentenary of British invasion of Australia (the 26th of January, the day on which ‘Australia Day’ is still observed). Other early forms of protest against restrictions enforced on Aboriginal people included mission walk-offs and strikes, such as the Cummeragunja walk off in 1939, Pilbara strike in 1946, and Wave Hill walk off in 1966. In 1965, the ‘Freedom Rides’ led by Charles Perkins, Reverend Ted Noff, and thirty white students from the University of Sydney’s Student Action

⁵¹ Wilson, 163;

⁵² Wilson, 151-232.

⁵³ The recent *Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Sexual Assault* (2012-2017) has drawn attention to the sexual abuse of children by religious institutions in Australia. The final report includes details and statistics concerning the abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. However, this report was intended to address institutional child abuse, not mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular.

For Aborigines (SAFA) toured through towns in western New South Wales to raise awareness of racism in Australia.⁵⁴ In 1967, Aboriginal rights activists successfully campaigned for Aboriginal people to be counted as Australian citizens and vote in elections. The designation of Australia as *terra nullius* was overturned in 1992 after decades of activism led by Edward Koiki Mabo. The principle of ‘co-existence’ was legally established in 1996 after a large group of Wik elders successfully claimed native title over several areas in Queensland. Following the delivery of the *Bringing Them Home* (1997) report to parliament, the first ‘Sorry Day’ took place in May of 1998 and saw a quarter of a million people walk together across Sydney Harbour Bridge in recognition of the report’s findings. Over the last decade, support has increased for revising the date on which ‘Australia Day’ is celebrated, a change that would see the holiday moved from the anniversary of Australia’s invasion – 26th January – to an alternative date.⁵⁵ In 2017, the Uluru National Convention was held by a significant gathering of Aboriginal elders and activists to discuss constitutional reforms. The same year, Clinton Pryor walked from Perth to Canberra to campaign for governmental recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty and the development of a treaty to be signed with Aboriginal Australians.

There have been some hopeful movements, but many have been accompanied by disappointments. In 1976, the Australian government reformed land laws in the Northern Territory to recognise Aboriginal methods of land distribution in the ‘Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory).’ By 2006, this piece of legislation had been reformed to fast track use of land to set up business and mining projects. In 1991, a Royal Commission into the numerous deaths of Aboriginal people while in police custody was completed,

⁵⁴ Gary Foley, “Black Power in Redfern, 1968-1972,” *There Goes the Neighbourhood: Redfern and the Politics of Urban Space*, eds. Zanny Begg and Keg de Souza (Sydney: Breakout Design Web Print, 2009), 14.

⁵⁵ The ‘Change the date’ movement has suggested, for example, that Australia Day could be celebrated on May 8, a date that plays on the online shorthand for mate (‘m8’) as well as the Australian colloquial pronunciation of ‘mate’ in which the central vowel of the word is often playfully elongated (usually when used as a term of endearment), resulting in a word that could be mistaken for containing two syllables or two short single syllable words, like ‘May eight.’

but the final report concluded that the police officers were not responsible for the investigated deaths that had occurred between 1980 and 1989. However, this investigation also found that Aboriginal people were incarcerated or died in police custody at alarmingly higher rates than non-Indigenous Australians and proved to be a catalyst for the creation of the National Deaths in Custody Monitoring and Research Program at the Australian Institute of Criminology. In 2008, then-prime minister Kevin Rudd formally apologised to the Stolen Generations in parliament. However, Rudd (as well as each of his successors) also oversaw the amendment and continuation of the 'Northern Territory National Emergency Response' (more commonly known as 'the Intervention'), a policy initiated by the preceding conservative government led by John Howard.⁵⁶

The tone and events called upon when recounting Australian history is subject to an ongoing dispute known as the 'history wars' which has seen the emergence of two strong schools of historical narration. The first is a 'black armband' view of Australian history (a term used by Geoffrey Blainey in 1993) which refers to narratives that acknowledge the violence and struggles faced by Aboriginal people since colonisation, a view that was favoured by former prime minister Paul Keating as well as Reynolds. The second is the 'three cheers' approach to Australian history which has been favoured by conservative politicians - such as former Prime Ministers John Howard and Tony Abbott - and likeminded writers - such as Keith Windschuttle and Andrew Bolt. This school tends to reinterpret British colonisation as an 'achievement'.⁵⁷ Carole Ferrier has suggested that the 'three cheers' school should be renamed the 'white blindfold' approach to Australian history given that it operates through an "unwillingness to look or an inability to see" the destructive consequences

⁵⁶ The policy has since been replaced with the very similar 'Strong Futures Policy.'

⁵⁷ Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 128-132; Reynolds, 32-40.

of colonisation.⁵⁸ When considered alongside further evidence of racism in Australia against immigrants and refugees – recent examples include the implementation of dehumanising rhetoric (most notably, former prime minister Tony Abbott’s ‘Stop The Boats’ campaign) and detention centres in response to ongoing refugees crises, and the re-election of controversial noted racist Pauline Hanson – it seems that Australian society is not a peacefully multicultural nation. Intolerance by white Australians of Aboriginal people and immigrant groups is not a historical condition; it is a feature of our contemporary society.

In the most recent *Closing the Gap* report (2018), it is clear that there remain large gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’ median rates of child mortality, life expectancy, education enrolment, school attendance, literacy and numeracy levels, secondary school completion, and unemployment.⁵⁹ In further research collected by not-for-profit activist group Australians Together, it seems that this gap also permeates secondary school educational results, physical and mental health, as well as community wellbeing.⁶⁰ Additionally, Australians Together have found that Aboriginal Australian communities experience higher rates of suicide, self-harm, child abuse, living in overcrowded spaces, and hospitalisations.⁶¹ Jan Pettman argues that, additionally, Aboriginal Australians are generally “constantly and disproportionately subject to state surveillance and control.”⁶² This was reflected by a report delivered by the World Council of Churches after a visit to Australia in 1981 which found that accounts of police brutality against

⁵⁸ Carole Ferrier, “White Blindfolds and Black Armbands: The Uses of Whiteness Theory for Reading Australian Cultural Production,” *Queensland Review* 6, issue 1 (May 1999): 42.

⁵⁹ The *Closing the Gap* report is an annually released report on the welfare of Aboriginal Australians that has been produced by the Australian government since 2008. For the most recent (2018) report, see *Closing the Gap: Prime Minister’s Report 2018* (2018).

⁶⁰ “Indigenous disadvantage in Australia,” *Australian Together*, last modified 2017, <https://www.australiantogether.org.au/discover/the-wound/indigenous-disadvantage-in-australia/>.

⁶¹ “Indigenous disadvantage in Australia.”

⁶² Jan Pettman, “Whose country is it anyway? Cultural politics, racism and the construction of being Australian,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 9, issue 1 (1988): 6.

Aboriginal Australians to be “disturbingly common” in Australia.⁶³ Aboriginal residents of Redfern have repeatedly faced racially motivated police brutality that has been actioned as if normal procedure and subject to allegations of misbehaviour during celebrations.⁶⁴ Pat Dudgeon argues that the current discrepancies in quality of life that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – including those who live in Redfern – are in part a product of unresolved (and often unacknowledged) histories of mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since colonisation.⁶⁵

Local histories

In addition to our complex national histories and institutionalised racism, what is perhaps even less discussed in regard to Redfern is the rich history of anti-racist activism in Australia at which Redfern has often been the centre. It is this narrative that the *RSD* perhaps references with its tent-like structure and continues through its conversations.

During the 1960s, Australia was among a group of colonised countries – such as New Zealand and Canada – that would see intensified anti-racist activism, in part following the momentum of the American civil rights movement.⁶⁶ However, prior to the 1960s, Aboriginal Australian advocacy groups were already beginning to appear, particularly in Redfern. In 1937, what was likely the first site of organised Aboriginal resistance was set up in Redfern, the Aboriginal Progressive Association (APA), and by the 1940s, anti-racist

⁶³ Elizabeth Adler, Anwar Barkat, Bena-Silu, Quince Duncan, and Pauline Webb, *Justice for Aboriginal Australians: Report of the World Council of Churches team visit to the Aborigines, June 15 to July 3, 1981* (Sydney: Australian Council of Churches, 1981), 27.

⁶⁴ For example, the Sydney City Council described a dance at Redfern Town Hall in the late 1950s attended largely by Aboriginal Australians as an example of “misbehaviour.” (Jack Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice: An insider’s memoir of the movement for Aboriginal advancement, 1938-1978* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 48-51).

⁶⁵ Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Q&A: Shine a Light on Depression*, online video, 1 hour 6 minutes, 5 October 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s4303400.htm#>.

⁶⁶ Steve Fenton, “The Sociology of Multiculturalism: Is Culture the Name of the Game?,” in *Governance in Multicultural Societies*, eds. John Rex and Gurharpal Singh (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 53.

demonstrations and rallies were common at Redfern Town Hall.⁶⁷ During this period, Redfern's football club also founded its first Aboriginal Australian rugby team, the 'All Blacks.'

After the Freedom Rides in 1965 – which were headed by Redfern residents and activists, Perkins and Noff – a coalition of activists from Redfern, Fitzroy (Victoria), and South Brisbane (Queensland) began to develop. Gary Foley observes that these activists energised the development of the Black Caucus group (centred in Redfern) and part of the wider Australia Black Power Movement.⁶⁸ Redfern soon developed into a popular meeting place for visiting activists and members of marginalised communities; Foley recalls that African American troops on Rest and Recuperation leave during the late 1960s viewed Redfern as a safe congregating space.⁶⁹ Redfern acted as a home for a number of significant Aboriginal Australian figures, including Paul Coe (who spoke about the struggles of Aboriginal people at the largest rally of the anti-Vietnam Moratorium Movement in 1971 at Sydney Stadium), Ken Brindle (who sought justice for the murders of Aboriginal people by police), as well as the activists – Billy Craigie, Tony Coorie, Michael Anderson, and Bertie Williams – who dispatched from Sydney to set up the first Aboriginal Embassy: a beach umbrella pitched peacefully on the lawn of (Old) Parliament House, Canberra in 1972.⁷⁰ All of these activists were members of a significant anti-racist advocacy discussion group founded in 1968 whose other members included John Newfong, Alana and Samantha Doolan, Lyn Craigie, Peter Thompson, Bob and Kaye Belleair, Naomi Mayers, Gary Williams, Norma Williams, Pam Hunter, and Isobel Coe.⁷¹ Foley also credits activists based in Redfern with creating a

⁶⁷ Notable protests include a demonstration led by the APA over the chaining of Aboriginal workers to an Oodnadatta station and Bill Ferguson's rally for endorsement for the Aboriginal Welfare Board. (Whitaker, 84)

⁶⁸ Foley, 11

⁶⁹ Foley, 15.

⁷⁰ Foley, 14-17

⁷¹ Foley, 14.

network of different anti-racist activists living along the eastern coast of Australia during the early 1970s.⁷²

The 1970s also saw the successful instigation of a number of significant ‘firsts’ developed for and by the Aboriginal community in Redfern: the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service (the first Aboriginal legal aid office); the Aboriginal Medical Service of Redfern (a “self-help project” that acted as an early hub for free health care and the Australian Black Power movement); the National Black Theatre Company (which was run by Australia Black Power movement cofounder, Bob Maza), the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC, which campaigned for affordable homes for Aboriginal residents of Redfern), and an Aboriginal Children’s Services & Archives (which supported Aboriginal kinship culture and advocated for the welfare of Aboriginal children).⁷³

The chapters of Redfern’s history that are perhaps most well-known, however, concern ‘the Block:’ a residential area that is contained by Eveleigh, Caroline, Louis, and Vine streets. After multiple clashes between police, council members, and residents, Bob Bellear – cofounder of the AHC – successfully lobbied the Whitlam government for a grant to purchase the Block to create affordable Aboriginal housing between 1971-1973. In 2004, the Block was the site of protests and riots following the death of a teenage Aboriginal boy, Thomas Hickey while he was being pursued by the police. Following these events, calls were made by some politicians to “bulldoze the Block.”⁷⁴ In 2014, the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy was launched by Wiradjuri elder and activist Jenny Munro on the site of the Block to continue to advocate for affordable housing for Aboriginal people.⁷⁵

⁷² Foley, 17

⁷³ Foley, 19; Whitaker, 84; Linda Briskman, *The Black Grapevine: Aboriginal Activism and the Stolen Generations* (Annandale and Leichhardt: The Federation Press, 2003), 45-46;

⁷⁴ “Brogden’s riot response: bulldoze The Block,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, last modified 16 February 2004, <https://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/02/16/1076779880553.html>.

⁷⁵ Lucy McNally, “Redfern Tent Embassy claims victory with Aboriginal housing deal,” *ABC News*, last modified 27 August 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-27/redfern-tent-embassy-claim-victory-after-aboriginal-housing-deal/6728342>.

Gentrification

While the signs of gentrification vary, there are some common tell-tale signs: mass construction of dense expensive housing and commercial properties (resulting in decreasing numbers of poor tenants who tend to also be people of colour), generation of ‘arts hubs’ (which draw in tourism and create opportunities for further development of commercial areas for ‘trendy’ markets, such as ‘pop ups’ and festivals), and, as Thomas J. Campanella suggests, bars with bare brick walls and retro Edison light bulbs (in other words, a working class/art studio aesthetic emptied of the social and economic struggles that accompany a working class life, but tagged with its seemingly ‘authentic’ minimalism).⁷⁶ Pre-existing tensions in Redfern have been exacerbated by the slow gentrification of the area which has intensified since the ‘Olympic boosterism’ of the 1990s, a period of “development at all costs” in the lead up to the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney.⁷⁷ The pace seems to have quickened lately, perhaps spurred by the formation of the Redfern Waterloo Authority in 2005, a governmental extension instructed to plan for the rapid redevelopment of the inner suburbs of Sydney, as well as extreme rates of housing unaffordability advanced by the Sydney property market’s apparent ‘bubble.’⁷⁸ De Souza argues that gentrification is, put simply, “about making money” while also increasing governmental and commercial controls over a society.⁷⁹

Such controls often impact people of colour much more often and quickly than other groups of people. During the tenure of the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Munro claimed that gentrification is “white man

⁷⁶ Thomas J. Campanella, “Mapping the Edison Bulbs of Brooklyn,” *City Lab*, last modified 24 October 2017, <https://www.citylab.com/design/2017/10/mapping-the-edison-bulbs-of-brooklyn/543738/>.

⁷⁷ Elaine Stratford, “Australian Cultural Geographies,” in *Australian Cultural Geographies*, ed. Elaine Stratford (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8; Whitaker, 81.

⁷⁸ Zanny Begg and Keg de Souza, “Introduction,” in *There Goes The Neighbourhood: Redfern and the Politics of Urban Space*, eds. Keg de Souza and Zanny Begg (Sydney: Breakout Design Print Web, 2009), 6.

⁷⁹ McGrath and de Souza, “A Wicked Problem.”

code for *social cleansing*.”⁸⁰ Zanny Begg similarly observes that there are “brutal and often racist aspects of the gentrification process” since Aboriginal and migrant communities tend to be less wealthy than non-migrant and non-Indigenous groups, leaving these people vulnerable to displacement from increasingly expensive city centres “into less conspicuous, isolated suburban areas ... out of sight of the new inner city elites.”⁸¹ These displacements also make vulnerable communities more visible and vulnerable to policing. Kay Anderson suggests that the resistance that activists and protesters have experienced on ‘the Block’ “foreshadowed a fundamental conflict over Aboriginal entitlement to the sacred spaces of metropolitan capitalism; that is, to areas of high rental value in the inner city, sacred to the interests of capital.”⁸²

Within all of this – the histories, complex politics, and unresolved problems that continue to shape Redfern – de Souza installed her transpedagogical project. De Souza’s *School* made space for critical discussions about ideas that complicate narratives supported by overarching ideologies, the settler-colonial state, and ‘three cheers’ versions of Australian history. The materials used to create the setting of the *RSD* seem to almost pay homage to Redfern’s activist histories, directly referencing the (then recently disassembled) Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy and, with it, the many other actions carried out by Aboriginal rights activists in and around Redfern. This aesthetic connection to previous acts of resistance is strengthened by the content of the *RSD*’s ‘syllabus’; during the final talk provided by Cope and Oliver, postcolonial critiques of Australian and Scottish linguistic norms were

⁸⁰ Zanny Begg, “Artists and gentrification: Is that warehouse conversion my fault?” in *Spaces of Justice: Peripheries, Passages, Appropriations*, eds. Chris Butler and Edward Mussawir (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), 57-58; Jed Smith, “Redfern’s Tent Embassy Is Ready to Fight for the Block,” *Vice*, last modified 27 February 2015, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/8gdz7b/redferns-tent-embassy-is-ready-to-fight-for-the-block; Rick Feneley, “Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Redfern: We’ll evict them from the block says Aboriginal housing boss Mick Mundine,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, last modified 23 February 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/aboriginal-tent-embassy-in-redfern-well-evict-them-from-the-block-says-aboriginal-housing-boss-mick-mundine-20150223-13m6md.html>.

⁸¹ Begg, 58.

⁸² Anderson, “Reflections on Redfern,” 74.

explored that are still sometimes considered radical, subversive, or ‘black armband’ because they acknowledge the existence of, and damage caused by, racism, classism, colonialism, and neocolonialism.

In addition to Redfern, the *RSD* should also be framed within the context of its art setting: the 20th Biennale of Sydney. While the *RSD* took place outside the confines of the larger Biennale embassies – in a non-institutional in-between space – the *RSD* was nevertheless supported, advertised, and perhaps constricted by the supporting art festival structure, a source perhaps of renewed ‘boosterism’ in the years leading to the Biennale. Sitting at the final talk of the *RSD*, the theme of the Biennale, ‘The future is already here – it’s just not evenly distributed,’ felt apt, yet uncomfortable since the large organisation had previously received funds from the same corporation – Transfield Holdings – responsible for the running of Australia’s off-shore detention centres that, until very recently, were used to imprison refugees.⁸³ The *School* could be read as operating again in situ, this time within the Biennale and therefore in close proximity to an object of critique: a source of gentrification and displacement.

Begg posits that discussions regarding the connections between art and gentrification are often “heated” and tend to position socially and economically privileged artists – who are often middle class and white – as guilty of either “fetish[ising] the allure of working-class or migrant areas (whilst simultaneously destroying them),” or underestimating the desires of the working class’s “own aspirations for culture and change.”⁸⁴ Begg convincingly argues, however, that artists are often “relatively marginal” players in the shifts that cause gentrification.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the question remains: does the *RSD* fall into an old trap, redeploying Redfern as a symbol of struggling people of colour for the benefit of a largely white and middle class

⁸³ The title comes from a phrase that sci-fi author William Gibson’s used frequently: “The future is already here. It’s just not very evenly distributed.” (Stephanie Rosenthal, “The future is already here – it’s just not evenly distributed,” in *20th Biennale of Sydney: The future is already here – it’s just not evenly distributed*, ed. Stephanie Rosenthal (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 2016), 30.)

⁸⁴ Begg, 56.

⁸⁵ Begg, 56.

audience? I would contest that it does not; the primary purpose of the *RSD* space was to develop and distribute critical ideas, largely those of residents and activists sympathetic to, or directly involved in addressing, the challenges faced by Aboriginal Australians in and around Redfern. As a result, de Souza did not avoid addressing the *RSD*'s surroundings, but rather pulled her Biennale audience into conversations that directly addressed them.

3. Speaking and listening

The talks held by the *RSD* relied on two key social acts: speaking or listening. However, this speaking and listening was particular for two reasons. The first is that the speakers – or co-ranters – all came with lived experienced and knowledge of being a member of a marginalised groups. They were invited by Keg to drive the conversations at the *RSD*. The second is that listening appeared to be employed as a meaningful form of participation by the attendees to validate the knowledge shared by the speakers.

The dynamic created by this combination of informed speakers and active listeners was reflected in the pedagogical aims outlined clearly in the *School's* pamphlet. In this pamphlet, the *RSD* was described by de Souza as an attempt to provide space for marginalised voices to guide the content and concerns addressed during discussions about their own communities. Meanwhile, participants were explicitly asked to recognise their privilege – their social and economic standing, their abilities and opportunities – and listen to the speakers. To discuss the politics of this particular type of pedagogical dialogue, I have compacted together some of the acts that were co-occurring during the talks, namely the acts of viewing – gazing, watching, and observing – and of reciprocating – that is, being heard while speaking and being addressed while listening – that all parties were engaged in while speaking or listening. I will focus on the speakers first, then turn to the listeners.

Speaking to listeners: Lived experience as expertise

Over the course of the *School's* existence, speakers from Aboriginal Australian communities, academics versed in related histories, and activists committed to fighting structures that enforce oppressive norms were invited to talk before the (largely white and middle class) audiences of the Biennale of Sydney. These speakers led the discussions that took place inside *We Built This City* as well as the 'excursions' – the *Redfern-Waterloo: Tour of Beauty* facilitated by de Souza's related collective, Squatspace – that took participants on a walking tour around sites of resistance and gentrification around the inner western suburbs of Sydney. This is reflective of an anti-racist model of encountering knowledge that values lived experience – that is, first hand, personal accounts of occurrences – as a form of expertise. This position has been taken up in a range of critical disciplines, including Indigenous studies, postcolonial critiques, and intersectional feminism.

Moreton-Robinson observes that Indigenous studies was once primarily concerned with following an “endogenous approach” (that is, an approach that focussed on the voices of Indigenous peoples and histories exclusively) to produce knowledge about the experiences, histories, and cultures of Indigenous groups that countered the “partial truths” and “translations” offered by members of non-Indigenous dominant cultures.⁸⁶ While Moreton-Robinson describes this first approach as “extremely important,” she also notes that it was unintentionally responsible for at times reifying, rather than problematising, some aspects of cultural difference. She notes that in more recent Indigenous scholarship, the focus has shifted towards positing “density rather than our difference” as the core feature that distinguishes Indigenous experiences from white interpretations of Indigenous experiences.⁸⁷ As Moreton-Robinson explains, this “density” is created by “the complexity of the

⁸⁶ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xiv-xv; Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up To The White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, 93.

⁸⁷ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, xv.

lives we live in webs of kinship” – including as members of families, communities, workplaces, and other meaningful circles – which are often ignored, poorly represented, or denigrated by dominating groups.⁸⁸

This density appears to be similar to an intersectional feminist approach to identity. Intersectional feminism advocates for an understanding of identity as always multiple and impacted by our many coexisting relationships with various groups of people. While Indigenous scholarship continues to encourage research into the experiences of Indigenous people by members of the relevant communities, this discipline has begun to examine how these bodies of knowledge intersect with other structures, including oppressive frameworks, ideologies, and historical narratives that prevent acceptable representation and understanding of the full density of Indigenous lives. Today, both lived experience and the structures that shape it – including those that intersect, impinge upon, or support Indigenous cultures – are among the central foci of Indigenous scholarship.

Lived experience has also been investigated by postcolonial theorists and intersectional feminists. In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s postcolonial critiques, she urges the process of ‘learning to learn from below,’ an important revisionist method for more socially or economically privileged academics and activists which advocates turning directly to members of marginalised groups to learn about their experiences, rather than imagining or speaking on behalf of them.⁸⁹ Much of Spivak’s related work has concerned the politics of the ‘subaltern’ – a member of a group of people who have been colonised and subjugated by imperial powers – and if it is possible to restore the agency, subjectivity, and individuality of members of colonised groups through

⁸⁸ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, xv.

⁸⁹ This phrase has replaced an earlier interpretation of a process that she referred to as ‘unlearning one’s privilege as loss.’ (Mark Sanders, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Live Theory* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 77; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Setting to Work (Transnational Cultural Studies),” in *A critical sense: Interviews with intellectuals*, ed. Peter Osborne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 165-169.)

speech.⁹⁰ Spivak has also dedicated significant thought to developing practical means of encouraging collective action without retreating entirely to essentialism, such as ‘strategic essentialism.’ In this amended form of essentialism, an essence known to be false is used temporarily and strategically to mobilise collective action amongst a group of oppressed people (for example, women grouping together as ‘women’ to campaign against sexism).⁹¹ Spivak has distanced herself from this idea since its conception; she now contends that any form of essentialism will inevitably reinforce boundaries between those who are generally included and addressed when certain essences are called upon, and those who are not (such as, women living in poverty, transgender women, or Indigenous women). However, as Razmig Keucheyan argues, Spivak’s strategic essentialism remains one of few rigorous attempts to address the problems with anti-essentialist advocacy – including the disciplines that I discuss in this chapter – can encounter when moving from theory to collective action.⁹²

Influenced by such critiques, intersectional feminists, like Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, argue that one of the core interventions to feminist thinking facilitated by intersectionality is shifting the focus of activism away from “social elites” and towards “previously excluded communities and multiple oppressed groups.” For Thornton Dill and Zambrana, this involves, at times, restructuring conversations so that the experiences of marginalised groups are offered by the voices of people from those groups.⁹³ This is evident in the pedagogical practice of Margaret Montoya

⁹⁰ Razmig Keucheyan distils Spivak’s answer to the titular question of her essay “Can the subaltern speak?” (1983) to the following: “The subaltern cannot speak and the historian cannot find their voice in history.” However, this position has been refuted and complicated – by Spivak herself among others – since publication of this essay. (Razmig Keucheyan, *The Left Hemisphere: Mapping Critical Theory Today*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 204; for a thorough discussion of Spivak’s “Can the subaltern speak?” see Rosalind C. Morris, *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (2010).)

⁹¹ Keucheyan, 203.

⁹² Keucheyan, 203.

⁹³ Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, “Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens,” in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice*, eds. Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 6.

who maintains that a person of colour should always be invited to speak first on the topic of race.⁹⁴ Montoya also regularly invites the lived experiences of students from marginalised identity groups into the classroom as critical learning material. Similarly, hooks argues that while every student in a classroom can make a valuable contribution, this does not mean that “all voices should be heard all the time or that all voices should occupy the same amount of time” during every conversation.⁹⁵

As I underscored earlier, the format of the *RSD* talks called upon the circular format of CR sessions and circle discussions. However, these techniques were amended to provide the invited speakers with more time to be heard. At the *RSD*, these focal speakers came with lived experience as members of racial minorities: Cope is an Aboriginal Quandamooka woman and member of Aboriginal Australian activist art group proppaNOW while Oliver is a Gaelic Scottish academic from the Isle of Skye in the Scottish Hebrides who now teaches practice as research (among other new transdisciplinary studies) at Monash University.⁹⁶ Both enter the *RSD* in possession of their lived experiences (in addition to inherited familial and community knowledge) as well as insights garnered from their recent research into language groups in Australia and Scotland. Additionally, both might be understood as unruly figures within neoliberalism: both maintain practices – activist art-making and experimental research methods – that are not regularly encouraged under the competitive entrepreneurial ideology within which we live. While Cope spoke about her research into Australian Indigenous languages and their disappearance, Oliver offered his insights into Scottish experiences of linguistic displacement, particularly that of Gaelic speakers.

⁹⁴ Margaret Montoya, “Critical Race Theory: An Examination of Race in the Law,” (presentation, La Alizana Alliance Harvard Latino Law Conference, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, 19 February 2016).

⁹⁵ bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 21.

⁹⁶ The proppaNOW collective is made up of seven influential Aboriginal Australian artists who make provocative politically engaged art. Since 2003, Cope has been a member of proppaNOW alongside Vernon Ah Kee, Tony Albert, Richard Bell, Jennifer Herd, Gordon Hookey, and Laurie Nilsen.

Cope and Oliver were in part invited to speak at the *RSD* because they were members of marginalised groups with personal experiences of cultural displacement and dispossession (experiences that were compounded by the knowledge that they had both developed through extended research into languages that continue to face cultural erasure). However, they also fulfilled a more symbolic role: as strategically chosen representatives of the much larger marginalised groups that have been impacted in various ways by colonisation. As previously discussed, ‘strategic essentialism’ might be a useful means of congregating and mobilising oppressed groups of people. However, what happens when one member of a minority is called upon as a representative of the whole? In a ‘live’ situation, like a talk at the *RSD*, there is still the risk a member of a minority will be expected to understand, represent, and speak for an entire group of people without recognition of intragroup differences.

At the final talk at the *RSD*, attempts were made to quickly counteract this risk through the thorough introductions provided by de Souza and the co-ranters who were careful to situate their experiences as historically, culturally, and socially specific. At the final talk, de Souza carefully identified both Cope and Oliver not only with their racial identities, but with their interests and practices. Additional nuance was provided by the speakers themselves who spoke further on their relation to the space of the *RSD* and theme of displacement. When Oliver entered the conversation, for example, he admitted feeling somewhat out of place as a Scottish Gaelic citizen, yet connected to the discussion at hand:

I feel very challenged to be a person with a particular accent, sitting on several layers of cultural discourse and story and complexity, even in this space, and I absolutely pay my own respects firstly to Gadigal people and language group here. I grew up in a bicultural space, a bit like Aotearoa, but different. Where I grew up, English is very much a recent, settled language and when I say recent, I mean in my lifetime. I’m the first person to have English as a first language in

terms of my direct maternal line so I am very much interested in this power dimension of naming practices, such as how we construct maps.⁹⁷

At the talks, Oliver's introduction seemed to perform a sincere desire to acknowledge the specificity of his Scottish identity and English-speaking position as well as the empathy that he feels for – as well as the disconnects with – Aboriginal experiences of dispossession in Australia.

The format of de Souza's talks, which directed much of the speaking time to her co-ranters, is also perhaps reflective of a radical pedagogical lean toward redistributing power in the classroom to encourage a similar redistribution of power in the wider world. Freire writes that in an ideal critical learning space, the roles of teachers and students are shared.⁹⁸ While this can be taken somewhat literally – that students and teachers both contribute knowledge to a classroom space – it should also be understood as reflective of a desire for power and criticality to become more rotational and shareable. This strategy emphasises that everyone can share in the responsibility, expertise, and maybe even the pleasure of labouring towards critical ideas and activism outside of the classroom. By allowing others to provide the content of her talks, de Souza decentres herself away from the position of 'holder' of knowledge and towards that of an orchestrator and facilitator of ideas. The inclusion of co-ranters – an interesting choice of term by de Souza that seems to reclaim an oft dismissed mode of communicating (ranting) and those who partake in it – creates an opportunity to experience knowledge as something that is developed by networks of different thinkers who come with different types of expertise and interests, including members of marginalised communities. This act draws attention to communities and issues that often go undiscussed and therefore, remain invisible and untouchable. "The easiest and most 'natural' form of racism," writes Langton, "is the act of making the other invisible."⁹⁹ De Souza's

⁹⁷ De Souza, Cope, and Oliver, n. p.

⁹⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 80.

⁹⁹ Langton, "Aboriginal art and film: the politics of representation," 113.

cooperative dialogical practice attempts to undo this invisibility (and inaudibility) through her inclusion of people who have been treated as ‘others.’

Simultaneously, this practice of collective knowledge creation through dialogue between multiple speakers and listeners – some from marginalised groups, others from more privileged backgrounds – rejects the type of competitive individualism that is espoused and normalised by neoliberalism. As I have explored in previous chapters, neoliberal states benefit from citizens taking on exclusionary ‘othering’ practices because this encourages individuals to treat their relationship with the state and economic market, rather than those fostered between individuals, as their “chief relationship.”¹⁰⁰ By rewarding individual hard work, rather than collectivity, neoliberal states discourage the development of meaningful groups based on shared identity traits or – worse still for a neoliberal government – groups united not by sameness, but by resistance to state ideologies, policies, and norms in spite of their differences. Additionally, it might be interesting to consider the setup of the *RSD* talks as akin to affirmative action (an inclusive practice of diversification, usually implemented in workplaces and educational sites, that favours people who usually suffer from discrimination) in its explicit rejection of assumed equal opportunity by all attending parties to speak; instead, the attendees – identified as having more social privilege than the speakers in the flyer and therefore more opportunity to have their experiences and ideas heard on a day to day basis – are asked to listen to the co-ranters.

There seem to be two assumptions common amongst Indigenous studies scholars, postcolonial thinkers, and, as a result, intersectional feminists regarding the importance of expressing (and listening to) lived experiences of oppression. The first is that speaking and listening are active, important, yet different methods of exploring experiences; while speaking allows for expression, listening might provide validation of the expressed experiences.

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Evans, *The Politics of Third Wave Feminisms: Neoliberalism, Intersectionality, and the State in Britain and the US* (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 45.

The second assumption results from the first; since speaking and listening are significant, yet different acts – given that one facilitates expression and the other validation – the pattern of identity groups who speak and those who listen matters and requires redistribution if meaningful opportunities for speaking and listening become allocated at an imbalance. The approach embraced by the *RSD* – and cooperatively participated in by its attendees and co-ranters – suggests that de Souza is not the only one who believes that Aboriginal Australians (and people acting in solidarity with their struggles) are in need of more opportunities to be heard.

Participating by listening

While speaking is frequently recognised as an active role in both of the root disciplines of transpedagogy (radical pedagogy and socially engaged art), it is only in radical pedagogy that listening is often assumed as an active role when practised by a figure in possession of pre-existing power. The activeness of listening is less addressed in literature on socially engaged art. This is an interesting contrast with the approach of the previously discussed disciplines in which listening is an important active practice of recognition. I will return to this issue shortly, but will first briefly explore some conventional thinking in radical pedagogy and socially engaged art regarding listening.

In radical pedagogies, there is a desire to make students participate. This is often encouraged by placing students into speaking roles and teachers in more facilitatory roles that encourage them to listen to their students. In many radical pedagogies, listening is an important gesture of acknowledging the validity of student knowledge. For example, while recalling the year spent developing her first feminist art program in Fresno, Judy Chicago describes feeling that it was important to not ‘talk at’ her students when they fell into silence, but rather sit in the silence and wait for a student to speak and, in doing so, provide an opportunity for her and the rest of the class to listen to

that student and validate her experience.¹⁰¹ Likewise, in Freire's problem-posing pedagogical model, teachers are urged to create situations in which students act as "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" instead of "docile listeners."¹⁰² Under such conditions, Freire hoped that students and teachers would create knowledge together. In a radical classroom, a listening teacher is one who makes their traditional speaking platform shareable with students, encouraging the whole class to feel able to discuss and believe in the worth of their own ideas. Here, listening is an important gesture of sharing power and, again, validating knowledge. Absent from much of this discourse, however, is investigation into student listening as a form of critical engagement.

Similarly, writings on socially engaged art often focus on particular forms of participation that, as David M. Bell describes, get attendees "mobilised."¹⁰³ While listening and watching are not explicitly excluded from these discussions of mobilisation – that is to say, specifically dismissed as modes of participating – there is often a focus on other social acts, such as interaction, cooperative movement, or dialogue. Grant Kester's preferred term for socially engaged art is, after all, 'dialogical art.'¹⁰⁴ There is also frequent use of vague terms that refer to acts of participation without clear definition; in Kester's texts, the specific acts involved in "civic engagement" and "social interactions" are not defined, and in Nicolas Bourriaud's writing, the phrases "hands-on experience" and "arena[s] of exchange" appear without elaboration.¹⁰⁵ This is in part a useful element of socially engaged art writing; these vague terms allow the inclusion of a number of types of participation.

¹⁰¹ Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1975), 76.

¹⁰² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 81.

¹⁰³ David M. Bell, "The Politics of Participatory Art," *Political Studies Review* (2015): 4.

¹⁰⁴ Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 7, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Kester, 7; Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, and Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002), 15, 18.

However, many of the terms used in socially engaged art literature tend to imply that participation involves movement, activity, or speech.

This is not a mischaracterisation of the types of participation that socially engaged art often encourages. Socially engaged artworks, after all, often involve some amount of speaking and moving (in addition to listening or watching) on the part of participants at the behest of the facilitating artist. For example, in Tania Bruguera's 'short term projects,' participants have been placed in situations where they must move in order to avoid being trodden on by mounted riot police (*Tatlin's Whisper #5*, (2008), snort cocaine (*Untitled*, 2009), or take lie detector tests (*Surplus Value*, 2012).¹⁰⁶ Irit Rogoff notes that the contemporary art-world leans easily into developing sites of extensive talking, but that the content of such discussions too often receives less critical attention than the desire to create convivial get-togethers.¹⁰⁷ In other words, what appears to be important is not so much what is said or who says it, but rather that everyone involved seems to be getting along and doing something, anything. Similarly, Claire Bishop argues that one of the "pitfalls" of some socially engaged art is that space is not made "for critical reflection, nor for a spectatorial position."¹⁰⁸

For this reason, De Souza's transpedagogical work might seem unusual in its encouraging of participants to take part largely by listening and watching. These are acts that are more commonly associated, perhaps, with passive students or audiences, uninvolved spectators, and Kantian disinterested viewers observing a painting, a film, or sculpture for enjoyment, rather than active participants taking part in a work where social and pedagogical exchanges are the primary medium. However, I would like to suggest that such

¹⁰⁶ Bruguera splits her work into two categories: 'short term projects' that occur as one off confronting performance events and 'long term projects' that involve an attempt to disrupt some sort of social or political norm through a lengthy activist project.

¹⁰⁷ Irit Rogoff, "Turning," *e-flux journal* 0 (November 2008): n.p., accessed 3 April 2015, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/>.

¹⁰⁸ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2012), 264.

an assessment continues an approach to listening that is based on some inaccurate assumptions.

Michael Gallagher suggests that listening is often approached either through an idealistic framework in which “the hopes and dreams of democracy can be realised if the ‘powers that be’ will listen to the voices of those who have hitherto been ignored, silenced and excluded” or through a more cynical lens in which “attempts to listen are often tokenistic ... tactics which promise much but rarely result in any meaningful change.”¹⁰⁹ Michael Bull demonstrates the earlier idealistic position in his understanding of the ear as “both passive and democratic” since ears are always ‘open’ and cannot be closed in the same manner as the eyes. For Bull, the ear is therefore characterised by “an openness that constitutes [a] democratic nature.”¹¹⁰ The latter cynical attitude is playfully explored by Michael Chanan who suggests that the oversimplified “conventional wisdom” of moviemaking is that the soundtrack of a film is not there “to be listened to, but merely heard.”¹¹¹ The soundtrack, in other words, is included, but not expected to garner any meaningful attention.

Gallagher suggests that the ‘genuine’ versus ‘tokenistic’ opposition is, however, a false binary predicated on two core misconceptions. The first is that listening is always a receptive act passively practised to understand the coherent thoughts of the active speaker. This assumption renders a binary that positions listening as an inactive, passive, and receptive act and speaking as a more active, aggressive, and expressive practice. The second assumption is that listening – when practised genuinely rather than tokenistically – is always a ‘good’ or ‘ethical’ act.¹¹²

Let us look more closely at the first assumption. There is much that can be said to disrupt the assumption that listening is a receptive act. Firstly,

¹⁰⁹ Michael Gallagher, “Listening, Meaning and Power,” in *On Listening*, eds. Agnus Carlyle and Cathy Lane (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2013), 41.

¹¹⁰ Michael Bull, *Sound Moves: iPod Culture and Urban Experience* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 12.

¹¹¹ Michael Chanan, “Listening to Music in the Cinema,” in *On Listening*, eds. Agnus Carlyle and Cathy Lane (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2013), 129.

¹¹² Gallagher, 43.

listening changes. There are multiple forms of listening or hearing. Anne Anderson and Tony Lynch suggest that there are at least three identifiable ‘situations’ that might impact how well a person is able to understand what is being said to them. These include coping with competing sounds, hearing words or syntax that are unfamiliar, or ‘switching off’ due to a distraction or boredom. There are also, of course, situations in which the listener hears and understands what has been said to them.¹¹³ Jean-Luc Nancy splits listening into two acts that often eventually unite: “between a sense (that one listens to) and a truth (that one understands).”¹¹⁴ Parker J. Palmer and David Michael Levin have both used terms – “attentive listening” and “careful listening” – to refer to types of listening practised to empathise with and understand the speaker’s perspective, suggesting that listening is not always occurring in order to comprehend what is being heard, but may also have emotional and cognitive dimensions separate to understanding transmitted information.¹¹⁵ Listening, in other words, transforms as we concentrate (and lose concentration) on different elements of the soundscapes that we move through.

A second problem that upsets neat conceptions of listening as passive and speech as active is that speech rarely communicates content in the absence of additional non-word sounds or tonal cues. Speech, in other words, is rarely a direct transmission of meaningful sounds; it can deliver a range of objects and experiences. Nancy argues that there are multiple categories of heard material, including “the audible and the intelligible, (...) the sonorous and the logical.”¹¹⁶ Gallagher emphasises that while a person may articulate a sentence clearly, the content of their speech might be muffled by the focus of the listener who may be more concerned with simply hearing the voice of someone they love.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Anne Anderson and Tony Lynch, *Listening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5-6.

¹¹⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 2.

¹¹⁵ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 161-162; David Michael Levin, *The Listening Self: Personal Growth, Social Change and the Close of Metaphysics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 126.

¹¹⁶ Nancy, 2.

¹¹⁷ Gallagher, 42-43.

Similarly, Jean-Paul Thibaud speaks to the issue of there being more than semantic content to listen to when someone speaks, which he refers to as the “musicality of the spoken word.”¹¹⁸ Relatedly, it is possible to become distracted by the ‘thingness’ of words as they are spoken: their sounds and impressions.¹¹⁹ Additionally, the speaker may be incoherent or an inept communicator.

However, while the ‘types’ of speakers might vary, it should be noted that I felt that de Souza, Cope, and Oliver were coherent and careful with their words. This coherency seems to be intentional; a full transcript of this talk has been published in the follow-up text on the *RSD* which allows for later clarification and closer reading of the content of the talks. It also allows attendees to catch any information perhaps missed during the first listen at the original event.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the publication also includes essays and documents that provide further explanation of the histories and ideas referenced during the conversations.

A third problem with approaching listening as a passive act lies in its characterisation of the listener. Often, listeners are considered as akin to vessels that can be filled with all of the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of the speaker to the exclusion of all others, including the listener’s own ideas and feelings. It is as if the speaker ‘downloads’ all of their content into an empty waiting listener. Anderson and Lynch note that this model of listening approaches the “listener as [a] tape recorder” and is inadequate because it assumes that listening is about parroting, not comprehending, what has been heard.¹²¹ Instead, Anderson and Lynch prefer to approach the listener as an “active model builder.”¹²² They argue that

¹¹⁸ Jean-Paul Thibaud, “Giving Voice to Urban Atmospheres,” in *On Listening*, eds. Agnus Carlyle and Cathy Lane (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2013), 75.

¹¹⁹ Dennis Lim, *David Lynch: The Man From Another Place* (Boston and New York: New Harvest, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), 11.

¹²⁰ De Souza, Cope, and Oliver, n. p.

¹²¹ Anderson and Lynch, 9-11.

¹²² Anderson and Lynch, 11.

understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means.”¹²³

In other words, meaning is made not only in the utterance of a phrase, but also in the mind of the listener who interprets connections between the aural signifiers that they receive and the signified ideas, as well as the accompanying tone, timing, and incomprehensible sounds. Gallagher similarly argues that listening is more often “about making rather than receiving meaning.”¹²⁴ This interpretation of receiver as meaning-maker is perhaps reminiscent of Roland Barthes’s description of the reader in ‘Death of the Author’ (1968) as an active ‘holder’ of all of the allusions, referents, and information that make a text meaningful.¹²⁵ In the case of works, like de Souza’s, in which the text is spoken and listened to, the moment of reception occurs alongside (and in the presence of) its creation; as words are uttered (and facial expressions and body language are performed) by the speaker, they are also heard, read, and interpreted by the listener. In short, listening cannot be assumed as a passive act because it varies based on circumstance, does not always occur in response to coherent sounds, and, perhaps most importantly, is linked to an internal operation of meaning making. Listening, therefore, can be an active form of participation.

‘Good’ listening?

Now that we have established listening as a potentially active practice, I now wish to return to its role at the *RSD*: as a form of acknowledgement of privilege, lived experiences, and marginalised histories. However, to do this, I first need

¹²³ Anderson and Lynch, 6.

¹²⁴ Gallagher, 42.

¹²⁵ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author, 1968,” in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press, 2006), 45.

to address the second assumption that Gallagher identifies as problematic: that all ‘genuine’ listening is inherently ‘good.’ Earlier in this chapter, I argued that any situation that invites participation is not somehow more democratic or instantly de-hierarchising because it invites participation; the ways in which participation is initiated, facilitated, and maintained matters, and so do the people facilitating or participating. I also noted that not every person can or desires to participate in the same manner. A similar politics exists among speakers and listeners who possess different forms of power.¹²⁶ Gallagher posits that “from Cage to counselling to consultation,” there exists a common belief that:

listening is essentially liberatory, that if there were more listening then the world would be a better place. Such notions overlook the fact that listening can be used for a wide variety of purposes. This is the case even (and perhaps especially) where listening is deep, careful, attentive and responsive.¹²⁷

Gallagher goes on to name the News International phone hacking scandal of 2011 as demonstrative of the destructive capabilities of listening. There are many more examples of listening at the service of surveillance, regulation, control, and maintenance of docility – such as the eavesdropping tactics of the National Security Agency revealed by Edward Snowden’s leaks in 2013 – that demonstrate the invasiveness of some listening acts.

There is another type of listening that occurs not so much out of attempting to hear, but out of not being able to speak. These are acts of being silenced, repressed, or contained. This type of listening results from lack of access, opportunity, or representation of speaking roles. The examples that could be turned to here of this type of silencing are numerous: lack of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal Australians until 1967 which

¹²⁶ Gallagher, 43.

¹²⁷ Gallagher, 43.

prevented their votes from being counted; the ‘three cheers’ narrative of Australian history that ignores the experiences of Aboriginal Australians; the degree to which filmic representations of women often lack opportunities to dialogue with one another (as documented by users of the ‘Bechdel test’); normalised homophobia which can prevent queer people from identifying openly as members of the LGBTI+ community; rape culture which creates an environment that is hostile to the accounts of victims; and ‘freedom of speech’ arguments from conservatives that instruct people of colour to accept abusive racist slurs as expressions of ‘freedom.’¹²⁸ These are not so much conditions that have created willing listeners, but rather individuals that have retreated into reluctant silence resulting from the absence of opportunities to safely speak.

The existence of invasive and reluctant forms of listening, however, does not cancel out the potential for meaningful, sincere practices of listening to occur. For Gallagher, listening is a “technology of power” that can be deployed “tactically and strategically” to interesting and even potentially critical ends.¹²⁹ As Aboriginal Australian feminist Celeste Liddle has suggested, inclusive feminist dialogue requires listening just as much as it requires speaking.¹³⁰ In particular, it requires room for people from racial minorities to have their concerns and mistreatment heard and acknowledged by people who possess more power in societies. Similarly, Petra Bauer and Sofia Wiberg argue that listening is not an inert form of presence, but rather a radical means of “leaving

¹²⁸ The Bechdel test originated out of ‘The Rule’ (1985), an episode of Alison Bechdel’s comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1983-2008). In the comic strip, a character tells a friend that she will only watch a movie if it meets the following conditions: (1) that the film depicts at least two women who (2) speak to one another about (3) something other than a man. The joke has become a ‘rule of thumb’ that often appears in critical film discourses, feminist writing, and queer theory literature among other disciplines.

¹²⁹ Gallagher, 43.

¹³⁰ Liquid Architecture, *LA2015: What Would A Feminist Methodology Sound Like? Celeste Liddle*, online video, 11 minutes 52 seconds, 17 April 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMI_GZZ9eEs.

established structures of knowledge production and dissemination in order to pay attention to other possibilities.”¹³¹

It is this type of strategic critically engaged listening that I believe some transpedagogical projects, like the *RSD*, attempt to encourage. Suzi Gablik describes this type of listening as a sort of interweaving of the listener with the perspective and experiences of the speaker:

Art that is rooted in a “listening” self, that cultivates the intertwining of self and Other, suggests a flow-through experience which is not delimited by the self but extends into the community through modes of reciprocal empathy. Because this art is listener-centred rather than vision-oriented, it cannot be fully realized through the mode of self-expression; it can only come into its own through dialogue, as open conversation, in which one listens to and includes other voices. For many artists now, this means letting previously excluded groups speak directly of their own experience.¹³²

Writing during the 1990s – a period in which socially engaged art was not so much a formalised discipline but more a loosely connected group of artists and writers interested in art made through social events – Gablik is both observant and speculative. Over the last two decades, socially engaged artworks have continued to employ empathetic, inclusionary dialogical practices that draw different groups of people together.

Transpedagogical works, like de Souza’s, seem to continue this practice. This type of encounter – in which a privileged group of people is invited to learn something from a less privileged group of people – is not without complications and has recently received some critical attention. Rina Kundu and Nadine M. Kalin have recently taken up James Clifford’s concept of

¹³¹ Petra Bauer and Sofia Wiberg, “Protocol 1, Rehearsals: Eight Acts on the Politics of Listening,” *Art and the F Word: Reflections on the Browning of Europe*, eds. Maria Lind and What, How & for Whom/WHW (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 273.

¹³² Suzi Gablik, “Connective aesthetics: Art after Individualism,” in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 82-83

museums as “contact zones” (spaces in which dislocated “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other in often highly asymmetrical relations of power”) to argue that such environments run the risk of “merely reinforc[ing] present circumstances or rehearsing ... old certainties.”¹³³ When creating encounters between groups of people with varying degrees of social and economic privilege – especially pedagogical ones – Kester argues that confronting information can result in the more privileged attendees reaffirming their knowledge of their own privilege, but not necessarily learning anything about the people that they are encountering.¹³⁴ Kester explains that in this type of work, attendees might “consolidate a particular sense of identity among art world viewers,” that they are “tolerant, enlightened, willing to accept risk and challenge” rather than experience some sort of “lasting ... dislocation.”¹³⁵ Rounthwaite extends this notion in her detailed analysis of Group Material’s *Democracy* project (1988-1989) which included facilitation of a panel led by members of a homeless community, *Homeward Bound*. The panel was attended largely by a middle-class audience. Like Kester, she notes that the encounter acted in part as a “spectacle of difference,” but that the pedagogical moment also managed to generate a relationship between the listening attendees and the speakers that replaced the conventional “middle-class viewing of the homeless as objectified others” with an understanding “that people without privilege have something to teach” and “a right to ... space” to do so.¹³⁶

It is of course difficult to stamp works that involve pedagogical exchanges between members of groups with various levels of influence and power as wholly operating one way or another. The pedagogical set up of the *RSD* in addition to the implications of representatives of oppressed groups speaking to a Biennale audience in an artwork that also functions as an

¹³³ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 198; Rina Kundu and Nadine M. Kalin, “Participating in the Neoliberal Art Museum,” *Studies in Art Education* 57, issue 1 (2015): 47.

¹³⁴ Kester, 165.

¹³⁵ Kester, 63.

¹³⁶ Rounthwaite, 140-142.

educational experience are, crudely, complicated. It is tempting to return to the simplified model of listening as either ‘genuine’ or ‘tokenistic’ – or alternatively, ‘dislocating’ or ‘consolidating’ as Kester among other writers might suggest – so that I can assert the *RSD* as a sincere attempt to facilitate meaningful expressions of and encounters with critical ideas. However, as I have previously outlined, these listening tropes do not account for the complexity and activity involved in listening, nor the various types of (or acts involved in) speaking.

The other complication in providing some sort of final ‘interpretation’ of de Souza’s employment of listening at the *School* is that, unlike the pedagogical encounters described by Kundu, Kalin, Kester, or Rounthwaite, the final talk at the *RSD* did not result in argumentative clashes. Such clashes can be useful for identifying clues of how reinforcing or confronting a work has proved to be for attendees, if it has impacted their sense of social position or relationship with local histories. Since the *RSD* was absent of revealing clashes, the quality of listening has to be instead read through the atmosphere and mood of the talk.

Unlike Song-Ming Ang’s *Guilty Pleasures* (the case study that appears in the next chapter), in which the mood of the work is joyous and convivial, the atmosphere of the *RSD* was sombre and quiet. When the final talk at the *RSD* was over, the attendees largely remained silent. It seemed that many of the attendees were struck by what they had been told under the murky green light of the supertent. It felt like a very small display of reverence for what had been heard: a respectful silence, a desire to let the speakers’ knowledge fill the space by not speaking over (or after) it, to let it exist, to let it be the ‘final word.’

Like other forms of engagement and activity, feeling and listening can be exhausting. Melora Koepke has briefly described a type of fatigue specific to learning as a process of being ‘unmade.’ She describes this as the experience of being immensely affected by information:

This semester, I am designing tutorials in an undergraduate class on use of global natural resources. [...] This week one student tells me she felt a MDE (major depressive episode) emerge as she listened to a slide-lecture about terminator seeds inheriting the earth. Another student broke out in a full-body rash as she delivered a Powerpoint presentation about the South Pacific nation of Nauru, laid waste by the aftereffects of mining and now forced to import all their food. I understand them: I myself have been unmade in the classroom during a reading of Guattari's *The Three Ecologies*; [...] the more-than-human also contains a great deal of humanity.¹³⁷

The political can be immersive and overwhelming, both bodily and psychologically. What Koepke attends to in this brief section of her essay is how intimate and sensitive intellectual experience can be, including when one is reading, listening, or otherwise internalising information.

There is something to be said about the weight that Australian history places on a listener that is particular to itself. Stories of mass murder, physical and sexual violence, family fragmentation, and intergenerational trauma characterise much of post-invasion Australian history. Our national narratives unravel quickly into the destruction of Aboriginal people's lives. This history – the number of people hurt, the list of traumatic events that elongates as more are unearthed, the inadequacy of governmental responses, and, now the encroaching force of gentrification – is overwhelming, and histories that involve this kind of overwhelming loss are difficult to grasp in their entirety. Something as inaccessible as trauma – that which has been repeatedly argued as unshareable, something that resists absolute representation – is what we attempt to understand when we address Australian history.¹³⁸ In other words,

¹³⁷ Melora Koepke, "Towards a Pedagogy of Moments," *Inflexions* 8, (April 2015): 157, accessed 8 July 2015, <http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/radicalpedagogy/main.html#Koepke>.

¹³⁸ See Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, (2005); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (2002); Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma" (1995); and Patricia Violi, "Trauma Site Museums and Politics of Memory: Tuol Sleng, Villa Grimaldi and the Bologna Ustica Museum" (2012).

traumatic histories are more often felt than they are adequately discussed or understood.

Perhaps we need to consider another aspect of listening to account for the character of the listening engaged in at the *RSD*. Nancy argues that “to listen is ... to stretch the ear” and experience an “intensification and a concern, a curiosity or an anxiety” for the speaker.¹³⁹ In other words, listening is impelled by feelings, such as interest or worry for the subject who is being heard or spoken of. Perhaps, then, when we listen, we sometimes participate actively through shared feelings. Christine Stewart writes that listening allows us to “experience and embody the extent of our entanglement” with other people.¹⁴⁰ Listening is perhaps a subtle gesture of being affected by – and therefore quietly engaged with – the people and situations that surround us. Listening, in this model, is a socially active and wordless affective response that allows the listener to take in the perspective and experiences of the speaker. Listening might be a process of knotting oneself to another person, even if only temporarily.

If we take listening as an affective and social experience, then de Souza’s event can also be understood as a temporary school that facilitated affective speechless exchanges – including shared feelings, body language, facial expressions, sounds of interest – to occur between people with different experiences of and identifications with Australian histories: some with links to oppressive circumstances and intergenerational trauma, others attempting to gain some understanding of these experiences. In listening and quietly taking in the knowledge provided by Cope and Oliver, the attendees seem to perform a subtle (and small) gesture of validation and acknowledgment. Instead of asking provocative questions that expressed disbelief or making comments that railroaded over the narratives brought to the space by Cope and Oliver, the

¹³⁹ Nancy, 5.

¹⁴⁰ Christine Stewart, “Treaty Six From Under Mill Creek Bridge,” in *Toward Some Art*, eds. Fred Wah and Amy De’Ath (Banff: The Banff Centre Press, 2015), 138.

attendees chose to either make personal connections to the material, express interest in Cope and Oliver's work, or silently take in the situation.

Since the *RSD* involved collective intellectual activity, it is tempting to compare the participants to researchers and the school to a study group of sorts, with some researchers (de Souza, Cope, and Oliver) presenting their research to a listening group of colleagues (the attendees). In many universities, research is often received in the form of a lecture or PDF. These are formats that do not always allow the speaker or writer to discover which sections of their research energise their listener or reader, or immediately respond to questions or moments of confusion. In the case of research accessed in print form, the reader might respond to the work of the author by highlighting sections of the text or creating marginalia (further thoughts, questions, and definitions of new terms that are scrawled around the printed words of the author). These responsive actions reveal which parts of the research have moved or mystified the reader. However, these actions are rarely seen by the original author and therefore usually cannot be responded to.

By contrast, in a live situation – like a study group or de Souza's *RSD* – the 'authors' of the research are present and can therefore experience the moments of impact. These are noticeable in the form of performed gestures, such as nodding, gazing, remaining still (so as to not interrupt the speakers with the sound of scrunching storage bags), sudden note-taking on a phone or notepad, or changing facial expressions. De Souza's co-ranters also had the opportunity to respond to any questions they received in a dialogic exchange. Even though there were only a few of these exchanges, what is important is that a space was created where such dialogue could occur. The potentiality of these exchanges is significant because it allows for the speakers' experiences and ideas to not only be heard, but understood and felt. Understanding novel ideas sometimes requires clarifications, further argumentation, or rephrased explanations.

Sometimes understanding can only occur after quiet digestion and internalisation of new ideas has taken place. In ‘Being Taken for Granite’ (2004), Ursula K. Le Guin wrote that she was often mistaken for a person with a tough exterior that could easily deflect the moods and changes of the world around her; she was often taken “for granite.” By contrast, she considered herself to be a more muddy and malleable person, because

people make footprints in mud. As mud I accept feet. I accept weight. I try to be supportive, I like to be obliging. [...] I yield and react and respond and give way and adapt and accept. [...] I have my own nature and am true to it just as much as granite or even diamond is, but it is not a hard nature, or upstanding, or gemlike. You can’t chip it. It’s deeply impressionable. It’s squashy.¹⁴¹

After the final talk at the *RSD*, it seemed that most of the people present accepted the weight of the knowledge that they had listened to, allowing it to sink into them quietly, like a fresh footprint in soft mud.

After the RSD

The *RSD* took place during a period in which there remained much to be acknowledged and repaired between Aboriginal Australians and national governing bodies. Just a year after the close of the *RSD*, a historic proposal for reconciliation – *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) – was collectively authored by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, elders, and activists from across Australia. The statement expressed two desires. The first was for a First Nations Voice representative body to be established that can be turned to by Australian parliamentarians for legal advice concerning Aboriginal traditions, histories, rites, places, cultures, and rights. The second was that a Makarrata Commission be set up to create a treaty between Aboriginal and

¹⁴¹ Ursula K. Le Guin, “Being Taken For Granite,” in *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (Boston: Shambhala, 2004), 8-9.

Torres Strait Islanders and the Australian federal government. This official body would facilitate “truth-telling” about Australian history and, as Noel Pearson explains, “[heal] divisions of the past” by “acknowledging that something has been done wrong.”¹⁴² In essence, the statement requested the development of formal means of ensuring that Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander people can speak of their experiences and be heard. The proposal has since been rejected by the Australian government.

De Souza’s transpedagogical project engaged in practices that, in an ideal situation, might be employed in other spaces to begin the work of adequately attending to the histories and structures that continue to negatively impact Aboriginal Australian communities. This is not because de Souza’s *RSD* promised ‘genuine’ listening or representation of every wrongdoing, but because it created the potential for these things to unfold eventually. While neoliberal thinking, ahistorical narratives, and gentrifying forces remain the prime informants of mainstream national narratives, de Souza’s *RSD* reminds us that there are alternative avenues and growing communities that will support counter narratives, critical perspectives, and Australians impacted by displacement and dispossession.

¹⁴² Daniel McKay, “Uluru Statement,” *Parliament of Australia*, last modified 19 June 2017, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/UluruStatement.

Chapter VI

Song-Ming Ang's listening party

Berlin-based Singaporean artist Song-Ming Ang is a transdisciplinary practitioner interested in the sociality of sounds. Since 2007, Ang has been facilitating *Guilty Pleasures*, an ongoing series of listening parties. These listening parties are dedicated to sharing songs or aural experiences that, as Ang suggests, one enjoys in private but is hesitant to share with others.¹ The performances have resulted in the publication of a companion text, *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* (2011), which contains further confessions and thoughts on guilty pleasures submitted by artists, writers, musicians, curators, and theorists.

On a wintery night in 2014, I attended an iteration of *Guilty Pleasures* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Sydney.² The listening party was tucked away in a corner of the gallery inside a private seminar room. Once inside, I found a number of participants seated on bean bags and couches arranged in a messy semi-circle. In the middle, Ang was seated on a small lounge with a laptop, microphones, and turntable before him. Behind him were

¹ Song-Ming Ang, "Introduction," in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvizor, 2011), 4.

² *Guilty Pleasures* was invited into the MCA as apart of *Sonic Social*, a performance art program organised by Performance Space curators Jeff Khan and Tulleah Pearce. The program drew together a range of participatory sound works that activated various areas of the MCA, including thoroughfares, stairwells, foyers, and meeting rooms.

two screens which beamed a live video feed of the music videos playing on his laptop. The regular house lights had been switched off and replaced with the romantic glow of discothèque lights. Blanketed by a cold night, the institutional seminar room felt surprisingly cosy, like a lamp-lit house party.

One by one, attendees would approach the centre lounge to sit by Ang's side and confess a song that they considered to be a guilty pleasure. The song choices were varied, but were often mainstream pop hits that were a decade or two old. As the music played, Ang and the confessor would talk about the song, the aesthetics of the accompanying music video, their attachments and memories, what they consider to be more acceptable music, and why the song in question was a guilty pleasure.

In this chapter, I will focus on three elements of Ang's work: his use of confessional dialogue to provoke conversations, his invitation of emotionality into a knowledge-building environment, and his turn to an unusual object of study that sits at the intersection of multiple minor aesthetic categories, including the kitsch, the camp, and the naff. Since *Guilty Pleasures* is an ongoing series, I approach this work as unfinished and potentially capable of producing experiences that I may not have observed at the performance that I attended. My analysis of this work is based on my observations of the listening party that I participated in during 2014, documented (photographed and filmed) moments from other performances of *Guilty Pleasures*, as well as ideas recorded in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* (which acts less as documentation of a specific performance of *Guilty Pleasures* and more as a speculative text on the phenomena of guilty pleasures). My analysis is conducted with the understanding that this work changes each time that it occurs and might provoke different conversations each time that it is performed.

Unintentionally (trans)pedagogical

Ang's listening parties are among a string of (often tongue-in-cheek) works that explore the ways in which popular or 'bad' music mediates congenial

social exchanges. In addition to his listening parties, Ang has facilitated mobile karaoke nights (*Yesterday (Mobile Karaoke)*, 2011), filmed aging men singing their school songs from memory (*Be True to Your School*, 2010), and instigated a collaborative project dedicated to writing *A Song to Change the World* (2018–ongoing). In his *Manifesto for Bad Music* (2009), Ang defines ‘bad music’ as a forgiving force, “a companion of the highest order” that “keeps no records of wrongs” and is “unfailing in its faithfulness.”³ Ang has returned to his listening parties many times as his musically oriented oeuvre has developed, perhaps like a research cluster that spurs his ongoing investigations into maligned sounds.

Guilty Pleasures, however, does not assert itself as a research cluster or alternative school. This differentiates Ang’s project from the others that I have discussed in this thesis so far which register themselves quite immediately as artworks operating as alternative learning centres (in the case of Kelly Doley’s work) or schools (in the case of Keg de Souza’s project). *Guilty Pleasures* is more akin to an informal learning situation, such as a support group, book club, or – to recall a historical feminist practice – a consciousness raising session. The twist is that the issue in question, the connecting thread for all attendees, is their enjoyment of an informal genre of bad songs.

However, I want to emphasise that a transpedagogy’s closeness to a recognisable pre-existing educational structure (formal or informal) should not be the litmus test of transpedagogical work. Rather, the common feature of transpedagogy tends to be acts of sharing and creating knowledge, not the reproduction of an educational structure in an art context. While some transpedagogues might deploy familiar signs of classrooms (like Doley) or make references to pre-existing educational configurations in order to assert an association with acts of learning (like de Souza), many transpedagogical works

³ Song-Ming Ang, *Manifesto for Bad Music*, 2009, vinyl text installation, Old Kallang Airport, Marina Bay (2011 Singapore Biennale), in jusdeanans, “*Manifesto for Bad Music*,” *Song-Ming Ang*, online video, 1 minute 46 seconds, 26 March 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiY3xUQ-RC0>.

also treat learning as an act that does not belong strictly to institutions or designated periods of education. Rather, transpedagogies experiment with different educational possibilities, sometimes through new models, sometimes in more ambiguous social settings. Many transpedagogical works create learning opportunities that validate marginalised fields of study, use experimental methods of learning, and treat social and affective engagement as key to encountering knowledge in meaningful ways. All of these acts take place during *Guilty Pleasures*.

However, it remains that unlike the other case studies that I have included in this thesis, *Guilty Pleasures* is not so much an informal learning situation – that is, a situation that has been *designed* to develop knowledge outside traditional (often now neoliberalised) educational spaces – as it is a situation that unintentionally *becomes* educational. In other words, it is a situation that has not been designed to facilitate knowledge creation, but results in its creation anyway. Ang’s artwork is perhaps unexpectedly educational – and therefore transpedagogical – in its facilitation of affective interactions that prompt exchanges of knowledge about an unusual topic. The inclusion of this project in my thesis is something of an experiment in thinking through transpedagogy, its flexibility as a practice centred around alternative modes of learning, and the processes that can be characterised as transpedagogical.

Confessions

For an early enactment of Ang’s work hosted by the National University of Singapore Museum in 2007, an invitation was printed that declared: “Abba is ok, Bananarama is cool, Celine Dion is hot, and Kenny G is God. We all stand accused, but will you confess to your sins?”⁴ Ang claims that he has been told “on several occasions” that *Guilty Pleasures* can feel “like an Alcoholics

⁴ Lim Qinyi, “No Man’s Music, No Man’s Band,” in *WE*, ed. Wang Zineng (Kent Ridge: National University of Singapore, Museum, 2007), n.p.

Anonymous meeting” for lovers of ‘terrible’ pop music.⁵ This is perhaps because the core social gesture engaged in by attendees of *Guilty Pleasures* is a voluntary confession. Like other examples of transpedagogy, Ang’s listening party format is reliant on social cooperation, namely contributing to a steady stream of ‘poor’ song choices to prevent any awkward halts or pauses in the listening party.

Michel Foucault argues that confessions are social exchanges that usually occur within unequal power relationships. He states that the act of confessing

is a ritual ... in which the speaker ... does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile.⁶

However, unlike confessions that take place in disciplinary institutions, such as churches or police departments that exchange ‘sins’ for punishments, Ang’s *Guilty Pleasures* operates more on the logic of a support group; confessions are absolved without judgment because everyone arrives with a burden of some sort to share. Despite the appropriation of the rhetoric of the disciplinary confessional, the admissions made during *Guilty Pleasures* were often treated as relatable knowledge that is yet to be shared, rather than admissions of truly deviant (and therefore punishable and correctable) behaviour. This is reflected in the MCA’s version of the invitation to Ang’s work in which participants were lightheartedly warned that they would be asked to confess their “embarrassing musical indulgences,” but would be “absolved from [their] musical sins without contrition.”⁷ In other words, at *Guilty Pleasures*, every attendee is at once a

⁵ Ang, “Introduction,” 4.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1990), 61-62.

⁷ “What’s On: Song-Ming Ang – Guilty Pleasures,” *Museum of Contemporary Art*, last modified October 2015, <http://www.mca.com.au/events/song-ming-ang-guilty-pleasures-listening-club/9029/>.

disciplinarian – upholding music taste – and a confessor – a partaker in terrible popular music.

A typical confession at the 2014 listening party that I attended would begin with Ang gently asking if anyone would like to share a guilty pleasure. While some gaps were longer than others, most attendees seemed to be keen to keep the night moving and music playing as fluidly as possible, coming forward often only after a few seconds of looking at one another to see if anyone was feeling braver. Once seated next on the central lounge, the confessor would tell Ang their name and confess their guilty pleasure. The song is then dialled up and played on the laptop, the video feed of which is synchronised to the large screens behind the confessor for the seated attendees to watch.⁸ Among the confessed songs were Berlin's 'Take My Breath Away,' The Black Eyed Peas's 'My Humps,' Fox's 'Livin' Out My Fantasies,' Whitney Houston's 'I Wanna Dance with Somebody,' Kylie Minogue's 'Better the Devil You Know,' New Found Glory's 'Sonny,' S Club 7's 'Don't Stop Movin',' Britney Spears's 'I'm a Slave 4 U,' and the Vines's cover of Outkast's 'Ms Jackson.' As the song plays, Ang asks the attendee leading questions – *what do you like about this song? How do you feel about that?* – often resulting in further confessions of personal experiences and memories associated with the song in question. Once the conversation or song ends – whichever comes first – Ang thanks the attendee for their song choice and for sharing. The confessor then returns to their seat and the process is restarted.

In addition to the confessing attendees, there are additional participants who perhaps unknowingly take part in this work. Drawn into the fray of *Guilty Pleasures* by their attending fans, the artists responsible for the songs volunteered at *Guilty Pleasures* could be understood as additional contributors to this work. While the attendees and Ang produce new creative dialogue 'in the moment,' it might be interesting to consider, for example, Kylie Minogue

⁸ At other iterations of *Guilty Pleasures*, songs have also been played from records brought along to the listening parties by attendees.

and Whitney Houston as appropriated makers, whose performances and poetry sometimes greatly influence – or interrupt – the dialogue that occurs throughout the listening parties. For example, during a playing of ‘I Know Him So Well’ – a show tune performed by Elaine Paige and Barbara Dickson – the confessor switches between recounting a story about “standing on chairs, shouting, really pissed” as a teenager with her friends, to dramatically mouthing the lyrics, “Why am I falling apart?” The appearance of the pronoun ‘I’ in both the lyrics and confessor’s storytelling causes a strange slippage in which the song appears to narrate the confessor’s teenage feelings. By this logic, other participants in *Guilty Pleasures* could also include phantom referents – older brothers and sisters, work colleagues, and exes – whose role in defining the confessors’ tastes were often discussed over the course of the evening.

There are some recognisable importations from radical pedagogy into *Guilty Pleasures*, most notably Ang’s use of elements of circle teaching and encouragement of storytelling. Like de Souza, Ang does not implement circle teaching proper, but operates on a similar logic of using circular seating to encourage voluntary input by multiple (or, if possible, all) attendees. Inviting attendees to sit almost in the round for *Guilty Pleasures* at first appears to create a theatrical proscenium, the seating shape framing the small area where Ang and the confessor sit together. Employing this convention quickly assigns different roles for different places in the room: while listening and responding is expected when seated in the semicircle facing Ang, confessing is expected while ‘on display’ next to Ang at the centre of the semi-circle. However, unlike the audience of a theatrical proscenium proper – which traditionally creates a ‘fourth wall’ that leaves the audience invisible to the drama unfolding on stage – Ang’s attendees are invited to respond and dialogue with the confessor and Ang. For this reason, the semi-circle reads as a radical pedagogical manoeuvre, intended to encourage attendees to take notice of and engage in each other’s




Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 10.

Song-Ming Ang, *Guilty Pleasures*, 2007-, performance, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Documentation: Heidrum Löhr.

ideas and stories; by remaining in view of one another, attendees might become invested in each other's experiences and feel comfortable enough (or gently pressured enough) to divulge their own stories in solidarity.

The personal content of the dialogues shared at *Guilty Pleasures* harks back to the consciousness raising (CR) activities of second wave feminists which have also been used in multiple radical pedagogies and – as already highlighted in this thesis – transpedagogies. Sharing personal narratives is a means of shifting an issue from the individual to the social; for second wave feminists, CR groups were instrumental in helping women understand that their mistreatment should not be minimised to individual unrelated experiences, but rather understood as symptomatic of structural sexism, among other forms of oppression. CR sessions were often spaces in which under-recognised issues – which have varied as laws, policies, and social attitudes have slowly changed – could be discussed and validated as legitimate common struggles. Similarly, exercises that encourage personal narratives to enter communal spaces are used in radical pedagogies to validate student experience. This act is part of a wider project of humanising students, acknowledging their critical capabilities, and linking their experiences to dominant social forces.

In Ang's work, the role of the speaker – or teacher – is dispersed and dynamic, occupied temporarily by multiple attendees. While Ang maintains a facilitatory role throughout the work, he is far from the primary contributor of content or ideas shared over the course of the listening party. Rather, the central contributions are made by the attendees. This might be understood as similar to teachers making space for student knowledge to permeate lessons, validating student experience as worthy of discussion and a potential source of new or critical knowledge. For collaborating critical race theory educators Margaret Montoya, Irene Vasquez, and Diana Martínez, exercises that encourage students to share personal stories and intimate experiences are an engaging means of ensuring that students feel valued and capable of shaping

not only their classroom environment, but also larger bodies of knowledge.⁹ This encourages students to question the people and means that are trusted when building knowledge. Therefore, the importance of storytelling does not always lie in the accuracy of the recollection, but rather in the ability of stories to personalise experiences, histories, and oppression. In Ang's work, sharing confessions of guilty pleasures – and the stories associated with them – in the round becomes an act with both relationship and knowledge building potential.

Emotional labour

If confessions are the first form of social cooperation that drives *Guilty Pleasures*, then emotional labour is the second. In addition to confessional dialogue and an intriguing central 'field of study,' so to speak – one that I will explore in further detail later in this chapter – *Guilty Pleasures* also involves a degree of emotional labour, particularly supportive gestures that occur throughout the performance. While emotional labour is common practice in most educational settings, radical or normative, radical pedagogues often actively embrace a variety of emotions while teaching and learning. hooks argues that “silence and obedience to authority” tend to be most commonly rewarded in traditional schooling while “loudness, anger, emotional outbursts, and even something as seemingly innocent as unrestrained laughter [are often] deemed unacceptable, vulgar disruptions of classroom social order.”¹⁰ There are some common exceptions, however, in formal classrooms; Wayne Koestenbaum argues that “pedagogy can't do without humiliation” because every “student, no matter how sane and obliging the teacher, structurally occupies the position of *the object in danger of being sacrificed*.”¹¹ He continues

⁹ Margaret Montoya, Irene Morris Vasquez, and Diana V. Martínez. “Name Narratives: A Tool for Examining and Cultivating Identity,” *Chicana/o Latina/o Law Review* 32, no. 2 (2014): 120-121.

¹⁰ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 178.

¹¹ Wayne Koestenbaum, *Humiliation* (New York: Picador, 2011), 22

that every “student ... knows the pain of getting it wrong, and acquires a gut knowledge of strict standards.”¹²

To counteract the muscle memory of rising hot embarrassment induced by answering ‘incorrectly’ (a response that students often develop early in educational spaces), both Ang and the attendees take part in developing an atmosphere of care and understanding. In *Guilty Pleasures*, this atmosphere is in part developed by Ang who encourages social engagement by placing attendees at ease in a casual environment. The set-up that Ang employs for *Guilty Pleasures* is seductive and cosy. Formal seating is swapped for the comforts of a lounge room with Ang often choosing carpets and beanbags over chairs and tables to produce a space that feels more intimate and homely than the average gallery space. *Guilty Pleasures* often takes place at night and in spaces where the house lights can be dimmed (or replaced with warmer lighting). At some iterations of *Guilty Pleasures*, alcohol is served to help attendees relax into a more party appropriate mood. The result is a space that is reminiscent of a living room or intimate karaoke box, places that stimulate the types of relations and dialogue that occur at cosy parties: friendly small talk that opens suddenly into intimate conversations. In Ang’s *Book of Guilty Pleasures*, many of the writers use a friendly, casual register that reflects the mood of the performances.

The openness and comfort developed over the course of *Guilty Pleasures* is also found in many radical pedagogies. hooks, for example, is a proponent of blurring the boundaries between the language of public and private relationships in her engaged pedagogy. She suggests that although conventionally “love has no place in the classroom,” it is warm, caring relationships between teachers and students that encourage passionate learning.¹³ This practice, for hooks, is also a direct rejection of the ways in which capitalism limits relationships, sets emotional boundaries, and tends to

¹² Koestenbaum, 22.

¹³ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 198.

foster “objective consideration” of students – which is a transactional relational mode that is also common in other workplaces and social situations – instead of meaningful connections.¹⁴

While Ang acts as an approachable facilitator – preparing an inviting space, playing songs only as they are volunteered, asking leading questions, propelling conversations when attendees fall silent – the attendees are entrusted with maintaining a warm and inviting atmosphere. In particular, they must diffuse the embarrassment of confessing to having poor taste through small supportive gestures and ‘evening out’ one another’s confessions with further admissions. Koestenbaum suggests that “humiliation, if passed through the masochistic centrifuge, becomes joy, or uplift – all emotional dissonances resolved.”¹⁵ Ang’s assumption that a listening party can operate as an opportunity to ‘absolve’ the embarrassment and shame brought on by guilty pleasures reveals an interesting paradox about shameful feelings: one might feel shame for enjoying an object when one realises that one’s enjoyment might be revealed, and yet, interestingly, revelation also seems to be the act that can bring an end to one’s shame. The burden of humiliation is easier to bear when a source of shame becomes communal, rather than a source of exclusion. If everyone’s taste is as bad as each other’s, then there is little chance of disciplinary action. No harsh judgments can be made that are not also at once hypocritical and, therefore, false. The act of reciprocal sharing of humiliating information seems to be a plateauing gesture that levels everyone to a similar plane of humility.¹⁶

In addition to mutually assured confessions, attendees also engaged in smaller supportive gestures that maintained a comfortable atmosphere at the listening party. This included sharing in feelings of the confessing attendees,

¹⁴ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 198-199.

¹⁵ Koestenbaum, 2.

¹⁶ This is an aspect of guilty pleasures that, of course, also makes them a vulnerable genre for recuperation into capitalist culture; if consumers are willing to share their guilty pleasures to feel accepted rather than to drive communal critique, then the cycle only continues.

actively listening, responding to jokes and stories with supportive laughter, and engaging in dialogue with the confessor and Ang. These acts are similar to the practice of ‘echoing,’ a mode of classroom participation previously discussed in this thesis. Echoing is described by Montoya a practice of visibly or audibly supporting an idea expressed by another class participant, often through murmurs of agreement, nods, or snapping fingers (a particularly common gesture amongst American students).¹⁷ These are subtle gestures of recognition that do not involve speech which might be chosen over speaking out of nervousness, incapability, or even fear (and therefore desire for safety), but is nevertheless a critical means of engaging with ideas. When an attendee would volunteer themselves to provide a confession, Ang and the other attendees were often quick to clap, smile, or provide quick hoots of enthusiasm. These small supportive gestures are akin to a returned gaze – a gesture of acceptance as opposed to the turned away gaze of rejection – or a snapping finger in a classroom. If the core medium of transpedagogy is educational socialising, then *Guilty Pleasures* is made of gestures of care.

The comfortable mood developed over the course of Ang’s listening party not only created an environment of social acceptance, but also facilitated casual critical engagement with pop cultural objects. While humour was used to diffuse embarrassment throughout the listening party, it was also used to create digestible critiques of some of the problematic elements of the confessed guilty pleasures. This, again, marks a departure from the seriousness associated with study and political discussions. The normative separation of serious intellectual inquiry from humour is perhaps ironic given humour’s spectrum of practices which often play on cultural knowledge and intelligent slippages, such as pastiche, parody, wit, *double entendre*, euphemisms, and black comedy.

Humour and excitement, among other forms of pleasure, are highlighted by radical pedagogues and feminist activists as means of encouraging critical

¹⁷ Margaret Montoya, “Latinx Advocacy: In/Different Spaces,” (presentation at La Alianza Harvard Latinx Law Conference, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, 28 January 2017).

thinking. For hooks, excitement can “co-exist with and even stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement” as long as students – and perhaps we might also suggest collaborators, attendees, or any other person invited into politically engaged dialogues – have their experiences repeatedly acknowledged and engaged with during the learning process.¹⁸ Laughing is also a useful coping mechanism and political strategy for dealing with raw or frightening experiences, one that seems to have received renewed interest recently in feminist art, feminist activism, and criticism more broadly.¹⁹ Over the last few years, a number of feminist commentators have turned to guilty pleasures in particular to develop accessible feminist critiques (a trend that I will return to later in this chapter).

Kitsch everyday music

Another radical pedagogical (and intersectional feminist) act at work in Ang’s listening parties lies in his centralisation of guilty pleasures, an unlikely field of inquiry perhaps for its position outside of ‘high culture.’ Despite multiple (academic, artistic, or other) challenges to modern standards of high and low culture – or, as Clement Greenberg would suggest, the avant-garde (poetry and artistry that keeps “culture *moving*” and developing) and the kitsch (“popular, commercial art and literature ... [which] changes according to style”) – the distance between the high and low – which we might equate with ‘serious’ music and pop music – remains seemingly entrenched.²⁰ This is reflected in the songs brought forward at *Guilty Pleasures*. The majority of the confessed songs were once very popular and commercially successful, but also generally considered outside of highbrow, technically challenging, insightful music.

¹⁸ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 7-8.

¹⁹ See Laura Castagnini, “BACKFLIP: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art” (2013) and “Performing Feminism ‘Badly’” (2015); Joanne R. Gilbert, *Performing Marginality: Humor, Gender, and Cultural Critique* (2004); Jo Anna Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Laughter* (1996), and Nancy Reincke, “Antidote to Dominance: Women’s Laughter as Counteraction” (1991).

²⁰ Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 8-12.

During a playing of a guilty pleasure, a confessing attendee blurted out a telling judgment of her taste: “I do actually like normal music as well!” Guilty pleasures are songs that are often adequate enough or entirely banal – given their popularity and commerciality – yet simultaneously not acceptable – due to their tackiness and expired satisfactoriness.

Not only do such hierarchies create a high and low of art, but also a high and low of makers and therefore their associated identity groups, experiences, and histories. This is recognised by two contributors to *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salinas, who argue that:

Naming Black Sabbath is a calculated attempt to come to terms with a white trash background. Naming 50 Cent, on the other hand, is an attempt to draw some ironic street ‘cred.’ Almost no one listens to John Cage regularly, for pleasure, and bragging about that would be pretentious beyond acceptable norms. Thus, naming Cage would perhaps be an acceptable candidate for ‘guilty listening’ because it would display an unapologetic approach towards ‘high’ culture. Likewise, listening to Indian classical music need not cause guilt by itself, but it could lead to suspicions of exoticism, and it could give the image of an insufferable ‘enlightened’ Westerner who wears white cotton drawstring trousers even during northern winters. John Coltrane is an acceptable taste in most educated circles, and although listening to him could cause mild feelings of guilt because now only unhip university professors play jazz[,] it is not a serious enough infraction of cool to cause anyone to hide the fact.²¹

Taste, as Berman and Salinas argue, is not apolitical or historical, nor are hierarchies of entertainment neutral.²² Rather, both are often the results of internalised stereotypes and subcultural rules that are built on sexism, racism,

²¹ Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salinas, “Our Enemy’s Lament,” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvizor, 2011), 21.

²² Bergman and Salinas, 21.

moments of cultural appropriation, classism, and so on. The high and low are not neutral nor fixed, and engagements with categories of culture are similarly culturally, historically, socially, politically, or otherwise determined.

It seems then that low or kitsch culture is a dynamic cluster of objects which is subject to historical and cultural context. Cultural standards may be enforced by institutions (that challenge or uphold exclusionary standards and traditions), but they are also maintained and monitored on a micro level amongst close friends or family. Demonstrative of this social pattern is Aaron Warren's contribution to *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*. Warren, a bass guitarist for experimental electronica band Black Dice, argues that the notion of a guilty pleasure arises only when one's surroundings are hostile to one's taste in music. He claims that while he would like to play Dido's 'White Flag' – which he affectionately describes as a “righteous funky anthem of love spurned” – while driving his band's tour van, he is forced to enjoy the Britpop song in private because his bandmates “[wail] in despair” before he can reach the end of the first verse.²³ 'White Flag' is a guilty pleasure for Warren because it fails to appeal to the people in his immediate surroundings. Ang's listening parties thrive on vulnerable music choices like Warren's. At *Guilty Pleasures*, unlike Warren's tour bus, the interjection of apparently low culture – pop songs – into a high cultural sphere – a major art institution in Sydney, the MCA – is rewarded by those within earshot.

Ang's work is not alone in its interest in this particular genre of popular culture. Guilty pleasures have increasingly become an issue for politically and culturally engaged voices. In a recent *Life Matters* discussion on Radio National, the guilty pleasure in question was televisual: *The Bachelor Australia* (a reality television program in which multiple women compete for engagement to the same single man), a series that has accumulated an audience of feminists who

²³ Aaron Warren, “Pass it up or spit it out,” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvivor, 2011), 23.

enjoy (and critique) the show's blatant and exaggerated sexist heteronormativity.²⁴ In Roxane Gay's *Bad Feminist* (2014), she details how E. L. James's *Fifty Shades* trilogy (2011-2012) wavers between being "amusing because the writing is terrible and fun, and then ... terrible and infuriating in its irresponsibility."²⁵ After the release of Beyoncé's *Lemonade* (2016) visual album, hooks was quick to publish a critique on her own webpage.²⁶ Liberal feminist click bait media seem to be churning out 'top tens' of seemingly 'unwomanly' guilty pleasure habits regularly as a means of dispelling heteronormative conceptions of gendered behaviour (which, while well intended perhaps, almost re-essentialises women into purveyors of 'gross' habits often only afforded to some cisgender, middle class, and usually white women).²⁷ In 2014, *The Conversation* commissioned a series of summer essays in which literary academics were invited to write about their "embarrassing cultural inclinations."²⁸ Jennifer Pozner's recent critique of reality television – *Reality Bites Back* (2010) – provides a searing evaluation of reality television as a threat to critical thinking.

Signs of the contemporary critical appeal of guilty pleasures can also be found in the development of new leisure activities (such as 'hate-watching,' the practice of watching shows while criticising much of its content) and online media dedicated to guilty pleasures (including 'recaps,' television reviews-turned-critiques published online that recount and analyse the politics of a

²⁴ "Can a real feminist enjoy The Bachelor?" *RN: Life Matters*, last modified 17 September 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/can-a-real-feminist-enjoy-the-bachelor/6781666>.

²⁵ Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 199.

²⁶ bell hooks, "Moving Beyond Pain," *bell hooks Institute, Berea College: Teach Remember Explore Celebrate (blog)*, 9 May 2016, <http://www.bellhooksinstitute.com/blog/2016/5/9/moving-beyond-pain>.

²⁷ There are many examples of this type of 'demystification of women' clickbait articles published by *Cosmopolitan*, *Buzzfeed*, *Redbook*, and *Bustle*. See Becky Barnicoat, "49 Gross Things Most Girls Secretly Enjoy" (2017); Dusty Baxter-Wright, "18 gross things all women do in their bedrooms but would never admit to" (2017); Samantha Lefave, "20 Gross Things Every Pregnant Woman Secretly Does" (2017); Gabrielle Moss, "19 Gross Things All Women Do in Private (Or At Least When We Think No One's Watching)" (2014); and Flo Perry, "44 Secret Gross Things That All Girls Do But Don't Talk About" (2017).

²⁸ For example, see Sally O'Reilly, "Guilty Pleasures: the feminist academic who loves a sexist novel or two" (2014).

program's questionable storylines or characters).²⁹ Community arts programs and club venues are also utilising guilty pleasures to draw an audience. The *No Lights No Lycra* dance party, for example, initiated by Melbourne-based dancers Alice Glenn and Heidi Barrett, invites attendees to dance in total darkness to guilty pleasures-dominated playlists that relax guests into a “daggy, non-pretentious” hour of dancing.³⁰ The dance party has developed a large following across Australia and internationally, particularly among queer communities. Of course, this approach is vulnerable to recuperation into heteronormative capitalist projects; club nights themed around candy pop music seem to be growing in popularity in clubs dominated by heterosexual crowds. In Seattle's Capitol Hill district, for example, there are multiple regular club nights dedicated to pop music, including ‘Hey Now!’ (a reference to a song by Hilary Duff) at Barboza, ‘Candi Pop’ at Chop Suey, as well as pop artist specific nights – such as ‘Justin vs. Justin’ (in reference to the music of Justin Timberlake and Justin Bieber) at Neumos.

At Ang's listening parties, these sonic guilty pleasures reappear. At the MCA, almost all of the guilty pleasures were dated pop songs that various attendees confessed to enjoying. In *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, however, the spectrum of guilty pleasures is a little broader. While many contributors wrote about certain types of music – including K-pop ballads, the playlists favoured by *Love Song Dedications* disc jockeys, or Disney musical numbers – there was a small group who chose less musical aural experiences – such as news reports or the sounds of people having sex in the next room.³¹ A guilty pleasure does not seem to be medium specific, belonging to only one category of culture or

²⁹ While some recaps give voice to liberal feminist readings of problematic cultural objects – take, for example, the hugely popular *Bachelor Australia* recaps written by Rosie Waterland for *Mamamia* which, while humorous, often reverted to cissexist gender assumptions – others manage nuanced discussions of popular culture – such as Ali Barthwell's intersectional feminist recaps of the American *Bachelor* franchise published by *Vulture*.

³⁰ “The NLNL Story,” *No Lights No Lycra*, last modified April 2018, <http://nolightsnolycra.com/the-nlnl-story/>.

³¹ *Love Song Dedications* is the popular misnomer of *Love Songs and Dedications*, a radio program that was hosted by Richard Mercer. It has maintained airplay in Sydney and Melbourne for almost 17 years. (Song-Ming Ang et al., *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvizor, 2011), 175, 159, 181, 192, 119, 19.)

entertainment, but rather a classification based on affective responses to particular popular cultural objects.

Conflicting feelings

The features of guilty pleasures that I have outlined so far – their status as low popular cultural object and their contemporary traction – do not wholly define the character or impact of guilty pleasures. Despite their informality, dynamism over time, and lack of medium specificity, guilty pleasures share the ability to provoke particular conflicting affects, namely guilt and pleasure. In other words, all objects that enter the category of guilty pleasures are made similar by their evocation of the feeling of guilty pleasure.

The feeling of guilty pleasure is perhaps a type of “ugly feeling.” This is an affect that Sianne Ngai suggests is marked by ambivalence, lack of catharsis, and the absence of intense moral sentiments.³² The objects that enter Ang’s artwork are somewhat embarrassing or shameful to desire and yet are desired anyway. They evoke a minor yet ugly feeling.

The feeling of guilty pleasure seems to be a combination of positive and negative affects, or as, Susan Feagin suggests, a “direct response” – an immediate feeling about the subject matter of an object – combined with a “meta response” – a feeling about one’s direct response.³³ In this case, the direct response appears to be pleasurable feelings of enjoyment, nostalgia, familiarity, comfort, attraction, intimacy, and safety: *I enjoy this thing*. The meta response is guilt – which might be understood as a combination of embarrassment, shame, humiliation, or of being compromised in some way – for experiencing pleasure: *I feel guilty for enjoying this thing*. For Ngai, meta responses are common for feelings that lack grandeur, cathartic potential, or otherwise lock the subject in a dramatic encompassing passionate extreme,

³² Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 3-5.

³³ Susan Feagin, “The Pleasures of Tragedy,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (January 1983): 97.

such as euphoria, grief, fury, or fear.³⁴ Room for a meta response – which often critiques or questions one’s direct response – can only be made when the direct response is somewhat minor, underwhelming, and lacking in intensity or trauma.

The type of pleasure that is tapped into by a guilty pleasure is often particularised by familiarity and recognition – *I know what this is* – which can lend itself easily to feelings of nostalgia and sentimentality. Familiarity is rooted in repetition: something that has been experienced can be recalled. Something that is familiar can seem reliable, safe even, because its effects (and affects) are already known; it is recognisable. For this reason, it is not unusual for a guilty pleasure to be attached to a specific (or multiple) memories. Interestingly, these memories are not always pleasurable in themselves; rather it is their familiarity that creates comfort. At the iteration of *Guilty Pleasures* that I attended, the conversations often wandered through memories of old relationships, crushes on singers, revelations about one’s identity, teenage angst and rebellion, the tastes of older siblings or influential friends, breakups, and moments of loneliness. The songs that were selected had been heard before, perhaps many times, during memorable moments in the confessors’ lives.

The act of remembering is an intimate form of repetition. When we remember, we internally re-live or re-play an experience (or a version of an experience) as well as the people (or a version of those people) that have impacted or affected us enough to be maintained as a memory. At *Guilty Pleasures*, there was a noticeable intimacy with which the confessed songs were often spoken of, or more specifically, the makers were spoken of. After confessing to enjoying Kylie Minogue, one attendee began shortening the popular Australian chanteuse’s name to ‘Kylie.’ Similarly, Ang comments in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* that as a “former fan” he feels “justified” in

³⁴ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 6-10.

referring to pop star Leon Lai by his first name only.³⁵ Celebrity crushes are a kind of guilty pleasure in their own right; they create a cognitive dissonance that allows a ‘crusher’ to wilfully ignore their distance from their crush – most celebrity crushes are accumulated through consumption of the crush’s work or through fantasies – or any of their crush’s potential downfalls so that the crusher can continue to adore them. Familiarity and nostalgia easily give way to sentimentality, a feeling that can enable a person to idealise or edit the past – and the objects that they have encountered – to form a coherent acceptable narrative or understandable purpose for one’s experiences and feelings.³⁶ The past, however, is often recollected selectively, to fulfil what is needed most in the present: an explanation, an escape.

There are other aspects of enjoyment at work when one feels guilty pleasure. Excitement and joy may also arise when something is so interesting that it captures or energises us.³⁷ During a playing of another guilty pleasure – Janet Jackson’s ‘That’s the Way Love Goes’ – the confessor tells the watching attendees:

I must say that this is probably the best Janet period. (...) I’d like you to notice ... how perfect Janet Jackson’s skin and cheeks are. In this film clip particularly. There are some close ups where you’re like, “There are no flaws, whatsoever.”

The affection with which the spectacle of Jackson’s cheekbones are described is echoed in the language used by other confessors to describe the video clip material of their guilty pleasures. One confessor describes feeling genuine love for Nikki Webster’s ‘24/7 (Crazy ‘bout Your Smile),’ particularly the video clip’s somewhat bizarre inclusion of Australian high schoolers taking part in a

³⁵ Song-Ming Ang, “Will You Come Tonight” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvizor, 2011), 11.

³⁶ The captions that accompany the *Humans of New York* photography are particularly demonstrative of this type of affective work in which recollections appear to ‘explain’ the expression of the portrait.

³⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 85.

cheerleading competition (an American past time, hardly an Australian one). Another confessor describes wishing she could join the dancers in Whitney Houston's video clip for 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody.' Guilty pleasures seem to induce positive direct responses that are often rooted in familiarity, nostalgia, and enjoyment.

Guilty feelings – such as shame, embarrassment or humiliation – are, by contrast, arrived at out of knowing that one has done something – or felt something – that crosses some sort of boundary, or violates an internalised code of conduct or character. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank argue, shame requires a positive affect. They are that “only a scene that offers you enjoyment or engages your interest can make you blush.”³⁸ Guilty feelings dislodge one's sense that one is behaving 'correctly' or, rather, in a way that appeases oneself and/or others. Importantly, this feeling never reaches catharsis: it never becomes strong enough to motivate the subject to cut ties with the pleasing yet shameful object.³⁹ Rather, the negative meta feelings that accompany pleasure are often more self-reflective and minor, perhaps closer to the feeling that one has made a mistake that can be reversed. Sedgwick and Frank suggest that shame, guilt, and humiliation are affects of indignity and “inner torment.”⁴⁰

Self-deprecating remarks are frequently found in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* which attend to a spectrum of guilty meta responses. When Damon Krukowski, for example, admits to enjoying top 40 radio, he rhetorically asks, “what am I thinking during long drives accompanied by idiotic music?”⁴¹ In another contribution to *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, Seth Kim-Cohen suggests that a guilty pleasure can make a person feel as if they were “hatched from an

³⁸ Sedgwick and Frank, 22.

³⁹ Sedgwick and Frank, 23.

⁴⁰ Sedgwick and Frank, 133.

⁴¹ Damon Krukowski, “All Love Songs All the Time,” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvivor, 2011), 113.

egg and share nothing with the rest of humanity.”⁴² Regardless of the specific object in question, all guilty pleasures seem to evoke a secondary minor negative judgement of one’s pleasure and the object that it has come from.

So far, my equation for the experience of guilty pleasure posits that a positive affect plus a negative meta response to first affect equals guilty pleasure. Missing from my guilty pleasure equation, however, is the catalyst for the meta response of guilt, or, as Sedgwick and Adam describe, the “barrier” that prevents enjoyment from being experienced without the interruption of guilty feelings.⁴³ To fill this gap, I propose that a meta response to pleasure suggests a moment – extended or brief – of critique, suspicion, or, at least, cynicism of one’s pleasure. In other words, the feeling of guilty pleasure arises out of a moment of critical engagement with an object, in which one feels that they are enjoying something that is ideologically, socially, culturally, or otherwise perverse: *I should not be enjoying this*. Perhaps, then, the feeling of guilty pleasure is a step towards critical enjoyment of problematic objects, a practice of understanding, naming, and critiquing cultural objects and their flaws.

Here I will explore three plausible ‘barriers’ that urge a guilty response to pleasure: (1) embarrassment caused by enjoying something that is outdated and unfashionable; (2) discomfort felt in the presence of something that exaggerates its sentiments; and/or (3) shame evoked by finding an entirely normalised object desirable, thereby compromising one’s politics and beliefs or sense of uniqueness and individuality. In other words, guilty pleasures are often either a little outdated and nostalgic (the 1970s twang of ABBA tunes, for example, remind me of Christmases as a child), or sickly sweet (like the wailing guitars on Natalie Imbruglia’s ‘Torn’), or contain questionable content (in the final verse of Bachelorette’s ‘Buses and Trains,’ for example, she cries that men

⁴² Seth Kim-Cohen, “Guilty & Pleasure: A Conversation,” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvizor, 2011), 109

⁴³ Sedgwick and Frank, 149.

can “kill and still be the sweetest thing.”). Importantly, one’s meta responses to a guilty pleasure object are never strong enough to prevent one from no longer enjoying the object or encompassing enough to become one’s direct response to the object in question; objects that move from exuding guilty pleasure to strictly strong feelings of discomfort, such as anger or disgust (which represent a different body of passionate affects) belong to other affective aesthetic categories, such as the taboo or abject. By contrast, guilty pleasures bring on mixture of excitement and light contempt.

(1) Unfashionable things

While discussions of guilty pleasures are common, explorations of this informal genre of entertainment as a specific minor aesthetic category seem to be scant. However, some of its intersecting aesthetic categories have been thoroughly explored. The previously discussed category of kitsch is one of them. Another is the category of camp.

Camp has been discussed at length by a number of writers, perhaps most notably, Susan Sontag. Some of Sontag’s “jottings,” as she referred to them, are useful for thinking through aspects of guilty pleasures, particularly their association with aged objects that have fallen out of fashion.⁴⁴ Like camp objects, guilty pleasures often tap into dated fantasies that – since they have gone through a process of deterioration which distances the camp object from the perceiving subject – have become detached from one’s current desires. Sontag argues that, as a result of their attachment to past desires, these fantasies are less frustrating to cope with when they fail or disappoint.⁴⁵ Similarly, Pamela Robertson notes that objects become camp when they lose their ability to “dominate cultural meanings.”⁴⁶ This occurs when an object

⁴⁴ Sontag, 276.

⁴⁵ Sontag, 285.

⁴⁶ Pamela Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.

becomes associated with an earlier cultural moment, rather than the present, and become historicised, outmoded, and prone to nostalgic recollections. Like Dadaist readymades, the guilty pleasures introduced into Ang's *Guilty Pleasures* act as inclusions of everyday material: prefabricated popular culture that has already been consumed (usually *en masse*) and is therefore familiar to the general public. Dadaists often combined nonsense with mundanity in their readymades, turning everyday objects strange, resulting in flipped urinals (Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917), tears made of glass (Man Ray's *Glass tears*, 1932), and poems written in gibberish (Hugo Ball's *Karawane*, 1917).

Readymades were at once a controversial means of capturing the *zeitgeist* (German for "time spirit," often extended to "spirit of the time") of Europe during World War I (and the era that would follow) through recognisable objects that implied societal concerns and values.⁴⁷ For Marcel Duchamp, readymades were "a matter of timing" and akin to the then-developing phenomena of snapshot photography, in which a moment in time could be captured as it was occurring.⁴⁸

Continuing a history of drawing attention to the politics of the seemingly ordinary and everyday, *Guilty Pleasures* centres popular culture – specifically, that which is at once commercially successful and enjoyed, yet disparaged – as an object for consideration. However, the spectacular time spirit of these objects tends to reflect the trends and objects enjoyed by wealthy, socially privileged pop stars from various decades gone by. This is a

⁴⁷ This practice of taking everyday objects and acts and transforming them into critical artistic material would be continued by conceptualists (who prioritised ideas and thinking), pop artists (using advertising and popular media imagery), Fluxus (who blurred art and life through 'Happenings'), Situationists (interested in drawing attention to the ways in which capitalism organises everyday life), confessional performances by feminist artists (for whom personal experience became the material for cathartic works), and socially engaged artists (who use everyday cooperative and collaborative acts as artistic material). Transpedagogues continue this tradition by inviting knowledge creation and learning into projects that blur the line between art and education.

⁴⁸ Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)*, 1934, cardboard box, colour plate and 94 lithographs, collotypes, and ink on paper, 333 x 279 x 25 mm, in Tate collection, London, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-the-bride-stripped-bare-by-her-bachelors-even-the-green-box-t07744>, quoted in Dalia Judovitz, "Rendezvous with Marcel Duchamp: *Given*," in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, eds. Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M. Nauman (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996), 196-197.




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Figure 11.

Song-Ming Ang, *Guilty Pleasures*, 2007-, performance, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Documentation: Heidrum Löhr.

departure from the Artaudian bleakness of Dadaist readymades which impelled a reaction by refusing established representational traditions in favour of art made of lowly objects. Rather, guilty pleasure songs and their associated music videos often feature signs of opulence and innovation associated with various decades: a telling perm, a drum beat with gated reverb, or perhaps flashy use of green screen or digital animation technologies.⁴⁹

With these signs of past trends and decades also come more specific reminders and memories of personal pasts. During the listening party at the MCA, a confessor told a story about feeling “genuinely” guilty while revisiting the music of the Vines because it reminded him of an unfortunate moment during his twenties. He explained that he took a “detour” with a girl at a Vines concert just after beginning to date another woman who he eventually married, an experience he described as a major “divergence [with] his life path.” While sitting with Ang, he asked if he could play just a short Vines song so that he would not have to sit with the memory for too long. As the song played, he revealed this his hands were shaking and the he was feeling “genuine guilt.” I could relate to this moment of music evoking a strong emotional memory. When I hear Hot Chocolate’s ‘Everyone’s A Winner,’ I am immediately taken back to visiting the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney as a child. There used to be a robotic arm on display in a vitrine that had been reprogrammed to dance to various songs, including song of Hot Chocolate’s songs. I feel hopelessly sentimental remembering this: I can sense that my grandmother is nearby, that I am little and uninhibited, and very excited by the rhythm of the robot’s movements. In spite of their decaying cultural potency, some songs can be as transporting as a scent. The affects of guilty pleasures – and the periods of time and experiences that they draw the beholder back into – are often palpable.

⁴⁹ Gated reverb is a distinctively 1980s drum sound – featured heavily in the work of Prince, Phil Collins, and Kate Bush, to name a few – in which the vibrations caused by a drum beat are cut cleanly, making the end of the beat sound much louder than the initial (manufactured) strike.

(2) Exaggeration and failed seriousness

Among other working definitions, Sontag's descriptions of camp as "failed seriousness" and that which is "good *because* it's awful" seem to linger.⁵⁰ The commonly used phrase 'so bad it's good' – often used to describe guilty pleasures – is almost a reiteration of Sontag's words. The discomfort impelled by the various types of 'badness' that guilty pleasures exude was a frequent point of discussion during the listening party. One confessor argued that punk pop music tends to be "really schmaltzy" while another described 'Take My Breath Away' by Berlin as "just too much." Another confessor still suggested the C AllStars is famous in Hong Kong specifically for "being bad" and not being aware of the fact.

This aspect of camp is often linked to its performative nature: its obvious exaggeration, artifice, or pastiche of certain emotions, once-fashionable entities, or people. However, for Sontag, exaggerated humouring and appropriating occurs in two forms: pure camp – which is unintentional, earnest, and "dead serious" – and deliberate camp – which involves some degree of disapproval of its subject matter and "wholly conscious ... plays at being campy."⁵¹ I am somewhat reluctant to accept this binary, but believe that Sontag's two camps are useful for thinking of embellished and extravagant performances as existing on a spectrum: at one end of this spectrum lie pure camp performances that are entirely genuine, potentially saccharine in their seriousness, and acritical in their lack of meta response. In Sontag's canon of pure camp lies *Swan Lake*, Tiffany lamps, and "stag movies seen without lust."⁵² At the other end lie things that are deliberately camp: over the top performances that are self-aware and emphasise their performativity, thereby making no attempt to appear 'real.' For Pamela Robertson, the work of particularly theatrical figures – such as Mae West, Joan Crawford, and

⁵⁰ Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp, 1964," in *Against Interpretation and other essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), 287-292.

⁵¹ Sontag, 282-283.

⁵² Sontag, 277-278.

Madonna – who tend to exude exaggerated performances of femininity and emotions, are deliberately camp in quality.⁵³ In other words, while one camp is aware that it is a performance, the other is not. However, all camp performances are vulnerable to blind spots and slip from one end of the spectrum to the other as they occur.

The same could be said of guilty pleasures, existing on a spectrum that stretches from a knowing wink to a total lack of awareness. Sometimes, of course, it is difficult to know for certain just how much discomfort is intended and how much is incidental. Perhaps this is sometimes part of what causes some of the uncomfortable feelings that guilty pleasures produce: not being able to tell if the performer is in on the joke, or is the joke; being unsure of whether one is being humiliated by an uncomfortable performance, or if one is humiliating someone else by witnessing an unconvincing and unflattering performance.

While camp aesthetics aid in delineating the character of guilty pleasures, I will not be using ‘camp’ as a synonym for the aesthetic of guilty pleasures. Camp objects and guilty pleasures are categories that share a taste for outmoded objects and expressions of sincerity that can falter into overly sentimental gestures. However, they appear to divide at a fork of political engagement (as I will explore in further detail momentarily). In other words, camp does not entirely account for the appeal of or the affects that guilty pleasures give rise to.

Another more pressing problem is that camp bears an uncomfortable proximity to androcentric homonormative (mis)understandings of queer culture and taste (or more specifically, gay male culture and taste) in addition

⁵³ See “‘The Kinda Comedy Where They Imitate Me’: Mae West’s Identification with the Feminist Camp,” “Camping under Western Stars: Joan Crawford in Johnny Guitar,” and “Does Feminist Camp Make a Difference? or, What We Talk about When We Talk about Madonna” in Pamela Robertson’s *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (1996).

to a connection to unfashionable, over dramatic objects.⁵⁴ When weaponised, the term ‘camp’ can be used by heteronormative speakers to homophobic ends since the term can, at once, refer to something tasteless as well as something that is associated with gay communities. This gives rise to a slightly different judgment of a camp object in which the object is dismissed as lowly or in poor taste *because* it is associated with or (perceived to be) enjoyed by members of gay subcultures. In short, camp’s limited usefulness for describing the sensibilities of guilty pleasures as well as its pejorative use makes it an unappealing term to peddle.⁵⁵ As such I am pivoting to focus on another aesthetic category that often finds expression in objects that become guilty pleasures, but is a less explored aesthetic terrain: the naff.

(3) Compromising content: Normative naff

So far I have argued that partial objection to a guilty pleasure might arise from the age of the object and/or the object’s engagement in overly sincere or uncomfortably exaggerated performances of various emotions or aesthetics. Another problem that might give rise to a guilty meta response is the sense that one is compromising one’s politics or sense of identity by engaging with objects that are seemingly complicit in ideas or practices that one would otherwise vehemently reject. This feeling arises often out of the guilty pleasure object appearing to be either a naïve or sincere reproduction of dominant ideological, political, cultural, or other forces that the viewer rejects. For example, Douglas Benford admits in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures* that he enjoys Christmas carols despite being a staunch atheist.⁵⁶ Similarly, one of the *Guilty Pleasures* attendees expressed that while she finds some of Tim Rice’s lyrics

⁵⁴ I use the term queer here both as an umbrella for the LGBTBI+ community and as a term of resistance to heteronormativity. It is the term that I use to identify myself as a bisexual woman who is a member of this community.

⁵⁵ As a queer researcher with close queer friends and family members, the latter reason feels particularly personal and pressing.

⁵⁶ Douglas Benford, “From nostalgia to a mundane place,” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvivor, 2011), 19.

sexist, she still sings the songs from *Chess* with her friends. Foucault suggests that a confession is a statement in which the speaker is also the subject of the statement.⁵⁷ In the moment of confessing a guilty pleasure, a person *becomes* that guilty pleasure and all that it is complicit in. However, the guilt that is felt in this moment signals a moment of criticality: while the guilty pleasure appears to be either blindly or happily complicit in problematic norms and powerful systems of consumption, sexism, racism, heterosexism, and so on, the viewer (or listener as the case may be) is aware of these issues and becomes uncomfortable because they are critically aware of such issues. I argue that this particular response is triggered by the naffness of guilty pleasures.

Naff objects are, like camp objects, sometimes somewhat dated and therefore unfashionable, kitsch, tacky, and uncool. They are also vulnerable to excessive emotionality, sometimes mawkish in their expressions of different experiences. Naff things are therefore often aged and mundane, but also often cheesy, cringe-inducing, and sappy. However, unlike camp objects, naff objects are almost always associated with mainstream, normalised taste. Naff objects are often complicit in, rather than obviously critical of, hegemonic beliefs and powerful structures. Naff things are therefore often that which has been, or currently is, trendy, popular, and therefore very familiar.

Naff has a noteworthy subversive etymology, one rooted in making heteronormativity somewhat visible by a queer community. ‘Naff’ is a term that emerged out of World War II British Polari slang, a colloquial coded dialect used by gay men to discuss their experiences and desires without detection by wider society and to avoid persecution (homosexual activity was ‘banned’ in Britain until 1967). During this period, naff was used to discretely denote heterosexual men.⁵⁸ By some accounts, naff may have passed into British slang from an American military acronym, NAFF, which might have extended into

⁵⁷ Foucault, 61.

⁵⁸ Ian Lucas, “The Color of His Eyes: Polari and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence,” *Queerly Phrased: Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, eds. Anna Livia and Kira Hall (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 86–87; Paul Baker, *Polari – The Lost Language of Gay Men* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 182.

‘Not Available For Fucking,’ ‘Not Available For Fun,’ or ‘Normal As Fuck.’⁵⁹ The term framed heterosexual people as distinct, rather than default.

This usage eventually developed into an association with straight men who were boring, tasteless, “unlovely,” and “dreary,” before becoming used to describe objects considered tacky, kitsch, and unfashionable.⁶⁰ Naff also became a common replacement for expletives on British radio programs and television shows during the latter half of the twentieth century, most notably in the scripts of BBC sketch radio show *Round the Horne* (1965–1968) and BBC sitcom *Porridge* (1974–1977).⁶¹ This usage quickly passed into everyday slang; Princess Anne of the British royal family is reported to have told members of the press to “naff off” on one occasion.⁶² Paul Baker argues that while naff has become a relatively commonly used word among heterosexual people, “the original meaning of *naff* – as a pejorative levelled at them by gay men – [is] not widely known.”⁶³

Naff is of interest in a discussion of guilty pleasures for its accumulated attachment to an aesthetic that is at once desirable, but becomes undesirable for its closeness to normativity. It brings the viewer (or listener) into contact with a feeling that Lauren Berlant describes as ‘cruel optimism.’ This aspirational feeling involves desiring the fulfilment of a “cluster of promises,” namely the promises entailed by ‘the good life.’⁶⁴ The features of this good life – which has various incarnations between cultures, such as ‘the American

⁵⁹ Baker, 182; Michael Quinion, *Why is Q Always Followed by U?* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), https://books.google.com.au/books?id=BfY47TgrbiMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false; David Crystal, “Keep Your English Up to Date 3: Naff,” *BBC Learning English*, last modified 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/1453_uptodate3/page15.shtml; and “Semantic Enigmas,” *The Guardian*, last modified 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-18768,00.html>.

⁶⁰ Martin Harrison, *The Language of Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 167.

⁶¹ Alkarim Jivani, *It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 1997), 15; Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. Paul Beale (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), 773; Jo Stanley and Paul Baker, *Hello Sailor! The Hidden History of Gay Life at Sea* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), 79.

⁶² “Princess Anne’s colourful royal career,” *BBC News*, last modified 21 November 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2498771.stm.

⁶³ Baker, 183.

⁶⁴ Lauren Berlant, “Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss and the Senses,” *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 63 (2007/2008): 33.

Dream’ or the ‘Great Australian Dream’ – is often tied up in the markers of success in capitalist neoliberal societies: belief in individual entrepreneurialism and hard work as a recipe for fulfilment through wealth accumulation, property ownership, and upward mobility through social classes. This cluster of promises is then turned over to children – presumably created in wedlock – who will ‘have it better than their folks’. Since desire for the good life is encouraged by government policies and institutions, the good life can be wielded as a sign of normality and, by extension, mental health, trustworthiness, and stability.

The good life always exists in the future and is never fully possessed in the present. It is something to be toiled toward in spite of the problems that it creates. Berlant argues that the good life acts as a distraction from the cruelties of the processes undertaken in the present to reach for the good life; instead of recognising how tiring the acts involved in reproducing neoliberalism are, these acts are misrecognised as achievements reached along the way to attaining the promises of the good life.⁶⁵ She argues that for this reason, people “do not ... interfere with [the] varieties of immiseration” that neoliberalism creates, but rather “choose to ride the wave of the system of attachment that they are used to, to syncopate with it, or to be held in a relation of reciprocity, reconciliation, or resignation that does mean defeat by it.”⁶⁶ The myth of the good life therefore creates a cruel optimism in which painful feelings and struggles are accepted as part of striving toward, hoping for, or imagining a better future.

Importantly, as Berlant explains, “cruel optimism is the condition of *maintaining* an attachment to a problematic object” out of fear that loss of that hope will destroy one’s “capacity to have any hope about anything.”⁶⁷ Since neoliberalism is thoroughly embedded in everyday life, refusal of one

⁶⁵ Berlant, 36.

⁶⁶ Berlant, 36.

⁶⁷ Berlant, 33.

neoliberal value might seem useless if there are so many others that also need challenging. Attachment to neoliberal values and norms, in other words, are continued rather than challenged because there seems to be no half way, no compromise; it must be either negation of all neoliberal things, or consumption of all neoliberal things.

I would like to suggest that, as a category of things, guilty pleasures are naff because they often contain glimpses of the normative good life, of neoliberalism's values and ideals, which operate upon the maintenance of a number of oppressive structures. In her introduction to a discussion of queer sexualities, Sara Ahmed considers the normative as akin to being "in line" – to being held in place, kept in alignment – with all other objects.⁶⁸ Popular cultural objects that become guilty pleasures are seemingly straight forward, easier to manage, follow, and understand, because they often reflect every other normalised message being directed at an individual living in a neoliberal society, grounded in capitalist values, and histories of normalised sexism, racism, heterosexism, and so on. Popular culture is one of a number of complicated mediating forces that quietly normalise oppressive codes of behaviour and sells oppressive ideological values that keep a population in line.

Guilty pleasures are among the objects that help maintain attachments to uncomfortable norms. During the listening party at the MCA, confessors frequently and bluntly declared the structures that their guilty pleasures were complicit in: one confessor described feeling compromised by Britney Spears's apparent desire to be subservient to her male lover in 'I'm A Slave 4 U'; another attendee commented that she found the Americentrism of Nikki Webster's cheerleading performance in '24/7' both captivating and uncomfortable (Webster being an Australian musician); a further attendee commented that the objectifying lyrics of 'My Humps' by the Black Eyed Peas were a sign of the 2000s having been "not a great time for women in pop music." Similar

⁶⁸ Sara Ahmed, "Sexual Orientation," *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 66.

statements appeared in an MCA blog post that accompanied the 2014 listening party. One of the online confessors, Aaron Clarke (then technical manager of Performance Space) cites ‘The Meed’ by Bad Brains as a guilty pleasure because of the band’s homophobic attitudes.⁶⁹ In *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, some contributors addressed social justice issues explicitly, while others provided only references to problematic figures, perhaps assuming an audience that was already well versed in the oppressive structures that many guilty pleasures reflect or reproduce. This is articulated clearly in Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva’s entry in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, in which they give examples of oppressive behaviour to gesture towards encompassing social problems:

I like Deep Forest’s debut album even though it exploits performers from the Solomon Islands and mis-credits their work as being from ‘deep in the African jungle.’ I like Chris Brown even though he beat up his girlfriend Rihanna in a hired Lamborghini at the front of an LA nightclub.⁷⁰

Despite the brevity of these mentions of racist and misogynistic behaviour, it seems that their notoriety is intended to do the critical heavy lifting. Guilty pleasures reveal behaviours that have been normalised, some slightly uncomfortable – such as Australia’s cultural cringe which seems to result in overconsumption of American culture – and others more violent and shocking – such as inaction on exploitation, sexism, and domestic violence.

The experience of guilty pleasure seems to be a moment of (often very brief) clarity or realisation. Guilty pleasures reveal what we are taught to desire, what is entirely normalised. A guilty meta response is perhaps similar to Paulo Freire’s description of surfacing out of a state of submersion in

⁶⁹ Benford, 19; Jeff Kahn, “Fess Up: Guilty Pleasures,” *MCA Blog (blog)*, 24 June 2014, <https://www.mca.com.au/blog/2014/06/24/fess-guilty-pleasures/>.

⁷⁰ Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva, “Who’s Paying?” in *The Book of Guilty Pleasures*, trans. Nicole Tao-Yun Wu, eds. Song-Ming Ang and Kim Cascone (Singapore: National Arts Council Singapore, Art-U Room, and Openvivor, 2011), 9.

normalised oppression.⁷¹ In their creation of uncertain feelings, guilty pleasures create an internal moment of dissonance in which guilt is felt for enjoying normalised neoliberal capitalist culture and all that it entails, such as gender inequality, white supremacy, neo-colonialism, homophobia, transphobia, heteronormative romance, and aspirations for upward mobility and wealth accumulation (among other ‘cruel’ desires).

As Ngai has argued regarding similar minor aesthetic categories – the zany, the interesting, and the cute – study of categories like guilty pleasures can provide an understanding of contemporary culture as well as the complex relations that exist between art, commodities, ambivalent feelings, and critical judgments.⁷² Of the zany, the interesting, and the cute in particular, Ngai argues that they are the aesthetic categories that are “best suited for grasping how aesthetic experience has been transformed by the hypercommodified, information-saturated, performance-driven conditions of late capitalism.” Additionally, it is minor aesthetic categories that “help us get at some of the most important social dynamics underlying” neoliberal society.⁷³ Likewise, critical discussion of guilty pleasures might perform a similar task of beginning to grapple with the conditions of contemporary neoliberal society.

The imperfect feminist

To date, feminist discussions of how to cope with popular cultural objects that reproduce neoliberal ideas – among other outputs of the intersecting forces of the kyriarchy – have produced a spread of approaches.⁷⁴ A comparable variety of discussions is found in feminist approaches to pornography, varying from the attitudes of sex positive feminists – who, in somewhat gender binary terms,

⁷¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 58-81.

⁷² Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2.

⁷³ Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 1.

⁷⁴ The term kyriarchy is used by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to describe the multiple intersecting oppressive structures – such as, sexism, racism, heterosexism, and classism – that may impede a person’s choices and treatment in society. (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Feminist studies in religion and a radical democratic ethos,” *Religion and Theology* 2, no. 2 (1995): 142.)

tend to advocate equal sexual liberation amongst men and women – to the militantly anti-porn feminism of Andrea Dworkin – which drew socially conservative sympathisers during the 1970s and 1980s for its attempts to totally eradicate pornographic representations of women – to the approaches of contemporary post-porn feminists – who advance a more nuanced discussion of the limiting and freeing elements of various forms of pornography.⁷⁵

In discussions of popular culture, liberal feminisms often pass off individual acts of complicity with patriarchal neoliberal culture as expressions of agency and choice. This approach fails to recognise that, firstly, choices have impacts that exceed the individual, and, secondly, that certain political choices are not available to all women. Intersectional feminists tend to favour one of two different approaches. The first seems to be to encourage absolute withdrawal from media that peddles oppressive standards and ideas (which is, again, not an option for all women).

The second we might call the ‘imperfect feminist’ approach which encourages criticality whilst enjoying culture that is complicit in oppressive structures.⁷⁶ The imperfect feminist figure seems to be one of recent public affection and sympathy, perhaps largely due to some recent well received feminist publications, like Gay’s *Bad Feminist* (2014), but also because this imperfect feminism involves a small amount of ‘normal behaviour’ – that is, engagement with mainstream culture – in addition to critical thinking and action. In *Bad Feminist*, Gay explores popular culture from an intersectional feminist perspective. For Gay, this involves wavering between “being a woman who loves pink and likes to get freaky and sometimes dances her ass off to music she knows, she *knows*, is terrible for women” and recognising that misogynistic popular culture sits at one end of a spectrum with “the disrespect

⁷⁵ Karrin Vasby Anderson, “‘Rhymes with Blunt’: Pornification and U.S. Political Culture,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 334.

⁷⁶ I have resisted referring to this approach as the ‘flawed feminist’ or ‘good enough feminist’ to avoid creating an unintentional link with Donald Winnicott’s ‘good enough mother’ figure.

of women's boundaries in the middle" and "lawmakers, who implicitly encourage the entire spectrum [of misogyny] to thrive" at the other end.⁷⁷

In her feminist critique of reality television, Pozner, like Gay, encourages indulging in guilty pleasures "with your critical filters intact" by watching while engaging in acts that develop media literacy.⁷⁸ These activities vary from drinking games or amended bingo charts which collect representations that sensationalise or reproduce damaging stereotypes, to asking deconstructing questions, choosing feminist media over mainstream media, as well as writing letters of protest or complaint when one encounters particularly discriminative media.⁷⁹ Imperfect feminists seem to move between being complicit and critically responsive as they move through the world and encounter different types of objects and media.

However, this approach has some issues. There appears to be a tendency among some imperfect feminists to eventually retreat into the rhetoric of individualism. Gay, for example, tends to draw conclusions about her guilty pleasures that seem unresolved, citing the messiness of one's identity, one's contradictions, and being 'only human' to explain away some of her critiques of popular culture. Internal contradictions certainly exist, but should be an issue that continues a conversation about complicated cultural objects, the origins of these internal contradictions, and if they should be filtered or catered to. Other feminists – such as Pozner – sometimes underestimate the critical thinking capabilities of their readers. In her text, Pozner seems to assume that consumers of problematic objects (including her readership) are not already somewhat aware – even if this awareness has only been experienced as a small flutter of guilt – that what they are observing is not always politically correct. This results in a feminist response to popular culture that denigrates the

⁷⁷ Gay, 189.

⁷⁸ Jennifer L. Pozner, *Reality Bites Back: The Troubling Truth about Guilty Pleasure TV* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2010), 346.

⁷⁹ Pozner, 300-324.

critical abilities of the reader much sooner than it validates or energises the reader to further develop their critical thinking skills.

Another complication – but not necessarily a problem – is that every imperfect feminist seems to have their own individual lines which they draw between what they will overlook, and what they will not tolerate: a line between guilty pleasures and objects held entirely in contempt. Gay admits that while she finds Robin Thicke’s music infectious despite his frequently objectifying lyrics, she cannot cope with jokes about sexual assault or rape.⁸⁰ Ali Barthwell claims to have enjoyed *Bachelor in Paradise* until it aired an episode that poorly handled allegations of on-set sexual misconduct and insinuated that a drunk person could still give consent.⁸¹ For Waterland, *The Bachelor Australia* can be laughed at, but the emotional abuse masked as kink in *Fifty Shades of Grey* makes her unbearably uncomfortable.⁸² These are complex distinctions and should not be misunderstood as hypocritical thoughts. There is a difference between cultural criticism that is complicated and weaves between privileged and disadvantaged circumstances – as well as flexible and irresponsible behaviour – and activism that is utterly complicit in (and only further normalises) the values of oppressive ideologies (which, perhaps, renders such activism useless). At *Guilty Pleasures*, all of the attendees were imperfect feminists, able to simultaneously feel pleasure and critically engage with objects that are complicit in oppressive structures.

A classroom exercise

While I was writing this thesis, *Guilty Pleasures* spurred the development of an exercise that I now use in art classes of my own. As an introductory exercise (a regular feature of the ‘housekeeping’ undertaken during the first tutorial of a

⁸⁰ Gay, ix, 128-136.

⁸¹ Ali Barthwell, “Bachelor in Paradise Recap: The Wrong Reasons,” *Vulture*, last modified 16 August 2017, <http://www.vulture.com/2017/08/bachelor-in-paradise-recap-season-4-episode-2.html>.

⁸² Rosie Waterland, “Rosie Reviews: Fifty Shades of Grey,” *Mamamia*, last modified 12 February 2015, <https://www.mamamia.com.au/fifty-shades-of-grey-review-rosie-waterland/>.

university course), I ask students to turn to whoever is sitting next to them, and share three things: their names, a little bit about their art practice, and a guilty pleasure. Before students start these paired discussions, I assure them that I would not ask them to reveal information that I would not first reveal about myself, and so I tell them my name, describe my practice as a writer and researcher, then confess one of my own guilty pleasures that I assume will be fairly recognisable (such as a reality television program, a Tom Hanks movie, or a Shania Twain ballad of some sort). After discussing in pairs these three pieces of information for about ten minutes, I get each student to reintroduce their partner to the class in the round (if the furnishings and shape of the room permit). The guilty pleasures often relax the class, draw supportive laughs, remind the students of other things that they used to enjoy and had forgotten, levelling everyone to the same foundation through common areas of bad taste. Reality television shows, pop songs, and sugary foods tend to be the most common answers, but there are always some interesting exceptions.

In this exercise, student knowledge and experience is emphasised as worthy of discussion. This gesture begins the work of encouraging students to understand their ideas as valid and potentially as interesting as those of the established artists and theorists that will also be discussed over the course of the semester. The exercise also helps students begin talking with one another and become somewhat accustomed to voicing their ideas without becoming fearful of judgment. Importantly, the exercise also prompts students to turn their critical thoughts on objects that intersect their own lives.

The value of guilty pleasures

In his *Manifesto for Bad Music*, Ang suggests that

in spite of itself, bad music is useful, even potent, in its versatility. Play it at low volume and it will facilitate conversations at a dinner party. Play it at sustained high volumes and a prisoner will confess to all allegations.⁸³

We might add that when played in a cosy enough seminar room, bad music will spur strangers into sharing embarrassing slices of their tastes, desires, and politics.

Bad songs – among other guilty pleasures – are yoked in layered feelings that urge these social responses. They may be a little dated and therefore enjoyed for their attachment to a memory or inducement of nostalgic feelings. They may also be inclined to overly sentimental expressions of emotion, and therefore uncomfortable to enjoy. Guilty pleasures may also feel somewhat naff due to their closeness to trends and extremely privileged lifestyles, a characteristic that perhaps brings on a flush of guilt for momentarily desiring, as Berlant suggests, a normative ‘the good life.’ Ang’s performances and text suggest that the contradictory emotions provoked by guilty pleasures – enjoyment that is made uncertain by guilt – are indicative of objects that are complicit in uncomfortable aesthetics or structures.

At Ang’s listening parties, participants are drawn into exploring the complexities of simultaneously rejecting and enjoying these objects and, by extension, the dominant ideologies with which they comply. As a result, Ang’s listening parties unexpectedly provide opportunities to grapple with the politics and conditions of contemporary society. Even though *Guilty Pleasures* is not set up to act as an alternative school, the project nonetheless creates an interesting knowledge building situation. This situation is produced not by pressuring attendees to discontinue their attachment to problematic objects; if anything, the listening parties probably encourage attendees to maintain these attachments. Instead, Ang encourages his attendees to pause and consider

⁸³ Song-Ming Ang, *Manifesto for Bad Music*, 2009, vinyl text installation, Old Kallang Airport, Marina Bay (2011 Singapore Biennale), in jusdeanans, “*Manifesto for Bad Music*,” *Song-Ming Ang*, online video, 1 minute 46 seconds, 26 March 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiY3xUQ-RC0>.

their embarrassment – the (otherwise fleeting) flash of criticality that a guilty pleasure response hinges on – for the duration of a bad song. Combined with Ang’s encouragement of confessional discussions and caring cooperative gestures, *Guilty Pleasures* facilitates an unconventional aesthetic education where congeniality and bad taste reign supreme.

Coda

Some conclusions

Look at the last paragraphs. See how, after a whole series of basically sensationalist details, last paragraphs talk about what should be done. If those changes were to come about, those vast system changes, divine intervention would be required. It's always in the last paragraphs.¹

While in conversation with Peter Osbourne, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak speaks to the purpose of a conclusion as a moment of futuring. This is a moment of envisioning what is to come next, even if such things are only hoped for or imagined. To close this thesis, I will gather together what has been collected in the preceding pages and speak to what might require, as Spivak suggests, divine intervention in the future.

Perhaps, if nothing else, this thesis draws together a group of experiences in a Deweyan sense of the word. When John Dewey describes an experience, he writes of it as an event constituted of actively trying and passively undergoing something.² For Dewey, “mere activity” is not an experience; rather, an experience is had only when we feel the consequences of

¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Setting to Work (Translational Cultural Studies),” in *A critical sense: Interviews with intellectuals*, ed. Peter Osbourne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 172.

² John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 133, Google Books.

an event and “we learn something” from its occurrence.³ Transpedagogical projects, which attempt to build and share knowledge, are experiences of this particular sort.

What is there to be learnt from the three transpedagogical works – Kelly Doley’s *The Learning Centre: Two Feminists* (2012), Keg de Souza’s *Redfern: School of Displacement* (2016), and Song-Ming Ang’s *Guilty Pleasures* (2007-) – that I have gathered together in this thesis and from transpedagogy more broadly? I can think of at least six lessons. The first is that social and intellectual engagement can take shape through a breadth of seemingly active and passive participatory acts, including gestures of cooperation, validation, and involvement. This includes: arguing, reflecting, and publishing (in Kelly Doley’s learning centre); sharing, listening, and absorbing (in Keg de Souza’s school); or confessing, acknowledging, and enjoying (in the case of Song-Ming Ang’s listening party). There is radical pedagogical potential in spaces that allow for both ‘quiet’ and ‘loud’ participation to flourish, but also in spaces that manage to encourage – encourage, not coerce – conventionally quiet participants – be it attendees who are shy or members of oft-ignored minorities – to engage in louder means of partaking, even guiding, a learning opportunity.

A second lesson is that an impactful learning experience can be facilitated in a range of affective environments. Dewey writes that a range of experiences can be “of tremendous importance,” from the dramatic – such as, “a quarrel with one who was once an intimate [or] a catastrophe finally averted by a hair’s breadth” – to the minor and slight.⁴ The case studies included in this thesis collect together a range of affective experiences – including moments of vulnerability and discomfort, empathy and solidarity, and pleasure layered with guilt – that may cultivate learning environments that encourage intellectual openness and critical engagement amongst participants.

³ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 134.

⁴ John Dewey, “Art as Experience,” in *Art and its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Stephen David Ross (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 205-206.

The third lesson is that some learning experiences cannot be contained to a single moment or place. While transpedagogical encounters might partially resolve at the close of the social event, they often remain somewhat open to a second audience who might experience a transpedagogical event (and the ideas produced) through the documents that transpedagogues and participants leave behind online or in print. The artists included in this thesis have all produced texts – Doley’s fictocritical blog, de Souza’s volume of transcripts and essays, and Ang’s book of confessions which all remain at varying degrees of accessibility – that invite continued engagement with transpedagogical experiences. Transpedagogical works seem to operate on a principle of learning as a lifelong practice that is not tied to the sites or time periods usually associated with formal education. In this way, transpedagogical experiences perhaps deviate from Dewey’s approach to experience as a unit, something that takes place and can be neatly resolved: “*that* meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship.”⁵ Rather, learning is an experience that never entirely ends.

Relatedly, a fourth lesson to be learnt is that the objects that spur critical thinking can vary. In the case studies that I have included, the content of the lessons have ranged from ‘serious’ intellectual inquiries – such as displacement and gentrification at de Souza’s school – or direct contact with a specific body of political thought – the *raison d’être* of Doley’s feminist learning centre – to more light-hearted and perhaps non-traditional objects – like the guilty pleasures that fuel Ang’s listening parties. Like learning, critical thinking is an act that cannot be contained by school buildings or state mandated syllabi. The everyday is the realm of the political.

This brings us to a fifth lesson to be garnered from a study of transpedagogy: a feminist praxis does not always require an explicit discussion of gender or sexism. Rather, feminist work can be done by addressing the many powerful and disciplinary bodies that keep oppressive norms in place.

⁵ Dewey, “Art as Experience,” 206.

Transpedagogies shift the location of change away from individual choices to the underlying structures that very quietly maintain oppressive norms and status quos (including education). When traced, the historical lineage of collaborative and cooperative practices that open up alternative learning spaces leads us back to pioneering feminist educators and artists of the twentieth century. Modified versions of various feminist tactics used to build solidarity amongst oppressed communities – including consciousness raising sessions, circle teaching, and emotional labour – are common in contemporary transpedagogical work. These techniques build alternative social structures that complicate the roles and boundaries of artists and participants as well as teachers and students. In turn, these reshaped roles develop opportunities for new types of educational relations that depart from the hierarchies, formalities, and limitations that normative educational spaces keep in place.

Sixthly, and finally, a radical practice – that is, the creation of a new model – is rare and often difficult to sustain. Spivak argues that it is a mistake to think that a dominant system has been “undone simply because you have wanted to undo it” and that the “staging of a desire is not its fulfilment.”⁶ Transpedagogy has its vulnerable spots. Some of the projects included in this thesis have encountered (or narrowly avoided) a range of common issues: creation of projects with only limited accessibility; risk of recuperation of a radical model by a capitalist structure; or development of a radical structure that ultimately preserves oppressive norms. Like other critical practices, transpedagogy is not immune to breakdowns in praxis that result in a separation of radical intentions from embodied practice. While the alternative modes of educating provided by transpedagogy do not always manage absolute departures from the norms of neoliberalised formal systems of education, they nevertheless turn against dominant systems, even if only temporarily.

⁶ Spivak, 172.

In another world – a necessary backdrop given the embeddedness of neoliberal capitalism in this one – formal education might replicate some of the modes of learning and teaching approached in transpedagogy. In this alternative world, the spaces that educate people would not be nested in neoliberal frameworks of value where success is determined by the metrics of capital gain, immediate marketability, or profitability of one's research or knowledge. Education would not be a space that normalises individualistic tendencies or competitive behaviour as substitutes for self-actualisation. Education would not be a source of anxiety, debt, or crushing pressure. Rather, in this other world – where, as Spivak might suggest, some sort of divine intervention has taken place – education would draw students and teachers together into spaces that support de-hierarchised intellectual communities driven by shared curiosity, care, chatter, and critical thoughts. In this other worldly education, there would be more spaces that thrive on creative and speculative acts of learning for the sake of learning without the pressure to 'publish or perish.' This education system would be flexible enough to support students and scholars with varying needs, approach engagement as a social state that varies in expression, and lean into the emotionality of encountering knowledge. What can be done exactly to mould this alternative education will be a future project, but there are lessons to be learnt from recent experiments at the intersection of art and pedagogy.

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