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Source: *Diacritics*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 72-91

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1566371>

Accessed: 30-05-2018 19:10 UTC

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KNOWING BETTER

SEX, CULTURAL CRITICISM, AND THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPERATIVE IN THE 1990S

RICHARD BURT AND JEFFREY WALLEN

Teacher Petting

“A distinguished professor and her graduate student French-kissed in front of a semicircle of gaping students. Were they furthering ‘an exploration of the erotics of the relation between teacher and student’ as the professor says—or was it part of a pattern of sexual harassment as the student later charged?” So ran the copy on an envelope advertising in 1994 an “extraordinary one-time offer \$9.95 trial subscription” to *Lingua Franca* in 1994.¹ The enclosed letter relates an anecdote about two complaints against Jane Gallop filed by two female graduate students alleging she had sexually harassed them. Gallop defended having French-kissed a graduate student in a bar in front of other students in the same class by saying it was a pedagogical performance. The letter quotes from a *Lingua Franca* cover story that came to Gallop’s defense [Talbot].

As sex between students and professors has become a topic of new interest in the wake of sexual harassment legislation, as colleges have adopted campus sexual conduct codes or debate doing so, and as debates and incidents involving sex and teaching have attracted widespread media attention, the anecdote has become central. Some critics might want to dismiss the *Lingua Franca* story as nothing more than titillating tabloid gossip or take it seriously only by regarding it as an effort to combat a right-wing agenda to smear innocent professors who, as feminist or queer, are politically and intellectually well to the left of the mainstream. But the anecdotal interests us precisely because it involves more than just a tabloid scandal in any simple sense. Sex is not merely a way one can slur kinds of criticism one doesn’t like by tarnishing its proponents (for teaching sexual, transgressive material to shock, pervert, or in the extreme case—as in this instance—literally seduce students) though it can sometimes function in this way. For sex comes up in anecdotes told by cultural critics to one another, and when it comes up, it comes up in the same way it does in “tabloid” coverage. The anecdote about sex is never really just about sex, about who did or didn’t (French) kiss, suck, and/or fuck whom: it is rather a story about something in the pedagogical relation that has gone wrong, about a connection that has gone off track. Anecdotes about sex and teaching are really stories about criticism, about pedagogy itself as a form of criticism, and about failed pedagogy as the occasion for self-criticism.

Yet if the anecdote is not really about sex, sex is hardly irrelevant to the production of what the anecdote is really about, namely, criticism. Indeed, we want to focus on the question of sex between students and professors because it is precisely sexuality that puts pressure on different, key aspects of the project of cultural criticism and on the present contestation over it within and outside of academia. Campus codes are being introduced

1. The letter inside answered the question in Gallop’s favor.

as new pedagogical practices, and new courses are being introduced into the classroom: disruption through impersonation, performative strategies, bringing the personal and the erotic into the classroom, and classes making use of pornography, even hardcore visual pornography, often taught by feminist women.² According to leading cultural critics, destabilizing gender roles shows us how gender is constructed, and tells us about power in ways that are politically and performatively effective.³

But there is often a moment when the game breaks down in the classroom. Someone gets offended, and given the way that for some sexual harassment extends from unwanted sexual advances or trading grades for sexual favors to classroom materials (both written and visual), offense can easily move into complaint, legal action, media attention, and of course administrative and professorial panic. The usual rationale for transgressive pedagogy is that this disruption will be successful, not just anarchic: it will be successful in that it gets in the way of the replication and reproduction of power (this is the new mission for teaching: to disrupt the transmission and reproduction of patriarchal power structures). When pressed, cultural critics generally defend a pedagogy of transgressive, “shocking performance” by saying that there is a delicate line between the serious and the sensational but that they can figure out how not to cross it: they can talk about threatening and potentially offensive material in a sensitive way or in a way that achieves our critical aims while minimizing fallouts such as student complaints or, worse, student lawsuits (and that they can protect themselves from accusations and misunderstandings by using, for example, the equivalent of a parental advisory warning to students in course syllabi).

The question of sex puts this defense under critical pressure and forces the related questions of what counts as criticism and who decides and what is professional or unprofessional conduct in the classroom; it puts tremendous pressure on all the attempts to fix the relations between criticism and desire, and professor and student. We are interested less in actual sex in the university than we are in the regulation of it, the discursive effects and administrative kinds of power circulating around it. In our view, sex complicates the notion of transgression, of crossing over, of going from inside to outside and redrawing the boundaries of criticism, to the point where claims to legitimate cultural criticism simply break down, producing not a successful melding of opposites like personal and public, intellectual and erotic, but a failed confusion of them.

Instead of trying to cover every possible aspect of the question of sex between students and professors, we will concentrate on one of the most interesting and perhaps one of the most ridiculous cases—namely, Jane Gallop’s. We will also discuss the sensational case of Malcolm Woodfield, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania who resigned amidst charges of sexual harassment. We focus largely on Gallop, however, even at the risk of appearing to focus on her as a person (in a way some might regard as unfair, bullying, typically male sexism, even politically reactionary), because she offers her own case as a figure of the anecdote. Gallop has not only been written about, but has herself written a book about sexual harassment, and she takes her own experience to be metonymic for the profession: “[i]n deciding to write and publish this essay, I am wagering that I am not a pervert, that this incident . . . is in its ambiguity fairly representative of a broad range of pedagogical experience.”⁴ Moreover, she knowingly

2. An overview of recent feminist work on hardcore porn movies is provided in M. G. Lord’s “Pornutopia: How Feminist Scholars Learned to Love Dirty Pictures.” See also, among many other instances, Joanna Frueh’s *Erotic Faculties*, especially the section “Fucking Around” and the chapter “Fuck Theory.”

3. See the influential work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Marjorie Garber. See also the collection of essays edited by Jane Gallop, *Pedagogy: The Question of Impersonation*.

4. The quote is from an essay published before she was accused of sexual harassment, “Knot a Love Story” 212. Gallop discusses her own case in “Sex and Sexism: Feminism and Harassment Policy” and in her recent (very thin) book, *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*. In this book,

trades on the sensationalism of the topic in her recent essay “*The Lecherous Professor: A Reading*” and in her recent book *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*.⁵ Gallop’s case performs and deconstructs in exemplary fashion a series of oppositions crucial to contemporary pedagogy: fantasizing about sex and having sex; talking about sex as a form of sublimation or as a means of seduction; talking inside the classroom and outside it; performance as “acting out” versus performance as analyzing the effects of gender; being a teacher versus being a student; facts versus gossip/narrative; knowledge/theory versus story/anecdote; academic work versus academic play.

We will explore the way sexuality problematizes these oppositions through the central and interlocking terms that Gallop’s case raises for our analysis: *consent*, *harm*, *celebrity*, and *fantasy*. We will also probe the double binds of a cultural criticism that oscillates between desires for an anti-institutional critique and hopes for reforming institutions.

Though the essay is divided into a number of sections, the argument of the essay falls into two parts. The first part of our essay analyzes the contradictions in Gallop’s failed attempts to harmonize discourses of consent, sexuality, and harm. The second part explains how fantasy, celebrity, and fandom produce irresolvable contradictions in Gallop’s writings and, more broadly, in contemporary cultural criticism. In Gallop’s case, several fantasies collide, and we find a new pedagogical imperative that both eroticizes knowledge in the name of liberatory effects and takes every instance of desire as an occasion for the production of knowledge. The professor thus occupies a contradictory position: she or he is both the one who knows better than anyone else and can therefore claim autonomy, professionalism, academic freedom, and exemption from outside interference, yet also the one who should know better, and who is held to ethical standards (and their correlative forms of interpretation) other than his or her own.

One coda before we begin our analyses of Gallop and Woodfield. At this point in our essay, the now standard move to make would be to say that this is not a right-wing critique but a critique from within left-wing cultural or feminist criticism. But this move would be just another way to stabilize and ground all the shifting relations by claiming a “proper,” progressive position. Rather than assume that cultural criticism—and especially the critique of current attitudes and practices in our society, and of their cultural representations and embodiments—will lead us to more cogent political practices, we want to bring into question the coherence and the efficacy of current critical strategies. Moreover, the dynamics of gender roles are also in flux. In current pedagogical cases of sex, it is no longer just a case of straight men in feminism being misunderstood by female students when they talk about sex (as leering heterosexist professors rather than as pro-sex feminists) but of women, straight or lesbian in feminism, of feminists in feminism,

Gallop is attempting to write for a nonacademic audience and to influence the policies and discussions of sexual harassment, but the book is a weak popularization of her intellectually more serious and challenging work. Unfortunately, as is too often the case for academics, in trying to write a “popular” book, she seems also to feel that her thoughts must be made simple. If she had only written Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment and not her earlier books, especially her essays discussing teacher-student sex (“Knot a Love Story,” “Sex and Sexism: Feminism and Harassment Policy,” “The Teacher’s Breasts,” and “The Lecherous Professor: A Reading”), we would have mentioned her case only in passing. Since the book adds little to her earlier discussions of teacher-student sex, we will cite it only when it elaborates her earlier arguments or provides additional insight into the issues under discussion.

5. In the opening paragraph of her essay, Gallop writes: “I must confess that what really moved me to read it [a book entitled *The Lecherous Professor*] was the novelistic title, whose sensationalism I wanted to transmit by putting it in the title of the paper” [Lecherous 1]. She then goes on to justify her indulgence in sensationalism and in talking “at length and in detail about a book that I myself don’t think very highly of, a book that to my mind thinks neither clearly nor subtly” [2].

being misunderstood. Sex in the classroom cannot be thought simply on the model of the desire of a male professor for a female student nor even on the model of the couple, and there are huge implications in the opening up of sex to multiple configurations.

Our critique, then, is not an “intervention” in contemporary debates over sex between professors and students. We are not trying to design new policies. We do want, however, to point out some things that are wrong with existing policies and with recent “pro-sex” critiques of them, and we want to challenge the belief that the right critique of sex will produce a better university and a better world. We are not simply arguing against the notion of the University as a special community that protects itself from harm; rather, we are attacking discourses that now configure education as requiring protection from harm, in the pursuit and production of knowledge.

(Un)informed Consent

In an essay about sexual harassment which focuses on her own case, Gallop distinguishes between consensual and nonconsensual relations between students and teachers, wanted and unwanted advances. For some feminists like Catharine MacKinnon, social conditions make the notion of “consent” to sex with men in power untenable.⁶ Unlike MacKinnonites, however, Gallop wishes to encourage sex while fighting sexism, and to distinguish between making sexual advances and denigrating women so as to exclude them from work they are otherwise entitled to do.⁷ Gallop argues that prohibitions against consensual relations between students and professors simply build on the idea that “[s]tudents cannot ‘really’ consent to sex with professors for the same reasons (power differential, economic/professional dependency) that women cannot ‘really’ consent to sex with men” [“Sex and Sexism” 22]. While Gallop writes that she “fully accept[s] the validity of” the former analysis, she “does not think the solution is to deny people with less power *the right to consent*” [22, emphasis added]. She does not want an analysis of (male) power to limit women to the role of victim, or to infantilize them by representing women as subjects free of sexual desire.

But what is it one is consenting to when one consents to have sex? And can one ever fully consent to sex, or does having sex always involve a degree of coercion, or always take the form of seduction? At the moment that sex gets yoked to consent, several questionable distinctions usually come into play: one consents to some kind of emotional intimacy, egalitarian interaction, desire for closeness, union, and merged happiness; by contrast, nonconsensual sex involves seduction, coercion, exploitation of weakness, victimization. A key assumption is that a discourse of consent goes together with a discourse of sexuality, and that all these distinctions between shared intersubjectivity and force can be kept intact. That is, the legal subject (one who can give consent) is equated with the sexual subject, and also with the pedagogical subject (the student).

It is our contention, however, that the two discourses do not go together. Current debates often rely on an idealized model of communication, even as many critics deploy strategies that are derived from theoretical attacks on such a model. The concept of the public sphere as the place of open democratic discussion “is anchored upon the notion of a liberal individual who participates in it” [Readings 140], and the pedagogical space of the seminar is always envisioned as a place of persuasion, openness, dialogue, and the

6. In the chapter “Rape: On Coercion and Consent” from *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, for example, MacKinnon writes: “[i]f sex is normally something men do to women, the issue is less whether there was force than whether consent is a meaningful concept” [178].

7. See “Sex and Sexism: Feminism and Harassment Policy” and *Feminist Accused of Harassment*, especially chapters 2 and 3.

noncoercive expression of ideas.⁸ Sexuality is a radically incommensurable mode of communication; it is not equivalent to an intersubjective exchange of ideas. Any eruption of sex in the classroom disturbs and challenges this model of transparent and open communication on which consent relies. Desire thwarts the belief in a complete transparency of consciousness, or of a rational and emotional self-knowledge that can always be clearly communicated to others.

Consent may be necessary as a legal model, and it is not our desire to overturn that model. But attempting to merge a legal discourse of consent with a humanist, romantic sentimental, meliorist, good-guy/good-girl discourse of sexuality obfuscates what goes on in any relationship. Attempts to make the two discourses go together result in a bad model of law, a worse model of sexual relations, and an untenable model of pedagogy.⁹ What we get is a desire for “sensitivity” at the expense of “traumatizing” thought, which is to say, at the expense of thought, since thought, we would argue, is by definition traumatic in a Freudian sense: it involves a kind of deferred action; teaching cannot be absorbed all at once.¹⁰ There is no reason to assume that sex is premised on sensitivity. All the talk today about sensitivity appears to be based on acknowledging difference: one strives for empathy, for an understanding of the differences that are essential to different “identities,” and the goal is to build community through heightened sensitivity. Sexual desire, on the other hand, also involves a refusal of difference, a desire for union, for breaking down the barriers between bodies and erasing the spaces between them. In her writings on sex between students and professors, Gallop unwittingly contributes to a bogus discourse about sexuality as itself a kind of heightened sensitivity, a discourse which fuels the very policies to which she is opposed.

Gallop’s account of her experience demonstrates quite effectively how much sex and consent cannot be harmonized. In her *Academe* essay “Sex and Sexism,” Gallop attempts to shift the focus from the problem of “consent” for the student back to the intentions and desires of the professor, and concludes her defense of consensual sex between students and professors by making a number of distinctions, none of which can withstand the slightest critical pressure. She writes:

The fundamental question should not be whether students are treated sexually but whether, as Adrienne Rich puts it, women students are taken seriously. . . . While sexualization is no doubt frequently a sign that the other person is not being taken seriously (as in “he just wants her for her body”), most of us would recognize that in our own sexual relationships (or those we would like to have) our partner is one of the people, if not the person, we take most seriously. While desire can indeed be demeaning and dehumanizing, it can also be the mark of profound esteem. The determining factor would seem to be whether the one who desires takes the desired seriously as a person, as a subject with a will of her own, whether desire can recognize in its object another desiring subject. [“Sex and Sexism” 20, 23]

8. Readings continues: “[s]uch a subject is capable of the public exercise of reason. In Kant’s terms in “What Is Enlightenment?” the public exercise of reason is the conversation of the individual with the universal” [140].

9. Witness Antioch College’s introduction of a policy demanding that students ask consent from other students at each step of physical interaction. Paradoxically (or perhaps perversely), the more consent is introduced, the more sex appears either to become unerotic (because absurd) or to resemble S & M; that is, the more consent is introduced as a means of correcting power imbalances, the more it appears to reinscribe a power imbalance between master and slave.

10. Of course a discourse of trauma can go together with a discourse of sensitivity. See Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*.

According to Gallop, no woman can be both taken seriously and sexually harassed at the same time; desire cannot be simultaneously humanizing and demeaning.¹¹ Yet as any reader of Genet or Sade knows, desire can be demeaning to the desiring subject. Taking a person seriously doesn't necessarily mean his or her humanization. Nor does it necessarily mean that one is simply recognizing desire where it already exists (when "women students are taken seriously") rather than imposing it (when they are "sexualized"), or that such distinctions between "taking seriously" and "sexualizing" can be maintained throughout the course of a relationship. Seriousness, rather, is premised on the erotic/narcissistic desire for the bright student, for the one who will realize and carry out the potential of one's teaching. Can one take seriously, in these terms, the mediocre student? And can one take the bright student seriously and not have sex with him or her? Gallop defends herself by exclaiming, "I had related to them [students] not *just* as interchangeable receptacles into which I poured knowledge, but *as people*" [23, first emphasis added]. But how does relating to one's students bear on the question of having sex with them? Does Gallop mean that it's OK to fuck a student as long as she is regarded as a person, but not OK to fuck a student seen just as a "cunt" or a "cock"?

Whatever the answer to these questions, Gallop's account reveals her own will to power: as the professor, she will be the one in authority, the one who will say whether French-kissing a student outside of class in a bar was a teaching performance or whether it was sexual harassment. In the essay defending herself in *Academe*, the journal of the American Association of University Professors, Gallop begins by stating that her "accusers claimed the contradiction [between feminist and male pig professor] was mine . . . I did not take these women seriously as students" [16]. She disclaims any responsibility for this contradiction and maintains that the capacity to judge (and to take seriously) is hers alone: the problem arose when the student "did not accept my judgments" [18]. On the one hand, she maintains that the relation with the student who filed a complaint was a teaching relation:

The so-called "consensual amorous relation" in question was neither a sexual relation nor even a romantic, dating one; it was a teaching relation where both parties were interested in writing and talking about the erotic dynamics underpinning the student-teacher relation. . . . [W]hat was never anything but a teaching relation found itself proscribed by university policy. [18]

Yet she also concedes that "it is not so easy to separate the erotic from the intellectual and professional." So who makes the decision? If it is difficult to do so, on what grounds can it be done, and who will do it? Gallop argues against the prohibition of consensual relations since it is based on "the assumption that women do not know what we want, that someone else, in a position of greater knowledge and power, knows better" [22]. Yet whenever the distinctions between the sexual and the pedagogic, or between sexual and sexist put her own position in jeopardy (if she were found guilty of harassment, she could have been fired from the university), she assumes the place of the "someone else" who "knows better." Gallop, as feminist and professor, as the one who can transform "erotic dynamics" into a "teaching relation," becomes the arbiter of the boundaries of "consent."

11. In *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment Gallop writes: "[s]crewing these guys [two professors with whom she worked closely in graduate school] definitely did not keep me from taking myself seriously as a student. . . . It never occurred to me to worry that sex would prevent them from responding professionally to my work" [42]. Richard Klein, one of "these guys," responded: "[f]or decades I have felt guilt and shame for having performed toward her in a way that was unprofessional, exploitative, and lousy in bed" [qtd. in Leatherman, "Key Feminist Scholar"]. Leatherman also reports, "[s]he [Gallop] says, for example, that as a woman she could never neglect to take seriously the work of a female student" ["Key Feminist Scholar"].*

For the editors of *Academe*, the question of “who makes the decision” about relations between professors and students is obviously not a problem at all. At the beginning of the article, and at the top of each page, we get a classic “thinker” photo of Gallop: head cradled between thumb and forefinger, cocked at a reflective angle, but with the body cropped, out of sight. Any Rodinesque harmony of body and mind gives way to a clear authorization of Gallop’s academic status as thinker, not sex object, and therefore as precisely the “someone else, in a position of greater knowledge and power, [who] knows better.”

Sex, rather than destabilizing the borders between desire and knowledge, becomes the discourse with which Gallop patrols the boundaries of criticism. At the end of her essay “The Teacher’s Breasts,” an essay which, like so much of her recent writing, is essentially a book review, Gallop states that the book under scrutiny, *Gendered Subjects*, can “teach us to analyze effects of gender in our pedagogical practice rather than just acting them out” [14]. Other pedagogues “just act them out”; Gallop instead analyzes “effects of gender in our pedagogical practice.” Yet Gallop’s whole career has been built on bringing up and acting out the feelings, desires, and bodily impulses that a timid and conventional academic patriarchy have traditionally repressed. Is sexual desire experienced, acknowledged, acted upon, and “performed” only so as to provide fuel for analysis and theorizing, or is it a means for subverting the oppositions between subjective experience and objective criticism, acting out and analysis?

Like the other teachers about whom she writes, Gallop discusses her own loss of control over her feelings about a student. But for Gallop, her ability to write about the loss of control allows her to reclaim it as mastery: her act of writing, and finally her signature, guarantees that we now have critique and analysis and not “just acting out.” Yet as she reclaims authority, she does not want to make the usual recuperative moves that would turn her into a good-girl teacher. She wants to get off on the eros of her loss of control: she can discuss her student’s breasts with her husband, and she even gets to confess her anxiety that anecdote hasn’t been absorbed by theory.

A haven of theory makes it safe to get off on figures of sex: the teacher’s (or student’s) breasts, her student’s loins as inspiration for her book *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*, or feeling “as if he put his balls in my mouth.” In defending her public kiss, Gallop attempts to draw attention to the erotics of the “teaching” relation. The premise here is that a kiss can be “a ‘performance,’ not acting on desire,” that the kiss can push students “to think about the erotics of the relation between student and teacher” [Talbot 34, 35].¹² What we have here is a fantasy of sublimation, even as the claim is to engage desire and erotics. Desire for the student (she tells Beckelman she has “nice breasts”) is transformed into “conversation with Dick [Gallop’s partner]” and into the possibility of knowledge (she “wondered . . . if Dana’s sexual experience with women meant she *knew something* that could free me from a pattern of increasing sexual rigidity” [Talbot 36, emphasis added]). The student and the lesbian are here fantasized as knowing something that can free the teacher.

Everything here revolves around Gallop’s ability to control the arrow of desire: to direct desire and to turn it toward knowledge. For Gallop, the distance between student and teacher and the difference in their power are a source of erotics, yet both student and teacher *must* follow the same pattern, her pattern, of provoking desire in order to perform it and then theorize it.¹³ Desire, which for Bataille is all about exceeding control, is

12. For Gallop’s lengthy account of this kiss, see *Feminist Accused of Harassment* 88–93 (*she withholds the account until the very end of the book*).

13. In *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* Gallop writes about “the kiss”:

It was a performance. By that, I do not mean that I wasn’t really kissing her or that I didn’t find it sexy. What I mean is that we didn’t just happen to be seen kissing, but we kissed like that because we knew we were being watched. . . . I thought of the kiss as very much

rigidified in the most extreme ways, even as Gallop fantasizes of a “knowledge” that will set her free. Desire is not allowed to roam, except under the gaze, the directorship, the stage management of the Distinguished Professor. Gallop is caught in a wrenching contradiction between the theorizing and performance of “desire,” and its required sublimation and transformation under the most controlling circumstances, in ways that short-circuit the very power of “desire” that is being explored.

Teaching X-Rated Kids in a PG Academy

The discourse of “consent” depends on a return to an Enlightenment model of agency and understanding that cultural critics otherwise throw out. The student, the woman, or the disempowered is to be given agency by learning to know and assert their own desires: pedagogy is now to imply the sexual enlightenment of students (if the newly empowered student comes into conflict with the enlightened critic, however, what finally must be preserved is the knowledge and agency of the critic). Yet enlightenment about one’s own desires is always also connected to enlightenment about the harmful desires of others.

The student, unmoored from his or her parents, awash in a sea of desire, is today so often figured as *vulnerable*. As Mari Matsuda writes, for example: “[u]niversities are special places, charged with pedagogy and duty bound to a constituency with special vulnerabilities. Many of the new adults who come to live and study at the major universities are away from home for the first time and at a vulnerable stage of psychological development” [44]. The flip side of enabling the student to occupy “a position of greater knowledge and power” is to protect them from harm.

Protection from harm, at this “vulnerable stage of psychological development,” is increasingly central to sexual harassment codes and related legislation. MacKinnonites believe that a hostile environment can be created not only from acts but from representations; thus class materials may be construed as a form of sexual harassment, not just trading grades for sexual favors.¹⁴ This view of protecting the student has received indirect support from administrations that govern an increasingly consumer-driven model of the University. The student is now frequently envisioned and treated by administrators as a consumer, and students are often very self-aware as consumers. Sexual harassment codes, especially when governing behavior between teachers and students, are also designed to shift power from the teacher to the consumer, and to protect the dollar value of the school’s product. An open stance of consumerism has a lot of power when exercised by a student. You don’t meet my desire, you don’t get my money. When a student files a complaint about harassment coming from the professor or from the materials in class, the professor is usually presumed guilty by department heads and deans. The student doesn’t have to meet with the professor first to attempt to resolve the dispute, because, it is said, that is like asking a woman who has been raped to meet with her rapist and discuss being raped before going to the police. The MacKinnonite version of protecting the student from

part of the conference, a sort of advance commentary on her [Beckelman’s] paper the next day. [91]

Not surprisingly, both students had in their complaints, as one of the demands, that Gallop “understand that making the complaint the subject of intellectual inquiry constitutes retaliation” [78].

14. One example is the case of Dean Cohen, an English professor at San Bernardino Valley College, who was found guilty by the college of sexual harassment after requiring students to write an essay defining pornography, and occasionally to read from *Hustler* and *Playboy* in class. A Federal Appeals court later ruled that the college violated his First Amendment rights. See Courtney Leatherman, “Court Finds College Violated First Amendment.”



patriarchal violence meets up with the administrative current of marketing to consumers; shared ideology is not at all necessary to put in place new codes and procedures regulating sex.¹⁵

This shift of power away from the professor and toward the student (even at the expense of opening universities to countersuits that allege violations of due process) raises important questions. Does pedagogy now mean the sexual enlightenment of students or their sexual reeducation? Is it a question of students making a successful transition into adulthood, or of their need to be reinstructed about the nature of desire? At issue is a dialectic of innocence and experience that education is expected to mediate: sexual harassment codes both presume students' innocence (and hence their need to be protected from unwonted desire) and their fallenness, their having already been corrupted by an oppressive, dysfunctional society (with education as the means for redemption).

Not only must the "community" of the university protect the student from unwanted desire or penetration—from harassment and rape—but from any threats to their intellectual and sexual development. As Matsuda writes: "[a] negative environmental response during this period of experimentation could mar for life an individual's ability to remain open, creative, and risk taking" [44]. Not only do we see a return to the university acting *in loco parentis* in all the concerns about regulating speech, behavior, and how one acts toward "others," but good pedagogy is often now conceived as enlightenment against harm. The student is to be protected from any evil forces by a ritualistic denunciation of any sexist, racist, classist, or homophobic expressions that might threaten his or her ability to develop into a fully enfranchised participant in society.

A discourse of harm provides immense leverage against whatever forces one wishes to oppose: no one wants the young person, who is in a formative period, to be traumatized, to be harmed by outside forces that will permanently affect the course of his or her development. Any potential threat must be kept at bay. For an earlier generation, the university was to function as the parent that kept the boys away; sexuality itself was to go unmentioned. But the vigorous introduction of sexuality only reveals the student to be so much more at risk. Those who desire to protect students finally want, despite their denials, the university to act *in loco parentis*. If the university is the parent, then the incest prohibition is central. Even broaching the "erotic dynamics" between teacher and student would threaten the traumatization of incest and disable any transformation of erotics into teaching.

For administrators and MacKinnonites, this makes sexual harassment codes and sensitivity classes all the more important and necessary. Though Gallop presents herself and like-minded feminists as being fiercely opposed to codes and the kind of feminism that has fueled them, she nevertheless conceives of pedagogy in similar terms. Gallop too fantasizes about the *vulnerability* of her students. Her most erotic fantasy is generated by thinking of the student she teaches as "placing himself, undefended and vulnerable, in my hands, trusting it would do him good. I feel as if he let me put his balls in my mouth" ["Knot a Love Story" 214].

Gallop articulates her model of academic desire in her essay "Knot a Love Story." She recounts an anecdote in which a graduate student comes to her office upset with a B- and demanding to know why he didn't receive a better grade. She begins to go over the paper sentence by sentence. He ends up satisfied; she ends up turned on, excited by the experience. In certain respects, this is a very traditional model of pedagogy—understanding is based on sympathy and shared experience, not primarily on reason. The goal is for her to see the paper as the student sees it and for the student to see it with her eyes. The

15. Battles to restrict pornography have of course led to some very strange bedfellows, such as Catharine MacKinnon and Edwin Meese. Recent harassment cases, such as that of Paula Jones, bring even more pressure and confusion to the usual political alignments.

question here is why this model of pedagogy should be sexualized; what is gained? A sense of learning as vulnerability? of nakedness?

Gallop appears to take for granted that teaching is always eroticized. Sex enters here through a fantasy of vulnerability—her power to give a student a low grade on a paper is transformed, in the transaction of “office hours,” into the power to bite his balls off. Gallop appears to need a scene of castration to authorize her version of education. The teacher is the one who can either cause harm or educate and protect from harm. For Gallop, the student must become sexually vulnerable in order to learn; male potency has to become actualized, but then given over, placed into someone else’s hands (or mouth). The possibility of harm to the student, in sexualizing pedagogy, is very different from what underwrites Gallop’s scenario. At stake in the erotic situation is satisfaction and dissatisfaction, pleasure and pain, expectation and fulfillment; potency and castration are Gallop’s projection of what she wishes to put into play. She must position the male student as always about to be intruded upon by sex in a milieu where it does not belong, always about to be harassed; this is precisely what she argues against when constructing a female student.

What pedagogical fantasies are in play in thinking about the student as being harmed? The horror movie scenario seems to be the dominant one. The student is now in the subject position of the woman about to be slashed and killed in a horror movie. This fantasy has a parallel in Dan Quayle’s fantasies about the cultural elite. For Quayle, the eruption of sexuality will lead to the breakdown of hierarchy, control, the work ethic, family values. If one thinks that the moment of sexuality is tied to the moment of harm, then sexuality becomes that which is impossible to navigate without disaster. We are witnessing the fetishization of the hymen—the student has to be kept physically and psychically intact.

The model of harm also functions as a model of an intellectual membrane. One can’t deflower the student. The university is to be a metonymic process of substituting outside and inside—the world is figured as a series of threats outside our campus, our community—yet magically keeping the membrane intact: no penetration, just heavy petting.

In rehearsing a fantasy of the professor’s potential harm to the student, Gallop in fact introduces a new pedagogical imperative rather than some liberatory transformation. Gallop hopes to impose a model of desire, and to reground desire in an enlightened discourse of sexuality. She wants to be the lips that speak the voice of female sexuality. The struggle within feminism over desire is not just about liberation and repression, but also about the control and regulation of desire in pedagogy. She assumes she is on the side of feminism: “I had assumed that the side of the equation which held the personal to be good applied to me” [“Sex and Sexism” 18]. And further: “I assumed my position would be taken as a disagreement over feminist strategy rather than as an expression of self-interest. I did not realize it was possible to apply the policy to the sort of relations I was having with students” [23]. Things get interesting—and contradictory—at the moment when it is no longer simply a question of “policing” other people’s relations.

Gallop’s case, then, raises broad concerns about professorial autonomy and authority that have resonance far beyond her particular case. It is often thought either that professors do the intellectual work and the administration does the regulating or that, as professors, we can do both in a way that makes the two go together unproblematically. This claim is questionable. Sexuality in the classroom can radically disrupt the rights and privileges of teacher and students, and the contradictions between these different paths for change—transgressive challenge and the securing of legal, procedural, or political rights—need to be addressed much more fully than they have been. Yet the transgressive and the administrative are not simply opposite or opposed to each other; they are interconnected in many complicated ways. The hope of any remedial critique is always also to change the administrative/regulatory set-up for the better, but “sexuality” hardly reanimates, re-

forms, or solves the problems of administration and administrators, even if it gives rise to a whole new set of diversity counselors, harassment judges, and sensitivity trainers.

I'm with the Band / Group(ie) Gropes

We have already argued that academic discourses of consent and protection from harm are not easily harmonized with explorations of sex and desire; pedagogical fantasies about sex bring out the contradictions between a discourse of rights and autonomy and fields of power and desires of transformation; they also bring out the usually submerged tensions between what is projected for the individual and what is projected for the group. In discussions of sex on campus, “fantasy” usually gets narrowed to sexual fantasy. Yet students are tied up with much broader, more significant fantasies about cultural transformation outside the classroom: students will actualize all the potentialities of the new discourse of sex that has been fostered within the university. When the legitimating ideas for the university are themselves in crisis, and the old ideas of *Bildung*, national culture, or even “excellence” are no longer viable,¹⁶ projecting hopes for change, social justice, or liberation from hegemony onto students becomes all the more enticing. Fantasies of sex and fantasies of pedagogy are all about breaking down boundaries and transforming social relations. As Andrew Ross puts it, we have access to the minds of the children of the ruling class. Pedagogical strategies of transgression, disruption, and bringing the personal into the classroom will therefore have repercussions in the world beyond. Yet the assumption is that the students won't all become like us, become professional teachers. As a result of their classroom experience, they will wield power outside the classroom in a different way.

What is particularly interesting about Gallop's French kiss is the way it complicates this fantasy of group transformation by bringing sex into it. On the one hand, many might scoff at Gallop's defense of the kiss as a teaching performance. But if it isn't clearly a pedagogical performance, it isn't clearly sex either, at least as sex is usually defined, and not because the sex is public but because it is performed in front of other students. Where does the pedagogical situation begin and end? Does teaching only occur in the university? Or can it occur in a bar as well? We can see more concretely how sex disrupts academic fantasies about pedagogical transformation, and brings into conflict the claims for educating the individual and the group, by turning to a second case, that of Malcolm Woodfield, who had sex with one of his undergraduate female students, Lisa Topol. Though the sex in Woodfield's case was recognizably sex, Woodfield's S & M relationship with his student Lisa Topol, even more clearly than Gallop's French kiss, calls into question the coherence of the models of sex that underlie campus codes and critical discussions.

Some of the details of the Woodfield case are in dispute: according to Woodfield, the two had sex once; according to Topol, the two had a relationship over a three-month period; he claims that she initiated consensual sex, whereas she says that he forced her to have sex. Topol filed a sexual harassment complaint which ended up being settled, to her dismay, by the University: Woodfield resigned and nothing was put in his file. Topol then sued Woodfield, the University of Pennsylvania, and Bates College (where he taught previously, and left under a sexual harassment cloud) for civil damages.¹⁷

16. On these issues, see Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins*. *Readings* describes a number of overdetermined changes in higher education in the 1990s, and he focuses on a shift in the legitimating idea of a university from one based on reflection and criticism toward a corporate model based on excellence.

17. Most of our information about the Woodfield case comes from Sabrina Rubin's "12 1/2 Weeks: The Professor. The Student. The Affair. The Lawsuit. The Secret." All the quotations about

This case has some of the marks of a classically kinky, that is to say from one point of view, perfectly average, heterosexual relationship. As the rather tabloid journalist telling the story writes:

According to Topol, Woodfield insisted on laying down the rules and demanded Topol's strict obedience. He would routinely spank her with a riding crop or a whip. He would mention other students' names and ask Lisa whether she thought they would sleep with him as well. And increasingly, she says, he would snarl at her "You're a bad student for fucking your professor."

The journalist tells us further that, according to Topol, "their sex always mirrored a teacher-student relationship, with Woodfield assigning her sexual 'homework' for their next meeting." One such "assignment" was "to find an off-campus apartment where he could spank her without worrying about the noise."

What is striking to us about the relationship between Woodfield and Topol is not so much the spanking and the perversion of the teaching relationship—disciplining and dominating the student, and having sex, became the forms of instruction—as the interest of Woodfield in his other students: "[h]e would mention other students' names and ask Lisa whether she thought they would sleep with him as well." The presence of other students is not just a function of Woodfield's kinkiness. They are present at crucial points in the story as told by others as well. The attention Woodfield gave Topol in class was remarked on by one student, who saw Woodfield as singling out Topol for attention:

As he began his lectures, most students would turn their attention back to the crosswords. But one student's attention was always riveted on the professor . . . she was an academic who took fierce pride in her work, talkative enough to allow the rest of Woodfield's class to doze. That was all right; some students felt that Woodfield scarcely noticed anyone else anyway. "Some days it was as if the rest of the class wasn't there," says a student who habitually sat next to Topol. "Ninety percent of his attention was on her." "What do you think, Lisa?," Professor Woodfield would ask, lingering on her desk. "Your comments are always so helpful."

A dispute over whether Woodfield gave only Topol a different option for a final examination again raises the issue of how sexual attention differentiates a student from the students. Topol went to Woodfield's office to tell him she thought his final exam would be too easy, and he asked her if she could think of an alternative:

Topol suggested she be given an oral exam. "An . . . oral?" he drawled in response. "How does one go about giving an . . . oral? How long does it last?" A little unhinged Topol replied that perhaps half an hour would be appropriate. "Oh no, Lisa," he then assured her, she says, "my orals last much longer than that—at least an hour." Later, Woodfield would claim that he had offered the oral exam to the entire class and that Topol was the only one out of the 75 to accept. Students testifying at the university hearings could not recall such an offer.

Topol was also concerned about other students. Woodfield tried to use her envy of them as part of his defense. To the ombudsman, Topol complained that she was "upset because

the case that follow will be from this account, and we will not be specifying page numbers, since we are working from a copy transmitted over the Internet.

he didn't call her and took other people out to lunch." And other students were central to her filing a complaint. She did so only after hearing rumors that Woodfield had harassed students at Bates College, where he had taught before coming to Penn.

The presence of other students complicates the model of sex as coupling between student and teacher that underlies most accounts by professors, students, administrators, and journalists. The model for sex is not really that of a couple in either Woodfield's case or Gallop's but that of group(ie) sex.¹⁸ The sex between professor and student is distinct from the romantic sentimentality of the couple in at least two possible ways: it can be regarded as Dionysian if everyone gets included, or it can be regarded as really about the rejects, the ones who remain apart, left out.

The one-on-one personal approach that leads to sex is really about singling out a student, giving him or her attention other students don't get. What excites Gallop about the graduate student in "Knot a Love Story" is taking more time than she had planned in her office to discuss his paper. The moment she calls a friend to cancel a date and remains in her office is the moment she gets turned on.

But the sexual excitement of engaging and transforming the particular student (Gallop writes: "I was aroused in fact by the sense that I was a 'good teacher,' by feeling my power to help someone reach his fullest. Yet the arousal meant I was getting off on being his teacher" [212]) collides with the belief that pedagogy necessarily extends to the group, to the class as a synecdoche for a larger community. The academicization of sex under a rubric of social justice founders on the desire for a student. As Freud writes in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, "Social justice means that we deny ourselves many things so that others may have to do without them as well, or, what is the same thing, may not be able to ask for them" [67]). Freud describes a trajectory of group identifications from the nursery to the student to the groupie in which, he argues, envy becomes a demand for social justice:

[I]n a nursery . . . [t]he elder child would certainly like to put his successor jealously aside, to keep it away from the parents, to rob it of all its privileges; but in the face of the fact that this younger child (like all that come later) is loved by the parents as much as he himself is, and in consequence of the impossibility of his maintaining a hostile attitude without damaging himself, he is forced into identifying himself with other children. So there grows up in the troop of children a communal or group feeling, which is then further developed at school. The first demand made by this reaction-formation is for justice, for equal treatment for all. We all know how loudly and implacably this claim is put forward at school. If one cannot be the favourite oneself, at all events nobody else shall be the favourite. This transformation—the replacing of jealousy by a group feeling in the nursery and the classroom—might be considered improbable, if the same process could not later on be observed again in other circumstances. We have only to think of a troop of women and girls, all of them in love in an enthusiastically sentimental way, who crowd round a singer or pianist after his performance. It would certainly be easy for each of them to be jealous of the rest; but, in the face of their numbers and the consequent impossibility of their reaching the aim of their love, they renounce it, and, instead of pulling out one another's hair, they act as a united group, do homage to the hero of the occasion with their common actions, and would probably be glad to have a share of his flowing locks. Originally rivals, they have succeeded in identifying themselves with one another by means of a similar love for the same object. [66–67]

18. It is worth noting the similarities between the cases. The two students who complained about Gallop did so after she announced at a gay and lesbian studies graduate student conference that "graduate students are my sexual preference."

There arises a taboo on actual sex, and “a certain amount of satisfaction” is preferable for members of the group to a “more obvious” outcome because “the circumstances of life prevent its leading to any such satisfaction” [67]. Sex with teacher blocks the transformation of jealousy into “group feeling” and thereby implodes the fantasy that we are in the business of transforming “the minds of the children of the ruling class.” Topol can never be the “good student,” in Woodfield’s scenario, because she disrupts the group identification of the class. Fucking one student is never enough.¹⁹

Hot for Teacher

Any hopes for using the erotics of the teacher-student relation in the service of transformative pedagogy and criticism are complicated further by the ways in which the relation is now often recast as celebrity-fan. Again, the Gallop case is instructive. Margaret Talbot, the writer of the *Lingua Franca* essay, points out that Gallop is regarded as a celebrity feminist and dresses the part. Talbot comments:

Gallop, a celebrity in lit-crit circles, could be described as a sort of post-structuralist Mae West: In critiquing the notion of a disembodied mind, she loves to flaunt her own body, dressing up like a vamp in seamed stockings and spike heels when speaking at scholarly conferences, confessing in her essays to things like masturbating while reading Sade. . . .

. . . Gallop was, in a manner of speaking, famous. Not Madonna famous; not even k. d. lang famous. But a name with real pull in high theory and feminist circles. [24–25, 30]

“Not Madonna famous . . . [b]ut a name with real pull”; what is the difference between desiring a professor as someone with greater power, knowledge, and authority and desiring a “celebrity”?

At least one of Gallop’s allies sees her celebrity as a problem she is unfairly saddled with. Joseph Litwack comments that the two student complaints about Gallop were really fueled by her celebrity:

I think that a lot of the aggression against Jane that seemed to be about sex was really about professional resentment. The leaflets [distributed at a conference she organized on the personal and pedagogy] played heavily on Jane’s status as a distinguished professor, as though that were itself culpable. Her salary was mentioned also. It seemed like a lot of displaced status envy getting played out, like what was really behind it was the unhappiness of graduate students, their feelings of powerlessness, of abjectness. [Talbot 39]

And the complaints confirm this point. According to Talbot: “in the sexual harassment complaints, her accusers also seem disgruntled with her status, stressing Gallop’s ‘fame’ as a theorist (as one of their supporters explains to me, though the students didn’t have to

19. Precisely because the professor is open to all comers, so to speak, the utopic dreams of group transformation and of equal access for all offer two pedagogic scenarios for teacher-student sex: either the unbounded simultaneity of group sex or the serial repetition of the sex worker. Democratic access coincides with the kind of consumer logic we discussed above—we’re all billed the same amount, students might say, so we should all get the same (this logic implies an equivalence between professor and prostitute: both engage in highly repetitive labor, and both are expected always to smile, to look they like they’re enjoying their work as if they were doing it for the very first time).

take courses with Gallop . . . they felt ‘pressure’ to do so ‘because she is famous’)” [28]. One friend of Gallop comments: “Dana idolized [Gallop] and I think [Gallop] should have realized that with this student she was on shaky emotional ground” [33]. The complaining students explicitly linked her status and her rank as a Distinguished Professor to the power differential between her and them.²⁰

Celebrity challenges the notion of cultural criticism’s democratic aspirations and legitimacy because it makes the professor a figure whom the student aspires to be but can’t realistically hope to become. It is never you, the student, who can be a star (while the groupie or wanna-be fantasizes about being a rock star, she or he isn’t being trained to become one). Celebrity *denies* the model of imitation, of initiation, of pedagogy that is otherwise at work. This earlier model depends on initiating the “youth” into a new status, and has everything to do with shaping the student in one’s own image. Implicit is the democratic/pedagogic claim that “knowledge” is something the student can strive for, gain access to, and attain. There is a conversation (between Socrates and Phaedrus . . .) that may be unequal, but the sexual desire is a continuation, a furtherance, a *supplement* to the interaction, conversation, and transmission of knowledge to the student.

Celebrity, in contrast, is all about exclusion—what you can’t have. What is desired is something that is *not* achievable by degrees, by slowly moving up the ladder, or by transmission, by a passing on of what one knows. What one desires, in (a) celebrity, is what one *cannot* have. Hollywood celebrity is built on *distance*, on the unbridgeable gap that defines desire—one desires here precisely what has been *reproduced*, the image.²¹

Celebrity calls a more wholesome model of teaching into question because becoming a celebrity isn’t about something being taught. It is about chance, not about open access. It’s about being discovered. And though the fantasy is that everyone can be a star, the truth is that not everyone can be discovered at Hollywood and Vine.²²

As a celebrity, the professor is an ambiguous object of desire. The nature of “knowledge” in the humanities is troublesome (what does the star “know”?), as is the status of the professor. In our view, academic celebrity is as much about abjection as stardom: the academic celebrity is closer, that is, to the porn star than to the Hollywood star; very well known inside a limited circle, virtually unknown outside it.²³ Moreover, academic stardom demands being positioned as an outsider, excluded from power, and also requires still being a fan.²⁴

20. *The same goes for Topol: “[a]nd, stripped of her identity as star pupil, she was left with no identity at all.”*

21. *And in academia, one also desires what can be cited, the name. Pictures on book jackets attempt to give a body or a face to the “name,” and as many critics have remarked in the aftermath of the Frank Lentricchia and D. A. Miller poses, the images call forth and parody a welter of conflicting desires.*

22. *Gallop describes the graduate student who accused her of harassment [Beckelman] as an “ambitious woman with a flair for outrageous performance,” who “identified with me and thought I’d be the ideal teacher for her. I responded strongly to her desire for a career like mine” [Feminist Accused 54]. She describes their association as: “a relation between a student enamored of a teacher’s work, a student who wanted to be like that teacher, and the teacher who responded deeply to the student’s desire to work with her, who wanted profoundly to help her do what she desired. . . .” [55]. Most graduate students desire a career like Gallop’s. But it is extremely unlikely that they will get one, no matter how strongly they identify with her.*

23. *For a fuller discussion of this idea, see Wallen’s “Crossing Over: The Academic as Porn Star” in his Closed Encounters: Literary Politics and Public Culture.*

24. *On celebrity, fandom, and the academic intellectual, see Burt, “Getting off the Subject,” and Unspeakable ShaXXXspears 1–24, 120–25, 212–14.*

We can now appreciate why sexuality operates at such a crucial point in anecdotes about teaching. Celebrity sets up a distance which can't be overcome through conversation. Celebrity is about unavailability. The only way to cross the divide, then, is through sex. The only means of communication is fucking, becoming a groupie. The groupie can at least "have" (possess, incorporate, ingest) the body, if he/she cannot gain/possess the image of the celebrity. Sex here does not mean complete reciprocity or equality, but it does diminish existential distance: the groupie becomes newsworthy/gossipworthy and achieves a degree of parasitic fame, or infamy, as the case may be. But the distance is never completely broken down; the fan can have but not be the celebrity, thereby inverting the usual compensatory strategy for failed desire of being what one wants because one can't have it. Distance is maintained as well by the division within the celebrity as image and as person; who is one sleeping with, when celebrity resides in the image (or the name)?

Academic celebrity lies somewhere in between "real" celebrity and typical academic nerdiness. Academic celebrity is object because of its in-betweenness: it is neither fully "academic" nor fully "celebrity." It puts into play several conflicting desires and disappointments. The dynamics of "academic celebrity" resemble neither the "old" pedagogic model of initiation and transformation (where the professor is the intermediary, initiating the student, in Allan Bloom's version, into the world of great ideas) *nor* the Hollywood model of celebrity, of posing as that which is to be desired (and cannibalized and destroyed).

To put this another way, the academic "star" never regards herself as a celebrity, never sees herself as others do. Indeed, the model for the intellectual is more that of a fan, or a fan of other fans (often of nonacademic fans, say of *Star Trek* or of Elvis). For cultural critics, being a fan/celebrity allows one to seem democratic and hierarchical at the same time: he or she gets to occupy all positions inside and outside of the academy. Moreover, the student and professor get to occupy the same position as fans (of other critics or of popular figures like Madonna), and both are able to claim a kind of agency. Thus, fandom appears to resolve the contradiction that students must be like us but not be like us, not want to become us: they can learn to do outside the institution what we teach them to do when they are still inside it (this is the fantasy of "popularization" that grounds cultural studies).

But it is precisely the way that fandom opens up agency for students that also destroys any imagined harmony between these institutional positions. For there is a considerable amount of aggression in fandom, as the destructiveness of fans in Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust* makes clear, and as can be seen as well in Freud's discussion of the passage cited earlier from *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, where he describes a movement from girls pulling out one another's hair to their desire for a lock of the musician's hair.

The aggressiveness of fandom can take different forms. It can be what Catherine Liu cleverly calls (s)talking.²⁵ In the case of teaching, fandom may involve a desire to devour the celebrity in a totemic, cannibalistic way. The student's desire for the professor may be engaged with a fantasy of self-transformation which involves a mixed metonymy: if I can get close enough it will change me; if I can have his or her sexual fluids, maybe I'll get his or her brain cells. There is a fantasy of infusion, a fantasy some might characterize as vampiric. (One could pause to ask here: is this a zero sum game? Can the professor give without losing, without having his or her life sucked out?)

25. Catherine Liu used this term in her introduction, "Fan Mail, Stalking," to a special session she chaired at the Semiotic Society of America Conference, October 18, 1996.

There is a remarkable lack of coherence about the position and boundaries differentiating a fan from a celebrity. If the professor can be both celebrity and fan, so too can the student. Beckelman (one of Gallop's accusers), for example, is multiply positioned as fan, gossip queen, and (fantasmatic) celebrity. The writer of the *Lingua Franca* essay on Gallop compares her to Hedda Hopper on the basis of Beckelman's having published an interview with Gallop in a publication entitled *Composition Studies: Freshman English News* as well as having written a column in a local *Lesbian and Gay Studies Newsletter*. And Beckelman views herself as both fan and student. At one point she admits: "I'd gone to Milwaukee to get on the fast track by hooking up with someone well known." But at another point, she imagines herself as the "up-and-coming" celebrity, dismissing the "old-and-out-of-it" Gallop, even as she identifies with her: "'She's done everything she set out to do. I mean, I'd feel like I was just hitting my stride, like Madonna. But maybe she feels, *Hey, I've done the book thing, I've done the child thing*'" [Talbot 36].

This aggressiveness and instability of fandom, explored enthusiastically by the cultural critic, is recoded as pathological when it's a matter of self-defense. This is exactly what happens in Gallop's case. The student is pathologized as a fan (read "crazy").²⁶ Alternatively, one could try to defend group(ie) criticism as a kind of close reading, (s)talking. Our point is not to normalize fandom, however, but to examine the contradictory claims it generates, and to highlight the links of celebrity and fandom to abjection. The entry into publicity is often through abjection. Woodfield and Topol are both portrayed as losers in the journalistic account of their case. And Gallop sometimes presents herself as a failure in her writings. She writes a book on Lacan in which she says she tried to read Lacan but couldn't; she writes an essay about teaching in which she says she tried to teach a student but couldn't. Her claim to academic fame rests partly on her "bravery" for risking being abjected by some members of her audience (who would conclude that she is a pervert).

Legal Briefs

Professors, like students, are always symbolically in an apprenticeship position. But although everyone is vulnerable, even someone in the more dominant role, the positions of student and teacher are obviously not equivalent or interchangeable. One's position will in large part dictate how to capitalize on abjection, which narratives and stereotypes will play best. Conflicts among faculty and between faculty and students or between faculty and administrators arise in part out of a struggle to occupy the same position: few, if any, cultural critics want to be regarded as dominant. They need instead to authorize themselves by claiming cultural marginality and abjection, no matter how much institutional power they have, no matter how highly they are ranked or paid.

We see here one of the many double binds of institutionalizing a critique of institutional practices: authority is wielded and preserved only by disclaiming any complicity with institutional power. Despite its self-representation as transgressive, academic criticism colludes with the very administrative processes to which it would seem to be opposed. Critical insights (about transgression, sexual desire, gender relations, and institutions) are necessarily in tension with administrative attempts to employ these insights for formulating new institutional policies (the liability and image of the institution are always of greater administrative concern than the intellectual exploration of the student or professor). As we have shown here, the tensions between theorizing, practicing,

26. There is often a need to delegitimize the complaining student by demonizing her, and by assigning her a status as overly professional and social climbing, thereby replaying the narrative of a film like *All about Eve*, or in a more recent version, *Showgirls*.

and administering sex are especially acute: the discourses of “consent” and “harm” founder on the contradictions between envisioning sexual desire as transgressive—as that which violates the limit or boundary—and as that which requires administrative limitation. Strategies for denying the conflicts between a critical theory and its institutionalization, or for denying one’s own institutional power (I’m a feminist, therefore I can’t be a harasser), only heighten the repressive power gained through institutional appropriations of these theories.

In closing, we want to make it clear that we are neither against sex nor for what one (straight white male) professor has termed “intimate mentoring.” As we said at the outset, our concern throughout has been not to devise some policy but to consider the ways in which anecdotes about sex are really allegories of criticism. We have been concerned to identify problems, raise questions, and explore contradictions. At a time when sexuality is arguably the master discourse of cultural criticism, there are many contradictory imperatives: you must pay attention to sexual difference, sexual orientation, and sexuality, but you must not cause any discomfort to students, especially to those in categories traditionally discriminated against or demeaned by sexual discourse (women, homosexuals, nonwhites). You must open up forbidden and neglected topics, but you must also carefully police every discussion and intrusion of sexuality. One is supposed to teach students about sexuality, but God forbid that one’s students ever get sexually aroused by a discussion in class.

There is, then, no Ariadne’s thread to guide us out of the maze built out of cultural criticism, sexuality, and the university. Transgression is always also an attack on regulatory mechanisms, yet administration is always also an embrace of them. Discourses of sexuality lean heavily on both transgression and administration, to the extent that any remedies are sought and any balances of power are to be changed. Sexuality in the classroom can radically disrupt the rights and privileges of teachers and students, and the tensions between different paths for change—transgressive challenge and the securing of legal, procedural, or political rights—spill onto every party. Sexuality will not, however, provide the grounds for a cultural critique that can liberate us from the constraints of our ideologies, our institutions, or our desires.

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