

## Introduction

### *Chronicle of a Search*

Throughout my research for this project, and in twenty years of professional life, I have been struck over and over again either by a widespread, peculiar, and unrestrained hubris on the part of the academy toward pedagogues and things pedagogical—in which case what pedagogy and pedagogues do, can do, should do, is defined *for* them; or by a lack of knowledge about and understanding of what even the terms mean. That there are historical precedents for this does not justify continuing this uncritical tradition, particularly at times, like the present, when a widespread circulation of the terms marks an apparently heightened awareness of pedagogy's potential to address the intricate educational issues that confront us.

A glance at how the term and the concept of *pedagogy* (less frequently, *pedagogue* and *pedagogist*) has been deployed in academic discourse in the last twenty years or so points out considerable confusion about its nature and function, and a peculiar lack of attention to the historical reasons responsible for that confusion. Since (approximately) the 1970s, its valorization has taken place *mainly* within the field of composition and radical education (though patterns are changing, now), which might have to do with the publication of Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). Generally speaking, even in these fields, the term is often used to refer to "teaching," or "practice," in which case the expression *pedagogical practice* seems redundant. More and more frequently, however, the term *pedagogy* seems to be deployed to designate a theoretically informed alternative to mechanical conceptualizations of teaching or instruction. In this case, the expression *pedagogical practice* suggests a teacher's commitment to teach in ways that are consistent with, in fact that are the enactment of, her theories of reading, writing, and thinking. A need to widen pedagogy's sphere of influence seems to be signaled by the proliferation of such phrases as *liberatory pedagogy*, *critical pedagogy*, and *radical pedagogy*. But the fact that pedagogy's positive valence is pegged on the adjective—critical, liberatory, radical—seems to underscore its perceived conceptual inadequacy (cf., for example, Simon 1992). Moreover, even when the term or concept *pedagogy* is invoked by "radical educators" as an alternative to approaches to teaching dominant in the academy, the past that led to pedagogy's demise is often so de-historicized that their move runs the risk of losing credibility.

A case in point. In *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern*, the issue of pedagogy is at the center of Patti Lather's project:

Like [Gayatri] Spivak (1989b), I position pedagogy as a fruitful site for learning strategies of a postmodern praxis. In the interest of accessible language, I had given thought to replacing the word pedagogy with the word teaching in the title of this book until I read David Lusted's 1986 article in *Screen* entitled, "Why Pedagogy?" Lusted defines pedagogy as addressing "the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies—the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they produce" (p. 3). According to Lusted's definition, pedagogy refuses to instrumentalize these relations, diminish their interactivity or value one over another. It, furthermore, denies the teacher as neutral transmitter, the student as passive, and knowledge as immutable material to impart. Instead, the concept of pedagogy focuses attention on the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced.

Arguing for the centrality of the issue of pedagogy to both cultural production and the popularization of critical analyses, Lusted sees the disattention, the 'desperately untheorized' (p. 3) nature of pedagogy as at the root of the failure of emancipatory objectives. While he cites Stuart Hall and Michael Young, Lusted appears unfamiliar with *the American literature on radical pedagogy*, a small but vibrant literature in both feminism (e.g., Culley and Portuges, 1985; Bunch and Pollack, 1983; Shrewsbury, 1987) and Neo-Marxism (Giroux, 1983; Shor, 1980; Freire, 1985). Nevertheless, Lusted brings to the center stage of cultural studies the interactive productivity as opposed to merely transmissive nature of what happens in the pedagogical act. (1991, 15, emphasis mine)

It seems odd that in the language necessary for Lather to construct her quite *smart* feminist critique with/in the postmodern, *pedagogy* should prove to be a troublesome term. It is not clear whether Lather is concerned that the term might make her work inaccessible because of its recondite meaning, or because of the negative valence it carries. The decisive factor in Lather's adoption of the term was, she states, a 1986 essay—"Why Pedagogy?"—by David Lusted, a British theorist of film studies, who convinced her of the necessity to adopt the term so as to identify a teaching that is other than merely transmissive (that is, other than the "banking concept of education" Freire described in 1968 in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).<sup>1</sup>

To read Lusted's essay is to recognize that although Lusted, like Lather, constructs a cogent argument for pedagogy, that argument is peculiarly dehistoricized. In the opening paragraphs, Lusted elegantly summarizes several "stories" of pedagogy and misconceptions that have contributed to its lamentable reputation. Having asked "*Why should pedagogy be of interest to anyone?*" he rehearses some of the reasons why it is not:

Few are familiar with the term. Even aficionados gag on its pronunciation and falter on its spelling. Where the word is familiar at all, it's most often in the shape of "pedagogue," conjuring mental images of the mortar-board and cane, Bash Street Kids and Mr. Chips (Michael Redgrave rather than Peter O'Toole), connoting pedantry and dogmatism.

Indeed, even among elite realms of thought, pedagogy is taken as coterminous with teaching, merely describing a central activity in an education system. The invisibility of pedagogy in education and cultural production generally is well matched by the imprecision of dictionary definitions which relate pedagogy variously to teaching as an agency, a profession or a practice.

Within education and even among teachers, where the term should have greatest purchase, pedagogy is under-defined, often referring to no more than a teaching style, a matter of personality and temperament, the mechanics of securing classroom control to encourage learning, a cosmetic bandage on the hard body of classroom contact.

So, is there any useful purpose in investigating a term so incoherent and unacknowledged?

Why is pedagogy so important? (Lusted 1986, 3).

According to Lusted, the term *pedagogy* (rather than *teaching*, *education*, or *instruction*) is important because "it draws attention to the *process* through which knowledge is produced." Though he is specifically concerned with examining and redefining the function of pedagogy in film, TV, and culture studies education, what he says is eminently applicable to any scene of instruction:

The central question here is how adequate the theorization of film, TV, culture in general can be without a consciousness of the conditions which produce, negotiate, transform, realize and return it *in practice*. What pedagogy addresses is the process of production and exchange in this cycle, the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the interaction of three agencies—the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce. (3)

Lusted's conceptualization of pedagogy assigns pedagogues an important role. Insofar as pedagogy's function is *not* the transmission of immutable knowledge but instead "the interaction of three agencies—the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce," pedagogues ought to be theorists who rigorously and responsibly practice the theories they espouse. Moreover, they ought to understand that they and their theories are not the sole "origins" or repositories of knowledge (knowledge is produced by the interaction of three agencies), and they need to practice that belief with intellectual integrity. This means, among other things, that pedagogues need to begin their investigations "where students are," not in condescension or as a beginning to be quickly left behind, but with a passion and an intellectual curiosity about how students think and the language they use to think, that

might lead them to recognize in their students' work telling examples of knowledge formation. By assigning to teachers, learners, and the knowledge they *together* produce the role of agencies, Lusted deftly destabilizes the hierarchical system that assigns differential powers, values, and roles to theorists and teachers, teachers and students, theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, and teachers' knowledge and students' knowledge.

What leads Lusted to this exciting and (potentially) powerful conceptualization of pedagogy? Nothing more, nothing less, I think, than the fact that the future of TV, film, and culture studies and their responsibility to educate depend, as he astutely points out, on methods of teaching that demystify the "process through which knowledge is produced." I fully agree. Unless teachers are able and willing to demystify the processes of knowledge formation and reception that constitute different theories (a function remarkably different from the "implementation of theory function" that teachers are usually assigned), theories will remain sophisticated bodies of knowledge inaccessible to and unaffected by those (students, the public) whose consciousness they are supposed to transform. Theories and theorists become hermetic, incapable of sharing the knowledge they can produce—which depletes rather than strengthens theories' and theorists' function.<sup>2</sup> This is a point that I have repeatedly argued—in print as well as in the classroom—in my work, work that is both shaped by and shapes my conceptualization of pedagogy as *reflexive praxis*.<sup>3</sup> What I particularly value about this definition of pedagogy is the inextricability of theory and practice that *praxis* conveys.<sup>4</sup> But because *praxis* can become inflexible, and blind to the possibility that the *nexus* of theory and practice might become an imprisoning knot, I think it is necessary for pedagogy to be reflexive. This means that a teacher should be able and willing to interrogate the reasons for his or her adoption of a particular theory and be alert to the possibility that a particular theory and the rigorous practice that enacts it might be ineffectual, or even counterproductive, at certain times or in certain contexts.<sup>5</sup>

Lusted's insight about the radical transformative power of pedagogy is valuable. Unfortunately, teachers, at any level, cannot become by fiat the kind of pedagogues Lusted expects them to be. The theorization and valuation of teaching that would make that possible is dependent on a radical transformation of what teachers' preparation and teachers' responsibilities, within every discipline, are assumed to be. And the potential for such transformation depends on a cogent and rigorous critique of the various ideological rationalizations that, especially in large research universities, mainly assign and confine pedagogy qua teaching, and its hygiene, to devalued members of the academy. If pedagogy is to fulfill the function Lusted (re-)claims for it, the coercive

and constitutive power that the academy has had in articulating such intellectually devalued functions for it (pedagogy as transmission of knowledge, teaching style, cosmetic bandage, etc.) and in demarcating its space of operation needs to be unravelled. Because Lusted does not expose how pedagogy's diminished functions came to be constructed, his attempt to assign a positive valence to a term that, as he points out, is still burdened with negative traces is ultimately puzzling. And it could be ineffectual, since the reasons and myths responsible for pedagogy's and pedagogues' peculiar reputation are left in place, readily available to whoever will want to oppose or abort the educational changes necessary to accomplish Lusted's encomiable goals.

Like Lusted, I am aware of the "imprecision of dictionary definitions" of pedagogy, its "invisibility in education and cultural production," and the differences that mark its various discourses. But having tried to conjecture the reasons for the imprecisions, and the invisibility, and the differences, I am in a position to suggest that Lusted's and Lather's and many other radical educators' critique of current educational practices would gather strength if they could contest and unravel the apodictic force of stories that, for example, automatically and uncritically reinscribe the close identity between a pedagogue and a pedant; or feed the notion that pedagogy is either an art so pure, so high, as to be unteachable, or a craft so lowly, so mechanical that any manual could teach it. I believe it is important to expose how and where these "stories" were produced so as to make it difficult for pedagogy's critics not to confront their own perhaps unself-conscious vested interest in continuing to assign to it merely a transmissive, didactic, and ancillary role. It is my hope that this book might contribute to the beginning of such a critique.

To this end, I have collected documents that bring together for the first time in one volume cultural, theoretical, institutional, and political constructions of pedagogy, constructions that are either scarcely known or not widely circulated among both proponents and critics of pedagogy. These texts, and the further texts they can lead us to uncover or to produce, should complicate current conceptualizations of pedagogy, especially those that sustain the distinction—ossified over time into an increasingly untenable stereotype—between the intellectual preparation, and the concomitant function, that sets the scholar apart from the teacher. This separation of functions, often invoked to demarcate a hierarchy of intellectual capabilities and connected powers, had its historical reasons.<sup>6</sup> In the 1880s, for example, it served to justify the establishment of departments of pedagogy at the university level as centers for the education of teachers that would advance the "liberal" discovery and production of knowledge. These new and supposedly more sophisticated and comprehensive departments of pedagogy were advertised

as being different from and in opposition to departments of pedagogy in normal schools, the first publicly funded institutions for the preparation of teachers that for complex economic, political, and ideological reasons came to be identified essentially with “pragmatic” and “professional” (a term with a hint of the mercenary) goals.<sup>7</sup> My research suggests that in the following decades, however, for equally complex economic, political, and ideological reasons, the distinction between the liberal (with its supposedly exclusive attention to scholarship) and the professional (with its supposedly exclusive attention to teaching) also demarcated, within universities, the opposition between departments of English and departments of pedagogy. The latter, housed initially within departments of philosophy and psychology, later became departments of education and subsequently schools of education.

Since then, it seems, this opposition has been kept firmly in place, one of the most lamentable consequences being that it has allowed and continues to allow many university professors of English to be dogmatically critical and dismissive of *all* work done in *all* schools of education, especially of “teacher preparation,” which gets to be constructed not only as the main function and responsibility of such schools, but also as a marker of difference between the “mission” of schools of education and of departments of English.<sup>8</sup> In the name of this difference English departments have historically legitimated a lack of systematic attention in their various graduate programs to (a) courses that will prepare graduate students to fulfill their teaching responsibilities at the college and university level in their areas of expertise as well as in areas about which they might have less specialized knowledge; (b) and in undergraduate programs to courses that might begin to prepare undergraduates who plan to go on to teach high school English. The devastating irony, as I see it, is that although university departments of English are *in* the business of teaching, indeed are kept in the business *by* teaching, very few elect to make teaching, and even less the teaching of teaching, *their* business and responsibility.<sup>9</sup>

As a member of a department of English—though fortunately of one that does make teaching and the teaching of teaching its business—I am interested in calling attention to some of the questionable rationales that historically have allowed English departments to look at teacher preparation with suspicion, derision, and condescension. I am interested in calling into question the widely circulated and anachronistic assumption that thorough and scholarly knowledge of subject matter constitutes automatic and sufficient preparation for teaching it. And I am interested in asking that we consider, squarely and honestly, what the consequences are, and for whom, of constructing pedagogy as something so “natural” or “elementary” as to make the study of it

superfluous or arbitrary. And, finally, I am interested in suggesting that it might be both timely and productive for English departments to pay closer attention to those institutional and ideological moves that by replicating reductive conceptualizations of pedagogy do not make pedagogy worthy of those *collective critical investigations* that in the last twenty years or so have so effectively called into question the disciplinary marginalization of so many other subjects of study.

I believe an investigation of the historical precedents that foster dismissive attitudes toward pedagogy must begin with the recuperative gesture, one that aims at recapturing a version of pedagogy's past that will make such dismissals problematic and self-indicting.

A composite text, the documents I have selected in this volume can be emplotted to tell different, even competing stories—stories that, hopefully, will lead to critical interrogations of what gets to be called, praised, or dismissed as pedagogy. How I came to look for, to select, and to arrange these documents into a plot structure that, as the title of this volume suggests, both represents and can be deployed as a “disturbing history” of pedagogy, is itself as story of, and for, critical interrogations and analyses. It is a story of a research that was propelled and framed by certain persistent questions that only recently have I begun to read as potentially positive markers of my cultural deracination, as an Italian in an American English department.

Unclearly formulated at first, belying a brooding sense of uncertainty about the nature of what I knew and its value in a foreign academic context whose historical formation, cultural traditions, and biases I was in no position then to fully comprehend, these questions, markers of a difference I tried to suppress, haunted me for years.

I began to ask them when, as a foreign graduate student in a Department of English, I was disoriented, and often silenced, by negative responses to my professed interest in pedagogy. In no uncertain terms, mentors and colleagues who cared about my professional future told me to be careful about my choices, lest I be identified as a “School of Education” person—a warning that at the time did not fully register, both in terms of what it meant and how it had come to mean what it meant. Though at the time I neither had the courage nor the authority to fully articulate it for my own and others' benefit, I was operating from within a conceptualization of pedagogy that made it the *sine qua non* of any teacher's professional life: I conceived of pedagogy as an always already interconnected theory and practice of knowing, that in order to be effective must “make manifest” its own theory and practice by continuously reflecting on and deconstructing it.<sup>10</sup> What my skeptical interlocutors

mostly named as pedagogy, I realized, was—within my conceptual framework—actually didactics, an integral part of pedagogy that, when divorced from the theory of knowing that motivates it, produces approaches to teaching that shun a teacher's and a student's critical reflexivity on the act of knowing and promote the reduction of somebody else's method of knowing into a sequential schematization of that method (Salvatori 1988, 1989, 1991).<sup>11</sup>

It was only when I chose to become involved with the study and the teaching of composition that my interest in pedagogy became both valued and expected. But its being valued and expected, I was soon to find out, signified one thing to compositionists and something else to literary theorists. Moreover, my conceptualization of pedagogy, of what pedagogy could and should be, usually struck most people in both fields as being either idealistic, or foreign, ex-centric or extravagant.

When I was about to conclude that my questions were both anachronistic and nonautochthonous, that I was approaching the issue of pedagogy with speculative and evaluative criteria that were ultimately inapplicable because determined by my foreign cultural formation, I "sighted" a rare entry on pedagogy. The entry, written by E. N. Henderson, professor of philosophy and education at Adelphi College, for the 1913 edition of *A Cyclopaedia of Education*, confirmed the plausibility of the questions I had been asking. The entry acknowledges what I had all along suspected and had begun to problematize: the connotation of "lack of esteem, if not contempt" historically associated with both the status of the *pedagogue*, usually a slave, and with the education of children, a task generally assigned to servants and women since it was deemed not to require special education. More importantly, the entry suggested a direction for my research that I had not imagined it would take. According to Henderson, even when the nascent science of child psychology gave pedagogy new status and, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, contributed to pedagogy's acceptance as a university subject and discipline, so persistent were the negative connotations attached to the term that it was thought advisable to substitute the term *education* for *pedagogy*. "The newer 'education' differs from the old 'pedagogy' in two respects. First it includes *more than method in teaching and school management*; second it is *more scientific*" (Henderson 1913, 622, emphasis added).

To know that *pedagogy* had been renamed *education* proved extremely helpful for my research. To begin with, it helped me to make sense of the unexpected difficulty I encountered in my first attempts even to identify titles that would display the word pedagogy. But more importantly, it helped me to construct that difficulty as an area of investigation that became this book's project.

As I tried to uncover the reasons for this particular renaming, I found myself turning and returning to two specific protracted moments in the history of American education. The two periods are, approximately, the 1840s–1850s and the 1880s–1890s. The first period roughly corresponds to the theorization of the function and the establishment of the domain of public normal schools. The second period roughly coincides with the theorization of the function and the establishment of the domain, at the university level, of chairs and departments of pedagogy, which after 1990 were renamed departments of education and later became schools of education.

Most historical accounts and synopses of American education, I discovered, connect these two periods in casual and progressive terms: they date the beginnings of a systematic theory of education, i.e., pedagogy, to the 1840s, and locate those beginnings in normal schools; but they also single out the 1880s–1890s as the period that marks the coming of age of education as a science in the universities. These accounts, in other words, pay normal schools and pedagogy an ambiguous tribute. While they recognize in normal schools' theories and practices of pedagogy the historical antecedents of education, they also construct those antecedents as already and always in need of remediation. More disturbingly, from my perspective, by paying little attention to the terminological change, or by recording it as relatively inconsequential, these celebratory accounts simultaneously cover over and reproduce the reasons and the conditions that marked the reduction of pedagogy's function and domain, from a discipline and field of study to mere teaching, mere implementation.

As I read these historical accounts, I kept questioning—unconsciously at first, and later from a consciously framed oppositional stance—the obscure(d) relations between what I saw as an uncritically accepted and disseminated terminological substitution, and the indictment of normal schools marked by that substitution.<sup>12</sup> By disrupting the naturalizing logic both of available historical documents (Henderson's entry is a case in point) and of more concealed ones, I found myself hypothesizing an alternative account both of normal schools' work, and of the coming of age of education as a science. Part two and part three, respectively, map out such readings.

Historical research in these two sites, however, did little to alleviate my disorientation about another renaming, the synonymization of *pedant* for *pedagogue*, and of *pedantry* for *pedagogy*. Once more it was an encyclopedia that suggested a path to follow. *The Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Education* (1922) offers no entry on either pedagogy or pedagogue; however, it records "PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE, CHILE" and immediately below, "PED-ANTRY."<sup>13</sup> I was struck by what the encyclopedia included as much as by

what it left out. To find out whether or not this might have been an isolated case, I began to look for similar significant absences, replacements, connections, and confusions in other dictionaries and encyclopedias. As I did so, I began noticing interesting patterns, which then led me to focus specifically on the differences between, on the one hand, American and British sources and, on the other, Italian, French, and Spanish ones.<sup>14</sup> That search produced the argument that I map out in the introduction to part one concerning some of the possible reasons for this synonymy, its consequences, and the role of dictionaries in shaping pedagogy's and pedagogues' cultural and institutional marginalization.