

Contents

Preface ix

Introduction 1

CHAPTER 1: Why Converse? 7

CHAPTER 2: Defining and Representing Conversation 20

CHAPTER 3: Food, Drink, and Conversation 37

CHAPTER 4: Bad Conversation 51

CHAPTER 5: Talking with the French 61

CHAPTER 6: Schools of Talk 81

CHAPTER 7: The Rise of the Novel—and Female Talk 121

CHAPTER 8: Conversation as Public Entertainment 134

CHAPTER 9: Conversation on Campus 148

CHAPTER 10: Shakespeare on Zoom 164

Conclusion 173

Coda 182

Bibliographical Essay 185

Index 199

Introduction

I come from a family of talkers. The household in which I grew up was always noisy. My parents were loud and opinionated, and interrupted and quarreled boisterously with each other. I realize that such an environment could give rise, in opposition, to taciturn children who seek quiet above all else. But for me, the prevailing atmosphere felt comforting and safe. It made my childhood home a place I loved to be.

The bright, ongoing talk that pervaded my growing up was overseen by my mother, a woman of great charm and energy. She was the maestro of the dinner table, unfailingly entertaining and fun. We loved to listen to her tell stories about what happened to her at work. She was a high school French teacher, a position that afforded a wealth of anecdotes about her students' misbehavior, eccentric wardrobe choices, and mistakes in the conjugation of verbs. There were also the intrigues among her colleagues—how I loved being privy to my teachers' peccadillos and romantic misadventures, an experience that sowed a lifelong skepticism about authority. My mother had the gift of making even the smallest detail of her day vivid and amusing.

My father, by contrast, was a very different kind of talker. A scientist by training and vocation, he had a logical, detached sort of mind, and his subjects for discussion were ideas. He had theories about things: why people believed in God, the role of advertising in modern life, why women liked jewelry, and so on.

I recall how he would clear his throat as a prelude to launching into a new idea: “I’ve been thinking about why we eat foods like oysters and lobster, which aren’t very appealing. There must be an evolutionary aspect to why we have learned to like these things.” Being included in the development of an idea with my father was a deeply bonding experience. The *idea* of ideas became enormously appealing as a result. And though my father was not an emotional person—and indeed, because he was not—ideas became imbued with feeling in being associated with my relationship with him.

My talk with my parents was not entirely reciprocal. They led and I followed. But, then, they were my parents and not my peers. I expected them to know things I didn’t and to control the direction of our talk.

The case was different with my sister. Siblings present us with unique challenges. Because we arrive in our families at different times, we are inevitably thrust into hierarchical relationships and must learn through acts but also, and perhaps more importantly, through words, how to share. For me, the transition from older sister to equal partner in conversation with my sister was particularly difficult, perhaps because she and I were so superficially similar in interests and talents (her talents in many ways superior to mine). For a long time, I clung to the status of older sister as the one element of superiority that I could continue to claim. I still sometimes feel myself trying to one-up or overexplain to my sister, but I have fought against this tendency; I have come to see the sibling relationship as a practice space for conversational relationships outside the family that requires equality and reciprocity to be authentic and satisfying.

My mother died over twenty-five years ago of a progressive neurological illness, and though we continued to communicate until almost the end, her ability to tell me stories and to perform

for me diminished as she grew sicker. My father died last year after being slowly taken over by dementia. Over the previous two years, he more or less stopped talking. This was sadder for me than the diminishment of my mother before her death, which still allowed for our emotional connection, but it was also less difficult to handle. Since my relationship to my father was almost entirely intellectual, that loss of our ability to share ideas made him seem like another person, the mere shell of what he had been. And so, though his body, still relatively healthy until the end, recalled the past, it didn't actually denote the person. I realize that I marked my father's passing from the time he stopped being able to engage with me intellectually.

My conversation with my sister continues. It is a vital part of my life. Though not the same kind of conversation that we had as children and I think far more equal than it once was, it carries the imprint of that earlier time. We often talk about the past, about our differing views of our childhood and our parents, and about our aspirations for ourselves and our children. There is an undertow to sibling conversation—an antecedent life that moves beneath the words, that allows for shared hilarity at things that others don't find funny, and for understanding of the most minor and seemingly trivial inflections or facial expressions (siblings can get angry at each other for a fleeting smile or raised eyebrow that no one else would ever notice). My sister and I are attuned to each other this way, but also aware of how our past in the family can pull us down, which makes us extremely careful and conscientious with each other.

I have described my family of origin in some detail to offer one template for the relatively closed system in which we all begin our lives and gain the tools by which we proceed to communicate beyond it. If I learned how to talk in my family of origin, that original space was, for all its liveliness and interest,

narrow in its scope and idiosyncratic in its lexicon. This is the paradox of growing up. Language is learned in the family; it is the means of both solidifying our place within it and allowing us to move beyond it, giving us the tools to widen our experience with people very different from ourselves.

Most of us are destined to outgrow our families of origin—thrown by necessity into the world by school and friendships that develop early and help us move away from that first, inbred space. But living in a larger world is difficult, and it is easier to embrace thinking and behavior that recapitulates in some way the safety of that initial family. Sects of various kinds (and I use the term “sect” loosely) are insidious in that they provide an illusion of freedom from our past while keeping us confined to ideas and values that never get a chance to be tested, elaborated, or changed. And they make those outside of our group seem strange and threatening.

Marriage—or long-term, intimate partnership—is a special case. I recall a friend telling me before I got married that my union with this other person would allow me to refresh the subjects and style of conversation to which I had become habituated. This was certainly true in the beginning. And indeed, it makes the early stages of intimacy difficult. When we live in proximity with someone else, we have to adjust ourselves to a discourse developed in another family of origin and that can be awkward and even unpleasant, a wrenching away from what we know and feel comfortable with. Ultimately, it is a process of synthesis—of our own lexicon with that of the other person—and I estimate that it took my husband and me half a dozen years or so to achieve this.

Eventually, however, if the relationship persists and deepens, one develops a new kind of predictable language, as second nature as the discourse we were bred to. In creating our own families, we can't help but close ourselves off again, to some de-

gree, from the larger world, replacing one kind of circumscribed vocabulary with another. This can provide a sense of safety and well-being, useful, especially if children are involved, but also a barrier to free exchange with what lies beyond. For in becoming predictable and known, conversation within the family—whether the family of origin or the family we make—cuts us off from difference. To speak to the converted or the entirely familiar is not to truly converse. It is to have one's beliefs reinforced; it is self-soothing but not self-developing.

In past eras, daily life made it necessary for individuals to engage with others different from themselves. Families were larger and more extended rather than small and closed, and so people were often in contact with cousins and more distant relatives of the sort we see now only at Thanksgiving or know about through Ancestry.com. It's true that pronounced ethnic, religious, and class barriers kept various groups apart from each other in unjustly prescribed ways. Nonetheless, the serendipity of having to move around in literal space created unpredictable encounters. People were forced to engage with others in order to carry on the business of their lives.

That element of serendipity has now diminished. For all our espousal of difference and diversity, we have become a nation of factions and tribes, our thinking, in so many instances, hardened into repetitive patterns of agreement or opposition. The rise of social media, while it provides access to people in far-flung places, also supports a narrow sectarianism of ideas and feeds mockery and mean-spiritedness. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these tendencies of isolation and repetition. Many people nowadays engage only with those whose views and life experiences mirror their own.

But to recirculate the same ideas within a closed group is likely to poison our sense of those outside that group and make society a site of continual conflict and enmity. And perhaps

worse is the harm we do ourselves. If we simply mouth platitudes of agreement, we must harbor the secrets of our individual natures within our own breasts, and this can turn toxic to our mental health. To share who we are, in our essential uniqueness, is one of the most human and creative of acts. I believe that most all of us need good conversation to lift our spirits, connect us to others, and give us a more solid sense of ourselves.

Hope, as I see it, lies on the local and intimate level of conversations between friends, colleagues, and strangers over lunch, dinner, and coffee; in the supermarket line or waiting for the bus—finding some kind of common ground, even as we disagree about politics, religion, and the meaning of life. The inevitable fact of mortality looms over us all and can lead us to put our differences in perspective: to make each other laugh and to laugh at ourselves, to share an awareness of the incongruity of things, and to question, together, the premises that we hold dear but which may be wrong or incomplete. These subjects bind us to each other and inform our best conversations.

Index

- Abbate, Fred, 39
Abbott, Bud, 94, 143–46
About the House (Auden), xi
Abstract Expressionism, 119
abstract thought, 9, 70, 158
Académie Française, 72
Academy of Athens, 84
activism, 67, 107, 116, 158, 180
Adams, Franklin P., 109–10
Adams, John, 81
Addison, Joseph, 25
Age of Conversation, 72
A La Recherche du Temps Perdu
(Proust), 74
alcohol: beer, 52, 115; cognac, 14, 122; food
and drink context and, 14, 48–49,
58, 114–15, 122, 155–56; wine, 40–43,
48, 79
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), 114–15
Alger, Horatio, 27
Algonquin Round Table, xii, 109, 119–20
Allen, Gracie, 143–44
Allen, Woody, 90
Altman, Robert, 30
American Association of University
Professors, 162
American Revolution, 25
Anderson, Sherwood, 104
Annie Hall (film), 90
anthropology, 17, 22, 55, 60, 159
Antoinette, Marie, 77
Apostles, 101
Apostrophe (TV show), 138
Arendt, Hannah, 81, 177
argument: bad conversation and, 58–60;
campus context and, 154, 157–60;
censorship and, 177; counterargu-
ment, 175; entertainment and, 138,
147; food and drink context and, 39,
45; grouptalk and, 59; novels and,
129, 132, 173–76, 180; persuasion and,
14, 23, 128, 132; reasons for conversa-
tion and, 8, 11–12, 16; representing
conversation and, 23, 27, 32–33;
schismogenesis, 60; schools of talk
and, 92, 94, 97, 101
Aristotle, 39
Armstrong, Karen, 140
*Art of Conversation, The: A Guided
Tour of a Neglected Pleasure* (Blyth),
27
Art of Conversation, The (Wright),
27–28
Art of Thinking Together, The (Isaac),
27
Asians, 169
Astaire, Fred, x
As You Like It (Shakespeare), 142
atheism, 89, 115
Athenium club, 121

- Auden, W. H., xi
- Austen, Jane: *Emma*, 127; female talk and, 124–32; *Jane Austen in Boca* and, 134–37; Leavis and, 124; *Mansfield Park*, 127–28; novels and, 124–32, 134; *Persuasion*, 128, 132; popularity of, 125; *Pride and Prejudice*, 125–28; Trilling and, 124
- avant-garde, 101–4
- Awkward Age, The* (James), 129–31
- bad conversation: argument and, 58–60; boasting, 25; diplomacy and, 60; dull people and, 54; as entertainment, 60; equality and, 53, 55; extremism and, 56; family and, 54; feeling and, 51, 53, 57, 59; flattery, 25, 28; food and drink context and, 51–52, 76; Freud and, 56; groupthink and, 57, 59, 117, 162; ideology and, 56–57; irritation and, 52–53; listening and, 51, 56, 58; men and, 51–58; offense and, 8, 22, 51, 56, 158; opinion and, 53, 57, 59; perspective and, 56; politics and, 54, 58–60; profanity, 21, 51; relationships and, 53, 58; religion and, 56, 58–59; shouting matches, 60; women and, 51; Woolf and, 51
- Bakhtin, Mikhail, 15, 19, 85, 87, 159–60, 177
- Baldwin, James, x, 83, 116–17
- Balzac, Honoré de, 69
- Banville, John, 140
- barbecues, 52
- bar mitzvahs, 37
- Barnes, Albert, 107
- Barrett, William, 113
- bars, 31, 37–39, 48, 104, 119, 121, 161
- Bateson, Gregory, x, 22, 55, 60
- Bateson, Mary Catherine, 55
- Beach, Sylvia, 104–5
- Beat poets, 119
- Beauvoir, Simone de, x–ix, xi, 81
- Bell, Clive, 103
- Bell, Daniel, 112
- Bell, Vanessa, x, 101–3
- Benchley, Robert, 109
- Bennett, Arnold, 102
- Bennett, Gwendolyn, 107
- Bernstein, Leonard, 118
- bias, ix, 84, 91, 101
- Big Little Lies* (TV show), 146
- Big Sea, The* (Hughes), 108
- Biographia Literaria* (Coleridge), 96
- bisexuality, 118
- Bishop, Elizabeth, 81
- Black Panthers, 118
- Black people: activism and, 107, 116; campus context and, 152–53; Civil Rights Movement and, 116–18; entertainment and, 136; Harlem Renaissance and, 106–9, 116; online learning and, 169; schools of talk and, 89, 106–9, 116, 118
- Bloomsbury Group, 101–2, 104, 111, 130
- Blyth, Catherine, 27
- Boas, Franz, 81
- boasting, 25
- Boétie, Étienne de la, 64
- Bogart, Humphrey, 141
- Bolsheviks, 12
- Bond, James, 71–72
- Book of the Courtier, The* (Castiglione), 24
- Boswell, James, 83, 90–94
- Brancolini, Pioggio, 174
- Breaking Bad* (TV show), 146
- Brenan, Gerald, 102
- Broun, Heywood, 109

- Brown, Craig, xii
Buckley, William F., 138
Burke, Edmund, 88, 91
Burns, George, 143–44
Bush, George W., 15
Byron, George Gordon, 95, 99–100, 124
- Café Flore, 104
Cambridge, 40
campus context: argument and, 154, 157–60; benefits of, 153–56; COVID-19 and, 161; debate and, 153; diversity and, 156, 162; family and, 154; feeling and, 152; flow and, 150, 152–53, 158; food and drink context and, 12–13, 40–52, 148, 161; gender and, 40, 152–53, 156, 160; good conversation and, 150, 156–57, 160; goodwill and, 159; Harkness Table and, 148, 153, 160; Honors College and, 45, 161; ideology and, 157–58; Johnson and, 162, 167; language and, 157; lectures and, 148, 150, 158; listening and, 152, 158; love and, 151, 161; lunch and, 12–13, 40, 43–45; men and, 149, 153, 162; opinion and, 151–53; perspective and, 152, 160; philosophy and, 159; politics and, 162; seminars and, 16, 60, 84, 148–54, 158–60; Shakespeare and, 160; STEM fields and, 159–60; stories and, 150; topics and, 153–54; white people and, 152; women and, 152
- Candida* (Shaw), xiii
Carnegie, Dale, 26–27
Carson, Johnny, 138
Castiglione, Baldassieri, 24, 28
Categorical Imperative, 14
Catholics, 89, 169, 174
Cavett, Dick, 138
Cedar Bar, 119
censorship, 139, 177
Charlie Rose (TV show), 138
Chaucer, 151
Cheers (TV show), 146
Christianity, 74, 89, 115, 171, 176
Churchill, Winston, 14
Church of England, 92, 111
Cicero, Marcus Tullius, 23–24, 120
Civic Club Dinner, 107–8
civility, 21, 23, 125
Civilization and Its Discontents (Freud), 35
Civil Rights Movement, 116–18
Claremont, Claire, 99
Clinton, Bill, 35–36, 132
Cohen, Roger, 69
Cold War, 60
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, xi–xii, 36, 68, 95–98
Communist Party, 12, 57, 111, 113
computers, 39, 80, 156, 161
Connelly, Marc, 109
controversy, 22
conversation: by Americans abroad, 104–6; around a publication, 111–14; as avant-garde expression, 101–4; bad, 51–60; campus context and, 148–63; as companionship, 88–94; as creative inspiration, 94–100; curated, 34–35; debate and, 14; diplomacy and, 14; entertainment and, 134–47; flow of, 146 (*see also* flow); food and drink context and, 37–50 (*see also* food and drink context); French context and, 61–80; as instruction, 84–88; minority Americans and, 106–8; need for, 9; novels and, 121–33; online learning and, 164–72; perspective

- conversation (*continued*)
and, 6, 12, 15, 56, 66, 84, 128, 152, 160, 166, 170–73, 178–80; representing, 20–36; schools of talk and, 81–120; as self-promotion, 109–11; as social protest, 116–18; as therapy, 114–15
Conversation: A History of a Declining Art (Miller), 23, 27
Converzazione Society, 101
Coolidge, Calvin, xii
Costello, Lou, 94, 143–46
COVID-19: activities prior to, 45, 79; campus context and, 161; isolation and, 5, 80; online learning and, 33, 164–67, 172
Coward, Noel, xii
Cowper, William, 20
Crosby, Bing, 143
Crown, The (Netflix), 50
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, 18, 41
Cullen, Countee, 106–7

Dadaists, 103
D'Alembert, 73
Damrosch, Leo, 89
Dark Ages, 174–75
debate: argument and, 27 (*see also* argument); campus context and, 153; distinguished from conversation, 21, 27; entertainment and, 143; political, 14, 34
Delbanco, Andrew, 158
De Quincy, Thomas, 95
De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things) (Lucretius), 174
Derrida, Jacques, 1
Descartes, René, 67, 177
Deux Magots Café, 119
Dewey, John, 149
dialogic nature, 15, 87

Dialogues of the Courtesans (Lucian), xi
Dialogues of the Dead (Lucian), xi
Dickens, Charles, 99
Diderot, Denis, 73
digression, 21, 25, 51, 169
dinner conversation, 1; campus context and, 161; Coleridge on, xi–xii; entertainment and, 141; female talk and, 125; French context and, 76; Lucian and, xi; novels and, 125; Plato and, xi; representing conversation and, 26–33; schools of talk and, 88, 98, 107–8, 116, 118; Woolf and, 40, 43–46, 50–51, 125
diplomacy: bad conversation and, 60; as distinguished from conversation, 14; entertainment and, 142; food and drink context and, 49; representing conversation and, 24; schools of talk and, 113
disagreement, 6, 12–13, 16, 56, 59, 152, 157
diversity: campus context and, 156, 162; factions and, 5; food and drink context and, 42; French context and, 71; of opinion, 177; representing conversation and, 21; schools of talk and, 89
DNA, 11
Donne, John, 10
Dookie Chase Club, 119
Dostoevsky, Fyodor, 159–60
Douglass, Frederick, ix, x8, xi
“Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind” (Baldwin), 83
Dracula (Stoker), 100
Drexel University, 12
Du Bois, W. E. B., 107

Eckermann, Johann, 91
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 25

- Eliot, George, ix, xi, 171
Eliot, T. S., xii, 102, 151
Elliot, Anne, 132
eloquence, 27, 41
El Quatre Gats Café, 119
Eminent Victorians (Strachey), 102
Emma (Austen), 127
Encyclopédie, 73
Enlightenment, 73, 95, 101
entertainment: Abbott and Costello, 94, 143–46; argument and, 138, 147; bad conversation and, 60; Black people and, 136; comedians, 143–44; debate and, 143; dinner conversation and, 135, 141; diplomacy and, 142; equality and, 142; flow and, 140–41, 146; gender and, 144; good conversation and, 146; goodwill and, 140; humor and, 23, 25, 108, 136–37, 140, 143–47, 158; ideology and, 138, 143; imagination and, 134, 140; interviews, 139–41; Jews and, 135–37; language and, 138; love and, 140, 142; lunch and, 135; manners and, 134; men and, 135–36, 140–45; music and, 27 (*see also* music); opinion and, 136; philosophy and, 136; podcasts and, 32–33, 138–39; private conversation and, 139–40; satire and, 19, 72, 108–9, 118, 126, 134; sex and, 135, 141, 144; Shakespeare and, 141–42; sitcoms and, 146; talk shows and, 137–38, 143; topics and, 140; vaudeville, 137, 143–44, 146; women and, 135–36, 144
Ephron, Nora, 139
Epictetus, xiii
equality: bad conversation and, 53, 55; entertainment and, 142; French context and, 64, 76; online learning and, 166, 169; reasons for conversation and, 18; reciprocity and, 2, 17, 64, 84, 97, 100; schools of talk and, 83–84, 91, 94; siblings and, 3
Essays (Montaigne), 64
ethnicity, 5, 112, 156
etiquette, 25, 126
Existentialism, 66–67, 115, 119
Fabien, Françoise, 141
Facebook, 157
Fairbanks, Douglas, x–ix
family, 1; bad conversation and, 54; campus context and, 154; extended, 123–24; female talk and, 123–24, 128; food and drink context and, 50; French context and, 77, 180; language and, 4; love and, 9, 77, 92, 123, 180; novels and, 123–24, 128; nuclear, 123–24; past size of, 5; patriarchs and, 64, 122, 144, 180; reasons for conversation and, 9, 12; schools of talk and, 92, 114, 118; siblings and, 2–3, 99, 169
feeling: bad conversation and, 51, 53, 57, 59; campus context and, 152; community of, 50; filmmakers and, 29–30; flow and, 19, 30, 41, 46, 50, 52; food and drink context and, 43, 50; free association and, 7; French context and, 62; Freud and, 177; goodwill, 13–14, 19–20, 51, 140, 159, 170, 177; ideas and, 2, 9, 15, 20, 95, 101, 152; novels and, 130, 181; online learning and, 169–72; opinion and, 17, 20, 53, 57, 152, 179; reasons for conversation and, 7, 9–10, 13, 15, 17, 19; representing conversation and, 20, 29; schools of talk and, 95, 101, 117

- female talk: Austen and, 124–32, 134;
dinner conversation and, 125, 133;
family and, 123–24, 128; Freud and,
123, 131; gender and, 169; gentlemen's
clubs and, 121–22; gossip and, 108, 130,
132; language and, 125, 127; manners
and, 125, 127–28; men and, 171; nov-
els and, 121–33; perspective and, 128;
private conversation and, 126; psy-
chology and, 123; relationships and,
123–24, 127–28, 130, 133; salons and,
70–75, 121–22, 130; vicarious leisure
of, 123; Western movies and, 132;
Woolf and, 125, 133
- Ferber, Edna, 110, 119
- Fielding, Henry, 25
- Fire Next Time, The* (Baldwin), 83,
116
- Firing Line* (TV show), 138
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott, 104
- flattery, 25, 28
- flow: achieving, 18; benefits of, 18;
campus context and, 150, 152–53,
158; creative, 48, 50, 107; distance to
Other and, 19; entertainment and,
140–41, 146; feeling and, 19, 30, 41,
46, 50, 52; of moment, 29; reasons
for conversation and, 29–30; schools of
talk and, 84, 107; scripts and, 140–41;
seminars and, 150–53; spontaneity
and, 125; Wright and, 29–30, 41
- food and drink context: alcohol, 14,
40–43, 48–49, 52, 58, 79, 114–15, 122,
155–56; argument and, 39, 45; bad
conversation and, 51–52, 76; barbe-
cues and, 52; bar mitzvahs and, 37;
bars and, 31, 37–39, 48, 104, 119, 121, 161;
campus context and, 12–13, 40–52,
148, 161; coffee and, 6, 46, 75–76,
79–80, 153, 164–65; cognac, 14, 122;
dinner conversation and, 1 (see also
dinner conversation); diplomacy and,
49; diversity and, 42; expectation
of, 46; family and, 50; feeling and,
43, 50; female talk and, 125, 133;
foodie culture and, 47; good con-
versation and, 46, 48, 50; Harlem
Renaissance and, 107–8; Immortal
Dinner and, 98; intimacy of, 6; Jews
and, 48; Johnson and, 37, 41; lan-
guage and, 44, 62–67, 72; love and,
39, 44, 46; lunch, 6, 12, 40, 43–45,
48, 50–51, 105, 109, 125, 133, 135, 148,
161, 165–66; manners and, 38; men
and, 39–45; music and, 49, 52, 74;
My Dinner with André, 30–33, 42–43,
50, 52, 141; novels and, 125; number
for, xi; picnics, 52; psychology and,
47; quality of food and, 46–49, 52;
relationships and, 48; representing
conversation and, 26–33; restaurants,
30–31, 42–43, 46–49, 52, 75, 79, 116,
133; schools of talk and, 88, 98, 105–9,
116, 118; unappealing food, 2; wed-
dings and, 37; wine and, 48; women
and, 38–46; Woolf and, 40, 43–52,
125; Wright and, 41
- foolishness, 21, 51, 132, 144, 178
- Franco, 177
- Frankenstein* (Shelley), 99–100
- Franklin, Benjamin, 25
- Frasier* (TV show), 146
- French context: Age of Conversation
and, 72; Balzac, 69; Cartesianism,
67; City of Conversation, 76; con-
ventionality of, 70–71; dinner con-
versation and, 76; diversity and, 71;
equality and, 64, 76; Existentialism
and, 67; family and, 77, 180; feeling
and, 62; gender and, 62, 66, 76; good

- conversation and, 63, 70; Hemingway on, 62; imagination and, 62, 64, 67–68; listening and, 180; Louis XIV, 70, 72–73; love and, 61–62, 66, 76, 76–77; Madame de La Fayette, 70, 72; Marquise de Lambert, 73; men and, 62, 68, 72–75; Molière, 72, 141–43; Montaigne, 18–19, 24, 58, 63–64; opinion and, 69; Paris renovation and, 75–76; perspective and, 66; philosophy and, 67, 73; poetry and, 142; politics and, 73; Proust, 74–75; religion and, 141; Rochefoucauld, 63; salons, 70–75, 121–22; Sarkozy, 70; sex and, 76, 80, 121; stories and, 180; theorizing and, 79; topics and, 76–78; women and, 62, 64, 66, 72–74
- French Revolution, 73, 77
- Freud, Sigmund: Anna O and, 7; bad conversation and, 56; centrality of talk and, 7, 177; *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 35; female talk and, 123, 131; God and, 8, 11; healing and, 177; Jung and, 7–8; language and, 13; love and, 9–10, 13; novels and, 123, 131; philosophy and, 9; psychoanalysis and, 7–12; psychology and, x–xi, 7–13, 35, 56, 102, 123, 131, 177; reasons for conversation and, 7–13; religion and, 8, 12, 56; representing conversation and, 35; schools of talk and, 102; sex and, 10, 13; talking cure of, 7–9, 131, 177; Vienna and, 7
- Friends* (TV show), 146
- Galsworthy, John, 102
- Garbo, Greta, xii
- Garrick, David, 88, 121
- Garvey, Marcus, 107
- gender: campus context and, 40, 156, 160; community of feeling and, 50; entertainment and, 144; female talk and, 121–33, 169; food and drink context and, 50; French context and, 62, 66, 76; Lacan and, 11; novels and, 133; reasons for conversation and, 11; roles of, 144; segregation of, 40, 76–77, 88–91, 94, 107, 111, 121–22, 133, 152–53, 167; social interaction between sexes, 75. *See also* men; women
- gentlemen's clubs, 76, 121–22
- George III, 25
- Gibbon, Edward, 88
- gift giving, 17, 23
- Gilmore Girls* (TV show), 137
- Giverny, 119
- God, 110, 180; atheism and, 89, 115; belief in, 1, 153; Freud and, 8, 11; Lucretius and, 174; Torah and, 8
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 91
- Golden Sayings* (Epictetus), xiii
- Goldsmith, Oliver, 25, 88–89
- good conversation: benefits of, 6, 11, 13–14, 18–20, 51, 181; campus context and, 150, 156–57, 160; defining, 20–21; depth of, 157–58; entertainment and, 146; finding another's interests, 54; flow and, 18 (*see also* flow); food and drink context and, 46, 48, 50; Franklin on, 25; French context and, 63, 70; Kant and, 13–14; love and, 10, 19, 44, 46, 62, 83, 140, 172; representing, 20–36; role of, 6, 11; rules for, 21, 25, 27, 126; schools of talk and, 83, 96, 119; Swift on, 20–21, 25; Turkle on, 27; variety and, 175; Wright on, 27–30
- Good Place, The* (TV show), 146

- goodwill: campus context and, 159;
entertainment and, 140; feeling
and, 13–14, 19–20, 51, 140, 159, 170,
177; mutuality and, 177; online
learning and, 170; reasons for con-
versation and, 13–14, 19; represent-
ing conversation and, 20
- Gopnik, Adam, 140
- Gorbachev, Mikhail, 14
- Gordon, George, 95
- gossip, 108, 130
- Gossip Girl* series, 132
- Great Tradition* (Leavis), 124
- Greenberg, Clement, 112
- Greenblatt, Stephen, 173–76
- Greenstreet, Sydney, 141
- Gregory, André, 125
- groupthink, 57, 59, 117, 162
- Habermas, Jürgen, 75
- Harkness, Edward, 148
- Harkness Table, 148, 153, 160
- Harlem Renaissance, 106–9, 116
- Harry's Bar, 104
- Hausmann, Baron Georges, 75
- Hay, Daisy, 100
- Haydon, Benjamin Robert, 97–98, 107
- Hazareesingh, Sudhir, 71
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 85
- Heidegger, Martin, 81
- Hello Goodbye Hello: A Circle of 101 Re-
markable Meetings* (Brown), xii
- Hemingway, Ernest, 62, 104–6, 131
- Hemingway, Hadley, 105
- Henry V* (Shakespeare), 68
- Hepburn, Katharine, 146
- "Hints toward an Essay on Conversa-
tion" (Swift), 20–21
- Hitchcock, Alfred, x–xi
- Hitchens, Christopher, ix–x, 140
- Hitler, Adolph, 177
- Hogarth Press, 102
- Honeymooners, The* (TV show), 146
- Honors College, 45, 161
- Hook, Sidney, 112
- Hope, Bob, 143
- Howe, Irving, 112
- How to Have Meaningful Conversations:
7 Strategies for Talking about What
Matters* (Rozenthaler), 27
- How to Succeed in Business without
Really Trying* (musical), 27
- How to Talk to Anyone: 92 Little Tricks
for Big Success in Relationship*
(Lowndes), 27
- How to Win Friends and Influence
People* (Carnegie), 26–27
- Hughes, Langston, 106–8
- Hulu, 53
- Humanity Formula, 14
- Hume, David, 25, 89
- humor: entertainment and, 23, 25, 108,
136–37, 140, 143–46, 158; satire and,
19, 72, 108–9, 118, 126, 134; shtick,
136–37; sitcoms and, 146
- Hurston, Zora Neale, 81
- ideology: bad conversation and, 56–57;
campus context and, 157–58; enter-
tainment and, 138, 143; reasons for
conversation and, 12, 16; schools of
talk and, 85, 116
- imagination: adolescent, 62; disaster
and, 48; entertainment and, 134,
140; French context and, 62, 64,
67–68; novels and, 128; online
learning and, 167, 172; scenarios
and, ix, 28; schools of talk and, 95,
101, 112, 119; Shakespeare and, 68
- Immortal Dinner, 98

- Impressionists, 119
improvisation, 2, 17–18, 20, 102, 109
Infants of the Spring (Thurman), 108
Inside NFL (TV show), 138
Inside the Actors Studio (TV show), 138
Inside the NBA (TV show), 138
Instagram, 157
interruption, 1, 21, 26, 31, 51, 157, 165–66
Isaac, William, 27
- Jackson, Michael, 140
James, Alice, x–xi
James, Henry, ix–x, 104, 106, 128–31, 134
James, William, x
Jane Austen in Boca (Cohen), 134–37
jazz, 17–18, 119, 160
Jefferson, Margo, 140
Jefferson, Thomas, 60, 81
Jews: bar mitzvahs and, 37; Caillavet and, 74; entertainment and, 135–37; food and drink context and, 48; Freud, 8; heritage of, 8, 12, 48; Lippmann, 74; Midrash and, 8; online learning and, 169–71; schools of talk and, 89, 111–12, 118; Talmud and, 8; Torah and, 8; Yiddish and, 112, 137
Jobs, Steve, 161
John Reed Club, 111
Johnson, Charles, 107
Johnson, James Weldon, 107
Johnson, Lyndon B., 50
Johnson, Samuel, ix, xi; Boswell and, 83, 90–94; campus context and, 162, 167; food and drink context and, 37, 41; reasons for conversation and, 22, 25; schools of talk and, 83, 88–94, 119
Jones, Dave, 12–13
Joyce, James, 54–55, 102, 104
Jung, Carl, 7–8
- Kagan, Donald, 150
Kant, Immanuel, 13–15
Kaufman, George S., 109–10
Kazin, Alfred, 112
Keats, John, 41, 95–100
Keller, Helen, xii
Kennedy, Jackie, 35
Kennedy, John F., 34–35, 50
Keynes, John Maynard, 103
- Lacan, Jacques, 10–11
Lake Poets, 95
Lamb, Charles, 95, 98–99
Lamb, Mary, 95, 99
language: Abbott and Costello routine and, 94, 143–46; behavior and, 9; campus context and, 157; cultural context and, 65; entertainment and, 138; family and, 4; female talk and, 125, 127; food and drink context and, 44; French context and, 62–67, 72; Freud and, 13; ideas and, 9, 11, 13, 62, 157; idioms, 66; Lacan and, 11; metaphor, 9, 17, 19, 36, 77, 84, 94; novels and, 125, 127; online learning and, 165; reasons for conversation and, 9–13; representing conversation and, 34; Saussure and, 10; schools of talk and, 96; slang, 66; symbolic order of, 11; unconscious and, 11; vocabulary, 5; Yiddish, 112, 137
La Princesse de Clèves (Madame de La Fayette), 70, 72
Leavis, F. R., 124
lectures, 21, 40, 107, 148, 150, 158
Les Précieuses Ridicules (Molière), 72
letter writing, 81
Levinas, Emmanuel, 39
Lewinsky, Monica, 132
Lewis, Jerry, 143

- Lewis, Sinclair, x, 104
Life of Johnson (Boswell), 90–94
“Lines Written a Few Miles from Tintern Abbey” (Wordsworth), 68
Lippmann, Leontine, 74
listening: American Revolution and, 25; bad conversation and, 51, 56, 58; benefits of, 1; campus context and, 152, 158; French context and, 180; novels and, 128; reasons for conversation and, 8; representing conversation and, 24–25, 29, 32–34; schools of talk and, 97, 99, 117
Literary Club, 88–91
Locke, Alain, 106–7
logic, 1, 67, 85–87, 146
Louis XIV, 70, 72–73
love, 182–83; of books, 151; campus context and, 151, 161; death and, 16; entertainment and, 140, 142; family and, 9, 77, 92, 123, 180; food and drink context and, 39, 44, 46; French context and, 61–62, 66, 76–77; Freud and, 9–10, 13; good conversation and, 10, 19, 44, 46, 62, 83, 140, 172; marriage and, 123, 179; novels and, 123, 130; online learning and, 172; reasons for conversation and, 9–10, 13, 16, 19; representing conversation and, 23, 28–29; schools of talk and, 81, 83, 90, 92
Lowell, Robert, 81
Lowndes, Leil, 27
Lucian, xi
Lucretius, 174
lunch: campus context and, 12–13, 40, 43–45, 48, 50–52, 148, 161; entertainment and, 135; female talk and, 125, 133; intimacy of, 6; online learning and, 165–66; reasons for conversation and, 12; schools of talk and, 105, 109; wine and, 48; Woolf and, 44–45, 48, 51–52, 125
Lyrical Ballads, The (Coleridge and Wordsworth), 95–96
McCarthy, Joseph, 57
McCarthy, Mary, 112
Machiavelli, 28
Macintosh computer, 161
McKay, Claude, 106–7
Madame Arman de Caillavet, 74
Madame de La Fayette, 70, 72
Madame de Lespinasse, 73
Madame de Pompadour, 73
Madame du Barry, 73
Madame Geoffrin, 73
Madame Roland, 73
Mad Men (TV show), 49
Magic Mountain (Mann), 64–65
Mahaffy, J. P., 25–26
Maher, Bill, 137–38
Mailer, Norman, 114, 138
Making It (Podhoretz), 113–14
Malle, Louis, 141
Maltese Falcon, The (film), 141
Man Booker Prize, 140
manipulation, 24, 28–29, 34, 58, 142
Mann, Thomas, 64–65
manners: entertainment and, 134; etiquette, 25, 126; female talk and, 125, 127–28; food and drink context and, 38; minimalist, 105, 131; novels and, 125, 127–28; online learning and, 166; representing conversation and, 25; schools of talk and, 112
Mansfield Park (Austen), 127–28
Ma Nuit Chez Maud (Rohmer), 141
Marquise de Deffand, 73
Marquise de Lambert, 73

- Marquise de Rambouillet, 72–74
marriage, 4, 75, 123–24, 128, 136, 144, 179
Martin, Dean, 143
Martin, Dick, 143
Martin, Steve, 53
Marx, Harpo, xii
Marx, Karl, 56, 85, 113
mathematics, 160–61
Mauss, Marcel, 17
Maxims (Rochefoucauld), 63
Mead, Margaret, 55–56
men: bad conversation and, 51–58; bars and, 31, 37–39, 48, 104, 119, 121, 161; campus context and, 149, 153, 162; entertainment and, 135–36, 140, 142–45; female talk and, 171; food and drink context and, 39–45; French context and, 62, 68, 72–73, 75; gentlemen's clubs and, 76, 121–22; novels and, 121–24, 127, 129–33, 179; representing conversation and, 21, 25, 28, 31–35; schools of talk and, 88–96, 102–3, 114, 117; white, ix, 42, 117, 133
Mencken, H. L., 107, 124
Merchant of Venice (Shakespeare), 170–71
metaphors, 9, 17, 19, 36, 77, 84, 94
Middlemarch (Eliot), 171
Midrash, 8
Miller, Stephen, 23, 27
Milton, 98
minimalism, 105, 131
Misanthrope, The (Molière), 142–43
modernism, 54, 102, 113, 119, 131
modesty, 26, 41, 48–49, 91, 99
Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin), 72, 141–43
Montaigne, Michel de, 18–19, 24, 58, 63–64
Montealegre, Felicia, 118
Moveable Feast, A (Hemingway), 104–5
“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (Woolf), 102
Mucho Ado about Nothing (Shakespeare), 141–42
Muhammad, Elijah, 116–18
music: classical, 49; food and drink context and, 49, 52, 74; jazz, 17–18, 119, 160; patter and, 136; representing conversation and, 27, 29; schools of talk and, 119–20
music halls, 143
My Dinner with André (film): analysis of, 30–32; bad conversation and, 52; food and drink context and, 30–33, 42–43, 50, 52, 141; representing conversation and, 30–33
NAACP, 107
National Urban League, 107
Nation of Islam, 116
Netflix, 50
New Journalism, 118
New Negro journal, 108
New Yorker, 35, 109, 169
New York Intellectuals, 111
New York Magazine, 118
New York Times, 32, 69, 136
Nineteen Eighty-Four (Orwell), 57–58
Nixon, Richard M., 14, 34
No Exit (Sartre), x
novels: argument and, 129, 132, 180; Austen and, 124–32, 134; Bakhtin and, 15, 19, 85, 87, 159–60, 177; Dickens and, 99; dinner conversation and, 125; Eliot and, 171; family and, 123–24, 128; feeling and, 130, 181; Dostoevsky and, 159–60; Freud and, 123, 131; Greenblatt and, 119–20, 173–76; imagination and, 128; James

- novels (*continued*)
and, 128–31; language and, 125, 127;
listening and, 128; love and, 123, 130;
manners and, 125, 127–28; men and,
121–24, 127–33, 179; perspective and,
128; psychology and, 123; relation-
ships and, 123–24, 127–28, 130, 133; sex
and, 121, 130–31, 133; Tolstoy and, 16,
178–81; women and, 64, 121–33
- Oakeshott, Michael, 23
- Obama, Barack, 35
- “Of Cannibals” (Montaigne), 64
- offense, 8, 22, 51, 56, 158
- “Of Friendship” (Montaigne), 64
- “One for My Baby (And One More for
the Road)” (Sinatra), 39
- O’Neill, Eugene, 107
- O’Neill, Tip, 14
- online learning: Black people and, 169;
COVID-19 and, 33, 164–67, 172;
equality and, 166, 169; feeling and,
169–72; goodwill and, 170; imagina-
tion and, 167, 172; Jews and, 169–71;
language and, 165; love and, 172; lunch
and, 165–66; manners and, 166; per-
spective and, 166, 170–71; philosophy
and, 171; relationships and, 165, 169;
Shakespeare and, 16, 167–72; white
people and, 169; women and, 171;
Zoom and, 16, 165–67, 170–71
- Only Murders in the Building* (Hulu), 53
- opinion, 1; argument and, 59 (*see also*
argument); bad conversation and, 53,
57, 59; campus context and, 151–53;
changing, 180; diversity of, 177; en-
tertainment and, 136; feeling and, 17,
20, 53, 57, 152, 179; French context
and, 69; perspective and, 6, 12, 15,
56, 66, 84, 128, 152, 160, 166, 170–73,
178–80; point of view, 57, 143, 179;
reasons for conversation and, 8, 17,
19; representing conversation and,
20–21, 28; schools of talk and, 94
- Origins of Totalitarianism, The* (Arendt),
177
- Orwell, George, 57–58
- Other, 11, 13, 15, 19
- Ozark* (TV show), 146
- Paar, Jack, 138
- Pappenheim, Bertha (Anna O), 7
- Parker, Dorothy, 110
- Partisan Review* Crowd, 111–14, 118
- patience, 19, 26, 78, 136, 141
- patriarchs, 64, 122, 144, 180
- Père Goriot* (Balzac), 69
- perspective: bad conversation and, 56;
campus context and, 152, 160; female
talk and, 128; French context and, 66;
novels and, 128; online learning and,
166, 170–71; opinion and, 6, 12, 15,
56, 66, 84, 128, 152, 160, 166, 170–73,
178–80; reasons for conversation
and, 12, 15; schools of talk and, 84
- persuasion, 14, 23
- Persuasion* (Austen), 128, 132
- Petrarch, 176
- Phillips, Adam, 12
- Phillips, William, 111–12
- Phillips Exeter Academy, 148
- philosophy, 175; Abbate and, 39;
Burke, 88; campus context and, 159;
Cicero, 23–24, 120; Enlightenment
and, 73, 95, 101; entertainment and,
136; Epicurean, 174; Existentialism,
66–67, 115, 119; French context and, 67,
73; Freud and, 9; Hegel, 85; Hume,
25, 89; Levinas, 39; Oakeshott, 3;
online learning and, 171; Plato, 22,

- 84–88; schools of talk and, 84, 87–88, 100; Socrates, 84–88; Wright and, 27
- Pickford, Mary, x–ix
- picnics, 52
- Pierce, Wendell, 139
- Place de la Concorde, 77
- Plato, 22, 84–88
- playwrights, 30–31, 107, 109, 119, 141
- podcasts, 32–33, 138–39
- Podhoretz, Norman, 111–14
- poetry, 172, 182; French context and, 142; negative capability and, 41; reasons for conversation and, 10; representing conversation and, 20; Roman, 174, 176; Romantic Movement and, 41, 68, 94–96, 99–101; schools of talk and, 82, 88, 91–100, 119–20. *See also specific poet*
- Polidori, John, 99–100
- politics: bad conversation and, 54, 58–60; campus context and, 162; censorship and, 177; Cold War, 60; disagreement and, 6; French context and, 73; group talk and, 59; manipulation and, 34; schools of talk and, 89, 110–11, 114
- Poor Richard Improved* (Franklin), 25
- Portrait of a Lady, The* (James), 129
- Pound, Ezra, 104
- Pratts club, 121
- Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind, The* (Wordsworth), 68
- Pride and Prejudice* (Austen), 125–28
- Principles of the Art of Conversation* (Mahaffy), 25–26
- private conversation, 177; entertainment and, 139–40; female talk and, 126; reasons for conversation and, 33–35; schools of talk and, 89, 94, 104; Zoom and, 33
- profanity, 21, 51
- Protestants, 89, 169
- Proust, Marcel, 54–55, 74–75
- psychoanalysis, 7–12
- psychology: Csikszentmihalyi and, 18, 41; female talk and, 123; food and drink context and, 47; free association and, 7, 12; Freud and, x–xi, 7–13, 35, 56, 102, 123, 131, 177; Jung and, 7–8; novels and, 123; reasons for conversation and, 8, 18; representing conversation and, 29; transference and, 9–10, 13
- Pulitzer Prize, 119–20, 173
- Putin, Vladimir, 15
- “Radical Chic: The Party at Lenny’s” (Wolfe), 118
- Rahv, Philip, 111–12
- rational intercourse, 41–42, 177
- Ravitch, Diane, 140
- Reagan, Nancy, 132
- Reagan, Ronald, 14, 34–35
- Real Time with Bill Maher* (TV show), 137–38
- reasons for conversation: argument and, 8, 11–12, 16; equality and, 18; family and, 9, 12; feeling and, 7, 9–10, 13, 15, 17, 19; flow and, 29–30; Freud and, 7–13; gender and, 11; goodwill and, 13–14, 19; ideology and, 12, 16; Johnson and, 22, 25; language and, 9–13; listening and, 8; love and, 9–10, 13, 16, 19; lunch and, 12; opinion and, 8, 17, 19; perspective and, 12, 15; poetry and, 10; private conversation and, 33–35; psychology and, 8, 18; relationships and, 10, 13–14, 19; religion and, 8, 12; stories and, 32; topics and, 23–24, 29, 33; Wright and, 27–30, 34

- reciprocation, 2, 17, 64, 84, 97, 100
- Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (Turkle), 27
- Red and the Black, The* (Stendhal), 69
- Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Burke), 91
- Reform club, 121
- Reign of Terror, 77
- relationships: bad conversation and, 53, 58; family and, 64, 122, 144, 180 (see also family); female talk and, 123–24, 127–28, 130, 133; food and drink context and, 48; Freud and, 13; language and ideas, 9, 11, 13, 62, 157; novels and, 123–24, 127–28, 130, 133; online learning and, 165, 169; patriarchal, 64, 122, 144, 180; representing conversation and, 27, 32; schools of talk and, 81–82, 96, 99, 113; sexual, 10
- religion: Armstrong and, 140; bad conversation and, 56, 58–59; barriers of, 5; believing leaders of, 58; Catholics, 89, 169, 174; Christianity, 74, 89, 115, 171, 176; Church of England, 92, 111; disagreement over, 6; French context and, 141; Freud and, 8, 12, 56; hope and, 6; ideology and, 12; Literary Club and, 89; Midrash and, 8; Phillips and, 12; Protestants, 89, 169; reasons for conversation and, 8, 12; Talmud and, 8; Torah and, 8; zealots and, 56
- Renaissance, 24, 176
- representing conversation: argument and, 23, 27, 32–33; dinner conversation and, 26, 28, 30, 32–33; diplomacy and, 24; diversity and, 21; feeling and, 20, 29; Freud and, 35; goodwill and, 20; language and, 34; listening and, 24–25, 29, 32–34; love and, 23, 28–29; manners and, 25; men and, 21, 25, 28, 31–35; music and, 27, 29; opinion and, 20–21, 28; poetry and, 20; psychology and, 29; relationships and, 27, 32
- Republic, The* (Plato), 85–86
- Reynolds, Joshua, 88–91
- Richardson, Samuel, 124
- Rochefoucauld, François de la, 63
- Rockefeller, John D., Sr., xii
- Rogers, Will, xii
- Rohmer, Eric, 141
- Romantic Movement, 41, 68, 94–96, 99–101
- Room of One's Own, A* (Woolf), 39–41
- Roosevelt, Franklin, 14
- Rose, Charlie, 138
- Ross, Harold, 109
- Rowan, Dan, 143
- Royal Academy, 91, 97–98
- Rozenthuler, Sarah, 27
- Rushdie, Salman, 140
- salons: female talk and, 70–75, 121–22, 130; French, 70–75, 121–22; Thurman on, 108
- Santayana, George, 173
- Sarkozy, Nicolas, 70, 72
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, x–ix, 81
- satire, 19, 72, 108–9, 118, 126, 134
- Saussure, Ferdinand de, 10
- Schapiro, Meyer, 112
- schismogenesis*, 60
- schools of talk: Americans abroad, 104–6; argument and, 92, 94, 97, 101; avant-garde expression and, 101–4; Black people and, 89, 106–9, 116, 118; Bloomsbury Group, 101–2, 104, 111, 130; companionship and,

- 88–94; creative inspiration and, 94–100; dinner conversation and, 88, 98, 105–9, 116, 118; diplomacy and, 113; diversity and, 89; equality and, 83–84, 91, 94; family and, 92, 99, 114, 118; feeling and, 95, 101, 117; flow and, 84, 107; Freud and, 102; good conversation and, 83, 96, 119; ideology and, 85, 116; imagination and, 95, 101, 112, 119; instruction and, 84–88; Jews and, 89, 111–12, 118; Johnson and, 83, 88–94, 119; language and, 96; listening and, 97, 99, 117; Literary Club, 88–91; love and, 81, 83, 90, 92; manners and, 112; men and, 88–96, 102–3, 114, 117; minority Americans and, 106–8; music and, 119–20; opinion and, 94; *Partisan Review* Crowd, 111–14, 118; perspective and, 84; philosophy and, 84, 87–88, 100; poetry and, 82, 88, 91–100, 119–20; politics and, 89, 110–11, 114; private conversation and, 89, 94, 104; publications and, 111–14; relationships and, 81–82, 96, 99, 113; self-promotion and, 109–11; sex and, 82, 99, 103, 115; Shakespeare and, 95, 97–98, 104, 120; social protest and, 116–18; Socratic teaching and, 84–88; stories and, 81, 97, 106, 114; therapy and, 114–15; topics and, 82, 85, 87, 92, 97–98, 102; white people and, 107–8, 116–17; women and, 89, 102, 104; Woolf and, 101–3; Wright and, 110
- Scott, Walter, 124
- segregation, 40, 77, 121, 133
- Seinfeld, Jerry, 143–44
- Seinfeld* (TV show), 51, 146
- selfishness, 26
- seminars: campus context and, 16, 60, 84, 148–54, 158–60; flow and, 150–53; Harkness Table and, 148, 153, 160; Kagan and, 150
- Severn, Joseph, 100
- sex: bisexuality and, 118; entertainment and, 135, 141, 144; flirtation, 38; French context and, 76, 80, 121; Freud and, 10, 13; innuendo and, 130; novels and, 121, 130–31, 133; schools of talk and, 82, 99, 103, 115; segregation and, 40; Shakespeare and, 171; Strachey and, 102–3; Toobin and, 35; Weiner and, 35
- Shakespeare: *As You Like It*, 142; Caliban and, 64; campus context and, 160; Elizabethan period and, 68; entertainment and, 141–42; Falstaff and, 120; Garrick and, 121; Hamlet and, 53; *Henry V*, 68; imagination and, 68; Lambs and, 95; *The Merchant of Venice*, 170–71; metalogues of, 22; Molière and, 141–42; *Much Ado about Nothing*, 141–42; online learning and, 16, 167–72; schools of talk and, 95, 97–98, 104, 120; *The Tempest*, 64
- Shakespeare and Company (bookstore), 104–5
- Shaw, George Bernard, xii–xiii
- Shawn, Wallace, 125
- Shelley, Mary Godwin, 99–100
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 95, 99–100
- Sherwood, Robert E., 109, 119–20
- shtick, 136–37
- siblings, 2–3, 99, 169
- silence, xiii, 26, 38, 59, 170, 178, 182
- Sinatra, Frank, 39
- sitcoms, 146
- Smith, Adam, 88, 91
- Smith, Bob, 114

- smoking, 14, 28, 78–79, 122
- Smothers Brothers, 143
- social media, 5, 113, 138, 156–57, 164
- social protest, 116–18
- Socrates, 84–88
- Sopranos, The* (TV show), 146
- Southey, Robert, 95
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer, 132
- Stalin, Joseph, xii, 12, 177
- Stein, Gertrude, 104–6
- STEM fields, 159–60
- Stendhal, 69
- Stephen, Leslie, 101
- Stephen, Thoby, 101, 103
- Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Bateson), 22
- stereotypes, 71
- Stoker, Bram, 100
- Stonewall Inn, 116
- stories: Alger and, 27; background, 150; campus context and, 150; French context and, 180; maternal, 1–3; novels and, 134 (see also novels); reasons for conversation and, 32; schools of talk and, 81, 97, 106, 114
- Strachey, James, 102
- Strachey, Lytton, 102–3
- Surrealists, 103
- Swerve, The* (Greenblatt), 173–76
- Swift, Jonathan, 19–21, 25, 38, 142
- Sylvia's Restaurant, 116
- Symposium* (Plato), xi
- Table Talk* (Coleridge), xi–xii, 97
- Talk, The* (TV show), 143
- Talmud, 8
- Tannen, Deborah, 133, 165
- Teachout, Terry, 140
- Tempest, The* (Shakespeare), 64
- Thurber, James, 109–10
- Thurman, Wallace, 108
- Toklas, Alice B., 104
- Tolstoy, Leo, 16, 178–81
- Toobin, Jeffrey, 35
- topics: campus context and, 153–54; entertainment and, 140; female talk and, 133; finding another's interests, 54; French context and, 76–78; off-limit, 76; patience and, 78; reasons for conversation and, 23–24, 29, 33; schools of talk and, 82, 85, 87, 92, 97–98, 102
- Torah, 8
- To the Lighthouse* (Woolf), 50
- Tracy, Spencer, 146
- transference, 9–10, 13
- Treatise on Friendship* (Cicero), 23
- Trelawny, Edward John, 100
- Trilling, Diana, 112
- Trilling, Lionel, x–ix, 111–12, 124
- Trintignant, Jean-Louis, 141
- Truants, The* (Barrett), 113
- True Detective* (TV show), 146
- Turkle, Sherry, 27
- Turk's Head Tavern, 89, 91
- Twain, Mark, xii, 124
- United Negro Improvement Association, 107
- Vampyre* (Polidori), 100
- Vanity Fair* magazine, xii
- Van Vechten, Carl, 108
- vaudeville, 137, 143–44, 146
- Veblen, Thorstein, 123
- Vicious Circle, 109
- Vidal, Gore, 138
- Viet Nam War, 12, 58, 116
- View, The* (TV show), 143
- Virgil, 98
- Voltaire, 73

- Wall Street Journal*, 140
War and Peace (Tolstoy), 178–81
Washington, George, 25
Waters, John, 140
Wealth of Nations, The (Smith), 91
weddings, 37
Weiner, Anthony, 35
Weiss, Bari, 140
Where's Waldo series, 178
White, Walter, 107
White House, 35
white people: campus context and, 152; Harlem and, 107; male, ix, 42, 117, 133; online learning and, 169; schools of talk and, 107–8, 116–17; Van Vechten parties and, 108
White's club, 121
“Who's on First?” (Abbott and Costello), 145–46
Wilder, Thornton, 104
Wilson, Bill, 114
Wilson, Edmund, 112
Wilson, E. O., 140
Wire, The (TV show), 146
With a Daughter's Eye (Bateson), 55–56
Wolcott, Alexander, 109
Wolfe, Tom, 118
women, 12; bad conversation and, 51; campus context and, 152; entertainment and, 135–36, 144; female talk and, 121–33; food and drink context and, 38–46; French context and, 62, 64, 66, 72–74; novels and, 64, 121–33; online learning and, 171; role of, 1; salons and, 70–75, 121–23, 130; schools of talk and, 89, 102, 104; segregation and, 40, 77, 121, 133; single, 38; Veblen and, 123; vicarious leisure of, 123; Western movies and, 132
women's studies, 40
Woolf, Leonard, 103
Woolf, Virginia, x; *A Room of One's Own*, 39–41; bad conversation and, 51; Brennan and, 102; dinner conversation and, 40, 43–52, 125; female talk and, 125, 133; Hogarth Press and, 102; “Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown”, 102; Oxbridge and, 40–43, 50–51, 125; rational intercourse and, 41–42, 177; relativity of want and, 44–45; schools of talk and, 101–3; *To the Lighthouse*, 50; women's studies and, 40
Woolcott, Alexander, xii, 110
Wordsworth, Dorothy, 95, 99
Wordsworth, William, 68, 95–99
Wright, Milton: *The Art of Conversation*, 27–28; flow and, 29–30, 41; food and drink context and, 41; reasons for conversation and, 27–30, 34; schools of talk and, 110
Wright, Richard, 57
Yeats, William Butler, 182
Yiddish, 112, 137
YMCA, 107
YouTube, 33, 60
Zhou Enlai, 14
Zoom: hacking of, 33; online learning and, 16, 165–67, 170–71; private conversation and, 33; Toobin and, 35