

The headlines were as close to impartial as you could reasonably get: "American Bombers Strike Military Targets in Libya" is typical. The lead article supplies factual details describing what happened, when, and with what kind of military hardware, without the rampant adjectives that characterized other papers' reporting. With every fact, the writer included reference to his source – "Mr. Speakes described the targets as Libya's 'terrorist infrastructure'" – acknowledging unidentified sources where that was the case.

Even the *Times'* pictures lacked emotional wallop: no photos of crumbling buildings or cheering soldiers, no dead babies, no maps with 'line of death' circles. One picture shows three men standing by a pillar; the caption simply gave their names and positions and reported that they were listening to Reagan's address. Another picture showed Reagan delivering the speech.

The only evidence of bias was the phrases from the speech transcript that the *Times* chose to highlight. Three were bold-faced: "Evidence is Now Conclusive" and "Actions Can't Be Ignored" suggested U.S. justification; "Secure World is Nearer" implies optimism that terrorism will end in the future. Obviously, Reagan was defending our action in the most positive way possible, but the fact that the *Times* highlighted these three phrases in particular may indicate its slight support . . .

* * * *

I quote from these two papers at some length partly because I enjoyed reading them – unlike my response to most every other "research assignment" I have ever tried to deal with. The first was written by a senior accounting major whose previous work had showed her to be a competent, if uninspired, writer. The second was produced by a junior marketing major who had been struggling with writing for the first eight weeks of the term. What seems to me to have happened in both cases is that the students were truly engaged with what they were doing here, and that that engagement shows itself strongly in the intelligence and *life* of the papers. (The two I've quoted here are typical responses, not unusual cases.)

I like this way of handling the research paper because its design guides students to topics they can be interested in, it confines them to texts short enough to encourage slow, attentive reading, it steers them sharply away from relying on other people's generalizations, it teaches something about 'truth' and 'belief,' and it sensitizes students to language and its arrangement. Beyond that, journalistic writing by definition conveys to students, sometimes subliminally, the power of tight writing.

The beauty of it for us teachers is that students' data is organized in front of you so that you can easily judge the validity of the conclusions and the rigor of the thought. The beauty of it for students is because they have had to organize data according to a system of inquiry, they can't fail to have something to say, can't fail to produce a statement that they can take responsibility for.

And the beauty of it for all of us is that no one is bored.

The Assignment:

Make a working outline of the differences and similarities you've noticed in the accounts. Structure your discussion according to your discoveries. A rough form to follow would look something like:

- I. A brief description of the event, stating only the established *facts* of the case, and a sentence or two explaining the controversy.

- II. A comparison of accounts. In analyzing the news stories, you'll want to consider:

- 1) what's mentioned first?
- 2) what facts are included; which are left out?
- 3) what kinds of nouns, verbs, adjectives are used?
- 4) where does the account appear—front page? buried?
- 5) how much space—in column inches—is devoted to the story?
- 6) how big is the headline? What's its emphasis?
- 7) is there a photo? what kind? what does it suggest?
- 8) who's portrayed as the good guy, the bad guy, the victim?

You need to begin each section of your comparison with a generalization such as "*The Washington Post* is sympathetic to X . . ." (support with evidence); "*The New York Times*, although also sympathetic, includes a fuller view of X's opposition, and is more reserved in its sympathy than the *Post*" (support with evidence); "But the *Roanoke Times and World Report* leans strongly toward Y, . . ."

Continue analyzing and comparing as you go.

- III. Write a clear, articulate description of what you now believe is true, or of where your sympathies lie.

As you analyze and compare accounts, DON'T LET THE DATA OVERWHELM THE GENERALIZATION: you can't simply throw facts on the page and expect me to make the inferences. It's your job to stare the facts in the eye and ask: So what?

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ENTHYMEMES AND FEMINIST DISCOURSE: MEDIATING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IDENTITY

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Of the many assumptions this paper makes, I think two are worth mentioning at the outset. One of these assumptions is that women and men do not use different languages but rather often have differences of style. There is ample research, such as that by Pamela Fishman on heterosexual couples and Jennifer Coates on gender-mixed groups, that demonstrates how telling – how loaded with cultural capital – these stylistic differences are. These differences – and the differences they make – ought not to be casually bracketed. Men and women can and do, however, regularly cross from one style to another. Margaret Thatcher's parliamentary delivery can sound characteristically male, and the surface features of former President Reagan's appropriation of the personal and private seem to have many of the earmarks of women's discourse. But what constitutes men's and women's discourse are not surface features but social relations, so my second

assumption is that, even when men and women use the same words and grammatical constructions, they are heard differently.

In find it helpful to foreground these two assumptions because I want to claim that the enthymeme is not naturally or biologically male. But I also want to acknowledge that it does not follow from this that enthymematic writing instruction necessarily affects men and women equally. The question at issue here, then, is not whether the enthymeme is insufficient to express woman's consciousness, but rather whether a certain type of writing classroom—one in which some attention to enthymemes plays a part—reproduces patriarchal social relations, which provide men with decisively greater opportunities for success. To begin answering this question, I will need to dissociate a common form of enthymematic pedagogy from an equally common caricature of it.

Taking as their maxim "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," some feminist critics have expressed a general skepticism toward logic and syllogistic structures, under which the enthymeme is assumed to fall. This assumption is understandable. Aristotle, for example, called the enthymeme a "rhetorical syllogism," which was "the [very] body of all rhetorical proof" (*The "Art" of Rhetoric* 1356b). Such proof consists of a major premise (which represents the common ground occupied by both writer and audience), the writer's intended conclusion or thesis, and a line of reasoning meant to connect the unshared conclusion to the shared assumption. Current advocates of the enthymeme claim that any piece of writing can be found to have an enthymeme as its deep structure.¹ This deep structure exists for women as for men, it is argued, because it is isomorphic with innate mental operations.² Women and men may know different things—may experience the world differently—but what they know will emerge only through what they share: the inferential process.

Rejections of this "global" enthymeme tend to come from two separate but related directions, which I'll call the pedagogical and the epistemological. From the pedagogical perspective, whether or not men and women share the inferential process which the enthymeme represents is beside the point. From the epistemological perspective, it is misleading if not mistaken to see the inferential process as identical for men and women. From both perspectives, to insist on the enthymeme's inevitable centrality is to obscure other, equally critical, issues.

First, a few words on the pedagogical critique, after which I'll describe how the epistemological critique both overlaps and departs from the pedagogical. Because the pedagogical perspective is concerned not so much with the actual shape of the student's finished product as with the stance towards writing which the student develops, the question to ask here is not whether the enthymeme is the architectonic structure of rhetorical thinking but, in this case anyway, whether it will empower or penalize women students. The consensus seems to be that enthymeme-based instruction is not a condition of subjectivity for women but an appropriation of it. Both Joanna Russ, in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, and the editors of *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity* indict as "inherently authoritarian" and as "reified writing" the "clear evocation of a thesis," in which the "act of writing becomes a suppressed and private activity of the self which is eventually divorced from the product made public" (*Teaching Writing* xii)—an act in which "women writers are separated from . . . each other" (Russ 118). What is objected to is not whatever deep structure informs the written product but the specific kind of superstructure within which argumentation has encased writing. According to two critics, because of argumen-

tation's "compulsive stress on hierarchical structures, categorizing, linear processes, outlining, and persuasion," the "qualities of 'good' writing . . . —directness, assertiveness and persuasiveness, precision and vigor—collide with what social conventions dictate proper femininity to be" (Daumer and Runzo 50, 52). Given these conditions, Dale Spender has argued, men can write for men without jeopardizing their human—i.e. "masculine"—identity (or sense of self), while women cannot without jeopardizing their human—i.e. "feminine"—identity (201). In short, women students must often exchange "self" for "success" in the academic economy (Clara Juncker 429).

Now, the epistemological perspective authorizes this critique of discursive categories, linear processes, etc. made by the pedagogical critique, but calls into question the pedagogical critique's assumption of feminine identity. The reason for questioning this essentialism is that, in one critic's words, the "male imaginary" is based on stable forms, such as *justice* or *woman*. These stable forms are governed by the "principle of identity"—or, in other words, by "the principle of non-contradiction," such as is found in syllogistic structures:—for example, "All S are P" or "No S are P" (Margaret Whitford 112). This male imaginary constructs a world of labels and abstract nouns and perceives this world in terms of categorical propositions, dichotomies, roles, and causation (Julia Penelope [Stanley] and Susan J. Wolfe 136). What enables these stable categories and roles is that outmoded epistemology which has oppressed women all along: the idea of a "unified, integrated self-identity," which is the "central concept of Western male humanism" and is "in effect part of patriarchal ideology. At its center is the seamlessly unified self" (Toril Moi 7-8). Such categorical thinking excludes women because, as Julia Kristeva has said, "woman" is "what cannot be represented, what is not said, what remains above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies." "Woman" is never self-identical with any categories because it does not yet "belong in the order of *being*" (137-38). To appeal to feminine identity, then, is premature, is to appeal to an effect of androcentric discourse.

I have just rehearsed the structuralist insight that identity has nothing to do with substance at all; it has to do rather with the stipulated position of something within a conventional system—an identity that is always different and always deferred. Thus, anyone could assume any role, and no one could assume any role always. This model of perpetually dispersed roles is persuasive, yet such a model of identity leaves no room to discriminate between roles we only rarely if ever occupy and those roles we occupy repeatedly. We are not just a thousand points of light, floating along in a social void, sometimes as consumers, other times as medical or legal subjects, as parents, but only occasionally as sexual beings. We're engendered to play determinate parts in the social relations of this form of society. As Teresa de Lauretis argues in *Technologies of Gender* (in a chapter entitled "The Violence of Rhetoric"), "For even as we agree that sexuality is socially constructed and overdetermined, we cannot deny the particular specification of gender that is the issue of that process; nor can we deny that precisely such process finally positions women and men in an antagonistic and asymmetrical relation" (38). If what feminist writing-teachers are struggling to do is not so much fixing or essentializing identity as helping students (and themselves) have some control over what will be the conditions of representability, then the enthymeme can help partially fix these fluid conditions of identity. And my position is that it can do so by rhetorically, pragmatically mediating between the extreme poles of identity described above.

As I understand them, certain feminist and enthymematic pedagogies are remarkably compatible, insofar as they envision themselves as alternative social structures in which power is decentered and knowledge socially constructed. I imagine we are already familiar with feminist pedagogies which profess something like the following epistemology:

first, inquiry is an activity (not a mental state) that takes place between two "things" that have responsibilities to each other, obligations to treat each other with respect and care;

second, knowledge is created, not discovered, on provisional, contingent grounds;

third, difference is respected; no one wants difference to disappear under sameness; they want to articulate it;

fourth, knowledge works in the service of knowing, which is ultimately practical and personal;

fifth, various conclusions may coexist without canceling out validity of others;

last, the foundation of such an epistemology is a *community model*; interconnections can and do change as a result of our mutual inquiry into them.³

Out of this epistemology comes a consciousness-raising pedagogy which, according to Pamela Annas, wants women to write political essays — ones that place the self in the world, are addressed to an audience, and take a position (369). Such writing "brings together the personal and political, the private and the public, into writing which is committed and powerful because it takes risks, because it speaks up clearly in their own voices and from their experience, experiments with techniques of argumentation and skillful organization, and engages, where appropriate, with the insights of other writers" (370).

It is my belief that the enthymeme can also enable such writing. I'd now like to consider how writers, by the collective analysis of enthymemes, can move from the details of personal experience to a broader analysis that brings lessons of "class" consciousness into zones that are insulated (or privileged) by an individualist/personalist ideology.⁴

In one of my writing classes last fall, discussions of Simone de Beauvoir's "Woman as Other," the Lindholms' "Life Behind the Veil," and items from the student newspaper generated many "live" topics, one of which was the question of whether a certain university program — Project Saferide, which provides a nighttime shuttle service for women only — was a legitimate program. To some men and women, Project Saferide seemed a form of reverse discrimination. This stance elicited discussion, which in turn elicited some uncertainty — or chaos, if you will. We tried to situate ourselves. I asked everyone to draft answers to this compound question: "What stance toward this question are you now inclined to take, and how would you explain it to others?" One response (by no means atypical) went as follows: "Men are not discriminated against by special support services for women because any man can potentially victimize women." By finding this statement's shared terms, we determined that its major premise was "Potential victimizers are not discriminated against by services which exclude them." I realize that, in its attempt to be systematic, this statement is abstract, rational, deductive. But rather than determining whether such qualities are inherently masculine or feminine, I wish to draw attention to the invention process which this enthymeme instigated: first, the questions (and transformations) of identity which emerged and second, the dialectical movement of this process.

The interrogation of "identity" began when someone pointed out that in order to come up with two shared terms, we had to conflate an individual category — "any man" — with a collective one — "men." It will probably come as no surprise to you that not only was this assertion questioned; so was the absorption of "women" by the category "victims." These two questions of identity crystallized when a student in support of this enthymeme claimed it was as reasonable as saying chicken coops don't discriminate against foxes. How are women like chickens? someone asked, voicing opposition to the label — and raising more questions about its implications of helplessness, no agency. And more questions: How is Project Saferide like a chicken coop? Is it a passive protection, conceding the night to male savagery? Does the exclusivity of Saferide demean men and women? Are men *natural* predators of women? Don't some men brutalize other men, who are also vulnerable after dark? Note that in this discussion — these attempts to close and re-open questions of who we really are — we see how enthymematic analysis — a reasoned critique of reason — was instrumental in revealing the equivocality of logical categories.

What I further noticed about this discussion is that scrutinizing the deductive "givens" led not to genteel assent or to compliance with public commonplaces. Quite the contrary, the inquiry into the "givens" led back to induction — to personal examples: personal examples about being menaced, which were offered in the spirit of making available the discovery that male brutality is rooted in the social realm and thus shouldn't be redirected to the fault of the victim; *and* personal examples offered in the spirit of resisting this "class" consciousness. I don't mean to celebrate this diversity. I wish only to point out that the movement of this dialectical process is not only from the personal to the public and political. The movement is also from the public and political back to the personal, the private, a movement that provides not only the possibility of identification with class consciousness but also criticism of it. It can, following Adrienne Rich, occasion the critical thinking that reminds us that "every mind resides in a body," the kind of critical thinking which tests and retests given hypotheses against "lived experience," including a critique of the language that mediates our "lived experience" (244-45). It is not impossible, then, that using enthymemes can be one way of structuring writing classes that do justice to the complex relation of discourse to what we know about our identities.

NOTES

¹Within the enthymeme itself is the "overriding logic of the whole argumentative discourse," *and* it is this logic which generates the shape the argument takes. The enthymeme functions, then, as the "architectonic structure of rhetorical thinking" (Gage, *The Shape of Reason's* instructor's manual 18). In "Toward a General Theory of the Enthymeme," Gage makes this point at greater length.

²See Aristotle, *On Interpretation*: although writing and speech are "not the same for all races of men . . . [,] the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies" (115).

³I am indebted to Lisa Heldke's "John Dewey and Evelyn Fox Keller: A Shared Epistemological Tradition" (especially pages 129-39) for making this "core" clear to me.

⁴For a fuller critique of this ideology, see Susan Sherwin, "Philosophical Methodology and Feminist Methodology."

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