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Authorizing Anger: A Personal Encounter with Plato's Gorgias

Jane E. Hindman

. . .above all other prohibitions, what has been forbidden to women is anger, together with the open admission of the desire for power and control over one's life. . . .If one is not permitted to express anger or even to recognize it within oneself, one is, by simple extension, refused both power and control. . . . Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter (Heilbrun 13, 15, 18).

Call me irresponsible. Call me unprofessional, overly emotional, strident, bitter, immature even. Call me what you will, I still have to say this: Socrates pisses me off. Kenneth Burke claims that "Socrates' dialectical attempt to build a set of generalizations . . .transcended the bias of the competing rhetorical partisans" (200). Similarly, the revered professors of my undergraduate Philosophy courses and my professor-father all promised that I'd see Truth emerge from the Socratic method. Even the professor of my graduate seminar in Classical Rhetoric presented Gorgias as an example of rhetoric dedicated to improving the soul. But I don't buy it, not anymore.

Instead, by the end of the Gorgias, I'm asking many angry questions: "Who does this Socrates think he is? What gives him the right to call all the shots? Why does he debase rhetoric as a form of flattery and then use flattery as a way to befuddle his opponent? Does he think that just because he has silenced his opponents they agree with him? And am I really supposed to accept this interaction as a dialogue when, by the end of the "lesson," no one else is speaking or has spoken for an incredibly long time? In fact, much of the time Socrates has the stage to himself; he's performing a soliloquy. And what happened to those other Sophists who were initially so excited to dialogue with Socrates? What are they doing? Are they listening carefully, plotting their strategies for the next go-round, since they've obviously failed so abysmally in this one? Are they all asleep? Are they are so mentally battered, beaten, and exhausted that--like submissive spouses--they're hanging their heads or maybe nodding from time to time until the

tyrant finally runs out of steam and ends the ordeal? How come nobody else in my undergraduate or even graduate classes ever asked these questions? Why were they so quiet? Why do I react angrily and they (apparently) don't?

Yes, that's right. I am responding to Gorgias in a personal way, and I intend to claim that this response is not only "responsible" but also "professional." Carolyn Heilbrun says that if I don't express or even recognize my anger, I am refused both power and control in "whatever discourse is essential to action," refused "the right to have one's part matter" (18). So, rather than restricting my personal responses to "mere" private complaints to my feminist friends and classmates, I intend to use my anger to authorize a public discursive act. I want my anger to matter to me and, perhaps, even to you.

How might it have been different for you, if early in your life, the first time you as a tiny child felt your anger coming together inside yourself, someone, a parent or grandparent, or older sister or brother, had said, "Bravo! Yes, that's it! You're feeling it!" (Duerk 30)

The woman on the 8 of Swords is very lost and alone. She can't see because she is blindfolded. She can't reach out because she is bound. She can't move freely because she is caught in a prison of swords. It seems she has wandered very far from home - her place of security far away on the hill. How can she get back? She doesn't even know which way to go. The 8 of Swords stands for all those times when we feel lost, confused and powerless - when help and relief seem very far away.

Sometimes we feel restricted by circumstances. We wake up one day to find ourselves in an impossible, unhappy situation. A deadend job. A troubled relationship. Mountains of debt. How did this happen? We have no idea. Even little problems can make us feel trapped. How to get out of this mess? There just doesn't seem to be a way. Other times we look around and life seems fine - on the surface. "I have everything I want. I should be happy, so what's the problem?" We just don't know. We're confused and unsure.



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I. Behind closed doors: [Mis]recognizing disciplinary gestures

My right to speak in this place on this topic in this way depends on your authorization. Our interpretive community--that is, professors and graduate students of English, particularly those who specialize in rhetoric and composition studies--requires discursive moves that the community sanctions. David Bartholomae's description of the moves successful student writers make to appropriate academic discourse also applies to English professors writing for academic journals:

the writer must find a posture, with its attending language, that stood before this paper (or its writing). . .brought forward to enable his narrative [and accompanied by]. . .the enabling gesture. . .[through which] the writer locates his experience (in order to authorize it) within a phrase whose authority is derived from its position in a prior text. For each of these more experienced writers, the primary value of the experience he brings forward is its context within that which has already been said, within the available language to characterize a lesson (76, emphasis added).

The "authority effect" is Jane Tompkins' label for this gesture in critical writing, a gesture which--she says--is created by "an authoritative language [that] speaks as though the other person wasn't there" (129). Indeed, our professional writing rarely acknowledges our readers or ourselves as people, rarely draws attention to our own postures or to those characteristics of our discourse that mask our emotional responses, personal stakes, physical bodies. Instead, as critical writers, we rely on conventional textual moves to locate ourselves in our discourse; as critical readers, we recognize those moves as more or less dispassionate or objective.

I have examined at length this culturally endorsed practice that Pierre Bourdieu calls "misrecognition," a process which creates a "truth whose sole meaning and function are to deny a truth known and recognized by all, a lie which would deceive no one were not everyone

determined to deceive [her or] himself" (133). Within our discipline, we agree not only to read, interpret, and understand our practices in a particular way but also not to read, interpret, or understand practices in ways that undermine or contradict or de-authorize that agreement. In the discipline of English studies, we assent to the "lie" that disciplinary authorization must emanate from a source external to the community. We have seen how this group agreement demands certain rhetorical moves to promote that notion of authority and how--according to William Epstein--we misrecognize our discursive moves.

[G]esturing is a critical tactic (of which we are all more or less aware, but which we are also determined to misrecognize) that characteristically shifts interpretive authority out of the context of everyday human and social activity (what I am calling professional practice) and into a timeless, independent, already constituted and structured realm of subject, works, ideas, and linguistic patterns (what I have called a disciplinary matrix). . . 'the professional' drives 'the disciplinary' although it must not appear to do so--thus such tactical operations as 'the gesture' (65).

Because the discipline of English studies includes not just literary critics but also rhetoricians and compositionists, I want to apply Epstein's claims to the interpretive authority of the professional, as well as the novice, writer of academic discourse. Success in that discourse is characteristically accomplished by certain misrecognized gestures which shift authority from the context of everyday human and social activity (what I want to call the personal) to a timeless, independent, already constituted and structured realm of subject, works, ideas, and linguistic patterns (what I want to call the stylistic conventions of academic discourse). Thus, if I as author want you as readers in the professional English studies community to authorize my public discursive act, then I must consider two questions: What are the gestures that shift my personal concerns into (y)our realm of stylistic conventions? What's at stake in [mis]recognizing those conventions?

First, the gestures. Because, in asking you to authorize my anger, I'll also ask you to sanction my disregard for other more or less dispassionate moves, I want to focus my discussion here on our misrecognized methods for dodging. One of our commonplace gestures for circumventing certain expected arguments, that is for authorizing disregard, is simply to bracket off those arguments by justifying why I cannot or will not include them. Our discursive practice produces innumerable examples of such bracketing. Here's just one, endorsed because it gestures to the discipline's conventions for analyzing classical texts and because it is authored by two writers the discipline respects, Andrea Lundsford and Lisa Ede.

In the following section we will argue that . . . the conventional distinctions generally drawn between classical and modern rhetoric . . . led not only to major distortions and misrepresentations of classical rhetoric, but to misunderstandings of our own contemporary system as well. Although we believe a strong argument can be made that these distinctions distort classical rhetoric in general, space restrictions do not permit us to make such a case here. Instead, we have chosen to use Aristotle as the locus of our discussion because the Aristotelian theory is the most complete of all classical rhetorics and, more important, because many current misconceptions grow out of a limited reading of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (85-6 emphasis added).

"Space restrictions" here justifies not discussing "major distortions and misrepresentations of classical rhetoric [and] . . . of our own contemporary system as well;" these gestures also authorize the writers to present specific evidence from just one text (albeit "the most complete") classical rhetoric while claiming general knowledge about classical as well as contemporary rhetoric.

Now what aspect of "the context of everyday human and social activity" might these enabling gestures allow us to deny the truth of? What personal stakes might the writers have? Perhaps they bracket off "classical rhetoric" and focus on one text because they don't really know much about classical rhetoric in general. Maybe the editor of *Written Communication*, the journal whose first issue (in 1984) included this article, convinced the two authors to support his fledgling project but didn't offer them sufficient time or space before publication to scour myriad texts in order to find sufficient support for their claims about "classical rhetoric in general." Maybe Lundsford and Ede simply believe that the business of making knowledge in the field of rhetoric and composition is sufficiently realized by well-supported claims about only one text if that text represents issues the discipline defines as central. Nevertheless, they recognize that the discipline only authorizes large knowledge claims that characterize time periods ("classical rhetoric in general" and "our own contemporary system as well"). Thus, in a gesture to this already constituted realm, Lundsford and Ede cite the completeness of Aristotelian theory and its central role in the discipline's "current misconceptions" about rhetoric. Their gestures to the disciplinary matrix and conventional posture authorize them to elaborate only the moves they choose but the choice appears to be a result of disciplinary, not personal, concerns.

Obviously, I am inventing these writers' motives, their everyday contexts. To accuse or defend Lundsford and Ede's knowledge about classical rhetoric is to miss the point, for it is not the authors but rather their textual mechanics that are at issue here. Obviously, I don't know what aspects of everyday life motivate these authors. Nonetheless, their text can and does reveal their gestures to authority; their skillful rehearsal of these gestures demonstrates their facility with the stylistic conventions of our discipline.

It also reveals what our practice allows and what it disables. Needless to say, dismissing another's argument or method simply because it pisses me off is not allowed. Claiming that the theory just doesn't feel true or correspond with my experience holds no clout either. Instead, demonstrating some objectively derived and textually evidence illogic inherent in an author's argument or method will enable me to displace her or his claims with my own. But what the discipline [mis]recognizes as illogic is itself driven by professional practice, although it must not appear to be so.

Lundsford and Ede's text also reveals this misrecognition, the curious shifts and gaps that occur as professional practice challenges discursive conventions. In order to enable their own argument, they must demonstrate others' arguments to be somehow incomplete, distorted, misrepresentative, illogical. Thus, their reaction to others' "limited reading of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" (86) and their focus on Bator's in particular. "Clearly [they say,] Bator's argument is self-contradictory" (85).

The context of this move is crucial: in some academic circles, this charge would have sufficed then and would continue to suffice even now as a scathing indictment of Bator's argument. But in 1984 that discursive ground was shifting: feminism's influence on our professional practice--in specific, the feminist critique of binary opposition and hierarchy--undermines certain of our previously authorized gestures--in specific, the gesture to the logic of non-contradiction. Thus, to at least some of our disciplinary community in 1984, the charge "self-contradictory" no longer necessarily disables another's argument. As authors who support feminist beliefs and practices, Lundsford and Ede gesture to this disciplinary shift:

The fact that these interpretations are contradictory does not necessarily mean, of course, that they are unreasonable or invalid, the humanities and social sciences often witness such basic difference of critical opinion. Still, the contrast between the two views is so extreme as to suggest the possibility that each perspective represents an incomplete view of classical rhetoric (85 emphasis added).

Interesting, their use of "of course." Even now--ten years after this article's publication--respected authors do consider contradictory interpretation unreasonable or invalid; some authorized arguments do insist that something cannot be and not be and therefore, either it is or it isn't. Thus, "of course" (in the sense of "isn't it obvious?") functions more as a move to establish a norm than a gesture to an existing one. Interesting also is the fact that the authors' move to authorize their claim that contradictory interpretations are not necessarily invalid requires them to gesture to knowledge claims of entire disciplines--the humanities and social sciences--particularly because the latter territory has the reassuringly objective ring of "science." Most interesting of all is Lundsford and Ede's willing to gesture to new trends in the discipline but their apparent disinclination to relinquish the authority earned by the "contradictory interpretations" charge: their critique of Bator (which justifies their corrective to the "major distortions and misrepresentations of classical rhetoric" and "our own contemporary system") is authorized by the extremity of the contradictions that Bator makes. Do they mean that moderate self-contradiction is logical but extreme self-contradiction is not?

Let me remind you that undermining Lundsford and Ede's argument is not my mission here. Instead, I want to recognize their discursive entanglements, their attempts to create new terms and conditions for discourse, to construct gestures to an evolving professional practice but to do so in a way that the "new" moves appear to have always already been there. The convolutions of their text above reveal not two feminist authors who are illogical but rather two writers written by the ways that our discursive practice authorizes, by the ways that the professional drives the disciplinary though it must not appear to do so.

I say "Enough already!" I am tired of lying to myself and to you too. Such discursive contortions as Lundsford and Ede's only reveal our determination to deceive ourselves. Rather than concoct elaborate justifications that situate us as dispassionate and objective, why don't we use our well-developed rhetorical skills to construct and render ourselves grappling within the context of everyday life? Otherwise, our justifications enable us as readers and writers to misrecognize the autobiographical reasons driving our discursive moves. Furthermore, such inscription prevents (or at least postpones) changes or revisions in our professional practice.

So, again, here's my argument: if a discursive practice exacts as its price for authorization the repression of feeling or of personal stakes in the practice, then that price is too high. What is at stake in that shift of authority is my self, my human body in this situated, immediate, and social moment, not just one but one hundred and thirty pounds of human flesh. I don't want to pay that price. I can't breathe in that stuffy discursive space. I need to open a window.

Except in rare cases, every human being grows and develops within a culture. We learn the ways of our society by living with others, and this molds who we are. The Hierophant represents this process of "official" learning in a group setting. A Hierophant is someone who interprets secret knowledge.

Besides churches, we learn within schools, universities, clubs, teams, companies, and societies. The Hierophant represents them all because his realm is formal, institutional settings. Such environments emphasize belief systems--facts, rules, procedures, and ritual. Members are rewarded for understanding and following conventions. They identify with their fellow "students" and develop a group identity. This card stands for groups that are organized and structured; everyone has a role and all the rules are known and agreed upon.

In readings, the Hierophant often represents structured learning with experts or knowledgeable teachers. This card also stands for institutions and their values. These can be enriching or stifling depending on circumstances. Sometimes we need to follow a program or embrace tradition, other times, we need to trust ourselves.



II. How to make a door a window: Discovering an honest gesture

In opening this window, what I hope to do is, first, recognize how the autobiographical also drives the professional and, second, persuade you to authorize autobiographical justifications for making or not making certain gestures, specifically in the discussion about Socrates' dialogic method and Plato's discursive mechanics. Nancy Miller's *Getting Personal* buttresses my argument for some fresh air:

one could argue that to a great extent [my] bildung, [my] formation as a speaking and writing subject, can be understood only against the institutional realities that structure [my] personal situation (57).

Here are the institutional realities that structure my reading of and writing about the Gorgias: a graduate student in a Rhetoric and Composition doctoral program at a large research institution, I was assigned to read the text in a classical rhetoric course. In the discussion of the text, the professor described the Gorgias as "a devastating critique of a certain sort of rhetoric (namely, rhetoric which is not dedicated toward improving the soul);" this sort of rhetoric, represented in Callicles' position, is that of a corrupt man who refuses to stand by his position, who shifts the meaning of terms according to prevailing doxa, public appearance and opinion. The professor further contextualized the dialogue by explaining that for Plato "philosophy" operates much as "science" does in this century, that is, as a site of absolute knowledge and/or a method for answering questions in order to uncover realities that are timeless, certain, rationally demonstrable. Because I believe him to be a respected and learned scholar in the area of classical rhetoric and rhetoric in general, I accepted this professor's explanations as representative of the discipline's common interpretation of the dialogue.

I chose to write the required seminar paper about the Gorgias because what I understood as the accepted reading of that text really annoyed me. The notion that "true knowledge" must be transmitted through dialogue/dialectic that Plato controlled really made me mad. I felt compelled to prove that the dialogue and its method do not reveal certainty, that-- if corruption means shifting one's position--Socrates himself is corrupt, that any persuasive argument relies on prevailing appearance and opinion.

Like most doctoral students in the department (most professors too, I'm sure), I wrote the essay under pressures to complete numerous other projects and with the hopes that I would eventually get it published. Further, and perhaps like others in the academy, I spend as little time as possible scrutinizing authors whose work I find tedious, irritating, and representative of what I find abhorrent about patriarchy; consequently, I didn't include the Phaedrus in my initial seminar paper, though I had read that dialogue in the course. Instead, I re-read Gorgias several times, trying to uncover the places in Socrates' speeches wherein he shifts position and relies on convention (doxa) to construct his "absolute" knowledge. In the meantime I was also reading Clifford Geertz's Works and Lives, mainly because I had heard it mentioned during so many CCCC's presentations that I vowed to know it and because I knew it would supplement my understanding of how doxa, local knowledge, i.e. that which is authorized or "absolute" knowledge for a particular group. Because I believe that I can draw important conclusions based only on what I feel and think as a result of several readings of only one text, I wrote a personal response to the Gorgias. Because I also believe in the knowledge claims made possible in the serendipitous juxtaposition of texts, I included not just Geertz' Works and Lives but also salient passages from other texts that I discovered through friends, a therapist, my spiritual advisor. I believed it not just possible but imperative to put as much of myself as possible into my academic writing.

When I presented the resulting seminar paper to them, my instructor and classmates corroborated my beliefs and in fact advised me to send the piece to "the best journals." I sent it first to College English. Of the two reviewers who read the piece for the editor, one rejected it "because the author has taken on so many subjects, there are many areas of scholarship she has not incorporated. . . .I don't think there is enough specialized knowledge in the article to warrant publication." The other reviewer recommended revision. Nonetheless, the editor decided that

those "'slight' revisions [were] likely to produce a significantly different manuscript" and rejected the "very vigorously written manuscript." I then submitted the piece to Rhetoric Review, whose editor described it as "uncharacteristically" reviewed "at opposite ends of a positive/negative spectrum." One of those Rhetoric Review readers recommended rejection because "the interpretation of the Gorgias is not the central focus. . . [the author] does not show a familiarity with a body of important scholarship that would help this essay." The other reader sent me four single spaced pages of comments, suggestions, and support. I revised and resubmitted a significantly different manuscript, one that I hoped emphasized my intent to critique the ways we academics authorize texts, to argue that our textual production is always already autobiographical, to use my responses to Gorgias as examples of a variety of ways I can authorize that response. (Unfortunately for me, the reviewers didn't authorize my responses, annoyed that "efforts by others who are not in agreement with the author are 'moves' [so are efforts by those who agree with the author, I want to shout] and that the "potentially sophistic move in this performative aspect of the piece. . . is not one that you [I] appear to be unaware of." Obviously, what I thought would be obvious, wasn't.

Those are the immediate institutional realities structuring my formation as a speaking writing subject herein; of course, other institutional realities have been similarly constructing me for years now. It is this formation of an academic speaking and writing subject that is my topic, not the body of knowledge of Plato's work but rather the embodying of a woman reading one of Plato's works. In choosing that subject, I consciously disregard some of the reviewers' criticisms of my initial manuscript. I argue that I do not need to read all of Plato's work or even more of it in order to have something "important" to say about it, in order to theorize the production and poetics of a female tradition of reading and writing a particular topic, say the Socratic dialogic method and its reliance on the logic of non-contradiction. To insist that an author can be authorized (published) only by responding to a "body of work" rather than to a single text, to sanction only gestures to the "body of scholarship" as opposed to the body reading and contextualizing the text, is to silence voices. These conventions require us to misrecognize the effects of our discursive practice, to conduct business as usual, to maintain the status quo. Nancy Miller says "the seductive powers of these [academic] cultural commonplaces should not be underestimated" (62). I agree and I want to resist the seduction.

Such resistance does require understanding the tactics of the tempter. Further, I really doubt that I can make the fact that Socrates pisses me off matter to you if I don't give at least some demonstration that you might respect. So, I want to make the move in which I cite the Gorgias in order to authorize my interpretation of it. Of course, most academic writers who deploy this gesture don't profess angry or peevish motives driving the analysis; neither do most academic readers look for the emotional or personal impetus informing a rhetorical analysis of a text. Nevertheless, let me say that from the outset of the dialogue, I am rankled by Socrates' insistence that debaters speak briefly and not "eulogize his [Gorgias'] art as though it were under some censure" (62). Authorized readings of the dialogue--such as that given by Bizzell and Herzberg--also assert that nothing personal is at stake in Socrates' debate with Gorgias, that "the stated question at issue here is the value of rhetoric" (57). I don't buy that. I think censure of Gorgias' art is precisely the point of the ensuing discussion, and Socrates' duplicity in disguising that motive unsettles me.

When, for instance, Polus comes to Gorgias' defense, I blaze. Polus, apparently unable to control himself any longer because--like me--he's irritated by Socrates' tactics, feels compelled to interrupt:

How is this Socrates? . . . think you, because Gorgias was ashamed not to admit your point that the rhetorician knows what is just and noble and good and then from this discussion I daresay there followed some inconsistency in the statements made--the result that you are so fond of--when it was you yourself who led him into that set of questions! (70)

I am thrilled at this point that someone has--however temporarily--finally called attention to the fact that Socrates' strategies rely on shame to coerce Gorgias; nonetheless, I'm confused by the incoherent form of Polus' remarks here. The translator explains that "The defective construction of this sentence is probably intended to mark the agitated manner of Polus in making his protest, and the editors clarify that "The name 'Polus' means young colt, and Polus's entry into the discussion here suggests in its style the awkward, impulsive gait of a colt" (70). Not surprisingly, Socrates also focuses on the form at the expense of the content of Polus' assertion:

Ah, sweet Polus, of course it is for this very purpose we possess ourselves of companions and sons, that when the advance of years begins to make us stumble, you younger ones may be at hand to set our lives upright again in words as well as deeds (70).

Sarcasm doesn't drip any thicker than this, except perhaps in another of Socrates' subsequent and false qualifiers: "I fear it may be too rude to tell the truth; I shrink from saying it on Gorgias' account, lest he think I am making satirical fun of his profession" (71). I ask you: if these lines are not making satirical fun, then what is?

This sarcasm--spoken by one who insists that "you must regard me as furthering your own interest"--obfuscates the fact that impulsive or not, awkward or not, Polus has a cogent point: earlier in the dialogue Socrates did bank on Gorgias' unwillingness to publicly shame himself as well as on his own ability to ask a question to which there is no honorable answer. He sets this situation up very carefully when, in effect, he says this: we've both done a lot of arguing; we know that when people disagree and say that the opponent is wrong, the opponent gets upset and "think[s] that the remark comes from. . . a spirit of contention rather than of inquiry. . . Now I am afraid to refute you, lest you imagine I am contentiously neglecting the point and its elucidation and merely attacking you. I therefore, if you are a person of the same sort as myself, should be glad to continue questioning you; if not, I can let it drop" (67).

Gorgias, of course, answers "After that, Socrates, it would be shameful indeed if I were unwilling." What else can a man say to this type of "Have-you-stopped-beating-your-wife?" question? What else can you say to a questioner who has demanded brief "yes" or "no" answers and whom you have answered with "Well, I will do that, and you will admit that you never heard anyone speak more briefly"? (62) It's a set up, and--dammit--Gorgias falls for it.

Clearly, Socrates is playing to the audience here: "You hear for yourselves, Gorgias and Socrates, the applause" (68). He seduces them with his mellifluous song and dance, the words to which go something like this: "I assure you all that I am only interested in the spirit of inquiry,

for I am a simple and humble man who's so afraid to come up against a famous and talented speaker like Gorgias." Socrates' performance captures his opponent as well as his audience, for his tune appeals not only to Gorgias' vanity (what teacher can publicly say that s/he is not interested in the spirit of inquiry?) but also to his pocketbook. If indeed there are potential students in the audience, Gorgias cannot afford to walk away from the debate, whether or not he has begun to sense that--contrary to his words--Socrates is NOT "just as glad, mind you, to be refuted as to refute" (68).

And here--I think--is why I'm so ticked off: in my circles (that is, among the groups of people with whom I talk and write and interact--some of whom are academic, some not, and most--but by no means all--of whom are female), these tactics are seen as hypocritical and dishonest because they deny the motive of those who use them. In addition, they serve the interests of the speaker, Socrates (and, of course, of his inscriber, Plato), but not those of the audience or--as Socrates claims--of the rival. By declaring himself as discursively invisible (or at least transparent, especially at crucial moments in his argument), Plato distances himself from his subject and his audience and thereby appears to be discovering "Truth." But I am not fooled by this ruse: I do not believe that author-evacuated prose is author-less. Closely read, his text renders the author Plato and the rhetor Socrates visible to me, visible in the same annoying way my attention-starved youngest sister was when she'd stand in front of the T.V. and all the rest of us girls would say "Hey, you make a better door than a window, you know."

So when Socrates says, "If you [my opponent in a dialogue] can bear me out in any point arising in our argument, that point can at once be taken as having been amply tested by both you and me. . . .Hence any agreement between you and me must really have attained the perfection of truth" (*Gorgias* 87), it doesn't ring true for me. I don't buy into the notion that Truth constructed ("discovered" if you prefer) by an apparently detached (as opposed to invested or situated), logical (as opposed to emotional), rational (as opposed to imaginary) author is necessarily objective. I don't trust discursive tactics that claim to detach truths from the people who live them. I prefer techniques that make visible the construction: they seem more honest to me. Attachment, emotions, visible positions, open declarations of what's at stake--those discursive maneuvers are what I trust.

But I don't make the rules. The readers of public discourse in my profession--namely, my professor, journal reviewers, you too--expect me to gesture not just to the tradition of close textual analysis but also to the opinion of an expert, a respected authority who'll validate my interpretation. So, allow me to tip my hat to Clifford Geertz's assertion that the truth-getting method texts profess "does not lie in the fact that [one] story was created while [another] was only noted [i.e. reported from facts]. The conditions of their creation and the point of it" are what distinguish texts from each other ("Thick" 16, emphasis added). Now there is a way to get at what is so maddening about Plato's dialogue. I can ask, What's the point of it? What were his motives? What conditions prompted the creation of *Gorgias*?

Another respectable expert, Bruce McComiskey, answers these questions. His article "Disassembling Plato's Critique of Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*," presents quite plainly what he sees as the conditions and point of Plato's text:

When Plato wrote the *Gorgias*, the Athenian democracy was in an unstable condition [after the recent tyrannies of the Four Hundred and the Thirty]. . . . Alcibiades and Critias, two of Socrates' most successful students, led the revolutions that resulted in these bloody oligarchic tyrannies; and their antidemocratic exploits contributed much to the Athenian death sentence against their mentor Socrates. . . . Most Athenian citizens, when Plato wrote the dialogue, were anti-oligarchy, with the bitter memory of Socrates' students Alcibiades and Critias fresh in their minds. At that time, few Athenian readers of the *Gorgias* would have judged in Socrates' favor had Plato presented Gorgias' beliefs as he truly would have expressed them. . . . Plato's purpose was to present Gorgias as a rhetorician with a foundational, ahistorical epistemology, so that his kairos-governed *techne* would seem absurd (80, 81-2).

By McComiskey's standards then, Plato's account of the dialogue between Gorgias and Socrates misrepresents Gorgias. Further, McComiskey demonstrates that Plato has personally and politically driven motives for this misrepresentation: oligarchic government, and its bedrock--foundational knowledge--grants power only to those philosophic few of wealth and high birth, a group that included Plato. What Socrates' dialectic "discovers," what Plato wrote, then, is not Truth but ideology.

Ah-ha! I have him now: I can see how this ideology of "disinterested interest in transcendent truth" is meant to silence those who have an interest in discovering truth to be relative or situated or partial. I can gesture to an authority who justifies my ideology, and I can validate my fiery reaction to Plato's motives. I can say to you, "There, you see? No wonder I feel so angry when I read the *Gorgias*! The dialogue's defense of foundational knowledge (and subsequently of oligarchic government) is actually propaganda: Plato lies and cheats in order to win. And if there's one thing I can't stand, it's a liar and a cheat who claims to be above lying and to want to cheat no one. I was right about him all along. (And besides, he was on the wrong side, i.e., the side not mine)."

And yet. . . seemingly logical as that argument might be, I still don't like it because it still presumes that the authority of a text is grounded in its representation of what "really" happened, on its "factual" accuracy. I don't want to use this discursive tactic, because it misrepresents my motives. The "real" reason I am not persuaded by Plato's text is not because his reports of Gorgias' views are not accurate: I didn't even know that fact when I first read the text and still it ticked me off. This evidence will get my Classical Rhetoric professor's approval; it might get yours. But if I resort to that model to validate my interpretation of the dialogue, I'm using McComiskey's argument as a weapon. Though it's difficult to resist that ambitious temptation, I want to try.

It is an enigma that when a woman first expresses herself, even if it is a matter for which she cares deeply, it may emerge in a false-masculine voice. It may state her matter factually, but without the shadings and overtones from her own life...without the nuance of her womanly feeling values (Duerk 64).

In the picture on the 2 of Swords, we see a young woman who has put up a barrier of swords across her heart. Her rigid, uptight posture tells us of her struggle to keep her feelings under control while fending off any approach from the outside. "Nothing comes in, and nothing goes out," she seems to say.

The 2 of Swords is all about the barriers we put up between ourselves and others and those we create within ourselves. Internally, we block off our emotions and refuse to feel them. We avoid looking at the truth and pretend to ourselves that everything's OK. We think one way, but feel another. In countless ways, we divide off parts of ourselves and try to maintain them all even when we know they need to be reconciled.



III. Mechanical Engineering: How to make a window a bridge "between the voice talking in [her] head and prose as [she'd previously] known it'"(Kolodny 256)

Okay. That's it. I have had it. I refuse to keep quiet any long. All these words of yours are just about to choke me to death. JaneE, I have let you play that detached rational game long enough. Get some guts! You promised me that you would do it differently this time, but you keep doing the same shit. Really, girl. Look at you: you've read the expected texts in the field, found an authority or two to hide behind and to slay your opponents (Socrates, Plato) with. You are making this about winning while you claim that it's about truth-getting. You're talking their story, and it's making me want to puke.

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"But, you're changing what you said," I'd complain as loudly as I dared considering that it was my father I was talking to. "That's not fair."

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So. There you have it. The truth is that I get angry, have a "personal problem," when I read Gorgias because I see my father speaking in Socrates. But do these responses have to be only about my Dad? Is my anger at the ways that authorized discursive tactics silence me "just personal"? Harriet Goldhor Lerner, author of *The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships*, claims that "if we feel chronically angry or

bitter in an important relationship, this is a signal that too much of the self has been compromised and we are uncertain about what new position to take or what options we have available to us" (106). Of course, resolving the anger in my relationship with my dad is really important, but that relationship is not my only important one; mine with the academy is important as well. And I feel pretty bitter there too sometimes.

So what are my options? I recognize the fact that simply confessing my anger does not of itself resolve or transform it, especially if I continue to argue. I also recognize that I have a penchant for arguing; indeed, that proclivity seems to be an integral aspect of the profession I've chosen. Maybe I'm actually cultivating this anger, not recognizing my motive because I'm afraid to let go of that position. Lerner contends,

You protect [the person with whom you're having conflicts] by participating in fights that lead nowhere and never speaking directly to the real issue. You fight. . . rather than let [him or her] know where you stand . . . on the question of who is in charge...and who has the authority to make decisions (73).

Yep. You got it: the reason you go ballistic about Socrates (and your dad) is that he gets to call all the shots. He's in control; you're not. In fact, as far as he is concerned, you're nada, zero, nowhere in this dialogue. And as if that's not enough, you've gotta read, study, write about, know the guy. You're supposed to ignore the fact that he tries to keep people in the dark about what he's up to and humiliates the ones who try to show others what's going on. You never get to say what you really want to say: "This guy is not a great teacher or even a good dialectician. He's an asshole!" Other people might think you're too abrasive. I say that it's good you can get mad about that shit.

Let's just say--even though it's stretching things a lot--that I can imagine myself taking on a voice in the Socratic dialectical process. The humiliating consequence of taking on, even demanding the right to, this voice is that I don't get to be the authority; I have to be Other. And even worse is the fact that the more I as Other (the opponent in the dialogue, the student, the Sophist, the daughter, whoever) use Socratic discourse to argue about what constitutes truth, the more powerful that discourse becomes. Thus the frustration: whenever it appears that I may be successful with using the authority's tactics as a way to point out the holes in his arguments, (that is, whenever I use "logic" to advance my own claims since "they" say that logic and logic alone determines what course the dialogue will take), then He abandons logic and resorts to pathetic (that is, "of pathos" as well as "feeble") tactics of shame and ridicule to subvert me. But I would be shamed and ridiculed if I were to resort to those same pathetic strategies, the very ones that the authorities deny using and hide behind. This kind of discursive practice not only obscures the motives and position of He who controls it but also demands the de-selfing of the Other (that's me). This is a crazy making, no win situation if ever I saw one. No wonder some of us get locked up in the attic.

Just in case it's necessary to present further proof that the authorized discourse relies on these tactics, here's another case in point. When Polus determines that he wants to take up Gorgias' side of the debate (all that dodging has worn the elder out), Socrates carefully admonishes him to play according to the rules: "if you have any concern for argument that we have carried on. .

.take your turn in questioning. . .and thus either refute or be refuted." (70). In this gesture toward apparent cooperation and fair mindedness, Socrates says that Polus may be the refuter (the questioner) if he likes. Yet, because Socrates feeds Polus the questions to ask, he controls the discourse.

Furthermore, in a game that he says requires short answers, he speaks at length. After one of these speeches--the written length of which suggests that its spoken time would be at least five full minutes--Polus re-caps briefly what Socrates has just said. Though this summarizing technique is one that Socrates has been using himself during the course of the dialogue, Socrates answers Polus' "is-this-what-you-said?" with more ridicule, with another satirical stab at Polus's youth and inexperience: "Why at your age, Polus, have you no memory? What will you do later on?" (72).

A few exchanges later, Socrates belittles another of Polus' efforts to imitate Socrates' techniques: "By the dog, I fear I am still in two minds, Polus, at everything you say, as to whether this is a statement on your own part and a declaration of your own opinion, or a question you are putting to me." (73) Odd critique from the master at using questions to state his philosophy.

Reacting to so much sarcasm, Polus interjects his own brand of pathetic appeal (a brand, I feel compelled to add, more generally expressive and less personally insulting than Socrates' has been, but sarcastic and ridiculing nonetheless): "Hark at the man--" and soon thereafter, "What shocking, nay monstrous answers, Socrates!" he says (73). Socrates answers, "Spare your invective, peerless Polus--if I may address you in your own style: but if you have a question to ask me, expose my error; otherwise, make answer yourself." Here is yet another caustic jab at how Polus speaks rather than at what he says, a criticism juxtaposed to Socrates' own demand that Polus comment not on how Socrates expresses himself but rather on what he says. Furthermore, Socrates capitalizes on this moment to shift the ground of the dialogue such that he again is the refuter, after having dabbled long enough at the game of letting Polus think that he was in control of the dialogue because he was asking the questions.

Socrates becomes even more aggressive and confrontational as the dialogue progresses, goading Polus into quick answers with "Why do you not answer?" (74). I hear these commands as rapid machine gun fire coming seconds after the question has been posed. He even shoots out "Hush, Polus!" (74) in response to one of the answers he receives. This rhetorical artillery strikes me as remarkable not so much for its contradiction of the so-called spirit of inquiry as for its evidence of Socrates' apparent objective to silence his opponent throughout his "dialogue." And speaking of hypocritical contradictions, consider this remark in light of Socrates' earlier use of well-received jokes: "What is that I see, Polus? You are laughing? Here we have yet another form of refutation--when a statement is made, to laugh it down, instead of disproving it!" (78).

Face it: the guy's an asshole.

Well, maybe it's not such a good idea to attack the man. But at least I can say that his tactics are those of an unscrupulous cutthroat, can't I? Close rhetorical analysis of Socrates' methods implicate him in a discursive practice designed to preserve the authority of his logic. But my

anger during the reading gave me all the proof that I need to know that Socrates' method is not presented in the spirit of inquiry. I know how I feel when someone is seriously proceeding in that spirit, even if s/he is not of my opinion. And I sure didn't have that feeling when I read Gorgias. No way. Socrates' spirit is about winning position and power; his dialogue is more like a war than a conversation. It's not fair.

But recognizing and exposing this bias doesn't necessarily guard against the tactics that enable it. It doesn't work when Callicles declares "Socrates, you seem to be roistering recklessly in your talk, like the true demagogue that you are" (84). Tearfully but also angrily saying to my dad, "But that's not fair!" didn't work either. He'd just laugh and say, "Well, Jane, life's not fair so you'd better get used to it."

And what about you? What happens to you when you read Gorgias? Does this inequity bother you? Do you think about how Polus felt? Or Gorgias? Or Callicles? I do, and my guess is that they felt ashamed, inadequate, and depressed, or perhaps incredibly angry. And why shouldn't they feel angry? Why shouldn't I be when--recognized or misrecognized--the purpose of the dominant discourse is to erase the self of the Other?

How might it have been different for you. . .If the first time you had experienced that sharp awareness of ego, of "me, I'm me, not you". . .you had been received and hugged and affirmed, instead of shamed and isolated. . . .If someone had been able to see that you were taking the first tiny baby step toward feeling your own feelings, of knowing that you saw life differently from those around you. If you had been helped to experience your own uniqueness, to feel the excitement of sensing, for the very first time, your own awareness of life. What if someone had helped you to own all of this. . .to own your own life? How might it be different for you? (Duerk 30)

Spend time with a 2-year-old, and you will quickly discover what the 4 of Pentacles is all about: "No!" and "Mine!" These are the cries of the ego which is just developing in the young child. The ego thinks it will be safe when it manages to completely control its environment. It wants to impose its will so it can guarantee its power. This desire for control is the active energy of the 4 of Pentacles.

Blocked change is another feature of this card. When I see the 4 of Pentacles, I often feel as if a lump of stagnant energy has plopped down in the middle of the cards. I know this stubborn little man is going to resist every movement forward toward positive change. If you are trying to create something new, this card may be a warning that you will run into opposition from those who want to maintain the status quo.



III. Mechanical Engineering: How to make a window a bridge "between the voice talking in [her] head and prose as [she'd previously] known it'" (Kolodny 256)

Okay. That's it. I have had it. I refuse to keep quiet any long. All these words of yours are just about to choke me to death. JaneE, I have let you play that detached rational game long enough. Get some guts! You promised me that you would do it differently this time, but you keep doing the same shit. Really, girl. Look at you: you've read the expected texts in the field, found an authority or two to hide behind and to slay your opponents (Socrates, Plato) with. You are making this about winning while you claim that it's about truth-getting. You're talking their story, and it's making me want to puke.

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You protect [the person with whom you're having conflicts] by participating in fights that lead nowhere and never speaking directly to the real issue. You fight. . . rather than let [him or her] know where you stand . . . on the question of who is in charge...and who has the authority to make decisions (73).

Yep. You got it: the reason you go ballistic about Socrates (and your dad) is that he gets to call all the shots. He's in control; you're not. In fact, as far as he is concerned, you're nada, zero, nowhere in this dialogue. And as if that's not enough, you've gotta read, study, write about, know the guy. You're supposed to ignore the fact that he tries to keep people in the dark about what he's up to and humiliates the ones who try to show others what's going on. You never get to say what you really want to say: "This guy is not a great teacher or even a good dialectician. He's an asshole!" Other people might think you're too abrasive. I say that it's good you can get mad about that shit.

Let's just say--even though it's stretching things a lot--that I can imagine myself taking on a voice in the Socratic dialectical process. The humiliating consequence of taking on, even demanding the right to, this voice is that I don't get to be the authority; I have to be Other. And even worse is the fact that the more I as Other (the opponent in the dialogue, the student, the Sophist, the daughter, whoever) use Socratic discourse to argue about what constitutes truth, the more powerful that discourse becomes. Thus the frustration: whenever it appears that I may be successful with using the authority's tactics as a way to point out the holes in his arguments, (that is, whenever I use "logic" to advance my own claims since "they" say that logic and logic alone determines what course the dialogue will take), then He abandons logic and resorts to pathetic (that is, "of pathos" as well as "feeble") tactics of shame and ridicule to subvert me. But I would be shamed and ridiculed if I were to resort to those same pathetic strategies, the very ones that the authorities deny using and hide behind. This kind of discursive practice not only obscures the motives and position of He who controls it but also demands the de-selfing of the Other (that's me). This is a crazy making, no win situation if ever I saw one. No wonder some of us get locked up in the attic.

Just in case it's necessary to present further proof that the authorized discourse relies on these tactics, here's another case in point. When Polus determines that he wants to take up Gorgias' side of the debate (all that dodging has worn the elder out), Socrates carefully admonishes him to play according to the rules: "if you have any concern for argument that we have carried on. . .take your turn in questioning. . .and thus either refute or be refuted." (70). In this gesture toward apparent cooperation and fair mindedness, Socrates says that Polus may be the refuter (the questioner) if he likes. Yet, because Socrates feeds Polus the questions to ask, he controls the discourse.

Furthermore, in a game that he says requires short answers, he speaks at length. After one of these speeches--the written length of which suggests that its spoken time would be at least five full minutes--Polus re-caps briefly what Socrates has just said. Though this summarizing technique is one that Socrates has been using himself during the course of the dialogue, Socrates answers Polus' "is-this-what-you-said?" with more ridicule, with another satirical stab at Polus's youth and inexperience: "Why at your age, Polus, have you no memory? What will you do later on?" (72).

A few exchanges later, Socrates belittles another of Polus' efforts to imitate Socrates' techniques: "By the dog, I fear I am still in two minds, Polus, at everything you say, as to whether this is a statement on your own part and a declaration of your own opinion, or a question

you are putting to me." (73) Odd critique from the master at using questions to state his philosophy.

Reacting to so much sarcasm, Polus interjects his own brand of pathetic appeal (a brand, I feel compelled to add, more generally expressive and less personally insulting than Socrates' has been, but sarcastic and ridiculing nonetheless): "Hark at the man--" and soon thereafter, "What shocking, nay monstrous answers, Socrates!" he says (73). Socrates answers, "Spare your invective, peerless Polus--if I may address you in your own style: but if you have a question to ask me, expose my error; otherwise, make answer yourself." Here is yet another caustic jab at how Polus speaks rather than at what he says, a criticism juxtaposed to Socrates' own demand that Polus comment not on how Socrates expresses himself but rather on what he says. Furthermore, Socrates capitalizes on this moment to shift the ground of the dialogue such that he again is the refuter, after having dabbled long enough at the game of letting Polus think that he was in control of the dialogue because he was asking the questions.

Socrates becomes even more aggressive and confrontational as the dialogue progresses, goading Polus into quick answers with "Why do you not answer?" (74). I hear these commands as rapid machine gun fire coming seconds after the question has been posed. He even shoots out "Hush, Polus!" (74) in response to one of the answers he receives. This rhetorical artillery strikes me as remarkable not so much for its contradiction of the so-called spirit of inquiry as for its evidence of Socrates' apparent objective to silence his opponent throughout his "dialogue." And speaking of hypocritical contradictions, consider this remark in light of Socrates' earlier use of well-received jokes: "What is that I see, Polus? You are laughing? Here we have yet another form of refutation--when a statement is made, to laugh it down, instead of disproving it!" (78).

Face it: the guy's an asshole.

Well, maybe it's not such a good idea to attack the man. But at least I can say that his tactics are those of an unscrupulous cutthroat, can't I? Close rhetorical analysis of Socrates' methods implicate him in a discursive practice designed to preserve the authority of his logic. But my anger during the reading gave me all the proof that I need to know that Socrates' method is not presented in the spirit of inquiry. I know how I feel when someone is seriously proceeding in that spirit, even if s/he is not of my opinion. And I sure didn't have that feeling when I read Gorgias. No way. Socrates' spirit is about winning position and power; his dialogue is more like a war than a conversation. It's not fair.

But recognizing and exposing this bias doesn't necessarily guard against the tactics that enable it. It doesn't work when Callicles declares "Socrates, you seem to be roistering recklessly in your talk, like the true demagogue that you are" (84). Tearfully but also angrily saying to my dad, "But that's not fair!" didn't work either. He'd just laugh and say, "Well, Jane, life's not fair so you'd better get used to it."

And what about you? What happens to you when you read Gorgias? Does this inequity bother you? Do you think about how Polus felt? Or Gorgias? Or Callicles? I do, and my guess is that they felt ashamed, inadequate, and depressed, or perhaps incredibly angry. And why shouldn't

they feel angry? Why shouldn't I be when--recognized or misrecognized--the purpose of the dominant discourse is to erase the self of the Other?

How might it have been different for you. . .If the first time you had experienced that sharp awareness of ego, of "me, I'm me, not you". . .you had been received and hugged and affirmed, instead of shamed and isolated. . . .If someone had been able to see that you were taking the first tiny baby step toward feeling your own feelings, of knowing that you saw life differently from those around you. If you had been helped to experience your own uniqueness, to feel the excitement of sensing, for the very first time, your own awareness of life. What if someone had helped you to own all of this. . .to own your own life? How might it be different for you? (Duerk 30)

Spend time with a 2-year-old, and you will quickly discover what the 4 of Pentacles is all about: "No!" and "Mine!" These are the cries of the ego which is just developing in the young child. The ego thinks it will be safe when it manages to completely control its environment. It wants to impose its will so it can guarantee its power. This desire for control is the active energy of the 4 of Pentacles.

Blocked change is another feature of this card. When I see the 4 of Pentacles, I often feel as if a lump of stagnant energy has plopped down in the middle of the cards. I know this stubborn little man is going to resist every movement forward toward positive change. If you are trying to create something new, this card may be a warning that you will run into opposition from those who want to maintain the status quo.



V. From Anger to Integration: A Woman's Quest for Her Own Story

Though it never occurred to me during my youth, an essential question about my and dad's dinner "dialogues" now presses on me. I am convinced my healing and freedom depend on addressing it: why did I continue to step into that arena, a forum in which--centuries earlier and through the conventions of Western religions, rhetorical tradition, and politics of gender--I had

been doomed to lose? Why did I not learn to say "No. I do not want to play under these rules. I want to live by my own premises"? I still sometimes have trouble detaching from my dad, but I moved closer to this goal in my experience with the lit crit conference-luminary with whom I argued in Wyoming. Very shortly after I'd delivered the "You do need psychotherapy" low blow, I retreated to the restroom and cried out some of my frustration. "God, I am so agitated!" I told the small group that had gathered. "This feels just like an argument with my dad. I'm shaking all over. God, he used to tick me off! What a bully!"

The chorus murmured consolations, all some version of "It's impossible to try to talk to those jerks anyway."

"Yeah, I know. But I walk into it every single time. It's me who continues to think that this time, this time, I will be the one who gets to be right. I'm just as invested in winning it as they are. So that makes me a jerk too. Why don't I just pack it up?"

As if on cue, another conference luminary emerged from one of the stalls, a feminist rhetorician who'd intrigued me the day before with her paper on the ethics of the graduate students' rhetoric in their complaints about her policies. "You're asking the right question," she said. "Why do you keep doing it? You might want to think about the concept of the 'worthy opponent.'"

"'Worthy opponent?' What does that mean? That guy's worthy: he's smarter than I am, for god's sake. He's famous; he's better at that game than me. What do you mean 'worthy'?" Knowingly--maybe even smugly, she just dried her hands and walked out. "Humph, some help she is," I thought.

That night I went to the conference cocktail party. Lots of people from the lit critic's seminar course came over to congratulate me on my performance in delivering my leveling blow; the professor himself avoided my eyes all evening, or so I thought. After the party--depressed, agitated, sleepless--I walked and walked until about three in the morning under a beautiful full moon lighting up the cloudy, windy, wide-open Laramie plains sky, unable to shake the guilt and discomfort I felt. I knew that I thought it wrong to do what I'd done, but I also knew that I'd played according to the guy's rules. I knew I'd feel better if I apologized, but--you can be sure--I wasn't too keen about actually doing it. I really wanted to hate that guy, blame him for getting me so worked up that I'd broken my own rules and was now losing sleep. But I needed to admit it was I who walked into the arena, I who had bought into the surge of adrenaline that carried me through the whole scene, my ego that couldn't resist. I also had to admit that in the rules of the game I claim I want to play, my "you do need psychotherapy" remark was not fair: it was personally directed, intended to get me a laugh, and not at all conducive to the spirit of inquiry. I'd won the battle but lost the war because I'd abandoned myself.

The next day, I cornered my "opponent" right after the closing ceremony; he'd been sitting up front with the other invited speakers only five feet in front of me for at least an hour, but he hadn't ever looked me in the face. "I need to talk with you," I said. "I want to say something at least after our debate yesterday. I guess if I were to continue your favorite--the sports metaphor--

I'd come up to you, shake hands, and say 'good game' or something. Isn't that how it's supposed to go?"

"Yeah, that's how it goes," he said. "And, listen, I hope there's no hard feelings, okay?" Now it was I who couldn't look him in the face. "I feel all right about it all. Do you?"

I looked at him and teared up. Damn. "Well, actually, no, I don't. I feel pretty shitty about the whole thing." He started to say something that sounded like apology, but I just kept talking right over him. "Though I'm dying to say otherwise, I really don't believe that's your fault: I chose to enter your arena; I chose to play your game. And now I feel icky."

"You know," he said, "Sandy told me that you said our argument reminded you of your father."

When will I learn to keep my mouth shut? I thought. I told the entire women's room about my dad and now Sandy set me up to get patronized, the traitor. I glared at him, my tears hardened already, my teeth gritted against what I felt certain he'd say next: "You've got to learn to get over that father stuff. You feminists take all male authorities to be like your father. No wonder you're so angry."

But no. He said something entirely different, worthy even. "You know, my dad was like that too," he said. "I never used to win with him. But I always used to try to figure out how to beat him. It makes it pretty difficult to stop arguing."

I was almost too surprised to answer. "Yeah, my Dad did that too," I said. "That's the only reason I was able to talk louder than you and not get bulldozed yesterday. I got a lot of practice with him. But I do need to say for myself that I think it was a low blow for me to make that crack about psychotherapy."

He tried to interrupt me, to tell me it was okay he was used to being insulted, but-- again--I just talked over him: "I don't think you understand: it doesn't really matter to me if it's okay with you. I know that your rules weren't broken, but mine were. And I don't want to play that way. It's not okay with me. In fact, I don't want to keep playing that game at all. That's what we were all trying to tell you. I don't want to have to have my heart beating at 90 miles an hour while I think about how much I want to hit you. I don't want to have arguments that make me feel like shit afterwards. There's got to be another way to do this."

"Even in sports, you know, where--according to you--people have to learn to be competitive, some people still don't play to win. So even competition is not an absolute requirement. Once a professor of my "Educating the Culturally Diverse" class told us about a group of islanders who play a national game sort of like football. In their game the main rule is that you can't stop playing until the score is tied. Now there's a sports metaphor that gives the whole point we students were trying to make all week: there's got to be another way to play. Your belief that there's only one way is just your belief. It's a myth."

End of story. And I want you to know what I recognize about the discursive set up here: because I am writing this story of the lit crit professor and me, I get to be the one who controls

this discourse (at least I control it until reviewers comment on it). I can begin and end it wherever I want, create the characters as I like. I can say about myself and my story what Valerie Smith says about the writers of nineteenth-century slave narratives:

the process of authorship provide[s] the narrators with a measure of authority unknown to them in either real or fictional life. . . . [Thus,] narrators not only grant themselves significance and figurative power over their superordinates, but in their manipulation of received literary conventions they also engage with and challenge the dominant ideology (2-3).

I want to be such an author, one who has a measure of authority in academic discursive life and who's powerful in my manipulation of the received conventions of critical writing. To some readers, I probably don't deserve that authority just because I feel like taking it. It doesn't fit me well, they might say; it's too big in the shoulders, and the buttons are on the wrong side. One College English reviewer of this essay in a previous version, for instance, dismissed my story because "Frankly, it's a bit too gossipy for my taste. It also has the flavor of a hero-story (despite the disclaimers): how I whipped the big, bad, male academic."

Naturally, I disagree. For one thing, the male academic proved himself to be not so bad after all. I don't see my story as especially heroic or victorious either: the professor and I didn't part on any particularly friendly terms; we didn't experience (at least I didn't) any happily ever-afters or warm, fuzzy "connection." I do think we shared some information about ourselves and thus got some new insight, perhaps. But I don't now and didn't then feel especially bonded to the man; though he--not I--is the authority on how he feels, I doubt if he feels bonded to me either. I'll admit that I feel oddly proud that somehow my apology prompted the professor to tell me about his dad, but I doubt that I've changed his mind or his practice. Nonetheless, I feel glad that we had that moment. I don't know even now what all it meant, but I did know even then that it was important because it marked something different, a new way for me to be. I confess to the above mentioned reviewer and to you too that I also knew even at the time that this encounter makes for a good story.

I confess too that I understand why that reviewer might assume that I'd want my story to be read as a triumphant myth: insignificant, female peon grad student entertains class by shouting down somewhat notorious feminist basher who's been pissing off students all week. However, in an important gesture to her feminine intuition and her "feminist" need to connect, nurture, and support even her enemies, she apologizes, thereby enabling famous guy to demonstrate that he's not such a beast after all. More importantly, female grad student gets to demonstrate that her feminine approach is "naturally" superior. It's *Beauty and the Beast* revisited, an allusion to my favorite Cocteau (but not Disney) movie and my favorite girlhood fairy tale.

But here's the catch and, I think, the most important and persuasive feature of my story: even if you try to see it through the hero window, I don't need to monopolize the hero role. When my story ends and the credits scroll by, the other guy--the "bad" guy--is not dead or silenced or even especially "whipped." Neither do I get to corner the market on courage or voice here. I didn't save the guy or redeem him; he made a choice himself to connect with me on a more personal level. In the end, the conflict's not really resolved, but I do feel good about not only expressing but moving beyond my anger; I liked the person I was in that moment. The anger expert, Harriet

Lerner, explains why I might have that satisfaction and helps me generalize beyond my experience:

Anger is a tool for change when it challenges us to become more of an expert on the self and less of an expert on others. . . .If, however, we do not use our anger to define ourselves clearly in every important relationship we are in--and manage our feelings as they arise--no one else will assume this responsibility for us (Lerner 102, 114).

I grew [up] some because I took responsibility for myself and feelings; it looked to me as if the professor did the same. Thus, the "victory" here is that we both lost a little and won some too. I deserve some credit because I listened to and took responsibility for my own feelings and actions. So does he.

[The] courageous act is to stop reacting with anger long enough to open up a real dialogue on the subject by sharing something about yourself and asking questions of others (Lerner 217, emphasis hers).

I'll admit that--at least in my eyes--I emerge the heroine of this myth in that I listened to my better self and--for a minute--was willing to put my ego under erasure and admit to the guy that I thought I made a mistake. I had the nerve to rely on my voice, my rhetoric, not his.

It is an act of courage to acknowledge our uncertainty and sit with it for a while. Too often, anger propels us to take positions that we have not thought through carefully enough or that we are not really read to take. . . .Our anger can be a powerful vehicle for personal growth and change if it does nothing more than help us recognize that we are not yet clear about something and thus it is our job to keep struggling with it (Lerner 107).

It strikes me, finally and now that I don't feel so angry anymore, that there's nothing particularly wrong with powerful myths: we all live by them in one way or another. What bothered me when I read Gorgias is that Plato's "real" myth--and the other aspects of the Master narrative it represents--has been the authorized one and that that authorization poses as "natural." What's important to me about the enterprise of probing and exposing Plato's or the professor's or even my dad's discursive strategies is recognizing their project's untenable function of silencing Others.

Autobiography's authorization of personal experience is an enterprise that I do support. Like Adrienne Rich, I believe that "it is only the willingness of women to share their 'private and often painful experience' that will enable them to achieve a true description of the world" (paraphrased in Heilbrun 68). "Others" who join in such a project include Nancy Miller, who describes the enterprise this way:

rather than handing "theory" over to "them," what we can argue about is precisely the practice of theory, and therefore the question of whether theory can be personalized and the personal theorized (21).

As is probably obvious, I believe that not just theory but also classical texts can be personalized and personally theorized. I believe that voices with bodies are heard better, reach farther than institutional voices. And so, Judith Duerk's *Circle of Stones*, the New Age book that my painting teacher recommended to me, was the text most useful to my formation as a speaking and writing subject in this context, for Duerk reminded me that

Most helpful of all for a woman [or man] to remember as she seeks her own voice, is that it will emerge when she speaks from her own true nature and experience, only when she expresses what she cares most dearly about and is her own unique and individual truth. . . .Her task must be to ground herself in her own life and let its truth emerge (66).

And finally I believe what Harriet Lerner's *Dance of Anger* claims: my anger has much to teach me; it can even open up a real dialogue, a chance to connect. Lerner says,

It is through the process of reconnecting and sharing--of learning firsthand how we are similar to and different from other women [and men]--that allows us to go beyond the myths that are generated by the dominant group culture, transmitted through the family, and internalized by the self (Lerner 223)

And so, launched by anger and nourished by my desire to resolve that anger without giving up too many of my own thoughts, wants, beliefs and ambitions--fueled, in short, by my refusal to be de-selfed--my angry story has come to an end. Among the multitude of voices and texts that give my life its immediate look of strangeness, I have discovered something to say. And since your presence here depends on some expert's authorization of my public discourse, it would appear that I have finally found something to wear for this special occasion.

There are certain people who exude a kind of quiet composure. They may not say very much, but they go about their business with an air of calm and graceful deliberation. Their presence is comforting because they are so centered. For me, this is the energy of Temperance.

In readings, Temperance can represent a need for moderation. This card can also indicate a need for balance. In conflict situations, Temperance suggests that compromise and cooperation are vital. Look for any opportunity to bring opposing parties together. In fact, to temper means to modify by adding a new component. By combining and recombining, we come up with the ideal mixture or solution. Finally, Temperance is the card of good health in all areas - physical, mental and emotional. When illness or dis-ease is a concern, Temperance holds out the promise of vitality and a greater sense of well-being.



Credits/Notes/Works Cited

The 3 of Pentacles is one of the cards in the Tarot that focuses on the group. As Pentacles are grounded and practical, this card represents the idea of a task-oriented team--people who are working cooperatively toward a common goal. We need the help of others to achieve our goals, even if we don't always realize it. How much better to acknowledge the teamwork!

Another feature of the 3 of Pentacles is competence - the ability to get the job done. How much this is appreciated nowadays! This card tells you that you have all the skills and knowledge you need. When you see the 3 of Pentacles, know that the situation is (or will be) in good hands, but ...it is important to concentrate on excellence in your work.

Be proud of what you do and how you do it. Then you will accomplish your mission.



Credits



Jane E. Hindman is an authorized professor for San Diego State University's Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. In addition to her anger, JaneE's also author(iz)ed articles about quilt talk among a group of African-American quiltmakers, quiltmaking as a metaphor in Toni Morrison's fiction, the construction of self (ethos) through landscape, and teaching basic writers to (re)invent not just the university but academic discourse itself.

Collin Gifford Brooke was responsible for the translation of "Authorizing Anger..." into HyperText Markup Language. In those spare moments of free time he has when he is not performing similar duties throughout the P/T Universe, Collin is nearing completion of his PhD in Rhetoric and Critical Theory at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Notes

All of the Tarot images provided in this text come from the Rider-Waite deck, which is published and owned by U.S. Games Systems, Inc. Although they are available from a number of locations on the WWW, Paul Caskey has made them available at the following location: <ftp://ftp.swcp.com/pub/pcaskey/tarot/>.

All of the descriptions which accompany the cards were taken, and in some cases abridged, from Joan Bunning's [Learning the Tarot--An On-Line Course](#). Ms. Bunning's site contains a wealth of information about the individual cards and spreads, in addition to the aforementioned on-line course. For those interested in less traditional Tarot imagery, I recommend [Michele Jackson's Tarot Page](#), which contains links to many different decks.

Finally, I should note that the idea for weaving Tarot cards into the text of "Authorizing Anger" came from Ms. Hindeman's suggestion of the 8 of Swords as a potentially relevant graphic for her essay. While I cannot claim responsibility for the original concept, I can, however, own up to the possibility that some cards may prove to be more appropriate than others. Any jarring inconsistencies that result from their presence on these pages are the fault of myself. Their layout is not intended to reflect any particular spread nor anything more than a series of exercises in associational thought. [cgb]

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