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Resistance, Women, and Dismissing the "I"

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak they speech, Love,
Think thy thought—
Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

—Robert Browning, "A Woman's Last Word"

I begin by not granting the writer her "own" presence in that paper, by denying the paper's status as a record of or a route to her own thoughts and feelings . . . I being by being dismissive.

—David Bartholomae, "Response," 85

The identities of women in our culture, in every culture, are formed by the confluence of social roles, cultural practices, signifying codes, and material experiences.[1] Obviously, this is true of all participants who are jointly engaged in culture-building and culture-maintenance. But this process is especially problematic for a woman because the linguistic systems that construe much of her identity have been, and remain, dominated by men. During this past decade, the laudable goal of the composition pedagogy articulated by David Bartholomae has been to help students unpack the multiple and conflicting discourses, thus the ideologies, that constitute an identity at any one moment (see, especially, "Writing with Teachers"). Unfortunately, the theoretical position described by Bartholomae in a variety of venues conflates feminine with masculine perspectives, implicitly denying gender as a category of difference. In his discussions of his pedagogy, Bartholomae treats the idealized "student"—regardless of the gendered pronoun he uses—as if a woman's experiences of the world, the classroom, and writerly subjectivities were equivalent to those of a man. He constructs female as male and evolves a male-

marked methodology, a praxis that undermines its critical thrust and risks reinscribing feminine identities so they speak the speech and think the thoughts of patriarchy.[2] To enact a critical pedagogy requires that teachers and scholars highlight, not elide, difference. It requires that we interrogate, not dismiss, the multiple material and rhetorical layers that comprise the authorial "I," a site where lived experience and dominant ideologies struggle. We need an approach that unpacks the material rhetorics at work in any speech act, aiming for a heterophonic classroom, one that hybridizes voices, authorities, and (con)texts.

To demonstrate the limitations of a purely rhetorical orientation for a critical pedagogy, I first review Bartholomae's descriptions of his pedagogical approach, focusing especially on his dismissal of material identity, which he discards for an emphasis on textual identity. Second, I trace women's cultural positioning, pointing out the implications such material placement has on the evocation of rhetorical subjectivities. Third, I examine the rhetorical options historically available to women, especially those writing in the academy as professionals and as students, highlighting the unequal relationship between material and rhetorical subjectivities in and out of the classroom. Finally, I close by suggesting an interrogative pedagogy, one that strives to create a locale where lived experience, ideology, and discursive practices are reciprocally evoked and examined.

(Dis)missing the "I"

Bartholomae offers a particularly influential vision of a pedagogical approach through his various articles, coauthored textbooks, and sheer ethos in the discipline. Although problematic as evidence of what goes on in the classroom or as evidence of the historical development of a field (see Eldred and Mortensen), textbooks do tend to provide "carefully weighed and sifted summary-outline of theory" (Baumlin xxviii). Such a summary-outline of theory represents a consensus in the field (Baumlin xxviii), especially for textbooks whose popularity has demanded multiple editions. Even though Bartholomae's representations of his own pedagogy in "Writing with Teachers" may be a bit extreme, as Don H. Bialostosky suggests in "Romantic Resonances," and while teachers using his coauthored textbooks in their classrooms invariably add their own signatures, Bartholomae's work still provides an excellent source of what scholar-teachers believe *should* happen in the writing classroom and thus provides an excellent means of examining the flawed premises on what that *should* rests. We can, and need to, study textbooks and articles on pedagogy as a means of unpacking their genealogy, the assumptions that give rise to their being, for those assumptions inevitably resurface in the classroom.[3]

Basically, Bartholomae argues that academic writing—writing that avoids the ideology of "sentimental realism" ("Writing with Teachers" 69) or the myth of self-expression—is the "real work of the academy" (63). Classrooms should be a "discursive space" (66) where teachers ask students to do what academics do—struggle with the texts of others as a means of creating new texts. To underline the scriptedness of their writing and the cultural overdetermination of their writerly identities, Bartholomae advocates a "pedagogy of dismissal." Initially, a teacher responds to a student's draft by challenging as an illusion the sense that an individual presence—a student's identity outside a text—is immanent within textual presence, a writerly identity configured in the text. When working on any text, Bartholomae claims, it is necessary to "separat[e] the author from the individual" ("Reply" 123). One does so by (dis)missing the individual and the materiality of that existence.

In "Writing with Teachers," Bartholomae provides a classroom example of (dis)missing the "I" by discussing his responses to a young woman's narrative of her parents' divorce. To underline his denial that a paper can be "a record of or a route to her own thoughts and feelings" (85), he would begin by rejecting her authorial first-person—the writerly subjectivity or implied author she creates in her draft. He scissors a sharp cut between the personal (the first-person material) and the textual (the first-person rhetorical), thereby preventing any confusion between "the give and take of common life" and that of professional work ("Reply" 130). Explicitly in "Reply to Stephen North," a rejoinder to North's "Personal Writing, Professional Ethics, and the Voice of 'Common Sense,'" Bartholomae explains that who the writer is *outside* the text is immaterial; it is the subject position, "the way the 'writer' [i.e., the writing figure] is positioned within a discourse" that is important (123). And this subject position is in particular need of deconstruction if it is figured as first-person expressive: "a figure of the writer as free agent, as independent, self authorizing, a-historical, a-cultural" because the textual first-person blurs the demarcation between author writing and author written (123). Essential both to Bartholomae's professional critique and his classroom pedagogy is a (dis)missal of the writer *outside* the text (the realm of the private, the commonsensical, and the first-person material) as a means to focus on the writing figure embedded *inside* the text (the discursively defined "professional" identity), which is produced more by the discourse than it is producing the discourse (123). (Dis)missing the writer outside the text also requires that scholar-teachers (dis)miss initially any writerly subjectivity manifested in the text especially when that subjectivity is masked by first-person rhetorical.

The problem with such a pedagogical (and a scholarly) approach is that it relies on a flawed premise: The assumption that the positioning of women—as

writers and as writing figures—is symmetrical to that of men.[4] Bracketing the material individual from the textual personal can be effective only if all writers share a similar material positioning and thus share access to the same textual identities. But a writer outside the text is always embedded within a cultural system that dictates and constrains options for material and rhetorical identity, and women writers are culturally situated in circumstances sharply divergent from those of men. Likewise, their relationship and access to potential rhetorical identities differ. "[T]he writing of students is not generated in a vacuum—it comes from the student who is not merely a student but a person, and not merely a person but a gendered person. That is what poststructuralists have lost track of" (Haswell and Haswell 247). Ignoring the material dissimilarities that mark gendered positions subsumes the situations of women without those of men, merely replaying the erasure that women typically experience in patriarchal cultures. As Jane Roland Martin warns, "[A]n educational philosophy that tries to ignore gender in the name of equality is self-defeating. Implicitly reinforcing the very stereotypes and unequal practices it claims to abhor, it makes invisible the very problems it should be addressing" (qtd. in Haswell and Haswell 251).

Positioning Material Identities

Absent from Bartholomae's various explanations of his professional and pedagogical approach is any recognition of the struggles women enact outside the text, answering the questions implicit within both the material and the textual "I." Assumptions about and treatment of subjectivity immanent in first-personal rhetorical emphasize that absence. For Bartholomae the subjectivity of first-person rhetoric is a manifestation of an "open space" ("Writing with Teachers" 64), an evocation of what Domna Stanton calls "a notion essential to the phallogocentric order: the totalized self-contained subject present to itself" (qtd. in Sivert 58). To illustrate, Bartholomae ascribes each student's desire for first-person rhetorical to the drive to "preserve the figure of the author, an independent, self-creative, self-expressive subjectivity" ("Writing with Teachers" 65). Bartholomae labels this subjectivity the Jimmy Stewart-Joseph Andrews figure and claims that first-person rhetorical derives its power from its "silent allusiveness" to this figure ("Reply" 123). But Bartholomae's claim is defensible only if we focus solely on men, especially Eurocentric, heterosexual, middle-class men. As Miriam Brody argues in *Manly Writing*, historically the rhetorical use of "I" (as well as the Montaigneian technique of including details revealing a personal signature) maintains the focal position that men hold culturally and to which they have been privileged rhetorically. Men in the West are acculturated in the master narrative of autonomous identities, where control

and domination are considered paradoxically both goals to be achieved and qualities endowed by right of birth. As Bartholomae asserts *all* writers, men may automatically claim first-person material and its rhetorical sensibility as their natural domain. Secure in the privilege of Cartesian certainty, men can even contest that certainty textually without endangering it materially. Bartholomae illustrates that privilege in his own writing in which he seemingly has little difficulty maintaining a professional and authoritative presence outside the text, a presence that he can so neatly parse from a private identity ("Reply" 130), even while he plays at unwriting that presence and authority in the text. For example, in "The Tidy House," Bartholomae recounts a personal narrative of his entry into composition, which he contests by reading it against the grain as a cultural script of liberal humanism. He then segues gracefully into a new identity story, reembedding his own narrated identity, as well as that of a student, in a poststructuralist master script. But he undermines the textual "I" without undermining the material "I," without undermining the professional authority of the reconfigured "I" to speak credibly to the future of basic writing. Bartholomae, regardless of the sleight of hand of textual decentering, retains his privilege, his right to address the needs of a discipline, to doctor its ills. Harriet Malinowitz in "David and Me" suggests that her resistance to/with Bartholomae issues from his "enthrallment with privilege—which in my reading was underwritten by his uncontested *claim* to privilege" (212-13, her emphasis). Although Malinowitz focuses specifically on the entitlement of class, that same ingrained sense of and right to centeredness outside the text—an entitlement of gender—may allow Bartholomae to maintain his name as rhetorical gesture even when he plays at breaking it down ("Tidy" 15). Thus Bartholomae, while seeming to dispute the naming implicit within his use of a liberal humanist first-person narrative in "The Tide House," merely renames himself, maintaining poise, privilege, and agency. He engages in the illusion of contestation only to remain Bartholomae. Although agency for men, regardless of how "simplistic," results from a struggle with contravening definitions, at least our culture confers on men the myth of that agency, of that identity, and its ensuing entitlement.

As a result, choosing first-person rhetorical may, as Bartholomae claims, arise from the desire of male students, especially those empowered by cultural and academic experiences, to evoke their socially privileged phallogocentric ideal. Therefore, (dis)missing an individual presence, a process central to Bartholomae's pedagogy, may serve a critical agenda by helping the male student unpack the cultural and discursive inscription of his rhetorical presence. But to what stalwart Marlboro-*woman*-type figure can a female writer refer with "silent allusiveness" ("Reply" 123)? To what independent, self-creative, self-expressive subjectivity can an individual woman outside the text allude as a

means of empowering her rhetorical presence? None. Because of their status within the cultural (and symbolic) order, women are denied a totalized self-containment characteristic of the writerly subjectivities Bartholomae describes. Women have been less defined by their sovereignty than by their relatedness, their negation of the material and rhetorical "I." Instead of control and mastery, a woman in Western culture is trained to become what Virginia Woolf calls the angel in the house: "in short she [is] so constituted that she never ha[s] a mind or wish of her own, but prefer[s] to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others" ("Professions" 278). Culturally, a woman is encouraged to justify her existence by directing her actions always toward an other (see Belenky et al.; Gilligan). Her agency, the ability to make choices and act in situations, is located in others (Hoagland 246). As a result, women frequently find themselves *refused* linguistic representation when they attempt to speak as women. Instead, they are reduced to speaking through their bodies, the only discourse from which they have not been (dis)missed. As Susan Bordo argues, a woman's battle with the cultural abnegation of her authority and the cultural insistence on an identity that realizes itself only when nested within an other sometimes can be manifested through the symbolism of the body. Physical disorders such as anorexia and agoraphobia constitute a "self-repudiating form of feminine discourse in which the body signifies *what social conditions make it impossible to state linguistically*" (Hunter qtd. in Bordo 20, my emphasis). Through anorexia women reduce the physical space they inhabit, feeding others while they starve themselves; through agoraphobia they reduce their spatial and social mobility, losing whatever voice they had in social discourse outside the home. For men, optioning the rhetorical "I" may be an open, uncontested field motivated by the desire to evoke the phallogocentric ideal. But for women, their cultural placement within the symbolic order both restricts their right to speak and skews their options.

Even when essaying linguistic rather than corporeal expression, women are moved to evoke the rhetorical first person for reasons and in ways that may differ radically from those of a man. Men can act simply for the sake of the act, John Berger argues in *Ways of Seeing* (47). But women, who assign themselves an identity on the basis of how they see themselves being seen by others—especially by men—act to be watched (47). Therefore, taking the stance of first-person rhetorical for women renders them doubly vulnerable. Such a move requires them to risk exposure as an agent *acting for self*, a culturally forbidden role, and requires them to watch their own vulnerability. Feminine material and rhetorical subjectivities are less a manifestation of an "open field" than a "dramatiz[ation] of the fundamental alterity and nonpresence of the subject, even as it asserts itself discursively and strives toward an always impossible

self-possession" (Stanton qtd. in Sivert 58). For many women, enacting a rhetorical "I" represents a struggle among identities conflicting on a variety of material levels and reflects threads and lifelines that issue from and reach toward others (58). "By this token, this 'I' represent[s] a *denial* of a notion essential to the phallogocentric order: the totalized self-contained subject present to itself" (58, my emphasis).

Within this material context, so different from that of a man who possesses at least the illusion of power and authority, a woman's motivation for choosing first-person rhetorical or choosing expressive elements as rhetorical tropes is not always congruent with that of a man. A woman's rhetorical evocation of first person, especially in a classroom situation, may in and of itself constitute an act of rebellion, an act of selfishness. It thrusts the writer forward and authorizes her agency to speak with something other and more than her body. Rhetorical "I" stakes out territory and asserts the right to a position, to a discursive room of one's own. Such an act arises out of resistance to material forces which a (dis)missive pedagogy fails to consider because it (dis)misses from consideration the author as an individual outside the text. (Dis)missing that "I" may (dis)miss a woman writer's move to identity and cast feminine consciousness back into silence. While this silence may be another move to resistance, ultimately it is a negative silence that provides only passive resistance. Such silent resistance may be necessary for survival, but it is not one that can effect change in material conditions or effect a heterophonic discourse, one that sings with multiple voices. In *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*, Bartholomae cites the necessity of drawing students out of a silence that denies them authority and power. By automatically challenging first-person material, he may be imposing a silence, especially on women. (Dis)missing material subjectivities negates the struggle outside the text and judges a woman writer's achievement inside the text to be of negligible value.[5]

Positioning Rhetorical Identities

Because a pedagogy of (dis)missal masks difference *outside* the text, it similarly hides the different constraints on rhetorical positioning *inside* the text. Traditionally, women have had to figure themselves inside the text as male, creating a masculinized persona or mask, while remaining female outside the text. Christine de Pizan notes that as she became an author, defending women against the misogyny of the Renaissance, she became a male: "[F]rom female I became male . . . I am a man, I do not lie, / My stride demonstrates it well enough" (qtd. in Battersby 68). As a result, a woman's use of first-person rhetorical, while it may, of course, arise from the desire to comply with the

prescribed homophonic Jimmy Stewart subjectivities and master narratives, may also arise from the desire to resist those subjectivities and hybridize heterophonic genres, voices, and (con)texts.

Publicly and academically, women have held a rhetorical position subsidiary to that of men. Within the public discourse at large, women have been historically denied the subject position and forced to engage in a process of "defeminization" through self-censorship. To gain discursive authority, they have had to cultivate the voice of masculine privilege—creating a masculine writing figure inside the text by erasing expressive elements or subjectivities that reveal their feminine signature or identity outside the text. In "From Novel to Essay," Katherine V. Snyder describes such a process in the work of Florence Nightingale by tracing Nightingale's struggles to revise an autobiographical novel into an essay "suitable" for publication. In the process of excising the female protagonist's voice (and repressing her own subjectivity as represented in that voice), Nightingale creates the mediating male voice of authority, the very voice she wishes to critique. As she shifts genre from novel to essay, she also systematically deletes elements from the novel—such as fantasies and romance—that she believes serve a survival function for disadvantaged women. However, as she crafts her essay, she extirpates those elements *because* of their feminine signature. In an effort to appeal to the predominantly male audience she envisions for her essay, she remakes herself male.

Virginia Woolf, one of the few canonized women essayists, also advises and engages in a process of defeminization. In a letter to musician-composer Ethel Smythe critical of Smythe's inclusion of autobiographical grievances in her writing, Woolf explains why she "forced" herself, despite her passions, to keep her own "figure fictitious" in her essay *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf explains to Smythe that she chose to excise autobiographical elements from *Room* for fear of those readers "who will read you and go away and rejoice . . . because they prove once more how vain, how personal, so they will say, rubbing their hands with glee, women always are; I can hear them as I write" (Letters 195). By deliberately expunging all evidence of her own subjectivity—a literary pose Woolf felt all modern writers should strike in order to distance themselves from realists ("Modern Fiction")—she represents herself in the universal/normative voice, the voice of the assumed author. But that voice is traditionally (perhaps always) constructed as male.[6] Thus, she barters her feminine identity, Tuzyline Jita Allan contends, to prove that she is as good as any man, inadvertently writing as a male regardless of her subject matter. For this reason, Ruth Ellen Boetcher Joeres and Elizabeth Mittman can argue that Woolf, although a woman, is anthologized because she simply becomes another man (14).

The necessity for a rhetorical process of defeminization is even more acute in an androcentric academy where a particular view of reason reigns supreme. The "patriarchal procession" of scholarship, of scholarly discourse, Mary Daly writes, is a metaritual that erases women, enforcing the rhetorical muteness women have contended with historically (315). Influenced by Cartesian rationalism and Baconian empiricism, the academic identity, especially in the sciences, is conceived as neutral, detached, and objective. Reason or data speak, not humans. A scholar remains emotionally untouched by his observations and is thus better able to control both the observations and the object of his observations. The conspicuous avoidance of first-person usage in the physical sciences and social sciences rhetorically marks the absence of that singular identity or subjectivity. But that absence merely signifies the inscription of a particular kind of subjectivity: a normative male subjectivity. As Jane Flax explains in "Responsibility without Grounds," reason historically has been normed as male; therefore, male reasoning, not female reasoning (if such an "oxymoronic thing" can even exist), is considered objective and neutral. Reason does not speak through the textual lacunae; men speak, the father speaks. As a result, Flax argues, "[t]o the extent that women can be like men, to the extent we can transcend or control the unique (relative to men) aspects of female bodies, then we, too, can be producers of rational knowledge" (159). But to be knowledge producers, even suspect ones, women have to be like men, think like men, speak like men. They must defeminize *inside* the text.

Even within the humanities, where the first-person rhetorical acquires a certain cachet, novice female writers quickly learn they are most secure and credible when their gendered subjectivity is least evident rhetorically. However, men, because they trace their essayistic heritage both to the formal essays of Bacon and the familiar essays of Montaigne, can display discursively characteristics that within the past three hundred years have been labeled "feminine" or expressive. Beginning with the familiar essays by Montaigne that blur the separation between the public and the private, the patrilineal essayistic tradition displaces the feminine by coopting it as a masculine rhetorical strategy (Snyder).[7] Thus, in a fascinating process of prestidigitation, men have had neither to defeminize nor demasculinize. Blessed by cultural privilege, men hesitate less to claim the autobiographical voice Woolf and other academic women fear will gain them only disapprobation or condemnation in their writing because for men the rhetorical move to the autobiographical, to the personal, has not been viewed as trespass but as male prerogative. This is the "particularly privileged sensibility" ("Reply" 123) Bartholomae condemns but also taps in his first-person essays which include elements of the personal (see "The Tidy House"). On the other hand, trained for success in the academy and cursed by

(dis)missal, women have less rhetorical latitude, less privileged sensibility. The fear of being read as "woman" bars them from choosing essayistic forms where authorial subjectivity and the textual use of first person possess validity. Rhetorically, men are protected by their gender; women are made vulnerable by theirs.

The rhetorical and conceptual compromises women endure are compounded by a composition class that requires students to produce traditional academic prose, for they are then constrained to assume—regardless of gender—traditional male subjectivity. Such is the conundrum presented by Bartholomae, who privileges the acquisition of academic discourse in composition classrooms. As asserted in "Writing with Teachers," as well as in *Ways of Reading*, *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*, and "Inventing the University," he emphasizes academic writing as the "form or motive to be taught/examined" ("Writing with Teachers" 63). For Bartholomae, academic discourse involves all writing, but especially that which honors the stylistic conventions and intellectual reasoning common to members of the academy in general (see *Facts*). Unfortunately, academic discourse so conceptualized requires the rhetor to figure herself as the normative male. Women in a composition classroom devoted to the acquisition of academic discourses are explicitly required to defeminize and speak the speech of the warranting male voice. As Bartholomae asserts in "Inventing the University," student writers (perhaps, especially, women writers?) inexperienced with the tropes and thinking required to produce scholarly texts may well have to "crudely mimic the 'distinctive register' of academic discourse," which means mimicking the culturally legitimated male voice (162). In "Writing Assignment" Bartholomae notes that a student "must become like us [the universal first-person plural, constructed masculine]. . . . He must know what we know, talk like we talk" (300). *She* must do so as well.

The tyranny of *must* is further underscored by the erotics of the classroom in which the cultural-material positioning of women again militates against their ability to resist the implicit demand to defeminize. A factor of any critical pedagogy, but one that many scholar-teachers seem to ignore, is the contextual implications of one's own gendered identity, particularly the metalinguistic control exercised by the male teacher over his female students in any academic situation. Meaning is not merely linguistic. As Mary Ann Cain argues, both linguistic and metalinguistic forces conspire to create a socially constructed meaning, and those metalinguistic forces include such things as "habits, myths, rituals, practices, historical and social processes" (10). The cultural protocols of male-female relationships—the metalinguistic contributions to socially constructed meaning—serve as a vital component in the composition classroom by contextualizing the textual. An array of social relationships between men and

women are already in place and instantiated before students walk into the classrooms. And power is implicated in those social relationships as in all social relationships. That power, exercised by men in the culture at large, replays itself in the classroom. Female students commonly respond to the classroom environment dominated by a male teacher by adapting social strategies they have developed outside of the classroom. One such strategy typical of women is that of attentiveness, employed as a survival mechanism by members of many subordinate social groups. Attentiveness, Joan Tronto explains, evolves out of the "necessity to anticipate the wishes of one's superiors" (184). To that end, members of subordinate groups "learn" the mind set of the dominant members as a means to understand (and meet) expectations concerning their behavior, role identification, and self-representation.

Attentiveness works against women in a classroom organized by a male teacher. Here, women students may attend to the orientation of the authority figure and subordinate their identities, refashioning them to fulfill the wishes of that figure, just as they tend to do within society at large. As a result, rather than engaging in any sort of "resistance," they may, in fact, reinscribe the oppressed behavior they have learned through social relationships outside of the academy. When a male teacher (dis)misses any presence they might have struggled to inscribe rhetorically, women may accept such (dis)missal, erasing themselves in order to speak as the male authority figure urges them to speak. In an odd paradoxical move, their material status as feminine requires that women delete evidence of that status rhetorically; they must and will defeminize. Anais Nin poignantly charts the paradoxes that face many women writers: "I tried to efface my creation with a sponge, to drown my creation because my concept of devotion and the roles I had to play clashed with my creative self" (qtd. in Battersby 45).

In addition to the authority traditionally held by men in our culture, and which women are trained to honor, the classroom—especially a composition classroom that requires that writers made themselves vulnerable—functions as a crucible intensifying normal social dynamics. What can evolve is a kind of eroticism or erotic desire coloring student-teacher relationships. Jane Gallop in *Thinking Through the Body* calls teacher-students relationships a reenactment of the oedipal desire: the daughter's desire for the father (or in a negative oedipal move the son's desire for the father). Roger L. Simon in "Face to Face with Alterity: Postmodern Jewish Identity and the Eros of Pedagogy" explains that "the context for learning will be erotic where education has been historically and institutionally framed to proceed through intimate interactions and structural dependencies" (100). Although Simon focuses specifically on the crucible of graduate studies, these same pedagogical features mark the intimacy and

dependency of an undergraduate composition classroom. Emotion and desire intertwine with teaching and learning, Simon says. This eroticism functions two ways. Teachers eroticize students, engaging in processes that render the student as a source of possible pleasure. Students eroticize teachers, creating a "cathexis" that casts the teacher as object of desire (99). This is not to suggest that sexual impropriety or harassment runs rampant in writing classrooms, although both can be real threats in any intense academic situation (see Brodkey and Fine). Pedagogical eros is not predominantly embodied sexuality (although Gallop may disagree), but neither is it desexualized (see Rouse). Instead, pedagogical eros reflects the pleasure and pain of the effort after mastery, the effort to nurture another's transformation, to "teach me, only teach, Love! As I ought" (Browning). Most academics probably share poignant memories of the feelings they experienced toward their first writing teacher, tutor, dissertation chair, or mentor. Such memories, colored by the eroticism of learning, add passion and depth to academic identities, and contribute to a commitment to higher education. But, Simon argues, "as a teacher, it is important to acknowledge one's eroticism, to realize that one's actions matter to students" (99).

What is problematic for female students of male teachers, and what a (dis)missive pedagogy erases, is that once in the throes of even a latent passion, female students tend to enact protocols of behavior and assumptions they have developed within heterosexual relationships outside of the classroom. Marilyn Frye points out in "Willful Virgin or Do You Have to Be a Lesbian to Be a Feminist?" that heterosexuality and its demands on identity and agency jeopardize a woman's ability to function as or aspire to anything other than her construction and enactment of the male fantasy:

> [heterosexuality] glues each adult woman to one or more men . . . making her, willy nilly, a supporter of whatever politic those men adhere to, though she has little or no part in shaping or defining that politic, regardless of whether that politic is liberatory or oppressive, and regardless of whether it is liberatory for women. (130-31)

Cued by heterosexual desire to please as a means of being regarded as pleasing, female students may subordinate whatever budding agenda they have as writers and reinscribe identities and agendas to align with that of the "beloved." An agenda of (dis)missal for women may mean a (dis)missal of their fledging attempts to gender an identity as something other than the fantasy figure (or the good son) of professorial projection. Such a tension is reflected in the life of Anais Nin. She write in her journal:

> To create seemed such an assertion of the strongest part of me that I would no longer be able to give all those I love the feeling of their being strong, and they would love me less. / . . . I have made myself less powerful, have concealed my power. / . . . I have crippled myself. / Dreams of Chinese women with bound feet. (qtd. in Battersby 45)

Guided by the protocols of behavior that constitute their feminine status without our culture, women are moved to defeminize rhetorically as a means to remain constituted feminine materially.

What all these myriad contradictions underscore is that men and women differ materially and rhetorically—inside *and* outside the text. But a (dis)missive pedagogy tends to ignore that fact, addressing resistance as if it were the same process with the same outcomes for men and women, regardless of cultural and pedagogical contexts. Decisions about resistance for women must be made within the concrete circumstances of students' lives and texts. Perhaps, as philosopher Jean Grimshaw suggests, failure to consider women's material and rhetorical positioning within pedagogy at large reflects an implicit agenda to control female resistance, to direct it into channels or practices deemed acceptable by the powerful or dominant group. Thus, when women in a composition classroom choose first-person rhetorical, especially one that "speaks" with the material details of a life, merging public and private spheres, they may already be writing against the grain, against the privileged sensibility. They may be struggling to become a subject by resisting rhetorically prescribed subjectivities. For women writers, the choice of that first-person rhetorical may not reflect a patriarchal desire to "preserve the author" but a feminist desire to resist that construction, "to cross, crisscross, doublecross that 'I' in order to move from silence into self-narrative," a narrative that blends and extends voices (Smith 4). Rather than bartering away or self-censoring their femininity, they may inscribe "I" to affirm the value and worth of subjectivities that have been rhetorically erased. Such a move, then, arises out of different roots and aims at different rhetorical goals than a similar move made by a male writer. It may be, in fact, already a species of rhetorical resistance. (Dis)missing it (dis)misses the emancipatory motive behind it and ignores the systems of constraints already functioning to erase the feminine writing figure.

Resisting Identities

So what kind of resistance should be fostered, one that disadvantages neither men nor women in all their myriad evocations? What kind of writing

should be privileged? I do not believe the answer lies in (dis)missing either textual or material presence, especially for women or members of any marginalized group. "Women," Celeste Schenck suggests, "never having achieved the self-possession of post-Cartesian subjects, do not have the luxury of 'flirting with escape from identity,' which the deconstructed subject may enjoy" (qtd. in Snyder 25).

The primary goal of writing pedagogy should not be simply to erase individual or rhetorical presence. After all, the "Steve" who Bartholomae reduces to a textual trope in "Reply to Stephen North" continues to agitate for attention outside the text, just as a "David" lurks behind and the within the rhetorical Bartholomae I constructed here (see Malinowitz). Instead, the primary goal of writing pedagogy should be to create then interrogate that subjectivity, to foster an awareness of conflicted identities, ideologies, and images—personal, professional, material, and textual—at play in the construction of the rhetorical "I." In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci writes about the necessity of interrogation in reality construction. Gramsci contrasts a fragmented, episodic view of the world with one that is critical and coherent. Contradictions, conflicts, disjunctions dominate the former, and the individual human being simply negotiates a livable, seemingly shared view of the world on a moment-to-moment basis, condemned to live always in the present. On the other hand, a coherent concept of the world—one that promotes agency because the individual can construct a past and a future—arises out of questioning the contradictions and critically assessing the conflicts between hegemony and lived experience. Such self-understanding, Gramsci says, is not a result of developing a spontaneous or real self; it is the result of developing a sensitivity to the traces or sedimentations deposited by history and of the potential ways to resolve the contradictions in life between intellectual choice and conduct. Advocating a politics of coherent resistance, Gramsci claims that people need to move toward greater unity of thought and action by making sense of life in a more critical and coherent way (324-27).

In a composition classroom founded on this concept of interrogation, men and women emphasize rather than (dis)miss the "I." They identify and critique the conflicts and inconsistencies immanent within any assumption (implicit or explicit) of their first-person rhetorical. People, torn by the conflicts between lived experience and hegemony, never completely experience themselves in terms of their ideology. They are not pliantly "produced" by their texts, as Bartholomae argues ("Reply" 123). Their "good sense"—the materiality of living in specific circumstances at specific times outside the text—prevents them, Gramsci says, from defining themselves hegemonically. First-person rhetorical is a site where lived experience and dominant ideologies struggle.

Therefore, a critical pedagogy that envisions an interrogatory classroom needs to become a locale where the struggles of lived experience, ideology, and discursive practices are reciprocally evoked and examined. The pedagogical focus is on the conjunction between the manifestation of the textual "I"—with all the intellectual and emotional baggage and dominant ideologies hidden within that single letter—and the living reality of a (con)textual "I," a physical person in specific material circumstances. It is a pedagogy for both inside and outside the text. From this perspective, when female and male students tap "I" as a rhetorical strategy, they are simultaneously required to confront and to question the multiple image-texts sustaining that (con)textual "I." The use of first-person singular is not denigrated; the means by which writers negotiate the image-texts of that first person are critiqued.

But interrogation, Gramsci says, yields more that self-understanding or an agency engendered by a coherent world view; it necessitates the creation of new social forms and practices, as in the feminist reconstruction of power, which redefines power as something other than manipulation or coercion hierarchically situated. An interrogatory praxis in the composition classroom necessitates the evolution of new discursive forms and the transformation of standard academic prose. Focusing on interrogation collapses the artificial boundaries traditionally separating the inside from the outside of the text. Personal, public, fictional, implied, and evoked realities blur, requiring a discursive conversion that similarly blurs the division between private and political. An interrogatory composition classroom elicits hybridized writing that reflects the interpenetration of lived experience and hegemony, of personal and political. As reflected in the essays of Susan Griffin, Adrienne Rich, Alice Walker, and Gloria Anzaldua, the political—previously so trivialized and limited as to exclude the private domestic sphere "where we lie down with unsanctioned lovers"—expands to include the "moment when feeling enters the body" (Rich 23-24). Within an interrogatory discourse, people have the opportunity to write as Rich believes they should—as if their lives depended on it, "putting up there in public words [they] have dredged up, sieved up from dreams, from behind screens, memories, out of silence—words [they] have dreaded and needed in order to know [they] exist" (Rich 33). Interrogating, rather than (dis)missing the "I," may enable all of us—student and teacher—to write as if our lives, not just our professional identities, depended on it.

The latent androcentric orientation in a pedagogy of (dis)missal and the limitations of that orientation suggest the scrutiny that we must pay to the various manifestations of composition pedagogy. We must bring to bear on praxis the same critical vision we train on culture, whether the praxis is Marxist, postmodern, Romantic, critical, liberatory, or liberal humanistic. We must strive

to interrogate any academic presence—teasing out the contradictions between intellectual choice and conduct—perhaps creating in the process a heterophonic pedagogy and discourse that orchestrates voices, authorities, texts, and contexts, mixing each into a third "I," neither material nor rhetorical, but both simultaneously.

Notes

[1] I thank Sue Hum, Nancy Myers, Linda Calendrillo, and Randall Roorda for their careful responses to drafts of this essay. I also thank *RR* peer reviewers Lynn Bloom and John Trimbur for their insightful suggestions for revisions. The strengths of the essay belong to them; the weaknesses, unfortunately, remain mine.

[2] I am using gendered terms—such as *feminine* and *masculine*—to refer to fuzzy categories that reflect certain characteristics and intellectual orientations our culture has labeled male or masculine, female or feminine. A difficulty in writing or speaking about gender is that of essentializing feminine and masculine perspectives and identities, treating a gendered identity as if it were a "thing in itself" rather than a culturally constructed designation constantly in flux and subject to the reciprocal influences of age, class, race, ethnicity, geographical placement, etc. Neither masculine nor feminine constitutes a fixed and unchanging categorical identity, although as Diana Fuss and others have argued persuasively, essentializing in and of itself is not necessarily bad. The crucial point is not *that* essentialism occurs within the discourse but *how* it occurs (see also Teresa de Lauretis). So the extent to which I imply that an identifiable "masculine" or "feminine" position exists, both rhetorically and culturally, I court essentialism. The extent to which I imply that the material-cultural-discursive terms of that position shift, I court anti-essentialism.

[3] Kelly Belanger in "Gender and Teaching Academic Discourse" analyzes the ways in which ten teachers talk about using *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts* in their classrooms, claiming that teachers classified "masculine" through self-descriptions emphasized "masculinist" markers in the textbook, while those classified "feminine" focused on "feminist" markers. Finally, a group she labels *androgynous* reshaped *Facts* and created a unclassifiable pedagogy. Belanger focuses her examination of praxis on teachers' descriptions of classroom approaches; she does not interrogate the theoretical assumptions upon which that pedagogy is grounded, particularly the nature of subjectivity and its rhetorical/material possibilities. Thus Belanger does not address specifically the limits placed on pedagogical interpretation by those b(l)inding assumptions.

[4] It also assumes that men are similarly situated, unmarked by age, class, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity. While all men, when compared to women, retain a privileged position within our culture, not all men retain the same degree of privilege. However, I am most concerned in this essay with teasing out and examining the impact of the elisions of gendered (as opposed or in addition to other) differences in a pedagogy of (dis)missal.

[5] In one of their unsigned but separately written conclusions to "Gendership and the Miswriting of Students," Janis or Richard H. Haswell writes that our discipline's and our individual failure to acknowledge that gender does make a difference is a "failure of imagination" (248). The challenge is to imagine responses that allow "gendership its own play . . . free[ing] students to make deliberate choices about how they want to shape their authorial and gendered presence in their writing and [freeing] teaching from deceiving themselves and their students that they are not affected by that presence" (248).

[6] Woolf urges women to kill the angel of the house, "else she [will] pluck the heart out of [your] writing" ("Professions" 279). Without some sort of metaphorical violence, she argues, women cannot free themselves from cultural prohibitions and realize their potential as writers (or as writing

figures); instead, "they must conciliate, they must—to put it bluntly—tell lies if they are to succeed" (279). In her last short story "The Legacy," Woolf recreates a metaphorical act of violence when Angela, a "perfect" mother and wife, kills herself after the suicide of the man she loves. For Woolf her metaphorical murder is not an act of defeminization but one of survival, for the angel of the house will prevent a woman writer from tackling the "hard" questions. Other feminists, however, believe that the fractured, coextensive nature of the angel may be a significant criterion in differentiating the rhetorical subjectivities of women writers from those of men and in writing with(in) something other than male-marked forms. The perspective of the angel also allows women to recast what constitutes the "hard" questions.

[7] Christine Battersby in *Gender and Genius* also argues that at least since the dominance of Romantic aesthetics, genius—like the muses figured feminine—inspires and is encompassed only by men. Women artists are viewed as "unnatural women. A woman can have a powerful imagination only by being unsexed: by being a freak of nature; a kind of mental hermaphrodite" (79). Thus, male artists by right of their genius can experience and reflect qualities culturally marked feminine, but women cannot.

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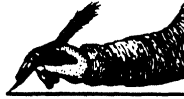

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Susan McLeod and Gary Tate are the featured speakers for the 5th Spilman Symposium on Issues in Teaching Writing, presented by the Virginia Military Institute, November 7, 1998. The topic for this year's meeting is *After First-Year Composition: The Role of Writing in the Academy.* Faculty from across the disciplines are welcome. Registration is limited. For information contact Robert L. McDonald, Department of English & Fine Arts, VMI, Lexington, VA 24450 or e-mail mcdonaldrl@vmi.edu