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Dramatism, Feminine Style and Women's Weblogs: Women Speaking in the E-Public

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DRAMATISM, FEMININE STYLE AND WOMEN'S WEBLOGS:
WOMEN SPEAKING IN THE E-PUBLIC

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Communication
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Communication

By
Misty S. York

August 2005

DRAMATISM, FEMININE STYLE & WOMEN'S WEBLOGS:

WOMEN SPEAKING IN THE E-PUBLIC

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89 Pages

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During the 2004 election cycle, online communication technologies emerged as a legitimate influence on political participation and strategy. Weblogs (blogs) played a pivotal role in the Internet's unprecedented sway. This research combined Burke's (1969) dramatism with Campbell's (1989) feminine style to describe and critique three women's political blogs. The pentad highlighted an argument derived from each blogger's master narrative, while feminine style analysis revealed subtle differences among the women's persuasive tactics.

Chapter 1

Introduction

For hundreds of years, page-a-day diaries have provided their owners a repository for their most intimate thoughts. In these private documents, owners recorded their personal experiences for, as Harrison (2003) put it, the self: an audience of one. In the meantime, automated printing had set the stage for a wholly different record of human events: mass communication. Mass-produced newspapers and pamphlets connected anyone who could cover the expenses to an outside audience of readers. As time went on, more media emerged and the cost of reaching the public rose, until only an elite few could afford to reach an audience. At the turn of the 21st Century, consolidation has significantly reduced the number and diversity of content creators. Centrally controlled mass media enforce a strict divide between producers and consumers of discourse (Gillmor, 2004).

However, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has also emerged, creating public media in which participants act both as senders and receivers in individualized contexts (Jaffe, Lee, Huang, & Oshagan, 1999). Among the fastest-growing types of CMC are *web logs*, more commonly known as *blogs*: personal journals available on the World Wide Web. Blogs are websites that contain periodic updates from one or more writers, generally organized in reverse chronological order (Blood, 2002; Morgan, 2004; Trammel, 2004). The Web space and software that powers them is widely available on

the Internet at no cost, through services such as Blogger and Typepad. By 2004, the resources and technical expertise necessary to operate web-based e-mail was sufficient to set up a free blog. These developments have led to a 21st-Century resurgence and convergence of diary keeping and mass communication; blogs connect a single voice to a global audience.

As private documents, the diaries of women have served as a resource for uncovering women's experiences in history, since they were not often represented in mainstream, typically male-dominated accounts (e.g. Acton, 1999; Harrison, 2003; Johnson, 2004). The owners' daily reflections help contemporary scholars reconstruct our understanding of what life was like in the past. These efforts provide a touchstone for this investigation. If feminist historians rely on personal journals as an alternative account of past events, then feminist communication scholars should examine their present-day correlates, as an alternative account of *current* events. Specifically, in this study I will describe and critique selected women's political blogs as archives of public conversations about political issues.

I chose Kenneth Burke's (1969) dramatistic pentad as a lens through which to describe each woman's rhetorical action. Pentadic analysis of each blog's predominant narrative will reveal its worldview and set the stage for my second layer of analysis, for which I chose Karlyn Cohrs Campbell's (1989) model of feminine style as a research tool. Campbell's tenets have described women's political discourse in several communication contexts (e.g., Blankenship & Robson, 1995; Hayden, 1997; Zurakowski, 1994), and in this study, I will critique the degree to which each blog conforms to

feminine style's principles. Finally I will attempt to relate adherence to feminine style to the type of rhetorical action revealed in the pentadic analysis.

These theoretical frameworks form the basis for a rhetorical criticism of selected women's blogs. Rhetorical criticism is an appropriate methodology, since my primary research goal is to analyze women's persuasive messages in a particular context. My approach equates one who writes a blog with one who speaks in public; the blog, then, provides an electronic public, a kind of virtual soapbox (Walker, 2005), from which the blog owner can advance a political position. However, blogs encourage audience participation to a degree unmatched in public speaking—or any other communication context. Therefore, in light of blogs' interactive features, this study also seeks ways of re-conceptualizing women's political discourse as it pertains specifically to an interactive, computer-mediated environment.

Investigating women's political blogs will advance scholarship in CMC and women's political communication. Blogs have received sparse academic attention as a communication technology: a search of the ComAbstracts database produced only one article on the subject, and ProQuest Digital Dissertations yielded six. Of these seven, only one (Trammel, 2004) addresses political blogs specifically. This study defines their distinctive features in order to establish blogs in the lexicon of CMC. Additionally, blogs have not been heretofore considered as a source of women's political discourse; therefore, this work will address that gap, since one of the goals of feminist rhetorical studies has been to extend the scope of women's persuasion research to activities and artifacts outside rhetoric's traditional parameters (Foss & Foss, 1991).

Definition of Terms

The person who adds regular updates to an online journal is known as the *blogger*. By posting to the Internet the blogger invites attention from a public of *readers*, who may take either a passive voyeuristic role and simply consume the rhetoric, or an interactive approach by clicking on the blog's *hyperlinks*. Bloggers often provide hyperlinks leading readers to the source material upon which particular posts are based, and blogs that link to a *comment function* invite readers to respond to the blogger's posts (Gillmor, 2004). In choosing to access source documents and/or make use of the comment function, readers become *interactive readers*, their role transformed from consumers of a message into participants in a dialogue. These interactions all take place within the *blogosphere*, the name bloggers use to describe all the blogs on the Web (Trammel, 2004). The primary quality that defines a blog is the presence of periodic posts. Additionally, the blogs featured in this study are all independent and powered by free software; therefore, the content is unedited and free from commercial influence. While some blogs do have corporate ties, they will not be addressed in this research.

In using the adjective *feminine*, Campbell's (1989) model refers to gender, a socially constructed symbolic system (Cohn, 1993), particular to a given time and place (Butler, 1997). Second, Campbell conceptualizes *style* as an interaction of persuasive form and content, "from which we can infer [the speaker's] epistemic stance" (Blankenship & Robson, 1995). In other words, a person's persuasive tactics tell us about the person's epistemology (Hayden, 1997). This research, then, conceptualizes *feminine style* as a collection of interdependent dimensions of discourse—evident in both form and

content—that are commonly shared by speakers who have been socialized into a feminine role.

Guiding Questions

Three guiding questions drive this research. First, what issues are the women in the sample talking about in their blogs? Second, how do the bloggers construct their arguments about the issues? Third, is there any relationship between the argument each blogger advances and the stylistic strategies she uses to advance her position? In Chapter 2, I examine previous research into women's computer-mediated communication, and review the literature dealing with feminine style and the dramatic pentad. In Chapter 3, I present my method for selecting and analyzing the data, and apply the two theoretical frameworks to my selected blogs in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I advance answers to the research questions based upon my analysis, and reflect on this research in terms of its limitations, potential applications, and suggestions for future inquiry.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Computer-mediated Communication and Women

The term *computer-mediated communication* refers to a group of technologies used to transfer and store information among interconnected computers. Jaffe et al. (1999) advanced a two-by-two framework by which to describe CMC technologies. The first dimension, synchronous/asynchronous, describes a medium's time orientation. Synchronous CMC, such as instant messenger, occurs among participants in real time, whereas asynchronous CMC technologies (e.g. online discussion boards) are characterized by a delay between responses. The second dimension highlights the number of participants a medium supports: one-to-one or many-to-many. E-mail, for example, is a one-to-one, asynchronous technology, while web based chat is many-to-many, synchronous communication. The Jaffe et al. model describes the majority of computer-mediated communication technologies, but the dimensions as outlined above fail to describe blogs specifically. My study will attempt to do exactly that, and secure the position of the blog as a unique communication medium among its computer-mediated counterparts.

With applications ranging from research to commerce to matchmaking services, CMC has become virtually inescapable. However, debate remains as to whether it represents an equalizing, unifying influence, or simply reinforces existing gender

separation. Some feminists defend the Internet's power to transcend "the dichotomous categorization male/female" and move toward "a genderless utopia" (Sunden, 2001, p. 215). The elimination of physical cues may enable greater interactional equality by obscuring the power differential among participants (Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & Sethna, 1991; Flanagin, Tiyaamornwong, O'Connor, & Seibold, 2002; Lee, 2005; Lee & Nass, 2002; Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984).

The case for increased equality among CMC participants rests on the assumption that the absence of nonverbal social cues in online environments helps reduce the risk to low-status individuals wishing to express an opinion, and "allows ideas to be evaluated in terms of their merit and worth, rather than the rank of the members" (Lee, p. 32).

Postmes, Spears, and Lea (1998) further argue that the Internet's connectivity allows its users to transcend traditional social boundaries. Put another way, women in CMC environments may enjoy greater credibility than in face-to-face communication, since their gender is less apparent in the disembodied world of cyberspace (Lee & Nass). Fox (2004) reports that women no longer constitute a minority of Internet users, and male and female undergraduates have reported similar levels of both computer skill and satisfaction (York, 2005). As personal computers approach ubiquity in homes and schools in the United States, the participation of males and females of all ages is increasing (Fox).

Online communities have offered considerable support for the equality claim associated with CMC. For example, Turner, Grube, and Meyers (2001) found that members of cancer-related listservs (i.e., groups in which members post to all other members' e-mail accounts) reported little difference between their feelings of closeness

within the online communities and their face-to-face relationships. Moreover, the sex of community members played little to no role in their ability to integrate into the support community. Task groups have demonstrated similar trends, as in Scott, Quinn, Timmerman, and Garret's (1998) investigation into Group Decision Support Systems. Their results suggested a powerful role for anonymity in promoting equality of participation.

On the other hand, critics of online technologies point to a persistent "digital divide" that has discouraged women from participating. Despite the purported democratizing effect of computer-mediated communication, and converging Internet-use rates between the sexes (Fox, 2004; Ono & Zavodny, 2003), women still struggle to establish locations of their own in cyberspace (Soukup, 1999). Women in CMC environments may feel threatened or alienated (Soukup), experience unsolicited sexual propositions, and suffer verbal harassment (Herring, 1999). Butler (1997) has proposed that gender is not determined by biological sex, but rather constructed as individuals act out certain socioculturally determined behaviors. Further, Lee and Nass (2002) suggest that in a text-only environment, "perception of the identity of interactants derives almost wholly from what and how one writes" (p. 351). If this indeed is the case, then individuals in computer-mediated interactions will carry their gendered communication behaviors into cyberspace (Soukup). Several researchers have found evidence to support this claim.

Jaffe et al. (1999) found that women in CMC environments were significantly more likely than men to choose androgynous pseudonyms in order to mask their gender identities. Such a pattern of screen-name selection points to women's desire to escape the

constraints and stereotypes associated with their sex, or “to rectify an imbalance, felt by women, of social parity when interacting in mixed-gender situations” (p. 230). The practice of selecting gender-neutral pseudonyms stretches back to the earliest days of CMC. Dickerson (2003) notes, “In the 1980’s most Internet users were men. If a woman went online, unless she took a gender-neutral screen name, she very often would be heckled and sexually harassed” (p. 435).

Evidently, the state of CMC has not undergone significant change in the past 20 years. Herring (1999) studied interactions in two mixed-sex discussion boards, and discovered that males dominated conversations in both forums, using intimidation and personal attacks against women who tried to take the floor. In all cases, the final result involved either the women’s departure from interaction or their accommodation of the men’s demands. Soukup (1999) reported a similar phenomenon, in which males engaged in competitive interaction both in a male-dominated sports-chat area, as well as in a separate forum designated as a female space. Women in the female-based chat engaged in relationship-building talk with each other, but anytime men joined the chat area they came to dominate the discourse, threatening and intimidating the women when the women rebuffed the men's requests for conversation. In response, the women in this chat area tended either to adopt a feminine, sexual, submissive role in their interactions with males, or to leave the chat altogether. Soukup notes, “even though the female chatroom was established for women, the norms of the chatroom were heavily influenced by the presence of masculine interaction patterns” (p. 175).

It is worthwhile to note that little of the research surveyed above investigated blogs specifically. Rather, the bulk of CMC research has examined discussion boards and

web-based chat. One-to-one technologies such as e-mail and instant messenger have not received as much attention, most likely because these artifacts are private and less widely available for exploration and analysis. My proposed investigation, then, will break new ground in the field of computer-mediated communication, in furthering blogs' status as a unique environment worthy of study in its own right. Specifically, the blogger's high degree of control over the discourse sets blogs apart from other public CMC formats. The nearest approximation of a blogger's control rests with a discussion board or chatroom's moderator. Moderators, while sharing a blogger's power to delete posts and ban users, do not possess the blogger's ability to set an agenda for the conversation. Rather, discussion board topics come up from the members, rather than coming down from the moderator (York, 2004).

One particular theoretical framework has ascended to explain the presence of sex discrimination in online environments, despite the absence of nonverbal cues that mark a participant male or female. The Social Identity and Deindividuation (SIDE) model asserts that in the absence of nonverbal information, communicators will form impressions of each other based upon the social categories to which other participants belong (Lea & Spears, 1991, 1992; Postmes, 1997; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1992, 1994). Postmes et al. determined that far from being a neutral technology, CMC often accentuates the influence of social boundaries. Tidwell and Walther (2002) contend that experiments seeking to support the SIDE model have measured the effects of social categories on interactants' impressions, but have not measured the degree to which those judgments were based on social category. Their research supported SIDE model predictions, and further revealed that CMC users

compensate for the lack of social cues in online media by engaging in more self-disclosure. Likewise, Hancock and Dunham (2001) found that participants in CMC formed less detailed, but more intense impressions of co-participants than the respondents in a face-to-face situation. This line of research suggests that women in CMC will not escape sex discrimination.

Thus far blogs have attracted scholarly attention as an outcropping of journalism (Gillmore, 2004; Knowlton, 2004; Matheson, 2004; Williams, 2004). Existing research points to a close, if tense, relationship between bloggers and traditional journalists (see Gillmore). Matheson (2004) argues that in adapting to the pressures of blogs' growing popularity, news texts have rearticulated both the traditional journalist's authority to report and a construction of news as a product. Bloggers tend to lack two of the key features that have long characterized the Anglo-American news form: formal training and objectivity. These deficiencies have made them a target of disparagement by the media establishment (Isaac, 2005). Blogs' tendency toward opinion, a shortcoming of the medium as it relates to journalism, is a tantalizing prospect for the rhetorical critic. Instead of constructing the blogger as a reporter, my approach conceptualizes the role of the blogger as analogous to a speaker: one who assembles evidence to present and support a claim before an audience. Walker (2005) has taken a similar tack, in calling a blog a soapbox. As a result, I sought rhetorical models for women's political speech. This inquiry led me to a body of research into the feminine style.

Feminine Style

Feminine style began with Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's surveys of feminist rhetoric (e.g. 1973; 1980; 1983; 1986; 1989; 1993; 1998). Her analysis of diverse texts from the first and second waves of feminism identified distinctive rhetorical features, resulting from women's adaptation to a unique rhetorical situation. The Western tradition of public speaking extends back to the Greek republic, a culture in which women were denied citizenship, and had no opportunities to speak before an audience. Since "the role of rhetor is gendered masculine" (1998, p. 116), women in the very act of speaking were calling into question received wisdom about women's inferiority. Campbell identified stylistic devices that emerged in response to the unique problems that arose when women took on the traditionally male role of speaker. This approach to persuasion came to be known as a feminine style.

By Campbell's reckoning, participation in public discourse was in itself a feminist act, because to be a female speaker necessarily violated traditional gender norms. As one mode of political action, feminism often encourages praxis, a concept rooted in Marxist socialist thought (Donovan, 2001). Loosely defined, praxis refers to consciousness-raising: "examining how words and actions empower all or oppress and sustain privilege for one gender and one race" (Rusch, 2004). Through this process, members of an oppressed class come to know how and why they suffer, simultaneously acquiring a stronger sense of self (Corcoran-Nantes, 2003).

Consciousness-raising inspired Campbell's framework for describing the rhetoric of the women's movement (1973). Feminist speakers faced a unique rhetorical problem. Aristotelian persuasion relies on the acceptance of a major premise in the construction of

a syllogism. However, when addressing pervasive gender inequality, feminist rhetors must call for the rejection of common cultural premises about women's inferiority. As a result, the consciousness-raising approach highlighted "affective proofs, personal testimony, participation and dialogue, self-revelation and self-criticism, the goal of autonomous decision making through self-persuasion, and the strategic use of techniques for 'violating the reality structure'" (p. 83). Through consciousness-raising, "members went from division and a sense of individual guilt and responsibility toward a recognition of their common condition and its relation to the nature of the system in which they lived" (1993, p. 157). At the heart of consciousness-raising lies the sharing of personal experience. Through self-disclosure, members of consciousness-raising groups come to realize that their encounters with oppression were not isolated incidents, but rather the result of systematic subjugation of women.

Feminine Style's Tenets

Campbell (1989) articulated a model of feminine style as a way to interpret the persuasive tactics common to feminist speech. A wide array of speakers employed specific strategies that connected to their experiences of being gendered feminine. In constructing the model for feminine style, Campbell correlated women's rhetorical strategies to the logic of craft learning, a metaphor that evokes a speaker and audience working together toward a desired outcome. Like women's experiences, "craft related skills [could not] be expressed in universal laws" (p. 13); rather, feminist discourse relied on contingency, resulting in a style favoring *personal* evidence, *inductive* structure, *peer-oriented* tone, and *empowering* goals.

Personal evidence.

The ascendance of personal experience recurs throughout Campbell's investigations into classic works of feminist discourse, from Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "The Solitude of Self" (1980) to Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" (1986). Testimonials created connections by which members of 19th Century women's societies generated arguments about the conditions of women as a group (1983). The metamorphosis of lived experience into political awareness "[transformed] women into . . . feminists willing to speak and act for social change" (p. 105). Mary Church Terrell's speech, "What It Means to Be Colored in the Capital of the United States," used examples to evoke empathy in the audience, and invited them to compare their own experiences to those presented in the narratives (1986). Ida B. Wells's "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," although conforming to a traditionally masculine style of reason, nonetheless relied heavily upon examples as evidence to support Wells's claims. In case after case, Campbell identified the use of personal testimony as a lynchpin in feminist rhetoric.

Personal examples feature in virtually all research into the feminine style research, and serve as the foundation that supports all the other tenets. In the feminine style, the anecdote supplies the evidence (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996; Scheckels 1997), drives the structure, supports a peer-oriented tone (Hayden, 1997), and empowers the audience by validating their own experiences (Hayden, 2003). In addition, reliance upon personal experience allows users of feminine style to point out disparities between commonly accepted cultural truisms and the embodied realities of everyday life. Zurakowski (1994) attests to the effectiveness of the personal anecdote in building a

grassroots abortion movement. Likewise, Sheckels (1997) highlights a preponderance of personal evidence in a debate led by women in the U.S. Senate. In a wide variety of contexts, the example serves as a specific kind of evidence that enables feminine style's other functions.

Inductive structure.

Related to feminine style's emphasis on personal anecdote is a tendency toward inductive structure, a nonlinear organization in which the central argument emerges gradually through the sharing of experiences. Griffin (1996) has conceptualized this kind of nonlinear, interdependent argument as a web, particularly evident in the speech of feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Inductive structure avoids the strategy of stating claims explicitly. Rather, the inductive approach relies on repetition: recurring themes connect the examples, inviting the audience to make inferences about the speaker's claims as her themes appear again and again (Hayden, 1999). Considering the emphasis in linear argument upon a widely accepted cultural premise, inductive logic serves a particular function in feminist speech. When arguing for the advancement of women in a patriarchal society, feminist rhetors asked their audiences to reject major cultural premises. Blankenship and Robson (1995) suggest that the inductive approach allows women's political discourse to address social problems more holistically, since arguments can build upon and modify each other.

Peer-oriented tone.

The use of examples in an inductive structure also supports a peer-oriented tone. Suzuki (2000) says, "inductive structure tends to invite audience to experience the rhetor's thought processes" (p. 192), creating a more egalitarian relationship resembling partners in discourse, rather than the hierarchy of authoritative speaker over a silent audience. Gilligan (1982) asserts, women define themselves in a context of human relationships, and seek identification through shared experience (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996). Purely peer-oriented rhetoric invites listeners to compare their own experiences to the speaker's claims (Dow & Tonn, 1993; Hayden 1997). Ruddick (1989) isolates a distinctive epistemological perspective associated with mothering, an ethic of care that emphasizes the connections among people and recognizes the value of multiple perspectives. Feminist speech constructs audience members as equal to the speaker, since its rhetorical goal is usually to inspire activism in the audience.

Empowering goals.

Personal experience empowers the audience by giving them an alternative standard for evaluating political reality (Dow & Tonn, 1993); "rather than arguing 'I think, therefore I am,' this feminist epistemology suggests 'I experience, therefore I know'" (Hayden, 1997, n.p.). Blankenship and Robson (1995) conceptualize women's political capital as "power to" rather than "power over" (p. 361). Likewise, appealing to women as capable individuals is a feature of empowering discourse (Mattina, 1994). The goal is to persuade women of their own potential as agents of change. Dow and Tonn assert, "the strategy of using concrete examples and personal experience . . . encourages

audience reliance on their own instincts and perceptions of reality, even if they dispute dominant models" (p. 291). Examples are empowering because they distribute expertise, invite audience interaction, and provide grounds on which to question authoritative claims.

Feminine Style in Politics

Other scholars have extended Campbell's work to examine women's political speech in the United States. Progressive era labor reformer Leonora O'Reilly utilized feminine style in her speeches and essays demanding better treatment of workers (Mattina, 1994). O'Reilly spoke to audiences composed mostly of women, in effort to involve them in a labor movement that had largely ignored them. Most evident in Mattina's analysis is O'Reilly's use of personal examples; her experience as a third generation working class woman served as the foundation of her expertise. Likewise, O'Reilly's speeches exhibited peer orientation, as she always referred to the women in her audiences as intelligent, capable individuals.

Surveying a variety of speeches from women in government—including campaign appearances, Congressional debate, and Congressional committee testimony—Blankenship and Robson (1995) demonstrated widespread use of feminine style among female elected and appointed officials. Of particular interest in their study is the implication that feminine style serves to re-draw the line between the traditional public and private spheres. Through the use of personal narrative and a holistic approach to policy-making, the women in Blankenship and Robson's sample demonstrated an unusually strong connection between public policy and private life.

Dow and Tonn (1993) examined several artifacts produced by former Texas Governor Anne Richards, including her 1996 keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. They determined that Richards not only made skillful use of feminine style as a persuasive strategy but also asserted that her approach encouraged an alternative mode of political judgment based upon personal experience rather than abstract principles. Specifically, Dow and Tonn extend the criterion of personal experience, to suggest that Richards' rhetoric explicitly encouraged her audience to test politicians' claims against their daily lives.

When the seven female members of the U.S. Senate contested Admiral Frank B. Kelso II's four-star retirement rank in 1993, they employed feminine style to create identification with the women Kelso's Navy had victimized at the controversial 1991 Tailhook convention, and to raise a broader question about widespread discrimination against and harassment of women (Sheckels, 1997). Further, Sheckels argues that the Senators' rhetoric subverted the Senate's traditional task-orientation. While the male Senators adopted what Sheckels called an "evidentiary approach" (p. 62) that focused specifically on the facts of Kelso's service in the Navy, the women used stories of Tailhook abuses to critique the sexist military culture to which Kelso had been party. In this study, the subversive potential of feminine style takes center stage: through the use of this specific rhetorical strategy, the women of the Senate brought to light the issue of sex discrimination, which on the surface had not been germane to a vote on one officer's retirement rank.

These studies employed a model originally tailored specifically to feminist speech, in an effort to expand scholars' understanding of women's persuasion in the

broader context of political communication. In doing so, several researchers fine-tuned Campbell's model, often including additional tenets appropriate to each situation. My examination of weblogs will likewise attempt to extend feminine style into a new context, with the intent of highlighting women's speech in a computer-mediated environment.

Feminine Style in Other Media

Thus far I have chronicled the research inspired by Campbell's model of feminine style as it has appeared in the context of public speaking. However, other researchers have likewise found evidence of feminine style in other communication contexts. Hayden (1997) found that feminine style appeared prominently in the work of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, leading to an understanding of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* as a subversive health text that called traditional medical knowledge into question. Hayden notes that Western epistemology has long claimed objectivity by privileging disembodied observation and thought, whereas the Boston Women's Health Book Collective advanced an epistemology that privileged personal experiences, in keeping with feminine style. Indeed, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* contains information about women's health from a variety of sources in a fragmented form that at times even exhibits internal inconsistency.

Suzuki (2000) used Campbell's model in conjunction with principles of high-context communication in describing the introductory essay to the women's journal *Seito*, published on September 1, 1911. An influential piece that significantly impacted the early Japanese feminist movement, Hiratsuka Raicho's work emphasized self-awareness: "the rediscovery of each woman's individuality so as to reclaim each woman's full potential or

recognize her hidden genius" (p. 188). Hiratsuka relied on her personal experience with Zen meditation as a framework for advancing her thesis. Suzuki suggests that in moving from one idea to the next using herself as an example, Hiratsuka's essay encouraged her readers to generalize, to move from the realities of one woman's existence to the condition of women in Japanese society. Further, Suzuki examines the intersection of feminine style with Hall's (1981) description of high-context communication (as cited in Suzuki). In the high-context environment, participants exchange only small amounts of information, providing only partial claims with the expectation that the audience members will complete the asserted position on their own. Suzuki asserts that the high-context system results in an inductive style of discourse, similar to that of feminine style.

Zurakowski (1994) described the role of feminine style in pamphlets and newsletters designed to build grassroots support for legal abortion in Minnesota between 1966 and 1973. The Minnesota Council for the Legal Termination of Pregnancy (MCLTP) sought to expand the organization's political base by recruiting and activating ordinary women to the cause of abortion law reform. Zurakowski tracks the evolution of MCLTP's rhetorical behaviors through three distinctive stages: professional, professional narrative, and discrimination-pragmatic. With each successive stage, MCLTP pamphlets and newsletters drew increasing numbers of women into the organization by enacting feminine style's principles of personal experience, peer orientation, and empowerment.

Some research also suggests that feminine style may be especially useful in constructing messages for television (Jamieson, 1988; Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996; Sheckels, 1997). For instance, in examining Presidential campaign films, Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles found feminine style to be dominant in the discourse of Ronald Reagan,

George H. W. Bush, Michael Dukakis, and Bill Clinton. Interesting here is the prevalence of feminine style in discourse ostensibly created by men. This phenomenon supports Campbell's early assertions that feminine style was by no means the exclusive domain of feminist speakers, but rather a device that was common to their rhetorical approaches. This line of research validates my decision to employ feminine style in a CMC context; if this style has been effective in print and televisual media, then it stands to reason that feminine style will likewise serve bloggers as rhetors.

Despite its apparent ubiquity in women's political communication, it is crucial to emphasize that feminine style is not exclusive to women, nor does masculine style belong exclusively to men. Rather, feminine style represents "a *strategic* approach for some female rhetors, not . . . an *innate* characteristic" of women's rhetoric (Dow, 1995, p. 108, emphasis in original). For example, Campbell's (1986) analysis of Ida B. Wells's 1892 speech, "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," observes that Wells did not rely upon strategies of feminine adaptation. Instead, she creates her case using traditionally masculine forms of evidence and reason. In fact, the literature also suggests that both women and men employ feminine style across multiple communication media. Such variety demonstrates feminine style's versatility, and justifies extending it into an online environment through analysis of women's blogs.

The Dramatistic Pentad

My discussion of women's blogs will also include an analysis using the dramatistic pentad. Based upon the writings of Kenneth Burke (1969), "Dramatism suggests a procedure to be followed in the development of a given calculus or

terminology” (p. 59). He labeled these terminologies “vocabularies of motive” which reveal the symbolic foundations of social and political reality. As a tool for rhetorical criticism, dramatism “explicitly focuses upon performance by demonstrating how symbolic representations, messages, are selectively conveyed to persuade an audience” (Manning, 1999, p. 286). Burke equated language with symbolic action. The relationship between verbal language and nonverbal thinking transcends representation, since the very act of naming a thing requires the use of extrinsic language to constitute its intrinsic qualities (Cralle, 2000b).

As a series of actions, then, human communication requires a constitutive, rather than representational, model of understanding. Thus Burke employs the vocabulary of theatre as a framework for describing discourse. The five elements of the pentad emerged from the theatrical context: act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose (Burke, 1969). Applying each element of the pentad to the text in question yields a framework that reveals linguistic structures and the relationships between them, and offers alternatives to privileged discourse, specifically, "the dominant scientific-technological orientation of our time and society" (Anderson & Prelli, 2001, p. 79).

Among the above pentadic terms, two warrant additional explanation: act and scene. Crable (2000b) asserts that a dramatisic act signifies more than the description of the action that transpired. Rather, Burke's (1969) conception of act shades into ontology: "In a dramatist perspective, where the connotations of 'to act' strategically overlap upon the connotations of 'to be,' action is not merely a means of doing but a way of being" (p. 310). Thus language itself is a form of conduct, a force that goes beyond merely

representing the world, to exert influence upon and within it (Cralle). Thus, to name the act is to inscribe it with meaning, and is thereby an act in itself.

In explicating scene, Burke asserts that defining its parameters determines the scope of understanding. Moreover, the process of selecting scenic circumference necessarily alters the definition of other terms. For example, "if we locate the human agent and his act in terms of a scene whose orbit is broad enough to include the concept of a supernatural Creator, we get a different kind of definition than if our location were confined to a narrower circumference that eliminated reference to the 'supernatural' as a motivating element" (1969, p. 77). Carried to its conclusion, this line of reasoning connotes a word of caution to the critic, since engaging in the act of constituting scenic scope can, in Burke's terms, deflect certain features, thereby leading us away from the very thing we seek to understand.

Burke (1969) argues that in our attempts to make sense of the world, humans necessarily engage in the attribution of motive. He asserts that in any complete statement of motive, a speaker "will offer *some kind of* answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)" (p. xv). Burke advances his framework on the grounds that these terms require little explanation. Their familiarity renders them "understandable almost at a glance" (p. xv). Further, the pentad offers manageable simplicity to the study of motives without unnecessary simplification (Cralle, 2000a). Comparing his approach to behaviorism, Burke asserts dramatism's superiority in terms of its capacity for linguistic action: that behaviorism fails to account for language use renders it inappropriate for the study of human adults (Burke, 1969). As opposed to behaviorism's simplified

explanations for human actions, dramatism allows, even welcomes, ambiguity; in doing so, it provides a more complete representation of its subject.

Further acknowledging the inherent ambiguity in motives, Burke explores the implications of interaction among the five terms. By pairing the terms in different combinations, or ratios, Burke writes, "the Grammatical forms can be considered in their relations to one another, over and above the relations prevailing among the many different particulars that may be subsumed under them" (p. 263). Burke recognizes all twenty possible interactions, and details the process by which one term governs and mediates its partner. Anderson & Prelli (2001) also argue that the pentad's base terms rarely function independently as representations for symbolic action, so that the evolution of one term often forces changes in the others.

To illustrate dramatism's far-reaching potential for ordering human action, Burke builds a case for associating each of several major Western philosophical approaches with a particular pentadic term. Each school allows its featured term "full expression," (p. 127), and develops vocabularies that describe the dependent terms from within the featured term's perspective. Burke orders the philosophical categories as follows:

For a featuring of *scene*, the corresponding terminology is *materialism*.

For a featuring of *agent*, the corresponding terminology is *idealism*.

For a featuring of *agency*, the corresponding terminology is *pragmatism*.

For a featuring of *purpose*, the corresponding terminology is *mysticism*.

For a featuring of *act*, the corresponding terminology is *realism*. (p. 127)

Crable (2000a) interprets these associations as evidence for dramatism's ascendance as "*the most complete approach to the study of motives*" (p. 329). Burke places competing

philosophies within the framework of dramatism, explaining their respective logics in a way that none of them can account for dramatism. From this perspective, the pentad serves as a tool for metatheorizing. Indeed, Burke uses dramatism to order behaviorism (1969), scientism (1978), and Freudian psychoanalysis (1984).

As a tool for rhetorical analysis, pentadic criticism highlights the relationship between those vocabularies that dominate a discourse, and those that depend upon or exist within the perspective of another (Rushing, 1986). Maslowski (2004), for example, found scene to be the featured term in Thomas Paine's Revolutionary War pamphlet, *The Crisis No. I*. Rather than downplaying patriot losses and conflict between rebels and loyalists, Paine emphasized the chaotic, confusing, and conflicted scene as all the more reason to resist the British. Paine encouraged his readers to face the scene, and re-evaluate their roles in the conflict in those terms.

The pentad uncovers clues about the speaker's perception of reality (and, by extension, his or her understanding of human motives). Interpreting these clues requires identification of what Burke (1969) calls the featured pentadic term, a master term to which all others are reduced, or from which all others are deduced. Birdsell (1987) describes the featured or root term as the one through which "the worldview or essence of [a philosophical] school can be summed up" (Birdsell, 1987, p. 274). Thus, examining the relative importance of each pentadic element allows the critic to make inferences about the speaker's worldview, and to determine what worldview the speaker hopes to instill in his or her audience (Ling, 1970).

Dramatism and Worldview

My primary interest in the pentad lies with its ability to draw out the dominant worldview within a text. For example, Ling (1970) used Burke's methodology to analyze Senator Edward Kennedy's July 25, 1969 address to his constituents in Massachusetts. Ling notes: "the speech functioned to minimize Kennedy's responsibility for his actions after the death of Miss [Mary Jo] Kopechne," although this conclusion lay "in direct antithesis of statements made by Kennedy during the speech" (p. 85). Pentadic analysis reveals that despite Kennedy's statements of culpability for Kopechne's death, his speech constructed an alternative world in which the tragedy and its repercussions were wholly out of the Senator's hands. Kennedy's remarks disempowered him as an agent in two ways. In the first half of his speech, he portrayed himself as a helpless victim at the mercy of a hostile scene during the events of July 18, 1969. In the latter half, he shifts responsibility for his actions from himself to the voters of Massachusetts. Here, the pentad uncovers an implied worldview that directly contradicts the one explicitly stated.

Manning (1999) demonstrates how analyzing a culture's artifacts can provide clues about the culture's worldview, in employing the pentad to investigate high-risk narratives in bestselling books (stories about human beings facing extreme circumstances, such as *The Perfect Storm*). These texts prominently feature act and scene, exhibit ambivalence toward agency, and emphasize certain agents while downplaying others. Purpose relates to the agents' morality: camaraderie and self-determination reflect the high ground, while pursuit of wealth embodies the darker side of risky behavior. Ultimately, Manning argues, pentadic analysis reveals how the culture's worldview plays

out in popular adventure books, in particular in our ambivalence about wealth and technology.

Terminological Shifts

In addition to uncovering clues about the rhetor's worldview, pentadic analysis also allows the critic to identify shifts within a text. As the drama unfolds, the featured or governing term might change (Birdsell, 1987; Newberry, 2002), or terms might take on new meanings (Edwards, 1998; Lule, 1993; Rushing, 1986). Several researchers have explored these phenomena.

Shift in featured term.

Birdsell's (1987) analysis of Ronald Reagan's nationally televised foreign policy address of October 27, 1983, revealed a shift in the featured term. Reagan began by addressing the loss of American life to a suicide bombing in Beirut, Lebanon, with a scene-dominant view of the tragedy. In the second half of his speech, Reagan's emphasis on scene gives way to an ascendant agent in his account of the U.S. military's invasion of Grenada. The shift allowed Reagan to advance a position of unity against Soviet corruption, and rhetorically affirm United States military might.

The featured term also changed during the sex tape scandal surrounding R&B star Robert "R." Kelly (Newberry, 2002). Between December 2000 and October 2002, three entertainment reporters at the *Chicago Sun-Times* published regular accounts of Kelly's sexual relationships with underage girls. However, public opinion did not turn against the singer until February 2002, when the *Sun-Times* reported on a videotape, allegedly of

Kelly and a minor engaged in sex acts. Dramatism provided a rationale for the downturn despite the singer's continued denials: by focusing on the videotape the reporters had shifted their featured term from agent to agency. At the same time, Kelly's history of alleged misconduct transformed from individual acts into a suspicious scene. The reshuffled pentadic hierarchy elevated the three reporters' exposé into a national scandal.

Redefinition of term(s).

Even when the featured term does not change, terms commonly take on new meanings as a drama unfolds. Lule (1993) demonstrated this kind of shift in the *New York Times*. In June 1985, hijackers took control of TWA Flight 847, demanding that Israel release some 700 prisoners. They severely beat and killed U.S. Navy diver Robert Dean Stethem, a passenger on the flight, and dropped his body onto the runway in Beirut. Lule asserted that Stethem never functioned as an agent in the coverage, despite his elevation to the status of national hero. Rather, during the 17-day hostage crisis, news reports constructed Stethem first as terrorist agency, and later as government purpose. Reports explicitly called Stethem a hero, while President Reagan vowed to hold his "murderers" accountable (p. 36). The crisis illustrates the pentad's dynamism and ability to account for changing speech.

Rushing (1986) investigated the "New Frontier" as an evolution of American frontier mythology that relocates the mythological scene from land to space. Burke's methodology provided a framework for answering questions about how "changes in one element affect the mythic whole" (p. 269). Analyzing seven space-themed films depicted the frontier myth's evolution from land to space, Rushing asserted that redefinition of one

pentadic term throws the entire myth out of alignment, forcing redefinition of the others. For example, the Old West's aloof, lonesome hero gives way to the space frontier's community-oriented hero. Here the pentad not only highlights the changing meanings but also reveals how a change in one term applies pressure to the others.

Clearly, the reach of Burke's dramatisic pentad has been broad and deep. Whether applied to explicitly persuasive (e.g., Anderson & Prelli, 2001; Birdsell, 1987; Maslowski, 2004), or supposedly expository texts (e.g., Edwards, 1998; Manning, 1999; Lule, 1993), pentadic ratio analysis draws to the foreground those qualities on which a text hinges. By identifying a rhetor's featured term, the critic can gauge the effectiveness of an argument, while peering into the arguer's view of the world. At the same time, dramatisic analysis highlights those instances in which the pentadic terms and relationships change and describes how those changes impact the discourse. My research attempts to determine whether differences in worldview relate to differences in rhetorical style, and whether a shift in pentadic terms may alter the persuader's style.

In this chapter I have examined past research into computer mediated communication and women, Campbell's model of feminine style, and Burke's dramatisic pentad. These readings provide the foundation for the next chapter, in which I will lay out an analytical procedure for examining selected women's blogs through both theoretical lenses. I will describe the blogs in terms of dramatism, and critique them using feminine style.

Chapter 3

Method

Selection of Data

The desire to study women's persuasion in this particular context suggests specific criteria for data selection. I emphasize political blogs in this research based on the assumption that they will be more overtly persuasive than the personal varieties; I have included blogs from across the political spectrum to help determine whether ideological differences influence the persuasion's style. I selected women's blogs exclusively, in keeping with Campbell's tradition of focusing solely on women's speech. Finally, all the blogs share the characteristics of regular updates as well as a comment function.

A request for political blog directories via the search engine Google yielded the website *eTalkinghead: a Political Web Magazine*. A publication that itself resembles a blog (readers can respond to the articles via Comment function), the magazine's website hosts a listing of individuals' political blogs. Here, any blogger can add her/his site to the directory. First the blogger must choose a category: conservative, independent, liberal, libertarian, religious, etc. Then a short online form collects the blog's name, a brief description, and the web address. By requiring member bloggers to affiliate with a particular political identity, this directory's format makes possible the argument that the blogs I have selected for analysis fall all along the political spectrum. In terms of chronology, my investigation centered upon blog entries during the two weeks

surrounding 2004's election, from Tuesday, October 26 through Tuesday, November 9, 2004. In order to minimize the likelihood that any of the bloggers had commercial ties, I also sought those using a free blog-hosting site.

My next step was to browse the listings for liberal (117 listings), moderate (24 listings), and conservative (132 listings) blogs to determine which, if any, were identified as women's words. Despite men outnumbering women in all the *eTalkinghead* categories, each included at least one self-identified woman blogger who updated regularly during the target period and whose website allowed for commenting. I applied the criteria outlined above, and using a process of elimination I arrived at an appropriate pool of data for this pilot investigation: Bonnie Bucqueroux's liberal website, *Estropundit*; Roxanne's moderate domain, *Rox Populi*; and Zelda's conservative blog, *The Urban Grind*.¹ Although these three websites hardly represent all the politically vocal women inhabiting the blogosphere, investigating these arguments can provide a starting point for understanding how women use blogs as a platform for their politics.

Theoretical Underpinnings

As a rhetorical critic interested in women's political persuasion, I proposed three guiding questions. First, what issues are the women in the sample talking about in their blogs? Second, how do the bloggers construct their arguments about the issues? Third, is there any relationship between the issues each blogger emphasizes and the strategies she uses to advance her position?

To answer the first question, I described each blogger's rhetorical act in terms of Burke's (1969) dramatic pentad: Agent is the person or entity at the center of the story.

Whatever the agent does in thought or deed constitutes act; agency is the instrument or method of doing. Scene is the context—including any background information—that contains agent and act, and purpose is the agent's motivation or desired effect. For each blog, I applied Burke's terminology to a recurring theme or example, which resulted in a detailed description of each blog's overarching political argument—her thesis statement, in a sense.

Restricting my inquiry to women's political blogs led me to Campbell's (1989) feminine style, by far the most commonly used methodology for assessing women's rhetorical acts. To assess how the bloggers constructed their arguments, I applied tenets of feminine style to each of the three bloggers' posts during the target period. Feminine style predicts that personal anecdotes provide both the evidence and structure, the inductive nature of which lends itself to a peer-oriented persuasive approach that invites listeners to transcend their passive roles and emerge as active co-participants in the discourse. Peer orientation, in turn, empowers the audience, not only to participate in their own persuasion but also to take personal action in response to the social problems the speaker has brought to bear. I critiqued each blog's entries in terms of their level of conformity to feminine style.

After applying both theories to each blog, I will look for relationships between each blogger's prevailing argument and the stylistic devices she chooses. For example, do arguments grounded in some worldviews offer a better fit with feminine style than other worldviews? Do changes in a featured term, or in any term's definition, coincide with changes in conformity to feminine style? In the end I will have a clearer picture of the nature of these bloggers' arguments, and the strategies the bloggers use to advance those

arguments. Likewise, this approach will test both theories' usefulness for critiquing political communication in this particular context.

Analytical Procedure

Dramatism laid the foundation for my analysis of the three blogs. To describe each blog's general content, I identified a dominant narrative that stretched across several entries, in the form of a recurring or extended example, or a group of thematically linked examples. I assigned the five pentadic terms—agent, act, agency, scene, and purpose—to the features of the key narrative, taking note of any terminological changes within each blog over time. Second, I performed a ratio analysis to reveal each blogger's featured term(s), taking note of changes in the featured term over time where appropriate.

Evaluating each blog's degree of conformity to feminine style was the next step in the procedure. I measured personal evidence through first- and third-person examples, including stories about politicians. For inductive structure, I looked for clusters of extended, recurring, or thematically linked examples, and attempted to translate them into claims. Two indicators helped me assess peer-orientation: invitations for audience participation, and the use of inclusive pronouns—first person plural (*our, us, we*) and second person (*you*). I carefully read the posts in order to establish whether the blogger had omitted but implied the word *you*, as in an imperative sentence. Audience participation via explicit calls to leave comments or follow hyperlinks also played a role in my definition of empowerment, as did the number of hyperlinks to source material.

Chapter 4

Analysis

In the previous chapters, I reviewed the literature surrounding Campbell's feminine style and Burke's dramatism, and advanced two frameworks through which to view the content of selected women's weblogs. In this section I will apply both dramatism and feminine style to Bonnie Bucqueroux's *Estropundit* (liberal), Roxanne's *Rox Populi* (moderate) and Zelda's *The Urban Grind* (conservative), for the period of Tuesday, October 26 through Tuesday, November 9, 2004. My analysis will focus upon postings within the sample and, where appropriate, the discourse of interactive readers in the comments section.

Estropundit

Sixty-year-old documentary filmmaker Bonnie Bucqueroux (which she pronounces "Buckaroo" in the sound files that accompany her blog) is the voice behind *Estropundit*. Based in Mason, Michigan, Bucqueroux calls herself "a political contrarian" in her blogger profile. She uses "the left," "liberal," and "progressive" to describe her politics elsewhere. Her banner asserts: "if Estropundit moved any further left, she'd fall off the edge of the earth" (Bucqueroux, 2004, November; Bucqueroux, 2004, October). Although *Estropundit* supports comment functionality, Bucqueroux's readership is either very low or very passive. During the two-week time frame that comprised my sample of

her writing, only two of her 16 posts received comments: two on October 26 and one on November 3, all three from the same screen name.

Key Narrative

Pentadic analysis of Bucqueroux's blog highlighted a drama that surfaced again and again throughout her posts: "centrist Democrats have sold out the progressive base" (November 9). Specifically, she names the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) and its high profile members—Former Democratic National Chair Terry McCauliffe, former President Bill Clinton, Senator Hilary Clinton, and then-nominee John Kerry—as agents. Their act is Bucqueroux's story of the Democrats' shift from post-New Deal progressives to post-Ronald Reagan moderates. She constructs political intimidation as agency, accusing the DLC of eliminating leftist candidates and silencing progressive voices. The DLC's purpose is, in a word, winning. She restricts her rhetorical scene to the U.S.'s entrenched two-party system.

Agent.

DLC as agent appears time and again in Bucqueroux's entries; half her posts mention the DLC or its leaders specifically. In this excerpt from October 26, she reflects on a campaign stop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Senator Kerry appeared with President Clinton:

I suppose there is really no hope that Kerry will become radicalized again once in office. Did you see the frail Mr. Clinton gain strength yesterday hammering conservative themes? Both he and Kerry are card-carrying

Democratic Leadership Council members. You remember the DLC, don't you? It's the [sic] group that has ruined the Democratic Party by pandering for corporate cash? You could tell that Clinton was almost sorry he had passed welfare "reform," so that he didn't have his own welfare queen to kick in the hope of scaring up a few more suburban votes.

Bucqueroux also positions filmmaker Michael Moore, as a counteragent to the DLC. She praises Moore's ability to "put together a coherent narrative," and "[galvanize] people with a populist message," in a way that the Kerry campaign had failed to do (November 9).

Act.

The act permeating the sampled entries revolves around the DLC's abandonment of traditionally progressive stances in order to attract more mainstream voters, and the resulting party shift to the right. She laments, "Need to join the witch-burners to get back in the game? No problem, in their mind" (November 3). Over several posts, she eviscerates what she calls, "the Terry McCauliffe Republican lite approach" (November 1) as one sending the U.S. toward "a full-blown theocracy" (November 3). A separate post on November 3 warns readers about the implications of an election won on moral values: "Brian Williams, the new Tom Brokaw, says that the Dems are already re-thinking a way to attract the born-again. . . . Yeah, great, let's jump on the creationist bandwagon."

Agency.

Bucqueroux addresses agency by offering examples of the DLC's control over the party. Specifically, she points to the book *Dime's Worth of Difference* by Alexander Cockburn, which accuses McCauliffe of torpedoing Governor Howard Dean's run in the primaries (November 9). In a separate post on November 9, she criticizes Democrats for "demonizing people like Michael Moore who could be their salvation," rather than energizing the far left and helping them to make the case for liberal policies.

Purpose.

"I fear that the party hacks see the world only in terms of winning or losing," writes Bucqueroux on November 3. She offers this purpose specifically for the DLC's opposition to Governor Dean: "For people like McAuliffe who doesn't stand for anything but winning, a candidate who takes a principled stand on the war as Dean did, whether it's a majority position or not, is dangerous" (November 9). Bucqueroux frames winning for its own sake as a corrupt purpose. Her calls for change urge the Democratic party to return to progressive values; her plan centers upon a benevolent purpose that transcends winning and losing.

Scene.

Estropundit constructs scene as the entrenched two-party political system in the United States. Bucqueroux points out that the DLC strategy rests on the assumption that far-left liberals will continue to vote for the least conservative of two major party candidates. Her November 2 post bemoans the lack of real choice in a duopoly. She

writes: "It's time for people who care to take back what's left of the party (pun intended), or to forge a new party of their own" (November 9), and her writings suggest she prefers the latter. For instance, she devotes two entries to her participation in an online vote swap. Bucqueroux, a would-be Ralph Nader supporter, voted John Kerry in a battleground state, while Tricia Heinz, a would-be Kerry supporter, voted Nader on Bucqueroux's behalf in the solidly red Utah (October 26 & November 2). In addition to offering an alternative purpose, her narrative advocates changing the scene in order to undercut the DLC.

Uncovering clues about the rhetor's worldview requires an examination of the ratios in order to identify the governing or root term, the one to which all others are subordinate. In Bucqueroux's drama, scene dominates all the other terms. When she criticizes centrist democrats for marginalizing the party's left wing, she implicitly acknowledges that the centrist strategy is only viable in a two-party scene. In her discussion of vote swapping, for instance, she speculates that a groundswell of Nader votes might push a Kerry administration to the left (October 26). The two vote-swap entries are among several that Bucqueroux devotes to the necessity of a third party candidate for revitalizing the left. She advocates changing the drama by changing the scene, as the entrance of an independent candidate would undermine the system upon which the centrist strategy relies.

The only terminological shift that occurs as Bucqueroux's narrative unfolds is a slight change in agency. Before Election Day, she complains that centrist democrats have ignored the left, wishing for "a little more red meat to the party faithful on our side of the spectrum" (November 1). One post on November 2 and two on November 9 escalate

agency to intimidation, specifically regarding Howard Dean and Michael Moore. Bush's victory may have played a role in the intensification, but Bucqueroux published her November 2 entry at 11:50 a.m., before any results. Redefining agency had no effect on the other terminological assignments.

Rhetorical Style

One entry between the target dates neatly illustrates Bucqueroux's use of feminine style (October 31). She writes: "Count us among the 272,000 people in Michigan who lost power this weekend. . . . A metaphor for the power failure felt by the left? Which of the two Yale Skull and Bones pro-war candidates do you prefer?" She begins with a personal account of a literal blackout, then offers rhetorical questions addressed to "you" the peer-reader. She implies her dissatisfaction with Senator Kerry's centrism, empowering the reader to draw the conclusion inductively. *Estropundit* demonstrates a close, though not exact, fit with Campbell's tenets. Her argument hinges on examples, albeit not personal. She builds an inductive argument by linking her examples thematically. Her inclusive pronouns point to peer-orientation, and she posts hyperlinks that empower her readers. However, one component of both peer-orientation and empowerment is missing from the discourse: explicit calls for audience action or participation.

Personal evidence.

Although Bucqueroux does not use personal evidence extensively, she does present examples that illustrate the Democrats' move to the center. For example, she cites

Kerry's appearance with President Clinton in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (October 26) and NBC Nightly News coverage of the Democrats' early response to the election's religious dimension (November 3). She offers anecdotal evidence of a moderate Democratic Party that is ineffective at best. On November 9, she contrasts the moderate approach to the Republicans' successful example. She describes a decades-long struggle to "make [the conservative] case and win converts," rather than ceding ground by adopting mainstream positions. Bucqueroux tells stories about public life more than her private life, but she relies on examples.

One personal narrative does recur in the sample: Bucqueroux's vote-swapping arrangement. She recounts signing up for the service on October 26, and thanks her partner on November 2. She justifies her vote swap as a chance to increase Nader's popular vote percentage, and perhaps—although she has her doubts—encourage Kerry to "radicalize" (October 26) if he should win. Here she offers herself as an example of the lack of options a disgruntled Democrat has at her disposal. In this and the previously mentioned electricity metaphor, powerlessness prevails.

Inductive structure.

Bucqueroux's examples all contribute to a call for liberals to re-take the Democratic Party or to leave it. Her October 31 entry fits the theme as it reveals her feelings of powerlessness just before the election. On November 9, she argues, "centrist Democrats have sold out the progressive base," calling Terry McCauliffe's leadership "bloodless" and extolling rumors about the Democratic National Committee's plans to replace him. When she mentions third parties she does so in terms of how they affect

Democrats, as on October 26, when she hopes a strong Nader showing might empower a Kerry White House to act more progressively. These examples unfold such that a reader likely could not discern her argument from a single post. Her use of thematically linked examples demonstrates feminine style's inductive logic.

Peer orientation.

Bucqueroux exhibits peer orientation in her prominent use of first person plural and second person pronouns. Nine of her 16 posts used such inclusive language: four cases of *our*, *we*, and *us*, four cases of an explicit *you*, and one implied *you*. On November 1, she explicitly calls the progressive movement "our side [i.e., the left] of the spectrum," and on November 3, refers to "our" Democratic candidate. The headline of her November 4 entry tells readers, "you need a 67" on Canada's work visa application. Her only implied *you* reads: "Before the election, here are some sites that may be of interest [to you]" (November 2), above eight links to outside sources such as the League of Women Voters' and resources for investigating state laws regarding time off work for voting. She speaks to her readers as comrades, people who share her concerns about the direction of the country, and possible beneficiaries from the resources she provides. At the same time, Bucqueroux almost never calls for readers to comment, or explicitly invites them to follow hyperlinks. Her low level of interactivity with her readers limits the degree to which *Estropundit* is peer-oriented.

Empowering goals.

Closely related to her peer orientation, *Estropundit* demonstrates goals of empowerment through a preponderance of links to source material. Her 16 posts contain 15 links, clustered heavily in Bucqueroux's November 2 compilation of election resources discussed above. After the election, she further exhibits a goal of empowerment in her post from November 4, entitled "Calculate points to get into Canada – you need a 67." Her response to liberals' threatening to immigrate if Bush won the election is to help people get started. She provides a link to Canada's Work Permit website for skilled worker applicants, on the assumption that some of her readers might indeed be interested in leaving the United States, rather than remain under President George W. Bush's regime. However, these posts contain her only calls for audience participation. As was the case with peer orientation, the low degree of interactivity hinders this blog's ability to empower.

Overall, Bonnie Bucqueroux's posts to *Estropundit* partially fit feminine style. Although all four of Campbell's criteria were present, only inductive structure seemed fully developed. She relied on thematically linked examples to build her argument inductively, but her blog contained few *personal* examples, thus she only partly met Campbell's first criterion. Likewise, Bucqueroux's posts are not completely peer-oriented or empowering. Although she frequently used inclusive pronouns (peer-oriented tone) and offered a large overall number of hyperlinks (empowering goals), her entries lacked calls for audience participation, and the majority of her total links appeared in a single post (November 2).

Summary

The self-identified liberal Bonnie Bucqueroux used her domain *Estropundit* largely to deride centrist Democrats (agent) for ceding ground to the political right. Her narrative portrayed a Democratic Leadership Council using intimidation (agency) to silence progressive voices and present a moderate Democratic Party (act). She blamed a win-at-all-costs attitude (purpose) for the shift, and accused the agent of manipulating the two-party system (scene) in order to serve a corrupt purpose. Bucqueroux's drama elevated scene to featured status. She disapproved of the Democrats' move to the center, and time and again brought up the significance of a third party in revitalizing progressive politics—in other words, in redefining the featured term.

Estropundit exhibited shades of feminine style throughout the sampled entries. Most closely aligned was the inductive structure of her argument; she built a solid case against the DLC using political examples, but when she delved into the personal she always included at least a hint of futility. *Estropundit* also only partially met the remaining two criteria, peer-orientation and empowerment. Bucqueroux rarely called upon her readers to follow the links she provided or to contribute to the largely silent comment area. She often referenced "you" and "us," as if someone must be reading, and she provided hyperlinks to news items and voter resources. Inclusive pronouns allowed her to adopt a partially peer-oriented tone: to speak as if an audience was present. Likewise, in its own way, hyperlinking implicitly invited Bucqueroux's readers to empower themselves by following the links. Still, Bucqueroux never emphasized reader comments in her entries, nor did she explicitly invite readers to visit the hyperlinks provided.

Rox Populi

A blogger known only as "Roxanne" operates the self-identified moderate domain, *Rox Populi*. A play on the phrase *vox populi*, a Latin expression meaning voice of the people (and the name of *Rox Populi*'s comment area), Roxanne's blog claims to cover "politics, art, culture, and language" in its banner (Roxanne, 2004, November; Roxanne, 2004, October). Featured prominently in the sample are discussions of politics, religion, and music. Roxanne does not provide a profile telling her readers where she is located, or for that matter, anything explicit about herself. From time to time her posts refer to her childhood in central California and her current location in Washington, D.C., where she apparently works as a media professional. She posted 39 separate entries to her blog during between October 26 and November 9, fairly balanced between the two weeks. *Rox Populi* logged 175 comments, over two-thirds of which were received in November. Roxanne's two recurring audience-participation features—Write Your Own Caption and Friday Random Ten—accounted for just over 40% of her readers' total comments, drawing 51 and 22, respectively.

Key Narrative

Rox Populi's prevailing narrative revolves around the blogger herself. Roxanne is the agent, carrying out a series of acts in which she engages with and reflects upon commentary in the political scene, using her blog as agency. Her purpose, though not explicitly stated, seems rooted in building community and making connections among people. After the election, the tone of *Rox Populi* changed from anxious to reflective, but the referent for each pentadic term remained the same. Because Roxanne filters all parts

of the narrative through her own point of view, agent emerges as featured term throughout the selected entries.

Agent.

Roxanne's story features herself as the dramatic agent interacting with reporting and rhetoric in a tense political climate. Pre-election, she reports feelings of uneasiness, inability to sleep, and sense of near obsession with the results (e.g., October 28). Through explicit self-disclosure and less direct means such as rhetorical questions, Roxanne shares her encounters with political discourse, ranging from other blogs to the streets of Washington, D.C., and she uses her blog to reflect on what she learns. For example, on October 28, she writes, "I'm not buoyed by the fact that **Hawaii is leaning towards Bush.** Hawaii! Ouch." [Her bold text here links to an article to a now-defunct page of an electoral vote prediction site.] Rather than framing election coverage in terms of the candidates, Roxanne talks politics from her own point of view, through her own perceptions. Before and after the election Roxanne dramatizes herself. On November 3, she reflects on an editorial critical of the red/blue state map favored on television; the next day, she predicts her blog will henceforth place a greater emphasis on drinking.

Act.

Roxanne's acts include engaging with and reflecting upon political discourse. As a result, the act is less a single event than a pattern of behaviors that make explicit her thoughts and feelings. Her October 26 entry provides an example. In "The Post I Want to Write on 11/3/2004," she writes, "**You. Are. So. Fucking. Fired.** Sorry folks. Not much

sleep last night." Each of the five words in bold links to a different administration official's White House biography page (e.g., Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice). The next day, she posts a "Newspaper Endorsement Round-up," which she presents as a possible remedy for pre-election jitters: "a clear winner will emerge if newspaper editorial pages have any impact whatsoever." After excerpting *Editor and Publisher's* tabulation of dailies in battleground states, Roxanne concludes, "looks like it's bad news for Bush" (October 27). The two above examples illustrate her anxiety prior to Election Day. Later entries describe more reflective acts; she frequently links to post-election analysis that interests her and discusses her own impressions.

Agency.

Before and after November 2, the blog provides Roxanne's agency, her means of engaging in and reflecting upon the political scene. She makes extensive use of the medium's interactive features, linking readers to source material and encouraging comments. Her blog displays links to other blogs Roxanne reads regularly. She even interacts via the comment area from time to time, as on November 9 when she provides a recipe for fresh cranberry sauce in response to a reader's request. Through *Rox Populi* Roxanne adds her voice to a larger political conversation, integrating her own experiences into the issues under debate through the process of recounting those experiences for the blog.

Purpose.

Her purpose in carrying out the act is to establish herself in a community of bloggers and readers and to promote connections among people. Roxanne displays high awareness of the blogosphere, going so far as to host a "Best Political Bloggers" contest and announce the winners on November 2. Entries like her November 4 installment entitled "Something For You To Chew On" include an excerpt from and a link to a newspaper or blog site, her initial reaction to the perspective it offers, and an invitation for her readers to consider the article's perspective as well. The above example presents part of a newspaper editorial that "points out an important factoid I think we should all contemplate. I've been thinking about it since I read it this morning" (November 4). After reprinting an excerpt and hyperlinking to the original document, Roxanne implores her readers, "let's put our thinking caps on." Although she does not explicitly state it, her use of the technology suggests a purpose rooted in community building and information sharing.

Scene.

As agent, Roxanne acts by becoming involved in political discourse. The scene varies among her individual acts: the street, the blogosphere, and her home all serve as different scenes in separate entries on November 2. In my analysis I focus on the common site of Roxanne's reflections about political rhetoric: her blog. She reacts to polls, predictions, and post-mortems from individual states including Hawaii (October 28), Ohio (November 4), Iowa, and Florida (November 2). She comments on newspaper

editorials after the election, analyzing their perspectives on Bush's victory, the Democrats' response, and what the 2004 election meant for U.S. policy.

Throughout the sampled entries, agent serves as the featured term: All the acts are filtered through Roxanne's point of view. For instance, she frames her concerns about the Iraq War in terms of her friends and loved ones serving in it (e.g., October 28). When presenting outside source material, she begins by offering her own thoughts about it, before she excerpts and/or links to the original. As the agent in her own drama, she uses her own Web space as both the agency and scene for her reflections on her acts of political involvement. Her purpose also capitulates to agent; the goal is not simply to connect people, but to share information with others who share her ideology.

The fact that Election Day fell in the middle of my target dates could have resulted in significant narrative changes within the sample. However, none of the pentadic elements in *Rox Populi* change their referents over the two-week period. Likewise, agent retained featured status from beginning to end. Roxanne's drama was consistent despite the potential for disruption the election held.

Rhetorical Style

Roxanne provided the best demonstration of feminine style of all three selected bloggers. Roxanne's posts frequently contain personal evidence; on October 26, for example, she offers several anecdotes that illustrate her dissatisfaction with the Bush administration and her desire for a Kerry victory and a speedy end to the Iraq War. Rather than stating her claim explicitly and offering support, Roxanne shares a few personal reflections, "doing some rambling," as she puts it, that lead her readers to infer a

thesis statement. In fact, she advances two key claims inductively during the target period: Before the election she urges readers to help defeat President Bush. Afterward, her posts highlight a need for Democrats to reevaluate their tactics. *Rox Populi* best embodies feminine style in its peer-oriented tone and opportunities for empowerment. Inclusive language, calls for audience action, and frequent linking to other Websites all mark Roxanne's rhetoric as peer-centered and empowering.

Personal evidence.

Virtually all Roxanne's posts revolve around her personal, day-to-day experiences in the nation's capital. Her October 26 entry discusses her niece's decision to enlist in the armed forces and Roxanne's anxiety about the decision; "If anything should happen to her ... well, I'm not sure what I'd be capable of." On November 2, Election Day, she recounts her "sentimental 3-block stroll on over to the White House to witness the beginning of the end." In a park on Pennsylvania Avenue, she describes her encounter with four high school girls carrying Bibles and Bush-Cheney placards. Roxanne questioned the girls on who they supported and their reasons why. She writes:

The type-A, ring leader [sic] volunteered, "President Bush. He's against abortion and abortion is destroying our generation, our nation. God doesn't like all that killing."

"What about Iraq? Does God like that killing?"

"The terrorists are bad. They want to kill us," proclaimed Ms.

Type-A in a half-shout.

Seeing the discomfort grow on the faces of the other three girls, I decided not to press and ended the conversation by saying "Look, I don't agree with everything you've said, but I'm glad you are standing up for what you believe in."

Which is true.

Here, Roxanne recounts one of several personal events that illustrate her position about the election, President Bush, and freedom of speech. The examples, as feminine style predicts, elucidate implied arguments. A second example comes from October 28. Roxanne admits she's not sleeping well and can't seem to focus on anything but election results; "I've got a yucky feeling in the pit of my stomach," she confesses. Reflecting on her experience as an intern for Walter Mondale's Presidential bid in 1984, she worries that Election 2004 will join that election as one of the worst days of her life.

Inductive structure.

Intimately linked to her personal revelations is Roxanne's use of inductive logic in structuring her political claims. *Rox Populi* resonates with two distinct themes in the sample. Prior to the election, she expresses vehement objection to President Bush and his policies; afterward, her posts take on a more reflective tone as she wonders what Democrats will do in response to John Kerry's loss. On October 27, for example, Roxanne excerpts a list of "107 reasons to vote for Bush," courtesy of the *Boston Weekly Dig*. The list is tongue-in-cheek, including items such as "Rampant unemployment boosts Dr. Phil's ratings, thereby healing the American family." Without ever explicitly

entreating her readers to vote for Senator Kerry, Roxanne's pre-election posts make clear her antipathy for President Bush.

Later posts, although more reflexive, do not abandon her sarcastic tone. On November 4 Roxanne predicts that heavy drinking will become a featured subject of her blog. In a more serious entry, she considers the United States citizenry's ability to heal divisions between so-called "red" (conservative) and "blue" (liberal) America. On November 4, she links to another blogger who compares the 2004 electoral map to an 18th Century breakdown of "slave" versus "free" states. She asks her readers to consider the implications.² I found one other distinction between the two master themes that struck me as important. Roxanne's pre-election claims tended more toward declaration, whereas her post-election themes suggested more questions than answers.

Peer orientation.

Roxanne exhibits peer orientation to a degree unmatched by the other two bloggers. I found 55 instances of inclusive language. The sample included two rhetorical questions, as in her October 26 post, in which she poses "A New Question for the 'Security Moms'":

Can an administration that doesn't have a contingency plan in place in case they get a batch of unusable flu shots have the foresight to ensure that every man, woman and **child** will have access to an anthrax vaccine should they need one?

Inclusive pronouns also appeared regularly: seven occurrences of "us," "we," or "our"; 35 uses of some form of "you"; and 11 examples of the implied you. By comparison,

Roxanne uses nearly six times the number of second person than first person plural pronouns, which suggests some distance between herself and her audience.

Rox Populi contained the greatest number of audience participation calls with 16: seven explicit requests to follow a provided hyperlink, and nine invitations to leave a comment. Nearly every entry addresses the audience as capable of interactivity. Two recurring items provide excellent examples of her peer orientation: Friday Random Ten, and Write Your Own Caption. To participate in Friday Random Ten, readers must interact with *Rox Populi* outside the blog itself. Roxanne explains the procedure: "(1)Take [sic] out your IPOD or MP3 player. (2) Set it to random play and (3) list the first ten songs." After listing her ten, Roxanne turns it over to interactive readers to report their own. In another recurring feature, she posts a photograph and invites readers to "Write Your Own Caption." Interestingly, Roxanne usually does not include any text in these entries; rather, she turns the captioning task wholly over to her readers.

I observed some connections among the numbers. Each of the 11 appearances of an implied you occurred in one of two particular contexts: either in Roxanne's explicit requests for readers to follow hyperlinks, or in her instructions for participating in Friday Random Ten. Also, of the nine comment invitations, over half resulted from her recurring features: two were associated with Friday Random Ten and three with Write Your Own Caption. Although her interactive readers receive regular invitations to contribute content, her frequent choice to use "you" instead of "we" suggests a division between the blogger and her audience. However, this relative lack of first person plural pronouns only slightly mitigates Roxanne's peer-oriented tone.

Empowering goals.

Aside from empowering her readers through regular requests to participate in creating her blog's content, Roxanne offers online resources for her interactive readers. In the sampled entries she included 46 hyperlinks, 11 of which led to the winners of her Best Political Blogger contest. As noted above, on seven occasions she specifically advised her readers to follow a particular link. For example, her October 27 entry linked to MoveOn PAC's Voter Protection Card, which provides "important information and contact numbers that might come in handy if someone decides to disenfranchise you next Tuesday." In the same entry, she also directs readers to My Polling Place, a website through which voters can find out where they should vote and what kind of balloting method they will use. Outside politics, Roxanne contributes to reader empowerment in her November 8 post, "Food For Thought." After disparaging a few common Thanksgiving dishes, specifically green bean casserole and canned cranberry sauce, she asks readers to share their own Thanksgiving Day pet peeves. Roxanne joined the discussion and empowered readers to make their own homemade cranberry sauce by posting her own recipe in the comment area. Combined with her frequent calls for audience action, the preponderance of hyperlinks in *Rox Populi's* sampled entries demonstrates her empowering goals.

Roxanne conforms to feminine style almost entirely. In sharing her personal experiences, as in her early morning post on November 3, entitled "Shit Heard Around the Rox Pop Household on Election Night," she calls into question conventional political wisdom by integrating political commentary into the peculiarities of her daily life. Two key arguments emerge through the repetition of themes in her examples: Prior to the

election she emphasizes the importance of a John Kerry victory. Afterward, she responded to the sharp divisions the campaign had made inescapable by advocating continued debate and personal reflection.

Summary

Pentadic analysis described the content of *Rox Populi* by providing a framework through which to discern her key narrative. I identified Roxanne as the agent, because she is the major player in the majority of her blog entries. She describes her own acts of engagement with political discourse in print and in person; then, *Rox Populi* served as both agency and scene, for Roxanne's reflections about the rhetoric she encountered. Her purpose, though not explicitly stated, revolved around building community and making connections among people. After the election, the tone of *Rox Populi* changed from anxious to reflective, but the referent for each pentadic term remained the same. Because Roxanne filtered all parts of the narrative through her own point of view, agent emerged as the featured term throughout the selected entries.

My critique of *Rox Populi* using feminine style revealed a close match between Campbell's tenets and Roxanne's strategies. Most of her blog entries recounted personal experiences; together they revealed political assertions that Roxanne rarely made explicit. She took full advantage of her blog's potential for interactivity among peers and empowerment of an audience. In her early writings, Campbell asserted that feminist critics should seek out women's particular adaptations to their specific rhetorical challenges. In this instance, Roxanne has fully integrated familiar persuasive strategies into the computer-mediated context.

The Urban Grind

A blogger who calls herself Zelda owns the domain *The Urban Grind*. Her blog banner identifies her as a conservative woman in Manhattan, and her profile page offers little else in the way of identification. The content of her posts indicates that she is Jewish. During the two-week period under investigation, Zelda posted 21 total entries, 7 in the first week and 14 in the second. She received only a single comment: on October 27, a blogger who calls himself "the g-man" invited her to visit his blog. Zelda replied to his comment saying she had visited his blog and placed a link to it on her Web site.

Key Narrative

Zelda's master narrative reveals her perception of the political left. Rather than identifying one particular agent, *The Urban Grind's* drama revolves around the actions of a group of agents whom Zelda labels liberals. Prior to Election Day, the agents lie, instigate trouble, and suppress information, all to serve the purpose of thwarting President Bush's re-election bid. Afterward, the slurs continue in effort to undermine his credibility on the international political stage. Mass media consistently appear as agency, the means by which liberals spread their anti-Bush message. Zelda's scene is more inclusive than any other blog I examined, as she situates her drama in terms of domestic and international politics.

Agent.

Those who oppose her ideology appear far more often in her entries than those who agree with her. Of her 21 total entries, 14 revolve around Democrats (e.g. October

27), liberal elites (e.g., November 3), or the left (e.g. November 2). None of her entries addresses President Bush or his administration specifically. Specifically, she targets documentary filmmaker Michael Moore (November 2), John Kerry's stepson Chris Heinz (October 31), the mainstream news media (October 28), *New York Times* editor Paul Krugman (November 6), Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (October 28), and of course, challenger John Kerry (October 26). The individuals listed above appear in only one post each during the sample period, but together they comprise Zelda's agent, the political left.

Act.

The liberals featured in Zelda's narrative oppose the Bush administration, and will stop at nothing to discredit him. Moore, for example, vowed to have hundreds of photographers and videographers present at Florida polling places, in an effort to document any attempts on the part of Republicans to disenfranchise likely Democratic voters (November 2). Zelda accuses mainstream news outlets, including the Associated Press and ABC News, of selecting news stories for purely political reasons, or, in her words, "pulling out all stops to get John Kerry into the White House" (October 28). Even the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health receives criticism, for attributing over 100,000 Iraqi deaths to the U.S.'s bombing campaign. While she stops short of attributing Johns Hopkins' results to political motivation, she does suggest that their analysis was based on poor information.

Agency.

Across the board, the liberals around whom Zelda's narrative revolves use mass media as agency. Chris Heinz's assertion that the pro-Israel lobby had too much power in Presidential politics appeared in the *New York Post* (October 31). Media outlets used their distribution power to spread negative remarks about Bush, while quashing stories that might help Bush's re-election bid (October 28). Reuters news service distributed copy critical of Bush's election, such as *Arab News* editor Khaled Maeena's remark, "All the Saudis I've seen so far are disappointed." To which Zelda added, "Translation: Waaaa, we can no longer get away with paying money to suicide bombers to kill innocent people, and to Madrassas that teach Muslims to hate and kill infidels. That sucks" (November 3). Time after time, the acts of undermining President Bush appear in mass mediated contexts, leading to the conclusion that media provided the agency for political liberals.

Purpose.

The purpose behind liberals' mediated attacks on the President is to undermine his re-election bid and damage his credibility and potential for effectiveness in a second term. On October 27, Zelda reports on the nine lawsuits that Democrats filed in Florida on behalf of voters whose ballots have been discarded. She asserts, "When Democrats want to get people out and vote, they're not kidding. **And they're not choosey over who gets this privilege.**" Here her bolded text links to an article suggesting that illegal immigrants, including the September 11, 2001 hijackers, have voted in past elections, and as such are corrupting the voting process in favor of Democratic candidates. An October 28 entry accuses mainstream media of favoring Kerry, and on November 2 she writes;

"the liberal elites are getting hysterical over the possibility of a Kerry loss," in response to suggestions that liberals would move out of the country if Bush were re-elected. All these individual acts fit into the larger narrative, by demonstrating the left's intentions to defeat Bush, or failing that, to dismantle his credibility.

Scene.

At no time does Zelda mention the political blogosphere, or her place therein. Rather, her narrative includes a broader political scene. In fact, Zelda devotes several posts to international affairs, addressing Yassir Arafat's failing health (October 28; November 4) and reactions to the U.S. elections from the Middle East (November 3) and Europe (November 6). She talks about mainstream political coverage in a multitude of posts and specifically addresses the controversy over the Electoral College (November 2). Thus *The Urban Grind* exists in the broadest scene among all the selected blogs.

Zelda's drama portrays a group of liberal agents who act to spread anti-Bush messages using mass media as agency. Their purpose is to destroy the incumbent President's credibility in an international political scene. Ratio analysis of the five terms reveals Zelda's elevation of scene to featured status. The agents choose acts in response to scenic pressures. Moreover, since Zelda's liberals depend on mass media as their agency, their acts become a part of the scene almost immediately. Thus, scene dominates act in two ways: by influencing its beginnings and absorbing its ends. Scene dominates agency because its sheer size in this case makes mass communication the only effective agency for carrying out their acts. Scene also dominates purpose, in that the liberal agents' purpose is to bring about a new political scene, either by defeating Bush in the election or

decreasing his political capital abroad. One way or the other, the agents will have created a new political scene in which Bush's role is diminished.

In addition to carrying out ratio analysis, I also sought examples of terminological change in the text. I found no re-definition of any terms in the drama. Likewise, scene remained the dominant term throughout the target time.

Rhetorical Style

Nearly across the board, *The Urban Grind* fails to conform to the tenets of feminine style. Although she does advance a pair of related themes that work together to infer an argument, Zelda reveals next to nothing about her personal life. Her entries by and large do not meet the criteria for a peer-oriented tone or empowering goals, although she does employ a very high number of hyperlinks per entry.

Personal evidence.

Zelda's avoidance of self-disclosure extends beyond her decision to offer very little personal information in her profile and blog banner. Her only uses of first person singular pronouns reflect her opinion more than her experiences. For instance, on November 2, Zelda writes, "I say good riddance" to liberals wishing to leave the country in the event of a Bush win; "I wouldn't be surprised" if Yasser Arafat has AIDS (November 4); and "there are two questions I would like to raise" about a Johns Hopkins study critical of Iraqi civilian death during the war (October 28). Instead, *The Urban Grind* relies on outside source material as evidence to support her position.

Inductive structure.

Two interrelated themes emerge from Zelda's blog entries, both devoted to undermining the arguments of Bush opponents. First, her blog makes clear her perception that mainstream media outlets actively promoted John Kerry's candidacy. On October 28, she refutes claims that 380 tons of explosives disappeared from Al Qaqaa, Iraq, after the U.S. invasion. Zelda writes: "the New York Times ran a piece on how Al Qaqaa was looted shortly after the arrival of U.S. troops . . . However, Ken Dixon, a former G.I. with the 101st Airborne Division, and one of the first Americans on the scene said there was no way there were 380 tons of weapons in Al Qaqaa." Zelda concludes that the story has legs solely because it casts a negative light on U.S. military operations in Iraq. By way of comparison, the same entry criticizes ABC News's refusal to air a video containing a terrorist threat against the United States, opining, "Somehow I think that if this was something helpful to Kerry, they would air the tape in two seconds."

A second theme criticizes public figures who oppose President Bush, generally holding that Senator Kerry's supporters are ill informed. On October 26, she calls Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the protest organization in which Kerry was a leader, "a puppet of Hanoi." In a separate post on October 26, she asserts that Rosie O'Donnell "doesn't get it," because O'Donnell publicly agreed with John Kerry's assertion that the U.S. should pass a "global test" before initiating military action. Her October 28 entry questions a study by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health study of Iraqi civilian deaths: "did the geniuses at Johns Hopkins take into account that these insurgents frequently hide out among women and children? . . . Also, how do we know that these civilians are not purposely hiding insurgents?" The themes of pro-Kerry media bias and

pro-Kerry misinformation go hand in hand. The argument that emerges from her repeated use of these themes suggests that people armed with the truth about Kerry's war record and U.S. actions in Iraq would necessarily vote for President Bush.

Peer orientation.

Of all the feminine style's elements, *The Urban Grind* makes the least use of peer orientation. The sampled entries contain no rhetorical questions or first person plural pronouns. I found only two second person pronouns: one "you" and one implied "you" associated with Zelda's single call for audience action. On November 2 she recommends following a hyperlink to what she calls "a hysterical letter to Michael Moore." At no time does she invite comments from her readers.

Empowering goals.

At the same time, Zelda's blog does exhibit one element of audience empowerment. She includes at least one hyperlink per entry, for a total of 39 links in her 21 posts. For instance, on October 28, "The [Mainstream Media] is [sic] Getting Desperate" features five separate links that elucidate and support each of her claims. Offering links empowers the audience by inviting them to examine and form their own opinions based upon source material. Still, as was the case with peer-oriented tone, the absence of calls for audience participation further separates *The Urban Grind* from the feminine style.

Generally speaking, *The Urban Grind* does manage to align with feminine style in two ways. First, Zelda uses thematically linked examples to advance an argument over

time, making good use of inductive structure. Second, she empowers her readers by creating a large number of hyperlinks. On the other hand, she fails all the other requirements for feminine style persuasion. Her entries are almost devoid of personal evidence and peer-oriented language. She relies on outside sources instead of her own experiences to provide support and elaboration for her claims, hence, her heavy reliance on hyperlinks. In addition, she shows little solidarity with her readers, rarely addressing them directly and never speaking up for a unified "us."

Summary

In Zelda's drama, a group of liberal agents used the mass media as their agency. They acted to discredit George W. Bush, for the purpose of preventing the incumbent from winning re-election, or at least to reduce his political clout by undermining his credibility. Zelda refers not only to domestic but also to international politics; scene, therefore extends all over the world. Ratio analysis of the five terms revealed scene to be Zelda's featured term.

Despite skillful use of inductive logic and the largest ratio of hyperlinks to posts of any blog in my sample, *The Urban Grind* makes a poor example of feminine style, in short because Zelda does not attempt to build a relationship with her audience. She reveals virtually nothing about herself, and asks virtually nothing from readers. Campbell (1989) used craft learning as a metaphor for her persuasive model: personal, interactive, and contingent. Without self-disclosure and interactivity Zelda demonstrates a wholly different approach to blogging, one that is blogger- instead of reader-centered.

In this chapter I have scrutinized three women's political blogs: *Estropundit*, *Rox Populli*, and *The Urban Grind*, for the purpose of better understanding the bloggers' persuasive strategies. I used Burke's (1969) pentad to describe each blog's dominant narrative, and from there determined the featured term that governs it. Then, I measured the degree to which each woman conformed to the tenets of Campbell's (1989) feminine style. I offered my first impressions about the relationship between each blogger's key narrative (and by extension, her worldview) and her level of conformity to feminine style. In the next chapter I will discuss my observations and their implications in more detail.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

In the previous chapters I reviewed the literature in Burke's dramatism and Campbell's feminine style. Based upon those readings I proposed an analytical procedure and carried it out on three selected women's political blogs. In this chapter I will address each blog and interpret the data according to the guiding questions: First, what issues are the women in the sample talking about in their blogs? Second, how do the bloggers construct their arguments about the issues? Third, is there any relationship between the issue each blogger emphasizes and the stylistic strategies she uses to advance her position? I will conclude by reflecting upon this research in terms of limitations, applications, and suggestions for future research.

Estropundit

Description of Central Issue

Burke's dramatisitic pentad helped describe the blog *Estropundit's* central drama. Bonnie Bucqueroux used her forum to blast the Democratic Leadership Council's (DLC) cooling effect on progressive politics. As the agent, the DLC's objectionable act was to move the Democratic Party toward the political center, with deleterious effects on progressive reforms. Their agency, their ability to control the party, hinged on

marginalizing far left voices, and the purpose was to win in the two-party political scene, which was the featured term.

Bucqueroux's featuring of scene was not immediately apparent to me. Initially, *Estropundit* appeared to feature act. In 9 of her 16 entries she criticized specific centrist strategies, as she built an argument case by case. In the larger sense, her entries condemned the DLC's act of turning the Democratic Party moderate. At the same time, she devoted considerable criticism to the purpose. Specifically, she lamented that the purpose "to win" had come to dominate everything else. Bucqueroux portrayed Democrats as agents who place politics over principle, stifle dissent, and give ground to the right in order to win undecided voters. Purpose, then, unified all the individual acts; it explained how the Democrats could marginalize progressives. However, in comparing purpose to scene, I found the former dependent upon the latter.

The clue to scene's dominance came from recurring talk of third parties throughout the sampled entries. Her remedy for the DLC problem was a restructuring of the scene. Bucqueroux argued that an energized left could advance an independent Presidential challenger who would at least pressure a Democratic candidate to face progressive voters. At issue in *Estropundit* is the entrenched two-party political system in the U.S., and the threats it poses to social and economic liberalism. Her problem is not the Democrats' centrism, nor their desire to win elections; rather, she fears the repercussions if far-left viewpoints remain outside the political conversation.

Conformity to Feminine Style

The sampled entries at *Estropundit* conformed closely, but not exactly, to feminine style. I definitely found argument in the sample, and I had to reach it based on the themes she repeated. Of Campbell's four criteria, Bucqueroux most fully demonstrated inductive logic; her entries only partially met each of the other three tenets. The majority of her examples were political, not personal, and the lack of calls for audience action reduced her levels of peer orientation and empowering goals.

The personal stories Bucqueroux shared fell right into line with her argument. The entries recounting a power outage in her home (October 31) and her vote swap (October 26; November 2) all criticized Senator Kerry and the two-party system, at least implicitly. Her forays into the personal also revealed her doubt and frustration as a liberal voter with the choice between a moderate challenger and conservative incumbent. Especially regarding the prospects for vote swapping and its influence on the Democratic Party, she is less than optimistic: "investing my belief in the Easter Bunny might make more sense" (October 26). Likewise, she uses a literal electrical failure to describe her feelings of powerlessness about the election.

Bucqueroux's political examples provided the bulk of her argument. Although moderate Democrats drew her direct criticism, she described a corrupt duopoly that has marginalized progressives. All along she talked about taking back the Democratic Party, but she also consistently called for or referred to the role of third parties in social reform. At no time did she state her thesis explicitly; her position and plan emerged bit by bit as she added content to her blog. She was able to build a coherent argument without explicitly advancing a claim, exhibiting skill at inductive structure.

Estropundit demonstrated peer orientation and empowerment, but not to their fullest. Her reliance on inclusive pronouns set a tone for her writing that treated readers as allies, and she offered empowerment to readers by providing hyperlinks. Still, *Estropundit* rarely called her readers to action. Her comments area remained nearly silent, and she never asked for contributions. Ultimately, not asking the audience to get involved compromises Bucqueroux's use of feminine style. Campbell's observations led to a methodology that described how women helped each other become activists. Without that element, *Estropundit* misses a fundamental mark.

Feminine style originally described the strategies that female speakers adopted to respond to the peculiarities of their rhetorical situation. Bonnie Bucqueroux extended many of these strategies into her blog, but failed to take full advantage of the new medium's potential for audience interactivity. She structured her argument inductively, and supplied opportunities for readers to act, but did not engage her readers in dialogue. Instead, Bucqueroux has developed a strategy, adapted for the unique challenges she faces as a blogger. Specifically, Bucqueroux's entries seemed to reflect the challenge of a small, or at least silent, readership. Given her evident lack of interactive readers, the partial adoption of peer-orientation and empowerment allowed her to maintain the talk of a community even in the absence of group action.

Synthesis

One method I proposed when I set out to integrate the results of an analysis drawing from two theoretical premises required me to look for correspondence between terminological shifts and stylistic changes. In this sample, the only change I noted in any

of the pentadic terms was an intensification of agency, from ignoring progressives to intimidating them, about halfway through the two-week target period. I noticed no impact on rhetorical style coinciding with this terminological shift.

As a second strategy for identifying possible relationships between each blogger's key issue and her rhetorical style, I compared what each of the two theories highlighted in search of corresponding or conflicting elements. For *Estropundit*, dramatic analysis teased out a well-developed scene-dominant narrative, a consistent argument, even a plan in opposition to the two-party political system. However, that particular methodology drew my attention away from the blogger and her individual role in the drama she presented. Feminine style, however, forced me to look specifically for the personal experiences she shared, which pointed to her sense of frustration, or powerlessness, as in the post dated October 31. The most important observation that resulted from my critique using feminine style brought to light the absence of interaction between Bucqueroux and her readers. The original research question asked whether I observed any relationship between each blogger's issue at hand and her rhetorical choices. In this case, Bonnie Bucqueroux's perception that liberals lack real choice in U.S. politics and the absence of dialogue with her readers seemed unrelated.

Rox Populi

Description of Central Issue

Roxanne's blog mostly related her own drama. As agent, she wrote about the interrelated acts of engaging in political communication and reflecting upon the rhetoric she encountered in those situations. The presence of a dual act (communicating and

reflecting) complicated all the other elements. She used several different agencies for engaging in political communication, including her blog, the sole agency through which she reflected on political discourse. Likewise, she carried out her acts in a variety of scenes, such as a park near the White House, the blogosphere, and her blog specifically. The preponderance of hyperlinks to other bloggers and multiple calls for reader interactions revealed her purpose: gathering and sharing information with a community of bloggers and readers, and making connections among well-informed people. Agent ascended to featured-term status, as Roxanne described the political discourse she encountered in terms of her own reactions to it. The referents for each of the five pentadic terms and the dominance of agent remained consistent throughout the entries in the sample.

Dramatistic analysis exposed an overarching storyline in *Rox Populi*, featuring the blogger/agent as the dominant term. Her narrative implicitly advocated involvement, engagement with political rhetoric. As she recounted her own experiences of interaction with political discourse, such as reading blogs and newspapers or talking face-to-face with others, she set herself up as a positive example for her readers to follow. Roxanne's narrative featured her seeking out and reflecting on political news and commentary. Through her blog, she encouraged her readers to do the same in at least two ways: providing hyperlinks to her key source material and frequently calling for audience feedback via her comment link.

Uncovering a narrative so closely related to the referent I had identified for purpose inspired me to revisit my ratio analysis. I had observed that agent dominated act, agency, and scene, insofar Roxanne held the power to choose. She decided what dialogue

to undertake, how, and where—and what portions of those events to share with her readers. I initially had assumed that agent dominated purpose in the same fashion: by choice. However, I can also argue a case for purpose dominating agent: that Roxanne's desire to reach out, to engage, and to connect with a politically informed community drove her to act in the ways and places she chose.

Conformity to Feminine Style

Roxanne's blog entries during the targeted period exhibited nearly exact alignment with Campbell's tenets of feminine style. Virtually all her entries recounted personal experience, most often her interactions with and reactions to political rhetoric she encounters. These examples revolve around a pair of themes (one before and one after Election Day). The first week's entries combined criticisms of George W. Bush with predictions of a John Kerry victory, to weave a call for readers to become involved in the political process and help ensure a Kerry win on November 2. In the week following the election, her entries turned more reflective in tone, and the theme that bound her examples shifted from critical to conciliatory: America must find a way to heal the divisions the election had exposed and exacerbated. Roxanne's posts exhibited a high level of peer orientation. She made abundant use of rhetorical questions and second person plural pronouns in the text, even though she rarely wrote in the first person plural. Additionally, her two recurring audience-participation features, Write Your Own Caption and Friday Random Ten, led the way for numerous calls for her readers to become involved in the discussion. Demonstrating her adherence to empowering goals, Roxanne provided an ample number of hyperlinks to original source and resource materials, and

habitually included explicit appeals for her readers to follow the links. In all, the sampled entries to *Rox Populi* exemplified an excellent adaptation of the old tenets to the new medium.

Synthesis

The first method I proposed for seeking out relationships between each blogger's issue and her rhetorical style was to determine whether terminological changes in the text coincided chronologically with stylistic changes. Roxanne's drama never deviated in the assignment of referents for the five dramatic terms. Therefore, although the tone of her entries changed from anxious to reflective following the Presidential election, I had no dramatic change by which to draw comparisons.

The second approach I used for seeking possible relationships between issue and style involved comparing the key findings from each analysis in order to see whether any correspondences emerge. In this case, my comparison highlighted a link. Dramatism highlighted two possible dominant terms: agent and purpose, both of which support Roxanne's close adherence to feminine style.

One way of interpreting *Rox Populi* is that this site elevated agent to featured status, based upon her tendency to emphasize her own perspectives in her entries. By recounting her experiences in the first person, she emphasized her engagement with her political surroundings. Burke described agent dominance as corresponding to idealism, which Roxanne demonstrated by enabling reader participation. Her extensive use of hyperlinks and explicit invitations to participate, which feminine style highlighted,

support agent dominance in that these strategies acknowledged her readers as agents in their own right.

Feminine style also supported the case for a purpose-dominant narrative in *Rox Populi*. Campbell first articulated feminine style as one especially well adapted for speakers whose goal was to create citizen-activists. Roxanne's purpose, as revealed in dramatistic analysis, was to build connections among people and to inspire political action among her readers. Indeed, the central argument that emerged from dramatistic analysis of *Rox Populi* attempts to inspire political involvement and activism. Therefore, the strategies of feminine style should suit Roxanne's rhetorical goals exceptionally well. Moreover, the fact that her blog entries fit the criteria so neatly suggests that Campbell's model has retained its effectiveness for describing women's political speech, even in blogs' interactive, computer-mediated environment.

The Urban Grind

Description of Central Issue

Zelda's recurring narrative in *The Urban Grind* named liberals, such as filmmaker Michael Moore (November 2) and *New York Times* editor Paul Krugman (November 6), as the agents; indeed, her ideological opponents appear in far more entries than her allies. She listed a group of acts, mostly news items, which shed the best possible light on Senator Kerry while discrediting President Bush. Mass media served as the agency by which the left brought its message to an international political community that served as scene. The liberals' purpose was to undermine Bush's credibility, in order to thwart his

election bid, or, in the case he should win, to reduce the President's international political capital.

Zelda elevated term to featured status. Scenic pressures influenced the agents to choose certain acts using mass media as agency to carry out their purpose. Further, because mass media play such a vital role in constructing the international political scene, their acts become part of the scene. Likewise, the liberals' purpose, their motivation for their acts, is to bring about a new political scene by reducing Bush's power.

Although I did not observe any changes in the definition or importance of any pentadic terms during the selected dates, mass media played multiple roles throughout *The Urban Grind's* drama—as agency, scene, even agent—which complicated the narrative. Mass media provided the vehicles through which the agents conducted their acts; at the same time political coverage constitutes a considerable part of the international political scene. In at least one entry (October 28), Zelda included media outlets among the agents, personifying the "MSM" (mainstream media) in her headline, "MSM is getting desperate," Dramatism's ability to account for ambiguity made it possible to identify the ways in which agency intertwined closely with scene, constituted acts, and overlapped agent.

Her central argument, then, asserted that liberals were using mass media to over-represent their political viewpoints. Although that argument clearly identified a problem, considerable ambiguity in Zelda's message undermined the coherence of her argument. For example, she constructed her agent in such a way as to include anyone who might challenge her ideology: celebrities, television anchors, newspaper editors, and even Johns Hopkins all drew her ire. Her choice to paint agent with such a broad stroke made it

difficult for me to discern whom Zelda held responsible for the problem. Additionally, the many roles mass media assumed under her argument further confused the issue. Sometimes liberals used journalists and editors; other times news outlets were the liberals; undoubtedly, political coverage constituted part of her international political scene. Between her broad definition of agent and her assigning mass media to multiple terms, Zelda presented a problem without a solution, a complaint without a case.

Conformity to Feminine Style

The Urban Grind exhibited feminine style only insofar as Zelda built an argument using thematically linked examples, and relied heavily on hyperlinks. She offered very little in the way of personal information, choosing instead to support her arguments by drawing examples from outside evidence sources such as online and print publications. Granted, these examples revolved around two interrelated themes that criticized Bush's opponents for spreading misinformation via mainstream news media; thus Zelda's blog entries wove together a case inductively. At the same time, her blog failed both criteria for peer-orientation; I found only two examples of inclusive language and only one call for audience participation in the entire sample. *The Urban Grind*, however, did incorporate one element of empowerment: Zelda had a higher ratio of hyperlinks per post than either of the other bloggers. Indeed, hyperlinks are key to her method for structuring her arguments. Rather than offer personal reflection on her posts, she implicitly invites readers to seek confirmation of her opinions through outside sources.

Synthesis.

Zelda's key narrative demonstrated considerable breadth and overlap in her assignment of the pentadic terms. However, I did not observe a distinctive shift in any of the terms' definitions or relative importance. Likewise, her stylistic choices remained consistent throughout the sample. Therefore, I had no data from either methodology for comparing terminological shifts to stylistic changes.

Each theory, did, however, highlight something important about the discourse. Dramatistic analysis charted Zelda's argument that liberals, in conjunction with mass media, were conducting a smear campaign against the President. However, dramatism also revealed a broad definition of agent and multiple roles for mass media in the narrative that confused her argument and left me wondering about the exact definition of her key issue(s). Critiquing *The Urban Grind* using feminine style only confirmed that Zelda did not use its tactics, with the exception of her high reliance on hyperlinks. Comparing these observations led me to wonder whether any relationship existed between the large number of hyperlinks in the sample and the overlap between Zelda's pentadic terms. If any, the connection may be that her obvious engagement with mainstream news sources, which provide the bulk of her hyperlinked evidence, caused her to overestimate or overstate the importance of media in the drama she constructed.

Reflection

Limitations

Like any attempt at describing or critiquing communication, my project suffers certain limitations that prevent me from making authoritative claims. First, I took on a

very small sample of discourse for analysis. In hindsight I believe a more appropriate sample would have included a larger time frame for a single blog, rather than the short time frame for three. Alternatively, to emphasize two blogs over a longer time frame could have provided the benefits of both a deeper description of each blog's content and a means for comparing different women's discourse. Given that my research does not begin to represent all the women's voices in the blogosphere, I might have benefited from more depth than breadth. Second, my own strong political feelings felt like a limitation throughout the process. I often questioned whether my opinion about a post was coloring my ability to evaluate it rhetorically.

Applications

Despite its imperfections, this research should be immediately useful to bloggers, blog readers, and blog scholars. My study is a step toward understanding what inspires the interaction of a community of readers, ostensibly the goal of any political blogger. Furthermore, feminist communication scholars should support my line of inquiry as an example of feminist rhetorical criticism insofar as I have reached out to the blogosphere as a source for women's political speech. Those interested in feminine style should likewise show interest in my results, since at least in the case of *Rox Populi* feminine style has shown its value for describing women's political speech in yet another communication medium.

My research also demonstrated the utility of dramatism, which supports previous research based on Burke's methodology. Stylistically, the three texts varied widely, but pentadic analysis still revealed something unique to each text. *Estropundit* highlighted the

pentad's ability to uncover discrepancies between the rhetor's stated goal (change the act) and her underlying objective (change the scene). My analysis of *Rox Populi* revealed a tension between agent-dominance and purpose-dominance. Dramatism drew attention to overlap and ambiguity among the terms in *The Urban Grind*. The pentad's flexibility made it an excellent descriptive model for my purposes, because it helped to account for other differences between the women's discourse.

Future Research

Since blogging represents the convergence of several communication forms, other research models and methodologies could add considerably to our understanding of the medium. First, my experience suggests that future studies involving blogs should favor depth (time) over breadth (number) when choosing a sample. In terms of specific recommendations, I foresee other exercises in rhetorical criticism. In particular, feminine style's poor fit with *The Urban Grind* suggests the need for a different methodology. Specifically, I suggest Fisher's (1984) narrative model as a potentially elucidating choice for rhetorical criticism of blogs. Despite their differences, all three blogs in my study shared in common the presence of a narrative arc. Bloggers tell stories; their ability to build a community of interactive readers might depend upon the coherence and fidelity of the blogger's story from the readers' point of view.

As far as other methodologies are concerned, exploring blogs' interpersonal dimensions will also help us understand their intricacies. Parasocial interaction, self-disclosure, and uncertainty reduction carry different implications in the blogosphere than in face-to-face or other mediated communication contexts. Also, as blogs grow ever

easier to use, and considering the rise in popularity of photoblogging, visual critique of some blogs is in order. As a research methodology, rhetorical criticism was useful for answering the questions I asked; however, I also see the value of ethnography in advancing scholarship of blogs. In my case, perhaps the ethnographic method would have helped me deal with my biases, since I would have been dealing with actual people and not just their writing. Moreover, ethnography allows the researcher to participate in the communication under investigation. For studying interactive media, I would argue that using the technology is a critical element in understanding the technology.

Summary

This research used rhetorical criticism as a method for understanding the persuasion in women's political blogs. In Chapter 1 I laid out three guiding questions: First, what issues are the women in the sample talking about in their blogs? Second, how do the bloggers construct their arguments about the issues? Third, is there any relationship between the position each blogger advances and the stylistic strategies she uses to advance her position? In Chapter 2, I examined past research into women and computer-mediated communication, and reviewed the literature focused on Campbell's (1989) feminine style and Burke's (1969) dramatistic pentad. In Chapter 3, I advanced a method for selecting and analyzing the data. I scrutinized my selected blogs through the two theoretical lenses in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I interpreted the data according to the research questions, and reflected on this research's limitations, potential applications, and suggestions for future inquiry.

My research has focused a spotlight on three women who kept active political blogs during the weeks surrounding 2004's election. That their persuasive styles differed so markedly speaks to the flexibility of women as rhetors, and to blogging as a platform for discourse. Without diaries, scholars would have no access to the thoughts and lives of women from the past. With blogs, scholars have unprecedented access to women in the present. As online technology and interest in it continues to grow, so too will the blogosphere. Likewise, I suspect scholarly interest in blogging will expand, as more and more individuals connect their voices to a potentially global audience—combining the best of the diary, the penny press, and the soapbox.

Notes

1. See References for web addresses linking to each blog's October and November archives.
2. On November 14, 2004, Roxanne posted an alternative map, the so-called "purple" map of the United States that broke down Presidential election results by county. This map suggested a rural-urban divide, rather than a North-South split. Along with the purple map, she posted one that detailed the hometowns of service members who had died in the Iraq war. Comparing these maps gave the impression that counties from which large numbers of men and women had died in Iraq were far more likely to favor Senator John Kerry.

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