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# Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition

Catherine E. Lamb

Current discussion of feminist approaches to teaching composition emphasizes the writer's ability to find her own voice through open-ended, exploratory, often autobiographical, writing in which she assumes a sympathetic audience. These approaches are needed and appropriate: they continue to show us the richness and diversity of women's voices. My intent in this essay is to suggest a means by which one can enlarge the sphere of feminist composition by including in it an approach to argument, ways to proceed if one is in conflict with one's audience—in other words, the beginning of a feminist theory of composition. The place to start is not with particular forms—those close off options too easily—but by understanding the range of power relationships available to a writer and her readers. One then determines which are consistent with the emphasis on cooperation, collaboration, shared leadership, and integration of the cognitive and affective which is characteristic of feminist pedagogy (Schniedewind 170-79). This line of exploration has taken me to the study of negotiation and mediation, and how these well-established forms of oral discourse can be adapted for a feminist composition class. Argument still has a place, although now as a means, not an end. The end—a resolution of conflict that is fair to both sides—is possible even in the apparent one-sidedness of written communication.

## Broadening the Scope of Feminist Modes of Discourse

Much has now been written about women writing and feminist modes of discourse. To illustrate representative approaches, I have selected two essays that have appeared recently in composition journals—one by Elizabeth Flynn describing patterns in women's narratives; the other by Clara Juncker playing out some of the implications if one applies French feminists' theories in the classroom, especially those of Hélène Cixous. Neither pretends to be an ex-

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haustive treatment of the subject. However, because both deal in the content and form that we have come to associate with the broad topic of women and writing, one could quite easily get the idea that these are the only areas in which feminist composition has a contribution to make.

In "Composing as a Woman," Elizabeth Flynn uses what we know about gender differences in social and psychological development to interpret the content of narratives her students wrote. The four essays she uses, two by women and two by men, are not meant to be definitive proof that women write one way and men another, but rather to show that the connections between psychological theory and narrative content are there and may illuminate each other. Her findings are not surprising: women write "stories of interaction, of connection, or of frustrated connection"; men write "stories of achievement, of separation, or of frustrated achievement" (428). This essay and one which followed it fourteen months later, "Composing 'Composing as a Woman': A Perspective on Research," emphasize the open-ended, provisional nature of Flynn's thinking—another quality that has come to be associated with (and prized in) feminist composition.

What I have learned from Flynn's essay and others like it helps me when I am working with women students and reading some literature by women. I need something else, though, if I am to develop a comprehensive approach to feminist composition, guidelines that could be used throughout a course, including the emphasis I used to give argument as a mode in which one's goal is to persuade another to one's point of view. I would also like to be as free as possible from the charge of essentialism, to which an essay like Flynn's is vulnerable. A feminist composition class could easily be a place where matriarchal forms are as oppressive as the patriarchal ones once were, even if in different ways.

Clara Juncker's essay "Writing (with) Cixous" is quite a different piece, written in the exuberant manner of the theorists whose work she is describing. Like them, she is much less interested in women as gendered beings possessing certain characteristics (a possible extension of Flynn's argument) than she is in "woman" as a feminine linguistic position from which to critique phallogocentrism, "the fantasy of a central, idealized subject and the phallus as signifier of power and authority" (425). If this order is dislocated, students may be able to find their own voices on the margins. Playing with language, as well as stressing pre-writing and revision, can sensitize students to the open-endedness of writing. And if they read material sufficiently outrageous, they are more likely to empathize with otherness, whether "racially, politically, sexually, herstorically" (433).

With Flynn's essay, in spite of its value, I see its potential for reductiveness. My concerns with Juncker's essay are theoretical and practical in a different way. I admire the energy in her essay and, having heard her read a shortened version of it at CCCC in 1988, I don't doubt she is able to convey the same to her students. But after the disruptions, then what? I can imagine

an essay written this way that is every bit as combative as the masculinist discourse we are seeking to supplant. Further, how can students take these forms and use them in other classes or in the world of work? If we are serious about the feminist project of transforming the curriculum and even affecting the way students think, write, and act once they leave us, we need an approach to teaching composition that is more broadly based and accessible to our students.

Without such a framework, we are also left battling the dichotomies that Cynthia Caywood and Gillian Overing identify in the introduction to their anthology *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity*. Noting that “the model of writing as product is inherently authoritarian,” they continue, “certain forms of discourse and language are privileged: the expository essay is valued over the exploratory; the argumentative essay set above the autobiographical; the clear evocation of a thesis preferred to a more organic exploration of a topic; the impersonal, rational voice ranked more highly than the intimate, subjective one” (xii). I don’t know anyone who would deny that these dichotomies exist and are evaluated in the manner described. Neither do I deny the value of continuing to emphasize and explore the potentials of the categories in the second half of each of these dichotomies, as do Flynn and Juncker, along with the contributors to this anthology. We need as well, however, to consider a feminist response to conflict, at the very least to recast the terms of the dichotomy so that “argumentation” is opposed not to “autobiography” but, perhaps, to “mediation.”

One half of the problem I am addressing is the narrow range of feminist composition as defined so far. The other is its incompatibility with the values of what I am calling here “monologic argument,” the way most (all?) of us were taught to conceptualize arguments: what we want comes first, and we use the available means of persuasion to get it, in, one hopes, ethical ways. We may acknowledge the other side’s position but only to refute it. We also practice what we were taught. Keith Fort, in a 1975 essay that uses language we have come to expect in feminist critiques, sees stating a thesis as a competitive act, a way to claim mastery over the subject matter. Similar competition may be generated between the reader and the text (179).<sup>1</sup> More recently, Olivia Frey demonstrates that the antagonism in our writing is much more overt than Fort implies. Using a sample that included all the essays published in *PMLA* from 1975 to 1988 as well as articles in a variety of other professional journals, she found some version of the “adversarial method” in all but two of the essays she examined (512). We have uncritically assumed there is no other way to write—at least that attitude was present in much of the discussion about ways to respond to conflict at the 1990 Wyoming Conference on English. Even a text like Gregory Clark’s *Dialogue, Dialectic, and Conversation*, which does a superb job of laying out the theory for a cooperative, collaborative approach to writing and reading that is consistent with much of what I shall present later in this essay, sees the act of writing as by definition au-

thoritarian in an even broader sense than do Caywood and Overing. Thus, it is the reader, not the writer, who has the primary responsibility for how a text functions in a community (see especially 49–59). Ideally, wouldn't we want the reader *and* the writer to share that responsibility?<sup>2</sup>

If we as teachers pass on without reflection what we have been taught and ourselves practice concerning argument, whether the rest of our pedagogy intends it or not, we are contributing to education as "banking," Paulo Freire's metaphor for education that is an act of "depositing" information into students who are only to receive and have no say in what or how something is taught (58–59). We are doing so because we are teaching students to form "banking" relationships with their readers, resisting dialogue, which, for Freire, means they are precluded from any possibility of naming the world, the essential element of being human (76). One of my first-year students this past year knew at some basic level what Freire was talking about when he described himself as a writer at the beginning of the semester: "For myself writing as a whole is not very important. . . . I would much rather interact with someone by voice rather than writing. Writing is one-sided where no argument or opinion from others can be intervened."

In my discussion thus far of monologic argument, I have intentionally avoided associating it with classical rhetoric, especially Aristotle's. While the connections can surely be made and have been for more than two thousand years, recent scholarship is much more likely to explore ways in which both Plato and Aristotle comment on the social, dialogical context in which knowledge is acquired and exchanged. (See, for example, chapter 2 in Clark, "Rhetoric in Dialectic: The Functional Context of Writing.") Here, I wish only to remind readers of some of those connections without discussing them in detail. The feminist alternatives I am advocating do not follow necessarily, but they are clearly consistent with them. With respect to Plato, what is most important is the example of his dialogues themselves illustrating the dialectic he is advocating, even though the goal, immutable truth, may not be one we share. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates criticizes writing (in writing), seeing it as something static which inhibits dialectic (95–103). However one interprets his condemnation,<sup>3</sup> the dissonance resulting from an attack on writing itself, also made directly by Plato in *Letter VII* (136), contributes to the dialectic. Aristotle is much more explicitly connected to monologic argument, especially if one stops at his definition of rhetoric as no more than dealing with "the available means of persuasion," a set of techniques to be used. Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede have refuted the contradictory claims that Aristotelian rhetoric over-emphasizes the logical and is manipulative ("On Distinctions"), making use of William Grimaldi's work on Aristotle. Grimaldi maintains that in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* one person is speaking to another *as a person*; the rhetor's task is to put before the audience the means by which the audience can make up his or her mind, but it is then up to the audience to decide. The enthymeme is most often cited by these writers and others as illustrating Aristo-

tle's recognition of the proper use of both reason and emotion. The speaker, in constructing an enthymeme, must take the audience into account since it is the audience who supplies the unstated premise. As Lloyd Bitzer says, the audience in effect persuades itself (408).

## A Feminist Theory of Power

While it is helpful to view Plato and Aristotle in the ways I have just summarized, neither provides ways to get to concrete alternatives to monologic argument. Considering writer/reader relationships in the context of a feminist theory of power allows us to see more clearly the disjuncture between monologic argument and the modes of discourse advocated by Flynn and Juncker. It also provides a framework for evaluating any alternatives to resolving conflict. Because the emphasis is on values available to men as well as women, essentialist aspects of this approach are minimized.

In an earlier essay, I note that we understand power in a common-sense way as "the ability to affect what happens to someone else" (100). Monologic argument fits in here easily. There are, however, a number of feminist theorists who view power not as a quality to exercise on others, but as something which can energize, enabling competence and thus reducing hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> More than thirty years ago, Hannah Arendt, in her discussion of "action" in *The Human Condition*, showed us what this use of power might look like. She wrote about the *polis* in classical Greece, in which rhetoric as a spoken art, and therefore argument, would have functioned to maintain the *polis* as she describes it. Its essential character is not its physical boundaries, but "the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose" (198). Power maintains this space in which people act and speak: no single person can possess it (as an individual can possess strength). It "springs up" when people act together and disappears when they separate. This sort of power is limitless; it can, therefore, "be divided without decreasing it, and the interplay of powers with their checks and balances is even liable to generate more power" (200–01). I am reminded here of Bakhtin's familiar image of the carnival as the place where hierarchy is suspended and with it the distance between people (e.g., *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 122–26). The image is much less dignified than Arendt's idealized description of the *polis*, but the impulse that drives and sustains them is, I believe, the same.

In discussing Dostoyevsky's world view, Bakhtin says its governing principle is "To affirm someone else's 'I' not as an object but as another subject" (10). Some feminist theorists contribute to articulating how such a relationship might develop through insights gained from studying women's experience. They are arguing from what has come to be called a "feminist standpoint," defined by Sara Ruddick as "a superior vision produced by the

political conditions and distinctive work of women" (129). The superiority of the standpoint derives from the manner in which it is acquired. An oppressed group, in this case, women, gains knowledge only through its struggle with the oppressor, men, who have no need to learn about the group they are oppressing. With this experience, women's knowledge has at least the potential to be more complete than men's (Harding, "Conclusion" 184–85). There are, admittedly, dangers in using standpoint theory: It can imply the moral superiority of women, easily become essentialist,<sup>5</sup> and ignore the reality that many of the qualities we ascribe to women can just as accurately be called non-Western—possibilities that my anthropologist friends have pointed out to me and that Harding notes in a later essay ("Instability" 29–30). I continue to use this approach, however, because of the teaching power of concrete experience reflected on, to which the success of a book like Belenky et al.'s *Women's Ways of Knowing* is eloquent testimony.

The most complete feminist discussion of the thought and action which makes possible the use of power described above, in individual relationships as well as those between nations, is Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking*. Ruddick deliberately uses "maternal" because women still have most of the responsibility for raising children; mothering work, she says, can be done as well by men as by women (xi). One need not be a biological parent either. I want to summarize the main features of maternal thinking and then apply them to writer/reader relationships. (They are also readily applicable to teacher/student relationships—but that is another essay. One of the pleasures of teaching this approach to conflict resolution is that it invites attention to the congruence between what and how one teaches.) Central to the idea and experience of maternal thinking is "attentive love, or loving attention" (120). Loving attention is much like empathy, the ability to think or feel as the other. In connecting with the other, it is critical that one already has and retains a sense of one's self. The process requires, ultimately, more recognition and honoring of difference than it does searching for common ground. The vulnerability of the child, combined with the necessity for it and the mother to grow and change, place apparently contradictory demands on the relationship. On the one hand, maternal work requires an attitude of "holding," in which the mother does what is necessary to protect the child without unduly controlling it. On the other hand, she must continually welcome change if she is to foster growth (78–79, 89–93, 121–23).

In the second half of her book, Ruddick shows how maternal thinking can be applied to conflict resolution more generally. One begins by recognizing that equality often does not exist in relationships; even with this reality, individuals or groups in unequal relationships do not have to resort to violence to resolve conflicts. Making peace in this context requires both "giving and receiving while remaining in connection" (180–81). In *Composing a Life*, a discussion of the shaping of five women's lives, Mary Catherine Bateson reflects on these asymmetrical, interdependent relationships and how ill-prepared we

are to function in them. Typically, we value symmetrical relationships—buddies and colleagues—which happen also to promote competition. Instead of honoring difference, which makes interdependence possible (both are qualities which “loving attention” cultivates), we want to reduce difference to inequality (102–06).

Monologic argument, even at its best, inevitably separates itself very quickly from the qualities I have just described because of its subject/object, I/it orientation. As I shall demonstrate later, where we still need this kind of argument is at the early stages of resolving a conflict, where both parties need to be as clear as possible about what they think and feel. Our students need to learn it for their survival in other contexts, and, more fundamentally, as part of the process of becoming adults. It promotes differentiation, the sense of self that Ruddick says must precede maternal thinking or integration more generally. This essay is itself a kind of monologic argument because I am asking readers to consider a different (and better, I believe) approach to resolving conflicts in writing. For any change to occur, however, readers first need to know what it is I am proposing.

At this point, readers might be thinking of Rogerian argument as an alternative to monologic argument. In it, the writer goes to great lengths to show the audience that he understands their point of view and the values behind it. The hope is that the audience, feeling less threatened, will do the same. My experience using Rogerian argument and teaching it to my students, is that it is feminine rather than feminist. It has always been women’s work to understand others (at Albion, it is women, not men, who sign up for *The Psychology of Men*); often that has been at the expense of understanding self. Rogerian argument has always felt too much like giving in. (In “Feminist Responses to Rogerian Argument,” Phyllis Lassner makes these points and others about the difficulties of using Rogerian argument, and the hostilities it may arouse in users, especially if they do not yet have a clear sense of self.)

### Mediation and Negotiation as Alternatives

What we need as an alternative to the self-assertiveness of monologic argument is not self-denial but an approach which cultivates the sense of spaciousness Arendt describes in the working of the *polis*. My very brief comments on Plato and Aristotle were intended as another way of saying they are concerned with knowledge as something that people do together rather than something anyone possesses (Gage 156). In a reversal of Bacon’s dictum, we could say that Arendt’s notion of power makes possible knowledge realized this way. We are ready now to apply this relationship of knowledge and power more specifically to a conflict situation. In it, both parties can retain the interdependence that permits connectedness while also going through the giving and receiving necessary if they are to resolve their conflict. The result is a



paradoxical situation where the distance between writer and audience is lessened (as they explore the dimensions of the conflict together) while the "space" in which they are operating has enlarged because they see more possibilities (Lamb 102-03). Jim Corder, in "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love," also asks us to visualize the writer/audience relationship in terms of physical space. Argument, he says, is too often a matter of "presentation" and "display." Instead, it should just "be." Rather than objectifying the other, we need to "emerge" toward it. In a corollary to the idea of creating more space in which writer and audience can operate, he says we should expect to have to "pile time" into our arguments: we can do so by relying less on closed, packaged forms and more on narratives that show who we are and what our values are (26-31).

When I read Fisher and Ury's *Getting to Yes*, a layperson's version of how the process of negotiation works, I saw that here were some new (to me, as a composition teacher) ways of thinking about argument and conflict resolution. I later attended a seminar on mediation and have mediated cases of sexual harassment at Albion, as one of the people designated by the College to hear these complaints. What quickly became apparent, in both negotiation and mediation, is that the goal has changed: it is no longer to win but to arrive at a solution in a just way that is acceptable to both sides. Necessarily, the conception of power has changed as well: from something that can be possessed and used on somebody to something that is available to both and has at least the potential of being used for the benefit of both. When negotiation and mediation are adapted for a writing class, talk is still central for either process. Writing marks critical stages but cannot occur without conversation that matters, before and after. With all of the currently fashionable and often obscure discourse about writing as dialogue, here is a simple, concrete way of actually doing it.

Central to understanding this broadened and re-focused "practice" of power—how it creates more space and the possibility for loving attention—is articulating the place of conflict in it. As a culture, we learn much more about how to repress or ignore conflict than how to live with and transform it. When we practice and teach monologic argument as an end, we are teaching students that conflict can be removed by an effort that is fundamentally one-sided. Morton Deutsch, in *The Resolution of Conflict*, reminds us that conflicts arise in order that tensions between antagonists might be resolved. They can be healthy ways of finding a new stability and of clarifying values and priorities (9), especially if both parties participate in the resolution in ways that are mutually satisfactory. Negotiation and mediation are *cooperative* approaches to resolving conflicts that increase the chances of these goals occurring. They focus on the future, not the past (as does the law), and seek to restore trust between the two parties. A win-lose orientation encourages narrowness and a wish to use resources only for the goal one has already identified. Deutsch notes that the outcomes of a cooperative approach are those

which encourage creative problem-solving: "openness, lack of defensiveness, and full utilization of available resources" (363). Negotiation and mediation are also *collaborative*, with both parties using the process to identify interests and outcomes they share. (See Clark, xvi, for distinctions between cooperation and dialogue on the one hand and collaboration and dialectic on the other.) Finally, both cooperation and collaboration are facilitated by negotiation and mediation as *structured* forms of conflict resolution. The point is important, for the guidelines which provide the structure are the mechanism whereby space between the two parties can be increased, making it possible for the distance between them to lessen as they move toward each other.

Negotiation as it is described in *Getting to Yes* begins with a recognition that focusing on the particularities of the *positions* of both parties will get them nowhere. Instead, identifying underlying *interests or issues* is a way to get at root causes of the problem as well as seeing where there might be common ground. The parties brainstorm a number of possible solutions, evaluating them using criteria both sides can accept. For Fisher and Ury, the ideal outcome is to reach a solution to which both sides can unequivocally answer "yes." Mediation extends and elaborates the process of negotiation with the introduction of an impartial third party. The nature of the outcome is still the responsibility of the disputants, as is carrying out the settlement. The parties in a dispute often appeal to a mediator when they believe they cannot resolve the conflict themselves. The presence of a mediator is also extremely valuable if there is a power imbalance between the two parties, as with, in my experience, cases of sexual harassment involving a student and professor. One of the mediator's main functions, especially at the beginning, is collecting information: What are the problems for each side? What are the interests these problems reflect? Where are the areas of agreement? What are the outcomes each side wants? The mediator's goal is a written agreement, which all parties sign, consisting of concrete statements describing actions both parties will take to resolve the conflict.<sup>6</sup>

I am not yet prepared to recommend one process of conflict resolution over the other in a composition classroom. Mediation may be somewhat more accessible because the roles of negotiator and disputant are separate. I have also taught both only in upper-level writing courses, negotiation in Advanced Expository Writing and mediation in Technical Writing. (I originally used mediation in Technical Writing because a good mediation agreement is also a model of good technical writing: its function is instrumental, and it must be straightforward, concrete, and unambiguous.) In both courses, the pedagogy is feminist, but only in the expository writing class do I use the theoretical orientation I describe in this paper as a guiding principle for the entire course. Here, I shall describe my use of mediation first to show how the roles operate separately. It also illustrates how a traditional-looking, writing-as-product piece of discourse actually functions quite differently because of the context out of which it comes.

Students work in groups of three, deciding what problem they will work with and who will take what role. Projects come from their reading or current college issues. Last semester, they were as disparate as mediating a property settlement between Donald and Ivana Trump and a dispute between the Inter-Fraternity Council and the administration at Albion College over the social function fraternities serve on campus. Much of the training for being a mediator (or a disputant) goes on in role plays. Of the many skills a mediator needs, I concentrate on just a few: getting as complete a picture as possible from both sides, separating the facts of the situation from the issues, and getting the parties they are working with to come up with as many options as possible in the process of arriving at a solution.

The first piece of writing is one they do individually after they have met several times as a group. If they are one of the disputants, they write a memo to the mediator in which they explain the problem as they see it, including an attempt to separate the immediate ways in which the problem has exhibited itself from the underlying issues or interests. They gain more from the experience if they are willing to take on a role opposite from their own actual position: a fraternity member representing the administration; or a woman playing a man whose spouse has just been offered a high-paying position hundreds of miles away—accepting it would mean serious disruptions in the family and in his career. If a student is the mediator, he or she writes a memo to a supervisor, summarizing the issues for both parties as they appear at that point. Here, all three are using the analytical skills we associate with monologic argument, although not with the goal of persuasion. The memos are part of what will give the mediator a sense of the dimensions of the conflict. For the disputants, they act to “pile time.” All of these actions encourage maternal thinking, which is especially desirable between the mediator and both disputants; one hopes it also occurs between the disputants by the end of the process. The second piece of writing is the mediation agreement itself, which all three prepare together. Here are two of ten clauses in an agreement the Inter-Fraternity/administration group reached to resolve their differences:

1. Fraternities agree to restrict the number of house parties to two per semester for the spring 1990 and fall 1990 terms.
2. The administration agrees to begin free shuttle services to cities (Ann Arbor and Lansing) to widen the available social possibilities.

All these pieces of writing in the mediation process are products and not, as will be seen in the discussion of negotiation, a record of a process. Because of the interaction that must occur, particularly when the agreement is being developed, and because everyone involved is both writer and audience, I am not willing to accept Caywood and Overing's judgment that “writing as product is inherently authoritarian.” The group's inventing has quite literally been a collaborative, social act, as Karen LeFevre has urged us to see invention more

generally (see especially 35–40). Developing and carrying out a mediation agreement is clearly an illustration of what Arendt is getting at when she describes how power works, a point LeFevre also makes. The mediator and disputants, acting together in good faith, can move beyond the conflict that divides them. They are likely to have the experience described by one of the professionals Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede interviewed for their book on collaborative writing, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*: “Working with someone else gives you another point of view. There is an extra voice inside your head; that can make a lot of difference” (29). If, however, one disputant pulls out, or the mediator gives up her neutrality, the energizing power is gone.

When I teach negotiation, it, like mediation, comes in the second half of the course when students trust me and one another and are accustomed to working in groups on various projects. Many of the features of teaching mediation (sources for topics, how to do the training, using writing in different ways at various stages of the process) apply as well to negotiation. Students work in pairs, selecting an issue of some substance in which they are both interested and which will require outside research. Individually, they each write a paper in which they take a contrasting position on the issue. I expect a monologic argument in the best sense of that term. Students see they cannot hope to negotiate a solution with integrity unless they are first clear about the characteristics and values of the viewpoint they are presenting, especially critical if it is one with which they do not agree. When the students have finished the first paper, I meet with the pairs to discuss their arguments. Sometimes, students on their own will take the initiative to begin negotiating a resolution during the conference, ignoring me. We can all then see the process occurring; their next essay, which they write together, is a record of it. They have little trouble differentiating the effect of reading it, its greater sense of spaciousness, from the much more linear effect of reading a monologic argument. The most common form of resolution is some kind of compromise, for example, merit pay for teachers, with the conditions limiting its application making it acceptable to its opponents. (The dynamics of power between the students working together are something I have not yet tried to identify in any systematic way. My impression, from anecdotal evidence, is that most pairs function in a fairly egalitarian way. Of course, they also know that’s what I want to hear them say.)

Taking together my discussion of mediation and negotiation, these several features of a feminist alternative to monologic argument are apparent: (1) Knowledge is seen as cooperatively and collaboratively constructed (what the groups have created has come out of the relationships among their members). (2) The “attentive love” of maternal thinking is present at least to some degree (or they would not have been able to come up with a solution acceptable to both of them). (3) The writing which results is likely to emphasize process. (4) Finally, overall, power is experienced as mutually enabling.

These forms, along with the contexts in which they are produced, may also

be ways to respond to Lunsford and Ede's call for written discourse which reflects dialogic collaboration in the texts themselves (*Singular* 136). They will not necessarily be of interest to all feminists. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, among the best known feminist collaborators, have said in a public discussion that they do not see any particular value to writing in a way that would reflect their collaboration and, by extension, more overtly invite the reader into the text. For those of us who *are* interested, these forms show how the writing of a text need not be "an inherently unethical act" (Clark 61), saved only by its readers and their responses. The forms are expressions of writer/reader relationships which reflect an understanding of power consistent with feminist values. As we use them, the forms themselves will change to mirror our evolving understanding of what we are constructing. *We can* move beyond argument. It may not even be foolish to hope for a time when wanting to do so is beyond argument.

## Notes

1. Fort's essay is cited by William Covino in *The Art of Wondering*. Fort's solution for the critical essay is to recommend "process criticism," where one might explore the correctness of a particular thesis rather than begin with it and show only how the work being analyzed fits. Fort notes that, to some extent, such essays are about the *process* of criticism; in the same way, the form I have students use when they are using negotiation as an alternative to argument is about the process of negotiation.

2. S. Michael Halloran works under assumptions similar to Clark's in "Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse." He is arguing for returning the practice of teaching public discourse to our teaching of rhetoric (a goal I support, as does Clark, for the ways it would reinforce the social function of writing). Although the form of the discourse is not his major concern, the examples he gives all assume a debate model of interaction.

3. For examples of the range of interpretations possible, see Ronna Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus*, in which she argues for Plato's developing a "philosophic art of writing"; Jasper Neel, on the other hand, in *Plato, Derrida, and Writing*, argues that Plato is not using writing but trying to "use it up," appropriating both Socrates's voice and then his means of expression (1-29). Walter Ong, in *Orality and Literacy*, is more relaxed. He notes that Plato's criticisms of writing are the same that were made with the advent of printing and now of computers (979).

4. In addition to the theorists discussed in this essay, I also refer to Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, and Elizabeth Janeway, *Powers of the Weak*. Another important source is Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power*.

5. I invite readers to consider whether Ruddick's approach as I go on to summarize it is essentialist. Perhaps in the final analysis it is, although in her book she goes to considerable lengths to discuss varieties of mothering experiences. The potential oppression of any essentialist features is also reduced because the process she describes is available to men as well as women and has as its hallmark a deep respect for the other as person.

6. I have taken this very abbreviated description of the mediation process from Christopher Moore, *The Mediation Process*, and from the *Mediator Training Manual for Face-to-Face Mediation* (Boston: Department of Attorney General, 1988), used at the Mediation Institute taught each spring at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst by staff of the Mediation Project.

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### Wyoming Conference on English June 24-28, 1991

We are pleased to announce the invited speakers for the 20th Wyoming Conference on English, *Writing and Teaching in the Material World*. Invited speakers include David Bartholomae, University of Pittsburgh; Stephen Greenblatt, University of California-Berkeley; Susan Howe, poet and critic; Patricia Nelson Limrick, University of Colorado-Boulder; Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Syracuse University. For Conference information, write Bruce Richardson, Conference Director, The Wyoming Conference on English, Dept. of English, P.O. Box 3353, Laramie, WY 82071-3353.

### JAC Announces Kinneavy and Winterowd Award Winners

The **James L. Kinneavy Award** for the most outstanding essay of 1989 published in JAC was awarded to David Bleich for "Genders of Writing," an expansion of the notion of genre using feminist perspectives.

Susan Miller received the first annual **W. Ross Winterowd Award** for the most outstanding book on composition theory for *Rescuing the Subject: A Critical Introduction to Rhetoric and the Writer* (Southern Illinois UP, 1989), and Charles Bazerman received an honorable mention for *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science* (U of Wisconsin P, 1988).

These awards were generously endowed by Professors Kinneavy and Winterowd and reflect their ongoing commitment to scholarship in rhetoric and composition. The awards include a cash prize and an attractive framed citation and are presented each year during the Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition meeting at the CCCC Convention.

Send nominations for the 1990 **W. Ross Winterowd Award** by January 1991 to Gary A. Olson, editor, *Journal of Advanced Composition*; Department of English; University of South Florida; Tampa, FL 33620-5550.