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"FEMININE STYLE" AND POLITICAL JUDGMENT IN THE RHETORIC OF ANN RICHARDS

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Attention to feminist rhetorical artifacts and feminist methods of analysis has burgeoned in recent years (Campbell, 1988, 1991; Carter and Spitzack, 1989; Condit, 1988; Dobris, 1989; Spitzack and Carter, 1987; Vonnegut, 1992). In traditional rhetorical analysis, such attention has focused primarily on rhetorical criticism of female rhetors in feminist movements. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's (1989) recent publication of a collection of analyses of rhetoric from the historical feminist movement is perhaps the most visible example of this trend, although it is buttressed by several individual studies in scholarly journals and edited collections (e.g., Campbell, 1987; Conrad, 1981a, 1981b; Dow, 1991; Japp, 1985; Solomon, 1991).

The general purpose of these studies has been to explicate rhetorical strategies used by feminist rhetors to gain access to traditional modes of political power, primarily suffrage. Consequently, such studies have instantiated a liberal feminist orientation; that is, the goals of rhetors studied have been to gain equity for women within existing political systems, and critics have attempted to explain these goals and the rhetorical processes involved in achieving them. It can be argued that the feminist agenda in rhetorical studies itself also has been primarily liberal-feminist in orientation; a clear goal has been to revise the traditional "great speaker" paradigm to include woman rhetors (e.g., Campbell, 1991). In many cases, the rhetorical concepts, theories, and methods used to analyze feminist rhetoric produce fairly traditional "great speaker" studies, save that the speaker is female (e.g., Campbell, 1989, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9; Dow, 1991; Japp, 1985).

A noteworthy exception to this generalization is Campbell's work on what she has termed "feminine style" (1989, p. 12; see also Campbell, 1973). Campbell's theory of feminine style, developed through her analyses of historical and contemporary feminist rhetors and their distinctive audiences, has provided an alternative critical orientation with which to understand the source, form, and function of female communicative strategies and their effectiveness in feminist movements. While Campbell's conclusions are a major theoretical contribution to the study of public address, we believe that the potential of this contribution has thus far been limited in two ways. First, there has been little attempt to extend the concept beyond the context of feminist social reform. Second, and more important, feminine style primarily has been viewed as simply another, albeit unique and innovative, strategy that serves to empower audiences for the traditional purpose of gaining access to the existing political system.

In this essay, we use the rhetoric of Texas Governor Ann Richards as a case study to extend the application and the implications of feminine style. We make two interrelated claims: 1) Richards' rhetoric illustrates that elements of feminine style are identifiable in mainstream political discourse, and 2) in her rhetoric, feminine style functions not only as a strategy for audience empowerment but as a critique of

traditional grounds for political judgment. We conclude that, in this context, the characteristics of feminine style are part of a synthesis of form and substance that works to promote an alternative political philosophy reflecting traditionally feminine values.[1] While grounded in Campbell's perspective on feminine style, our interpretation also draws upon studies of women's talk in various contexts (Kramarae, 1981; Hall and Langellier, 1988; Maltz and Borker, 1982; Treichler and Kramarae, 1983) as well as on psychological and psychoanalytic perspectives that examine connections between women's experiences and their modes of reasoning (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Wilson Schaef, 1981).

Exploration of this process furthers the feminist agenda in rhetorical criticism by expanding awareness of the philosophical, as well as tactical, implications of feminine style. Moreover, as the agenda for a critical rhetoric develops, the study of rhetorical efforts to create alternative communities and modes of reasoning enhances our understanding of potential resistance to the implicit discourses of power that shape our culture (Charland, 1991, pp. 73–74). We propose that the discursive strategies and modes of argument in Richards' rhetoric be viewed as contributing to what feminist literary critic Rita Felski calls the "feminist counter-public sphere," a concept adapted from Habermas' theory of the bourgeois public sphere. Using this perspective, both the discourse itself and this analysis of it function as contributions to the continued formation of "a discursive space which defines itself in terms of a common identity" but which operates to provide potential for oppositional ideology that counters hegemonic ideas of universality (Felski, 1989, p. 166).

The primary text for this analysis is Richards' 1988 Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention (DNC). Because it deals with the national political climate in a presidential election year, this speech is the broadest and most comprehensive example supporting our claims. We feature another national political address, Richards' speech to the Democratic Issues Conference in January of 1992, for similar reasons. However, to indicate consistency of style and substance, we also support our conclusions with evidence from several of Richards' speeches as State Treasurer of Texas which preceded the 1988 Keynote and from other speeches she gave as Governor of Texas following her election in November of 1990.

Contemporary Feminine Style

Campbell traces the development and appeal of feminine style to the common experiences of women in the process of craft-learning. In this context, she argues, women developed particular capacities for concrete and contingent reasoning, for reliance on personal experience, and for participatory interaction. In a rhetorical situation, these attributes produce discourse that displays a personal tone, uses personal experience, anecdotes and examples as evidence, exhibits inductive structure, emphasizes audience participation, and encourages identification between speaker and audience (Campbell, 1989, p. 13).

We maintain that these characteristics hold true in some contemporary discourse because, while the historical conditions of women have changed in many ways, their primary social roles have not. Women still learn the "crafts" of housewifery and motherhood. Few women still may make soap or weave cloth; nonetheless the traditionally female crafts of emotional support, nurturance, empathy, and concrete reasoning are still familiar requirements of the female role. Moreover, current

research indicates that these specific skills, as well as the way they are learned, may continue to foster development of specific communicative strategies for women. Evidence indicates that most female children are socialized to exhibit the traditional characteristics of their perceived social roles early in life, and that possession of such skills has little to do with whether or not a woman actually becomes a wife or mother (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Ruddick, 1989).

As a result, women are encouraged to exhibit communicative patterns that correspond to the tasks that women are expected to perform in the private sphere, just as men's communication reflects their primary roles in public life. While private, female communication is characterized as concrete, participatory, cooperative, and oriented toward relationship maintenance, public, male communication is characterized as abstract, hierarchical, dominating, and oriented toward problem-solving (Maltz and Borker, 1982; Treichler and Kramarae, 1983).

However, public communication, primarily produced by males, has served as the model for "good" speech. Because women's communicative patterns are associated with their roles in the private sphere of home and family, women have been perceived as ill-suited to the competitive, task-oriented, or deliberative behavior of the public sphere (Kramarae, 1981; Spitzack and Carter, 1987, pp. 407–414).

Understanding this dichotomy is important for evaluating the rhetoric of female political speakers. Female politicians must operate in the ultimate public deliberative context, where feminine communicative strategies would seem least valued and adaptation to typically male communicative patterns would seem most useful. Indeed, Campbell has noted that historical feminist rhetors such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were skilled at adapting to masculine modes of communication when speaking to primarily male audiences in political or judicial contexts (1989, Chapters 6, 7). In a study of contemporary female politicians, Karlyn Campbell and E. Claire Jerry (1988) note the paradoxical demands placed on contemporary female politicians. Attempts to avoid perceptions of masculinity and to be rhetorically effective with public audiences have led these women to synthesize gender expectations by using socially approved rhetorical strategies commonly identified as "masculine"—formal evidence, deductive structure, and linear modes of reasoning—while simultaneously incorporating concerns and qualities typically considered "feminine," such as family values or feminine personae.

The perceived unsuitability of a feminine communicative style for traditional public discourse is supported by Campbell's claim that this style arose as a strategic response to a *non-traditional audience inexperienced in public deliberation*. Campbell stresses that the similarity between characteristics of women's private world of experience and feminine style made the latter particularly effective for powerless female audiences (1989, p. 14; see also Campbell, 1973). However, we believe that to interpret Campbell's conclusions as restricting study of the implications of feminine style to this context is short-sighted. We contend that analysis of contemporary discourse exhibiting feminine style can elide the barriers between private and public discourse, illustrating how feminine style can function to offer alternative modes of political reasoning.

Contemporary Feminine Style in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards

While State Treasurer of Texas, Ann W. Richards emerged as a national political figure with her keynote address at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in

1988. In 1990, she won a close race for Governor of Texas, and she became only the second woman to hold that position. Richards' 1988 Keynote Address prompted recognition of her unusual qualities as a political orator. Most reviewers attributed her non-traditional style, which made use of frequent colloquialisms, personal anecdotes, sharp humor, and family values, to regional influence. Comments included descriptors such as "stemwinder," and "Southernism" (Balzar, 1988, p. 4, 5), and references to the "tradition of Southern storytelling," to her "laconic Texas drawl" and to Richards as "a female Texas good ol' boy" (Applebome, 1988, p. A13).

While Richards' Texas background clearly is reflected in her rhetoric, we suggest that the most useful way to understand the appeal of her discourse is as a manifestation of contemporary feminine style. The synthesis of formal qualities of feminine style evident in Richards' rhetoric (use of narrative, concrete examples, analogies, and anecdotes as primary evidence sources; personal tone, and encouragement of audience participation) with an alternative political philosophy reflecting feminine ideals of care, nurturance, and family relationships functions as a critique of traditional political reasoning that offers alternative grounds for political judgment. We examine three specific aspects of Richards' rhetoric: her process of testing claims for political progress, her privileging of personal grounds for public knowledge, and her creation of a unique rhetor/audience relationship.

Testing Claims With Experience

The dominance of personal anecdotes, concrete examples, and brief narratives in Richards' 1988 address to the Democratic National Convention is perhaps the most visible hallmark of the feminine style. Campbell notes that the use of these types of evidence can function to empower audiences because the generalizations reached from validation of personal experiences lead to the realization that "the personal is political," a process which produces group cohesion and transforms audience members into "agents of change" (Campbell, 1973; Campbell, 1989). We argue that Richards' reliance on such evidence functions in two additional ways: first, it creates an implicit standard for political judgment that is based on the primacy of experiential knowledge and inductive reasoning; second, it explicitly critiques the validity of claims that cannot meet this standard.

Richards' reliance on an experiential standard is evident in the DNC speech, where she is consistent in her application of the standard both to attack the opposition and to praise her own party. Richards moves into the body of her keynote address by initiating her attack on the Republican opposition; she begins the attack inductively by stating simply, "I got a letter last week from a young mother in Lorena, Texas, and I want to read a part of it to you." The letter stresses the practical hardships that Richards will attribute to the policies of the Reagan administration:

> I pray my kids don't have a growth spurt from August to December so I don't have to buy new jeans. We buy clothes at the budget store to have them fray, stretch, and fade in the first wash. . . . We're the people you see every day in the grocery store. We obey the laws, pay our taxes, and fly our flags on holidays. We plod along trying to make it better for ourselves and our children and our parents. . . . I believe people like us have been forgotten in America. (1988b)

At the conclusion of this brief narrative Richards validates the experiential

reasoning of the woman by stating, "Well, of course, you believe you're forgotten. Because you have been" (1988b). With this first example, Richards begins a pattern that privileges concrete experience over traditional deductive reasoning and creates standards for political judgment in which claims are tested against private experience. For example, when criticizing Ronald Reagan's handling of questions about the Iran-Contra affair, she compares his responses to those given by her children: "And when we get our questions asked, or there's a leak, or an investigation, the only answer we get is 'I don't know' or 'I forgot.' But you wouldn't accept an answer like that from your children. I wouldn't. Don't tell me 'you don't know' or 'you forgot'" (1988b).

Reducing a complex issue such as the Iran-Contra affair to a judgment based in parental experience promotes the validity of practical wisdom in testing claims. In this case, Richards highlights a type of wisdom that could be construed as peculiarly feminine. Sara Ruddick argues that women's capacity and preference for concrete reasoning is tied to the contingencies of dealing with the growth of children (1989, p. 96–97), and Nancy Chodorow links women's tendency for "particularistic" thinking with their primary "exercise of influence in face-to-face personal contexts" (1978, p. 180). Richards' transfer of such reasoning to a political context brings feminine reasoning into the public sphere.

While she uses practical wisdom drawn from experience to attack the opposition, Richards is consistent in that she also uses this strategy to praise the values and accomplishments of the Democratic Party. Rather than using veneration of specific party leaders or recitation of general Democratic ideals, she uses practical consequences to evaluate Democratic accomplishments:

> People in rural areas were told that we deserved to have electric lights, and they would harness the energy to give us electricity so that my grandmama didn't have to carry that old coal oil lamp around. They [past Democratic leaders] told us that they were going to guarantee that when we put our money in the bank, that the money was going to be there, and it was going to be insured, and they did what they said. They did not lie to us. (1988b)

Richards' reliance on judgments based in human experience rather than abstract reasoning is also clear in her rhetoric in other contexts. In an address in Texas in 1987, Richards makes clear the importance of the daily human consequences of policy decisions: "I know what it means in human terms when the EMS [Emergency Medical Services] unit cannot get down the road for an emergency call or an elderly heart patient. Those situations . . . come back to haunt you in the wee hours of the night when you feel every ounce of the weight of your responsibility, when you reflect on the human cost of the dollars that were not available" (1987b).

Richards apparently views the ability to see the human factor in a situation as part of a "feminine eye," a perspective suggested in an anecdote she repeats in speeches as Governor:

> Years ago, Eleanor Roosevelt was traveling by train across the United States and she looked out the window and saw a clothes line drooping across the horizon. She made a note in her journal; two children's play suits, a denim work shirt, a pair of faded dungarees, and a plain cotton dress. "Not much to waste here." Others might have seen only the clothes on the line, but Eleanor saw the human beings, the family. It is time for us to open our eyes and truly see the people who live with our politics. (1992a)[2]

The corollary to Richards' use of experiential wisdom as grounds for political judgment and evaluation is her critique of the validity of claims that cannot meet such a standard. In a long passage from the DNC speech, Richards explicitly contrasts a series of claims made by the Reagan administration with the reality that Americans experience:

> Now they tell us that employment rates are great and that they're for equal opportunity, but . . . the opportunity they're so proud of is low-wage, dead end jobs. . . . And there is no major city in America where you cannot see homeless men sitting in a parking lot holding signs that say, "I will work for food." (1988b)

Using one of her trademark colloquialisms, Richards later critiques Republican defense expenditures in a similar fashion: "When our leaders say . . . we need a new weapons system, our inclination is to say, 'Well, they must be right.' But when we pay millions for planes that won't fly [and] billions for tanks that won't fire . . . that old dog won't hunt" (1988b).

In the context Richards creates, "truth" is found in consistency between what is said and what is experienced, and her rhetoric dismisses as invalid those claims that cannot meet this standard. Richards' refusal to trust deductive claims that are divorced from concrete experience is vividly illustrated in an anecdote about federal energy policy from her 1992 Democratic Issues Conference speech to congressional leaders: "Not only did the Federal government allow the market to be flooded with a sea of cheap oil, but they sent the Navy out to escort the tankers, spending billions of dollars to bring oil out of the Middle East. The Defense Department may not like to call it a subsidy . . . but you can put lipstick on a hog and call it Monique . . . and it is still a pig" (1992a).[3] As in the DNC address, the contrast between claims and experience is illustrated repeatedly in this speech, as when Richards notes that "[The people] are told their government is cutting all the fat, but riding past all the new construction of those big government buildings on the way in from the Washington airport, it sure doesn't look that way" (1992a).

Although Richards occasionally makes use of traditional lines of reasoning and impersonal forms of evidence, she promotes inductive reasoning based on experience and examples as the soundest ground for judgment. In an address to lawyers in Texas, she explicitly rejects the privileging of deductive logic in favor of experiential modes: "In thinking about what I might say to you today, I came upon something Oliver Wendell Holmes said, 'The life of the law,' observed Holmes, 'has not been logic. It has been experience.' " (1987c).

As Campbell claims, the strategy of using concrete examples and personal experience is empowering; it encourages audiences' reliance on their own instincts and perceptions of reality, even if these dispute dominant models. However, given this analysis, we believe that this conclusion can be extended to include the potential for feminine style to function philosophically as well as strategically, by creating alternative grounds for testing the validity of claims for public knowledge. This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that Richards' most explicit critiques of traditional political reasoning are found in the DNC address and the address to the Democratic Issues Conference: speeches to political leaders who are in the best position to implement such a philosophy.

Moreover, the alternative standard evident in Richards' rhetoric celebrates quali-

ties regarded as traditionally feminine: the use of experience in testing generalizations, the importance of trusting personal reactions, and the applicability of wisdom from the private sphere of home and family to the public sphere (e.g., "But you wouldn't accept that answer from your children"). Chodorow claims that women's roles involve mediation "between the social and cultural categories which men have defined; they bridge the gap and make transitions . . . between nature [the private sphere] and culture [the public sphere]" (1978, p. 180). Yet because of the paradox facing female politicians and the general devaluing of women's experiences and modes of talk, women in public life are not likely to admit reasoning from feminine experience. Richards' defiance of this constraint, in both form and content, is explored next as we examine her explicit validation of a feminine, personal perspective on political life.

The Personal as Political Philosophy

The use of a personal tone and of personal disclosure are interrelated characteristics of feminine style. The telling of personal experience presupposes a personal attitude toward the subject and a willingness for audience identification, a goal of feminine style (Campbell, 1989, pp. 13–14). However, self-disclosure for the purpose of identification is a widely used strategy, particularly by politicians (See Jamieson, 1988). Yet, Richards' use of personal disclosure to highlight values and experiences peculiar to women's culture makes her use of this strategy distinctive. Moreover, her celebration of women's experiences functions to critique the exclusion of women and women's modes of reasoning from public life and promotes grounds for political judgment that reflect traditionally feminine concerns.

Most striking in this regard is Richards' choice to begin her DNC speech with specific acknowledgement of her gender and to include a direct critique of a political system that has ignored the existence and accomplishments of women: "Twelve years ago, Barbara Jordan, another Texas woman, made the keynote address to this convention, and two women in 160 years is about par for the course. But if you give us a chance, we can perform. After all, Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels" (1988b).

The indictment is less threatening couched in humor, but the humor functions to underscore the fact that women have performed on a level equal to men despite the added obstacles of sex roles ("high heels" and adapting to male leads). In a speech to the Texas "Rising Star" Awards dinner, Richards also begins by alluding humorously to the overlooked accomplishments of women, herself perhaps included: "*Texas Business* magazine produced a real attention-getter in December when its Texan of the Year issue displayed an empty saddle . . . and asked "Why is this saddle empty?" An immodest woman might point [out] that you would have had better luck filling a side-saddle. . . . But *I* would never say that" (1988a).

Richards' humorous jibes both reaffirm sex roles ("high heels," "side-saddle" "immodest woman") and critique them. The good humor that clearly underlies the pointed remarks introduces an element of self-deprecation, shielding Richards from the label of "angry feminist." The personal anecdote about an eighth grade basketball game that follows her opening remarks to the DNC makes this clear: "I thought I looked real cute in my uniform, and then I heard a boy yell from the bleachers, 'Make that basket, bird legs.' My greatest fear is that same guy is

somewhere out in the audience tonight and he's going to cut me down to size" (1988b). Yet the humility implicit here is not a retreat from feminist principles, but an inductive introduction to a section celebrating the value of personal experience in political life. She continues:

> Where I grew up there wasn't much tolerance for self-importance or people who put on airs. I was born during the Depression [and] . . . it was back then that I came to understand the small truths and hardships that bind neighbors together. Those were real people with real problems. And they had real dreams about getting out of the Depression. I can remember summer nights when we'd put down what we called a Baptist pallet, a quilt on the ground, and we listened to the grown-ups talk. . . . They talked about war and Washington and what this country needed—straight talk from people living their lives as best they could. And that's what we'll do tonight. (1988b)

Richards' self-disclosure, and the wisdom she draws from her experience, reflects a quality associated with female culture, where private experiences are shared both to enhance relationships and to create a perspective on the world (Jones, 1980, p. 195). Traditionally, women's primary roles are their private and relational ones (wife, mother, daughter) and not their professional or public ones (Chodorow, 1978, p. 178). Consequently, the lessons learned and later transmitted through stories are grounded in personal experiences, often experiences specific to women in these relational roles (Hall and Langellier, 1988).

Richards' distinctiveness is in her extension of these qualities of private talk to the public sphere, and her promotion of the sharing and personal awareness they entail as necessary for fulfillment of human potential and political progress. An important example of her enactment of this perspective is her willingness to speak publicly about her experiences as a recovered alcoholic. Speaking to the National Conference on Women and Alcoholism, she uses her own life as an example of the possibilities of recovery: "The fact that I hold office and continue to enjoy success that amazes even my parents says something wonderful both about the treatment of chemical addiction and the changing attitudes of our society toward the disease" (1988c).

Richards' specifically addresses the importance of self-awareness for women with a strikingly personal passage from a speech at the commencement of an all-female school in Dallas, where she uses an extended version of the "birdlegs" anecdote that later would appear in her DNC speech:

> At the age of fifty-three, I have long accepted the fact that Birdlegs will *always* be inside with me. And the truth is, she's good to have around. She keeps me honest. . . . But I have learned a few things Birdlegs doesn't know. She doesn't know that almost everyone is as insecure as she is. She doesn't know that she's just as smart as she will allow herself to be. And Birdlegs certainly doesn't know that she is in charge of her life. She still believes in Movie Romance and Daily Miracles. Birdlegs still believes that if she uses just the right combination of mysterious potions from the make-up counter and practices sounding terribly sophisticated, she will attract the interest of a rich, Italian count with a faint aura of danger about him—and he will eventually devote himself to catering to her every whim. Ann is fairly certain that isn't true. . . . Birdlegs even believes that there are great mysteries in life that only a select group of people understand. She thinks that if she can just work her way up high enough and far enough, she will be led into a great boardroom in the sky where the clouds will part and important men will reveal to her the secret of making big things happen. Ann *knows* that isn't true. That eighth grade basketball player is still frozen in time. Ann isn't. And neither are you. (1987a)

While Richards demonstrates her susceptibility to the common fantasies of women in a humorous fashion, the narrative has a more complex function than levity. Rather, Richards' self-disclosure and self-deprecation celebrate the strength and self-awareness gained through mature introspection. The contents of the narrative are experiences peculiar to women, which Richards' comfortingly validates for this female audience. However, the moral of the tale is psychological survival, which she explicitly shares and enacts in the same address: "[T]he small voice of self-doubt will always be there in some form or another. But, over the years, you learn to talk back to it. . . . [L]et me tell you that you *will* survive. If nothing else, I serve as living physical proof of it" (1987a).

One of Richards' most explicit statements of the distinctiveness and value of female experience and modes of expression comes in a speech to a group of female lawyers:

> I hope we all accepted long ago that women and men are different. . . . The most sympathetic and sensitive of our men friends, no matter how hard he tries, cannot hear with a woman's ear or process information through a woman's experience. . . . The experience is different. The perspective is different. The knowing is different. We see it many ways in our society now—and I see it often in policy deliberations. . . . When I am part of a meeting . . . the nature of the discussion changes, because I am a woman. . . . When you add someone whose understanding is not intellectual, but instinctive—the whole equation changes. Their presence creates a confrontation with the obvious, a close encounter with reality. (1987c)[5]

In this statement, there is recognition of the concrete nature of women's thinking ("close encounter with reality") that creates "instinctive" (versus "intellectual") understanding. This analysis of women's perspective also reflects a dominant thread in Richards' rhetoric: the value of inclusion versus separation and categorization, a theme we return to later.

Although not as explicit, the elevation of a feminine perspective is clearly present in her DNC address as well where she develops a framework of feminine values: nurturing, care, and family relationships, as the model for measuring progress. As in her critique of reasoning described above, her promotion of these values includes a devaluation of actions that exclude them.

Female Experience and the Ethic of Care

Chodorow maintains that the development of female children stresses "particularistic and affective relationships to others" tied to identification with the mother (1978, p. 176). As females mature, they attach value to connections with others in a way that male children, whose learning privileges differentiation from others in a process stressing abstract and categorical dimensions of the masculine role, do not (Chodorow, 1978, p. 176–77). The result is that women's roles "share a concern with the crossing of boundaries" while men's identity encourages separation from others and a reproduction of categorical definitions (Chodorow, 1978, p. 180) Ann Wilson Schaef describes "the essence of female life" for women as "relationships—not relationships that define and validate, but relationships with the self, one's work, and the universe that nurture and grow. Not static relationships that are neatly categorized and packaged, but relationships that evolve and change, contract and expand. A process of relationships" (1981, p. 113). In the DNC speech, Richards'

critique of opposition values and her creation of an alternative paradigm for political progress reflect these distinctions.

Criticizing the Republican administration for employing divisive political strategies and as divorced from ordinary concerns, she lays the groundwork for her development of an alternative framework stressing connection, empathy, and familial concerns. She uses metaphor to describe what she calls the "political theory" of "divide and conquer": "This Republican administration treats us as if we were pieces of a puzzle that can't fit together. They've tried to put us into compartments and separate us from each other. . . . We've been isolated. . . . And in our isolation we think government isn't going to help us, and that we're alone in our feelings" (1988b). As an alternative, Richards' offers a vision of communal interests and connectedness produced by Democratic leaders of the past:

> Now, I'm going to tell you, I'm really glad that our young people missed the Depression and missed the great big war. But I do regret that they missed the leaders that I knew. Leaders who told us when things were tough and that we would have to sacrifice, and that these difficulties might last awhile. They didn't tell us things were hard for us because we were different or isolated or special interests. They brought us together and they gave us a sense of national purpose. (1988b)

Noteworthy here is Richards' attribution of the value of connectedness, prefaced by an acknowledgement of the particular importance of this lesson for young people. Richards' implicit use of a family metaphor here (young people would learn from the examples of their elders) runs throughout the address as she repeatedly returns to issues of care, nurturance, and the values learned from relationships.

Praising leaders who "want us to be all that we can be" (1988b), she implicitly links leadership to the feminine responsibility for fostering growth and development (Ruddick, Chapter 4). This connection becomes more explicit as she immediately lauds Jesse Jackson as such a leader, who "has taught us that we are as good as our capacity for caring. Caring about the drug problem, caring about crime, caring about education and caring about each other." The failure of Ronald Reagan to meet this standard of care is expressed through metonymy: "Now, in contrast, the greatest nation in the free world has had a leader for eight straight years that has pretended that he cannot hear our questions over the noise of the helicopter." Richards' critique of Republican disregard for the needs of the people extends to George Bush: "And, for eight straight years, George Bush hasn't displayed the slightest interest in anything we care about" (1988b).

Carol Gilligan notes that, as women "define themselves in a context of human relationships," they "judge themselves in terms of their ability to care" (1982, p. 17). Richards extends the ethic of care to serve as grounds for political judgment; in essence, she takes a feminine value from the private sphere and asserts its relevance in the public world of politics. At the end of the body of the DNC speech, Richards sums up the conclusion to be drawn from her interpretation of America's political culture when she notes "what this election is really all about. It's about the American dream. Those who want to keep it for the few, and those of us who know it must be *nurtured and passed along*" (1988b) [our emphasis].

Perhaps the ultimate expression of feminine style and the philosophy that underlies it emerges in the extended narrative that serves as Richards' conclusion to the DNC speech. Weaving together self-disclosure and concrete examples, Richards

returns to the themes of the story of her childhood in Texas that began the speech, and she creates a paradigm for political progress that stresses the connections, nurturance, and family relationships that govern female life:

> I'm a grandmother now. And I have one nearly perfect granddaughter named Lily. And when I hold that grandbaby, I feel the continuity of life that unites us, that binds generation to generation, that ties us with each other. . . . As I look at Lily, I know that it is within our families that we learn both the need to respect individual human dignity and to work together for the common good. Within our families, within our nation, it is the same. As we sit there, I wonder if she'll ever grasp the changes I've seen in my life—if she'll ever believe that there was a time when blacks could not drink from public water fountains, when Hispanic children were punished for speaking Spanish in the public schools, and women couldn't vote. I think of all the political fights I've fought and all the compromises I've had to accept as part payment. And I think of the small victories that have added up to national triumphs. . . . And I will tell Lily that those triumphs were Democratic Party triumphs. . . . And our strength lies in the women who go to work every day, who struggle to balance their families and their jobs, and who should never, ever be forgotten. I just hope that—like her grandparents and her great-grandparents before—that Lily goes on to raise her kids with the promise that echoes in homes all across America: That we can do better. (1988b)

This narrative is a succinct expression of what Carol Gilligan has called women's ideal of care: "An activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the . . . web of connection so that no one is left alone" (1982, p. 62). Richards uses the concrete concerns and values of family life and draws a connection to political responsibility. As we argue next, this emphasis on connection and relationships as the basis for political life is enacted in the relationship that Richards creates with her audience.

Nurturing and Empowerment

The above analysis of Richards' rhetoric offers several implications for the concept of the speaker/audience relationship in feminine style. As Campbell notes, identification is the goal of the personal connection forged between speaker and auditor in feminine style, and this identification serves as the basis for empowerment (1989, p. 13). We believe this conclusion can be extended to include a specific awareness of the roles that feminine style can invite speakers and audiences to play. If, as we have proposed, feminine style is grounded in the characteristics of women's social roles, central of which is that of nurturer in their primary relationships, then the notion that feminine style presupposes a peer relationship (Campbell, 1989, p. 13) must be adjusted somewhat. It is in this context that the connection between women's consciousness-raising groups and feminine rhetorical style (Campbell, 1989; Campbell, 1973) is made problematic.

Richards' rhetoric contains all the ingredients that indicate a participatory, peer tone using Campbell's definition; she acknowledges the audience in her inclusive pronouns, she encourages audiences to draw their own conclusions from the examples she offers, and she self-discloses, a strategy that presupposes the trust among peers. However, these characteristics also fit nurturing relationships, which, while not explicitly hierarchical in terms of a requirement for dominance, nevertheless imply guidance rather than pure equality.

We contend that the feminine style embodied in Richards' rhetoric reflects the complicated nature of a nurturing persona, in which authority is used for the

purpose of fostering the growth of the other toward the capacity for independent action. "Nurturing" is a term naturally associated with motherhood, and Ruddick identifies nurturing, and the ethic of "care" that underlies it, as central to what she calls "maternal thinking" (1989, p. 46). The characteristics of maternal thinking are closely allied with those Gilligan, Chodorow, and others delineate as central to feminine modes of reasoning, regardless of performance of motherhood.

Ruddick's description of the persona enacted through maternal thinking reflects the delicate balance of nurturing work in a mother's life that is illustrated in Richards' rhetoric. Richards' attempts to facilitate the reasoning of her audience through inductive use of examples, and her encouragement of the use of personal experience in understanding self and in judging the public world are trademarks of a nurturing attitude. Ruddick writes:

> To be responsible for children's moral well-being means helping them to become people who will be reliably moral when they are alone or among peers. This means turning over moral initiative to the children themselves. . . . Her children's differences require the most challenging of a mother's many balancing acts: alongside her own strong convictions of virtues and excellence she is to place her children's need to ask and answer for themselves questions central to moral life. (1989, p. 108)

In this context, nurturance is central to the work of empowerment. Through empathy, attentiveness, and inducements to participation, those who nurture constantly negotiate the balance between authority and independence.

In Richards' rhetoric, the wisdom she offers from her own experience, the connections she urges her audience to draw from their experiences, her insistence on an ethic of care from leaders, and her development of a family paradigm for political judgment both enact a nurturing relationship to the audience and celebrate a nurturing philosophy. Synthesis of form and substance are realized here, because a conception of what is desirable that is guided by the activity of care requires "a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 19). The end result of such activity, both in traditional nurturing contexts and in Richards' rhetoric, is empowerment, a goal Richards articulates specifically in a 1988 speech:

> In the sixth century before the birth of Christ, the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu noted that, "when the best leader's work is done, the people say 'We did it ourselves.' " And, today, as we fret about the absence of leaders, what we are really looking for is someone who will help us do it ourselves. (1988a)

The relationship that Richards describes and enacts for her audience is key to her appeal and has potential for alleviating the increasing disaffection with traditional politics, by both politicians and voters. Such a relationship reduces distance between rhetor and audience and empowers audiences to trust their own perceptions and judgments. In an increasingly complex political climate, recognition of new and effective modes of political communication is important. While we suggest that the philosophy reflected by Richards' rhetoric can be illuminated by its connections with women's roles and experiences, its use is not necessarily restricted to women; just as women have long adapted to masculine modes of discourse, men could surely learn the usefulness of what we have called a "feminine" mode. Moreover, Richards'

success in a state as large and diverse as Texas indicates that the appeal of her style and philosophy *for audiences* is not limited by gender.

CONCLUSION

We believe that this analysis illustrates the potential for an alternative perspective on feminine style, one that includes its philosophical as well as its strategic value. If feminine style is a reflection of the conditions of female existence, then perhaps feminine style reveals the potential, in the public sphere, for reproducing positive elements of those conditions. In the context of public, political discourse (rather than feminist social reform), feminine style can be interpreted as reproducing those conditions for the purpose of creating alternative grounds for political judgment.

To say that the form of feminine discourse reflects a philosophical standpoint is to recognize an intimate relation between form and content, one that Leff and Sachs have labelled "iconicity," in which the "aesthetic dimension" of a work "appears intimately connected with its political function" (1991, p. 269). Such a perspective reveals "the power of discourse to blend form and meaning into local unities that 'textualize' the public world and invite audiences to experience the world as the text represents it" (1991, p. 270).

If the content of public, political discourse can be studied for its implicit, or explicit, philosophy, a task with long precedent, then to ask how the form of discourse contributes to that philosophy is a natural evolution. In Richards' rhetoric three vital equations make such a process evident. First, reliance on concrete examples and anecdotes in feminine style, particularly in the process of evaluating political action, reflects a philosophy stressing the utility of practical wisdom in judging truth. The contingent reasoning on which women rely, in their social roles as wives and mothers, is privileged here. Second, Richards' use of self-disclosure and sharing of emotion, elements of both feminine style and women's nurturing roles, promotes a political philosophy governed by the fostering of connections and affective relationships. Finally, the combination of the above elements with Richards' explicit avowal of a family model for political progress results in a rhetor/audience relationship based on nurturing principles.

These conclusions foster realization of feminine style as a philosophy with important implications for the study of women's rhetoric. Restricting examination of feminine style only to the context of social reform rhetoric aimed at disempowered female audiences is to limit its relevance and implicitly to reify the public/private distinction that devalues women's communication. Campbell certainly does not endorse such separation; indeed, she explicitly notes that feminine style is not exclusive to women, as rhetors or audiences. However, only if we test the implications of feminine style beyond its original context can we realize the transformative potential of its use in a variety of situations.

For example, a developing trend in political theory emphasizes how traditionally feminine values might be integrated into politics. In a review essay of work in this area, Jane Mansbridge notes that this project "requires seeing relations formed in the private, domestic, and particular realm as reasonable models for, or the first steps toward, some forms of public spirit" (1990, p. 133). Such a feminine political theory might include valuation of the ethic of care, of enhanced emotional capacity, and of empathy in relationships (Mansbridge, 1990, pp. 134–135). Our analysis

illustrates the discursive expression and enactment of such an emerging perspective, and it carries both political and rhetorical implications.

First, analysis of rhetoric such as Richards' demonstrates the declining usefulness of distinctions between public and private modes of discourse and thought, a distinction that has devalued women's rhetorical and political contributions. If we are to revise past definitions of universal rhetorical standards, as Charland (1991) has suggested, then this kind of analysis is an important step. We argue that the complexity of women's social roles, and their influence on communication, may be an asset in the public sphere, rather than an obstacle. However, such an evaluation requires adjustment of conventional rhetorical, as well as political, wisdom. Ultimately our scholarship will be enriched as we come to understand the "different modes of language and thought" that can inform the lives of men and women (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174).

Second, this rhetoric demonstrates that critics must revise paradigms that view female or feminist rhetorical action simply in terms of its *adaptation* to obstacles posed by patriarchy (usually within the context of feminist movements) and more in terms of its attempts *to offer alternatives* to patriarchal modes of thought and reasoning. With this focus, Felski's concept of the feminist counter-public sphere becomes useful. Felski claims that one way to make sense of the varieties of feminist symbolic action is to view them as contributions to the feminist counter-public sphere, "a model for the analysis of the diverse forms of recent artistic or cultural activity by women in relation to the historical emergence of an influential oppositional ideology which seeks to challenge the existing reality of gender subordination" (1989, p. 164). We suggest that the existence of and analysis of rhetoric such as Richards' can be understood as part of this phenomenon, and can contribute to the articulation of a critical rhetoric.

The concept of a counter-public sphere is an adaption of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, which he sees as a discursive arena, distinguishable from state power, that provides a realm for rational public argument to influence public opinion. The bourgeois public sphere is a historical concept originally predicated on the conditions of seventeenth and eighteenth century publics controlled by aristocratic and propertied concerns (Habermas, 1974). As growth of state economic, bureaucratic, and communicative influence has undermined the notion of an independent sphere for public discourse, and as a postmodern perspective has taken hold, Habermas' project has been to reclaim and reconstruct what he sees as the untapped emancipatory potential of an essentially rationally grounded notion of the public sphere (Best and Kellner, 1991). However, the public sphere ideal has been attacked for its assumption of universalism (and thus its exclusion of issues of race, gender, and class) and its related incompatibility with a postmodern perspective (Best and Kellner, 1991, pp. 241–246).

According to Felski (1989, p. 166), rather than eliminating the critical potential of the public sphere ideal, the lack of a consensual basis for a universal public sphere has led some theorists to posit the development of *partial* or *counter* public spheres, of which feminism is an example. The feminist counter-public sphere does not claim universality but instead "offers a critique of cultural values from the standpoint of women as a marginalized group within society" (1989, p. 167). Clearly, given the diversity of feminist beliefs and practices, such a sphere is not univocal. Two

conditions make it possible: First, its general orientation as a "critique of values" for the purpose of "revising or refuting male-defined cultural and discursive frameworks ... through political activity and theoretical critique" (Felski, 1989, pp. 167–68). Second, and of equal importance, is its public nature, such that it is not only concerned with developing community among women but with "a dissemination of feminist ideas and values throughout society as a whole" (Felski, 1989, pp. 167).

Felski argues that contributions to the feminist public sphere are to be judged in terms of their political use value or "potential function as a critique of patriarchal society" (1989, p. 50), and she notes that such contributions may take a variety of forms, working either within or outside of traditional discursive or institutional forms (1989, p. 171). Such a perspective is key to understanding the importance of Richards' rhetoric and of our claims about feminine style. To highlight only Richards' use of feminine style, and to claim from that a political function, would be misguided. However, the synthesis of this style with the philosophical viewpoint she offers clearly has potential to function as a critique of patriarchal modes of reasoning as well as to offer an empowering alternative. Synthesis of style and substance is vital here; through feminine style, Richards enacts the type of political reasoning she proposes.

Given Richards' clear commitment to working within traditional political channels, this analysis also makes clear the value of the feminist counter-public sphere as a model for expanding the possibilities for feminist rhetorical criticism, which thus far has focused primarily on female rhetors within feminist movements. The concept of a feminist public sphere allows for a broadening of the context for feminist public action. The feminist public sphere is best understood as "coalitions of overlapping subcommunities, which share a common interest in combating gender oppression" but which differ in race, class, institutional and professional allegiances, and which "draw upon a varied range of discursive frameworks" (Felski, 1989, p. 171). Although Richards' has identified herself as feminist, her primary public role is not as a feminist advocate. The important feminist implications we identify in her discourse illustrate the potential for moving beyond an agent-centered (or perhaps movement-centered) approach to feminist rhetorical criticism.

Finally, we also see potential in this analysis for furthering the aims of a critical rhetoric. While a primary goal of critical rhetoric is to understand the discursive operations of power and domination, a complete agenda for critical rhetoric would also include investigation of positive alternatives to the discourses of power, requiring that critics "seek to name a new audience or constitute a new *sensis communis*" grounded in a reconstructed concept of *phronesis* (Charland, 1991, pp. 73–74). Such a project seeks to understand the potential for oppositional practices and to discover spaces for resistance that provide relief from a totalizing vision of domination. The definition and application of the feminist counter-public sphere that we offer here can be useful in this endeavor, for it encourages the recognition and articulation of alternative modes of symbolic and political action.

NOTES

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[1]We use the term "philosophy" to refer to a system of principles forming a perspective or orientation that is used for guidance in deliberating about and forming judgments toward practical affairs. A *political philosophy*, we contend, can be derived through study of "the conceptual structure of political discourse . . . [and] the kinds of arguments used to propose, defend, or criticize political institutions and policies" (Benn, 1967, p. 388).

[2]It is important to note that this speech, given at a meeting of Democratic leaders in January of 1992, was an address about national politics delivered to a group made up largely of white males. The first use of this anecdote that we have found is in a speech given at the ceremony for the Governor's 15th Annual Texas Volunteer Conference Awards in 1991 (1991b).

[3]This anecdote was repeated in a speech to the Democratic Unity Dinner in San Francisco (1992b).

[4]Another example of Richards' use of her personal experiences with alcoholism is found in her 1991 speech to the Texas Forum on Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Texas (1991a).

[5]This is an anecdote that Richards uses frequently. Two other uses we have found are in a speech to a fundraising group (1991c), and in a commencement address at Smith College (1992c).

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