

1-1-2007

# In Search of the Unstated: The Enthymeme of/and Whiteness

Krista Ratcliffe  
*Marquette University*

- Walker, Alice. "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996. 2315–21.
- Warnock, Tilly. "Bringing Over Yonder Over Here: A Personal Look at Expressivist Rhetoric as Ideological Action." *Beyond Postprocess and Postmodernism: Essays on the Spaciousness of Rhetoric*. Ed. Theresa Enos and Keith D. Miller. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003. 203–16.
- West, Cornel. "I'm Ofay, You're Ofay: A Conversation with Noel Ignatiev and William 'Upski' Wimsatt." *Transition* 73 (1997): 176–98.
- West, Thomas R. "The Racist Other." *JAC* 17 (1997): 215–26.
- Williams, Patricia J. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Wilson, James C., and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, eds. *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2001.
- Worsham, Lynn. "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion." *JAC* 18 (1998): 213–45.
- Zawacki, Terry Myers. "Recomposing as a Woman—An Essay in Different Voices." *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Gesa E. Kirsch et al. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003. 314–20.



## In Search of the Unstated: The Enthymeme and/of Whiteness

Krista Ratcliffe

I am pleased to be responding to Matthew Jackson's article. Not only am I fascinated with the enthymeme as rhetorical tactic and with whiteness

as rhetorical trope, but I am also intrigued with how, together, they afford me an opportunity to contemplate the unstated. Lately I have been thinking about how the unstated influences rhetorical performances of thought, communication, and action. Perhaps a physics analogy will explain my thinking. Physicists now believe that approximately 95% of the universe is composed of dark matter and dark energy, both of which cannot be seen but can be detected by their influence on visible matter. If you have seen images mapping the cosmic journey from planet to solar system to galaxy to ever-expanding universe, what can be seen is only 5%. That is a staggering percentage. From a rhetorical point of view, dark matter and energy serve as metaphors for the unstated. After all, we do not see the unstated in texts; we simply experience its effects. Given this “rhetorical situation” of the unstated, we need tactics for measuring these effects, and as Jackson’s article suggests, the enthymeme is one such strategy for articulating, analyzing, negotiating, employing, revising, or rejecting the unstated. Engaging the enthymeme in these ways is a productive performance of pedagogy, whether in the classroom or beyond.

What exactly is the unstated? To answer that question, let’s begin with an everyday practice (thank you, Michel de Certeau) and examine the definition of *unstated* on *dictionary.com*:<sup>1</sup>

–*adjective*

not made explicit; “the unexpressed terms of the agreement”; “things left unsaid”; “some kind of unspoken agreement”; “his action is clear but his reason remains unstated[.]”

From a rhetorical perspective, these five definitions signify some interesting points. The first implies that the unstated may always be implicit, implied. The second, third, and fourth imply that the unstated may always be unspoken, either on purpose or not. And the fifth implies that the unstated haunts actions in that actions are always driven by reasons, whether stated or not. However, in search of more ideas about the unstated, let’s take another tact. Because the negative is a valid means of definition (if not proof), let’s look at what *dictionary.com* says about *stated* and, by extrapolation, what it implies about unstated.

If *dictionary.com* defines *stated* as follows:

–*adjective*

1. fixed or settled: *a stated price*[:]
2. explicitly set forth; declared as fact[:]
3. recognized or official[:]

then, it stands to reason that *unstated* might be defined as:

–*adjective*

1. not fixed or settled: *an unstated price*[:]
2. not explicitly set forth; not declared as fact[:]
3. not recognized or not official.

From a rhetorical perspective, such extrapolated definitions of *unstated* are a little more interesting in terms of the term's import for Jackson's postmodern enthymeme. The first implies that the unstated may always be in flux. The second implies that the unstated may always be an invisible yet haunting presence as well as always up for negotiation since it is not "fact." The third implies that the unstated may be unknown (not recognized) or unacknowledged (not official) or not reflected upon (not recognized). As such, the unstated is not simply the inverse of the stated in terms of effect because both the unstated and the stated do affect thought, communication, and action. As such, the unstated is not simply an absence because (like dark matter and energy) it is present and detectable, just invisible. And as such, the unstated is not simply a gap waiting to be filled with "meaning" because the unstated signifies . . . as many different things. That is why Jackson's concept of the postmodern enthymeme is important: it helps us articulate, analyze, negotiate, employ, revise, or reject multiple significations of the unstated. So in what space I have available here, I will engage the unstated in terms of the enthymeme and/ of whiteness.

### **The Unstated: The Enthymeme**

As I mentioned earlier, the enthymeme fascinates me. Ask any TA whom I've ever trained to teach composition. During TA Orientation I always ask, "How many of you have heard of the enthymeme?" Sometimes a

lonely scholar raises her/his hand. However, when I ask what it is, rarely can anyone provide a definition or even an example. I am continually amazed that the enthymeme has dropped out of common usage. Yes, a few rhetoric scholars dress it up and, on occasion, take it to the scholarly fair. But in the practices of everyday life (thank you, again, M. de Certeau), people rarely know the concept or use the term, even as every single person regularly composes enthymemes in writing, speech, and body language. So what is an enthymeme? Jackson does a nice job of rehearsing competing scholarly definitions in his article, so for now, I will simply follow Aristotle's lead from his *Prior Analytics* and begin with his idea that an enthymeme is a *rhetorical* syllogism (bk. 2, pt. 27)—that is, a way of reasoning about particulars that takes into account probable assumptions, reasons, and claims . . . any of which may be unstated.<sup>2</sup>

Although philosophers worry about mathematical precision in a syllogism (that is, making sure that the major premise, minor premise, and conclusion are all perfectly stated in substitutive order), rhetoricians worry less about mathematical precision in the enthymeme. For as Jackson claims, enthymemes “are not laid out so neatly for us” (605); unlike a syllogism, the enthymeme is often missing a major or minor premise and sometimes even a stated conclusion. Although popularly defined as a “truncated” syllogism, the enthymeme is more than simply an incomplete or inferior syllogism. (That way of reasoning was employed for centuries to subordinate rhetoric to philosophy). Instead, it is a related but different way of reasoning. A syllogism is grounded in general, universal truths; the enthymeme, however, is grounded in probability, particular cases, and common sense (or the sense a culture holds in common), a grounding that makes it a perfect companion for Jackson's foray into postmodernism.

What is important about the “missing elements” in the enthymeme is that they function as the unstated. And as Aristotle tells us, such unstated assumptions, reasons, or claims may be supplied by audiences, hence the Aristotelian charge that interlocutors know their audiences. Although understanding every particular audience member's psyche may be an impossible endeavor, understanding some cultural assumptions of an audience is not; different kinds of understanding may be achieved via study, reflection, and lived engagement. And it is from this cultural

common sense that an interlocutor may accrue unstated assumptions that may, in turn, be used to construct enthymemes as well as to fill in unstated parts. However, the enthymeme is not a sure thing. Just as there are many different cultural assumptions, there are also many different possible ways to fill in the unstated. That is just one reason communication is difficult . . . and always ongoing, as Jackson makes clear in his discussion of the postmodern enthymeme.

OK, let's ground this discussion for a moment.

Scene 1: Suppose I walk into my first-year writing classroom, talk with the students for a couple minutes, and then say, "Class is cancelled today." Grounded in my ethos as "the teacher," I have, with that one small claim, persuaded twenty students to pack up their backpacks, leave the room, and (probably) rejoice. But I will bet my last penny that at least one of the students leaving the room will think or say, "I wonder why she cancelled class?" That student is curious about the "because." He/she is trying to reason enthymemically, that is, to fill in reasons and assumptions for my claim that class is cancelled. I have not provided enough information for students to complete my enthymeme successfully, so the audience is left speculating.

Scene 2: Suppose I walk into my first-year writing classroom, talk with the students for a couple of minutes, and then say, "You all bore me today. Class is cancelled." With those two short sentences, I have persuaded twenty students to pack up their backpacks and leave the room, but I will bet my last penny that, in this case, most of them will be insulted. And rightly so. They may even complain to parents or higher administration. Why? Because they do not accept my enthymemic reasoning, consisting of an unstated assumption (a teacher's being bored is a valid reason for cancelling a class), a stated reason (you bore me), and a stated claim (class is cancelled). Some students may take issue with boredom being a valid reason for cancelling class; others may take issue with being called boring; still others may simply be glad of any reason that cancels class; and perhaps a few will be motivated to elevate their performances just to prove something to me or to themselves.

Scene 3: Suppose I walk into my first-year writing classroom, talk with the students for a couple of minutes, and then say, "You know what? Class is cancelled because I'm feeling really ill today." With these

sentences, I have again persuaded twenty students to pack up their backpacks and leave the room, but on their way out a few of them will offer, "I hope you're feeling better soon." Some may even recount a sympathy narrative of their or their roommate's being ill. But they will not usually complain. Why? Because they accept my enthymemic reasoning, consisting of an unstated assumption (a teacher's being ill is a valid reason for cancelling a class), a stated reason (I am ill), and a claim (class is cancelled).

Aristotle celebrates the enthymeme as a rhetorical tactic; however, it has fallen by the wayside of rhetorical studies, assumed to be overly dry and overly rigid. That is a shame. And that is why I am delighted to be contemplating Jackson's postmodern take on the enthymeme, which celebrates the multiplicity of the unstated haunting enthymemic reasoning. For example, in Scene 3, perhaps a few students may think that my being ill is not a valid reason for cancelling class; perhaps they may think that I should have gotten a substitute or held class online from my home; and, of course, there may be the student who, having pulled an all-nighter studying for a test in another class, really does not care why my class is cancelled but is simply grateful for the time to take a quick nap. Given these different possibilities (and myriad others I have not mentioned), when Aristotle's notion of probability is merged with the postmodern notion of multiplicity, the enthymeme may appear to be dodgy proposition because it is hard to nail down. But the previous statement is an enthymeme (actually a couple). And that is precisely Jackson's point: a postmodern take on the enthymeme allows innumerable ways to imagine arguments and to render visible those imaginings. This multiplicity does not necessarily mean that anything goes; however, it does mean that there is always more to the universe than meets the eye. As such, the enthymeme is an invention tool that works at all stages of the composing process, whether one is composing via reading, writing, speaking, or listening and whether one is in a writing class, at a job interview, on a date, or via self-reflection.

Given that Jackson posits the enthymeme as an antiracist strategy, it seems incumbent on readers to consider the political functions of the enthymeme. Given its focus on cultural common sense, the enthymeme possesses a conservative power (that is, a means for retaining the status

quo) whether the status quo is liberal or conservative, progressive or totalitarian. Unstated *assumptions* not only drive thought, communication, and action, but they also drive the status quo; they hinder change because change is dependent upon changing not just thoughts and actions but assumptions. Unstated *reasons* drive the status quo because the speaker/writer assumes the reasons to be self-evident; if someone does not find the reasons to be self-evident, then that someone is an outsider to the powers-that-be-that-decide-assumptions. Unstated *claims* also drive the status quo. A mere lift of an eyebrow can tell someone else that an action should be taken, as when a parent walks into a teen's messy room, looks around, and lifts an eyebrow knowingly at the child. Even as the teen wails, "Whaaaattt???" s/he knows (based on previously established premises) that she was supposed to have cleaned her room.

However, the enthymeme possesses more power than its potential for conserving the status quo. It has the power to totally upend the status quo. If unstated enthymemic assumptions are "not settled or fixed," then thought, communication, and action are also "not settled or fixed"; instead, they are in a constant state of flux and negotiation. That is true for teens, for parents, for institutions, for countries. The Bush administration masterfully performs this flux even as it preaches a fixed neo-conservative view of the world. Vice President Cheney merely had to mention on two or three occasions that Iraq was involved in 9/11; suddenly, that totally specious claim became a common-sense reason that helped drive the US to war. President Bush did not have to state it; Vice President Cheney already had. All President Bush had to do was let that claim turned reason, turned "common-sense" assumption, haunt his discourse, unstated but rendering very real effects, one being the upending of world opinion about the US, from sympathy after 9/11 to less-than-sympathy after the invasion of Iraq. The enthymeme is powerful.

So why do I love the enthymeme if its traditional use is conservative and its postmodern use may be co-opted by neo-cons to help drive the US to war? I love it because it is a rhetorical tactic with the potential to help people construct their own arguments and analyze arguments directed to them—by detecting the unstated. Once such dark matter and energy are detected, we can determine if the detected assumptions, reasons, and claims need to be celebrated or challenged. That is why the enthymeme

is a useful tactic for teaching critical thinking and writing: it helps unpack unstated assumptions, unstated reasons, and sometimes unstated claims. (Note: I just used another enthymeme, the unstated assumption being that unpacking unstated assumptions and reasons is necessary for critical thinking and writing. OK. I'll stop. But you get the idea). Getting student writers to think about unstated ideas and getting teachers to think about students' unstated ideas (as well as their own!) goes a long way toward helping students and teachers think and write more critically in the classroom and beyond. That is why I love the enthymeme. The messier the better. And because Jackson's postmodern take on the enthymeme helps readers navigate such "messes," his article is important.

Are there other ways of reasoning rhetorically? Of course. But this is my point, and Jackson's: Do not sell the enthymeme short . . . but do not whitewash its problematic functions either.

### **The Unstated: Enthymemes of Whiteness**

*Whiteness* is a rhetorical trope that lends itself well to a pairing with the enthymeme because, currently, whiteness in the US is often unstated. Even so, this unstated whiteness signifies as an assumed norm, which haunts discourses on any topic, whether education, food, music, rhetorical theory, and so forth.<sup>3</sup> In "Local Whiteness, Localizing Whiteness," Ruth Frankenberg offers four reasons for studying how unstated whiteness haunts cultural discourses: (1) to make whiteness visible; (2) to put all racial categories into play so as to make discussions of race symmetrical; (3) to examine white selves; and (4) to excavate all racial/cultural locations so as to understand their functions and to be able to interrupt unproductive ones (1-2). Given that whiteness is frequently unstated and given that the enthymeme culls the unstated, I would like to explore how Jackson's concept of the enthymeme as antiracist strategy may actually effect all four of Frankenberg's charges.

In the weird synergy that sometimes happens when I am writing, I read Jackson's article at the same time I received an e-mail from Kat Bodrie, a graduate student whom I have never met. As a result, Jackson's article provided a frame for my thinking about Bodrie's e-mail, and her

e-mail provided a testing ground for my thinking about his article's engagement with enthymemic functions of whiteness. Theory and practice. Practice and theory. These two continually inform and challenge one another. As always, Adrienne Rich says it best: "If [theory] doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth" ("Notes" 214). However, before I discuss how the article and the e-mail inform and challenge one another, let me share the e-mail (and express my gratitude to Kat Bodrie for permitting me to reprint it here):

Dr. Ratcliffe,

I'm a graduate student from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and I just read your book *Rhetorical Listening*. While reading, I realized that I had just listened to a comedy sketch by a (white) woman named Lisa Lampanelli. I don't know if you've heard of her before, but she talks about the common stereotypes of male and female blacks, male and female whites, Chicanas/os, and others. At first, *I was aghast—how could she just come out and say those things, and wasn't the audience offended?* But judging by the audience's reaction (and it sounded like a LOT of people), they were loving it. I've been thinking about it in conjunction with your book, and I noticed some of my own assumptions regarding whiteness and "race," and how, as I realized through my initial reaction to Lisa, *I have had the common "white" presumption that talking about race should not be done.* Now that I think about it, Lisa's comedy is just the opposite; by coming out and just saying these things, she is poking fun at stereotypes—recognizing them but not reinforcing them—and the audience can laugh along with her. Thank you for offering your perspective, and for offering a concrete method of pedagogy for such a (currently) difficult topic.

Yours respectfully,

Kat Bodrie

Masters Student of English Literature

University of North Carolina Wilmington (emphasis added)

The three emphasized claims above are all enthymemes (and yes, this e-mail contains many more than three). However, these three represent everyday enthymemes about the functions of whiteness in the US, circa 2007. What I find fascinating about Bodrie's e-mail is that she does not simply channel existing enthymemes of whiteness to reinforce the status quo (that is, the current dominant cultural logic of color blindness, which

pretends not to see race in the US);<sup>4</sup> instead, she employs the everyday enthymemes as antiracist strategies to navigate what Adrienne Rich calls “the vast encircling presumption of whiteness” (“The distance” 181). (And yes, it did occur to me that someone else, say Ann Coulter, could argue that Bodrie does indeed perpetuate the “liberal” status quo in academe, which is proof of the multiplicity of enthymemic reasoning, but I digress). In addition to resisting the everyday enthymeme of color blindness, Bodrie demonstrates that the enthymeme is about more than just logic; it is also about visceral, bodily reactions that may serve as cues for reflection. That recognition is important, especially when dealing with issues of race, for race is about more than reason or logic. As Michael Eric Dyson states clearly: “[Race] . . . is a set of beliefs and behaviors shaped by culture, rooted in history, and fueled by passions that transcend reason” (42). By attempting to state that which was formerly unstated, Bodrie practices in her e-mail what Jackson advocates in his article. In the process, she models a kind of thinking that may be employed in the classroom and beyond.

First, let’s address Bodrie’s question about Lisa Lampanelli’s comedy routine: “*how could she just come out and say those things, and wasn’t the audience offended?*” Turned from question to statement, this quotation translates into the following: *those offensive things should not be talked about*. How might this quotation function enthymemically in terms of Lampanelli’s routine about race? One way is delineated below (note: in all three examples of Bodrie’s enthymemes, the stated is underlined; the unstated, italicized):

(1) Offensive topics should not be talked about.

*Racial, gender, and ethnic stereotypes are offensive topics.*

*Racial, gender, and ethnic stereotypes should not be talked about.*

This enthymemic construction (and remember, it could be constructed differently) makes offensive topics the primary assumption, with race being one of many insulting topics that should not be talked about. It is common-sense knowledge that polite white US society does not willingly encourage insulting discourses, and even in informal settings white society is not known for playing the dozens (as evidenced by the locker room scene in *Remember the Titans* where a black athlete performs a “yo

mama” joke on a white athlete and the white athlete thinks he is being insulted instead of being invited into the group). Bodrie’s above enthymeme makes sense within white society’s unstated obliviousness to whiteness because, given the above assumption, *it goes without saying* that racist, gender, and ethnic jokes must be offensive. Thus, this enthymeme may signify a conservative function of the enthymeme, which reinforces the status quo of white society without critiquing the status quo: in sum, race is not to be talked, or joked, about. However, Bodrie questions her performance of this enthymeme (the *logos* as she knows it), and as she does so, she begins making whiteness visible.

Second, let’s address Bodrie’s description of her initial reaction to Lampanelli’s comedy: “*I was aghast.*” How might her reaction function enthymemically in terms of Lampanelli’s use of offensive topics? One way is outlined below:

*(2) The proper response when someone hears offensive topics is feeling aghast.*

*I heard Lisa Lampanelli perform a comedy routine about offensive topics.*

*I was aghast.*

Notice the leap from offensive topic to aghast. What is lost in that leap is attention to particular offensive topics. Because the category *offensive topic* includes so many different possibilities, the specific functions of any one topic (for example, race) at particular times and particular places are lost; also lost are differences among the topics as well as differences among the contexts in which the topics are invoked. Remaining unstated, such specific functions and their differences cannot be defined, analyzed, challenged, or even (if appropriate) reinforced. The logic of this enthymeme leads directly to an emotional conclusion—being aghast. Within a color-blind cultural logic, this emotional conclusion often functions not as a springboard for reflection but as closure, with a slight echo of moral righteousness haunting its presence: I am aghast. The end. However, by laying a book she was reading alongside her own reaction and listening to the discourses of both, Bodrie was able to hear the dissonance between the two discourses, which, in turn, made whiteness visible and rendered it capable of being stated, analyzed, and questioned.

Third, to see how Bodrie articulates moving beyond being aghast, let's address her claim about her former unstated presumption, which undergirded her previous two enthymemes: "*I have had the common 'white' presumption that talking about race should not be done.*" How does this claim function enthymemically in terms of Bodrie's understanding of how race functions in the contemporary US? One way is listed below:

(3) *The idea that one should not talk about race is a "white" presumption.*  
*I thought that LL should not talk about race.*  
I am functioning from a "white" presumption.

With this claim, Bodrie has moved from thinking about race as one of many offensive topics, to thinking about it on its own terms with its own assumptions, one of which is that a "white" presumption exists. No longer is race simply an offensive, taboo subject; instead, it is an operative cultural category (grounded in bad science most certainly, but operative nevertheless). This move enables her to identify ideas and actions and people as "white." Just as importantly, she avoids a woe-is-me, aren't-all-white-people-terrible, shouldn't-I-feel-guilty routine, which in the end is really all about the lamenting "I." Instead, she identifies the issue, and then she thinks more deeply about her reactions ("*Now that I think about it*"); reassesses her evaluation of cultural performances ("*Lisa's comedy is just the opposite*"); and revises her understanding of how race functions in the US ("*she is poking fun at stereotypes—recognizing them but not reinforcing them*"). And her concluding sentence, which refers to whiteness as "*such a (currently) difficult topic*," implies that she possesses an historicized understanding of how race functions in the US at this particular moment as well as an understanding that over time it may change, both structurally and personally.

In her e-mail, Bodrie narrates an enthymemic engagement with whiteness that takes her to a different place from whence she started. In his article, Jackson explains this phenomenon: the postmodern enthymeme ensures that people, in their search for the unstated, will end up in a different place, with the degree and quality of difference being particular to each enthymemic journey. And as Bodrie's enthymemic journey

demonstrates, going in search of the unstated can serve as a terrific antiracist strategy for pedagogy, in the classroom and beyond.

### **Pedagogies of the Classroom, of Scholarship, of Life**

Jackson concludes his article with a nod toward pedagogy, claiming that rhetoric and composition scholar-teachers need to engage whiteness not just in one course but, by implication, in scholarship and life as well (629-30). I agree. He claims that the issue to be taught is not intentional racism so much as the structural advantages proffered to people, things, and ideas coded white (606). I agree. He claims that just talking about whiteness is not in and of itself an ethical act (630). I agree. He claims it is not even a matter of moving from the stance of one-who-does-not-know to “one who gets it” (631). I agree—because “getting it” assumes a fantasy of mastery and closure and problem solved. If one lives in a racialized society that denies it is racialized, then what one “gets” is the challenge to engage race, and whiteness, in different ways every day. Jackson’s article, Bodrie’s e-mail, and my response here are simply moments from which we may move on to engage whiteness again and again, maybe the wiser for our past experiences, but not always.

Despite the aforementioned common ground that I find with Jackson’s article, there are three points on which I, respectfully, part company. First, I do not find the tropes of *guilt* (601) and *blame* to be particularly effective for pedagogy, in the classroom or beyond, because they make people (whites and non-whites) defensive and, thus, less open to contemplating contrary ideas. Instead, I find the tropes of *responsibility* and *accountability* more productive in getting students and others to see and engage systemic whiteness.<sup>5</sup> Jackson yokes guilt and responsibility on his first page. I try to unyoke them. Do I think guilt and blame exist? Of course. I simply do not find them effective springboards for pedagogical discussions. Second, I do not find the trope of *domination* (604) particularly effective for pedagogy, in the classroom or beyond, except in discussions of the past; in discussions of the present, this trope tends to make people defensive and, thus, less open to contemplating contrary ideas. Rather, I find the much-used distinction between the tropes of *earned privilege* and

*unearned privilege* (with whiteness being an unearned privilege) a much more productive way to enter pedagogical discussions of systemic oppression because all of us (non-whites and whites) have experienced both privileges at some point in our lives. And third, I do not think remaining silent always puts one in “de facto agreement with arguments for white supremacy as expressed in fragmented, mediated formal and informal discourse” (631). To his credit, Jackson does not accuse readers; he just repeats this claim in terms of himself. However, that claim invites readers to question whether their own silence puts them in “de facto agreement with arguments for white supremacy.” Can it? You bet. Does it often? Yes. Does it always? I am not so sure of that. As Cheryl Glenn has argued in *Unspoken*, there are many reasons for silence, and they are not always negative.

These differences of opinion, however, pale in comparison to my admiration for Jackson’s project. My differences simply reflect my subject location, not necessarily the “wrongness” of his ideas. After all, pedagogues need to perform the pedagogies that work for them and for their students. Regardless of one’s pedagogical method, however, the pedagogical challenge remains to make whiteness visible and to help students and others (whether coded white or not) articulate how we are all personally implicated (albeit differently) in systemic whiteness. That challenge is taken up in Bodrie’s e-mail, when she narrates hearing whiteness in a comedy routine and explains how this hearing made whiteness visible to her. As a teaching moment, it is a performance of who she is and what she knows at a particular moment. The same is true for Matthew Jackson’s article. Consequently, I am indebted to them both because, in this moment, they are teaching me to search for the unstated . . . via the enthymeme . . . in terms of whiteness.

*Marquette University  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

### Notes

1. Although I would normally not use *dictionary.com* in a scholarly article and would more likely cite the *OED*, I do think it is useful to model how such sources that students are familiar with may be used for pedagogical purposes.

2. For more on Aristotle's ideas about enthymemes, see his *Rhetoric* (bk 2, pts. 22, 25).

3. Some of these issues are discussed in my book, *Rhetorical Listening*. For a discussion of *whiteness* as a trope, see the introduction and chapter one. For a discussion of the history of whiteness in the US, see 12-16. And for a discussion of how whiteness haunts rhetorical theory, see chapter four.

4. Jackson claims that white supremacy is the dominant cultural logic about race in the US (602); however, I think the dominant cultural logic has shifted more to color blindness. Both have their problems, of course: white supremacy exaggerates differences and color blindness exaggerates similarities. The difference lies, I think, in two assumptions: both assume racial categories exist in that white supremacy works to celebrate them while color blindness works to ignore them; and white supremacy assumes a racial great chain of being while color blindness assumes a naive equality that closes its eyes not just to "color" but to the inequities that a racialized society effects on people.

5. For my arguments on *responsibility* and *accountability*, see chapters one and three in *Rhetorical Listening*.

### Works Cited

Aristotle. *Prior Analytics*. Trans. A.J. Jenkinson. 7 Aug. 2007 <[http://www.philosophy.ru/library/aristotle/pr\\_an/02.html](http://www.philosophy.ru/library/aristotle/pr_an/02.html)>.

———. *Rhetoric*. Trans. Rhys Roberts. 7 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/twoindex.html>>.

Bodrie, Katherine. E-mail to the author. 1 Aug. 2007.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. New ed. Trans. Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996.

Frankenberg, Ruth. "Local Whiteness, Localizing Whiteness." *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997. 1-34.

Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

- Jackson, Matthew. "The Enthymematic Hegemony of Whiteness: The Enthymeme as Antiracist Rhetorical Strategy." *JAC* 26 (2006): 601–41.
- Kennedy, Tammie M., Joyce Irene Middleton, and Krista Ratcliffe. "Bibliography for Symposium on Whiteness Studies." *Rhetoric Review* 24 (2005): 359–73. 7 Aug 2007 <<http://www.marquette.edu/english/faculty/ratcliffe.shtml>>.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Rich, Adrienne. "The distance between language and violence." *What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics*. 1993. New York: Norton, 2003. 181–89.
- . "Notes Towards a Politics of Location." *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979–1985*. New York: Norton, 1986. 210–31.
- "stated." *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v.1.1)*. Random House. 7 Aug. 2007 <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/stated>>.
- "unstated." *WordNet 3.0*. Princeton U. 7 Aug. 2007 <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/unstated>>.



## So Much Depends Upon the Route

Jennifer Beech

When scholars engage in theoretical critique, they see themselves as intervening in an important issue or problem. In this regard, in the practice of theory, the possibilities of agency and action are primarily textual. In the practice of teaching, agency and action are experienced in the moment-to-moment, day-to-day experience of teaching.

—Lisa Ede