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Support, Adversariality, and the Negotiation of Meaning on the Academic Mailing List

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Title: Support, Adversariality, and the Negotiation of Meaning on the Academic Mailing List
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1.0 Introduction

This project is a microanalysis of a private graduate student electronic mailing list. The mailing list is private in the sense that subscribers are restricted to Master's and Ph.D. candidates in the Division of Humanities from Maple Leaf University, a large metropolitan university in Canada. From observations I have been able to make of approximately six months of archived messages, the tone of the mailing list *generally* fosters collegiality and serves as a tool for disseminating information relevant to humanities graduate students; however, an ethic of camaraderie among colleagues does not always reign.¹ I examine one such interruption of collegiality, and how participants attend to it.

I initially gained access to the mailing list by virtue of being part of the division of Humanities. My interest in what was said on the mailing list was piqued when Jennifer, an acquaintance, began discussing with me her experience of what she believed to be silencing by male colleagues on the list. Upon my expressed interest in analyzing Jennifer's anecdotal report of having been silenced, I secured the informed consent to make public the messages of those who participated in a series of exchanges that occurred during a five-day time frame and six-hundred and eleven lines of text. I selected these particular dates and text for analysis because the discourse that occurred during this span is rife with conflict and negotiation as participants attempt to communicate and interpret messages without the paralinguistic cues they have otherwise come to know one another by in their face-to-face interactions.

2.0 Details about the Medium

At the time of my analysis a total of thirty students subscribe to the humanities mailing list, ten of whom are women and twenty of whom are men. Of those subscribed, one third are 'lurkers' (in other words, have never posted a message to the list). The mailing list is unmoderated, therefore messages may be sent by anyone who is subscribed to it. Not only are messages are not filtered by a moderator, but also any humanities graduate student can subscribe to the list by sending a message to one of two list owners. The mailing list operates on a Maple Leaf University (hereafter, MLU) mail server.

3.0 Silence, Negotiation and Context

I analyze the text of the messages in question with the goal of examining how Jennifer's silence enables her to resist ideological frames that aim to render her incapable of accurately reconstructing her own personal experience. Thus far I do not have a full-bodied account of the ideological frame through which Jennifer's initial message to the mailing list is understood and dismissed. Tentatively, the ideological frame can be loosely characterized as one that reinforces women's silence in spaces where male dominance is challenged.

In my analysis of the mailing list data, I borrow from Emanuel Schegloff's (2001) analysis of how silence functions in conversation. Of particular interest is the idea that when an utterance does not receive the uptake one may have expected, she or he has to fill in the space to conceal the fact that the intended respondent's talk is relevantly missing. A situation arises on the humanities mailing list when Stanislav sends a message to the list that is not taken up as a conversational topic by those to whom it is addressed (namely, Jennifer and Wes). Stanislav recognizes that uptake is essential to give his message force and when his message does not get taken up as a topic of discussion he flames those to whom the ignored message was directed in an attempt to conceal the relevant silence that renders his message conversationally impotent.

In lines **191-219**, it can be seen that Stanislav's mockery of Jennifer and Wes fails to incite humour because he demeans a serious issue for the members of the community who orient to it as such; his flame is poorly crafted and unoriginal, as he uses Jennifer's and Wes's exact words against them to demonstrate that they are just as wrong as the doctor they take issue with; and Stanislav's flame comes after over 48 hours of having posted a message which receives no uptake, thus demonstrating he has noticed the relevant silence and must insert himself back into the conversation as someone who demands attention, albeit negative, from the rest of the group.

The discourse that comes before the flame Stanislav directs at Jennifer and Wes is particularly relevant because the previous style of response is explicitly pro-social, supportive, and even coded as feminine. I describe the style of Kalvin and Wes's messages, in response to Jennifer's initial post about her experience of being made to feel uncomfortable during a visit to an on-campus doctor, as symbolically coded as feminine and in stark contrast to those produced by Stanislav, because Kalvin and Wes perform the emotional labour of being empathetic to Jennifer's feelings and anticipating her need for support. In return, Jennifer explicitly shows positive politeness to Wes and Kalvin by expressing gratitude and orienting to the tone of their respective messages (in Kalvin's case the tone is humorous, whereas in Wes's the tone is serious).

It is interesting to note that Jennifer responds to Stanislav's initial request, in lines **23-37** of the appendix, for further explanation of the "relevance" of her initial message to the mailing list about what occurred at the doctor's office. However, when Stanislav's tone becomes more patently adversarial and he not only challenges Jennifer's reconstruction of her personal experience, but goes so far as to state that it is not accurate, she does not give his message uptake. When Jennifer does not respond to Stanislav's second and more verbally aggressive message, the consequence is that the sort of identity he can perform is circumscribed and his positive face wants are left unfulfilled. Jennifer's lack of response to Stanislav's claim (that her reconstruction of the events occurring in the doctor's office were inaccurate) is an indication that she is not obligated to give his message uptake because he disregards her positive face wants and is more generally impolite. After all, since Stanislav was not present with Jennifer at the doctor's appointment, Jennifer seems to be in a far better position to recount the events that occurred. Again, in an effort to insert himself back into the conversation, after his message goes without uptake for two days, Stanislav resorts to inventing for himself a speaking position as the doctor in the examination room with Jennifer. This move demonstrates an attempt, on the part of Stanislav, to elevate himself to a position of power and authority over Jennifer in a manner similar to that of the medical doctor in question.

4.0 Herring and CMC Research

I am indebted to Susan Herring for many of my ideas about silencing and CMC. Herring began researching gender and CMC in the early 1990s with the goal of assessing whether CMC lived up to the laudable goal of being a democratic medium. Herring (1994) found that the ideological frame behind patterns of male dominance and interactional styles in CMC is resident in the valorization of antagonistic debate and freedom from censorship, both of which give rise to verbally abusive attacks known as 'flames.' Herring (1999) goes on to argue that flaming has nothing to do with the 'anonymity' or the 'impersonality' of the medium, given that "If the medium makes men more likely to flame, it should have a similar effect on women, yet if anything the opposite appears to be the case" (*Politeness* 291). It seems to me that flaming is about male privilege and dominance to the extent men flame almost exclusively, in addition to producing more lines of text than women on any given topic. Herring's research demonstrates that so long as women limit their participation to less than 30 percent of the total discussion and avoid introducing topics, they will neither arouse the hostility of men nor invoke pleas that "This thing has gotten blow out of proportion." (appendix lines 429-430). Once female presence exceeds 30 percent, males employ the following discursive strategies for silencing them: ignoring, patronizing, dismissing, threatening, harassing, attacking and co-opting. Co-optation is "disguised in the form of agreement with feminist views" which makes it so that women themselves cannot make discursive gains (Herring 1999, 91). For Herring (1999) resistance to silencing takes the form of continued participation, being that the ultimate goal of men in CMC is to render female participants compliant to male control. I argue that resistance can also take the form of silence so that men "bury themselves" as they continue to communicate messages that ultimately result in their own loss of positive face within the group.

At its heart, this project is an affirmation of the necessity of voicing women's concerns about being 'flamed' or harassed when they raise or participate in topics that challenge male control of public discourse in computer-mediated environments. Flaming "is a performative game where winning and silencing seems to be determined by thrusting the opponent into a visceral and emotional reality" (Vrooman 2002, 61). The desire to flame another person cannot be pared down to a single cause, nor does it always produce the effect that the flamer may have in mind (Vrooman 2002, 65). A discussion of the flamer's intentions brings to the fore the problem of the indeterminacy of meaning or the intended or unintended effect of some communicative act upon the recipient. In the case of a semi-public mailing list, the audience of those who "get off" on the spectacle are important to consider because at any time an audience member can assume a speaking position and reject another's performance.

Flaming is also "one of the prominent ways in which questions of social versus individual identity are negotiated" (Vrooman 2002, 64). It seems to me though that reducing the conflict on the Division of Humanities mailing list to simply a problem of negotiating individual identity versus group identity is too simplistic, as it leaves out a lot of the 'context' that is behind a participant's identification with other participants or with the community as a whole. By 'context' I mean to communicate something resembling Celia Kitzinger's (2000) definition that "For feminists, 'context' means the social, cultural and historical setting within which talk takes place, the institutional or hierarchical relationship of the people talking, and their location in the social order" (173). A broad conception of *context* is valuable in the sense that it affords one the understanding that categories of analysis such as 'the individual' and 'the community' are inadequate tools for getting a thick sense of the bonds and the history of relations that exist between participants. A discussion of the social locations of the participants on the list cannot go

much beyond disclosing that the participants are relative equals in the Division of Humanities for reasons relating to the ethical constraints of encroaching on the anonymity of participants by giving too thick a description.

5.0 Contextualizing the Exchange

Throughout this project, which is "microanalysis" of one series of discursive encounters that occurred on a Division of Humanities mailing list, I avail myself to wider social categories of analysis such as 'gender' because such categories are relevant to understanding how the data is socially organized. I contend that by posting a public message about her personal experience, Jennifer's discursive construction of her experience is open to strategic misunderstanding by those who are not sympathetic to her explicit orientation as both pro-union and a feminist. It is relevant to note: although Jennifer does not explicitly state her feminist and pro-union orientation on the mailing list, her colleagues know how she situates herself politically.

Lines **264-273** of the data (see appendix) make obvious that Daniel's misappropriation of Jennifer's name and identity in a message he sends to Stanislav and his partner (Lidija), from an account he created for the sole purpose of pretending to be "an angry and sarcastic Jennifer," relies upon a characterization of Jennifer as a radical feminist who problematizes the word 'history' by pointing out that history reflects the accomplishments of men or 'his' story and not 'her' story.

Extract 1: Daniel's pretends to be Jennifer

270 George Bush is not just the greatest leeder of our time, he's the greatest

271 leeder in the (his)tory of the world. W = winner!

272 luv u 2,

273 Jenn.

In addition to playing upon Jennifer's feminism and the fact that she is American, Daniel misspells various words to add to his characterization of her as someone not to be taken seriously. The colloquial and friendly closing "luv u 2," on line **272**, signals that Jennifer is easily caricatured as someone who uses 'teen-talk' or otherwise employs the kind of slang associated with adolescent girls. The category 'girl' is of lower status than the category 'woman'. What is significant is that although Daniel does not explicitly use the category 'girl' in reference to Jennifer, the discourse he uses in his imitation of her references or is mediated by cultural scripts, which construct how Jennifer is situated in regard to both gender and social status. My point is that Jennifer's gender and status within the group are constructed in the interaction itself and thus it is not necessary that Daniel explicitly use the category 'girl' in his attempt to belittle her.

6.0 Concluding Remarks

Although one could take the position that Jennifer's silence signals that she has been intimidated into leaving public discourse on the mailing list to the men in the Division of Humanities, I think that Jennifer's silence is her power. Throughout the series of exchanges I've called attention to so far, the absence of relevant responses from Jennifer signal a refusal to interact, negotiate, or to otherwise give uptake to those who discursively position themselves as unwilling to affirm her positive face wants. In light of accusations that Jennifer's reconstruction

of her personal experience was either irrelevant, untrue or both and that she was sending harassing e-mails to Stanislav and his partner (Lidija), it seems that to not give an account of her own positioning on their terms has the effect of making it so that those who wish to get a response from her are left to fill in the relevant silence by manufacturing a response of their choosing. The problem of the indeterminacy of meaning leaves unanswered the question of whether Jennifer's intentions are relevant in regard to how her silence gets taken up. Regardless of her intentions, there is a sense in which Daniel "buries himself" by resorting to opening a hotmail account in Jennifer's name to give Stanislav the "soap opera" he is after. An "angry, and sarcastic Jennifer" (see **appendix line 359-362**) never appears on the scene except by way of fraud on Daniel's part.

What is interesting to note is that other men in the department rally around Daniel after he apologizes for impersonating and demeaning Jennifer. Farooq states: "Daniel it takes a great person to admit error!" (see **appendix line 391-392**). Donald takes a similar approach by echoing Farooq's statement and minimizing the incident with the comment that Daniel's "humour was a little dry anyway" (see **appendix lines 434-435**). It is as though Farooq and Donald are propping Daniel up after he is reduced to conceding that he treated Jennifer with inexcusable meanness.

Moreover, Stanislav ultimately suffers nearly as much face loss as Daniel does, given that Stanislav seems to want to see Jennifer's message as "irrelevant," whereas in his public apology Daniel positions the issue Jennifer raises in her initial post as something not only important in its own right, but significant enough of a threat to male control of the list to merit going to the trouble to open and send mail from a bogus e-mail account in her name (see **appendix line 366-369**)

Additionally, Perry's claim (see **appendix lines 304-345**) that he is committed to *reason* and *neutrality* in opposition to Jennifer's "skewed picture" can be analyzed alongside of his label of Jennifer's initial warning, that an anti-union doctor might make women going for gynecological exams uncomfortable, a "sheer political response" that was not worked out morally or with reason.

Of course there is sense in which the discursive encounter I analyze throughout serves as a warning to women on the mailing list that minimal participation is the ideal. However, separatist political strategies and political mobilization is open to those women on the list who refuse to be silenced, constrained, or to otherwise refuse to assume anything less than their full entitlement to equal speaking rights.²

Appendix: The Division of Humanities Mailing List³

01 Date: Tue, 5 Mar 2002 13:29:00 -0500 (EST)

02 From: Jennifer Schweiter <Schweiter@MapleU.ca>

03 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

04 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

05 Subject: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

06 I'm not sure whether or not this information will be useful to anyone, but I have a
07 story to share about my experience at the Maple Leaf health centre this morning. I had
08 an appointment with Dr. Renold (it was my first time seeing her). She entered the
09 examination room and introduced herself. I introduced myself to her and she retorted:
10 "I know who you are -- you stopped me from going into the university during the
11 strike last year. I was pregnant at the time!" She then said something about hoping she

12 would have a chance to meet me on her terms. This interaction with Dr. Renold made
13 me very uncomfortable and I would encourage those who took part in the strike to
14 avoid her. She is not sympathetic to our situation as workers and students and seemed
15 to want to render our resistance during the strike as an issue of being rude and
16 discourteous instead of it being an act of resistance.

17 Thanks for alerting others who might find themselves on the receiving end of Dr.
18 Renold's anti-union attitude -- I certainly will do my best to get the word out. This is
19 especially pertinent to women who might see her for a yearly gynecological
20 examination. I can assure you that she is still very bitter about having to have waited
21 in line "to get to work" during our labour strike.

22 Jennifer

23 Date: Tue, 5 Mar 2002 14:13:54 -0500

24 From: Stanislav Popovic <Popovic@MapleU.CA>

25 Reply-To : Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

26 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

27 Subject: Re: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

28 Jennifer, can you please clarify the following line:

29 >She then said something about hoping she would have a chance to meet me on her
30 >terms.

31 Without a reasonably convincing clarification of this line, I think that everything else
32 you told us in your previous e-mail seems quite irrelevant to everyone else but you.
33 Dr.Renold can be a very good professional irrespective of everything you said, and her
34 unsympathies with our causes have nothing to do with her doing a good job as a
35 doctor.

36 cheers!

37 s.

38 Date: Tue, 5 Mar 2002 13:52:42 -0500

39 From: Calvin Berlowski <Berlowski@MapleU.CA>

40 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

41 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

42 Subject: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

44 Ouch!

44 Next thing you know you're going to run into our old buddy Chief Wiggum! Let that
45 be a lesson to everyone who goes on strike--always wear a full face mask and carry a
46 big pipe!

47 Seriously though, that doctor sounds ridiculous. That behaviour sounds like some kind
48 of medical ethics violation, but good luck proving it happened. I think that alerting
49 everyone in the community is probably the most effective approach.

50 I'll certainly stay away from Dr. Grudge.

51 Sincerely,

52 Name withheld by request

53 Date: Tue, 5 Mar 2002 15:15:14 -0500 (EST)

54 From: Jennifer Schweiter <Schweiter@MapleU.ca>

55 To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

56 Subject: Re: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

57 Stanislav,

58 "On her terms" meaning in the examination room and not in a line of cars waiting to
59 be let into the university. When she was in her car waiting to be let into the university
60 she was, I suppose, subject to the terms of the striking workers. Whenever anyone
61 enters her place of business, that person enters under her terms in the sense that they're
62 on her "turf." That's my best interpretation -- I took the comment as meaning
63 something like: I had hoped I would be in a position where one of you needed
64 something from me so that I could throw that in your face that you made me wait in a
65 line of cars when I was pregnant.

66 Jennifer

67 Date: Tue, 5 Mar 2002 16:08:17 -0500 (EST)

68 From: Jennifer Schweiter <Schweiter@MapleU.ca>

69 To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

70 Subject: Re: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

71 It might also be relevant to mention that, if my memory serves me correctly, Dr.

72 Renold was three months pregnant at the time and claimed to be in need of a

73 washroom. She was still working at the health centre and was late to work on the day
74 that she encountered the Maple Lane fort.

75 The date of the encounter was October 31st (Halloween), as today during my visit to

76 her examination room Dr. Renold made a remark about my wearing a clown wig on

77 the day of the incident. Can I get Ms. Groucho Marx to back me up on this? See

78 Groucho and I were working together on this particular morning and had several

79 incidents with people screaming at us and trying to run us over. Groucho even lost an

80 eyebrow over the whole thing, but Calvin recovered the eyebrow when he broke out

81 his pipe (the last sentence is an admitted embellishment, but it makes for a chuckle

82 which I hope does not detract significantly from the serious tone of my first e-mail).

83 Thanks for the support, Calvin! I haven't seen Chief Wiggum -- I assume he is busy

84 elsewhere taking it *you know where*! He did so love that phrase...

85 Jennifer

86 Date: Wed, 6 Mar 2002 13:14:31 -0500

87 From: Wesley Wilde <wlwilde@PLATINUM.NET>

88 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

89 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

90 Subject: Re: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

91 Jennifer: You should definitely contact the union about this and have them initiate a

92 formal complaint through the university. After that I think you should contact the

93 Canadian Medical Association, the Metropolitan Paper, The University Weekly, etc.,

94 etc. You might even think about contacting a lawyer, since the doctor's comments

95 could be interpreted as a threat. Were there any witnesses?

96 Wes.

97 Date: Wed, 6 Mar 2002 13:20:00 -0500

98 From: Wesley Wilde <wlwilde@PLATINUM.NET>

99 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

100 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

101 Subject: Re: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre

102 Hi Jennifer: Is this a health clinic run by the university, or is it Dr. Renold's private

103 practice? In either case, this doctor is under contract to Maple Leaf University and

104 should be bound by the rules and ethics code of the university. I believe this is
105 something you should action.
106 There must be a complaint process for something like this.
107 Wes.
108 Date: Wed, 6 Mar 2002 21:07:56 -0500
109 From: Stanislav Popovic <Popovic@MapleU.CA>
110 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
111 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
112 Subject: On Dr Renold
113 Dr Renold's comment might have been inappropriate even if Jennifer might not be
114 able to accurately reconstruct the actual sentence spelled out by the doctor. But
115 before anyone contacts either the union or media, or Helsinki Watch, I'd like to make
116 one point.
117 Medical doctors are expected to treat the patients regardless of their religious,
118 political etc beliefs and regardless of their race, gender, etc. but this expectation is
119 not one sided. Medical doctors, even in wars are treated as neutral parties, and from
120 the early stages of their medical education they feel entitlement to this kind of
121 treatment. They should be treated in the same way in which they are supposed to
122 treat their patients. That's the reason why the Union decided to treat the doctors from
123 Mapleleaf in a specific way after all as I recall it. Picketers might have crossed the
124 line in this respect and hurt the professional and even moral feelings of Dr Renold.
125 Not that this justifies her behavior at the examination room but it certainly does not
126 help the case that Jennifer or anyone on her behalf would make.
127 cheers.
128 Stanislav
129 From: Sherry Hardy <shardy@HOTMAIL.COM>
130 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
131 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
132 Subject: will the real Farooq please stand up
133 ok. theses are not my speculations, but a list of the Farooq rumours I have heard to
134 date.
135 1. he is under house arrest
136 2. he has a cold
137 3. he had a brian aneurism
138 4. he has a blood clot
139 5. he is just fine
140 could someone (maybe the great Farooq himself) please clear up this mess?
141 Whenever some one askes me and I present them with these possibilities,
142 people look at me as if I'm the freak.
143 Hey, man.
144 Don't shoot the messenger.
145 -Sherry
146 Date: Thu, 7 Mar 2002 13:51:13 -0500
147 From: Kalvin Berlowski <Berlowski@MapleU.CA>
148 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
149 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

150 Subject: Meat-ring with Farooq
151 Gather round, young'uns and listen to my tale . . .
152 Well the story of Farooq is a long and convoluted one. You see what happened was,
153 he first had a cold, but he went to see Jennifer's doctor who recognized him from the
154 strike. But Dr. Grudge didn't say anything to Farooq about that, she just told him he
155 had a brain aneurysm. He said, "What!?" and she said "Aneurysm" and he said
156 "Whatt?!" and she said "Aneurysm!" and he said "What??!!" and she said "Blood
157 clot!!! In your brain!!!". Now you would think that would bother him, but it didn't
158 because after reading all that Konrad Lorenz last term he had sworn he would never
159 use his brain again. So in a last ditch effort to wreak revenge for incidents that
160 occurred during the strike, Dr. Grudge told Farooq that he had the ebola virus and the
161 only cure was to move to the prairies. This being too much pain for anyone to
162 endure, Farooq ran screaming from the office. In his blind mad dash to freedom he
163 ran into a wedding ceremony between Abigail Rest and Fred Devonovich. Fred
164 is 6' 10" and weighs 457 lbs. His nickname on the construction site is "House"
165 (which is weird because he's an insurance claims adjuster and works in an
166 office). So when Farooq came crashing into the back of their knees just as they were
167 pronounced married, he was literally under House-A. Rest.
168 When the couple finally saw who had fly-tackled them, they asked him why he had
169 done it. He gasped out "I have ebola and now I've been condemned to the prairies".
170 The preacher conducting the ceremony was part of the Suppertime Religion and
171 being a man of the tablecloth could not abide by such a horrible sentence on such a
172 beautiful, virile, young man. So he prayed in tongues and faith-healed Farooq of
173 ebola. He couldn't do anything about the aneurysm though, because that really
174 existed, and let's face it, faith is a lie. Fortunately, he is the irrepresible Farooq the
175 magnificent ("Farooq the Great" to the press), so despite having an aneurysm and
176 being crushed by newlyweds, he is just fine. Or as fine as he gets.***
177 *** Some or all of the facts of the previous story were made up for absolutely no
178 reason.
179 Date: Fri, 8 Mar 2002 00:57:16 -0500 (EST)
180 From: Jennifer Schweiter <Schweiter@MapleU.ca>
181 To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
182 Subject: Alert: Dr. Renold in Maple Leaf health centre
183 Hi Wes. Thanks for your support and advice! I have written someone in the union via
184 e-mail, though I've gotten no reply as of yet. I do plan to follow up on this matter and
185 you've given me some good ideas. Thanks alot. :-)
186 Dr. Renold works for the Maple Leaf health centre. I agree that her behaviour was
187 totally uncalled for -- I could hardly believe the way she treated me -- she made me
188 feel very uncomfortable, which is hardly the role of a medical doctor. Again, I
189 appreciate your support on this matter.
190 Jennifer
191 Date: Fri, 8 Mar 2002 01:36:47 -0500
192 From: Stanislav Popovic <Popovic@MapleU.CA>
193 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
194 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
195 Subject: Alert: Dr. Schweiter in Graduate Housing asylum

196 Quoting Dr Renold:

197 On Wed, 6 Mar 2002, Dr Wilde wrote:

198 >Dr Renold: You should definitely contact the Canadian Union of Public Employees
199 >about this and have them initiate a formal complaint through the university. After
200 >that I think you should contact the Canadian Medical Association, the Metropolitan
201 >Paper, The University Weekly, etc., etc. You might even think about contacting a
202 >lawyer, since Dr Schweiter's acts could be interpreted as a threat. Were there any
203 >witnesses?

204 >Dr Wilde

205 On Wed, 6 Mar 2002, Dr Wilde wrote:

206 >Hi Dr Renold: Is this an Graduate Housing asylum run by the university, or is it
207 >Dr.Schweiter's private practice? In either case, this doctor is under contract to
208 >CUPE and should be bound by the rules and ethics code of the CUPE. I believe this
209 >is something you should action. There must be a complaint process for something
210 >like this.

211 >Dr Wilde

212 Hi Dr Wilde. Thanks for your support and advice! I have written someone in the
213 union via e-mail, though I've gotten no reply as of yet. I do plan to follow up on this
214 matter and you've given me some good ideas. Thanks a lot. :-)

215 Dr. Schweiter works for the Graduate Housing asylum. I agree that her behaviour
216 was totally uncalled for -- I could hardly believe the way she treated me -- she made
217 me feel very uncomfortable, which is hardly the role of a humanities doctor. Again, I
218 appreciate your support on this matter.

219 Dr Renold :)

220 Date: Fri, 8 Mar 2002 07:12:20 -0800

221 From: Mar'yaska Sofiyko <msofiyko@YAHOO.COM>

222 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

223 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

224 Subject: Stanislav and the science of psychiatry

225 Hi, Stan,

226 We have this commercial in Ukraine which says: "sometimes it's better to chew", if
227 you understand what I mean.

228 Date: Fri, 8 Mar 2002 12:37:49 -0500

229 From: Stanislav Popovic <Popovic@MapleU.CA>

230 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

231 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

232 Subject: Dr Renold soap opera continued...

233 Mariska, it seems to me that you did not understand my joke that well.

234 As far as I know Dr Popovic is a prominent member of the world renowned Graduate
235 Housing Asylum as well.

236 That's why he is so interested in Dr Renold case.

237 If you are interested in following this outstanding series here are some keywords that
238 might help:

239 witch-hunt: a rigorous campaign to round up or expose dissenters on the pretext of
240 safeguarding the public welfare

241 blacklist: a list of persons or organizations under suspicion, or considered

242 untrustworthy, disloyal, etc., esp. one compiled by a government or an organization
243 CUPE: Canadian Union of Public Employees (both main actors of the soap, namely
244 Dr Schweiter and Dr Renold are members of this organization)
245 asylum: a safe or inviolable place of refuge, esp. as formerly offered by the Christian
246 Church to criminals, outlaws, etc.; sanctuary
247 Graduate Housing: a place where students at Maple Leaf University sometimes
248 reside, especially while they are still taking courses
249 have fun!
250 s.
251 Date: Sat, 9 Mar 2002 12:13:03 -0500
252 From: Stanislav Popovic <Popovic@MapleU.CA>
253 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
254 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
255 Subject: Jennifer 's misdirected e-mail messages: Fwd: just had to share.
256 Jennifer Schweiter,
257 my understanding is that you misdirected the following message to LIDIJA and to
258 me instead of to the list. I hope that you did it by mistake, since Lidija is not
259 implicated in any way in our latest discussion. As a matter of fact, this is the second
260 message that you misdirected, the previous one was sent yesterday. I must mention
261 that Lidija finds the content of the following message pretty disturbing.
262 Stanislav Popovic
263 ----- Forwarded message from Jennifer Schweiter
264 <Jennifer_Schweiter@hotmail.com> -----
265 Date: Sat, 09 Mar 2002 02:43:00 -0500
266 From: Jennifer Schweiter <Jennifer_Schweiter@hotmail.com>
267 Reply-To: Jennifer Schweiter <Jennifer_Schweiter@hotmail.com>
268 Subject: just had to share.
269 To: lidija@hotmail.com, Popovic@MapleU.ca
270 George Bush is not just the greatest leader of our time, he's the greatest
271 leader in the (his)tory of the world. W = winner!
272 luv u 2,
273 Jenn.
274 ----- End forwarded message -----
275 Date: Sat, 9 Mar 2002 12:53:22 -0500
276 From: Martin Kang <mkang@MapleU.CA>
277 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
278 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
279 Subject: Re: Jennifer 's misdirected e-mail messages: Fwd: just had to share.
280 First, I want to make clear that I am not saying what follows as "moderator" of the
281 list—this is an unmoderated list, and no one will be censored or otherwise censored.
282 I hope, however, that we can all be civil with each other here. I'd suggest everyone
283 should keep in mind that e-mail is a very "cold" medium, and that what is intended
284 as irony often gets interpreted as (malicious) sarcasm--and half-malicious sarcasm
285 can't be redeemed by a nudge and a wink (or whatever) to maintain the
286 understanding that we're still on friendly terms.
287 Also, common netiquette dictates that personal communication should not be

288 forwarded to others without the permission of the author. Since I can't make much
289 sense of Jennifer 's note forwarded by Stan, it appears to me that it was not intended
290 for anyone other than the people it was sent to--I can't see how it was intended to be
291 read by *me*, anyway--and so there was no implicit permission for it to be
292 forwarded. People tend to get upset—justifiably so--when personal communications
293 are forwarded to others. So, please, be very careful about this.

294 Along the same lines: everything posted to this list is posted under the assumption
295 that no one will see it but this list's subscribers. Nothing that is posted to this list
296 should be forwarded elsewhere, except with the explicit permission of the author.

297 Martin

298 Date: Sat, 9 Mar 2002 19:46:19 +0000

299 From: pKirk <pKirk@HOTMAIL.COM>

300 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

301 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

302 Subject: Square table?

303 Re: The Dr. Renold Debacle:

304 So folks, I am thinking we have here before us a great opportunity for a humanities
305 graduate conference/discussion, after all it deals with moral and political aspects both
306 theoretical and applied, as well as aspects about some sort of moral due process,
307 rights and responsibilities of various parties involved in a conflict, how such things
308 are determined, etc. I think many of the e-mails about the issue of Dr. Renold have
309 clearly pointed these out and so let's put our money where our mouths are and see
310 whether we through reason are capable of resolving or merely exacerbating
311 problems. There are many level to this issue, the first of which is the
312 distinction between morally appropriate behaviour of ALL parties involved on the
313 one had, and a sheer political response (which could, but far from obviously,
314 includes a moral ground) on the other. To look at just some of these issue in isolation
315 will likely do little more than skew the picture, and our commitment to continue in
316 this fashion betrays our desire to cathart, rather than work out through reasoning or
317 morally.

318 In the event that nobody wants to put reason to the test here, I offer my own take on
319 the issue (for those who care). First, I think it is obvious that Jennifer clearly has
320 reason to be concerned, but what I think is far from obvious is whether how she
321 handled it was good, or even neutral (I don't think this issue has been raised).

322 Conflict resolution provides for people who are involved and or accused (in this case
323 Dr. Renold) to be able to defend or explain themselves. I am not sure about what
324 beyond the e-mail 'warning' Jennifer has done, and in fact she may have started the
325 process that will bring an appropriate inquiry to this concern, but without such
326 appropriate inquiry, the claims border on liable. (Furthermore, having pursued an
327 appropriate inquiry to this issue in addition to the e-mail 'warning' does not
328 necessarily neutralize the question about whether it was appropriate to
329 address it in this way on this list serve, but nor does it suggest it was inappropriate to
330 (these subtleties need to be worked out.) Also, suggesting that newspapers should
331 be notified, etc., seems to be a political move, that although is within one's
332 prerogative, does seem to jettison the moral ground by taking it to the quasi mob
333 attitude of "I'll show you." Moral ground should not be assumed here on any side

334 and I think to a large degree it has been, at least to the extent that it is
335 assumed that Jennifer's take on this is complete and accurate and that Dr. Renold is
336 without any reasonable explanation. Merely moving these two issues from the realm
337 of 'assumptions' to that of 'questions' changes all kinds of things irrespective of what
338 the answers actually hold. Finally, those who are committed to pursuing this issue
339 within a moral framework need to do more than merely direct it to a crud political
340 battle. Anyway, I think we have a really interesting and meaningful topic that would
341 put reason and our commitment to it to the test. Many may think this is undesirable
342 because it is too personal, but to limit reasoning to merely impersonal issues is to
343 relegate it to the level of bureaucracy. It is in these difficult and complex areas that
344 reasoning is most needed, at least as far as I am concerned.

345 Comments? Questions? Queries? Concerns?

346 perry k.

347 Date: Sun, 10 Mar 2002 01:58:36 -0500

348 From: Daniel Konrad <Konrad@MapleU.CA>

349 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

350 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

351 Subject: Apology

352 Dear all,

353 I would like to apologize for a terrible misjudgement on my part, one which has
354 resulted in the hurt feelings of at least one member of our graduate group.

355 Early yesterday I had a phone conversation with Lidija in which we talked about
356 some of the recent messages. We discussed how certain posts might have come
357 across as hurtful, and of how we felt that none were intended at all in this way.

358 In particular, Lidija expressed her hope that Jennifer would not be offended by some
359 of the response to her post about Dr. Renold. After our conversation I thought I
360 would lighten the air about this and make a sort of joke, so I pretended to be an angry
361 and sarcastic Jennifer, and sent emails to Stanislav and Lidija in her name, from a
362 fake address. I meant these to be obvious frauds, since each was just a line of
363 nonsense. Instead of humour, however, what I produced was injury, as my lame
364 attempt at a joke managed only to horribly insult Jennifer .

365 Of course, this was an absolutely and incredibly stupid thing for me to have
366 done, and it couldn't have been in poorer taste. I do not have words strong enough to
367 express my regret, but at very least I apologize to all of you for demeaning what was
368 an important issue raised by Jennifer, and I apologize especially to Jennifer for the
369 thoughtlessness and insensitivity of my act.

370 Sincerely,

371 Daniel

372 Date: Sun, 10 Mar 2002 21:57:14 -0500

373 From: Farooq Bassami <farooq@MapleU.CA>

374 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

375 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

376 Greetings All,

377 As I am under house arrest, I was not able to speak my mind on many occasions
378 which required my participation. For those who give a damn, not that I expect many
379 to do so, I am just fine. As of today, I can say I am 95% and ready to put some more

380 Garbage-in in order to Garbage-out. On a more serious note, I will be at Maple Leaf
381 U. from now on till the day I die. ha ha for those who thought I would leave. Back to
382 the serious note, on Thursday the 14th of this March, at 1:00 pm Wes Wilde will be
383 giving a talk as part of our Graduate Teaching series. The talk will be general tips for
384 TA's and possibly a discussion of the serious matters that face us now as Maple
385 Grad. students. I strongly encourage everyone to come not because of the Indian
386 food, but because we could take this opportunity as a means of having some of our
387 serious concerns (as both educators and students) addressed. Another
388 reason, you could all come to see how I am doing, since I am the product of too
389 much stress and no results.

390 As for Kalvin, thank you.

391 As for Sandy, Sorry I am in Fairfax, and Daniel, it takes a great person to admit
392 error! Take it easy.

393 regards to all,

394 farooq

395 Date: Mon, 11 Mar 2002 02:41:41 -0500

396 From: Farooq Bassami <farooq@MapleU.CA>

397 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>

398 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA

399 Subject: Re: On Dr Renold

400 Quoting Stanislav Popovic <Popovic@MapleU.CA>:

401 My friend Stan,

402 I used to think the same. But after watching the news the last few days, it seems
403 Palestinian Medical support People do not get the same privelege.

404 So much for civilization,

405 I'll see you soon.

406 farooq

407 >Dr Renold's comment might have been inapropriate even if Jennifer might not be
408 >able to accurately reconstruct the actual sentence spelled out by the doctor. But
409 >before anyone contacts either the union or media, or Helsinki Watch, I'd like to
410 >make one point.

411 >Medical doctors are expected to treat the patients regardless of their religious,
412 >political etc beliefs and regardless of their race, gender, etc. but this expectation is
413 >not one sided. Medical doctors, even in wars are treated as neutral parties, and from
414 >the early stages of their medical education they feel entitlement to this kind of
415 >treatment. They should be treated in the same way in which they are supposed to
416 >treat their patients. That's the reason why the Union decided to treat the doctors
417 >from Mapleleaf in a specific way after all as I recall it.

418 >Picketers might have crossed the line in this respect and hurt the professional and
419 >even moral feelings of Dr Renold. Not that this justifies her behavior at the
420 >examination room but it certainly does not help the case that Jennifer or anyone on
421 >her behalf would make.

422 >cheers.

423 >Stanislav

424 Date: Mon, 11 Mar 2002 09:47:46 -0500

425 From: Donald Booker <donaldbooker@HOTMAIL.COM>

426 Reply-To: Humanities Graduate Student Forum <HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA>
427 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
428 Subject: Re: On Dr Renold
429 I'm sorry if this is offensive to anyone but I honestly think the Dr. Renold thing has
430 gotten blown out of proportion. The Dr. was a little frustrated and couldn't resist the
431 chance to send a little of that frustration back Jennifer's way. It happens to the best
432 of us! I think we need to just look at the whole episode with a little bit of humour and
433 not let it get under any of our obviously very thin skins.
434 Daniel, Farooq is right, it takes courage to admit error. But hey, the humour was a
435 little dry anyway. I honestly think that the Dr. would be incredibly amused to know
436 that her remark has caused such a stir. Her mission is accomplished wouldn't you
437 say?
438 Don
439 Date: Tue, 12 Mar 2002 13:54:46 -0500
440 From: Martin Kang <makang@MapleU.CA>
441 To: HUMANITIES@MapleU.CA
442 Subject: Responses to Donald and Perry (On Dr. Renold)
443 On Mon, 11 Mar 2002, Donald Booker wrote:
444 >I honestly think that the Dr. would be incredibly amused to know that her remark
445 >has caused such a stir.
446 I think we may find out--the controversy is not confined to this list, and it's looking
447 likely that it's going to come to her attention, somehow or other, sooner or later. It
448 will be interesting to see.
449 Look at it this way: what if one of us, who had been on the picket lines, had a student
450 who had done something we considered rude in crossing the line--and we were to say
451 to that student in a tutorial, "I know who you are ... now I've got you on my terms."
452 That would be grossly unethical, don't you think?
453 Of course, it would also be grossly unethical to hold the picket-line incident against
454 the student, even if you didn't say anything--maybe it would be even more unethical.
455 There have been occasions in my life when I've gotten myself into trouble with
456 people by revealing negative assumptions that I have about them. They get insulted,
457 but I figure it's better for everything to be out in the open and for them to be insulted
458 than it would be for me to treat them negatively without them knowing why. And,
459 sometimes, my assumptions turn out to be wrong--and bringing them into the open
460 gives us an opportunity for reconciliation. Once, I got into a heated online debate
461 with someone who had a name that was gender-neutral but usually male. I had the
462 feeling that this person was a man playing at holding feminist positions for their
463 "radical chic" value, and it annoyed me. So I told the person this--and it turned out
464 the person was a woman. She was, of course, very insulted, for the short term. But
465 we got along better for the long term, with an improved understanding where each
466 other was coming from (mostly my improved understanding of where she was
467 coming from).
468 On Sat, 9 Mar 2002, pKirk wrote:
469 >So folks, I am thinking we have here before us a great opportunity for a graduate
470 >conference/discussion
471 Want to present a paper on it at the (mythical) symposium? ;)

472 >There are many level to this issue, the first of which is the distinction between
473 >morally appropriate behaviour of ALL parties involved on the one had, and a sheer
474 >political response (which could, but far from obviously, includes a moral ground)
475 >on the other.

476 In the manner of a true academic, let me begin with a terminological quibble
477 (insisting, likewise in the manner of a true academic, that the quibble is actually very
478 important): I would rather say "ideological" where you have said "political". What
479 we are talking about here is, one way or another, a matter of politics (that is, of how
480 we get along together in the polis). The question is whether, or in what measure, we
481 want to approach political matters academically or ideologically. It's an important
482 quibble since opposing politics to academic matters may have the effect of removing
483 the academic from political matters, from participation in the polis (as Nietzsche
484 does: "'to live alone,' says Aristotle, 'one must be either a beast or a god'--leaving out
485 the third case: one must be a philosopher").

486 >In the event that nobody wants to put reason to the test here, I offer my own take on
487 >the issue (for those who care). First, I think it is obvious that Jennifer clearly has
488 >reason to be concerned, but what I think is far from obvious is whether how she
489 >handled it was good, or even neutral (I don't think this issue has been raised).

490 What interests me particularly is the effect of her putting the story of her encounter
491 with Dr. Renold into writing, on a listserv, as opposed to, say, orally telling each of
492 us, or some of us, about it. I don't think the ethical issue of whether Jennifer has
493 unfairly maligned the reputation of Dr. Renold could possible come up if she had just
494 told each of us, orally, what had happened.

495 So why is the issue raised now, when Jennifer puts the story on this listserv? Here are
496 three possibilities: putting it on the listserv makes the story more public, more
497 permanent, and more monological. Whether it's actually more public is debatable;
498 Jennifer could have told the story in person to just about everyone on this list. On the
499 other hand, I'm fairly sure she wouldn't have wanted to. Some people here could be
500 expected not to be all that interested or sympathetic. So there's another point: it
501 generally takes less courage to say things in writing than it does to say things in
502 person. The story being more permanent and more monological go together. As
503 Perry notes, Dr. Renold is not given the opportunity for rebuttal; but what may be
504 more important is that *we* aren't given the same kind of opportunity for rebuttal, or
505 at least for investigation, that we would have if the story were related personally. The
506 story stands--in our inboxes, in the archives, and wherever else it has passed on to --
507 as it is. The story is less permanent than if it were written on paper, less permanent
508 still than if it were published in a book, but it is more permanent than if it were
509 spoken. Spoken words can be *replaced*, more or less (not entirely, because their
510 effects may linger), in conversation, when the speaker modifies something s/he has
511 said. Of course, something *like* a conversation can take place on a listserv. We can
512 just read the original message and move on with the conversation, and we can ask for
513 clarification. But there is not so much of an obligation to accommodate one's
514 interlocutors in this sort of medium as there is in personal dialogue. If one makes a
515 claim to someone in person, one is expected to be able to explain it and/or defend it,
516 if desired by one's interlocutors. That isn't the case on a listserv--because, for one
517 thing, saying things on a listserv takes longer, and so people can't be expected to

518 devote as much time as it might take to explain and defend anything they might say.
519 (For that same reason, i.e. the time and deliberation it takes to say things on a
520 listserv, saying things on a listserv may be held to be less "forgiveable" than
521 saying them out loud, off the cuff.)
522 >Also, suggesting that newspapers should be notified, etc., seems to be a political
523 >move, that although is within one's prerogative, does seem to jettison the moral
524 >ground by taking it to the quasi mob attitude of "I'll show you."
525 I assume that Wes said what he did from a basically moral stance rather than an
526 ideological one. I assume he said it out of the belief that one ought to take reasonable
527 measures to ensure that people don't behave immorally toward others, and that if Dr.
528 Renold is inclined to act immorally toward other, then any measures that could
529 reasonably be pursued to ensure that she doesn't behave that way ought to be
530 pursued. In Wes's estimation (I assume), Dr. Renold's behaviour indicates an
531 inclination to act immorally toward others, and notifying newspapers is a reasonable
532 measure to ensure that she doesn't actually behave immorally toward others in the
533 future. Personally, I'm not convinced that contacting newspapers is a reasonable
534 measure, but neither am I convinced that it isn't. The reason I didn't respond to
535 Jennifer 's original post is that I think she is in a far better position than anyone else
536 to decide what might be a reasonable response; I don't think I'm in any such position
537 at all. As Stanislav indicated in his first response, it's important to know exactly what
538 Dr. Renold said. It's also important to know exactly how she said it--what her tone
539 was, what her facial expression was, what her general bodily comportment was.
540 These sorts of things can hardly be captured in writing; they can't even be captured
541 very well in speech. Of course, Jennifer may have misinterpreted them, at least as far
542 as Dr. Renold might be concerned; Dr. Renold may have intended what
543 she said in a light-hearted sort of way (which would make it less inappropriate, but
544 still inappropriate, in my view). But Jennifer is certainly in a far better position than
545 anyone else to make that kind of judgment.
546 Of course, Jennifer 's story came with its own judgments, in the form of her editorial
547 comments about Dr. Renold regarding the strikers' "act of resistance" as merely
548 discourteous and rude, etc. I tend to suspect that it was those editorial comments that
549 generated the current controversy, and specifically Stanislav's "blacklist" remarks.
550 With those editorial comments the ideological element was introduced, and the door
551 was opened for debate as to whether Dr. Renold's attitude toward the behaviour of
552 the strikers is justified--and the confusion between Dr. Renold's *attitude* and her
553 *behaviour* as the objects of ethical debate. Incidentally, I think her attitude *is*
554 justified, to a large extent (and, as Stanislav pointed out, the union acknowledged as
555 much by agreeing to expedite the passage of doctors through the lines), but Dr.
556 Renold's *behaviour* was inappropriate regardless of whether it was understandable
557 or the attitude it manifested was justified. Once again, I think it's interesting to note
558 that people are generally less inclined in speaking face to face than they are in
559 writing to make the kind of editorial comments Jennifer made: in person, one is more
560 directly confronted with the fact that either one's interlocutors will be sympathetic
561 with such comments, and they'd be unnecessary, or one's interlocutors will not
562 be sympathetic, and they'd be imprudent. It also goes to show how statements
563 (apparently) motivated by ideology can tend to backfire, at least when the motivation

564 is transparent to the receivers of such statements. It should also be noted that Jennifer
565 did not advise any particular action--she didn't call for a general boycott of Dr.
566 Renold or anything like that. She did make comments to the effect that people might
567 be made uncomfortable by Dr. Renold, and that this might be of particular
568 concern to women going for gynecological exams. These seem to me like reasonable
569 inferences from her own experience, and they don't seem necessarily related to any
570 particular ideological stance. Everyone, I presume, has an interest in not being made
571 uncomfortable by their doctors while they're being examined; patients undergoing
572 particularly invasive, "personal", or otherwise uncomfortable procedures would,
573 naturally, be particularly interested in not having their doctors add to their
574 discomfort.

575 >Moral ground should not be assumed here on any side and I think to a large degree
576 >it has been, at least to the extent that it is assumed that Jennifer's take on this is
577 >complete and accurate and that Dr. Renold is without any reasonable explanation.
578 >Merely moving these two issues from the realm of 'assumptions' to that of
579 >'questions' changes all kinds of things irrespective of what the answers actually
580 >hold.

581 As I've said, I think Jennifer 's take on this as presented in her original post is
582 necessarily incomplete, as any written account would be. As for whether it's
583 accurate--what can you say? You can take into account her (apparent) ideological
584 motivations and suppose that she might have exaggerated ... but, notwithstanding the
585 hermeneutic diceyness of doing that, the story (as opposed to the editorial comments)
586 was very brief and not particularly sensational. If she had wanted to exaggerate, I
587 would think she could have given the story some more colour. (By the way,
588 Jennifer's story would only be libellous if it were untrue, right? So if it's true,
589 she presumably needn't worry about it being libellous.)

590 >Anyway, I think we have a really interesting and meaningful topic that would put
591 >reason and our commitment to it to the test. Many may think this is undesirable
592 >because it is too personal, but to limit reason to merely impersonal issues is to
593 >relegate it to the level of bureaucracy.

594 One "application" of "reason"--one thoughtful approach--here might be to understand
595 that treating "personal" matters in such an abstract and analytical manner as you and
596 I are doing may do some sort of violence to the person involved. Not merely that it
597 may be *imprudent* to do this because the person may be offended and you may
598 incur her disfavour, but that it may also be unethical. So I think one should be
599 cautious about labelling responses which one perceives to be unreflectively
600 supportive or accepting as "unreasonable". As I said to you/Perry (it's hard to know
601 who you're addressing in this medium sometimes) before, my first thought on your
602 post was: "This is why they killed Socrates, you know." Is it justifiable to place the
603 interests of reasonable investigation above all other interests--above, for instance,
604 ethical interests such as respecting the dignity of people one might wish to
605 make the subjects of investigation? Maybe, sometimes, it is, and maybe, sometimes,
606 it isn't.

607 Of course, I'm posting this now, so evidently my (uneasy) judgment is that here,
608 now, it is.

609 We're all scholars here, after all. ;)

610 Martin

Notes

¹ The archival messages I observed span from October 12, 2001 to May 30, 2002.

² It is significant to mention that a group called Women in the Division of Humanities at Maple Leaf University (WHAM) was envisioned after women on the list got together to talk about the need for a safe space where women can discuss their experiences without fear of being verbally attacked or otherwise subjected to the vocal expression of a lack of sympathy to women's issues.

³ Spelling and punctuation have not been corrected.

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