

## BOOT CAMP

I want to start by extending, for the moment, the “war” metaphor which has guided many of the essays we have read so far. In this “war of words,” evidence is the weapon, though evidence is at the same time part of the territory each party wants to conquer. Your minds are another spoil of this war. But unlike many wars, you are not mere civilian casualties, since in being in this classroom you have stepped onto the front lines. In your papers you wage part of this war, and today we will make sure you are properly armed to defend, or offend <g>.

One of Sokal’s bombshells he drops on his own article is that the editors of *Social Text* “felt no need to analyze the quality of the evidence, the cogency of the arguments, or even the relevance of the arguments to the purported conclusion” (64). As your drill instructor, that’s precisely my job in evaluating your papers, so today we will focus on “the quality of evidence,” one of Sokal’s primary concerns as well. Specifically, we will focus on the different ways to use quotation as evidence.

### **QUOTE TYPE ONE: DAMAGE, MINIMAL**

The most basic way to use quotation is simply to make a statement which summarizes or defines or repeats an author’s position. For example, look at the way Martin uses Marx:

Marcellino is doing critical theory in the sense specified by Marx in 1843: “The self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age” (quoted in Fraser, 1989, 113). (69)

This quotation from Marx doesn’t prove anything. What does it do?

Take a look at another example from Martin:

Individual feelings were an inadequate measure of the social good. There was a total distrust of “untutored” human nature and a desire for the complete control of “wayward human experience” (Ross 1991, 368-69). (70)

What does *this* quotation do, and how do you think these type of quotes can help you in battle? For more examples, review Martin’s section on identity politics.

### **QUOTE TYPE TWO: DAMAGE, HEAVY**

Another way to use quotation in this war is to make connections, clearly one of the major battle strategies of the 103 pedagogy. At times, this type of quotation use may seem to blur into type one. Indeed, many times you may want to use a type one quotation to set up for the kill that

comes with the type two. Another example from Martin:

The economy is expanding because the wealthiest 40 percent get 68 percent of the income, creating consumer power to keep companies in business but leaving 60 percent of the population unable to participate (Peterson 1994). This helps explain why many people feel as if they are living through a depression. As an example, there is the family with three children who between them hold four jobs but make only \$18,000 a year (Johnson 1994). “When it was noted that two million new jobs were created last year, the husband quickly put that statistic in perspective. ‘Sure, we’ve got four of them. So what?’” (Herbert 1994). (75-6)

What does this kind of quote do for an argument? What does it do for Martin here? What does it do in your paper? What don’t the essays we read have more of this type of weapon?

### **QUOTE TYPE THREE: DAMAGE, SEVERE**

The most powerful way to use quotation is to analyze it. This weaponry is often referred to as “close reading.” Terry Eagleton explains a little about close reading: close reading

meant detailed analytic interpretation, providing a valuable antidote to aestheticist chit-chat; but it also seemed to imply that every previous school of criticism had read only an average of three words per line. To call for close reading, in fact, is to do more than insist on due attentiveness to the text. It inescapably suggests an attention to *this* rather than to something else: to the “words on the page” rather than to the contexts which produced and surround them. It implies a limiting as well as a focusing of concern--a limiting badly needed by literary talk which would ramble comfortable from the texture of Tennyson’s language to the length of his beard. But in dispelling such anecdotal irrelevancies, “close reading” also held at bay a good deal else: it encouraged the illusion that any piece of language, “literary” or not, can be adequately studied or even understood in isolation. It was the beginnings of a “reification” of the literary work, the treatment of it as an object in itself, which was to be triumphantly consummated in the American New Criticism. (44)

Subsequent armies of criticism have refined close reading. Poststructuralism called for an attention to the *lacunae*, or the gaps, in a text--paying close attention not only to what was said but also to what was *not* said. New Historicism placed the text back into its historical context and used close reading to read the society that surrounded and produced the text.

We can see close reading in all of our essays so far. Take, for example, Tompkins:

My research began with Perry Miller. Early in the preface to *Errand into the Wilderness*, while explaining how he came to write his history of the New

England mind, Miller writes a sentence that stopped me dead. He says that what fascinated him as a young man about his country's history was "the massive narrative of movement of European culture into the vacant wilderness of America." "Vacant?" Miller, writing in 1956, doesn't pause over the word "vacant," but to people who read his preface thirty years later, the word is shocking. In what circumstances could someone proposing to write a history of colonial New England *not* take account of the Indian presence there? (125)

The attack is swift and decisive, as Tompkins uses a single word from the quotation to launch her offensive, reflecting New Historicist and Poststructuralist uses of close reading in paying attention to what Miller did *not* see (Poststructuralism) and how that omission related to his place in history (New Historicism). And this analysis feeds directly into her argument. What kind of damage does this kind of evidence weapon do?

For Martin, can you recall any times she used close reading? What was the effect? What did it do for her battle? Even Foucault uses close reading, in his obtuse explanation of the shogun and sailor story.

This particular weapon is not just postmodern in nature. How and where does Sokal use this weapon of close reading to indict his own essay? What kind of quotation does he tend to use in "Transgressing the Boundaries"?

When you work on your rough drafts, be conscious of what weapons you choose to use. Also keep in mind that no one weapon will win a war. Strategize how best to use these kinds of evidence in combination.