Attica as Symbolic Event

or

“All we want is the facts, Ma’am. Nothing but the facts.”
Focus in this lecture

Fr seeing chg in motive to seeing variety

From *Soc Infl of Lang*

• Subcomties use d-to-d events to strengthen

From *Epis Infl of Lang*, in day-to-day events:

• T/A: Comty defs, evals, & motivates resp

From *Beh Infl of Lang*,

• Thru T/A motives are chosen & played out

*Now we look at that process*
Symbolic Events

• Demand attention
  – In resp, subcomties produce intrprtns

• Result:
  – Comty chooses fr variety of ways to und
  – Subcomties strengthened/weakened

• Landmark events: benchmarks for the discourse that makes society’s history
Levels of Symbolic Events

- Generational Events
  - 9/11, Vietnam, Great Depression
- Compelling Events
  - Attica, Challenger Disaster, Election of Obama
- Mundane/common events
Texture of Symbolic Events

Looking at the subcomties
• All exp same event; desc event diff/ly

Looking at the comty
• Var of voices: compete to give meaning

Looking at the rhetoric
1. See the variety
2. See the motives
3. See the logic
Discourse in Symbolic Events

• What happened?
  – Notice var of “facts”
  – What causes event?

• What sig? What meaning?
  – Connections? Similarities?

• How to respond?
  – Notice the logical structure
Attica Prison Revolt

- 1971
- Upstate New York, near Buffalo
- Part of 1960s
  - Race
  - Religion
- Prisons take over Cell Block D; take hostages
- Ended in assault
  - 39 hostages killed; all by assaulting forces
Significance of Attica

- Weeks of front page news
- Cover of news magazines
- Major topic of comm across society
Focus on Four Motives

14 diff motive in T/A Attica

Our focus, 4 major:

• Prison Reform
• Rejection of Authority Structure; Revolution
• Attica and the Radical Revolution
• Law and Order
Prison Reform Motive

• Personae of *Struggle*
  – The forces
  – The Inmates
  – Those who would ease the struggle
  – Negotiating Team

• The Conditions

• The Progression Toward Death

• Attica as *archetype*
What you should note

• Pwr of narr of *struggle* to shape desc
  – Word choices?
  – Progression?
• Merger of desc, eval, & action
• DP motivating chg
• Beyond Attica relevant? How?
• Driven by policy or democratic motive?
Revolution: Rejecting the Authority Structure

- Char of American authority (Pollution)
  - Vignettes of Action
- Fixing responsibility: Capitalism forms character
- Revolutionary hero
  - Humane & compassionate
  - Unity of cadre
  - Willingness to sacrifice
- Rituals perform revolution

*Attica: the reality test for revolution*
What you should note

• Diff of facts in desc
• Relevant b/y Attica? How? Diff fr PR?
• Vignettes r/t narratives: Why?
• DP & strength of motivation
• How do desc & eval motivate?
• How does ritual function?
Recognizing the Revolution

• Attica part of rev *conspiracy*
  – Looks like a revolution
  – Secret meetings to plan
• Pttns of rev play out at Attica
  – See typical strat of rev
• Only way to deal w/ rev: total victory
  – Char of those we fight
  – Rej neg; Suppress immediately

*Obscured revealed; now you must act*
What you should note

• What diff facts?
• Events b/y Attica? Why imp?
• What does Attica contribute rhet/ly?
• DP?
• How does it tie desc, eval, action?
Law and Order

- Centrality of <Law> in discourse
- <Law>: symbol shapes Attica
  - Participants
  - 3 challenges to law
- Response: Principle of <Law>
What you should note

• Diff facts? Beyond Attica?
• Things shared w/ other motives?
• Use of the ideograph
• DP?
• Tie of desc to eval and action?
Rhetoric which enacts: 3 quals

- Creates common understanding of events: “Knowledge”
- Names & motivates proper response
- In doing so, reaffirms motives; shapes action
Toward “Cmn” Undstding

• rhet selects
  – some happenings appear; some don’t
  – different importance
  – details differ
  – story starts & ends in diff places

• the rhet relates thgs in pttns
  – Concurrent rlsps remove randomness
  – Causality & interaction give reas & dev
Toward Propriety & Response

• Rhet vals elems of sit
  – by vocab
  – by attributing chars
  – by rlsps of pttns

• act of valuing sugg coalition or conflict
  – imperative for action in portrayal of roles
Reinforcing the Motive

• Praise for people & acts at Attica w/ certain char: praise for chars themselves
  – Concreteness offers Attica as proof
• Rhet ties desc to response: “What happened at Attica proves that this is the proper way to respond!”
Variety of Perspective marks the texture of discourse

The Public Sphere

Law & Order
- Turn against Violence
- Dehumanization of Industrial System
- Force does not solve problems
- Poor conditions no excuse

Confront Revolution
- Don’t obey orders? Attack
- Prisoners were thugs

Prison Reform
- Permissiveness Condemned
- International Imperialism; Go to UN
- More study needed

Radical Revolution
- Symptom of Needy Society

The Public Sphere