

From: Practical Argument  
Ed. Kirszner & Mandell

This piece appeared in the *New York Times* on August 30, 2007.



## TERROR'S PURSE STRINGS

DANA THOMAS

- 1 Luxury fashion designers are busily putting final touches on the handbags they will present during the spring-summer 2008 women's wear shows, which begin next week in New York City's Bryant Park. To understand the importance of the handbag in fashion today consider this: According to consumer surveys conducted by Coach, the average American woman was buying two new handbags a year in 2000; by 2004, it was more than four. And the average luxury bag retails for 10 to 12 times its production cost.
- 2 "There is a kind of an obsession with bags," the designer Miuccia Prada told me. "It's so easy to make money."
- 3 Counterfeiters agree. As soon as a handbag hits big, counterfeiters around the globe churn out fake versions by the thousands. And they have no trouble selling them. Shoppers descend on Canal Street in New York, Santee Alley in Los Angeles and flea markets and purse parties around the country to pick up knockoffs for one-tenth the legitimate bag's retail cost, then pass them off as real.
- 4 "Judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys shop here," a private investigator told me as we toured the counterfeit section of Santee Alley. "Affluent people from Newport Beach." According to a study by the British law firm Davenport Lyons, two-thirds of British consumers are "proud to tell their family and friends" that they bought fake luxury fashion items.
- 5 At least 11 percent of the world's clothing is fake, according to 2000 figures from the Global Anti-Counterfeiting Group in Paris. Fashion is easy to copy: counterfeiters buy the real items, take them apart, scan the pieces to make patterns and produce almost-perfect fakes.  
"At least 11 percent of the world's clothing is fake."  
Most people think that buying an imitation handbag or wallet is harmless, a victimless crime. But the counterfeiting rackets are run by crime syndicates that also deal in narcotics, weapons, child prostitution, human trafficking and terrorism. Ronald K. Noble, the secretary general of Interpol,<sup>o</sup> told the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations that profits from the sale of counterfeit goods have gone to groups associated with Hezbollah, the Shiite terrorist group, paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland and FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.
- 7 Sales of counterfeit T-shirts may have helped finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, according to the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition. "Profits from counterfeiting are one of the three main sources of income

*An international criminal police organization*

supporting international terrorism,” said Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland.

Most fakes today are produced in China, a good many of them by children. Children are sometimes sold or sent off by their families to work in clandestine factories that produce counterfeit luxury goods. Many in the West consider this an urban myth. But I have seen it myself.

On a warm winter afternoon in Guangzhou, I accompanied Chinese police officers on a factory raid in a decrepit tenement. Inside, we found two dozen children, ages 8 to 13, gluing and sewing together fake luxury-brand handbags. The police confiscated everything, arrested the owner and sent the children out. Some punched their timecards, hoping to still get paid. (The average Chinese factory worker earns about \$120 a month; the counterfeit factory worker earns half that or less.) As we made our way back to the police vans, the children threw bottles and cans at us. They were now jobless and, because the factory owner housed them, homeless. It was *Oliver Twist* in the 21st century.

What can we do to stop this? Much like the war on drugs, the effort to protect luxury brands must go after the source: the counterfeit manufacturers. The company that took me on the Chinese raid is one of the only luxury-goods makers that works directly with Chinese authorities to shut down factories, and it has one of the lowest rates of counterfeiting.

Luxury brands also need to teach consumers that the traffic in fake goods has many victims. But most companies refuse to speak publicly about counterfeiting—some won’t even authenticate questionable items for concerned customers—believing, like Victorians,<sup>9</sup> that acknowledging despicable actions tarnishes their sterling reputations.

So it comes down to us. If we stop knowingly buying fakes, the supply chain will dry up and counterfeiters will go out of business. The crime syndicates will have far less money to finance their illicit activities and their terrorist plots. And the children? They can go home.

The people who lived during the reign of Victoria (1819–1901), queen of Great Britain and Ireland, who are often associated with prudish behavior



## A POWERFUL CALL TO ACTION

DENIZ BILGUTAY

Context

In her *New York Times* editorial, “Terror’s Purse Strings,” writer Dana Thomas uses the opening of New York’s fashion shows as an opportunity to expose a darker side of fashion—the impact of imitation designer goods. Thomas explains to her readers why buying counterfeit

Topic

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luxury items, like fake handbags, is a serious problem. Her first goal is to raise awareness of the dangerous ties between counterfeiters who sell fake luxury merchandise and international criminal organizations that support terrorism and child labor. Her second goal is to explain how people can be a part of the solution by refusing to buy the counterfeit goods that finance these criminal activities. By gaining her audience's confidence and goodwill, building her case slowly, and appealing to both our logic and our emotions, Thomas succeeds in writing an informative and inspiring piece.

Analysis of writer's purpose

2 For Thomas's argument to work, she has to earn her readers' trust. She does so first by anticipating a sympathetic, well-intentioned, educated audience and then by establishing her own credibility. To avoid sounding accusatory, Thomas assumes that her readers are unaware of the problem posed by counterfeit goods. She demonstrates this by offering basic factual information and by acknowledging what "most people think" or what "many in the West consider": that buying counterfeit goods is harmless. She also acknowledges her readers' high level of education by drawing comparisons with history and literature—specifically, the Victorians and *Oliver Twist*. Second, to earn the audience's trust, she uses her knowledge and position to gain credibility. As the Paris correspondent for *Newsweek* and as the author of a book on luxury goods, Thomas has credibility on her topic. Showing her familiarity with the world of fashion by referring to a conversation with renowned designer Miuccia Prada, she further emphasizes this authority. Later in the article, she shares her experience of witnessing the abuse that accompanies the production of fake designer handbags. This story allows her to say, "I've seen it myself," confirming her knowledge not just of the fashion world but also of the world of counterfeiting. However, despite her authority, she does not distance herself from readers. In fact, she goes out of her way to identify with them, using informal style and first person, noting "it comes down to us" and asking what "we" can do.

Thesis statement:  
 Assessment of essay

Analysis of writer's audience

Writer's use of similes,  
 metaphors, allusions

Writer's use of *ethos*

Analysis of the writer

3 In Thomas's argument, both the organization and the use of evidence are very effective. She begins her article with statements that are easy to accept, and as she proceeds, she addresses more serious issues. In the first paragraph, she simply asks readers "to understand the importance of the handbag in fashion today." She demonstrates

Analysis of essay's organization

Writer's use of *logos*

the wide-ranging influence and appeal of counterfeit designer goods, pointing out that “at least 11 percent of the world’s clothing is fake.” Thomas then makes the point that the act of purchasing these seemingly frivolous goods can actually have serious consequences. For example, crime syndicates and possibly even terrorist organizations actually run “the counterfeiting rackets” that produce these popular items. To support this point, she relies on two kinds of evidence—quotations from terrorism experts (specifically, the leader of a respected international police organization as well as a scholar in the field) and her own personal experience at a Chinese factory. Both kinds of evidence appeal to our emotions. Discussions of terrorism, especially those that recall terrorist attacks on America, spark fear. Thomas deliberately chooses her one specific example—the “sales of counterfeit T-shirts” that “may have helped finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing”—to evoke that fear. Next, to elicit her readers’ compassion, she describes her experience of witnessing child labor in China. After using her readers’ emotions to make them empathize with the situation, she asks, “What can we do to stop this?”

Writer’s use of evidence

Writer’s use of *pathos*

Thomas waits until the end of the article to present her thesis, which is stated in the form of a clear-cut solution: to avoid financing terror and abuse, we should not give our money to the terrorists and abusers by buying counterfeit goods. Her appeals to emotion have made readers ready to act. Her subsequent reference to the “war on drugs” evokes emotionally charged images of evil drug lords and drug-addicted children, reinforcing the readers’ sense that change is needed. Ultimately, however, the solution that Thomas presents relies on the simple logic of cause and effect. Those who buy counterfeit goods are supporting criminal practices and, as a result, are responsible for the harm that these organizations do. If we want to change this situation, then we need to change our buying practices.

Writer’s use of *pathos*

Writer’s use of *logos*

## EXERCISE

Read the essay on pages 86–87. Follow the task.

Revision

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From: Writing Arguments  
Ed. Ramage, Bean & Johnson

## Readings

Our first reading is by journalist Ellen Goodman, whose columns are syndicated in U.S. newspapers by the Washington Post Writers Group. This column, which appeared in 2008, is analyzed rhetorically by student Zachary Stumps in our second reading.

### Womb for Rent—For a Price

ELLEN GOODMAN

BOSTON—By now we all have a story about a job outsourced beyond our reach in the global economy. My own favorite is about the California publisher who hired two reporters in India to cover the Pasadena city government. Really.

There are times as well when the offshoring of jobs takes on a quite literal meaning. When the labor we are talking about is, well, labor.

In the last few months we've had a full nursery of international stories about surrogate mothers. Hundreds of couples are crossing borders in search of lower-cost ways to fill the family business. In turn, there's a new coterie of international workers who are gestating for a living.

Many of the stories about the globalization of baby production begin in India, where the government seems to regard this as, literally, a growth industry. In the little town of Anand, dubbed "The Cradle of the World," 45 women were recently on the books of a local clinic. For the production

and delivery of a child, they will earn \$5,000 to \$7,000, a decade's worth of women's wages in rural India.

5 But even in America, some women, including Army wives, are supplementing their income by contracting out their wombs. They have become surrogate mothers for wealthy couples from European countries that ban the practice.

This globalization of baby-making comes at the peculiar intersection of a high reproductive technology and a low-tech work force. The biotech business was created in the same petri dish as Baby Louise, the first IVF baby. But since then, we've seen conception outsourced to egg donors and sperm donors. We've had motherhood divided into its parts from genetic mother to gestational mother to birth mother and now contract mother.

We've also seen the growth of an international economy. Frozen sperm is flown from one continent to another. And patients have become medical tourists, searching

for cheaper health care whether it's a new hip in Thailand or an IVF treatment in South Africa that comes with a photo safari thrown in for the same price. Why not then rent a foreign womb?

I don't make light of infertility. The primal desire to have a child underlies this multinational Creation, Inc. On one side, couples who choose surrogacy want a baby with at least half their own genes. On the other side, surrogate mothers, who are rarely implanted with their own eggs, can believe that the child they bear and deliver is not really theirs.

As one woman put it, "We give them a baby and they give us much-needed money. It's good for them and for us." A surrogate in Anand used the money to buy a heart operation for her son. Another raised a dowry for her daughter. And before we talk about the "exploitation" of the pregnant woman, consider her alternative in Anand: a job crushing glass in a factory for \$25 a month. 10 Nevertheless, there is—and there should be—something

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uncomfortable about a free market approach to baby-making. It's easier to accept surrogacy when it's a gift from one woman to another. But we rarely see a rich woman become a surrogate for a poor family. Indeed, in Third World countries, some women sign these contracts with a fingerprint because they are illiterate.

For that matter, we have not yet had stories about the contract workers for whom pregnancy was a dangerous occupation, but we will. What obligation does a family that simply contracted for a child have

to its birth mother? What control do—should—contractors have over their “employees” lives while incubating “their” children? What will we tell the offspring of this international trade?

“National boundaries are coming down,” says bioethicist Lori Andrews, “but we can't stop human emotions. We are expanding families and don't even have terms to deal with it.”

It's the commercialism that is troubling. Some things we cannot sell no matter how good “the deal.” We cannot, for example, sell ourselves into slavery. We cannot sell

our children. But the surrogacy business comes perilously close to both of these deals. And international surrogacy tips the scales.

So, these borders we are crossing are not just geographic ones. They are ethical ones. Today the global economy sends everyone in search of the cheaper deal as if that were the single common good. But in the biological search, humanity is sacrificed to the economy and the person becomes the product. And, step by step, we come to a stunning place in our ancient creation story. It's called the marketplace.

Our second reading shows how student writer Zachary Stumps analyzed the Ellen Goodman article.

### A Rhetorical Analysis of Ellen Goodman's “Womb for Rent—For a Price”

ZACHARY STUMPS (STUDENT)

Introduction provides context and poses issue to be addressed

Provides background on Goodman

Summarizes the op-ed piece

With her op-ed piece “Womb for Rent—For a Price,” published in the *Seattle Times* on April 11, 2008 (and earlier in the *Boston Globe*), syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman enters the murky debate about reproductive technology gone global. Since Americans are outsourcing everything else, “Why not then rent a foreign womb?” (130) she asks. Goodman, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the Washington Post Writers Group, is known for helping readers understand the “tumult of social change and its impact on families,” and for shattering “the mold of men writing exclusively about politics” (“Ellen Goodman”). This op-ed piece continues her tradition of examining social change from the perspective of family issues.

Goodman launches her short piece by asserting that one of the most recent and consequential “jobs” to be outsourced is having babies. She explains how the “globalization of baby production” is thriving because it

brings together the reproductive desires of people in developed countries and the bodily resources of women in developing countries like India. Briefly tracing how both reproductive technology and medical tourism have taken advantage of global possibilities, Goodman acknowledges that the thousands of dollars Indian women earn by carrying the babies of foreign couples represent a much larger income than these women could earn in any other available jobs. After appearing to legitimize this global exchange, however, Goodman shifts to her ethical concerns by raising some moral questions that she says are not being addressed in this trade. She concludes with a full statement of her claim that this global surrogacy is encroaching on human respect and dignity, exploiting business-based science, and turning babies into products.

Thesis paragraph

In this piece, Goodman's delay of her thesis has several rhetorical benefits: it gives Goodman space to present the perspective of poor women, enhanced by her appeals to *pathos*, and it invites readers to join her journey into the complex contexts of this issue; however, this strategy is also risky because it limits the development of her own argument.

Develops first point in thesis: use of *pathos* in exploring perspective of poor women

Instead of presenting her thesis up front, Goodman devotes much of the first part of her argument to looking at this issue from the perspective of foreign surrogate mothers. Using the strategies of *pathos* to evoke sympathy for these women, she creates a compassionate and progressively minded argument that highlights the benefits to foreign surrogate mothers. She cites factual evidence showing that the average job for a woman in Anand, India, yields a tiny "\$25 a month" gotten through the hard work of "crushing glass in a factory," compared to the "\$5,000 to \$7,000" made carrying a baby to term (130). To carry a baby to term for a foreign couple represents "a decade's worth of women's wages in rural India" (130). Deepening readers' understanding of these women, Goodman cites one woman who used her earnings to finance her son's heart operation and another who paid for her daughter's dowry. In her fair presentation of these women, Goodman both builds her own positive *ethos* and adds a dialogic dimension to her argument by helping readers walk in the shoes of otherwise impoverished surrogate mothers.

Develops second point in thesis: the complex contexts of this issue—outsourcing and medical tourism

The second rhetorical benefit of Goodman's delayed thesis is that she invites readers to explore this complex issue of global surrogacy with her before she declares her own view. To help readers understand and think through this issue, she relates it to two other familiar global topics: outsourcing and medical tourism. First, she introduces foreign surrogacy as one of the latest forms of outsourcing: "This globalization of baby-making comes at the peculiar intersection of a high reproductive technology and a low-tech work force" (130). Presenting these women as workers, she explains that women in India are getting paid for "the production and delivery of a child" (130) that is analogous to the production and delivery of sneakers or bicycle parts.

Shows how delayed thesis structure perspective conflict

Restates point in lack of development Goodman argument

Discusses of ideas Goodman develop

Goodman also sets this phenomenon in the context of global medical tourism. If people can pursue lower-cost treatment for illnesses and health conditions in other countries, why shouldn't an infertile couple seeking to start a family not also have such access to these more affordable and newly available means? This reasoning provides a foundation for readers to begin understanding the many layers of the issue.

Shows how the delayed-thesis structure creates two perspectives in conflict

The result of Goodman's delayed-thesis strategy is that the first two-thirds of this piece seem to justify outsourcing surrogate motherhood. Only after reading the whole op-ed piece can readers see clearly that Goodman has been dropping hints about her view all along through her choice of words. Although she clearly sees how outsourcing surrogacy can help poor women economically, her use of market language such as "production," "delivery," and "labor" carry a double meaning. On first reading of this op-ed piece, readers don't know if Goodman's punning is meant to be catchy and entertaining or serves another purpose. This other purpose becomes clear in the last third of the article when Goodman forthrightly asserts her criticism of the commercialism of the global marketplace that promotes worldwide searching for a "cheaper deal": "humanity is sacrificed to the economy and the person becomes the product" (131). This is a bold and big claim, but does the final third of her article support it?

Restates the third point in his thesis: lack of space limits development of Goodman's argument.

In the final five paragraphs of this op-ed piece, Goodman begins to develop the rational basis of her argument; however, the brevity of the op-ed genre and her choice not to state her view openly initially have left Goodman with little space to develop her own claim. The result is that she presents some profound ideas very quickly. Some of the ethically complex ideas she introduces but doesn't explore much are these:

- The idea that there are ethical limits on what can be "sold"
- The idea that surrogate motherhood might be "dangerous work"
- The idea that children born from this "international trade" may be confused about their identities.

Discusses examples of ideas raised by Goodman but not developed

Goodman simply has not left herself enough space to develop these issues and perhaps leaves readers with questions rather than with changed views. I am particularly struck by several questions. Why have European countries banned surrogacy in developing countries and why has the United States not banned this practice? Does Goodman intend to argue that the United States should follow Europe's lead? She could explore more how this business of finding illiterate women to bear children for the wealthy continues to exploit third-world citizens much as sex tourism exploits women in the very same countries. It seems to perpetuate a tendency for the developed world to regard developing countries as a poor place of lawlessness where practices outlawed in the rest of the world (e.g. child prostitution, slave-like working conditions) are somehow tolerable. Goodman could have developed her argument more



to state explicitly that a woman who accepts payment for bearing a baby becomes an indentured servant to the family. Yet another way to think of this issue is to see that the old saying of “a bun in the oven” is more literal than metaphoric when a woman uses her womb as a factory to produce children, a body business not too dissimilar to the commercialism of prostitution. Goodman only teases readers by mentioning these complex problems without producing an argument.

Still, although Goodman does not expand her criticism of outsourced surrogate motherhood or explore the issues of human dignity and rights, this argument does introduce the debate on surrogacy in the global marketplace, raise awareness, and begin to direct the conversation toward a productive end of seeking a responsible, healthy, and ethical future. Her op-ed piece lures readers into contemplating deep, perplexing ethical and economic problems and lays a foundation for readers to create an informed view of this issue.

Conclusion

Uses MLA format to list sources cited in the essay

#### Works Cited

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