and her parents, Charles and Martha Reiske, have been the best in-laws anyone could have. The true rhetoricians in our family are the twins, Meagan Belle and Matthew Michael, whose exuberance and love as symbol-using and mis-using animals knows no bounds.

—D. B.

1

Dramatism and Rhetoric

❖

Cartoonist Gary Larson begins *The PreHistory of The Far Side: A Tenth Anniversary Exhibit* by announcing, "I thought it might be time to reveal some of the background, anecdotes, foibles, and 'behind-the-scenes' experiences related to this [*The Far Side*] cartoon panel. (This may or may not be of particular interest to anyone, but my therapist says it should do *me* a lot of good)" (Foreword). This collection of sketches, single-panel cartoons, and commentary is a chronicle of *The Far Side's* birth (in 1980) and its evolution. Like Larson's other collections, it is filled with panels of dogs, cats, mad scientists, snakes, babies, ducks, and cows (galore)—all depicted in some bizarre or nonsensical situation, often with a verbal explanation that works with the drawings to achieve the comical effect (or not). One of my favorites shows two ducks standing together next to a pond, gazing up at a flock of crudely drawn birds flying overhead. The caption reads, "I just can't tell from here. . . . That could either be our flock, another flock, or just a bunch of little m's."

A single-panel cartoon like *The Far Side* offers a slice of life, a (sometimes) familiar scene with which readers may or may not identify. We scan for meaning and significance and if it's on target, we laugh, or perhaps smile inwardly, then go about our business. Larson has also gained fame for being obscure. He describes his cartoon "Cow Tools"— depicting a cow standing in front of a table filled with oddly shaped tools—in this way: "I drew a really weird, obtuse cartoon that no one understood and wasn't funny and therefore I went on to even greater

success and recognition. [. . .] Yeah—I like this country" (157). Whether on target or obscure, the cartoons appeal as minidramas, representative of some desire or need in the artist or in his audience. People named "Doug" were especially taken by Larson's panel depicting a rather large man "hiding" behind a tree in a front yard while a door-to-door salesman reads the sign on the gate, "Beware of Doug." (It's easy to imagine how many Dougs had that one tacked to an office door.) What exactly do these cartoons do for us? For Larson? Are they a kind of cure, as Larson's therapist suggests? And what on earth is the appeal of obscurity or ambiguity?

Representative Words

"Cartoons are, after all, little stories themselves, frozen at an interesting moment in time" (113), Larson observes. What story does the panel in Figure 1.1 tell? What is interesting about its moment? We see a grinning and toothy man who has apparently just finished sloppily painting words on their corresponding objects: *The Tree, Garbage Can, The House, The Door, Shirt, Pants, The Cat, The Dog*. The caption reads: "Now! . . . *That* should clear up a few things around here!" *What*, if anything, has he cleared up, and *why* is he so happy about it?

There has clearly been some sort of anxiety about "thing*s*" that had to be "cleared up." That is, there is some situation that has supplied a **motive** for the man to respond with his paintbrush and bucket, an act that has him clearly feeling relieved. You could surmise that he has in the past had trouble remembering what words go with what things, so that problem is now solved (except perhaps for the lawn, sky, drainpipe, roof, his glasses, nose, and all the other objects depicted). Words, of course, are what he uses to communicate with others, so it could be that after his artistry, he will be able to communicate more clearly and effectively with them, the mystery of what signs go with what things resolved and unambiguous. Or in an even more general sense, it could be that the anxiety, the situation, is over the inherent problem posed by language, that words are not the things themselves, but representative of things. They function as symbols, in other words. The correspondence or relationship between symbols and what they represent has (until this cartoon panel) been somewhat arbitrary. For example, when we use the word *dog*, we may mean or see our dog, your dog, the species dog (the ultimate dog), or some other dog. Language philosophers might say that
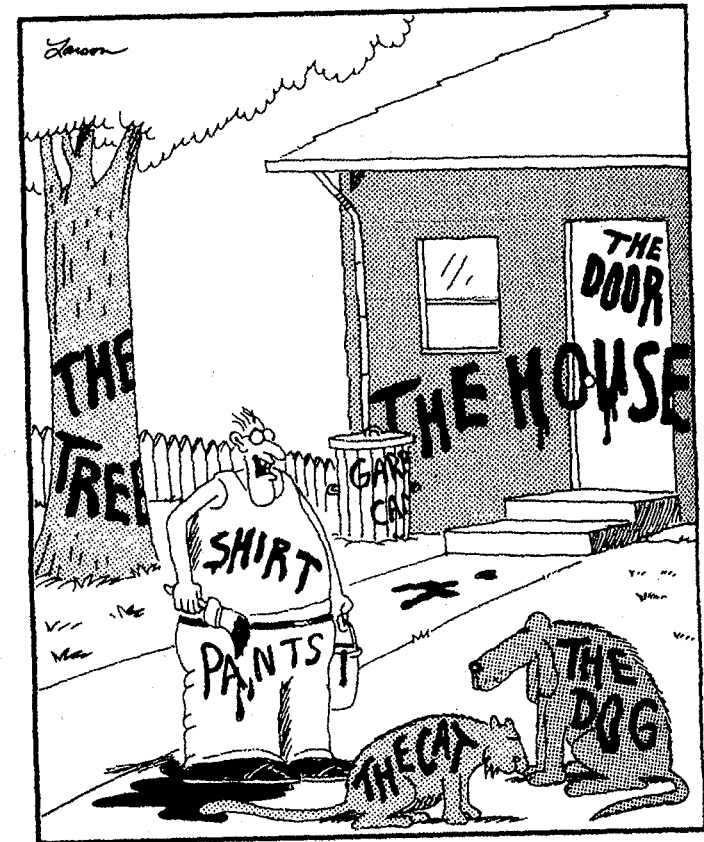
"Now!...*That* should clear up a few things around here!"

Figure 1.1 Gary Larson, *The Far Side*.

the man has stabilized the slippage of meaning or bridged the gap between the signifier (the word as a sound or image) and the signified (the object or concept). Interestingly, the man feels relieved for having done this. It is as if the act of assigning unambiguous meaning has a **cathartic** effect. The act of using words (in fact, writing them literally on the world) reduces uncertainty or anxiety, which makes him feel better. His act has made the potential for misinterpretation a thing of the past, in

one fell swoop (or as a friend of mine once accidentally put it, one swell foop).

What might the cartoon do for Gary Larson? For us? Perhaps the man's silly grin is a clue. He doesn't have the demeanor of a genius (if there is such a thing). If he thinks that he's cleared anything up, he's sadly mistaken. In *The PreHistory of The Far Side*, Larson confesses to a great deal of anxiety of his own about trying to get his cartoons just right, of avoiding misinterpretation and ambiguity. Yet he and we, too, know that while the motive is pure, the act is futile. We have all experienced disagreements caused by misunderstanding, by some failure not merely of compassion or intellect, but borne of words and their multiple meanings, their potential for making our lives easier or yet more difficult than they might otherwise be. In the novel *Free Fall* (1959), Nobel Prize Winner William Golding's narrator notes the problem succinctly: "To communicate is our passion and our despair" (9).

An answer or rejoinder to the intrigues and problems posed by our symbol systems—our various ways of expressing meaning—is the subject of this book. I'm using the Gary Larson cartoon as a **representative anecdote,** a slice-of-life story that captures an interesting moment but that also can generate questions about a broader subject. In this case, the cartoon raises questions about, among other things,

1. Our desire to "clear things up" or change our circumstances by writing *about* or *around* them (or *on* them, in this case)
2. The "problem" in which we all find ourselves as symbol-using animals, a world where meaning and significance is both a mystery and an opportunity for gaining power over our own lives or those of others
3. The function of the word as an act in a scene (the front yard) performed by a person or agent (our grinning man) with means or agency (a paintbrush) for a purpose (to clear things up)
4. The central role of language and the imputing of motives in our attempts to philosophize about our lives and our realities
5. How the uncertainty or ambiguity in language creates the conditions for **division** (our separateness from each other) and **identification** (our union with each other).

Dramatism is the systematic study of these kinds of questions.

All the Words, a Stage

Dramatism is a philosophy of language, with stress upon the original meaning of *philosophy* [*philo* = life + *sophos* = knowledge], the study of language as a way of living and knowing. In the broadest sense, dramatism *is* life, life lived in a world populated by people acting through language to build societies, establish and maintain social relations, adjust to their social situation, and come to terms with their existence in time and space. Dramatism analyzes language and thought as modes of action rather than as means of conveying information. Thus, for dramatism, language is a form of **symbolic action.** The dramatistic view of the world holds that language is not simply a tool to be used by people (actors), but the basis for human beings acting together and thus, of all human relations. Words act, in other words, to define, persuade, appease, divide, identify, entertain, victimize, move, inspire, and so on. It might help to understand language as symbolic action when you consider whether it makes a big difference to say "I am not crazy" rather than "I am happy" when you are indeed happy. The use of the **negative** in the first performs an act of denial, even if it doesn't make any positive assertion about what you actually are. "I am not crazy" *could* mean that you are happy. You may be far worse or better than crazy. As a resource of language, the negative can be seen as a purely verbal act because on the one hand it doesn't convey any information, yet on the other it may induce some change in the attitude of others. Imagine, for instance, what will happen if you walk around town mumbling "I am not crazy."

Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) was the philosopher, critical theorist, and rhetorician who made dramatism the central tenet of his work and who has influenced the thinking of countless others interested in the study of speech, writing, and society. Dramatism originated in his work in the mid-1930s and marked his attempt to develop a systematic method for analyzing human communication in all its complexity. By the mid-1940s, Burke's desire to develop such a method took on added urgency in a world torn apart by war. His *A Grammar of Motives* (1945) was the first of a planned trilogy on human relations and formally introduced the **pentad**—act, scene, agent, agency, purpose—which is the heart of what is now known as dramatism. (Burke would later add a sixth term, *attitude*.) By 1968 and three books further into his project, Burke summed up as follows:

Dramatism is a method of analysis and a corresponding critique of terminology designed to show that the most direct route to the study of human relations and human motives is via a methodical inquiry into cycles or clusters of terms and their functions. ("Dramatism," 445)

Burke saw the pentad as the set of relational and functional principles that could help us understand what he calls the "cycles or clusters of terms" people used to attribute motives in a particular work of philosophy, literature, speech, or in more general philosophies of human motivation, such as capitalism, communism, or psychoanalysis. Other critics have put dramatism to work in analyses of social movements, political rhetoric, film, economics, interpersonal psychology, art, and popular culture. A quick perusal of the Suggested Readings at the end of this book will give you a good sense of the scope of dramatism as an analytical method.

Burke often called himself a "word-man," and some discussion of that moniker will help clarify precisely what the concept of dramatism entails. For eons, human beings have sought to define themselves, to name that essential quality that both distinguishes us from animals and other forms of life and even that distinguishes people from one another. Some say we *are* what we do, that our actions define us (the pragmatic view). Some say that we are what we think we are (the subjective view). Still others say that we are the sum total of our social identities or roles (the sociological view). Others say that we *are* by virtue of a complex system of biological and neurological processes (the objective view). We may be the sum of internal and instinctual drives (the psychological view). Or we may be whatever we desire to be (the idealist view). Burke, and thus dramatism, holds that our words define us, that our identities are but composites of our symbol systems. Human beings are in the simplest sense, says Burke, the symbol-using animal. So if you ask, "Who is Burke?" the answer is, simply, a "word-man." He, like the rest of us, is an actor in a world of words.

It was Jaques in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* who spoke suggestively that

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts.
> His acts being seven ages. (II.vii.149–53)

In its time, this well-known saying referred to the fact that people pass through *stages in life*—periods, in other words—but it was also used as a metaphor to describe the dramatic nature of life itself, that we are but actors on the "stage of life" (as described in *Hamlet*, for instance). Dramatism takes the next step and holds that words (symbols) are the actors in this drama of human relations. It is through careful study of their symbolic action that we can come to a better understanding of our *words* as the staging of our hopes, our vengeance, our dreams, our fears, our desires. In his well-known essay, "Definition of Man," Burke sums up the implications of this perspective:

> [H]owever important to us is the tiny sliver of reality each of us has experienced firsthand, the whole overall "picture" is but a construct of our symbol systems. To meditate on this fact until one sees its full implications is much like peering over the edge of things into an ultimate abyss. And doubtless that's one reason why, though man is typically the symbol-using animal, he clings to a kind of naïve verbal realism that refuses to realize the full extent of the role played by symbolicity in his notions of reality. (*Language as Symbolic Action*, 1967, 5)

By "naïve verbal realism," Burke means our tendency to think of the self and the world as present and real without heed of the possibility that our sense of who we are, what we do, and what we think is a consequence of our symbol-systems. (As I noted in the Preface, it was my own naïve verbal realism that had made understanding science so frustrating.) From the perspective of dramatism, our symbol systems thoroughly mediate experience and sustain thought.

Dramatism, Rhetoric, and the Pentad

As the study of language as symbolic action (what Burke would later call **logology**), dramatism shares many principles with **rhetoric,** which from its earliest conception referred simply to "the art of **persuasion**" but more complexly (in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, for instance) to the faculty for finding the possible means of persuasion in any given case. To better understand the relationship between drama-

tism and rhetoric, we need to turn first to Burke's explanation of the pentad.

Many students of composition, communication, psychology, sociology, and history may have already heard of Burke's pentad—act, scene, agent, agency, purpose—terms that in their interanimations (ratios or interrelationships) can help us answer the question, as he puts it in the first line of *A Grammar of Motives* (1945), "What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (xv). It is a deceptively simple question, as are the individual questions he associates with each of the five terms of the pentad: Act (what happened?), Scene (where and when was the act performed?), Agent (who did it?), Agency (how was it done?), and Purpose (why was it done?). Burke's questions are deceptively simple because, at first glance, they seem to ask, "Why do people do what they do?" and thus prompt us to analyze why we do what we do. It is important to remember, though, that Burke has the symbolic act in mind and not necessarily, for example, motion that does not involve language and thus motive, such as tripping over a stick.

Burke likely has something else in mind with that first part of his question: "What is involved when we *say* what people are doing and why they are doing it?" with stress upon *say*, or upon the *words* about motives. His question is actually about the attributing of motives, or what he calls "symbolic action," the word as an act in a scene written or spoken by a person for a reason. *A Grammar of Motives*, in which the pentad functions as the set of generating principles, becomes a study of the alignment of motives and actions articulated throughout the history of philosophy, what Burke might call "words about the art of living." When we stress its focus on words about the art of living, dramatism begins to sound more like rhetoric, which from antiquity through the present has been seen as a central activity of civic life.

Burke's pentad functions grammatically as a means of articulating the relationships among ideas, how words about motives fit together to explain human action. As a philosophical grammar, it is capable of generating an infinite variety of equations or meaningful relationships, just as the grammar of a language enables us to generate an infinite variety of sentences. In its capacity for generating that variety, the pentad functions much like an Aristotelian general topic, which is a rhetorical figure or pattern expressing a formal relationship among parts. Words have meaning in and of themselves, but they also act together in sentences

and larger formal units, at each level becoming more ambiguous by accretion and as the contexts change. Burke is not interested in developing a grammar of motives so that he can identify the "right" relationships among terms for human action or resolve the ambiguity seemingly inherent in the philosophical systems he elaborates using the pentad and dramatistic analysis. He is, however, deeply interested in how and why we identify with and argue for the motives we value.

Burke explains at the outset that the forms of thought he has in mind "can be embodied profoundly or trivially, truthfully or falsely. They are equally present in systematically elaborated metaphysical structures, in legal judgments, in poetry and fiction, in political and scientific works, in news and in bits of gossip offered at random" (*A Grammar of Motives*, xv). Furthermore, as generative principles, he wields them not to contain the subject, not as *"terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise"* (xviii). The pentad and thus dramatism begin to sound like the agency and orientation of rhetorical analysis, the general aim of which is to examine ways that people use words to identify and divide, to agree and disagree, or to cooperate and compete. "Put identification and division ambiguously together," Burke writes in *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), "so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric" (25). Rhetoric, the aim of which is identification, is only necessary when there is a dispute over meaning, significance, or implication; when, in other words, the basis for identification or cooperation is ambiguous or uncertain. Dramatism would keep us alert to ambiguity, while rhetoric would explore and even exploit that ambiguity to influence people's attitudes and actions.

For these reasons, Burke believed that interpretation itself was a form of rhetoric, an attempt to reduce uncertainty and thus to motivate action. It would behoove us to study the many forms our interpretations may take because while they might help us make sense of the world and our actions, they may also reduce the possibility for acting in new ways as our situations in the world change. As a system for studying the use of language to foster identification, rhetoric has the power to turn upon its own creations as a meta-perspective, an interpretation of our interpretations. In conjunction with rhetoric, dramatism helps us understand when and why our symbol systems sometimes use *us*,

unnecessarily restricting the scope of action by reducing the range of possible acts. Dramatism teases us from the complacency that words and other symbol systems can produce in us as we become accustomed to familiar ways of knowing and seeing.

On Interpretation

Because dramatism is the study of symbolic action and must also be explained and discussed using the very symbol system it would "expose," explanations of dramatism will at times seem especially abstract. As was illustrated in the Larson cartoon, our predisposition or desire is to view a word as the sign for a thing, not just the sign for another word. Dramatism asks us to make a meta-cognitive shift, to think of words as symbolic acts inscribed in a (written) system of signs, much like words in a dictionary derive their meaning from other words. Meaning and thus interpretation are guideposts to symbolic motives, to our actions as signs of prior associations and interpretations. The meaning of a familiar term like *dog*, for example, comes from its dictionary definitions and popular usages (from other words, like *canine* or even "four-legged domesticated animal," or "who let the dogs out"), as well as from personal histories and memories (dogs we have known, the dog that bit us), social contexts (famous dogs, fictional dogs), and even from other words that might have a tonal or formal relationship to the word *dog* (such as god, which is dog spelled backward, a point not unnoticed by philosophers, who sometimes discuss dogs as an indirect and allusive way to discuss our notions of god).

We turn now to the words of Burke himself in his 1934 book, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*, which began his methodical development of dramatism. This excerpt comes from Part I, "Orientation," and introduces the book's first chapter. In this section, entitled "All Living Things Are Critics," Burke explains why we need to be careful to interpret our interpretations and suggests some rather dire consequences for those who do not. As with much of his writing, the insights of *Permanence and Change* are not merely theoretical musings, but they are responses to a situation, in this case an intensely personal one. Reflecting on the work 20 years later in a new Prologue, Burke writes, "It is such a book as authors in those days sometimes put together, to keep themselves from falling apart." The book was written in the tough years following the Great Depression of 1929 and its after-

math. Burke had also recently finished his only novel, *Towards a Better Life* (1932). We can't be certain why Burke feels he might have been on the verge of "falling apart," but we do know that he thought of *Permanence and Change* as his own brand of therapy (not entirely unlike Gary Larson's own in his *PreHistory*). In a video interview with his grandson, the philanthropist and musician Harry Chapin (1942–1981), Burke says with a chuckle, "I built my whole theories of literature out of what I learned out of spying on my own book! [*Towards a Better Life*]."

In this selection, Burke conveys an attitude that is characteristically dramatistic. As the study of language's role in shaping and determining motives, dramatism encourages us to revise our interpretations, to find new **orientations,** when there are signs that previous ones no longer work or cause more problems than they alleviate. Here, he uses the examples of a sophisticated trout and well-educated chickens to suggest that language enables us to interpret our interpretations, to be self-reflective about how existing orientations determine motives (often self-destructive ones). Language structures belief and motive individually and socially, but it also enables revised judgment because of its capacity for enabling not just criticism of experience, but criticism of criticism.

Dramatism also reminds us that we can easily mistake the abstractions of symbol systems as realities. In the Preface, I mention how my own belief in the reality of abstract physics had led me astray. As you read this selection, you might also think about how the verbal symbols in your own life shape your orientation, as well as ways that you might reinterpret that orientation with the dramatistic attitude. When we look more closely at the relationship between dramatism and rhetoric later in this chapter, we will consider the broader social situation that makes the informing attitude of dramatism expressed in this excerpt especially relevant for social criticism. Spying on Burke spying on his own novel to develop dramatism, we will see (by a kind of counterespionage) that the elements of dramatism were his response to the failed interpretations of his own life and times.

Kenneth Burke
All Living Things Are Critics

We may begin by noting the fact that all living organisms interpret many of the signs about them. A trout, having snatched at a hook but having had the good luck to escape with a rip in his jaw, may

even show by his wiliness thereafter that he can revise his critical appraisals. His experience has led him to form a new judgment, which we should verbalize as a nicer discrimination between food and bait. A different kind of bait may outwit him, if it lacks the appearances by which he happens to distinguish "jaw-ripping food." And perhaps he passes up many a morsel of genuine food simply because it happens to have the characters which he, as the result of his informing experience, has learned to take as the sign of bait. I do not mean to imply that the sullen fish has thought all this out. I mean simply that in his altered response, for a greater or lesser period following the hook-episode, he manifests the changed behavior that goes with a new meaning, he has a more educated way of reading the signs. It does not matter how conscious or unconscious one chooses to imagine this critical step—we need only note here the outward manifestation of a revised judgment.

Our great advantage over this sophisticated trout would seem to be that we can greatly extend the scope of the critical process. Man can be methodical in his attempts to decide what the difference between bait and food might be. Unfortunately, as Thorstein Veblen has pointed out, invention is the mother of necessity: the very power of criticism has enabled man to build up cultural structures so complex that still greater powers of criticism are needed before he can distinguish between the food-processes and bait-processes concealed beneath his cultural tangles. His greater critical capacity has increased not only the range of his solutions, but also the range of his problems. Orientation can go wrong. Consider, for instance, what conquest over the environment we have attained through our powers of abstraction, of generalization; and then consider the stupid national or racial wars which have been fought precisely because these abstractions were mistaken for realities. No slight critical ability is required for one to hate as his deepest enemy a people thousands of miles away. When criticism can do so much for us, it may have got us just to the point where we greatly require still better criticism. Though all organisms are critics in the sense that they interpret the signs about them, the experimental, speculative technique made available by speech would seem to single out the human species as the only one possessing an equipment for going beyond the criticism of experience to a criticism of criticism. We not only interpret the character of events (manifesting in our responses all the gradations of fear, apprehension, misgiving, expectation, assurance for which there are rough

behavioristic counterparts in animals)—we may also interpret our interpretations.

Pavlov's dog had acquired a meaning for bells when conditioned to salivate at the sound of one. Other experiments have shown that such meanings can be made still more accurate: chickens can be taught that only one specific pitch is a food-signal, and they will allow bells of other pitches to ring unheeded. But people never tremble enough at the thought of how flimsy such interpreting of characters is. If one rings the bell next time, not to feed the chickens, but to assemble them for chopping off their heads, they come faithfully running, on the strength of the character which a ringing bell possesses for them. Chickens not so well educated would have acted more wisely. Thus it will be seen that the devices by which we arrive at a correct orientation may be quite the same as those involved in an incorrect one. We can only say that a given objective event derives its character for us from past experiences having to do with like or related events. A ringing bell is in itself as meaningless as an undifferentiated portion of the air we are breathing. It takes on character, meaning, significance (dinner bell or door bell) in accordance with the contexts in which we experience it. A great deal of such character can be imparted to events by purely verbal means, as when we label a bottle "Poison" or when Marxians explain a man's unemployment for him by attributing it to financial crises inherent in the nature of capitalism. The words themselves will likewise have derived their meanings out of past contexts.

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. Burke describes a criticism of experience as an "orientation" that abstracts qualities from the experience to shape judgment and attitude, both of which prepare or motivate us to act. An act is like a vote of confidence in our ability to interpret our experience accurately. Once we have acted, that original experience becomes "the way things were," so that any uncertainty we might have had initially may later be forgotten. When that happens, we can mistake our abstractions for realities (or our stereotypes for real categories), then find ourselves fighting "stupid national or racial wars." Describe one historical event when you think people fought over "abstractions" that were mistaken for realities.

2. Why does Burke think it is so important to interpret our interpretations? What can happen when we don't?

3. Later in *Permanence and Change,* Burke makes the point that "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing—a focus on object *A* involves a neglect of object *B*" (49). One function of dramatistic analysis is to reveal precisely what our observations have ignored, in the interest of making well-rounded statements. Describe what happened the last time you experienced a surprise, something genuinely unexpected but that in hindsight, you *should* have expected. What happened? How did it happen?

4. Being conscious of our blindnesses may be easier said than done. What attitudes seem to be necessary? If you have a strong suspicion that things may be other than they appear, what do you do?

Identification and Consubstantiality

It will help you to see the linkage between dramatism and rhetoric more clearly if you know that throughout its history, the term *rhetoric* has been used to name either (1) the use of persuasive resources (*rhetorica utens*), or (2) the *study* of the use of persuasive resources (*rhetorica docens*). We are more accustomed to thinking of rhetoric as the performance itself, the use of language to persuade others to act or change their minds, as in number 1. But rhetoric also refers to the philosophy that would study *how* and *why* people use persuasion in the first place, as in number 2. Thus it shares with dramatism an interest in the strategic use of words to perform and induce action.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives,* written shortly after the end of World War II, Burke focuses our attention on what he calls "the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard" (23). These flurries and flare-ups result from our inevitable and frequent failures to interpret the signs around us with the complexity they deserve. The elements of dramatism, consisting in large measure of the traditional principles of rhetoric, provide us with the analytical tools and the attitude necessary for examining not only our differences, but the rea-

sons for our unity. Dramatism and rhetoric are both conceptual frameworks for understanding ways that human relations are formed through language.

For Burke, the primary aim of rhetoric is identification, which he describes as an alignment of interests or motives and that he is careful to distinguish from persuasion. Unlike persuasion, which is normally thought to involve explicit appeals and manipulation, identification allows for an unconscious factor as well. We may identify with someone (or some cause) and thus come to share belief because we imagine or desire to be one with another, or to feel energized or uplifted by our association. Burke believes that in any rhetorical situation there is always a **dialectical** struggle between the forces of identification and division. People can never be identical or divided in the absolute sense. We have bodies and experiences and a common language, each of which can help us identify with each other. Yet we also have unique experiences that we may interpret differently from others, keeping us divided.

For Burke, our passion is the desire for what he calls **consubstantiality** or "shared substance" and represents an unconscious desire to identify with others. Consubstantiality can be achieved by different means, including the devices of form, which Burke calls a type of rhetorical appeal, the arousal and gratification of desire. We imagine that we share substance even when exactly what we share is ambiguous or the product of some unconscious desire. Here is how Burke puts it:

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so.
>
> Here are ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time, he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (*A Rhetoric of Motives,* 20–21)

Consubstantiality may be necessary for any way of life, Burke says. And thus rhetoric, as he sees it, potentially builds community. It can tear it down as well. In the end, rhetoric relies on an unconscious desire for

acting-together, for taking a "sub-stance" together. "In the old philoso-phies," Burke writes, "substance was an *act;* and a way of life is an *acting-together;* and in acting together, [people] have common sensations, con-cepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (21). Oddly enough, and as we will discuss in Chapter 5, the term *substance* itself induces a kind of acting-together. You can see that happen in argu-ments over quality when people say some "thing" lacks "substance." Such a claim often induces nods of agreement even though if put to the test, no one would likely agree on just what that substance might actu-ally be. Substance becomes purely an acting-together with the term it-self referring to nothing in particular. Burke will suggest that the term serves as an occasion or invitation to agree about "you know not what." To Burke, it doesn't matter whether the term has any reference because its rhetorical function as the basis for identification, for "stance-taking," is fundamental to our way of life together.

Identification and Transformation

The problem we face everyday is that we cannot be consubstantial. We cannot identify with one another in an absolute sense, except by way of fantasy, since we are distinct bodies animated in our own ways even as we share some common sensations and experiences. The desire is still there, however. For we are also never wholly divided. As Burke says, "[P]ut identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric" (*A Rhetoric of Motives,* 25). As the central aim of rhetoric, identification also brings with it suggestions of transformation, the changing of something, with identification being necessary before and after. In Burke's view, transfor-mation, and thus identification, are forms of symbolic violence: "the imagery of slaying is a special case of transformation, and transforma-tion involves the ideas and imagery of *identification.* That is: the *killing* of something is the *changing* of it, and the statement of the thing's na-ture before and after the change is an *identifying* of it" (20). Put yet an-other way, Burke notes that "the so-called 'desire to kill' a certain person is much more properly analyzable as a desire to *transform the principle which that person represents*" (13). We will examine that insight more closely in Chapter 4 when we discuss Thomas Harris's now infamous character, Hannibal Lecter.

At this juncture, it is important to remember that dramatism is an analytical method for describing, as Burke says, what is involved when we *say* what people are doing and why they are doing it. It may sound odd, even heartless, to hear that something as awful as murder can be thought of merely as the transformation of a principle. Why would Burke want to direct our attention to the principles inherent in the im-agery of killing? And how does he explain its relevance to dramatism and rhetoric?

Logomachy: Wars of Words and Nerves

The historical situation that Burke found himself facing as a socially conscious writer in the 1930s and 1940s provides the context for his de-velopment of the elements of dramatism and for the plea he makes in "All Living Things Are Critics." By spying on Burke's attempt to come to terms with his situation, we can see how dramatism developed not only as an analytical method for discussing literary works, but also as a means for understanding the ways that writers come to terms with their personal and social situation. During the years preceding World War II and with the escalation of the Holocaust in Europe, the stakes for every-one were high.

Cooperation and Competition

In Burke's first book of theory, *Counter-Statement* (1931), he voiced the principle that knowledge is one product of social relations. However, knowledge and thus understanding are not simply the result of consen-sus, or what he calls cooperation. Consensus may define and maintain **ideology** or common sense, but too often consensus is sought for the sake of efficiency, for simply "getting along." Burke believed that we would be better off thinking of progress as the result of "competitive co-operation," hoping that by introducing distinctions and contrary ideas, we could avoid becoming too hopelessly ourselves. The purpose of in-tellectual inquiry should be to transcend the limitations of individual perspectives or of the unquestioned linkages or associations that we make between words and things. In his view, agreement itself can be dangerous because it encourages complacency and even complicity. By

1950 (about 20 years after Burke began thinking about competitive co-operation), he thought of inquiry as a dialectic and had linked the process to rhetoric and dramatism:

> A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in co-operative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to views transcending the limitations of each. ("Rhetoric—Old and New," 63)

The aim of dramatism is thus to show us ways to develop our ideas so that we, the people who represent them, can continually find new reasons for identification even as we and our ideas grow more and more divided. When we are absolutely divided from or identical with each other, there is no basis for strife. But in most situations that require action, people hold different ideas, with conflicting motives, which for Burke makes the "characteristic invitation to rhetoric" (*A Rhetoric of Motives,* 25). Dramatism helps us analyze the basis of our unity and our difference, with rhetoric working to forge new identifications. In times of national crises, the battle for our sympathies, for our cooperation, becomes a form of rhetorical action that is especially ripe for dramatistic analysis.

Logomachy comes from the Greek roots of *logos* ("words") and *machesthai* ("to fight") and refers either to a dispute over or about words or a controversy attended by verbal sparring. A logomachy is a war *of* or *about* words. Burke uses the term to describe both the function of dramatism as an analytical system and the situation that arises when conflicting perspectives compete for our allegiance, as may always be the case in a conflict, whether between people or nations. In the years leading up to World War II, the time during which Burke conceived of dramatism, the war of words was being fought bitterly and craftily in the United States, Europe, and Asia, with leaders on every side in the escalating conflict aggressively seeking both the internal cooperation of citizens and internationally recognized validation of individual claims. It was a time of fervent *rhetorica utens,* the use of persuasive resources, as you can imagine. As a socially engaged critic and philosopher, Burke deeply felt the need to develop a method for understanding such a globally important use of rhetoric to instill patriotism and garner allies. As

he saw it, it was most important to understand how these global arguments could work so effectively as forces of power and motive.

"Road to Victory": The Basis for Dramatism

What is dramatism's role in articulating these forces? In the introduction to *A Grammar of Motives,* Burke illustrates how the pentad works:

> In an exhibit of photographic murals at the Museum of Modern Art, there was an aerial photograph of two launches, proceeding side by side on a tranquil sea. Their wakes crossed and recrossed each other in an almost infinite variety of lines. Yet despite the intricateness of the tracery, the picture gave an impression of great simplicity, because one could quickly perceive the generating principle of its design. Such, ideally, is the case with our pentad of terms, used as generating principle. It should provide us with a kind of simplicity that can be developed into considerable complexity, and yet can be discovered beneath its elaborations. (xvi)

In this passage, Burke never mentions that the exhibit of photographic murals was called "Road to Victory: A Procession of Photography of the Nation at War" and showed from May through October in 1942. The "installation view" of the exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art (Figure 1.2) shows the particular mural Burke has in mind when he explains the working of the pentad. It appears in the lower-right portion of the frame. By itself, the mural looks just as Burke describes it, with the wakes of the two ships crossing in an increasingly intricate pattern while the generating principle of their design is clearly evident. What is striking about the installation view, however, is that it shows some of the other murals, the context from which Burke has extracted his illustration. We see the images of war, some of them depicting the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Set beside the clean and purposeful pattern of the ships running parallel, these are striking images, inviting us to pause to consider Burke's interest in the formal principles of the pentad. Surely he must have been struck by the oppositional character of that one mural, that it was speaking dialectically with those around it.

As it turns out, Burke was especially interested in the mural's context. In "War and Cultural Life," an as yet uncollected essay appearing in the *American Journal of Sociology* in November 1942, he comments on
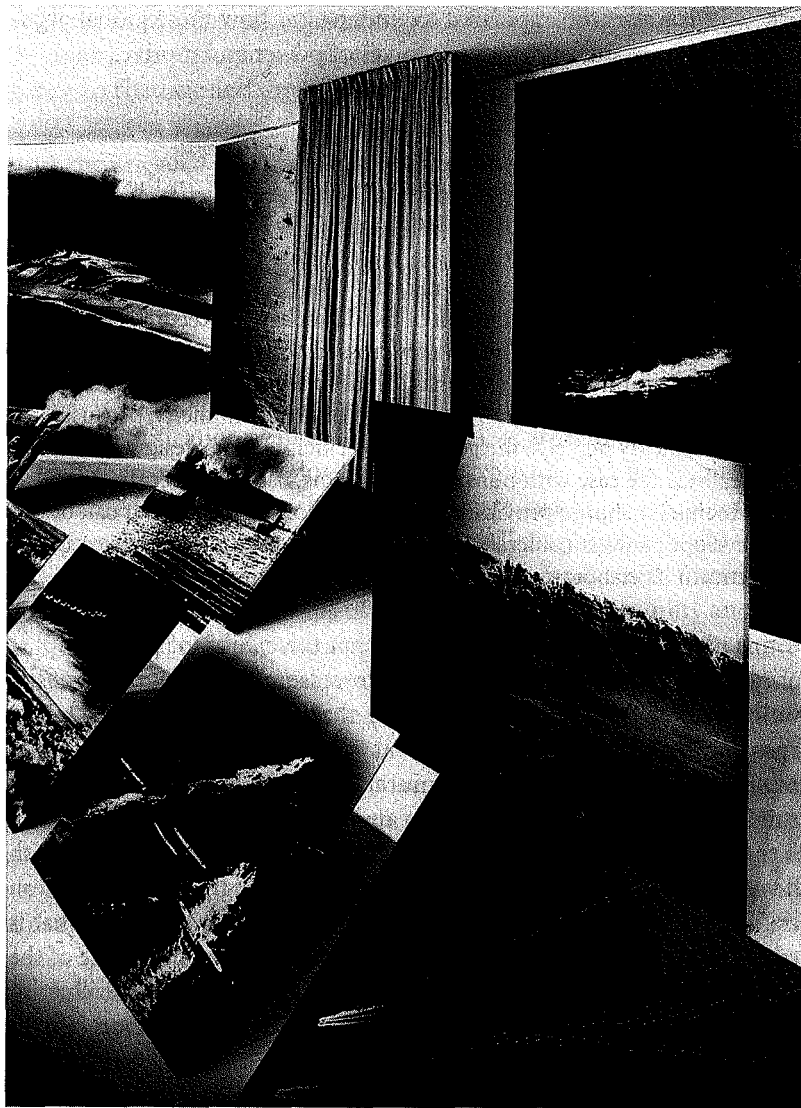
Figure 1.2   "Road to Victory."
Source: © 2002 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

this mural's placement in the exhibition: "one gets a very strong feeling that the war, vast as it is, is part of a still vaster configuration" (409). The explicit purpose of the exhibition, as implied by its title, is to build up patriotic fervor, with art in the service of politics as propaganda. "War, when fought under conditions of totality," he says, "obviously requires the enlistment of art, of hortatory or admonitory rhetoric, of information presented in ways that cushion the discouragements of defeats, or intensify the encouragements of victories" (406). The keen insight of dramatism is that social life, of which war is perhaps and ironically the most social of acts, has poetic or dramatistic ingredients. The "Road to Victory" calls forth in him a "certain philosophic or 'meditative' attitude toward the war" even as it may give "nourishment to a strong sense of our national power" (408). He describes the exhibit as a " 'natural' aesthetic adjustment to war conditions" (408).

The **aesthetic** at work is expressed formally in the mural of the two ships and their crossing wakes. Formally, that mural comments dialectically and ironically on the other murals *and* on the wider social scene, prompting the viewer to see in the outward manifestations of war a pattern of development, a generating principle essentially formal (or poetic) in nature. When viewed as the expression of poetic principles, social life and our means of representing it are thus problems of appeal. Change the principles, and the appeal changes. "The war," for example, "may be considered as a scene motivating our acts—but this exhibit causes us to remember that the war may also be considered as an act placed in a more inclusive motivational scene and being enacted by agents with whom, likewise, motives originate" (409).

The Resources of Ambiguity

To better understand the role Burke sees for dramatism as an analytical system, it will be useful to turn to his introduction to *A Grammar of Motives* so that you will understand the context of Burke's illustration of the pentad's function and so that you will appreciate more fully how you might put dramatism to use in understanding rhetorical action. As he will in *A Rhetoric of Motives,* Burke focuses our attention in this introduction on the problem of ambiguity and the opportunity it poses for identification. In *A Grammar of Motives,* he says that what we want is *"not terms that avoid ambiguity,* but *terms that clearly reveal the strategic*

spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise" (xviii). Rhetoric is only necessary when there is ambiguity, when an issue or an idea's merit can be seen from two or more perspectives, each of which may be reasonable. The function of rhetoric, as Aristotle said, is not so much persuasion, but to discover the available means of persuasion. For Burke, dramatism is the systematic method for articulating these strategic spots, those eddies of meaning where it is possible for rhetoric to prove opposites. The terms Burke adopts are those of the pentad, which we will turn to after this selection from *A Grammar of Motives.*

As you read Burke's own introduction to dramatism, you will notice again that he views it not simply as a method for developing ideas about motives—why people do things. He is more interested in explaining how broader systems of belief shape and even determine the possibilities for acting. Language and thought act on us as well as through us. During the years in which he wrote *A Grammar of Motives* (1940–1945), the world was embroiled in a worldwide war that threatened everyone's existence. In such times when people are so divided across battle lines and yet ironically so united in carrying out a war against "the enemy," we must understand the devices of rhetoric if we hope to interpret the interpretations that have led to war in the first place. The focus here, as it was in "All Living Things Are Critics," is on interpreting our interpretations, what people *say* when they attribute motives to human action. Watch also for Burke's analogy of "the central moltenness," his way of describing how the method of dramatism can help us change our circumstances when we find ourselves at the edge of an abyss. We can, if we understand the underlying principles of motivation—the *grammar*—find new ways to identify with each other across the wide divisions that threaten peace.

Burke also mentions in this introduction what he calls the "Rhetoric" and the "Symbolic." He has in mind the planned second and third parts of what would be a full treatment of human relations, with *A Grammar of Motives* laying the groundwork for that kind of thorough examination. *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) was completed five years later. The bulk of *A Symbolic of Motives* has only recently (and posthumously) been collected by scholars working to assemble the writings Burke planned to include in that final volume. (See a selection, for example, in *Unending Conversations: New Writings by and about Kenneth Burke,* the volume edited by Greig Henderson and David Cratis Williams and published in 2001 by Southern Illinois University Press.)

Each of these works helps us understand the ambiguity inherent in our symbol systems.

In his introduction, Burke stresses that dramatism reveals the areas of thought where these ambiguities necessarily arise. Dramatism makes rhetoric possible and ethical. In essence, it reminds us that we are always necessarily mistaken because our terms use us, rather than the other way around. Dramatism deliberately and systematically encourages us to imagine alternative perspectives and thus new modes of action and interaction. For instance, we can refresh community and build identification when we recognize that our differences and uncertainties are at least in part a consequence of our symbol systems. We might remain divided along racial lines, for example, not because of some essential difference, but because the terms we use to understand this difference (an ethic based on the color of one's skin) do not account for other ways of understanding our identifications. Our margin of overlap might have more to do with our ambitions, our fears, or our desires than it does with racial qualities. It is Burke's hope that dramatism can help us find ways of coaxing reidentifications when it is clear that our previous orientations have driven us into a corner and the possibilities for action are drastically reduced. In times of war, that often means fighting or fleeing. In this introduction to *A Grammar of Motives,* he describes dramatism as his method for ensuring that we retain choices.

Kenneth Burke

Introduction: The Five Key Terms of Dramatism

What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it? An answer to that question is the subject of this book. The book is concerned with the basic forms of thought which, in accordance with the nature of the world as all men necessarily experience it, are exemplified in the attributing of motives. These forms of thought can be embodied profoundly or trivially, truthfully or falsely. They are equally present in systematically elaborated metaphysical structures, in legal judgments, in poetry and fiction, in political and scientific works, in news and in bits of gossip offered at random.

We shall use five terms as generating principle of our investigation. They are: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the

act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the *purpose.* Men may violently disagree about the purposes behind a given act, or about the character of the person who did it, or how he did it, or in what kind of situation he acted; or they may even insist upon totally different words to name the act itself. But be that as it may, any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind of* answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose).

If you ask why, with a whole world of terms to choose from, we select these rather than some others as basic, our book itself is offered as the answer. For, to explain our position, we shall show how it can be applied.

Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. Although, over the centuries, men have shown great enterprise and inventiveness in pondering matters of human motivation, one can simplify the subject by this pentad of key terms, which are understandable almost at a glance. They need never to be abandoned, since all statements that assign motives can be shown to arise out of them and to terminate in them. By examining them quizzically, we can range far; yet the terms are always there for us to reclaim, in their everyday simplicity, their almost miraculous easiness, thus enabling us constantly to begin afresh. When they might become difficult, when we can hardly see them, through having stared at them too intensely, we can of a sudden relax, to look at them as we always have, lightly, glancingly. And having reassured ourselves, we can start out again, once more daring to let them look strange and difficult for a time.

In an exhibit of photographic murals (*Road to Victory*) at the Museum of Modern Art, there was an aerial photograph of two launches, proceeding side by side on a tranquil sea. Their wakes crossed and recrossed each other in almost an infinity of lines. Yet despite the intricateness of this tracery, the picture gave an impression of great simplicity, because one could quickly perceive the generating principle of its design. Such, ideally, is the case with our pentad of terms, used as generating principle. It should provide us with a kind of simplicity that can be developed into considerable complexity, and yet can be discovered beneath its elaborations.

We want to inquire into the purely internal relationships which the five terms bear to one another, considering their possibilities of

transformation, their range of permutations and combinations—and then to see how these various resources figure in actual statements about human motives. Strictly speaking, we mean by a Grammar of motives a concern with the terms alone, without reference to the ways in which their potentialities have been or can be utilized in actual statements about motives. Speaking broadly we could designate as "philosophies" any statements in which these grammatical resources are specifically utilized. Random or unsystematic statements about motives could be considered as fragments of a philosophy.

One could think of the Grammatical resources as *principles,* and of the various philosophies as *casuistries* which apply these principles to temporal situations. For instance, we may examine the term Scene simply as a blanket term for the concept of background or setting *in general,* a name for *any* situation in which acts or agents are placed. In our usage, this concern would be "grammatical." And we move into matters of "philosophy" when we note that one thinker uses "God" as his term for the ultimate ground or scene of human action, another uses "nature," a third uses "environment," or "history," or "means of production," etc. And whereas a statement about the grammatical principles of motivation might lay claim to a universal validity, or complete certainty, the choice of any one philosophic idiom embodying these principles is much more open to question. Even before we know what act is to be discussed, we can say with confidence that a rounded discussion of its motives must contain a reference to *some kind of* background. But since each philosophic idiom will characterize this background differently, there will remain the question as to which characterization is "right" or "more nearly right."

It is even likely that, whereas one philosophic idiom offers the best calculus for one case, another case answers best to a totally different calculus. However, we should not think of "cases" in too restricted a sense. Although, from the standpoint of the grammatical principles inherent in the internal relationships prevailing among our five terms, any given philosophy is to be considered as a casuistry, even a cultural situation extending over centuries is a "case," and would probably require a much different philosophic idiom as its temporizing calculus of motives than would be required in the case of other cultural situations.

In our original plans for this project, we had no notion of writing a "Grammar" at all. We began with a theory of comedy, applied to a treatise on human relations. Feeling that competitive ambition

is a drastically over-developed motive in the modern world, we thought this motive might be transcended if men devoted themselves not so much to "excoriating" it as to "appreciating" it. Accordingly, we began taking notes on the foibles and antics of what we tended to think of as "the Human Barnyard."

We sought to formulate the basic stratagems which people employ, in endless variations, and consciously or unconsciously, for the outwitting or cajoling of one another. Since all these devices had a "you and me" quality about them, being "addressed" to some person or to some advantage, we classed them broadly under the heading of a Rhetoric. There were other notes, concerned with modes of expression and appeal in the fine arts, and with purely psychological or psychoanalytic matters. These we classed under the heading of Symbolic.

We had made still further observations, which we at first strove uneasily to class under one or the other of these two heads, but which we were eventually able to distinguish as the makings of a Grammar. For we found in the course of writing that our project needed a grounding in formal considerations logically prior to both the rhetorical and the psychological. And as we proceeded with this introductory groundwork, it kept extending its claims until it had spun itself from an intended few hundred words into nearly 200,000, of which the present book is revision and abridgement.

Theological, metaphysical, and juridical doctrines offer the best illustration of the concerns we place under the heading of Grammar; the forms and methods of art best illustrate the concerns of Symbolic; and the ideal material to reveal the nature of Rhetoric comprises observations on parliamentary and diplomatic devices, editorial bias, sales methods and incidents of social sparring. However, the three fields overlap considerably. And we shall note, in passing, how the Rhetoric and the Symbolic hover about the edges of our central theme, the Grammar.

A perfectionist might seek to evolve terms free of ambiguity and inconsistency (as with the terministic ideals of symbolic logic and logical positivism). But we have a different purpose in view, one that probably retains traces of its "comic" origin. We take it for granted that, insofar as men cannot themselves create the universe, there must remain something essentially enigmatic about the problem of motives, and that this underlying enigma will manifest itself in inevitable ambiguities and inconsistencies among the terms for motives. Accordingly, what we want is *not terms that avoid ambiguity,* but *terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise.*

Occasionally, you will encounter a writer who seems to get great exaltation out of proving, with an air of much relentlessness, that some philosophic term or other has been used to cover a variety of meanings, and who would smash and abolish this idol. As a general rule, when a term is singled out for such harsh treatment, if you look closer you will find that it happens to be associated with some cultural or political trend from which the writer would dissociate himself; hence there is a certain notable ambiguity in this very charge of ambiguity, since he presumably feels purged and strengthened by bringing to bear upon this particular term a kind of attack that could, with as much justice, be brought to bear upon any other term (or "title") in philosophy, including of course the alternative term, or "title," that the writer would swear by. Since no two things or acts or situations are exactly alike, you cannot apply the same term to both of them without thereby introducing a certain margin of ambiguity, an ambiguity as great as the difference between the two subjects that are given the identical title. And all the more may you expect to find ambiguity in terms so "titular" as to become the marks of a philosophic school, or even several philosophic schools. Hence, instead of considering it our task to "dispose of" any ambiguity by merely disclosing the fact that it is an ambiguity, we rather consider it our task to study and clarify the *resources* of ambiguity. For in the course of this work, we shall deal with many kinds of *transformation*—and it is in the areas of ambiguity that transformations take place; in fact, without such areas, transformation would be impossible. Distinctions, we might say, arise out of a great central moltenness, where all is merged. They have been thrown from a liquid center to the surface, where they have congealed. Let one of these crusted distinctions return to its source, and in this alchemic center it may be remade, again becoming molten liquid, and may enter into new combinations, whereat it may be again thrown forth as a new crust, a different distinction. So that A may become non-A. But not merely by a leap from one state to the other. Rather, we must take A back into the ground of its existence, the logical substance that is its causal ancestor, and on to a point where it is consubstantial with non-A; then we may return, this time emerging with non-A instead.

And so with our five terms: certain formal interrelationships prevail among these terms, by reason of their role as attributes of a common ground or substance. Their participation in a common ground makes for transformability. At every point where the field covered by any one of these terms overlaps upon the field covered

by any other, there is an alchemic opportunity, whereby we can put one philosophy or doctrine of motivation into the alembic, make the appropriate passes, and take out another. From the central moltenness, where all the elements are fused into one togetherness, there are thrown forth, in separate crusts, such distinctions as those between freedom and necessity, activity and passiveness, coöperation and competition, cause and effect, mechanism and teleology.

Our term, "Agent," for instance, is a general heading that might, in a given case, require further subdivision, as an agent might have his act modified (hence partly motivated) by friends (co-agents) or enemies (counter-agents). Again, under "Agent" one could place any personal properties that are assigned a motivational value, such as "ideas," "the will," "fear," "malice," "intuition," "the creative imagination." A portrait painter may treat the body as a property of the agent (an expression of personality), whereas materialistic medicine would treat it as "scenic," a purely "objective material"; and from another point of view it could be classed as an agency, a means by which one gets reports of the world at large. Machines are obviously instruments (that is, Agencies); yet in their vast accumulation they constitute the industrial scene, with its own peculiar set of motivational properties. War may be treated as an Agency, insofar as it is a means to an end; as a collective Act, subdivisible into many individual acts; as a Purpose, in schemes proclaiming a cult of war. For the man inducted into the army, war is a Scene, a situation that motivates the nature of his training; and in mythologies war is an Agent, or perhaps better a super-agent, in the figure of the war god. We may think of voting as an act, and of the voter as an agent; yet votes and voters both are hardly other than a politician's medium or agency; or from another point of view, they are a part of his scene. And insofar as a vote is cast without adequate knowledge of its consequences, one might even question whether it should be classed as an activity at all; one might rather call it passive, or perhaps sheer motion (what the behaviorists would call a Response to a Stimulus).

Or imagine that one were to manipulate the terms, for the imputing of motives, in such a case as this: The hero (agent) with the help of a friend (co-agent) outwits the villain (counter-agent) by using a file (agency) that enables him to break his bonds (act) in order to escape (purpose) from the room where he has been confined (scene). In selecting a casuistry here, we might locate the motive in the agent, as were we to credit his escape to some trait integral to

his personality, such as "love of freedom." Or we might stress the motivational force of the scene, since nothing is surer to awaken thoughts of escape in a man than a condition of imprisonment. Or we might note the essential part played by the *co-agent,* in assisting our hero to escape—and, with such thoughts as our point of departure, we might conclude that the motivations of this act should be reduced to social origins.

Or if one were given to the brand of speculative enterprise exemplified by certain Christian heretics (for instance, those who worshipped Judas as a saint, on the grounds that his betrayal of Christ, in leading to the Crucifixion, so brought about the opportunity for mankind's redemption) one might locate the necessary motivational origin of the act in the *counter-agent.* For the hero would not have been prodded to escape if there had been no villain to imprison him. Inasmuch as the escape could be called a "good" act, we might find in such motivational reduction to the counter-agent a compensatory transformation whereby a bitter fountain may give forth sweet waters. In his *Anti-Dühring* Engels gives us a secular variant which no one could reasonably call outlandish or excessive:

> It was slavery that first made possible the division of labour between agriculture and industry on a considerable scale, and along with this, the flower of the ancient world, Hellenism. Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire. But without Hellenism and the Roman Empire as a basis, also no modern Europe.
>
> We should never forget that our whole economic, political and intellectual development has as its presupposition a state of things in which slavery was as necessary as it was universally recognized. In this sense we are entitled to say: Without the slavery of antiquity, no modern socialism.

Pragmatists would probably have referred the motivation back to a source in *agency.* They would have noted that our hero escaped by using an *instrument,* the file by which he severed his bonds; then in this same line of thought, they would have observed that the hand holding the file was also an instrument; and by the same token the brain that guided the hand would be an instrument, and so likewise the educational system that taught the methods and shaped the values involved in the incident.

True, if you reduce the terms to any one of them, you will find them branching out again; for no one of them is enough. Thus, Mead called his pragmatism a philosophy of the *act.* And though Dewey stresses the value of "intelligence" as an instrument (agency,

embodied in "scientific method"), the other key terms in his casuistry, "experience" and "nature," would be the equivalents of act and scene respectively. We must add, however, that Dewey is given to stressing the *overlap* of these two terms, rather than the respects in which they are distinct, as he proposes to "replace the traditional separation of nature and experience with the idea of continuity." (The quotation is from *Intelligence and the Modern World*.)

As we shall see later, it is by reason of the pliancy among our terms that philosophic systems can pull one way and another. The margins of overlap provide opportunities whereby a thinker can go without a leap from any one of the terms to any of its fellows. (We have also likened the terms to the fingers, which in their extremities are distinct from one another, but merge in the palm of the hand. If you would go from one finger to another without a leap, you need but trace the tendon down into the palm of the hand, and then trace a new course along another tendon). Hence, no great dialectical enterprise is necessary if you would merge the terms, reducing them even to as few as one; and then, treating this as the "essential" term, the "causal ancestor" of the lot, you can proceed in the reverse direction across the margins of overlap, "deducing" the other terms from it as its logical descendants.

This is the method, explicitly and in the grand style, of metaphysics which brings its doctrines to a head in some over-all title, a word for being in general, or action in general, or motion in general, or development in general, or experience in general, etc., with all its other terms distributed about this titular term in positions leading up to it and away from it. There is also an implicit kind of metaphysics, that often goes by the name of No Metaphysics, and aims at reduction not to an overall title but to some presumably underlying atomic constituent. Its vulgar variant is to be found in techniques of "unmasking," which would make for progress and emancipation by applying materialistic terms to immaterial subjects (the pattern here being, "X is nothing but Y," where X designates a higher value and Y a lower one, the higher value being thereby reduced to the lower one).

The titular word for our own method is "dramatism," since it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action. The method is synoptic, though not in the historical sense. A purely historical survey would require no less than a universal history of human culture; for every

judgment, exhortation, or admonition, every view of natural or supernatural reality, every intention or expectation involves assumptions about motive, or cause. Our work must be synoptic in a different sense: in the sense that it offers a system of placement, and should enable us, by the systematic manipulation of the terms, to "generate," or "anticipate" the various classes of motivational theory. And a treatment in these terms, we hope to show, reduces the subject synoptically while still permitting us to appreciate its scope and complexity.

It is not our purpose to import dialectical and metaphysical concerns into a subject that might otherwise be free of them. On the contrary, we hope to make clear the ways in which dialectical and metaphysical issues *necessarily* figure in the subject of motivation. Our speculations, as we interpret them, should show that the subject of motivation is a philosophic one, not ultimately to be solved in terms of empirical science.

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. In "War and Cultural Life," Burke explains the meaning of the "Road to Victory" exhibition, which for him crystallizes his philosophical purpose:

   > The need to think of global war and of its counterpart, global peace, invites us to seek also a truly global attitude toward all mankind, with its expressions ranging from the austere down to the foibles of the human barnyard. The study of war aims should thus be grounded in the most searching consideration of human motives. So far, however, it seems that war aims are being treated as something of a cross between anticipatory or retrospective ideals and cameralistic proposals designed to enlist or appease various economic interests. And more basic inquiries into human motives seem to have been postponed, as a luxury that the moment cannot afford, precisely at a time when the need for such a search is all the more urgent. (409)

   Burke published "War and Cultural Life" in November, 1942. Why do you think it so important that even at the height of a world war it would be so important for us to study "war aims" in "the most searching consideration of human motives"? What other concerns normally prevent us from doing so?

2. Distinctions are marks of difference. Burke's analogy of the "great central moltenness" implicitly argues for the value of

making distinctions in an ever-renewable process of assertion and reassertion. Can you think of situations that encourage us to avoid making distinctions? What are the consequences of not making distinctions?

3. We find many examples of "congealed" distinctions in the systems and stereotypes that govern social behavior, where categories of race, gender, and class often encourage attitudes and motivate action that preserve the status quo and maintain the lines of power in society. Burke suggests there is value in returning these congealed distinctions to their "alchemic center" and allowing them to be thrown forth as new distinctions. Can you think of any current examples of people seeking actively to reorganize our "distinctions"?

4. Burke has been called a pragmatist because he is ultimately more concerned with the dynamics and effects of verbal action than he is in explaining the ultimate ground of existence or transcendental ideas (one traditional aim of philosophy). For pragmatists like William James, the measure of an idea is not its inherent truth-value, but the action it performs, whether and how it "works" in the world. What aspects of Burke's dramatism or rhetoric seem pragmatic? Why? What aspects are not pragmatic?

The Pentad

As Burke discusses in his introduction to *A Grammar of Motives,* the pentad is a strategic method for analyzing discourse by focusing on how it attributes motivation to human action. Simple statements about why people do things, even what they did, are thus potential material for dramatistic analysis. Burke himself used the pentad on many kinds of discourse, especially poetry and philosophy. He also later added a sixth term, *attitude,* making the pentad into a hexad. Pentad or hexad, the point is that "well-rounded statements" about human motivation will make some reference (explicitly or not) to act, scene, agent, agency, purpose, and attitude. To the extent that a work of literature or a philosophy fails to account for one of these "nodes" of meaning, or privileges one over all others, we see the resources of ambiguity at work.

Burke intended the pentad to be a form of rhetorical analysis, a method readers can use to identify the rhetorical nature of any text, group of texts, or statements that explain or represent human motivation. He found that particular texts tended to highlight one of the elements of the pentad as the "titular" or privileged term. (For instance, Marxism and Marxist texts tend to privilege scene as the ultimate ground of human motivation and of corresponding class distinctions.) Burke also used the pentad to "open" a text to multiple perspectives. We can identify an "act" in a text, then investigate how the other terms are related. As the "act" is described we may find an author noting aspects of scene, purpose, and so forth, but not mentioning "agency." It is Burke's point that any "well-rounded" account of human action must include some reference to the five (or six) elements of the pentad. Writers have also found that the pentad is a useful method of generating ideas.

In this chapter, and in each subsequent chapter, you will find examples of how the pentad can be applied to situations or discourse as a means of rhetorical and dramatistic analysis. You should discover that while the elements of dramatism may be challenging to learn initially, the insight they can help you generate can be profound and revelatory, encouraging you to see the world in new and interesting ways, sometimes perhaps fundamentally changing the way that you view the experiences you share with others and the words you use to talk about them.

To begin, then, here is a breakdown of the elements of the pentad, with a brief explanation and question next to each term:

Act: Names what took place, in thought or deed. What was done?

Scene: The background of the act, the situation in which it occurred. Where and when was the act performed?

Agent: Names what person or kind of person or people performed the act. Who did it?

Agency: Names what means or instruments the agent used. How and with what was the act performed?

Purpose: Suggests why the agent performed the act. What motivated the act?

Attitude: Names the state of mind that predisposes the agent to act or that substitutes for an act. What is the agent's attitude toward the act?

It also is possible to discuss the ratios between terms of the pentad by asking, for example, "How does the *scene* influence the *act?*" Here are all the possible ratios and the question:

How does the _____ influence the _____?

act-scene	scene-agent	agent-agency	agency-purpose
act-agent	scene-agency	agent-purpose	
act-agency	scene-purpose		
act-purpose			

Each of the ratios can be reversed also. For instance, rather than asking how the act influenced the scene, we can ask how the scene influenced the act.

Burke used the pentad to conduct textual analysis, but it is useful as well for analyzing situations, especially when we consider events or actions as "texts" capable of interpretation and provoking response. People observe the signs around them to make interpretive statements that explain or rationalize their own actions or the actions of others. Burke's contention is that we should study these interpretations lest we become victimized by our **trained incapacity,** our inability to interpret such signs in any other way but the familiar or comfortable, much like our sophisticated trout. Burke analyzed his own situation as a text and in fact "textualized" it. For instance, at the time he wrote *Permanence and Change* in the early 1930s, the United States was in the throes of the Depression, **fascism** had a stronghold in Europe and appeared to be influencing politics in the United States, and Burke himself found his personal scene crumbling around him. Remember that *Permanence and Change,* and in fact much of his later work, is an attempt not just to understand how the social and historical scene influences political action, but how it also influenced his writing of his only novel, *Towards a Better Life.* In turning the elements of dramatism to his personal situation, with emphasis on the scene-act ratio, Burke found a way to "muddle through" the "wrangling in the marketplace," as he liked to put it.

The Pentadic Ratios: Scene-Act

To further illustrate how the pentad can help us analyze complex situations and thus to teach the basic principles of dramatism, we turn now to a problem that many people have grappled to understand but for which

no easy explanations or solutions come readily to mind. In this next section, you will also see how the pentadic ratios help us multiply the perspectives from which we view motives and thereby expose the resources of ambiguity people might exploit to interpret complex problems.

The Scene-Act Ratio: School Violence

On the morning of April 20, 1999, two students of Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado, an affluent suburb of Denver, killed 12 of their classmates and a teacher, wounded 21 others, and then committed suicide. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold used two shotguns, a rifle, and a handgun to fire 188 rounds of ammunition in a span of about 45 minutes. The Columbine Massacre, as it has come to be known, was the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history, occurring not long after other much-publicized shootings in Kentucky, Arkansas, and Oregon. Since April 1999, the incident and the shooters have been studied exhaustively. A massive and controversial report released by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office on CD-ROM details the shooting and offers hundreds of pages of text, timelines, crime-scene photographs, maps, drawings, an hour of audiotape, and two hours of videotape. Analysis of this and other data, including the writings of Harris and Klebold, have failed to provide clear or easy answers to the question of why the rampage killings took place.

The first problem of interpretation is to determine what has taken place, the act. People will disagree about how to name an act because the ambiguity of the act makes alternative perspectives possible. Naming an act reduces uncertainty by making particular assumptions about the nature of the act itself. For Burke, the ambiguity is inescapable. The point of pentadic analysis is to make our ways of naming the act explicit so that we can understand our choices and the reasons behind them. We interpret our interpretations, in other words, to avoid falling into the self-made traps that our customary ways of interpreting experience create for us.

The first newspaper reports of the incident at Columbine described it as a rampage or a massacre, as another incident of school violence in what has been widely perceived to be a national crisis. This first interpretation places the act alongside similar acts of school violence, marking it as symptomatic of a widespread social malaise that persuades young people through media representations of violence

that the way to solve problems or to garner attention is to shoot first and ask questions later:

Pentad 1—Massacre

Act: Students massacre classmates in a rampage school shooting

Scene: The late 1990s, when incidents of school violence are becoming more frequent

Agent: Harris and Klebold

Agency: Guns (and home-made bombs that failed to detonate)

Purpose: 1. To gain attention or notoriety
2. To seek revenge
3. Imitation

The use of terms like "massacre," "rampage," and "school shooting" mark the incident historically by placing it in a larger narrative depicting random acts of violence as common in the United States. In such incidents and especially in the early days after a shooting, there is a frantic effort to determine purpose as 24-hour news feeds extend coverage of the event. The purpose remains unknown initially (and perhaps much longer). Still, by calling it a massacre or "rampage" and by citing other incidents of school violence, media accounts implicitly suggest a purpose. The purpose is initially defined by what may be called its discursive context: previous generic explanations about why young people "act out" in such a horrible way. It is seen as yet another tragic symptom of our glorification of violence in the entertainment industry or our indiscriminate use of guns. News reports immediately marked the Columbine shooting as "the worst school shooting in U.S. history," assuring its place in these ongoing narratives and invoking all the previous interpretations as to the causes of such school violence, which people will now bring to bear on this incident. Constructing the pentad in this way focuses our attention on answering key questions, such as the precise details of the act and how it was carried out, the similarities between this incident and others, the types of weapons used, the nature of the two killers, and the inexplicable reasons for their actions.

It is an interpretation that is validated by casting the agents as inscrutably evil. It was quickly reported that Harris and Klebold associated with "The Trenchcoat Mafia," a clique of students at Columbine

who wore black trenchcoats as a symbol of solidarity and difference and who adopted Nazi symbols to "worship." Their association with this group thus became a focus of great scrutiny, as did the date of the incident itself. The foreword to the Jefferson County Sheriff's report even notes the following:

> Perhaps there is a connection with the history of this date. To begin with, 4/20 carries the same numerals as 420, the California criminal code for possession of marijuana. Due to the significance of these numbers in popular drug culture, some students were absent from school that day in recognition of what they termed "national marijuana day." April 20, 1999, also marked the 110th anniversary of Adolph Hitler's birth.

The act takes on the characteristics of ritualized and ceremonial violence by two students under the influence of drugs and misplaced hero worship.

I mentioned earlier that news media accounts (in print, on the Internet, and on television) initially reported the act as a massacre, linking it to other school shootings. Interesting questions, and a paradox, rise to the surface when we focus attention on the news media as the agent for the act of reporting the incident.

Pentad 2—Reporting News

Act: Reporting news of yet another school massacre

Scene: 1. The Information Age, when news is more accessible, immediate, interactive (as in news chat rooms), and widely disseminated
2. A time when images of violence are common in entertainment media, such as film and TV shows

Agent: The news organization, the reporter(s)

Agency: Print newspapers, the Internet, television

Purpose: 1. To report the news
2. To increase readership or viewership and thus advertising revenue

Several questions come to mind, especially ones relating scene, agency, and purpose as they affect the act. For example, the prevalence of news sources on television, in print, and on the Internet make it likely that a

typical citizen nowhere near Columbine High School will learn about the incident quickly and often. It becomes "news in the making" or a "breaking story" that has an inherently dramatic quality to it and thus will draw a sizable audience. The speed with which the news becomes available adds to the tension, as does the presence of live cameras at the scene of the incident. While the purpose may be to report the news, an unintended by-product becomes its appeal as entertainment. Television news reports also share agency with other forms of entertainment (movies, for example), so one response to such coverage, especially when it is dramatized to such a degree, is to view it as "like" a movie. It may be a "real" event, but it has many of the characteristics of a film, with a narrator, plot, characters, heroes, villains, and so on. Each school shooting thus becomes a highly dramatized event in the historical consciousness of the culture and dangerously, in the minds of people who see such acts as ways to express their discontent, to solve problems, to gain notoriety, or to be a "star" in such a drama themselves. Imitation or "copy-cat" shootings become a real threat.

Very early in the process of interpreting an event such as the Columbine shooting, the people directly involved will provide different accounts of not just the act, but of its scene, agency, agents, and purpose. Early reports from witnesses suggested that Harris and Klebold targeted specific people, that the violence was in fact not random but motivated by racial and class stereotypes. If the act is defined as an act of revenge, the pentad looks very different, with more stress placed on the scene as a motivating factor.

Pentad 3—Revenge

Act:	Seek revenge for perceived wrongs
Scene:	A school in an affluent suburb where success is measured by material gain, popularity, and privilege
Agent:	Disillusioned students victimized by rigid hierarchies of success; loners; outcasts
Agency:	Guns (and home-made bombs that failed to detonate)
Purpose:	To punish those who have unfairly reaped the rewards of their status

The focus here shifts from the motives of the killers themselves to the culpability of those responsible for creating the hierarchical system that

oppresses some students, that is, to school administrators, parents, the community, and even to the philosophy of capitalism and the American Dream. That African-Americans were also targeted suggests racist motives as well, perhaps an expression of Harris's and Klebold's attitude that they had been denied privileges others unjustly received, even if those others had themselves been oppressed minorities. (In Chapter 2 we will consider in greater depth the problem of conceiving victimage as an expression of power, a rhetorical tactic that Hitler himself relied on to effect his program for Nazi Germany.)

Over time, some people seized upon this explanation by noting that the social climate of Columbine High School in particular had overemphasized success and popularity as signs of achievement, which creates even more rigid social hierarchies. Of course, the ethic of success in U.S. society has for quite a long time been tied to fame and notoriety. "In the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes," wrote Andy Warhol in his diaries. If we say that Harris's and Klebold's act was seeking fame and the recognition that it brings, the pentad looks like this:

Pentad 4—Fame

Act:	Seeking fame and recognition
Scene:	A society that associates success with fame or notoriety rather than accomplishment, quality, or virtue
Agent:	Disenfranchised students with low self-esteem
Agency:	Actions that people (and the media) will notice and disseminate widely
Purpose:	To gain attention

Psychologists and FBI profilers have generally used such an account to explain ways that people can spot potential killers. Others have used such a profile to suggest a solution or cure. Some people have noted that young people are not provided sufficient ways to seek redress in situations that they find unfair and that arise in competitive, high-stress environments. So one "option" can be to publicize their oppression by drawing attention to it in dramatic ways. The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) publishes strongly worded guidelines for ensuring that people are not discriminated against in the workplace. Psychologists suggest that young people need access to similar measures that would give them a voice and a means of redress as an alternative to acting out publicly and violently.

The problem of school violence also directs our attention to issues of gun control. For gun-control advocates, the act might remain the same (murder), but the agent of school violence shifts from a person to guns themselves, with the person becoming the agency with which a gun acts:

Pentad 5—Gun Control

Act: Using a gun to commit murder
Scene: A society in which guns are readily available to anyone who wants them, including children, and where violence is widely perceived to be a solution to problems
Agent: Guns and their ready availability, soft gun-control laws
Agency: People with easy access to guns who may be ignorant of their power for harm
Purpose: To settle disputes

Conversely, from the perspective of gun-control opponents, the agency for gun violence is not guns themselves, but people, as in the slogan, "Guns don't kill, people do." So from this perspective, the pentad might look like this:

Pentad 6—Murder and the Law

Act: Committing murder
Scene: A society in which the right to bear arms is guaranteed, even when it means some will exercise that right illegally
Agent: Criminals
Agency: A "soft" legal system that is too lenient on criminals and that does not enforce existing laws against the misuse of guns
Purpose: Evil

In this case, the explanation of motive centers on the agent and purpose, with the agency (soft laws against crime) being the factor that enables criminals to carry out their actions. As with Pentad 5 (Gun Control), the controversy focuses on how the legal system, as an agency, either enables or can prevent such incidents from occurring.

As you can see, alternative interpretations of an act rest on an associated set of contextual and motivational assumptions. Our interpretations of an act are motivated symbolically, ideologically, and psychologically, such that any one interpretation may tell only one side of a complex story. One purpose of the pentad is to reveal the implicit assumptions people make when they say what people are doing and why they are doing it. As Burke sees it, dramatism enables us to see not only the grounds of these interpretations, but to enable alternative ones by forcing categorical expectations to shift and thus generate new ways of seeing.

Because the conceptual categories of the pentad exert influence on each other, it is possible to generate further perspectives with pentadic ratios. We might ask, for example, how the scene influences the act in the case of the shooting at Columbine. If, as in Pentad 3 (Revenge), we place stress on the influence of the social scene on Harris's and Klebold's act, we are forced to ask questions about the character of our culture, the reasons why, for example, we seem drawn to expressions of violence in popular media. We have to consider the more local circumstances of the scene as well, such as the culture of success and hierarchy at Columbine, or the quality and character of Harris's and Klebold's family life, about the failure of school administrators or law enforcement agencies to notice the many warning signs that have now been cited. More generally, we would want to consider the penchant for violence in the United States, whether violence is a product of the system itself or of the lack of restraint by the entertainment industry in glorifying violence, or if it has some other source. We would have to address the objections of those who would note that the scene does not have the motivating influence that some attribute to it because a great majority of people do not resort to gun violence to solve their problems. Each pentadic ratio raises as many questions about our manner of attributing motives. What, for example, might be the influence of drug culture (as an agency) on the agents? Or what are the implications of suggesting that evil (as a purpose) is the primary motive for acts of school violence? As any good analytical method should, the pentad generates further questions about its subject, showing us what we ought to know, need to know, or do not know. When Burke says that the pentad is designed to reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities arise, he has in mind this sort of open-ended questioning of the subject.

Summary

Dramatism analyzes language and thought as modes of action rather than as means of conveying information. Developed by Kenneth Burke, dramatism is a systematic method for analyzing human communication

in all its complexity. It thus shares with rhetoric a focus on human symbol-use as a social process of both describing and influencing motives. The pentad—Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose—functions as a form of rhetorical analysis that can help us understand the presence of ambiguity and persuasion in any interpretation that guides action.

Identification, or an alignment of interests and motive, is the aim of rhetoric, with consubstantiality (shared substance) being its ideal. Dramatism helps us understand the resources of ambiguity that make identification possible. It also helps us study identification's counterpart, division, as a dialectic between competing and cooperating forces. For Burke, human relations should be guided by the fullest understanding possible of the basis of our disagreements, our wars of words (logomachy).

The dramatistic pentad, Burke's "engine" for the analysis of symbolic motives, helps us develop well-rounded accounts of the patterns and reasons behind our disagreements and our explanations. In an analysis of the Columbine shooting, we saw how the elements of the pentad and the pentadic ratios can help us understand the wide range of explanations people have offered as motives for the tragedy, which themselves extend to the agents, Harris and Klebold, to the society that nurtures violent behavior, to the influence of fascistic and racist thinking in America.

▶ Research and Writing Activities

1. Practice using the pentad. Begin with a topic, issue, or text that is unsettled or ambiguous, or that lends itself to multiple interpretations. You could, for instance, think about the value and purpose of writing: Why do people write? Once you have a topic in mind, follow these steps to develop it:

a. Supply yourself with several pieces of scratch paper. List the pentad terms across the top of one page (Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose).

b. Under "act" begin by defining an important act associated with your topic. Beneath this, list all the associated details that you can. For instance, if your topic is writing, you might define the act as "Writing to Persuade" and list associated details that remind you of what writing to persuade involves, such as argumentation, evidence, opinion, logic, feeling, or character. At this

stage, it is only critical that you generate details without worrying too much about how they interrelate.

c. Do the same for each of the five terms, each time listing as many details as you can under each column. For our example, under scene you might specify "The Internet" and then the particular circumstances of the World Wide Web as a site of contesting viewpoints and opinion, with the possibility of reaching millions of readers holding vastly different opinions. You could specify the agent as the college-level writer, someone who has grown up in a media age in which so much writing now takes place online. The agency would be the means, such as Web pages, HTML, e-mail, and even graphics, as well as the various tactics of writing to persuade, such as problem-solution, thesis-proof, arguing from experience, even repetition (as in advertising). The purpose could be to change minds, to expose injustices, or to make contact with like-minded people.

d. Once you have generated a page of details on your topic, redefine your act, then repeat steps a–c. For instance, we could redefine our act as "Writing to Entertain," in which case the scene might become not simply the World Wide Web, but the wider entertainment culture that has made the Internet more like a media outlet than a repository of information. The agent would be someone who aims to please rather than convert. Agency might expand to include such things as electronic books or digital video. The purpose might now be understandable as e-commerce (to make money) by somehow charging people for the entertainment delivered. (Stephen King, for example, has used the Internet to deliver chapters of a novel in serial form.)

e. You will notice as you work that the pentad helps you discover those areas of your topic that you need to know more about, which is part of its power. You may find that you need to do some research. For instance, the text you analyze may not supply very good answers to some of the questions you ask of it. Or you might find that you don't know as much about your subject as you previously thought.

f. Generate even more perspectives by trying some of the ratios. Act-scene is often a good one, as is agent-purpose. Investigating the ratios will lead you to intriguing new insights. In our example, we could ask how the scene (The Internet) influences the act (Writing to Persuade). Web authors have learned that their readers

won't have much patience for Web pages that load slowly or that sacrifice content for graphics. If they aim to persuade on the Internet, they have to take into account the interface to a greater degree than they might in traditional print formats. Even writing persuasive e-mail messages might require privileging brevity over depth because of the sheer number of people competing for attention. It is interesting to think that the revolution in digital culture is partially explainable as a redefinition of agency as scene. The Internet, a "medium," also is thought of as a place, even sometimes a place to live, as in the film *The Matrix*.

Following your generation of details, complete these steps:

   i. Write a one-page commentary that explores more closely some of the new discoveries that you have made.
   ii. Plan your further research by identifying three or four questions worth pursuing.
   iii. Write a paragraph describing what it was like to expand your subject using the pentad.

2. Burke chooses *drama* as a **metaphor** for analyzing human behavior, which allows him to approach questions of motives through a lens that emphasizes people as actors using symbols to influence each other and their scenes. A metaphor is a way of seeing one thing in *terms* of something else. What happens when you think of human behavior not as dramatic, but in terms of chemical reactions or cause and effect, as in psychology? What is involved, for instance, when we say that addictive behavior is the result of chemical imbalances? Or what if we think of behavior in terms of money, as in economics? What is involved, for instance, when we say that people are commodities, human "resources"? Think of some other metaphors that describe human behavior in terms of something else and consider the consequences of such symbolic representations. What difference does it make if you think of a person as a commodity, a consumer, a "change-agent," a cyborg, a rat, a god, a carbon-based unit, or "describable by the enemy as vermin"? (See Chapter 2 for more on that last one.)

3. Based on your reading of the six pentads, your knowledge of the Columbine shooting or similar events, and your experience as a student, construct another pentad by renaming the act. For instance, what does the pentad look like when you think of the act in terms of

gender (e.g., two *males* go on a rampage shooting)? In terms of imitation (e.g., a copy-cat school shooting)?

4. In popular usage, rhetoric is often thought of as an act that involves embellishing the truth with fancy language, distorting or overstating a case, or attacking an opponent. From a dramatistic perspective, however, rhetoric comes into play in every situation that involves people acting on each other through symbols to achieve identification. In what ways can a poem be considered rhetorical? An e-mail message to a parent or a friend? An essay written in a history class? This book?

5. Find a printed newspaper article that reports information in an apparently objective way. Use the pentad to show that a rhetorical motive may be present, even if the article itself does not make an explicit persuasive appeal.

6. Burke's conception of dramatism was heavily influenced by George Herbert Mead. Mead's book *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (1934) argues among other things that our sense of self and our social roles are shaped by our immersion in language. Later, Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) described human behavior as a theatrical performance. Track down works by either Mead or Goffman to see what bearing either might have on your understanding of dramatism and the function of language as symbolic action.

Preview of the Following Chapters

Each of the ensuing chapters introduces new elements of dramatism, with the dual aim of making them accessible while preserving their complexity. The concepts are applied in analyses of situations and works that both illustrate them and reveal their pliability for the analysis of human motivation. Each chapter also applies a different pentadic ratio in the interest of generating a well-rounded account of what people say when they attribute motives to others or define motives for themselves. In the end, we will see that while dramatism may have at its core the pentad, Burke draws from a wide range of disciplinary terminologies and perspectives to define its elements, including the fields of rhetorical theory, literature and literary theory, philosophy, political science, sociology, and psychology.

Chapter 2, "The Dramatistic Analysis of Form," introduces the theories of form that Burke uses to examine the function of literature from the standpoint of both readers and writers. For Burke, literature potentially includes anything written or spoken. From the writer's perspective, form functions as a way to shape and reshape the writer's situation in the interest of formulating a satisfactory response to personal and social circumstances. From the reader's perspective, form is an appeal to desire and its subsequent gratification. To the extent that a work has form, writers and readers achieve identification. Using form as a key concept, Chapter 2 then looks closely at Burke's rhetorical analysis of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and applies the pentad's scene-agent ratio to Hitler's act, as well as to Burke's attempt to represent it.

Chapter 3, "Terministic Screens," explores the ramifications of one of Burke's most important concepts. **Terministic screens** consist of the words and conceptual strategies that comprise a point of view or perspective. They function as filters, simultaneously illuminating and obscuring the subject they are designed to explain. The chapter begins by examining the generative nature of representative anecdotes, then demonstrates **cluster analysis** using William Carlos Williams's short poem, "The Red Wheelbarrow." The function of terministic screens and their relation to visual rhetoric is demonstrated in an extended analysis of *The Usual Suspects,* a film largely about rhetoric itself in addition to being a good example of how terministic screens can obscure motives. Taking *agency* (means) as the key term, the chapter concludes with an analysis of "Electronic Civil Disobedience" and "hacktivism" as modern forms of social protest that re-imagine Henry David Thoreau's description of traditional forms of symbolic resistance.

Chapter 4, "The Resources of Terminology," examines the structure of the linguistic sign and its rhetorical nature. Dramatistic analysis here focuses on the process of tracking down the implications of a terminology, on demonstrating that our words carry multiple meanings, and on exposing the method of dialectic, which is seen as a process of revealing the ways that our terms "jump to conclusions." In analyses of dialectic and rhetoric as they are displayed and discussed in Plato's dialogues *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* and of the scene-agent ratio as it plays out in narratives of serial murder (in Thomas Harris's novel *Hannibal*)—Chapter 4 demonstrates that our terms represent motives, which in turn

are shorthand terms for situations. In choosing our terms, we not only name our world, but we set it in motion.

The book's final chapter, "The Public Memory, Rhetoric, and Ideology," describes the dramatistic elements of memory, illustrating its public representation as ideology in the film *Toy Story 2* and the recent representation of Hitler's magic in Don DeLillo's award-winning novel, *White Noise.* An expression of how circumstances shape conscious and unconscious motivation, the scene-purpose ratio then helps us understand the rhetorical function of **hegemony** as a rehearsal and celebration of ideology. Burke's explanation of **substance** rounds out the book and invites consideration of the perilous and comic nature of human communication and symbol-use.

2

The Dramatistic Analysis of Form

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In his first book of critical theory, *Counter-Statement* (1930), Burke makes the concept of **form** the key element of what he would later call his machinery for criticism, or as he named the concluding section of *Counter-Statement,* his "Lexicon Rhetoricae" (lexicon of rhetoric). Like the pentad, form expresses a relationship. The pentad helps us recognize and elaborate the ambiguity in interpretations, which themselves derive from a motivational cluster of relationships that Burke says consists of an act performed in a scene by an agent by some means for a reason: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Burke called this cluster a "grammar of motives" to emphasize its function as a set of relational and, in this case, philosophical principles. A **grammar** in the most general sense is a rule-governed or relational system of formal principles.

As with the pentad, the relationship expressed by form has a grammatical basis. With form, however, there is also a rhetorical dimension, an appeal. As Burke sees it, form provides us with a perspective for understanding the dynamic of identification as it functions grammatically and aesthetically in texts and, by extension, in experience. Form is an important element of dramatism because it helps us explain how and why readers construct meaning from both texts and experience, and importantly, how writers use this meaning as "equipment for living." As we will see in Burke's analysis of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (German for

"My Struggle" or "My Battle"), form functions as structure, but also as the shaping of experience to foster identification.

Burke used the phrase "literature as equipment for living" to describe one of the major functions of literature, which for him included traditional literary genres (poetry fiction, and drama), but also any written or spoken words meant to arouse emotions or to shape attitudes, including criticism itself. We use and interpret symbols so that we might equip ourselves to live better lives. Or perhaps more rightly, we talk ourselves and others into believing that lives can be improved only if people are capable of reading the world from the multiple perspectives that works of literature bring to bear on experience. Dramatism conceives of literature as a symbolic adaptation to a situation, and in the act of identification between readers and writers, a type of equipment for adapting to shared, lived experience. That identification may be real or imaginary, so long as it is the expression of desire.

Form, for Burke, is "an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence" (*Counter-Statement*, 124). Form is an appeal to the extent that it creates and gratifies needs. Form is also "a way of experiencing; and such a form is made available in art when, by the use of specific subject matter, it enables us to experience in this way" (143). A work of literature, or any type of writing, has form when both writers and readers experience it as an appeal to desire and subsequent gratification. Like arrangement or structure, form involves patterns, but it also has the dynamic quality of being the focal point of identification between the experience of writers and readers or between a writer and the unarranged aspects of her situation. If you recall that the primary aim of rhetoric, identification, is a way of experiencing and acting together, consubstantially, the importance of form in a system of rhetoric and as an element of dramatism becomes clearer. In this chapter, you will learn to see form as a critical element in dramatism's function as an analytical system for understanding and interpreting language as symbolic action.

The Writer's Situation

In *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1940), Burke explains that "[c]ritical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are *strategic* an-

swers, *stylized* answers" (1). Poetry, for instance, is a strategy for "encompassing situations" by naming their structure and outstanding ingredients in such a way that implies an attitude toward them. Writing is, in other words, an act of forming and re-forming experience using language. It can function as the writer's answer to a situation while also appealing to a reader's identification with that situation. In this sense, it is dramatic because, as with consubstantiality, it is an acting-together. Burke calls such a symbolic act "the *dancing of an attitude*" (9).

The writer's situation is not merely his or her set of personal experiences or historical context, though those elements do help define it. The writer's situation, more accurately, is what today might be called subjectivity. In this case, the writer's or the subject's situation is the transformed personal and public experiences that in turn serve as ingredients useful in interpreting other experience, in solving (or even avoiding) problems, and in communicating with each other. It is the margin of overlap between the writer's personal experience and that of others, between situations, that creates the potential for identification. The writer's situation, or subjectivity, is a construction and thus an act of interpretation. As such, it will be well rounded or not, based upon the rigor, flexibility, and resourcefulness with which it is "performed." We construct and articulate our subjectivity—our situation—symbolically, in works of literature or any other type of writing or speech that has identification as one of its aims. For Burke, that subjectivity is a composition of our experience in history and in textuality—the symbol systems that give our life meaning.

Burke's Parlor

The following passage is the most frequently cited of all of Burke's writings. It describes succinctly the drama of the writer's situation at his or her moment in history. It also acts as a metaphor for the drama of wider human relations and thus for understanding the rhetorical process of transforming experience through social dialogue. Burke revised this passage substantially over a period of time, indicating the importance he attributed to it and its function as his own "stylized" answer to his personal situation. It comes near the end of his long title essay of *The Philosophy of Literary Form:*

Where does the drama get its materials? From the "unending conversation" that is going on at the point in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (110–11)

Burke's parlor analogy suggests that a symbolic act, such as a poem, is the voicing of one or more selves, the dancing of one attitude among many possible. He is also describing the more public contest of competing perspectives, the wrangle in the marketplace of ideas. We spend our lives adjusting to that which directs our attention, putting in our "or," allying ourselves with and against others in a process that is perpetually renewed and interminable.

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. In this extended analogy or what Burke calls a representative anecdote, we find him reiterating his belief that it is through competitive cooperation that we make meaning, that we compose our situation. An anecdote is representative if it has explanatory power, if it brings coherence or meaning to previously uncollected or misunderstood phenomena. What in your experience does Burke's parlor anecdote help you understand?

2. One way that Burke "stylizes" his answers to his situation is to pun, which is a play on a term's multiple meanings. He sometimes uses what he calls "tonal" puns, which depend on words sounding alike but having very different meaning. For example, "put in your *oar*" could also be read as "put in your *or.*" What other puns or double meanings can you find ex-

pressed in this passage? What significance might they have? To get started, think about a word like "interminable."

3. In an earlier version of this passage in a long essay called "Auscultation, Creation, and Revision," Burke used the term *room* instead of *parlor.* Why do you think he "stylized" the passage by changing *room* to *parlor*? Recall (or look up) the meaning of the French term, *parler,* and then other related terms, such as *parlay* and *parliament* to help you formulate a response.

4. The writer's situation is like a parliament of competing voices, each making its own special assertion and thus, each functioning like a motive. How might this explain some forms of mental illness? Do you think there might be a linguistic or symbolic ingredient in such diseases as schizophrenia?

Piety and Form

To understand how people transform their experiences and attitudes into writing and other forms of art, Burke suggests that we view symbolic action as an expression of **piety**. In its usual meanings, *piety* means "devoutness" or "a conventional belief or standard." There is the sense also, however, in which piety means "a natural obligation." The latter is the meaning that Burke seizes upon in *Permanence and Change* when he takes the term *piety,* which normally has a religious context, and gives it secular meaning. In doing so, he is practicing what for him is one of the generative principles of rhetorical inquiry: **perspective by incongruity.** We can generate new insight by taking a term and applying it in verbal contexts and to situations in which it is not normally thought to operate. For example, "trained incapacity" encourages perspective by incongruity because we do not normally think of training as incapacitating. Training is supposed to prepare, not impair. It is Burke's insight that our customary ways of interpretation do prepare us to act, but they are not all-inclusive. As we saw with the (too) well-educated chickens, our training may misguide us as well. In a similar fashion, when Burke defines piety as "the sense of what properly goes with what" (74), he is using perspective by incongruity to suggest that piety is not simply dutiful obligation to religious or ideological doctrine, but that it is the expression of a grammatical or formal relationship among the components of our experience and the symbols that give it meaning. To put it simply,

piety feels right. It is formed experience and thus appeals to our desire for formal gratification.

To understand our experience, we take perspectives on it using symbols that are expressions of piety and that in turn function as motives. Ritual, for example, is an expression of piety. Rituals work by the principle of repetitive form, such that over time the form itself communicates meaning or coaxes certain attitudes that might otherwise be forgotten in the confusion of everyday life. Over time, social groups develop rituals to go with events that have special meaning for the group's identification or that are expressions of the group's values. Even waiting in line (or "on" line as they say in New York City) has ritualistic components. Most people know the "rules," the appropriate behavior that goes with the situation (no cutting, converse only to complain about having to wait, etc.). Waiting in line is pious behavior. You will certainly learn how pious it is the next time you try to break into the front of a line in which people have been waiting for awhile (do not try it in New York City). The point is that piety works like a system and, in fact, is a system builder. It is a ritualized and rehearsed means of determining, explaining, or marking the significance of experience. Burke's insight is that we should be deliberately impious in the interest of fostering new insights or interpretations.

One example he uses is called **exorcism by misnomer.** We can deliberately rename something in order to fundamentally change its meaning for us. For example, it is easy for children to imagine seeing monsters in the dark, under the bed, in the corner of the room, or hiding in the closet. They can easily transform an old coat on a chair into a hideous creature. In their world, it is perfectly pious to presume that a vague shape in the dark is something dangerous. A caregiver "casts out the devil" by essentially misnaming the monster. Call it "an old coat" and the fear will probably disappear quickly. Such an act is a good example of how symbols help us (and children) adjust to situations. It is also a good example of how our interpretations can misguide us. For Burke, an interpretation is an expression of symbolic piety, a sense of what goes with what. It is a formal principle because it depends on a relationship between the new experience and our ritualized orientation to experiences we judge to be similar.

Piety works in a similar way in the poetic process, or in any symbolic means of expressing an orientation or interpretation. Consider,

for a moment, these lines spoken by Theseus in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination
> That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear? (V.i.14–22)

Emotions have a formal (relational) and pious quality to them, such that if we experience fear, we imagine monsters (or bears); if we feel joy, we attribute it to some person (a "bringer of joy"), even if the joy might come purely from within or from some biological process we do not understand (manic depression is especially vicious in this respect). The point is that in representing intellectual and emotional experience, we use symbols piously, in a manner consistent with our being or with the internalized meanings we have learned from ritual. It is how we make sense of our lives. Dramatism takes special interest in such acts of making meaning and would have us analyze them systematically. Artists, by nature, will reveal their sense of what goes with what in their works, and by carefully analyzing the evidence of this sense, we can come to understand how they have blended meaning to respond to their situations and, perhaps vicariously, we can see new ways of responding to our own.

Types of Form

Burke sees form as but one way writers and readers shape experience symbolically for the purpose of communicating and shaping attitudes and emotion, which run the whole gamut: from pity and fear to joy, hatred, love, desire, anger, or jealousy. Form involves the manipulation of expectations and their subsequent gratification. A particular text will, to the extent that it has form, gratify or appease the needs that it has created. Form makes an appeal, in other words, so we should watch closely

to see how a text's form serves both its poetic and its rhetorical function. It is important to pay close attention to the devices of form because as an appeal to emotion or desire, form also encourages readers or listeners to displace their formal gratification to the subject itself. If a text gratifies the needs it creates, people are more likely to accept its propositional content (its assertions) as truthful or "right." Therein is both the power and the danger of works of art, such as music, that might speak to our sense of form (e.g., harmony and rhythm) and yet carry with them messages that under other conditions we might find disagreeable or offensive. The rap artist Eminem, for example, has been widely criticized for his misogynistic and homophobic lyrics, even as his music wins awards from the very establishment that would by counter-measures try to distance itself from the message, if not the form, of his music. Eminem has not only cultivated a form that appeals to audiences, but he has also mastered the attitude of the disenfranchised, angry, adolescent male that has been popular since James Dean perfected the form in the film *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and for probably much longer. The ritualized attitude and form of Eminem's music overshadows or represses what might otherwise be found offensive.

In *Counter-Statement,* Burke identifies four major types of form: syllogistic (or progressive), qualitative, repetitive, and conventional. Following the explanation of each type, we turn to his analysis of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" (1939) to illustrate how pentadic and formal analysis combine in what has become a classic example of the value and perceptiveness of dramatistic analysis.

Syllogistic Progression

Also called syllogistic form, syllogistic progression takes the shape of a "perfectly constructed argument, advancing step by step" (*Counter-Statement,* 124). The term *syllogism* refers to the form of deductive logic in dialectic, whereby premises lead deductively to conclusions. Given one thing, another must follow. Syllogistic form is the generative principle behind works that also rely on the appeal of information, what Burke calls the psychology of information. A familiar example of syllogistic form as an appeal can be found in the mystery novel, where the appeal is to the reader's desire to see what happens next, given what has happened before. More subtly, it is the form of the demonstration in

science, whereby hypotheses help one generate conclusions. The traditional academic essay, which normally begins with its conclusions (e.g., its "thesis") has syllogistic form in its body, whereby the writer demonstrates the validity of those conclusions. A work has syllogistic form insofar as it directs our attention and then appeases our desire for clarification, for elaborated meaning or conclusions. Television soap operas rely on such a form, but in their case, the progression is unresolved; they just keep going and going (and therein is their lure). (It is rumored, by the way, that Burke himself loved to watch soap operas with his friend, sociologist Hugh Dalziel Duncan, in the 1960s.)

Qualitative Progression

Also called qualitative form, qualitative progression is less obvious than syllogistic form, but its use is perhaps just as common. Rather than prior information or arguments preparing us for some revelation or resolution, with qualitative form, the presence of one *quality* prepares us for the next in the sequence. Scenes in a film, for instance, might have little to do with each other in terms of plot or characters, but they might have contrastive emotional qualities that establish a pattern or form. Some horror films are especially good at balancing scenes of terror with comedy or romance, so much so that the pattern has become cliché (and even self-referential, as in the *Evil Dead* or *Scream* films). In a dramatic sequence in Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining,* Jack Nicholson's character (Jack Torrance) creeps into a hotel room looking for a ghost who has apparently attacked his son, only to find a nude woman emerge seductively from the bathtub to embrace him. The camera's perspective pans slowly until we see the woman's reflection and then Jack's reaction in a mirror to his sudden discovery that the woman is a rotting corpse. The contrastive emotional qualities of sexual arousal and fear make this one of the more striking scenes in the film.

Repetitive Form

Repetitive form appeals by repetition, relying on familiarity to be comfortable or even reassuring to the audience. The repetition is of a principle or perspective in new guises, using perhaps different subject matter, but always with an underlying pattern of means or style. The familiarity develops intrinsically, as the work unfolds. So the repetition of a rhyme

scheme in a sonnet relies on repetitive form as part of its appeal. An image in a film appeals as form when viewers discern its repetition and then come to expect its reappearance in new contexts. Director Alfred Hitchcock is especially adept at using repetitive form to implicate the viewer in a film's message. In *Rear Window* (1954), for example, the various windows into which the protagonists look frame the private dramas of their neighbors, just as the film events themselves are framed on a theater or television screen. By the repetition and even insistence of such a framing motif, the spectator is implicated in the voyeuristic guilt of the protagonists, L. B. Jeffries (played by James Stewart) and Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly). Somewhat differently, Claude Monet's series of water lily paintings appear as variations on a theme, the appeal coming from variations in context caused by changing light and weather patterns, as well as by the substantial passage of time. The repetitive form became an obsession in Monet's case, as his water lily paintings became huge murals near the end of his life.

There is a difference between sheer repetition and repetitive form that is important to keep in mind. Repeating a message verbatim, in terms of both content and form, does have a rhetorical function. In fact, advertisers and political candidates know that "product recognition" is best assured by flooding the airwaves with the same message in minimally altered circumstances (sound bites like "Got Milk?" and "Just Do It" are two of the most obvious examples). But repetitive form, unlike repetition, has its appeal in the familiarity of the underlying pattern, which prompts the audience to "swing along" with the form. In a work's unfolding, we learn the pattern—the twists and turns of a plot, rhythm, or tonal pattern, for example—and come to look for it elsewhere. The rhetorical effectiveness of repetitive form comes from our tendency to associate pure and pleasing form with the propositional content (i.e., the "argument") of the message. In simple terms, if it feels, looks, or sounds right, it must be right.

Conventional Form

Conventional form appeals to an audience because it is familiar, as with repetitive form, but in this case, the form itself appeals as a form that preexists the individual work. Any of the other types of form can become conventional over time. Children learn to like "Once upon a time . . ." *because* it is a beginning. People like the sudden twist of logic

or fate, the cymbal-crash, in a *Twilight Zone* ending. Popular Hollywood films rely on the desire for happy endings, for satisfying and clear resolution of conflict. The coming-of-age story (a *bildungsroman*) is a conventional form used in works as widely divergent as Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Disney's *The Lion King*. Even forms of literature as complex as tragic drama can appeal as conventional form. Shakespeare's *King Lear* caused a tremendous stir in its time because his audience, already familiar with Shakespeare's source for the play—the *True Chronicle History of King Leir*—expected a happy ending. In Shakespeare's version, however, Cordelia, the only faithful daughter of Lear, dies because of her father's vanity, in spite of his last-minute attempt to rescind his death sentence for her. Until the nineteenth century (300 years after Shakespeare's version was first performed), Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear* was the one audiences watched. In that version, Cordelia is happily married to Edgar at the end of the play. Shakespeare had converted a romance into a tragedy, both of which had appeal as conventional form and thus were resistant to manipulation or change.

Burke contrasts conventional form with the other types by noting that it creates "categorical expectancy" (*Counter-Statement*, 126), which is an expectation formed prior to the process of reading, viewing, or interpretation. Syllogistic, qualitative, and repetitive forms usually create expectations during the process, so that readers or viewers learn to expect what follows as a pattern emerges. All four types of form, as well as the many minor forms that Burke also catalogues, play on an interactive dynamic of identification between the writer and the audience. Form is not simply the structure or arrangement of a work, but is a negotiated middle ground where subject matter fuses with the act of writing or interpretation in an indivisible unity. We can analyze its appeal and effects, but form is always inseparable from its content. As controlling presences, writers and readers form and re-form meaning in competitive cooperation.

Dramatism on the World's Stage

Adolf Hitler's (1889–1945) rise to absolute power in Germany from the 1920s onward was steady and well calculated. As early as 1920, he became the chief propagandist for the Workers' party, which in 1921 became known as the Nazi party. In 1923 he was imprisoned for opposing the Weimar Republic, which was the ruling government in Germany

following World War I until 1933. During his nine months in prison, Hitler wrote the first volume of *Mein Kampf*. After his release, he wrote a second volume and saw both volumes published in 1925 and 1927. Hitler eventually became the German dictator in 1933, and the leader of the Nazi party in 1934. By 1939, the year that marked the beginning of World War II in Europe, *Mein Kampf* had sold over five million copies in various forms around the world. Hitler eventually committed suicide on April 30, 1945, eight days before Germany surrendered. During Hitler's twelve years as dictator, he sustained the Holocaust (1933–1945), the systematic persecution that resulted in the death of nearly six million Jews during World War II alone.

Hitler's Polemic

There is no question that Hitler was a viciously effective propagandist for himself and his causes. *Mein Kampf* played an important role in establishing his authority and sincerity among the German people. In this autobiography, he portrays himself as someone who identified with the plight of the poor and suffering in Europe, having himself struggled to survive under terrible economic conditions. He imagines himself as one of the people (*Das Volk*) and as someone persecuted himself at the hands of the socialists and the Jews. Hitler achieved and sustained political power by also winning battles with his enemies, many of whom he ordered executed once he had solidified his power. He was also a passionate, even maniacal public speaker whose chief genre was the polemic. Hitler's maniacal style of speechmaking is very familiar to us now, but it was also brilliantly parodied in film by Charlie Chaplin as early as 1940's *The Great Dictator*.

A *polemic* is an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another person. It is a common rhetorical genre, even in forms as familiar as the traditional academic essay, which usually attempts to assert authority and reduce uncertainty. Syllogistic in nature, a polemic aims to settle disputes verbally by surmounting the differences of orientation in opposing viewpoints, step by step. It works by negation, whereby contrary arguments get a "Nay," and supporting arguments are synthesized as "Aye." The term *polemic* derives from the Greek word *polemikos*, meaning "war" or "war-like," and the Latin, *polemicus*, referring to a "controversialist." The polemic is a **logomachy,**

a war of words, that aims to "rally the troops," which may be either supporting arguments or, as in Hitler's case, millions of supporters. Polemic is perhaps the most aggressive means of mediating that middle ground between identification and division where rhetoric comes to the fore. It is polarizing, of course, but it is also a response to the predicament whereby we can never be wholly consubstantial or absolutely divided from each other, as much as we might like to be.

As a prelude to Burke's extended essay on Hitler's rhetoric and as a way to understand the attitude that informs dramatism in general, we can contrast dramatism's generative nature with the attitude that accompanies the sort of polemic that animated and agitated Hitler. As you will see, Burke seizes upon Hitler's persistent desire to silence the parliamentary voices that would make certainty harder to come by. Of course, Hitler did not simply use words to silence contrary opinions. In his famous book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, William L. Shirer notes that when speaking before a captive audience of 3,000 on November 8, 1923, Hitler told everyone that no one would be allowed to leave the room alive without permission until he was through speaking (107).

Polemic seeks identification with a vengeance, but in doing so, its unintended by-product is division. When there are sharp differences of opinion, social hierarchies will come to the fore, making division across a range of social groups and classes more pronounced than they might be when the atmosphere of intellectual exchange and argument is not so competitive. Using its set of generating principles (the pentad), dramatism is designed to suspend closure and to sustain rhetorical analysis of symbolic action. Dramatism exploits verbal resources for the purpose of sustaining discussion and inquiry, not to foreclose it, which is polemic's primary purpose.

Herein also is one explanation for the Latin epigraph that Burke uses to begin *A Grammar of Motives: ad bellum purificandum* ("to purify war"). The elements of dramatism help us traverse division not by promoting identification at all costs, but by providing a method whereby we can peer beyond the obvious to see how the verbal tactics we select for ourselves carry with them motives of their own, or encourage attitudes that may in fact lead to war more than they might alleviate its possibility. When people are at war, division is at its greatest, and there is no perceivable basis for discussion. The "enemy" is described as absolutely

evil, and to enter into any kind of debate is seen by either side as a concession or an implicit compromise of the basic principles that unify each side against the other. To maintain such division, each side must have complete cooperation among those loyal to its cause for the sake of presenting a "united front." In Hitler's view, one method of creating a united front was to silence dissenting voices, even those inside him that might soften his stance. But he went much further. The desire became one for absolute unity, one that transcended ideology by also founding itself on biology and place, which was expressed by Hitler's desire to make Germany an Aryan nation with racial purity.

By extending his polemical attitude to its limits, Hitler came to see everything as a sign that he was right, that as he says in one of the most haunting lines from the book, "*In warding off the Jews, I am doing the Lord's work.*" Burke believes that Hitler's rhetorical motives were not simply symptoms of some other disease, of madness, or pure evil. Rather, Hitler's was a case of trained incapacity if there ever was one. He imposed on his personal experience a syllogistic narrative form that he would in turn write on the world. It was an act of symbolic displacement, whereby his situation could be rewritten and his inner demons projected, purged, and embodied symbolically in his enemies. In purely formal terms, it is a diabolically poetic act.

The attitude found expression in Hitler's reading also. In the early chapters of *Mein Kampf*, he offers a sometimes rambling account of his early childhood and his frustrations in school. Over time, he says, he learned a practice of reading that would later have a profound influence over his manner of thinking about virtually any subject. He saw reading simply as a means to an end, as another step in an argument: "When studying a book, a magazine, or a pamphlet, those who master the art of reading will immediately pick out that which is in their opinion suitable for them—because it serves their purposes or is generally worth knowing—and therefore to be remembered forever" (49). Reading, in other words, should fortify one's ideas. **Pluralism** and multiple perspectives (sometimes called "universality" or many-sidedness among teachers at the time) was seen as a serious threat to the State. Burke will note that Hitler's cult of efficiency and his defiant rejection of alternative perspectives nursed his anger and feelings of persecution. The parliamentary was anathema because it nursed fears and uncertainty, which can seriously hamper a State's ability to wage war, to conquer the enemies within and beyond its borders.

Fascism was the political philosophy that Hitler used to rationalize this one-sidedness. Fascism endorses stringent social, educational, and economic control and preaches belligerent nationalism and racism—all in the interest (noted its supporters) of disciplined unity and efficiency. It is a word that derives from the Italian *fascista,* meaning "group," which in turn derives from the Latin *fascis,* meaning "bundle." Interestingly, somewhat related terms include the Latin *fascinum* ("witchcraft") and *fascinare* ("to enchant," i.e., as in "fascinate").

The purpose of dramatism is to purify war, to avoid being driven into separate corners by our arguments, into a state of absolute division. In *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (1961), Burke includes an "Epilogue: Prologue in Heaven" that is an imaginary dialogue between The Lord and Satan. There, The Lord defines his human creation as "describable by an enemy as vermin and endowed with the power of speaking, hence the powers of mechanical invention and political governance" (276). As Burke will argue in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" it is Hitler's tactic to make the "other" that he saw as Jewish into the enemy and through the devices of speech and real threats of violence, channel the powers of government to line up followers numbering in the millions.

First published in 1939, Burke's essay begins by responding to what he saw as a failure to take Hitler seriously, or as seriously as was warranted. *Mein Kampf* had earlier that year been published in unexpurgated (i.e., uncut) form as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and in the year following Hitler's appearance as *Time* magazine's Man-of-the-Year. Prior to this new, full translation of *Mein Kampf,* the American public had only been able to read the book in highly abridged form. Burke makes clear in the first two paragraphs why he believes critics and the American public needed to move beyond simply saying that Hitler was evil, then calling it a day. Hitler had laid his cards on the table for all to read, and yet few had taken the time to understand just how dangerous his rhetoric could be. At that moment and on the verge of World War II, Burke publishes his essay in *The Southern Review,* after it had been rejected by *Harper's.* It appears before Burke had fully worked out the elements of dramatism, but you see them at work here in his discussion of the form of Hitler's rhetoric: his attempts to transform a personal principle into a social disease, his characteristic habit of clustering symbols to suggest their equation, and the use of what Burke calls the scapegoat mechanism whereby all the fears and hatred of one group are

heaped on another in a symbolic effort to "cast them off." In the end, Burke hopes to help us guard against similar concoctions in America, recognizing that even as powerful as Hitler had become, the social and economic circumstances of Nazi Germany made it possible for someone like him to emerge as an unquestioned leader. Those same conditions could emerge elsewhere and trigger similar events.

Kenneth Burke

The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle"

The appearance of *Mein Kampf* in unexpurgated translation has called forth far too many vandalistic comments. There are other ways of burning books than on the pyre—and the favorite method of the hasty reviewer is to deprive himself and his readers by inattention. I maintain that it is thoroughly vandalistic for the reviewer to content himself with the mere inflicting of a few symbolic wounds upon this book and its author, of an intensity varying with the resources of the reviewer and the time at his disposal. Hitler's "Battle" is exasperating, even nauseating; yet the fact remains: If the reviewer but knocks off a few adverse attitudinizings and calls it a day, with a guaranty in advance that his article will have a favorable reception among the decent members of our population, he is contributing more to our gratification than to our enlightenment.

Here is the testament of a man who swung a great people into his wake. Let us watch it carefully; and let us watch it, not merely to discover some grounds for prophesying what political move is to follow Munich, and what move to follow that move, etc.; let us try also to discover what kind of "medicine" this medicine-man has concocted, that we may know, with greater accuracy, exactly what to guard against, if we are to forestall the concocting of similar medicine in America.

Already, in many quarters of our country, we are "beyond" the stage where we are being saved from Nazism by our *virtues*. And fascist integration is being staved off, rather, by the *conflicts among our vices*. Our vices cannot get together in a grand united front of prejudices; and the result of this frustration, if or until they succeed in surmounting it, speaks, as the Bible might say, "in the name of" democracy. Hitler found a panacea, a "cure for what ails you," a "snakeoil," that made such sinister unifying possible within his own nation. And he was helpful enough to put his cards face up on the

table, that we might examine his hands. Let us, then, for God's sake, examine them. This book is the well of Nazi magic; crude magic, but effective. A people trained in pragmatism should want to inspect this magic.

1

Every movement that would recruit its followers from among many discordant and divergent bands, must have some spot towards which all roads lead. Each man may get there in his own way, but it must be the one unifying center of reference for all. Hitler considered this matter carefully, and decided that this center must be not merely a centralizing hub of *ideas,* but a mecca geographically located, towards which all eyes could turn at the appointed hours of prayer (or, in this case, the appointed hours of prayer-in-reverse, the hours of vituperation). So he selected Munich, as the *materialization* of his unifying panacea. As he puts it:

> The geo-political importance of a center of a movement cannot be overrated. Only the presence of such a center and of a place, bathed in the magic of a Mecca or a Rome, can at length give a movement that force which is rooted in the inner unity and in the recognition of a hand that represents this unity.

If a movement must have its Rome, it must also have its devil. For as Russell pointed out years ago, an important ingredient of unity in the Middle Ages (an ingredient that long did its unifying work despite the many factors driving towards disunity) was the symbol of a *common enemy,* the Prince of Evil himself. Men who can unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all. Hitler himself states the case very succinctly:

> As a whole, and at all times, the efficiency of the truly national leader consists primarily in preventing the division of the attention of a people, and always in concentrating it on a single enemy. The more uniformly the fighting will of a people is put into action, the greater will be the magnetic force of the movement and the more powerful the impetus of the blow. It is part of the genius of a great leader to make adversaries of different fields appear as always belonging to one category only, because to weak and unstable characters the knowledge that there are various enemies will lead only too easily to incipient doubts as to their own cause.

As soon as the wavering masses find themselves confronted with too many enemies, objectivity at once steps in, and the question is raised whether actually all the others are wrong and their own nation or their own movement alone is right.

Also with this comes the first paralysis of their own strength. Therefore, a number of essentially different enemies must always be regarded as one in such a way that in the opinion of the mass of one's own adherents the war is being waged against one enemy alone. This strengthens the belief in one's own cause and increases one's bitterness against the attacker.

As everyone knows, this policy was exemplified in his selection of an "international" devil, the "international Jew" (the Prince was international, universal, "catholic"). This *materialization* of a religious pattern is, I think, one terrifically effective weapon of propaganda in a period where religion has been progressively weakened by many centuries of capitalist materialism. You need but go back to the sermonizing of centuries to be reminded that religion had a powerful enemy long before organized atheism came upon the scene. Religion is based upon the "prosperity of poverty," upon the use of ways for converting our sufferings and handicaps into a good—but capitalism is based upon the prosperity of acquisitions, the only scheme of value, in fact, by which its proliferating store of gadgets could be sold, assuming for the moment that capitalism had not got so drastically in its own way that it can't sell its gadgets even after it has trained people to feel that human dignity, the "higher standard of living," could be attained only by their vast private accumulation.

So, we have, as unifying step No. 1, the international devil materialized, in the visible, point-to-able form of people with a certain kind of "blood," a burlesque of contemporary neo-positivism's ideal of meaning, which insists upon a *material* reference.

Once Hitler has thus essentialized his enemy, all "proof" henceforth is automatic. If you point out the enormous amount of evidence to show that the Jewish worker is at odds with the "international Jew stock exchange capitalist," Hitler replies with one hundred per cent regularity: That is one more indication of the cunning with which the "Jewish plot" is being engineered. Or would you point to "Aryans" who do the same as his conspiratorial Jews? Very well; that is proof that the "Aryan" has been "seduced" by the Jew.

The sexual symbolism that runs through Hitler's book, lying in wait to draw upon the responses of contemporary sexual values, is easily characterized: Germany in dispersion is the "dehorned Siegfried." The masses are "feminine." As such, they desire to be led by a dominating male. This male, as orator, woos them—and, when he has won them, he commands them. The rival male, the villainous Jew, would on the contrary "seduce" them. If he succeeds, he poisons their blood by intermingling with them. Whereupon, by purely associative connections of ideas, we are moved into attacks upon syphilis, prostitution, incest, and other similar misfortunes, which are introduced as a kind of "musical" argument when he is on the subject of "blood-poisoning" by intermarriage or, in its "spiritual" equivalent, by the infection of "Jewish" ideas, such as democracy.[1]

The "medicinal" appeal of the Jew as scapegoat operates from another angle. The middle class contains, within the mind of each member, a duality: its members simultaneously have a cult of money and a detestation of this cult. When capitalism is going well, this conflict is left more or less in abeyance. But when capitalism is balked, it comes to the fore. Hence, there is "medicine" for the "Aryan" members of the middle class in the projective device of the scapegoat, whereby the "bad" features can be allocated to the "devil," and one can "respect himself" by a distinction between "good" capitalism and "bad" capitalism, with those of a different lodge being the vessels of the "bad" capitalism. It is doubtless the "relief" of this solution that spared Hitler the necessity of explaining just how the "Jewish plot" was to work out. Nowhere does this book, which is so full of war plans, make the slightest attempt to explain the steps whereby the triumph of "Jewish Bolshevism," which destroys *all* finance, will be the triumph of *"Jewish"* finance. Hitler well knows the point at which his "elucidations" should rely upon the lurid alone.

The question arises, in those trying to gauge Hitler: Was his selection of the Jew, as his unifying devil-function, a purely calculating

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[1]Hitler also strongly insists upon the total identification between leader and people. Thus, in wooing the people, he would in a roundabout way be wooing himself. The thought might suggest how the Führer, dominating the feminine masses by his diction, would have an incentive to remain unmarried.

act? Despite the quotation I have already given, I believe that it was *not*. The vigor with which he utilized it, I think, derives from a much more complex state of affairs. It seems that, when Hitler went to Vienna, in a state close to total poverty, he genuinely suffered. He lived among the impoverished; and he describes his misery at the spectacle. He was *sensitive* to it; and his way of manifesting this sensitiveness impresses me that he is, at this point, wholly genuine, as with his wincing at the broken family relationships caused by alcoholism, which he in turn relates to impoverishment. During this time he began his attempts at political theorizing; and his disturbance was considerably increased by the skill with which Marxists tied him into knots. One passage in particular gives you reason, reading between the lines, to believe that the dialecticians of the class struggle, in their skill at blasting his muddled speculations, put him into a state of uncertainty that was finally "solved" by rage:

> The more I argued with them, the more I got to know their dialectics. First they counted on the ignorance of their adversary; then, when there was no way out, they themselves pretended stupidity. If all this was of no avail, they refused to understand or they changed the subject when driven into a corner; they brought up truisms, but they immediately transferred their acceptance to quite different subjects, and, if attacked again, they gave way and pretended to know nothing exactly. Wherever one attacked one of these prophets, one's hands seized slimy jelly; it slipped through one's fingers only to collect again in the next moment. If one smote one of them so thoroughly that, with the bystanders watching, he could but agree, and if one thus thought he had advanced at least one step, one was greatly astonished the following day. The Jew did not in the least remember the day before, he continued to talk in the same old strain as if nothing had happened, and if indignantly confronted, he pretended to be astonished and could not remember anything except that his assertions had already been proved true the day before.
>
> Often I was stunned.
>
> One did not know what to admire more: their glibness of tongue or their skill in lying.
>
> I gradually began to hate them.

At this point, I think, he is tracing the *spontaneous* rise of his anti-Semitism. He tells how, once he had discovered the "cause" of the misery about him, he could *confront it.* Where he had had to avert his eyes, he could now *postively welcome* the scene. Here his

drastic structure of *acceptance* was being formed. He tells of the "internal happiness" that descended upon him.

> This was the time in which the greatest change I was ever to experience took place in me.
> From a feeble cosmopolite I turned into a fanatical anti-Semite,

and thence we move, by one of those associational tricks which he brings forth at all strategic moments, into a vision of the end of the world—out of which in turn he emerges with his slogan: "I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator: *By warding off Jews I am fighting for the Lord's work*" (italics his).

He talks of this transition as a period of "double life," a struggle of "reason" and "reality" against his "heart."[2] It was as "bitter" as it was "blissful." And finally, it was "reason" that won! Which prompts us to note that those who attack Hitlerism as a cult of the

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[2]Other aspects of the career symbolism: Hitler's book begins: "Today I consider it my good fortune that Fate designated Braunau on the Inn as the place of my birth. For this small town is situated on the border between those two German States, the reunion of which seems, at least to us of the younger generation, a task to be furthered with every means our lives long," an indication of his "transitional" mind, what Wordsworth might have called the "borderer." He neglects to give the date of his birth, 1889, which is supplied by the editors. Again there is a certain "correctness" here, as Hitler was not "born" until many years later—but he does give the exact date of his war wounds, which were indeed formative. During his early years in Vienna and Munich, he foregoes protest, on the grounds that he is "nameless." And when his party is finally organized and effective, he stresses the fact that his "nameless" period is over (i.e., he has shaped himself an identity). When reading in an earlier passage of his book some generalizations to the effect that one should not crystallize his political views until he is thirty, I made a note: "See what Hitler does at thirty." I felt sure that, though such generalizations may be dubious as applied to people as a whole, they must, given the Hitler type of mind (with his complete identification between himself and his followers), be valid statements about himself. One *should* do what he *did*. The hunch was verified: about the age of thirty Hitler, in a group of seven, began working with the party that was to conquer Germany. I trace these steps particularly because I believe that the orator who has a strong sense of his own "rebirth" has this to draw upon when persuading his audiences that his is offering them the way to a "new life." However, I see no categorical objection to this attitude; its menace derives solely from the values in which it is exemplified. They may be wholesome or unwholesome. If they are unwholesome, but backed by conviction, the basic sincerity of the conviction acts as a sound virtue to reinforce a vice—and this combination is the most disastrous one that a people can encounter in a demagogue.

irrational should emend their statements to this extent: irrational it is, but it is carried on under the *slogan* of "Reason." Similarly, his cult of war is developed "in the name of" humility, love, and peace. Judged on a quantitative basis, Hitler's book certainly falls under the classification of hate. Its venom is everywhere, its charity is sparse. But the rationalized family tree for this hate situates it in "Aryan love." Some deep-probing German poets, whose work adumbrated the Nazi movement, did gravitate towards thinking *in the name of* war, irrationality, and hate. But Hitler was not among them. After all, when it is so easy to draw a doctrine of war out of a doctrine of peace, why should the astute politician do otherwise, particularly when Hitler has slung together his doctrines, without the slightest effort at logical symmetry? Furthermore, Church thinking always got to its wars in Hitler's "sounder" manner; and the patterns of Hitler's thought are a bastardized or caricatured version of religious thought.

I spoke of Hitler's fury at the dialectics of those who opposed him when his structure was in the stage of scaffolding. From this we may move to another tremendously important aspect of his theory: his attack upon the *parliamentary*. For it is again, I submit, an important aspect of his medicine, in its function as medicine for him personally and as medicine for those who were later to identify themselves with him.

There is a "problem" in the parliament—and nowhere was this problem more acutely in evidence than in the pre-war Vienna that was to serve as Hitler's political schooling. For the parliament, at its best, is a "babel" of voices. There is the wrangle of men representing interests lying awkwardly on the bias across one another, sometimes opposing, sometimes vaguely divergent. Morton Prince's psychiatric study of "Miss Beauchamp," the case of a woman split into several sub-personalities at odds with one another, variously combining under hypnosis, and frequently in turmoil, is the allegory of a democracy fallen upon evil days. The parliament of the Habsburg Empire just prior to its collapse was an especially drastic instance of such disruption, such vocal diaspora, with movements that would reduce one to a disintegrated mass of fragments if he attempted to encompass the totality of its discordancies. So Hitler, suffering under the alienation of poverty and confusion, yearning for some integrative core, came to take this parliament as the basic symbol of all that he would move away from. He damned the tottering Habsburg Empire as a "State of Nationalities." The many conflicting voices of

the spokesmen of the many political blocs arose from the fact that various separationist movements of a nationalistic sort had arisen within a Catholic imperial structure formed prior to the nationalistic emphasis and slowly breaking apart under its development. So, you had this Babel of voices; and, by the method of associative mergers, *using ideas as imagery*, it became tied up, in the Hitler rhetoric, with "Babylon," Vienna as the city of poverty, prostitution, immorality, coalitions, half-measures, incest, democracy (i.e., majority rule leading to "lack of personal responsibility"), death, internationalism, seduction, and anything else of thumbs-down sort the associative enterprise cared to add on this side of the balance.

Hitler's way of treating the parliamentary babel, I am sorry to say, was at one important point not much different from that of the customary editorial in our own newspapers. Every conflict among the parliamentary spokesmen represents a corresponding conflict among the material interests of the groups for whom they are speaking. But Hitler did not discuss the babel from this angle. He discussed it on a purely *symptomatic* basis. The strategy of our orthodox press, in thus ridiculing the cacophonous verbal output of Congress, is obvious: by thus centering attack upon the *symptoms* of business conflict, as they reveal themselves on the dial of political wrangling, and leaving the underlying cause, the business conflicts themselves, out of the case, they can gratify the very public they would otherwise alienate: namely, the businessmen who are the activating members of their reading public. Hitler, however, went them one better. For not only did he stress the purely *symptomatic* attack here. He proceeded to search for the "cause." And this "cause," of course, he derived from his medicine, his racial theory by which he could give a noneconomic interpretation of a phenomenon economically engendered.

Here again is where Hitler's corrupt use of religious patterns comes to the fore. Church thought, being primarily concerned with matters of the "personality," with problems of moral betterment, naturally, and I think rightly, stresses as a necessary feature, the act of will upon the part of the individual. Hence its resistance to a purely "environmental" account of human ills. Hence its emphasis upon the "person." Hence its proneness to seek a noneconomic explanation of economic phenomena. Hitler's proposal of a noneconomic "cause" for the disturbances thus had much to recommend it from this angle. And, as a matter of fact, it was Lueger's Christian-Social Party in Vienna that taught Hitler the tactics of tying up a

program of social betterment with an anti-Semitic "unifier." The two parties that he carefully studied at that time were this Catholic faction and Schoenerer's Pan-German group. And his analysis of their attainments and shortcomings, from the standpoint of dema-gogic efficacy, is an extremely astute piece of work, revealing how carefully this man used the current situation in Vienna as an experi-mental laboratory for the maturing of his plans.

His unification device, we may summarize, had the following important features:

1. Inborn dignity. In both religious and humanistic pat-terns of thought, a "natural born" dignity of man is stressed. And this categorical dignity is considered to be an attribute of *all* men, if they will but avail themselves of it, by right thinking and right living. But Hitler gives this ennobling attitude an ominous twist by his theories of race and nation, whereby the "Aryan" is elevated above all others by the innate endowment of his blood, while other "races," in particular Jews and Negroes, are innately inferior. This sinister secularized revi-sion of Christian theology thus puts the sense of dignity upon a fighting basis, requiring the conquest of "inferior races." After the defeat of Germany in the World War, there were es-pecially strong emotional needs that this compensatory doc-trine of an *inborn* superiority could gratify.

2. *Projection* device. The "curative" process that comes with the ability to hand over one's ills to a scapegoat, thereby getting purification by dissociation. This was especially medic-inal, since the sense of frustration leads to a self-questioning. Hence if one can hand over his infirmities to a vessel, or "cause," outside the self, one can battle an external enemy in-stead of battling an enemy within. And the greater one's in-ternal inadequacies, the greater the amount of evils one can load upon the back of "the enemy." This device is further-more given a semblance of reason because the individual properly realizes that he is not alone responsible for his condi-tion. There *are* inimical factors in the scene itself. And he wants to have them "placed," preferably in a way that would require a minimum change in the ways of thinking to which he had been accustomed. This was especially appealing to the middle class, who were encouraged to feel that they could

conduct their businesses without any basic change whatever, once the businessmen of a different "race" were eliminated.

3. Symbolic rebirth. Another aspect of the two features already noted. The projective device of the scapegoat, cou-pled with the Hitlerite doctrine of inborn racial superiority, provides its followers with a "positive" view of life. They can again get the feel of *moving forward,* towards a *goal* (a promissory feature of which Hitler makes much). In Hitler, as the group's prophet, such rebirth involved a symbolic change of lineage. Here, above all, we see Hitler giving a malign twist to a benign aspect of Christian thought. For whereas the Pope, in the familistic pattern of thought basic to the Church, stated that the Hebrew prophets were the *spiritual ancestors* of Christianity, Hitler uses this same mode of thinking in re-verse. He renounces this "ancestry" in a "materialistic" way by voting himself and the members of his lodge a different "blood stream" from that of the Jews.

4. Commercial use. Hitler obviously here had something to sell—and it was but a question of time until he sold it (i. e., got financial backers for his movement). For it provided a *noneconomic interpretation of economic ills.* As such, it served with maximum efficiency in deflecting the attention from the economic factors involved in modern conflict; hence by attacking "Jew finance" instead of *finance,* it could stimu-late an enthusiastic movement that left "Aryan" finance in control.

Never once, throughout his book, does Hitler deviate from the above formula. Invariably, he ends his diatribes against contemporary economic ills by a shift into an insis-tence that we must get to the "true" cause, which is centered in "race." The "Aryan" is "constructive"; the Jew is "destruc-tive"; and the "Aryan," to continue his *construction,* must *destroy* the Jewish *destruction.* The Aryan, as the vessel of *love,* must *hate* the Jewish *hate.*

Perhaps the most enterprising use of his method is in his chapter, "The Causes of the Collapse," where he refuses to consider Germany's plight as in any basic way connected with the consequences of war. Economic factors, he insists, are "only of second or even third importance," but "political, ethical-moral, as well as factors of blood and race, are of the first

importance." His rhetorical steps are especially interesting here, in that he begins by seeming to flout the national susceptibilities: "The military defeat of the German people is not an undeserved catastrophe, but rather a deserved punishment by eternal retribution." He then proceeds to present the military collapse as but a "consequence of moral poisoning, visible to all, the consequence of a decrease in the instinct of self-preservation . . . which had already begun to undermine the foundations of the people and the Reich many years before." This moral decay derived from "a sin against the blood and the degradation of the race," so its innerness was an outerness after all: the Jew, who thereupon gets saddled with a vast amalgamation of evils, among them being capitalism, democracy, pacifism, journalism, poor housing, modernism, big cities, loss of religion, half measures, ill health, and weakness of the monarch.

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Hitler had here another important psychological ingredient to play upon. If a State is in economic collapse (and his theories, tentatively taking shape in the pre-war Vienna, were but developed with greater efficiency in post-war Munich), you cannot possibly derive dignity from economic stability. Dignity must come first—and if you possess it, and implement it, from it may follow its economic counterpart. There is much justice to this line of reasoning, so far as it goes. A people in collapse, suffering under economic frustration and the defeat of nationalistic aspirations, with the very midrib of their integrative efforts (the army) in a state of dispersion, have little other than some "spiritual" basis to which they could refer their nationalistic dignity. Hence, the categorical dignity of superior race was a perfect recipe for the situation. It was "spiritual" in so far as it was "above" crude economic "interests," but it was "materialized" at the psychologically "right" spot in that "the enemy" was something you could *see*.

Furthermore, you had the desire for unity, such as a discussion of class conflict, on the basis of conflicting interests, could not satisfy. The yearning for unity is so great that people are always willing to meet you halfway if you will give it to them by fiat, by flat statement, regardless of the facts. Hence, Hitler consistently refused to consider internal political conflict on the basis of conflicting inter-

ests. Here again, he could draw upon a religious pattern, by insisting upon a *personal* statement of the relation between classes, the relation between leaders and followers, each group in its way fulfilling the same commonalty of interests, as the soldiers and captains of an army share a common interest in victory. People so dislike the idea of internal division that, where there is a real internal division, their dislike can easily be turned against the man or group who would so much as *name* it, let alone proposing to act upon it. Their natural and justified resentment against internal division itself, is turned against the diagnostician who states it as a *fact*. This diagnostician, it is felt, is the *cause* of the disunity he named.

Cutting in from another angle, therefore, we note how two sets of equations were built up, with Hitler combining or coalescing *ideas* the way a poet combines or coalesces *images*. On the one side, were the ideas, or images, of disunity, centering in the parliamentary wrangle of the Habsburg "State of Nationalities." This was offered as the antithesis of German nationality, which was presented in the curative imagery of unity, focused upon the glories of the Prussian Reich, with its mecca now moved to "folkish" Vienna. For though Hitler at first attacked the many "folkish" movements, with their hankerings after a kind of Wagnerian mythology of Germanic origins, he subsequently took "folkish" as a basic word by which to conjure. It was, after all, another noneconomic basis of reference. At first we find him objecting to "those who drift about with the word 'folkish' on their caps," and asserting that "such a Babel of opinions cannot serve as the basis of a political fighting movement." But later he seems to have realized, as he well should, that its vagueness was a major point in its favor. So it was incorporated in the grand coalition of his ideational imagery, or imagistic ideation; and Chapter XI ends with the vision of "a State which represents not a mechanism of economic considerations and interests, alien to the people, but a folkish organism."

So, as against the disunity equations, already listed briefly in our discussion of his attacks upon the parliamentary, we get a contrary purifying set; the wrangle of the parliamentary is to be stilled by the giving of *one* voice to the whole people, this to be the "inner voice" of Hitler, made uniform throughout the German boundaries, as leader and people were completely identified with each other. In sum: Hitler's inner voice, equals leader-people identification, equals unity, equals Reich, equals the mecca of Munich, equals plow, equals sword, equals work, equals war, equals army as midrib,

equals responsibility (the personal responsibility of the absolute ruler), equals sacrifice, equals the theory of "German democracy" (the free popular choice of the leader, who then accepts the responsibility, and demands absolute obedience in exchange for his sacrifice), equals love (with the masses as feminine), equals idealism, equals obedience to nature, equals race, nation.[3]

And, of course, the two keystones of these opposite equations were Aryan "heroism" and "sacrifice" vs. Jewish "cunning" and "arrogance." Here again we get an astounding caricature of religious thought. For Hitler presents the concept of "Aryan" superiority, of all ways, in terms of "Aryan humility." This "humility" is extracted by a very delicate process that requires, I am afraid, considerable "good will" on the part of the reader who would follow it:

The Church, we may recall, had proclaimed an integral relationship between Divine Law and Natural Law. Natural Law was the expression of the Will of God. Thus, in the middle age, it was a result of natural law, working through tradition, that some people were serfs and other people nobles. And every good member of the Church was "obedient" to this law. Everybody resigned himself to it. Hence, the serf resigned himself to his poverty, and the noble resigned himself to his riches. The monarch resigned himself to his position as representative of the people. And at times the Churchmen resigned themselves to the need of trying to represent the people instead. And the pattern was made symmetrical by the consideration that each traditional "right" had its corresponding "obligations." Similarly, the Aryan doctrine is a doctrine of resigna-

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[3]One could carry out the equations further, on both the disunity and unity side. In the aesthetic field, for instance, we have expressionism on the thumbs-down side, as against aesthetic hygiene on the thumbs-up side. This again is a particularly ironic moment in Hitler's strategy. For the expressionist movement was unquestionably a symptom of unhealthiness. It reflected the increasing alienation that went with the movement towards world war and the disorganization after the world war. It was "lost," vague in identity, a drastically accurate reflection of the response to material confusion, a pathetic attempt by sincere artists to make their wretchedness bearable at least to the extent that comes of giving it expression. And it attained its height during the period of wild inflation, when the capitalist world, which bases its morality of work and savings upon the soundness of its money structure, had this last prop of stability removed. The anguish, in short, reflected precisely the kind of disruption that made people *ripe* for a Hitler. It was the antecedent in a phrase of which Hitlerism was the consequent. But by thundering against this *symptom* he could gain persuasiveness, though attacking the very *foreshadowings of himself.*

tion, hence of humility. It is in accordance with the laws of nature that the "Aryan blood" is superior to all other bloods. Also, the "law of the survival of the fittest" is God's law, working through natural law. Hence, if the Aryan blood has been vested with the awful responsibility of its inborn superiority, the bearers of this "culture-creating" blood must resign themselves to struggle in behalf of its triumph. Otherwise, the laws of God have been disobeyed, with human decadence as a result. We must fight, he says, in order to "deserve to be alive." The Aryan "obeys" nature. It is only "Jewish arrogance" that thinks of "conquering" nature by democratic ideals of equality.

This picture has some nice distinctions worth following. The major virtue of the Aryan race was its instinct for self-preservation (in obedience to natural law). But the major vice of the Jew was his instinct for self-preservation; for, if he did not have this instinct to a maximum degree, he would not be the "perfect" enemy—that is, he wouldn't be strong enough to account for the ubiquitousness and omnipotence of his conspiracy in destroying the world to become its master.

How, then, are we to distinguish between the benign instinct of self-preservation at the roots of Aryanism, and the malign instinct of self-preservation at the roots of Semitism? We shall distinguish thus: The Aryan self-preservation is based upon *sacrifice,* the sacrifice of the individual to the group, hence, militarism, army discipline, and one big company union. But Jewish self-preservation is based upon individualism, which attains its cunning ends by the exploitation of peace. How, then, can such arrant individualists concoct the worldwide plot? By the help of their "herd instinct." By their sheer "herd instinct" individualists can band together for a common end. They have no real solidarity, but unite opportunistically to seduce the Aryan. Still, that brings up another technical problem. For we have been hearing much about the importance of the *person.* We have been told how, by the "law of the survival of the fittest," there is a sifting of people on the basis of their individual capacities. We even have a special chapter of pure Aryanism: "The Strong Man is Mightiest Alone." Hence, another distinction is necessary: The Jew represents individualism; the Aryan represents "super-individualism."

I had thought, when coming upon the "Strong Man is Mightiest Alone" chapter, that I was going to find Hitler at his weakest. Instead, I found him at his strongest. (I am not referring to *quality,* but to *demagogic effectiveness.*) For the chapter is not at all, as you might infer from the title, done in a "rise of Adolph Hitler"

manner. Instead, it deals with the Nazis' gradual absorption of the many disrelated "folkish" groups. And it is managed throughout by means of a spontaneous identification between leader and people. Hence, the Strong Man's "aloneness" is presented as a *public* attribute, in terms of tactics for the struggle against the *Party's* dismemberment under the pressure of rival saviors. There is no explicit talk of Hitler at all. And it is simply *taken for granted* that *his* leadership is the norm, and all other leaderships the abnorm. There is no "philosophy of the superman," in Nietzschean cast. Instead, Hitler's blandishments so integrate leader and people, commingling them so inextricably, that the politician does not even present himself as candidate. Somehow, the battle is over already, the decision has been made. "German democracy" has chosen. And the deployments of politics are, you might say, the chartings of Hitler's private mind translated into the vocabulary of nationalistic events. He says *what he thought* in terms of *what parties did.*

Here, I think, we see the distinguishing quality of Hitler's method as an instrument of persuasion, with reference to the question whether Hitler is sincere or deliberate, whether his vision of the omnipotent conspirator has the drastic honesty of paranoia or the sheer shrewdness of a demagogue trained in *Realpolitik* of the Machiavellian sort.[4] Must we choose? Or may we not, rather, replace the "either—or" with a "both—and"? Have we not by now offered grounds enough for our contention that Hitler's sinister powers of persuasion derive from the fact that he spontaneously evolved his "cure-all" in response to inner necessities?

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[4]I should not want to use the word "Machiavellian," however, without offering a kind of apology to Machiavelli. It seems to me that Machiavelli's *Prince* has more to be said in extenuation than is usually said of it. Machiavelli's strategy, as I see it, was something like this: He accepted the values of the Renaissance rule as a *fact*. That is: whether you like these values or not, they were there and operating, and it was useless to try persuading the ambitious ruler to adopt other values, such as those of the Church. These men believed in the cult of material power, and they had the power to implement their beliefs. With so much as "the given," could anything in the way of benefits for the people be salvaged? Machiavelli evolved a typical "Machiavellian" argument in favor of popular benefits, on the basis of the prince's own scheme of values. That is: the ruler, to attain the maximum strength, requires the backing of the populace. That this backing be as effective as possible, the populace should be made as strong as possible. And that the populace be as strong as possible, they should be well treated. Their gratitude would further repay itself in the form of increased loyalty.

It was Machiavelli's hope that, for this roundabout project, he would be rewarded with a well-paying office in the prince's administrative bureaucracy.

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So much, then, was "spontaneous." It was further channelized into the anti-Semitic pattern by the incentives he derived from the Catholic Christian-Social Party in Vienna itself. Add, now, the step into *criticism*. Not criticism in the "parliamentary" sense of doubt, of hearkening to the opposition and attempting to mature a policy in the light of counter-policies; but the "unified" kind of criticism that simply seeks for conscious ways of making one's position more "efficient," more thoroughly itself. This is the kind of criticism at which Hitler was an adept. As a result, he could *spontaneously* turn to a scapegoat mechanism, and he could, by conscious planning, perfect the symmetry of the solution towards which he had spontaneously turned.

This is the meaning of Hitler's diatribes against "objectivity." "Objectivity" is interference-criticism. What Hitler wanted was the kind of criticism that would be a pure and simple coefficient of power, enabling him to go most effectively in the direction he had chosen. And the "inner voice" of which he speaks would henceforth dictate to him the greatest amount of realism, as regards the tactics of efficiency. For instance, having decided that the masses required certainty, and simple certainty, quite as he did himself, he later worked out a 25-point program as the platform of his National Socialist German Workers Party. And he resolutely refused to change one single item in this program, even for purposes of "improvement." He felt that the *fixity* of the platform was more important for propagandistic purposes than any revision of his slogans could be, even though the revisions in themselves had much to be said in their favor. The astounding thing is that, although such an attitude gave good cause to doubt the Hitlerite promises, he could explicitly explain his tactics in his book and still employ them without loss of effectiveness.[5]

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[5]On this point Hitler reasons as follows: "Here, too, one can learn from the Catholic Church. Although its structure of doctrines in many instances collides, quite unnecessarily, with exact science and research, yet it is unwilling to sacrifice even one little syllable of its dogmas. It has rightly recognized that its resistibility does not lie in a more or less great adjustment to the scientific results of the moment, which in reality are always changing, but rather in a strict adherence to dogmas, once laid down, which alone give the entire structure the character of creed. Today, therefore, the Catholic Church stands firmer than ever. One can prophesy that in the same measure in which the appearances flee, the Church itself, as the resting pole in the flight of appearances, will gain more and more blind adherence."

Hitler also tells of his technique in speaking, once the Nazi party had become effectively organized, and had its army of guards, or bouncers, to maltreat hecklers and throw them from the hall. He would, he recounts, fill his speech with *provocative* remarks, whereat his bouncers would promptly swoop down in flying formation, with swinging fists, upon anyone whom these provocative remarks provoked to answer. The efficiency of Hitlerism is the efficiency of the one voice, implemented throughout a total organization. The trinity of government which he finally offers is: *popularity* of the leader, *force* to back the popularity, and popularity and force maintained together long enough to become backed by a *tradition.* Is such thinking spontaneous or deliberate—or is it not rather both?[6]

Freud has given us a succinct paragraph that bears upon the spontaneous aspect of Hitler's persecution mania. (A persecution mania, I should add, different from the pure product in that it was constructed of *public* materials; all the ingredients Hitler stirred into his brew were already rife, with spokesmen and bands of followers, before Hitler "took them over." Both the pre-war and post-war periods were dotted with saviors, of nationalistic and "folkish" cast. This proliferation was analogous to the swarm of barter schemes and currency-tinkering that burst loose upon the United States after the crash of 1929. Also, the commercial availability of Hitler's politics was, in a low sense of the term, a *public* qualification, removing it from the realm of "pure" paranoia, where the sufferer develops a wholly *private* structure of interpretations.)

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[6]Hitler also paid great attention to the conditions under which political oratory is most effective. He sums up thus:

"All these cases involve encroachments upon man's freedom of will. This applies, of course, most of all to meetings to which people with a contrary orientation of will are coming, and who now have to be won for new intentions. It seems that in the morning and even during the day men's will power revolts with highest energy against an attempt at being forced under another's will and another's opinion. In the evening, however, they succumb more easily to the dominating force of a stronger will. For truly every such meeting presents a wrestling match between two opposed forces. The superior oratorical talent of a domineering apostolic nature will now succeed more easily in winning for the new will people who themselves have in turn experienced a weakening of their force of resistance in the most natural way, than people who still have full command of the energies of their minds and their will power.

"The same purpose serves also the artificially created and yet mysterious dusk of the Catholic churches, the burning candles, incense, censers, etc."

I cite from *Totem and Taboo:*

Another trait in the attitude of primitive races towards their rulers recalls a mechanism which is universally present in mental disturbances, and is openly revealed in the so-called delusions of persecution. Here the importance of a particular person is extraordinarily heightened and his omnipotence is raised to the improbable in order to make it easier to attribute to him responsibility for everything painful which happens to the patient. Savages really do not act differently towards their rulers when they ascribe to them power over rain and shine, wind and weather, and then dethrone them or kill them because nature has disappointed their expectation of a good hunt or a ripe harvest. The prototype which the paranoiac reconstructs in his persecution mania is found in the relation of the child to its father. Such omnipotence is regularly attributed to the father in the imagination of the son, and distrust of the father has been shown to be intimately connected with the heightened esteem for him. When a paranoiac names a person of his acquaintance as his "persecutor," he thereby elevates him to the paternal succession and brings him under conditions which enable him to make him responsible for all the misfortune which he experiences.

I have already proposed my modifications of this account when discussing the symbolic change of lineage connected with Hitler's project of a "new way of life." Hitler is symbolically changing from the "spiritual ancestry" of the Hebrew prophets to the "superior" ancestry of "Aryanism," and has given his story a kind of bastardized modernization, along the lines of naturalistic, materialistic "science," by his fiction of the special "blood-stream." He is voting himself a new identity (something contrary to the wrangles of the Habsburg Babylon, a soothing national unity); whereupon the vessels of the old identity become a "bad" father, i. e., the persecutor. It is not hard to see how, as his enmity becomes implemented by the backing of an organization, the rôle of "persecutor" is transformed into the rôle of persecuted, as he sets out with his like-minded band to "destroy the destroyer."

Were Hitler simply a poet, he might have written a work with an anti-Semitic turn, and let it go at that. But Hitler, who began as a student of painting, and later shifted to architecture, himself treats his political activities as an extension of his artistic ambitions. He remained, in his own eyes, an "architect," building a "folkish" State that was to match, in political materials, the "folkish" architecture of Munich.

We might consider the matter this way (still trying, that is, to make precise the relationship between the drastically sincere and

the deliberately scheming): Do we not know of many authors who seem, as they turn from the rôle of citizen to the rôle of spokesman, to leave one room and enter another? Or who has not, on occasion, talked with a man in private conversation, and then been almost startled at the transformation this man undergoes when addressing a public audience? And I know persons today, who shift between the writing of items in the class of academic, philosophic speculation to items of political pamphleteering, and whose entire style and method changes with this change of rôle. In their academic manner, they are cautious, painstaking, eager to present all significant aspects of the case they are considering; but when they turn to political pamphleteering, they hammer forth with vituperation, they systematically misrepresent the position of their opponent, they go into a kind of political trance, in which, during its throes, they throb like a locomotive; and behold, a moment later, the mediumistic state is abandoned, and they are the most moderate of men.

Now, one will find few pages in Hitler that one could call "moderate." But there are many pages in which he gauges resistances and opportunities with the "rationality" of a skilled advertising man planning a new sales campaign. Politics, he says, must be sold like soap—and soap is not sold in a trance. But he did have the experience of his trance, in the "exaltation" of his anti-Semitism. And later, as he became a successful orator (he insists that revolutions are made solely by the power of the spoken word), he had this "poetic" rôle to draw upon, plus the great relief it provided as a way of slipping from the burden of logical analysis into the pure "spirituality" of vituperative prophecy. What more natural, therefore, than that a man so insistent upon unification would integrate this mood with less ecstatic moments, particularly when he had found the followers and the backers that put a price, both spiritual and material, upon such unification?

Once this happy "unity" is under way, one has a "logic" for the development of a method. One knows when to "spiritualize" a material issue, and when to "materialize" a spiritual one. Thus, when it is a matter of materialistic interests that cause a conflict between employer and employee, Hitler here disdainfully shifts to a high moral plane. He is "above" such low concerns. Everything becomes a matter of "sacrifices" and "personality." It becomes crass to treat employers and employees as different *classes* with a corresponding difference in the classification of their interests. Instead, relations

between employer and employee must be on the "personal" basis of leader and follower, and "whatever may have a divisive effect in national life should be given a unifying effect through the army." When talking of national rivalries, however, he makes a very shrewd materialistic gauging of Britain and France with relation to Germany. France, he says, desires the "Balkanization of Germany" (i. e., its breakup into separationist movements—the "disunity" theme again) in order to maintain commercial hegemony on the continent. But Britain desires the "Balkanization of *Europe,*" hence would favor a fairly strong and unified Germany, to use as a counter-weight against French hegemony. *German* nationality, however, is unified by the *spiritual* quality of Aryanism (that would produce the national organization via the Party) while this in turn is *materialized* in the myth of the blood-stream.

What are we to learn from Hitler's book? For one thing, I believe that he has shown, to a very disturbing degree, the power of endless repetition. Every circular advertising a Nazi meeting had, at the bottom, two slogans: "Jews not admitted" and "War victims free." And the substance of Nazi propaganda was built about these two "complementary" themes. He describes the power of spectacle; insists that mass meetings are the fundamental way of giving the individual the sense of being protectively surrounded by a movement, the sense of "community." He also drops one wise hint that I wish the American authorities would take in treating Nazi gatherings. He says that the presence of a special Nazi guard, in Nazi uniforms, was of great importance in building up, among the followers, a tendency to place the center of authority in the Nazi party. I believe that we should take him at his word here, but use the advice in reverse, by insisting that, where Nazi meetings are to be permitted, they be policed by the authorities alone, and that uniformed Nazi guards to enforce the law be prohibited.

And is it possible that an equally important feature of appeal was not so much in the repetitiousness per se, but in the fact that, by means of it, Hitler provided a "world view" for people who had previously seen the world but piecemeal? Did not much of his lure derive, once more, from the *bad* filling of a *good* need? Are not those who insist upon a purely *planless* working of the market asking people to accept far too slovenly a scheme of human purpose, a slovenly scheme that can be accepted so long as it operates with a fair degree of satisfaction, but becomes abhorrent to the victims of its disarray? Are they not then psychologically ready for a rationale,

any rationale, if it but offer them some specious "universal" explanation? Hence, I doubt whether the appeal was in the sloganizing element alone (particularly as even slogans can only be hammered home, in speech after speech, and two or three hours at a stretch, by endless variations on the themes). And Hitler himself somewhat justifies my interpretation by laying so much stress upon the *half-measures* of the middle-class politicians, and the contrasting *certainty* of his own methods. He was not offering people a *rival* world view; rather, he was offering a world view to people who had no other to pit against it.

As for the basic Nazi trick: the "curative" unification by a fictitious devil-function, gradually made convincing by the sloganizing repetitiousness of standard advertising technique—the opposition must be as unwearying in the attack upon it. It may well be that people, in their human frailty, require an enemy as well as a goal. Very well: Hitlerism itself has provided us with such an enemy—and the clear example of its operation is guaranty that we have, in him and all he stands for, no purely fictitious "devil-function" made to look like a world menace by rhetorical blandishments, but a reality whose ominousness is clarified by the record of its conduct to date. In selecting his brand of doctrine as our "scapegoat," and in tracking down its equivalents in America, we shall be at the very center of accuracy. The Nazis themselves have made the task of clarification easier. Add to them Japan and Italy, and you have *case histories* of fascism for those who might find it more difficult to approach an understanding of its imperialistic drives by a vigorously economic explanation.

But above all, I believe, we must make it apparent that Hitler appeals by relying upon a bastardization of fundamentally religious patterns of thought. In this, if properly presented, there is no slight to religion. There is nothing in religion proper that requires a fascist state. There is much in religion, when misused, that does lead to a fascist state. There is a Latin proverb, *Corruptio optimi pessima,* "the corruption of the best is the worst." And it is the corruptors of religion who are a major menace to the world today, in giving the profound patterns of religious thought a crude and sinister distortion.

Our job, then, our anti-Hitler Battle, is to find all available ways of making the Hitlerite distortions of religion apparent, in order that politicians of his kind in America be unable to perform a similar swindle. The desire for unity is genuine and admirable. The desire

for national unity, in the present state of the world, is genuine and admirable. But this unity, if attained on a deceptive basis, by emotional trickeries that shift our criticism from the accurate locus of our trouble, is no unity at all. For, even if we are among those who happen to be "Aryans," we solve no problems even for ourselves by such solutions, since the factors pressing towards calamity remain. Thus, in Germany, after all the upheaval, we see nothing beyond a drive for ever more and more upheaval, precisely because the "new way of life" was no new way, but the dismally oldest way of sheer deception—hence, after all the "change," the factors driving towards unrest are left intact, and even strengthened. True, the Germans had the resentment of a lost war to increase their susceptibility to Hitler's rhetoric. But in a wider sense, it has repeatedly been observed, the whole world lost the War—and the accumulating ills of the capitalist order were but accelerated in their movements towards confusion. Hence, here too there are the resentments that go with frustration of men's ability to work and earn. At that point a certain kind of industrial or financial monopolist may, annoyed by the contrary voices of our parliament, wish for the momentary peace of one voice, amplified by social organizations, with all the others not merely quieted, but given the quietus. So he might, under Nazi promptings, be tempted to back a group of gangsters who, on becoming the political rulers of the state, would protect him against the necessary demands of the workers. His gangsters, then, would be his insurance against his workers. But who would be his insurance against his gangsters?

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. People are often surprised to know that Burke published this work two years before the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese and three years before it became widely known that Hitler had begun implementing his "Final Solution" (as he called it) that resulted in the death of millions of Jewish people in concentration camps. What do you find prophetic about Burke's essay? What lesson(s) can we learn from his critical approach to the subject?

2. Because of the strong feelings that accompany racially charged events like the Holocaust, it can be very difficult to write critically about the motives and rhetorical methods of

people like Hitler without offending people. What signs in Burke's essay do you see that he is aware of this critical dilemma? How does he balance a tone of outrage with critical inquiry?

3. In 1938, Hitler was named *TIME's* "Man of the Year" for becoming "the greatest threatening force that the democratic, freedom-loving world faces today" (http://www.time.com/time/special/moy/1938.html). *TIME's* choice was not meant to be a mark of positive distinction, but a sign of who had had the most influence on world events. In hindsight, it is difficult to imagine how Hitler managed to persuade the leaders of Great Britain, France, and Italy to redraw the map of Europe in September, 1938. Or how he had turned Austria and Czechoslovakia to his bidding absolutely. Clearly, people had not come to suspect his intentions as much as they should have. Why is that?

4. Ethos, which is the writer's or speaker's presentation of character in discourse, is one of three forms of appeal described by Aristotle in his treatise, *On Rhetoric.* In that work, he notes that while *logos* (the facts of the case and the logic that generates and presents them) should be most persuasive, *ethos* can dominate the audience's attention so thoroughly that judgment (of motives or of the case itself) can be clouded. What elements of Hitler's ethos, or presentation of character or identity, does Burke isolate for study? In what ways might persecution mania function as a form of ethos?

The Pentadic Ratios: Scene-Agent

As we discussed in the beginning of this chapter, a writer's situation is the transformation of personal and public experience into their symbolic equivalents or forms. As a system of symbols, the writer's situation is in turn open to interpretation and, through art, further transformation. Poetry, for example, can be seen as the writer's attempt to make the world over in his or her own image. When we discuss the influence of a writer's scene on the act of making meaning—the scene-act ratio—we focus on the ways that circumstances function as motives. As with each of the other terms of the pentad, how we define the scene is inextricably connected to our definition of each of the other terms in the matrix.

The Scene-Agent Ratio: The Writer as Propagandist

The scene-agent ratio asks, "How did the scene influence the agent?" As it always is, the motivational cluster that accompanies the act can be structured in many different ways, depending on how we name the act. We can also begin by naming the scene as well, then watch how all the other elements of the pentad fall into place. In this section, we will name the scene in several different ways, then raise questions about each of the other corresponding elements of the pentad, with particular attention to the scene-agent ratio.

Burke focuses on the conduct of and responses to Hitler's rhetorical power, as well as on the psychological and social conditions that drove him to seek it. The ultimate purpose is to help us guard against the kind of fascistic thinking and rhetoric that Hitler used to gather and motivate his followers: his rejection of the parliamentary and, thus, alternative perspectives; his use of the scapegoat mechanism, which causes him to offer a noneconomic solution to an economic problem; his technique of unifying the masses by focusing attention on place (Munich) as the ordering principle of nationalistic fervor; his representation of himself as one of the persecuted masses with which his followers could identify; and so on. In offering Hitler's scene as a "lesson," Burke also invokes the scene in the United States, which to him and many others during the thirties showed signs of containing the same ingredients that fueled Hitler's rise to power. In considering scene, we can ask about Hitler's situation, but we can also ask about Burke's and, thus, our own. (In his book *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis* [2001], Volume II of his brilliant biography, Ian Kershaw reiterates a position Burke laid out years earlier: What made Hitler possible?)

So, then, we can apply the pentad to Hitler's acts as they are represented in these two works, or we can ask questions about Burke's act as a writer concerned with the dangers of glamorizing cultural heroes (and anti-heroes). For the sake of illustration, we focus first on Burke as a writer:

Pentad 1—"The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'"

Scene: The late 1930s in the United States, at a time when the conflict in Europe was escalating but before the United States had made any commitment to support its European allies

Agent:	Kenneth Burke
Act:	Writing an essay about Hitler as a skilled rhetorician
Agency:	An article in *The Southern Review*
Purpose:	To warn people so that they can guard against fascistic rhetoric in the United States

This representation of the pentad raises many questions, but when we focus on the scene-agent ratio, we can ask how Burke's scene influenced him to write about Hitler at that time. Generally speaking, the United States had been struggling to break free of the economic and social disaster caused by the Great Depression of 1929 and its ensuing problems. New Deal politicians, led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, implemented widespread social and economic reforms designed to cure these problems and to prevent them from happening again. These economic and social problems were not entirely unlike those faced by Europe (and Germany) following World War I. There was a fear that Hitler's means of solving Germany's economic problems using a scapegoat would act as a model in the United States. Many people knew that there were deep racial tensions bubbling under the surface of American culture, tensions made explicit in the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and by the "Eugenics" movement, which began with the American Eugenics Society, founded in 1926. Eugenicists argued that markers like wealth and social status were consequences of superior breeding, with their recommendation being that people of "lesser stock"—defined by Eugenicists as nonwhite races, the mentally ill, and homosexuals—should be prohibited from immigrating to the United States and that those already here should be sterilized. Many states adopted sterilization laws as a consequence of this thinking, making the danger very real. In times of social crises, those in power want people to blame, and too often, it is the powerless themselves who bear the brunt of the attention.

Burke himself had been interested in problems of communication for over twenty years, with his work in the 1930s taking a decided socialist strain. He actually delivered "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" as a speech to the Third American Writers' Congress earlier in 1939. That socialist group consisted of a large number of prominent American writers (such as John Dos Passos, Langston Hughes, Dwight MacDonald, and James T. Farrell), many of whom had become members of

the Communist party and believed that capitalism had led to severe social problems that it was unable to address. Burke was clearly a socially engaged critic who took the Nazi threat so seriously that he saw its potential for finding adherents at home. He also knew that in the hands of a skilled craftsman like Hitler, rhetoric was an extremely powerful force that people were generally not very good at recognizing. And so in his essay, he presents himself as a critic with an educational and social mission.

Several years earlier, Burke had made an explicit appeal to his peers at the First American Writers' Congress, which was held in New York City in 1935. His speech, "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," has since become one of his most famous, in part because his plea that we conceive of criticism as a form of propaganda, as public mythologizing, drew strong reactions. Most were genuinely enthusiastic about this Writers' Congress as a marshaling of forces against, as it was often described, fascist and capitalist tyranny. Farrell, who fictionalized this event in his novel, *Yet Other Waters*, describes the sentiment through his character Mel Morris: "Listen, we're out of the bush-league stage. From tonight on, we're big-time stuff, strictly big-time league in American culture. From here on, we're moving in to take over American culture" (102). Despite communism's totalitarian features and its curtailment of individual liberties, many writers in America felt that the Soviet "experiment" had succeeded in liberating minorities, establishing a workers' government, and leading the world in the struggle against international fascism (Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 155). Socialist writers in the early 1930s joined John Reed Clubs in great numbers. These organizations aimed to unify the Marxist agenda. By 1935, many of these writers were ready to socialize the rest of the masses.

In his speech on the second day of the Congress, Burke argued basically that the socialist movement in America should substitute the symbol "the people" for "the worker." He also suggested that they ought to think of Communism as a "myth" and of its dissemination in America as propagandistic. Needless to say, Burke suffered the public wrath of, among others, Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman, perhaps the two most influential Marxists on the American scene. As Burke recalls it, "When the time came for criticism—O my god! It was a slaughter!" (Woodcock, "An Interview with Kenneth Burke").

In arguing that the socialist movement should abandon the symbol of the worker, Burke did not mean that "a proletarian emphasis should

be dropped from revolutionary books" (269). The problem, from a practical standpoint, was that "one cannot extend the doctrine of revolutionary thought among the lower middle class without using middle-class values" (269), and the symbol of the worker enlists "sympathies" but not "ambitions." Burke argues that our "myths," which he thinks of as literature and public discourse, should be thought of as rhetorical devices as real as a hammer, or even a gun:

> "Myths" may be wrong, or they may be used to bad ends—but they cannot be dispensed with. In the last analysis, they are our basic psychological tools for working together. A hammer is a carpenter's tool; a wrench is a mechanic's tool; and a "myth" is the social tool for welding the sense of interrelationship by which the carpenter and the mechanic, though differently occupied, can work together for common social ends. (267)

Myth, then, is the social tool for welding the sense of interrelationship that allows people to work together for common social ends, the unifying principle that allows for identification. For Burke, the aim of rhetoric is to foster this identification. A writer, then, spins myths to induce cooperation, remembering of course that such myths need not be objectively true (a purely scholastic issue), their truth instead deriving from their reality and power. "Myths are not 'illusions,'" says Burke, "since they perform a very real and necessary social function in the organizing of the mind" (268).

In "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" Burke extends his personal stake in the belief that a symbolic act is every bit as real as a bomb or a murder. While its effects may not be as immediate in terms of destructiveness, a symbolic act still induces action or a predisposition to act. Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, to the degree that it had rallied the German people, was a clear forecast of intention and action. It was Burke's belief that similar intentions had been expressed in perhaps more subtle ways in the United States, so people had better notice. Popular interpretations of Hitler's motives had been conditioned by an automatic response to the vulgarity and irrational nature of a work like *Mein Kampf*, even though that work had already worked real magic elsewhere.

Burke may not have been able to reach the audience he most needed to reach. *The Southern Review* was an academic journal with a fairly large circulation, but it was not *Harper's*, which had rejected his

essay because the editors believed a previously published article had treated the subject sufficiently (Pauley, 10). When we consider the scene-agent ratio as it describes Burke's motives, then, we can ask more questions about the role of the cultural or literary critic (the subject of Frank Lentricchia's 1985 book, *Criticism and Social Change*), the possibilities and means of shaping public attitudes with criticism, and the value of, as Burke put it in *Permanence and Change*, "going beyond the criticism of experience to a criticism of criticism" (6).

It is possible also to focus the scene-agent ratio on Hitler himself, defining one of his many acts, for example, as the silencing of alternative perspectives to create a unity built on division. As we have already seen, education for Hitler was a matter of reification, of making steadfast what he already knew. It was an act of conviction and principle, with the true learner someone who would not fall prey to doubt or alternative points of view. He should be someone who would accumulate ammunition for supporting his position. An education should be "limited to general and important points of view, which, if necessary, should be impressed on the minds and feelings of the people by constant repetition" (*Mein Kampf* 42). Hitler also believed that family life helped undo the discipline and respect for authority that students should have learned in school. Instead of "placing the youngsters on their knee and spanking some sense into them, they [parents] simply yell at them" (43). He believed under the influence of the skeptical, "everything is abused, everything is pulled down in the nastiest manner into the filth of a depraved mentality" (43).

Pentad 2—Hitler

Scene: Post–World War I Germany at a time when national pride was low and poverty rampant

Agent: Adolf Hitler

Act: The rejection of pluralism

Agency: Propaganda, repetition, force

Purpose: To build "pride in the fatherland" by silencing the voices that would "poison the masses by the bucketful" (44)

Hitler's first official position with the Worker's party was as a propagandist. Propaganda is a form of rhetoric the aim of which is to spread or "propagate" ideas that support or further one's own cause. Its focus is

usually not on new ideas, but on ones that the propagandist believes need to be reasserted in order to ensure stability and to withstand the challenge of competing ideas. One measure of Hitler's success (or failure, depending upon how you want to look at it) was the fact that he had been sent to prison for his role as propagandist in the Worker's party, which opposed the ruling Weimar regime. With his opportunity to argue their case publicly lost, his attention turned to writing his own life story. In this context, we see *Mein Kampf* as an extension of his role as a propagandist for the self and the lessons his "years of study and suffering" had taught him. He argues his own cause, first privately, then publicly. He saw two ways of improving his own situation, and by extension, the larger social situation: "A deep feeling of social responsibility towards the establishment of better foundations for our development, combined with the ruthless resolution to destroy the incurable social tumors" (39). He took upon himself the responsibility for naming those "better foundations" and for destroying the "tumors" that would undermine them. In the course of *Mein Kampf*, we learn that the tumors he has in mind are not simply competing ideas, but a race of people.

Chapter 5 continues the examination of Hitler as an agent influenced by a scene in the context of Don DeLillo's ironic novel *White Noise*, which tells the story of an imaginary scholar of "Hitler Studies" who succumbs to the impulse in popular culture to glamorize its famous, regardless of how infamous they might deserve to be. In the context of writing about the bewildering effects of consumer culture, DeLillo also suggests how Hitler's early family life ultimately motivated his expression of purpose.

Summary

Dramatism focuses our attention on the writer's situation for the purposes of analyzing a text as a symbolic act. The writer gauges the unarranged aspects of his or her situation and formulates a strategic and stylized response to it. A sense of piety—what goes with what—guides this process of making meaning. Devices like perspective by incongruity and exorcism by misnomer challenge pious ways of naming in the interest of forming alternative perspectives.

The concept of **form** helps us explain how and why both writers and readers shape their situation and thus use literature as "equipment

for living." Form is an appeal involving the arousal and fulfillment of desires. Syllogistic progression has the form of a step-by-step argument. Qualitative progression consists of a sequence of contrastive emotional qualities. Repetitive form establishes a pattern that readers come to expect. Conventional form appeals because of its familiarity and is extrinsic to the work itself. Form has power because it engages the audience in the act of interpreting and assigning meaning. In his analysis of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Burke makes his readers aware of its rhetorical devices, including form, so that they can be wary of similar appeals made in the United States during the 1930s, a time when fascistic ways of thought presented real danger.

▶ **Research and Writing Activities**

1. One of the rhetorical devices that Burke describes is Hitler's use of the scapegoat mechanism. Burke calls it an error of interpretation because, in Hitler's case, he offers a noneconomic interpretation of economic ills. Hitler attributed the serious economic problems in Europe (and Austria especially) to the influence of a race of people, the Jews, whom he made international scapegoats for widespread poverty. Anti-Semitism had unfortunately been a common form of racism in Europe and even in the United States (to a lesser degree) for a long time, but Hitler channeled it for his even more sinister purposes.

   A scapegoat is a person or group of people who bears the blame for others. In tragic drama, such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the hero often acts as a symbolic scapegoat for the audience, who can suffer with the hero and yet not really experience any consequences. (The term *tragedy* comes from the Greek words for "goat song.") Psychologically speaking, the scapegoat mechanism can be an effective rhetorical device because it is a form of **catharsis,** the act of relieving or purging anxiety, unfulfilled desire, fear, pity, or other unsettling emotions. Initially, the scapegoat is identified (named) and identified *with,* but then we experience a rupture, a division, whereby the scapegoat is left bearing the blame.

   Describe a modern-day example of the scapegoat mechanism exemplified as an effective, albeit erroneous, appeal. (Think, for instance, about stereotypical "villains" in popular film.) As Burke notes,

the mechanism can also be turned inward as a kind of persecution mania. Would you consider someone like Eminem a scapegoat in this sense? Indiana University basketball coach Bobby Knight? Former President Bill Clinton? One of his accusers, Linda Tripp or Paula Jones?

2. Burke spent his early years as a critic writing music reviews for magazines like *The Dial* and *The Nation*. His theories of form emerge from that experience. Use the four types of form—syllogistic, qualitative, repetitive, and conventional—to analyze a song to illustrate how its form involves the "the arousal and fulfillment of desire."

3. Burke described gargoyles as an illustration of perspective by incongruity. The word *gargoyle* comes from the French word for "gargle." Gargoyles are grotesque figures that merge two distinct forms, such as human and animal, mind and body, god and devil, lion and bird. In medieval times especially, they were used on buildings to draw water away from them (the water would drain out the mouth, hence the root in "gargle"), but they were also thought to ward off evil spirits. Investigate the history and meaning of terms such as *gargoyle* and *carnival* to see if you can discover a similar function. Or select another object or concept that seems to be an example of perspective by incongruity and explain how it works.

4. Construct additional pentads by renaming Hitler's act (however you would like to define it) in a variety of ways, then analyze one or more of them to see how the pentad helps reveal motive. What happens, for example, if you say Hitler's act was to overcompensate for guilt? An expression of fear? An expression of desire for his mother's approval? Or what happens if you identify the agent of the Holocaust as a place (e.g., Germany) rather than a person (e.g., Hitler)?

5. Construct a pentad and corresponding analysis of form with regard to a particular speech that has had a significant impact on people in recent times. To generate your interpretation, be sure to rename and redefine the elements of the pentad to liberate possible viewpoints.

3

Terministic Screens

❖

In a world of words where people act on each other to teach, delight, and persuade and thus to build their cultures and define their place in them, the words we choose to perform these acts matter a great deal. Dramatism is a generative grammar of motives that helps us describe the **scope** and **circumference** of these acts. Dramatism also includes elements that help reveal their ambiguity, as well as the degree to which our explanations and interpretations of motives are determined and deflected by the terms we choose to represent them.

Burke's concept of terministic screens is useful for understanding how thoroughly what we say we know is filtered through our terms. He explains the process with reference to the function of a lens filter in photography. Different photographs taken of the same scene using different filters will reveal new textures and forms, even though the object itself doesn't change. Burke concludes, "Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another. Also, *many of the 'observations' are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made*" (*Language as Symbolic Action*, 46). A terministic screen functions like a framing of experience by singling out or highlighting certain aspects for focused attention. Even more important, however, terministic screens *enable* our observations, so the angle of approach we take to phenomena through our vocabularies sets limits on what observations are possible. To borrow from Burke's analogy, if

you take a picture of an object using a red filter, you will see lots of red because the filter selectively transmits red but blocks other colors in the spectrum from passing through it. Cinematographers and digital video experts have been known to smear Vaseline over a clear filter to achieve a diffuse or soft focus on the resulting film or video. The Vaseline softens sharp contrasts in lighting by intercepting them at the camera lens.

Because terministic screens have this filtering effect, our attempts to describe or interpret reality are limited initially by the terms available to us, and then further, by which ones we choose. Given this fundamental principle, it behooves us to bear in mind that our attempts to reflect reality by our choice of terms will not only be limited, but the attempts themselves will have motives associated with them. In *A Grammar of Motives,* Burke writes, "Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection of reality*" (59). Our selection of terms is an act of choosing among alternative means of representation. In choosing to describe a thing *this* way, we implicitly choose not to express it *that* way. We would describe a loaded gun as protection or as a threatening weapon, depending upon whether we are pointing it or it is aimed at us. In this case, our choice of terms would be motivated by scenic elements. Both ways of describing it would be essentially correct, but neither by itself fully captures the full significance, the "reality" of a pointed gun. In political contests, we might call one candidate's victory a sign of hope or a harbinger of doom, depending upon where our sympathies lie. Either way, when we name the act, we choose terms that flavor it and thus reveal our motives by privileging some of its features over others.

As Burke notes, our selection of terms to represent reality or situations is also a deflection in certain circumstances. The act steers interpretation one way rather than another. Herein is the rhetorical dimension implicit in our choice of terminology. We can deliberately choose terms and relationships among them that foster identification or persuasion. ("When in Rome, do as the Romans.") It also explains why our terms are never neutral, but take on meaning as part of a context or structure of relationships, either involving the situations of the writer and reader or speaker and audience. To better assess the ways that our terminologies define these situations, Burke suggests that we develop methods for choosing terminologies, for elaborating their scope and

circumference, and for complementing our choice of terminologies with others that might encourage alternative perspectives or express new relationships. ("When in Rome, do as the Greeks.") As we have already seen, the pentad is one means of choosing a well-rounded terminology of motives. Dramatism also includes elements that help us determine whether a terminology is indeed adequate for the situation it was designed to illuminate.

Representative Anecdotes

Anecdotes are short stories or tales that describe unusual, amusing, or otherwise remarkable experience. They sometimes teach a lesson. There is the sense, also, in which an anecdote is an unverified story, as in "the argument was based on anecdotal evidence." *Anecdote* comes from the Greek *anekdota,* meaning "unpublished." For Burke, anecdotes have special significance because even behind complicated theoretical formulations, there are implicit stories about human behavior or motivation that inform them. We can thus see anecdotes as containing the essential ingredients, the gist, of the more complex narratives of experience from which they may be derived. Burke also recognizes the tonal pun in *anecdote,* which sounds like the word *antidote,* which is a remedy that counteracts a poison, or a drug that prevents or provides relief from some illness or infection. From a rhetorical perspective, anecdotes are a form of ideological maintenance. They express or reaffirm belief, acts that have a curative effect and share some functions with propaganda. As we saw in Chapter 2, Hitler's representative anecdote of "his years of study and suffering in Vienna" serves as his script for his plan for Germany. Of course, anecdotes may have nefarious effects if they are not well suited to the situation they seek to affirm. Like an antidote, they may work as poison or cure; they may or may not be representative of the situation they were designed to explain or affirm.

Representative anecdotes are at the core of what dramatism is designed to reveal. In Burke's words, "Dramatism suggests a procedure to be followed in the development of a given calculus or terminology. It involves the search for a 'representative anecdote,' to be used as a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed" (*A Grammar of Motives,* 59). Dramatism helps us find representative anecdotes, or points of departure, for human motivation in complex situations, in a

process that works like distillation. For example, each pentad constructed in Chapter 1 with regard to the shooting at Columbine High is a representative anecdote for a particular conception of what happened and why. Pentad 1 (page 36) suggests that people use guns not only to solve their problems but also to gain attention and notoriety. It is a distillation of a complex and ambiguous situation. As an abstraction, it is an anecdote that helps us, when extended, to understand how and why people in American culture might come to the conclusion that violence solves rather than causes problems. We could use such an anecdote to appreciate the conflicting messages our society communicates to young people: Violence is not a good solution to problems in real life, and yet in some of our most popular forms of entertainment, it is presented as the *only* solution. In the generic action film, for instance, a persecuted loner (usually male) seeks retribution for perceived wrongs in the name of vigilante justice. Whether this glamorization of violence functions as a motivating factor for acts of violence is open to debate. Nevertheless, it reinforces the perception that "good guys" take action; they shoot first and ask questions later.

This conflicting message was effectively parodied in the film *Last Action Hero* (1993; Dir. John McTiernan). The film starred Arnold Schwarzenegger, himself one of the mega-stars people associate with action films. In one scene, we see a movie trailer advertising the new "Jack Slater" film, a remake of Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* In this version, however, Hamlet is hardly the brooding intellectual who cannot make up his mind whether to seek revenge on his uncle Claudius for his father's unjust murder. Jack Slater as Hamlet rampages through the castle at Elsinore with bombs and an automatic weapon. The voice-over narrator tells us "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark, and Hamlet is taking out the trash." Slater says, "Hey Claudius! You killed my father! Big mistake!" Slater then delivers a line in the style for which Schwarzenegger is well known. When he spies Claudius sitting on the throne, he says, "To be or not to be? Not to be!" He then blows up his father's murderer with some kind of projectile bomb. When we distill from the complex motives of the Columbine shooting an anecdote saying that people believe gun violence solves problems, we can then extend that anecdote to find that same value expressed (or parodied, as in *Last Action Hero*) in other cultural narratives. The purpose might be to expose an inherent contradiction in the value system of American culture. It functions less as a cure than as a diagnosis.

In addition, anecdotes alone may themselves help us generate more complex explanations of human motivation. They may be constitutive as well as derivative. We might start with stories or theories of human behavior, for example, and from them develop what we hope will be a well-rounded account, that we hope will be representative of human relations generally. Some examples from Burke's own work include three that we have already discussed. In this list, you'll see beneath the anecdote the core principle:

Burke's Representative Anecdotes

Anecdote 1 The story of the sophisticated trout and well-educated chickens in *Permanence and Change* (Chapter 1)

Principle 1 With language we have the speculative agency for moving beyond an interpretation of experience to an interpretation of interpretation

Anecdote 2 The image of the "central moltenness" from which distinctions spring, from the introduction to *A Grammar of Motives* (Chapter 1)

Principle 2 Our explanations of human motivation are ever renewable in dramatism's capacity for making distinctions and for revealing the resources of ambiguity

Anecdote 3 The analogy of the human drama as a parlor conversation from *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Chapter 2)

Principle 3 The "material" for the drama of human relations is a product of competitive cooperation that is "interminable"

Each of Burke's representative anecdotes has language as a central factor. He is sharply critical of anecdotes or points of departure, such as behaviorism's, that do not include linguistic ingredients. Behaviorism is the branch of psychology that studies conditioned reflexes in response to stimuli as evidence of behavioral principles. It holds that human behavior is the product of stimulus and response and has a chemical basis. The problem, as Burke sees it, is that while holding that chemicals or other physical stimuli induce action, the behaviorist would "induce response in people by talking to them, whereas he would not try to make chemicals behave by linguistic inducement" (*A Grammar of Motives*, 59). In other words, while behaviorism may explain what Burke calls the food- and

bait-processes, it does not do a very good job of explaining how behavior and attitude (a predisposition to act) can be shaped rhetorically, using words alone as the motivating influence. In its zeal to explain human behavior broadly, behaviorism would remove language as a motivating factor in human relations. Its point of departure, the idea that behavior is a process of stimulus and response, is not representative because it cannot ultimately account for the dramatic role of language in human relations. It does not, in other words, have the necessary scope.

By itself, any terministic screen will be a reduction to some degree, filtering some aspects of reality from view while revealing others. Given that paradox, Burke proposes that we systematically disrupt the stability and unity of terministic screens using a variety of methods. One of them is perspective by incongruity, which we discussed in Chapter 2 with regard to trained incapacity, piety, and exorcism by misnomer. Perspective by incongruity enables new meanings by "extending the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and applying it to another" (*Permanence and Change,* 89). A given terministic screen will elevate key terms to prominence or controlling authority, as well as map the customary (i.e., formal) linkages between these terms. Perspective by incongruity works somewhat like metaphor, which involves seeing one thing in *terms* of something else. To generate new meanings and thus fuller accounts of situations, we can disrupt the integrity of a given terministic screen by introducing previously unrelated meanings or disrupting its usual linkages. For example, in the section on "All Living Things Are Critics" from *Permanence and Change* (page 12), Burke notes Veblen's clever transformation of the dictum, "Necessity is the mother of invention," into "Invention is the mother of necessity." That reversal puts *invention* in the grammatical position as subject. Perhaps it is not necessity that leads to invention, but invention that creates necessity. We become beholden to our inventions, in other words. The technological revolution may initially be a response to a need for greater efficiency, but in the case of computing technology, it can also have the unintended by-products of forcing people to become experts in software management as they grapple with system crashes, computer viruses, and globs of e-mail. In the larger terministic screen that we would associate with capitalism and free enterprise, it is not heretical to suggest that inventions help create jobs in a free market economy. But it may be heretical to suggest that the burden that goes along with invention erodes people's freedom. As we will see later in this

chapter, the phenomenon of computer hacking and electronic civil disobedience brings these concerns into the limelight.

Another way of transcending the limitation of a given terministic screen is to accumulate these screens without maintaining pious devotion to one over any of the others. This technique is at the heart of pluralism, which holds that multiple viewpoints are better than one. Pluralism is different from pure relativism, which holds that knowledge of a thing's reality is contingent upon the perspective from which we view it. In one sense, Burke's concept of terministic screens has an element of relativism to it because it holds that our perspectives are determined by our angle of approach. For Burke, however, some terministic screens are better than others, depending upon whether they have sufficient scope and circumference. In addition, he sees value in accumulating terministic screens and in trading symbols back and forth between them (as in perspective by incongruity, metaphor, and other relational principles between terms and concepts). After all, how exactly do we gauge an object's reality using language? Burke's answer to that question establishes what for him is a foundational principle of dramatism and at the heart of rhetorical invention:

> It is by the approach through a variety of perspectives that we establish a character's reality. If we are in doubt as to what an object is, for instance, we deliberately try to consider it in as many different terms as its nature permits: lifting, smelling, tasting, tapping, holding in different lights, subjecting to different pressures, dividing, matching, contrasting, etc. (*A Grammar of Motives,* 504)

In the very end, Burke sees value in accumulating perspectives as widely and apparently divergent as those offered by science and religion, biology and philosophy, the visual worlds of art and the verbal worlds of poetry. In fact, he believes that criticism should "use all that is there to use" (*The Philosophy of Literary Form,* 23) and that language can be manipulated systematically to reveal what is there in the first place.

Scope and Circumference

Burke's concepts of scope and circumference are tests to be used for evaluating whether originating anecdotes are representative or not. A vocabulary or terministic screen should reflect reality as fully as possible, even if it does so selectively. It is a deflection or distortion of this

reality when it fails to account for elements that the terminology presumably was designed to illuminate. It becomes, in other words, a trained incapacity or paradigm that has certain utility, but not unlimited utility. Burke explains:

> Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is a reduction. Its scope and reduction become a deflection when the given terminology, or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it was designed to calculate. (*A Grammar of Motives,* 59)

Burke would say that behaviorism is a reduction that does not have the necessary scope. When extended to instances of language used to teach, delight, or persuade, its circumference proves too limited because it fails to account for language's power to influence in ways more complex than a stimulus/reaction model would allow. As a term in itself, we could say that *behavior* for a behaviorist is not inclusive enough. Its meaning does not include *verbal* behavior, which is impossible to replicate among laboratory rats. Ironically, it may also be one of our most common and most distinguishing human behaviors. Not to account for it is an inescapably serious oversight.

A term's scope and circumference will change over time as social contexts work to add new meaning. In 1776, The *Declaration of Independence* pronounced that "All men are created equal" but it was clear at that time that "men" did not include women, African or Native Americans, or people who were not landowners (as much as we would like to think otherwise). Over time, however, the inclusiveness of *men* as a generic term for "humans" became wider in scope, so that it became more inclusive and the *Declaration of Independence's* circumference broadened. Still, there are residual meanings associated with the pseudo-generic "man," so that in some cases, people will read the term inclusively; in others, they still do not. Recall for example, Neil Armstrong's first words upon setting foot on the moon on July 20, 1969: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." If Armstrong intended "That's one small step for me, a man" he should have included the indefinite article *a*, as in "That's one small step for *a* man, one giant leap for mankind." With the absence of the indefinite article, this famous line actually translates, "That's one small step for

humans, one giant leap for humans," which as you can see is somewhat of a contradiction. The confusion comes from the shift in meaning of generic *man,* which is supposed to be all-inclusive, to the more particular, gender-specified *man.* The point, here, is that a term's or terminology's scope and circumference should be inclusive enough for the situation or reality it hopes to describe. The scope and circumference of our terms will change over time as meaning is massaged by social forces that might isolate their reductiveness. Burke calls this "**casuistic stretching.**" *Casuistry* is a noun referring to the process of resolving particular meaning with reference to broader principles or doctrine.

Burke pays great heed to elements like scope, reduction, and circumference because he sees all terms as shorthand for situations. That is, a word always functions implicitly in a wider array of meanings, whether we know it or not or whether we agree with that implicit involvement or not. As we will see in Chapter 4, these meanings range from personal associations to public and historical meanings. When we act on each other verbally, the words we choose are paradigmatic, meaning that they stand in for a wider range of possible meanings. Our choice of terms is one sign of some broader philosophy of human motivation. As he puts it in one of his "Flowerishes" (visual poems and aphorisms published in his *Collected Poems, 1915–1967*), "At the very start, our terms jump to conclusions." As shorthand for larger situations and meanings, our terms are necessarily reductive, but by the same logic, they are also capable of extension. We can, through the devices of dramatism, trace them back into the central moltenness of meaning from which they sprang forth to congeal on the surface at the moment of utterance, then repeat the process cyclically, keeping our philosophies and interpretations on the move as the nature of our problems and contexts change.

Cluster Analysis

One of the key methods of dramatism is cluster analysis, the system Burke developed for talking about the characteristic features of a writer's loyalty to the sources of her being. Cluster analysis is an important and much-practiced form of dramatistic analysis that reveals the repetitive nature of a writer's associational (and terminological) logic.

In cluster analysis, we interpret the work of a writer through a process of indexing, which involves systematically tracking down the context where important or pivotal terms appear. The aim is to see if there are "equations" or what Burke would call "verbal tics" that reveal a writer's propensities. Combined with pentadic analysis, cluster analysis helps us understand in what ways a writer's work is an answer to his or her situation, and importantly, whether it is an answer with which we might identify.

Cluster analysis asks of a work, what goes with what? (an expression of piety), what implies what? (interpretation by association and **entelechy**), and what follows what? (form). To perform cluster analysis, we index a work, noting the frequency and contexts of key terms. We also prepare what amounts to an extended annotation, sometimes called a concordance, that makes connections across the contexts in which these terms appear and thus notes habitual patterns or unexpected contrasts of meaning. In doing so, we map the interrelationships among the terms in any given work, the premise being that these formal relationships express a logic rooted in the writer's psychology (conscious or unconscious).

The primary purpose of cluster analysis is to determine the precise nature of the act, the poetic act in particular. There are many examples of cluster analysis throughout Burke's work. In *The Philosophy of Literary Form,* he performs cluster analysis on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.* He concludes that the work, among other achievements, functioned as Coleridge's struggle to manage his addiction to opium, or perhaps more rightly (since the timing of Coleridge's addiction may be off), to channel his addictive personality in an act of symbolic redemption. As we saw in Burke's essay on Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* cluster analysis can help us see precisely how a work functions to reveal the nature of the writer's act and, thus, his situation. Hitler habitually characterized Jews as devils and the masses as feminine, combining religious and sexual imagery to horrific effect. Combined with pentadic analysis, cluster analysis helps us recognize and elaborate a writer's poetic and rhetorical motives in the interest of understanding (not just reacting to) the symbolic act.

In this next section, we look at William Carlos Williams's famous poem, "The Red Wheelbarrow," to suggest ways that cluster analysis can help us begin to identify the distinctive features of Williams's poetic act,

as well as to understand the importance of the image in the act of interpretation. In the subsequent analysis of Bryan Singer's film, *The Usual Suspects* (1995), we will examine more closely the linkage between terministic screens and Burke's contention that "[a] way of seeing is also a way of not seeing—a focus on object *A* involves a neglect of object *B*" (*Permanence and Change,* 49). Cluster analysis, in conjunction with the concept of terministic screens, can reveal unexpected associations and trained incapacity at work in the moment of persuasion.

Cluster Analysis: William Carlos Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow"

William Carlos Williams (1883–1963) is widely known for his dictum, "No ideas but in things." He has been called an "Objectivist" poet because of his interest in isolating the objects of the discrete and sensuous world for consideration through the lens of poetry. Williams was also a pediatrician and general physician in his hometown of Rutherford, New Jersey, for over fifty years. He and Burke exchanged a robust and lengthy correspondence beginning in 1921 and ending shortly before Williams's death in 1963. They were also neighbors (Burke lived near Rutherford on his Andover, New Jersey, farm for over seventy years) and thus spent many days and nights discussing the aims of poetry and philosophy, their contemporaries in New York writers' circles, and their personal reflections on the direction of their lives. One of those meetings is chronicled in Williams's 1946 poem, "At Kenneth Burke's Place." Williams also wrote extensively about American culture and the writers who helped shape it. His book *In the American Grain* (1925) is a collection of essay-profiles of American writers and written in Williams's highly individualistic style.

"The Red Wheelbarrow," as it has come to be known, is one of his most famous short poems and has received perhaps more attention from students and scholars than any poem written in the twentieth century. It first appeared in Williams's 1923 collection *Spring and All* under the heading "XXII." It appears in the following form and is then followed by a series of prose statements about the imagination and the aims of poetry. For the purpose of illustrating cluster analysis concisely, only the poem itself is included here.

XXII

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens

Remember that cluster analysis involves indexing and beckons us to ask these questions:

1. What goes with what?
2. What implies what?
3. What follows what?

To begin, here are some general observations about the poem: It consists of what amounts to one declarative sentence, broken up into eight lines, with four two-line couplets. Indexing this poem is fairly easy because no word appears more than once. However, in cluster analysis, we can also move outside the poem to the writer's situation, which includes in this case Williams's life as a poet and "the country doctor" (as he was called), as well as his other works of poetry. An indexing of this sort would take a substantial amount of work to compile. We would want to track the appearance of key terms and concepts, such as red, wheelbarrows, rain and rainwater, chickens, and so on, and to note the contexts in which they appear to see if some pattern emerges. In Burke's own analysis of Williams's poetry, he finds a "kind of physicality imposed upon his poetry by the nature of his work as a physician" (*Language as Symbolic Action*, 283). Donald and Christine McQuade note also that "knowing that William Carlos Williams was a doctor who was treating a seriously ill child when he looked out the window and saw the now much-celebrated red wheelbarrow might make a difference in how you read this poem" (*Seeing and Writing*, xliv). Observing that this poem singles out certain objects for isolated observation, we would also want to note

similar occurrences of physicality paired with contexts suggesting Williams's role as a doctor.

Our indexing involves asking what goes with what within the poem itself also. Note that each couplet has four words in it, with the last three each containing terms that name objects or qualities. Lines 1, 3, 5, and 7 each have three words in them, with lines 2, 4, 6, and 8 having just one word each, each of those having two syllables. Couplet 1 is an assertion of value ("so much depends / upon"), but couplets 2–4 name, describe, and then contextualize the red wheelbarrow. Couplet 2 has a line break between *wheel* and *barrow*, which is somewhat unusual given that we would normally think of the object as a wheelbarrow, not a wheel *and* a barrow. In couplet 3, the line is broken between *rain* and *water*, two separate objects in other contexts, but here the reference seems to be to *rainwater*, which would normally be thought of as a thing that would stand by itself. Likewise, in couplet 4, we see the line break between *white* and *chickens*. *White* is a quality, a color, and chickens are things. Put them together, however, and you have "white chickens," which refers to singularity, a category of chickens. In couplets 2–4, we notice the pattern whereby Williams divides an object into distinct entities with a strategic line break. He divides a unity (wheelbarrow, rainwater, and white chickens), into separate elements. For now, we have only to make the observation that "what goes with what" in this poem suggests a pattern that isolates "thingness" within hybrid forms.

This pattern in Williams's poetry has been noticed by others, and it is of no minor consequence. Williams is interested in the process whereby words name things and thus conjure images. The literary critic and theorist J. Hillis Miller notes, for instance, that for Williams, "Both a word and a tree have their meanings as inescapable parts of their substances. But the meaning which is intrinsic to a word is its power of referring to something beyond itself. Williams has no fear of the referential power of words. It is an integral part of his theory of imagination" ("Introduction," 10–11). A wheelbarrow has meaning as an object, and the words that refer to it, a union of *wheel* and *barrow*, also have distinct meaning as words, irrespective of their relationship to a specific wheelbarrow.

When we ask "what implies what?" we are forced to consider, then, the function of referentiality in this poem, the process whereby words

imply the existence of both objects and other words. We could examine, for example, whether white chickens and wheelbarrows imply or symbolize for Williams or his readers an image of country or farming life. We would want to track down the occurrence of other such images throughout his poetry, on the premise that his use of the images in this poem implicate (or invoke) similar images elsewhere. There is the sense also in which this poem directs the attention to the act of *implying* itself. Words imply other words, but in doing so, the objects they imply can be obscured. As Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren put it, "Reading the poem is like peering at an ordinary object through a pin prick in a piece of cardboard. The fact that the pin prick frames it arbitrarily endows it with a puzzling, and exciting freshness that seems to hover on the verge of revelation" (*Understanding Poetry*, 173–74). In "The Red Wheelbarrow," Williams takes pleasure in the power of a terministic screen to filter other objects from view.

Interesting considerations arise when we consider what follows what in this poem also. Couplet 1 makes an assertion about the image that is constructed in the remaining three couplets. Much depends upon that image. We could interpret the meaning of that assertion in (at least) two ways: (1) So much depends upon the things themselves (e.g., farmers depend on them); or (2) so much depends upon the words themselves and their capacity to represent things. This latter meaning has been of much interest to Williams's critics. It is as if Williams is saying to us, "So much depends upon the process whereby these words can conjure an image in the mind." So much depends, in other words, on the power of the imagination to translate verbal symbols into visual images. Burke himself has said that for Williams, the process is this: "There is the eye, and there is the thing upon which that eye alights; while the relationship existing between the two is a poem" ("Heaven's First Law," 48). Williams's assertion in the first couplet functions as an act and refers not simply to the objects represented in the lines that follow, but to the collection of words that have the power of invoking them and that initiate an act of imagination. From this perspective, "The Red Wheelbarrow" is *about* the poetic act itself. If written as a normal sentence (e.g., "So much depends upon a red wheelbarrow glazed with rainwater beside the white chickens"), the words would lose that meaning. By "stacking" the individual images beneath the opening assertion in poetic form, Williams singles out the capacity of poetry to direct the

attention both to objects in themselves and to the symbolic process whereby we come to know and see them.

The Image and the Word

We have all heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." If we accept this as a reasonable proposition, a picture can be said to function symbolically, representing within its boundaries the words that would be needed to express its meaning. Pictures (i.e., photographs) single out their subject for scrutiny at a frozen moment in time. They are also framed by the physical limitations of the lens used to capture the subject, as well as by the distance and angle from the camera and the chemical processes used to develop the film stock. (The emergence of digital photography changes the physical process into one involving the conversion of light values into numerical [digital] data, but the process of selection on the front end is still the same.) In this way, a photograph functions much like a terministic screen. It is a distillation, a selection of the photographer's visual field that may or may not be entirely representative of the whole panorama or of its subject. A photograph can help us see a subject in new ways, but it cannot help us see it in *all* ways. It is an interpretation.

Although it is customary to think of an image as like a picture, we should be careful to distinguish them for the sake of understanding how images themselves function as important elements of dramatism and rhetoric. An image is a subjective phenomenon, conjured in the interface between the object and the viewer. An image involves an act, in other words. It is common to think of the imagination as that process of mind chiefly responsible for making images out of experience, words, emotions, and even the visual world. An image is the end result of an act of perception, which itself is more than just looking. Perception involves what we believe and know at least as much as it does the physiological processes of seeing. Perception also involves language, which provides the grammar and meaning that direct our attention (our "glance") and help us interpret what we see. A picture is only worth a thousand words to the extent that we can hold it as an image in the mind, analyze its components, and reassemble it as a verbal description or interpretation. The Greeks called this process of translating the verbal into an image *ekphrasis* and it was made possible through the power

of *phantasia* ("fantasy" or something akin to the Latin concept, *imaginatio*, "imagination"). The Disney films, *Fantasia* and *Fantasia 2000*, are illustrations of a variation on this process, made as they were by illustrators who interpreted classical music by translating it into visual equivalents or representations.

Bryan Singer's The Usual Suspects

In many respects, *The Usual Suspects* is like many gangster films that have come before. There are tough, shady, male characters cheated by the system and pursued by the law. The criminals are outcasts trapped in a life of crime, which may include robbery, drug deals, murder, and whatever else might help them achieve their version of the American dream. Anxiety and suspicion are ways of life for all of the characters in these films, including officers of the law, who are just as tough and willing to do what it takes to get their job done. In terms of cinematic style, *The Usual Suspects* hearkens back to what was called the *film noir* ("black film"), a type of film common in the 1940s and notable for its low-key lighting and melancholy mood. However, while this film's explicit subject may be gangsters ("the usual suspects"), that subject changes in a fundamental way once we discover that we have been witness to a rhetorical demonstration of the power of words to conjure images and foster identification.

As it unfolds, the plot of *The Usual Suspects* is not especially remarkable. However, as we learn by the end of the film, all is not as it seems. One recurring image throughout the film is a close-up shot of some rigging and tangled ropes on the deck of the ship next to where Keyser Söse shoots Dean Keaton (Gabriel Byrne) in the opening sequence of the film. The image serves as a metaphor for the film's overall plot, which is a tangled web of suggestion and fantasy. By the end, we realize that much of what we have seen is fabricated, making it virtually impossible to know "what really happened." In fact, all we can know is that we have been fooled (but not cheated, as some critics suggest). The story "unwrites" itself by the end because what we thought we knew regarding the events of the narrative has been filtered for us by an unreliable narrator and his audience, Agent Kujan (Chazz Palminteri). Nevertheless, it is possible to determine what happens on screen as the film progresses. Because the film is the sort that calls for a careful reconstruction, we will look closely at the scene sequence.

Shot in low-key lighting, the opening scene on the boat, which takes place "last night," shows Keaton light a book of matches and then a cigarette from where he sits. He is apparently in considerable pain. He tosses the matches to the ground, where they ignite some fuel. Then we see that someone douses the trail of flame by urinating on it, after which we see all but the head of the person responsible. Shrouded in darkness, the figure approaches Keaton, who sighs in recognition, moaning the word "Keyser" after the character approaches and lights a cigarette with a lighter, using his left hand. Keyser shoots Keaton twice, then relights the fuel by dropping his cigarette and leaves in a hurry. The camera pans to the ropes, zooms in, then we see a dissolve to a shot of Roger "Verbal" Kint (Kevin Spacey) being interrogated, saying, "It all started six weeks ago." The next thirteen minutes of screen time show a sequence of arrests, a lineup of each of the "suspects," and their interrogation. Verbal serves as the narrator throughout these scenes, so from very early in the film, well before the interrogation in Kujan's office, his version of events orients the viewer. (This opening narrative, we learn later, is part of his statement to the District Attorney prior to his interrogation by Kujan.) Hockney (Kevin Pollack), Fenster (Benicio Del Toro), McManus (Stephen Baldwin), and Keaton are interrogated in this flashback. Keaton is beaten when he insults his interrogators. The suspects eventually meet in a holding cell, where they introduce themselves. Verbal plays "the gimp," and they begin to plot another job. Verbal concludes this sequence with the lines, "What the cops never figured out and what I know now was that these men would never break, never lie down, never bend over for anybody . . . anybody." Our initial impression is that we will be witness to a contest of wills between the cops and the usual suspects.

The cell scene then dissolves into a close-up of a charred body, one of 15 bodies found so far, in the burned wreckage on the deck of the boat in San Pedro, "the present day." We discover that there were only two survivors, one in the hospital in a coma, the other, "a cripple" whom the D.A. has questioned. Kujan, who has flown in from New York, arrives at police headquarters and is filled in by Jeffrey Rabin (Dan Hedaya). Rabin informs Kujan that Verbal has given a statement but that he is "protected from on high by the prince of darkness," having been granted total immunity for his story. Kujan learns that Verbal is "paranoid about being recorded" and that many questions remain regarding what happened on the boat in San Pedro Harbor. Rabin then

says to Kujan, "I'm sure you have a host of wild theories to answer all these questions."

After a cut to the hospital where the other survivor has shouted "Keyser Söse!" we return to Rabin's office, where Verbal awaits his meeting with Kujan. Verbal eyes various objects in the room: a rolodex, a cigarette box, a crowded bulletin board. Before the interrogation begins, Verbal makes small talk, noting that among other things, he used to be in a barbershop quartet in Skokie, Illinois. Kujan has to light a cigarette for him because Verbal's left hand is useless. Both have cups of coffee. Then Kujan threatens to let everyone know Verbal has "ratted," even though he hadn't, if Verbal doesn't give him the real story. Seeing Verbal's resistance, Kujan says, "Let's get right to the point. I'm smarter than you. And I'm gonna find out what you know, and I'm gonna get it from you whether you like it or not." Verbal appears to submit and begins describing what happened right after the line-up at the police station.

At that point the story unfolds on screen as a long flashback with frequent interruptions. Usually, we presume such flashbacks represent the narrator's imagined recollection of the events. He tells his story, and we see it. However, in this case, the situation is rather different. At the end of the film, we will learn that these events have been imagined by Kujan, the audience for Verbal's re-telling. On second viewing, it becomes clearer that what we see on screen is what Kujan only imagines happens as Verbal recounts the event to him in the interrogation room. We don't hear much of Verbal's story, but we are reminded that he's narrating it as the film progresses. Described in this way, the interrogation should be more rightly considered a rhetorical event, with a man named "Verbal" (a clue if ever there was one) speaking to his audience, Kujan. Kujan *seems* to have all the will and thus the power, with Verbal on occasion reduced to a whimpering fool before the strong-armed tactics of the interrogation. Verbal's real purpose, of course, is disguised as a plea-bargained confession.

At several key moments in the interrogation, Kujan and occasionally Rabin interrupt Verbal's story to dispute it. The first such instance occurs just after we have seen Keaton reluctantly leave his girlfriend, Edie Finneran (Suzy Amis), to head for L.A. to fence stolen jewels. Kujan appears in close-up, transfixed by the story, but Rabin says "That's heartwarming . . . I'm weepy." Kujan gathers himself, then leans on Verbal. The exchange goes like this:

Kujan: C'mon, Verbal. Who do you think you're talking to? Do you expect me to believe that he [Keaton] retired . . . for a *woman?* Bullshit. He was using her.

Verbal: He loved her.

Kujan: Let me tell you something. I know Dean Keaton. . . . The guy I know was a cold-blooded bastard.

Verbal: You've got him all wrong.

Kujan then recites a list of Keaton's many indictments, pointing out that he had been an ex-cop turned bad, that he had murdered witnesses against him previously, and that he had also faked his death once before. After a cut again to the hospital, where a sketch artist has been brought in to render a picture of Söse, Kujan says to Verbal: "My bet is he [Keaton] is using you because you're stupid, and you think he's your friend." Verbal denies it, and after a litany of threats from Kujan, he introduces the name of "Kobayashi" as the man "behind it." "Is he the one that killed Keaton?" asks Kujan. "No," says Verbal, "but I'm sure Keaton is dead." Kujan then says, "Convince me . . . tell me every last detail." As the narrated flashback proceeds, we see a series of cuts that show Kujan, Rabin, and others occasionally discussing details of the events in San Pedro Harbor outside of Verbal's hearing, scenes at the hospital where the lone witness relates his story, and back in Rabin's office, where Kujan presses Verbal for more details. Kujan's questions always stem from some new detail that he and the other detectives discover in the midst of Verbal's ongoing narrative.

We then see a series of scenes in which the five suspects commit another heist but are double-crossed by "Redfoot," the fence in L.A. Verbal, prompted by Kujan, says that the lawyer came from Redfoot, but he changes that story after Kujan learns the name of Keyser Söse from his detectives and asks Verbal, "Who's Keyser Söse?" We then follow the story as Kobayashi, sent by Söse, employs the men to interrupt a $91 million drug deal. From this point on, Söse is the mastermind behind it all. However, we see that as Kujan introduces "facts" culled from the ongoing investigation, Verbal's story changes (as it plays in Kujan's imagination) so that the story accounts for all the ambiguities that gradually reify as the film unfolds. For example, once Kujan tells Verbal that they know drugs weren't involved—that it was a hit to take out someone who could identify Söse—the story shifts to reflect that. Kujan, who has believed from the start that Keaton masterminded everything, ultimately

believes that Keaton is Söse, and we see the opening scene of the film replayed with Keaton as the dark figure who lights the ship ablaze as Verbal watches from behind the ropes.

Verbal knows early on that Kujan thinks Keaton is the mastermind behind the plot. Verbal sees that expectation and thus his rhetorical task simply becomes to confirm what Kujan already knows. Whenever Kujan begins to doubt Verbal's story, the detective reveals new information that has been discovered, allowing Verbal to shift directions to suit Kujan's modified expectations, his newest "wild theories." Kujan's terministic screen, which spontaneously associates Verbal and his impairment with stupidity, prevents Kujan from realizing that he is being duped. His information (the facts of the case) is provisional and probable, also, which creates the circumstances conducive to persuasion. If Kujan already knew all the facts, he wouldn't need to say, "Convince me . . . tell me every last detail." Once Kujan translates Verbal's story into an image with Keaton as Keyer Söse at the end of the film, the case from Verbal's perspective has been won and Kujan is pleased. Verbal is set free.

In the remarkable concluding sequence of the film, we see a visual and sound montage—a rapid juxtaposition of images and sounds—that represents Kujan's thinking as he (finally) puts two and two together. Scenes and words from Verbal's story are juxtaposed to close-ups of items on the bulletin board and around Kujan's office. Kujan notices the "Redfoot" headline and that the bulletin board was made by a company called "Quartet" in Skokie, Illinois, among other things. When he drops his coffee cup, a slow-motion, rotating zoom-shot reveals that it has the imprint of "Kobayashi" china on its bottom. These are the bits of information Verbal has used to fill in the narrative gaps in his fabricated story, helping him to embellish what for him was the story Kujan wanted to believe. Kujan supplied the details that counted. As Verbal leaves the police station, the words of his story are linked directly to the images replaying in Kujan's mind. We realize that the central narrative has been fabricated, that Verbal is a liar and—as is confirmed by the artist's sketch of Söse coming out of the fax machine—that he is indeed Keyser Söse. We then see a close-up shot of Verbal first limping then shifting to a confident walk outside of the police station. A car pulls up with Kobayashi driving. Verbal lights a cigarette with his left hand, enters the car, and we hear Verbal's words about Söse: "And like that . . . poof . . . he's gone." At this moment, the story we have just

seen unfold onscreen unwrites itself and we are forced to question exactly what has happened. One thing is certain. Verbal has succeeded in fooling Kujan, and director Bryan Singer has fooled the audience. But how? And to what effect?

Verbal's power, no doubt the reason for his nickname in the first place, is the power of the rhetorician, someone who can take what his audience knows, find a point of identification, then create the conditions symbolically such that the audience feels consubstantial. He invents his material extemporaneously and it is tightly woven to his rhetorical situation: Kujan's expectations for "the usual suspects," the facts of the investigation, words and images that Verbal picks up from Kujan's office. Together, these are the components of Kujan's terministic screen that Verbal exploits to fabricate his story. They are what predispose Kujan to see in certain ways and that ultimately deflect his attention as a costly instance of trained incapacity.

A terministic screen is not simply a vocabulary but a set of relationships among the key terms of the vocabulary that are stable and resistant to manipulation. It is, in other words, pious, a sense of what goes with what. In the world of Agent Kujan, there are usual suspects for heists, cons, drug deals, and murders. The FBI constructs detailed profiles of such people because these profiles can help guide an investigation and track down likely perpetrators. A side effect of such a technique is the tendency for people to read components of the profile into circumstances on the barest of evidence, so that we have situations when people may be presumed guilty on the basis of their match to a profile. Most people recognize the value of what we might call educated looking. Still, however, as a terministic screen, a profile will have unintended by-products, including a filtering effect that prevents people from recognizing what lies outside the frame and encourages the tendency to make judgments about people on minimal evidence. (The poster for *The Usual Suspects* shows a police lineup, with each of the suspects standing against a grid that measures their height, suggesting that they are being measured and "slotted.") As we will see when we discuss Thomas Harris's novel *Hannibal* in Chapter 4, profiling also involves identification and thus, rhetoric. In order to construct such a profile, we have to imagine ourselves to be the "other," which is the mechanism of identification that also governs the rhetorical process.

Kujan's terministic screen includes equations he makes between criminals and intelligence, between the profile of the macho gangster

and his motives, and even between physical impairment and character. Terministic screens have a filtering effect, so Kujan's attempts to fit his "wild theories" to the facts (as he imagines them and as Verbal delivers them) will be limited initially by these equations. You could say that a terministic screen has a coercive effect as well. It pulls its users to conclusions that are implicit in the terminology. In his zeal to "close the deal" with Verbal, Kujan misses many clues that would perhaps have made him realize to whom he was really speaking. On a first viewing, most spectators do not perceive Verbal's magic until it is too late. Once we learn that he is Keyser Söse, however, the parts add up and we feel the "ah ha!" effect, whereby the previously uncollected details (the lighter, Verbal's name, the "spook stories" about Söse, etc.) take on recognizable, syllogistic form.

Remember, Kujan's choice of terministic screens has motives also, ones that may be personal or sanctioned by the official discourse of the law. It is clear from early in the film that the power struggles are over who is the better man, who has the stronger will, who is smarter, and who is more willing, as Verbal puts it, "to do what the other guy wouldn't." Kujan "gets his man" as an agent of the law by asserting his authority "in the name of the law" but also by parading his intelligence ("I'm smarter than you!" he tells Verbal, "and you're going to tell me what I need to know"), by threatening to expose Verbal as "a rat" (which violates the gangster code), by browbeating him, and, of course, by asking the leading questions to which Kujan believes he has the answers. The interrogation method, while presumably intended to be open-ended inquiry, actually becomes a closed process with a predetermined end. It is supposed to work by **induction,** which is a means of arguing or reaching conclusions by examples (the evidence will add up, in other words). In many cases, however, and partially due to the influence of the terministic screen, the process is one of **deduction.** It is thesis driven, with the desired conclusion determining the means of inquiry. Both methods are rhetorical in that they aim to elaborate and exploit ambiguity in the interest of identification.

It is customary for us to watch a film and become engrossed in the world of the narrative, to identify with the characters and situations on screen as if we were there with them. We participate symbolically in their imaginary world, which is one we interpret using the sounds and images that the film director provides. What is most tricky and interest-

ing about *The Usual Suspects,* however, is the magic that is perpetrated by the director of the film, Bryan Singer. Recall one of Verbal's memorable lines: "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was making the world believe he didn't exist" (a quotation from Charles Baudelaire's short story, "The Generous Gambler"). The line replays in Kujan's mind at the end of the film also. In the fabricated world of Kujan's imagination and Verbal's magic, the line refers to Söse's attempts to hide behind his menacing aura so that he can work his powerful will on others, as a "spook story" or myth, which can be more powerful than the man himself. *The Usual Suspects,* in the end, suggests that the real power of Verbal/Söse is in his ability to persuade, to manufacture stories and myths that people believe and that will motivate their action in ways that he desires. His eloquence is evil, in other words. It is the devil's trick, one first perpetrated on Eve in the Garden of Eden.

But wait a minute. As spectators in this drama, we have been baited by the conventional form of recollected narrative to believe that the flashbacks are memories running in Verbal's mind, that they are retellings of actual events. Yet we discover later that these flashbacks are not really memories at all; instead, they are fantasies constructed in Kujan's mind as he tries to fit his facts to a story as he imagines it. They are projections. Verbal is there to lead him down this primrose path. As spectators, we have no choice but to accept the verisimilitude of what we see, to believe that it reflects what Verbal remembers and is now retelling. Additionally, throughout the interrogation, we do not hear many of Verbal's words as he tells the story. When he does speak, we usually see him in the interrogation room. (There are just a few exceptions, including the scene that shows Söse murder his family; Verbal's words are heard as a voice-over to the action on screen.) We have no choice but to believe Verbal since the events that unfold on screen are ready-made; they are presumably secondhand accounts of these events filtered through Kujan's interpretation of what Verbal tells him orally.

Singer is engaging in some sleight-of-hand here. At the same time that the film persuades us to distrust those who fool us with their rhetoric, Singer fools us by providing the series of events surrounding the drug deal as ready-made conclusions that draw us into the false world that Kujan imagines. In doing so, Singer creates an entertaining film, certainly, but he exploits the same magic that is condemned explicitly in the association of Söse's power for evil with his eloquence. It is as

if Singer's own manipulation of our experience does not exist, which, if we go along with Baudelaire, is "the greatest trick the devil ever pulled." If we unpack carefully what we saw on screen, it is possible to figure out how this has happened. Yet the film in the end argues for equating rhetoric with evil, even as the film uses rhetoric to entertain (presumably a good).

Recall Burke's admonition that with regard to Hitler we should try to "discover what kind of 'medicine' this medicine-man has concocted, that we may know, with greater accuracy, exactly what to guard against, if we are to forestall the concocting of similar medicine in America" (see Chapter 2). Dramatism would help us to be "on guard" against the subtle twisting of motive and desire that results from the crafty manipulation of our symbol systems, as we see in *The Usual Suspects*. With elements like terministic screens, we are encouraged to notice ways that our "conclusions" about the world are implicit in our choice of vocabularies, which are our lenses for interpreting experience. Rhetoric can be used to propagate evil by leading people astray. In *The Usual Suspects*, Bryan Singer teaches us also that it can be used to entertain. The important thing to remember is that we should be aware of such processes, in the latter case Singer's cinematic style, so that we can interpret our experience fully, with the complexity and integrity that it requires.

The Pentadic Ratios: Act-Agency

Another useful application of the dramatistic pentad can be generated when we ask in what ways an act is influenced by the means to achieve it: the act-agency ratio. It is a ratio that comes to the fore when we consider the meaning of phrases like "the ends justify the means" or "by any means necessary." These two rationalizations or justifications for human action have played important roles in shaping political and social movements and have been dramatized in political philosophy, literature, and film. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) is best known for having advanced the thesis in his book, *The Prince* (1513), that the means one chooses to achieve an end have to be judged contextually, by the needs of the occasion and, in this example, the will of the State. Spike Lee's 1989 film, *Do the Right Thing*, brings this issue to the fore in its method of contrasting the two philosophies of ensuring racial equality espoused by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. King argued for dialogue

and nonviolent protest, while Malcolm X advocated reform "by any means necessary" (which included dialogue and nonviolent protest but also did not eliminate the possibility of violence). The issues and consequences governing means selection are understandably complex, but we can interpret and judge them by considering the act-agency ratio, the influence of means on the act performed.

Hacktivism

The phenomenon of computer hacking has become an issue of national interest because of the enormous and immediate economic impact that hacking can have on corporations, people, and public policy. Everyone who has surfed the Internet or used electronic mail has heard of the dangers of computer viruses, the tactics of unscrupulous advertisers who place "cookies" on an individual user's machine, the need to protect personal information (credit card numbers, for instance), the inconveniences of "denial-of-service" attacks, or websites that have been defaced. Experts predict that the "problems" posed by our increasing reliance on computing technology and electronic communication will not go away and that in the near future, hacktivism will become even more widespread and thus more threatening to corporate America, governments, and individuals. From the hacktivists' perspective, of course, that is precisely the aim, on the premise that that's how their criticism is propagated. Consumers have spent millions of dollars on virus protection software, with software companies reaping the rewards for providing it. According to a survey conducted by the International Computer Security Association, "The worst offender has been the LoveLetter virus. . . . About 41 percent of the surveyed organizations said LoveLetter inflicted a 'disaster' in their networks, shutting down servers and costing companies an average of $120,000 based on lost productivity and other measures" (Messmer, Internet). Although the number would be impossible to determine accurately, it is likely that a billion or more e-mail messages have crossed the Internet warning people about new viruses or spreading viruses themselves. (That sort of e-mail traffic is one of the intended consequences of a virus scare since the Internet traffic virtually shuts down other business.)

Hacktivists have organized themselves to both manufacture and expose the technological problems posed by the Information Age.

Sympathizers call the movement "hacktivism," a merger of "hacker" and "activism" in a term that conveys the social banner under which hackers claim to crusade. The "establishment" prefers to use the term *hackers* rather than *hacktivists,* also using descriptive phrases like "cyber-terrorists," "common criminals," "script kiddies," or "brilliant misguided youths." The hacktivists' purposes in exposing these technological problems have been hotly contested, with the FBI and the federal government now heavily vested in fighting what they deem to be cybercrime. Social commentators likewise have debated the social value of this new form of political activism in their newspaper columns and across the World Wide Web. Hacktivists themselves openly flaunt their accomplishments to draw attention to their cause by hacking into computer networks, like the Pentagon's, systems that people would normally expect to be secure. The phenomenon has been depicted in films like 1983's *War Games,* in which a hacker breaks into the computer with control over the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and 1995's *The Net,* in which a software engineer's electronic identity is stolen from her, after which she becomes embroiled in a plot by cyber-terrorists to disrupt the computers that run the New York Stock Exchange and various airports. Set two hundred years in the future, the highly popular *The Matrix* (1999) depicts the efforts of a group of hackers who lead the effort to save humanity from the control of a gigantic computer network. Computers have enslaved everyone in pods that make people believe they live in a real world, even though it is computer-simulated virtual reality. The machines use people for fuel and seek to take control of the world once and for all.

Real-world hacktivists have organized themselves into underground groups, adopting names like Cult of the Dead COW, NPA (National Phreaks Association), LOpht, and HFG (Hacking for Girlies). An annual convention, DEF CON, draws thousands each year. Hacktivists have developed programs like BackOrifice 2000, which enables hackers to take over Windows 95, 98, or NT systems surreptitiously from an Internet distance, and, of course, viruses like "Melissa" and "I Love You." The targets of hackers are very often large corporations, media organizations, or government agencies, though individual users also feel the effects of computer viruses spread through electronic mail. Most hackers are male, but women have begun to organize groups of

their own, with names like Geek Girl, Blueberry, and Javaman. In the parlance of the hacking world, "black hat hackers" are those who want to perpetrate maximum damage on a corporation's computing systems. "White hat hackers" work within the law (presumably) and say, for example, "Our goal is to empower the network and system administrators with the knowledge and tools required to defend their networks in an ongoing struggle against irresponsible or malevolent attack" (Max Vision's Whitehats, Internet). There are also "grey hat hackers," such as LOpht, who consider themselves to be consumer advocacy groups. As you might expect, individual hacking groups often contest their categorization, with the terms for labeling them always shifting as the circumstances of hacking change.

The Act-Agency Ratios of Hacktivism

If you see hacking as cyber-terrorism, the pentad might look like this:

Pentad 1—Cyber-Terrorism

Act:	Cyber-terrorism
Agency:	Electronic technology
Agent:	Cyber-criminals
Scene:	The Internet
Purpose:	Notoriety

From this perspective, the act is enabled by the rapid development and deployment of computing technology in the midst of the Internet boom of the late 1990s. A natural by-product of this expansion is that people will capitalize on the unfamiliarity of many others with the technology that drives the change. Hackers are people who take advantage of this ignorance by flaunting their own expertise. From this point of view, the act of cyber-terrorism is simply an effort to show off. Calling the act "cyber-terrorism" is a rhetorical choice by the government and popular media that eliminates (from popular consciousness, anyway) the thought that there is anything noble in the act. Terrorists normally don't think of themselves as terrorists.

Seen from the perspective of the hackers, however, hacktivism might look much different, even when we still emphasize the act-agency ratio:

Pentad 2—Hacktivism

Act: Social activism
Agency: Media attention
Agent: Crusaders who "watch the watchers"
Scene: The Internet
Purpose: Civil disobedience

Pentad 2 identifies the agency of social activism (the act) as media attention because that becomes the vehicle for spreading news of the hack. For this reason, hacktivism shares much in common with more traditional forms of social protest, which are usually designed to draw as much attention to a cause as possible. While the tools used to carry out the act are computer related, in Pentad 2 they are placed under the category of scene because of its nature as a virtual space. The act-agency ratio for this arrangement raises questions about the effects and purposes of website hacking and whether the act is a form of activism or a form of propaganda (or both). *The New York Times* website was hacked on September 13, 1998, by HFG (Hacking for Girlies) to protest what they deemed to be biased coverage of the activities of Kevin Mitnick, a hacker hero prosecuted and convicted by the federal government for breaking into the security systems of corporations like Motorola, Sun, Nokia, Fujitsu, NEC, and Novell. Another tactic has been to hack sites that are likely to be visited at crucial moments. In fall 2000, as the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks stalled and violence in the Middle East escalated, hackers on each side attacked pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sites in what was called "cyberwar." In yet another example, on November 6, 2000, hackers replaced the website of the Republican National Committee with a page that railed against George W. Bush. At the same time, the Democratic National Committee reported efforts to hack into its security system. These acts are each designed to draw media attention to a cause, the media functioning as the agency for what is deemed social activism.

Pentad 3 shows what questions arise when the agency becomes computer viruses and code, with the purpose as hacking itself:

Pentad 3—Hacking

Act: Demonstrating security flaws in consumer software
Agency: Computer viruses, computer code
Agent: Curious people who understand computing technology
Scene: The Internet
Purpose: To show that it can be done
                Because it helps hackers hone their programming skills

Many hackers will proudly claim that they write computer viruses as a way to learn the ins and outs of computer programming, specifically of Visual Basic Script, a programming language used by Windows to perform routine tasks. Hackers write code that when run on a host machine will either propagate itself to other machines via a network connection or will wreak havoc on the user's machine by deleting files, formatting the hard drive, or otherwise corrupting data. As you can see from Pentad 3, the purpose of hacking from this perspective contains an element of agency as both a means and purpose for the act itself.

These conflicting conceptions of the act of hacking (or hacktivism) suggest that one of the key issues circling the larger questions of means and purpose derives from a long-standing question in the history of social protest. Expressions of civil disobedience operate in a terministic screen elaborated in the United States by Henry David Thoreau. In the next section, we examine this terministic screen by looking closely at Thoreau's perspective, as well as one that relies on it for its terminology.

Civil and Electronic Disobedience

Coined "electronic civil disobedience" by an organization known as the Critical Art Ensemble, this form of hacktivism operates in a terministic screen initially defined by Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) in his 1849 essay, "Resistance to Civil Government," which later came to be known as "Civil Disobedience." As a response to his situation, Thoreau's writings often argue for the importance of developing a personal ethic in opposition to the artificial mechanisms of organized government,

which almost always seek to reduce the scope of human freedoms. His essay has become an American credo, a rationalization or justification for all sorts of social and individual protest. Following these excerpts from his essay, we will examine how electronic civil disobedience has appropriated the terms and principles espoused by Thoreau for its own cause.

Henry David Thoreau

Resistance to Civil Government (Civil Disobedience)

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too. See what gross inconsistency is tolerated. I have heard some of my townsmen say, "I should like to have them order me out to help put down an insurrection of the slaves, or to march to Mexico,—see if I would go"; and yet these very men have each, directly by their allegiance, and so indirectly, at least, by their money, furnished a substitute. The soldier is applauded who refuses to serve in an unjust war by those whose own act and authority he disregards and sets at nought; as if the State were penitent to that degree that it hired one to scourge it while it sinned, but not to that degree that it left off sinning for a moment. Thus, under the name of order and civil government, we are all made at last to pay homage to and support our own meanness. After the first blush of sin, comes its indifference; and from immoral it becomes, as it were, *un*moral, and not quite unnecessary to that life which we have made.

The broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it. The slight reproach to which the virtue of patriotism is commonly liable, the noble are most likely to incur. Those who, while they disapprove of the character and measures of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support, are undoubtedly its most conscientious supporters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform. Some are petitioning the State to dis-

solve the Union, to disregard the requisitions of the President. Why do they not dissolve it themselves,—the union between themselves and the State,—and refuse to pay their quota into its treasury? Do not they stand in the same relation to the State, that the State does to the Union? And have not the same reasons prevented the State from resisting the Union, which have prevented them from resisting the State?

How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy *it?* Is there any enjoyment in it, if his opinion is that he is aggrieved? If you are cheated out of a single dollar by your neighbor, you do not rest satisfied with knowing that you are cheated, or even with petitioning him to pay you your due; but you take effectual steps at once to obtain the full amount, and see that you are never cheated again. Action from principle,—the perception and the performance of right,—changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with any thing which was. It not only divides states and churches, it divides families; aye, it divides the *individual,* separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy *is* worse than the evil. *It* makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and *do* better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

One would think, that a deliberate and practical denial of its authority was the only offence never contemplated by government; else, why has it not assigned its definite, its suitable and proportionate penalty? If a man who has no property refuses but once to earn nine shillings for the State, he is put in prison for a period unlimited by any law that I know, and determined only by the discretion of those who placed him there; but if he should steal ninety times nine shillings from the State, he is soon permitted to go at large again.

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth,—certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not *every* thing to do, but something; and because he cannot do *every thing,* it is not necessary that he should do *something* wrong. It is not my business to be petitioning the governor or the legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and, if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness and consideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserves it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death which convulse the body.

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors, constitutes a majority of one already.

* * *

I know that most men think differently from myself; but those whose lives are by profession devoted to the study of these or kindred subjects, content me as little as any. Statesmen and legislators, standing so completely within the institution, never distinctly and nakedly behold it. They speak of moving society, but have no resting-place without it. They may be men of a certain experience and discrimination, and have no doubt invented ingenious and even useful systems, for which we sincerely thank them; but all their wit and usefulness lie within certain not very wide limits. They are wont to forget that the world is not governed by policy and expediency. Webster never goes behind government, and so cannot speak with authority about it. His words are wisdom to those legislators who contemplate no essential reform in the existing government; but for thinkers, and those who legislate for all time, he never once glances at the subject. I know of those whose serene and wise speculations on this theme would soon reveal the limits of his mind's range and hospitality. Yet, compared with the cheap professions of most reformers, and the still cheaper wisdom and eloquence of politicians in general, his are almost the only sensible and valuable words, and we thank Heaven for him. Comparatively, he is always strong, original, and, above all, practical. Still his quality is not wisdom, but prudence. The lawyer's truth is not Truth, but consistency, or a consistent expediency. Truth is always in harmony with herself, and is not concerned chiefly to reveal the justice that may consist with wrongdoing. He well deserves to be called, as he has been called, the Defender of the Constitution. There are really no blows to be given by him but defensive ones. He is not a leader, but a follower. His leaders are the men of '87. "I have never made an effort," he says, "and never propose to make an effort; I have never countenanced an effort, and never mean to countenance an effort, to disturb the arrangement as originally made, by which the various States came into the Union." Still thinking of the sanction which the Constitution gives to slavery, he says, "Because it was a part of the original compact,—let it stand." Notwithstanding his special acuteness and ability, he is unable to take a fact out of its merely political relations, and behold it as it lies absolutely to be disposed of by the intellect,—what, for instance, it behoves a man to do here in America to-day with regard to slavery,—but ventures, or is driven, to make some such desperate answer as the following, while professing to speak absolutely, and as a private man,—from which what new and singular code of social duties might be inferred?—"The manner," says he, "in which the governments of those States where slavery exists are to regulate it, is for their own consideration, under their responsibility to their constituents, to the general laws of propriety, humanity, and justice, and to God. Associations formed elsewhere, springing from a feeling of humanity, or any other cause, have nothing whatever to do with it. They have never received any encouragement from me, and they never will."[a]

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[a]These extracts have been inserted since the Lecture was read.

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. Since Thoreau wrote "Resistance to Civil Government" in 1849, civil disobedience has been the aim of many groups seeking to thwart what Burke calls capitalism's "cult of efficiency." Each generation since, new forms of protest have emerged to express civil disobedience. In addition to the kind of individual resistance that Thoreau focuses on and the electronic resistance of hackers, what other forms of civil disobedience have been successful?

2. What is it about Thoreau's approach to this subject that makes it appealing to hackers as an "anthem"?

While some hacker groups explain that they hack "to show that it can be done" (a celebration of *agency*), others see it as a resilient and powerful form of electronic civil disobedience. A group called the Critical Art Ensemble produces lectures, books, and web projects that directly address the emergence of what they call "Electronic Civil Disobedience." Their 1994 essay on that subject has been distributed widely across the Internet, serving as a manifesto of sorts because it maps the terms and tactics for cultivating electronic activism against capitalism and its by-products. Initially, the tactic, or agency, was simply defined as electronic. Since then, the group has argued for a more complex understanding of the motives of hacking. Their article on "Tactical Media" directly addresses the problem of conventional forms of political activism in "real" space (for example, a protest march), arguing that such events do not endure in time and space because they are too thoroughly defined by their immediate context (the physical scene of the event):

> Traditional practitioners of anti-authoritarian resistance tend to dwell on the micro-phenomena of tactics. This is understandable, since tactical activity has many of the characteristics that are valued by this variety of activist. Tactics are immediate; they address a particular real space situation; they are grounded in a sense of "community;" they can deliver moments of empirical freedom; and their ad hoc nature prevents them from transforming and solidifying into a structure of authority. At the same time, the very elements which make tactics a focal point for some resistant groups also reveal the weakness of overemphasizing this particular category of struggle. Real space tactics alone tend to remove a situation from the continuity of space and time, and treat the event as an independent unit. (Internet)

By contrast, however, cyber-activism endures because it emphasizes agency (or technique), which transcends space and time because it can be perpetually replicated. Both real-space political activism and cyber-activism have similar purposes (change, resistance, critique), but electronic civil disobedience has the advantage of being unconfined by spatial constraints and can thus remain virtually private, yet still collaborative. So electronic civil disobedience is seen as an improvement on traditional forms of social activism, which are limited to physical space. It also gives the hacktivists more power over possible retribution because they can hide their tracks for the most part, though the U.S. government has hired white hat hackers of its own to investigate cases of activism. It is a virtually private act, even as its message goes public.

The different purposes of hacktivism and their resulting acts hinge on the resources of an act-agency ratio. As portrayed in Pentad 2 (Hacktivism), the agency is media, and the venue for this form of social protest is often public websites that themselves act as media outlets (e.g., *The New York Times*). At issue is who controls the dissemination of information, and essentially then, who defines the scope and circumference of the terministic screen that identifies hacktivism as criminal activity, propaganda, or civil disobedience. As portrayed in Pentad 3 (Hacking), the act-agency ratio places more stress on agency (e.g., the techniques of hacking) as the motivating factor, with purpose (e.g., to show that it can be done) also playing a role in determining the nature of the act.

Summary

In seeking to explain or interpret the world and experience, people choose terms that both reveal and filter aspects of reality. Burke calls the cluster of terms associated with these explanations and interpretations terministic screens. A well-rounded account of human relations will examine terministic screens to reveal the motives behind them as well as their implications for interpretation. At their core is the representative anecdote, which can function as a point of departure for the analysis and evaluation of the scope and circumference of the terms people choose to attribute motives. Cluster analysis involves the systematic tracking down of the components

of a given terministic screen. The key questions of cluster analysis are (1) what goes with what? (2) what implies what? and (3) what follows what?

Terministic screens mediate experience both verbally and visually, so that the image becomes a manifestation of the act performed by terms—an interpretation, in other words. While the well-worn phrase "seeing is believing" may be a test of knowledge, in many cases, the act of perception is shaped (or constrained) by the expectations shaped by our knowledge and that depend on the angle of approach or the terms that direct attention. The power to conjure images is one power of poetic and rhetorical acts, both of which may cast experience in relief (as in "The Red Wheelbarrow") or in obscurity (as in *The Usual Suspects*). Terministic screens also help reveal the ways that different groups with conflicting interests can reshape screens like that offered by Thoreau in "Civil Disobedience" to define the nature of an act and the means with which it is performed.

▶ **Research and Writing Activities**

1. In an interesting application of dramatism (and terms from dramatic literature), Burke notes in *Attitudes toward History* (1937) that people generally take either a tragic or a comic perspective on human motivation. The tragic view holds that people are vicious or evil. The comic view, however, holds that people are mistaken, *necessarily* mistaken, that "all people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, that *every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness" (41). Burke preferred to take a comic rather than a tragic perspective on life.

   Write an account of a recent situation in which you made an interpretation (of a text, film, event, etc.) that turned out to be totally wrong. What happened? How did you discover that you had been mistaken? What in your training led to the mistake? What role did language play in the situation?

2. To see how a terministic screen both provides perspectives and filters them from view simultaneously, perform a cluster analysis on a text to isolate some of what Burke would call its "god-terms," or terms that seem to be the ones from which all others radiate. Then, track down the meanings and etymologies of these terms in a good dictionary, such as *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Generate a list of definitions, then write an essay that discusses the scope and circumference of these key terms.

   With regard to Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," for example, terms like *civil, civilian, civility, duty, obedience, authority, expedient, resistance, mediation,* and *conciliatory* comprise a terministic screen whose scope and circumference extend broadly and yet still might predispose us to see the characteristic or defining attitude of civil disobedience as polemical or antagonistic, even when there may be other attitudes motivating the expression of civil disobedience itself (greed, for example). The terministic screen directs the attention to particular motivational clusters, even as it might hide others. For instance, recall that Thoreau argues that "action from principle" is always revolutionary when it is right and just. The ambiguity in the term *civil* has thus made it possible for some to conclude that violence is a form of civility, seen from the "right" context.

3. Construct additional pentads by renaming the act of hacktivism in a variety of ways, then analyze one or more of them to see how the pentad helps reveal motive. What happens, for example, if you say hacktivists are building a resume? Protecting people from corporate monopolies?

4. Construct a pentad and corresponding analysis with regard to a different form of social protest, such as marches, sit-ins, graffiti, documentary films, or boycotts.

4

The Resources of Terminology

❖

"At the very start, one's terms jump to conclusions." Typically Burkeian, the phrase is one of his "Flowerishes" (i.e., "flourishes") and captures an essential characteristic of his work and his methodology (see Chapter 3). It conveys a twist on the familiar biblical phrase, "In the Beginning was the Word" (John 1:1), such that we might say, "In the End, there was the Word." While we often think of our first words as beginnings, Burke will have us think of them as endings, as conclusions to tangled chains of meaning, significance, motivation, and dialectic. We can think of the *word* as the sign of a world, or the word as a sign of the *world*. Whereas Protagoras would say, "Man is the measure of all things," Burke might say, "A word is the measure of all things." Or perhaps he would say, "Our words choose us." What does he have in mind?

If you think of a word as an act, it would have to be the culmination of something, and as a word, it could also potentially act on something else. A word, then, is both the sign of a motivated act and a motivating act. The idea that words are beginnings and that they jump to conclusions is an implicit contention in the work of Sigmund Freud, who believed that words could be signs of inner turmoil or neuroses. For Freud, the content of dreams themselves were not really the issue. The words his patients used to symbolize the dream material, however, were of central importance. Motivated as they were by their own interpretation of their dreams, the words they used to interpret their dream material were for Freud signs that could be analyzed, rearranged, and even

cast off by replacing them with new ones. The "talking cure" of psychoanalysis involves a process of substituting the analyst's signs for the patient's signs, which re-motivates new interpretations of the primary material. The congealed distinctions (interpretations) of the patient are cast off as if by magic, and the new distinctions of the psychoanalyst are substituted. On the one hand, the patient is relieved of the burden of interpretation. On the other, the analyst's interpretation—a kind of exorcism by misnomer won by renaming the elements of the dream—needs to be persuasive to the patient. Much of Freud's time was spent convincing his patients that he was right in interpreting their dreams as he did, that he warranted their trust and could satisfy their need to identify with him and the interpretation that he offered them.

The motive for a symbolic act can also produce new combinations of terms and thus new meanings. Recall Burke's representative anecdote of the central moltenness (Chapter 1). Our words are distinctions that have congealed on the surface, having sprung forth from a larger cauldron of meaning and significance. The function of dramatism is to return these words to their origins in a cluster of motives, then to let them reemerge in an alembic process, a process of distillation and refinement. Burke also encourages us not to resist the impulse to consider ourselves involved in the process of elaborating meaning as subjective agents. Our involvement in elaborating meaning and the subsequent understanding that it generates requires, for Burke, tracking down "*the kinds of observations implicit in the terminology you have chosen, whether your choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous*" (*Language as Symbolic Action*, 47).

We could see this method as a sort of inventing backward. To investigate the resources of terminology in dramatism, we can begin with our terms themselves, as terms, suspending momentarily and for the purposes of elaboration their function as signs of things. We can explore the possibility that our ideas are not always the seeds of new insight, but germs of the unending conversation of history that has preceded them. We usually tend to think of invention as a generative process, but perhaps we should consider the utility of learning to think not like traditional inventors—formulating hypotheses, testing them out, revising them—but like archeologists, sifting through the layers of meaning, dusting off, cracking open, disassociating our terms from each other and the ideas they represent. As we have seen in previous chapters, terms like *man, fascist, civil, anecdote,* and *rhetoric* carry with them

residual or prior meaning and uses, whether we consciously recognize them or not. (This is also a key principle behind Freudian psychoanalysis.) We find precedent for such tracking down of the implications in a terminology in the dialogues of Plato, who nearly always presented Socrates' conclusions as first principles, working backward from them to generate the dialectic that would end up where he began.

In this chapter, we examine various perspectives on the nature of symbols, of what are called **signs, signifiers,** and **signifieds.** With its focus on the concept of entelechy, dramatism suggests ways for us to trace the resources of our terminology so that we can uncover the motives that lurk beneath them, the meanings they make possible, and the power they have to foster identification. We will learn to see that motives are really, as Burke suggests, "shorthand terms for situations" (*Permanence and Change*, 29). We will discuss the scene-agent and purpose-agent ratios as capable of shedding light on the tendency for us to see the "real" as a simulation, as a representation only (what critic Jean Baudrillard calls **simulacrum.**) So, for instance, we might view events in our lives as if they are scenes in a movie or "chapters" in some larger text. (My five-year-old son Matthew threw his plastic dagger in the driveway the other day, explaining quite matter-of-factly that he did so because "it was part of the scene.") The simulacrum is a phenomenon motivated not by a "development" so much as by our ways of reading our situations through the resources afforded to us by our terminologies, which comprise the symbol systems that help us adjust to the world and to each other and that sometimes prompt people to rewrite their experience as if it were part of an elaborate narrative. Eyewitness accounts of dramatic events often show the prevalence of the simulacra. People report that "it was just like in a movie." The interpretive lens for confronting experience is mediated by a secondary level of textuality (or imagery, in this example). One resource of dramatism is its capacity for exposing these mediating texts, terms, or images.

Signs, Signifiers, and Signifieds

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) is the Swiss linguist credited with formally articulating the system of signs and signification that has had so much influence on modern critical theory in philosophy and literary theory. Saussure had no direct influence on Burke's dramatism. Nevertheless, Saussure's explanation of signs, signifiers, and signifieds proves

useful in understanding the resources of terminology, the concept of entelechy, and what Burke calls "The Five Dogs of Meaning."

Saussure explained language as a system of signs. A word in any given language is a particular instance of a sign, so that the sign for horse may be represented by different words across languages (*horse, equus, cheval, cavallo*), but there is always an underlying sign that consists of two components: the *signifier*, which is the sound image; and the *signified*, which is the concept or referent. Represented visually, the sign looks like this:

$$\text{Sign} = \frac{\text{Signifier (sound-image)}}{\text{Signified (concept)}}$$

The signifier, or sound-image, is the word as it is pronounced orally or as it is represented visually. The letters *d-o-g* or the sounds they represent when combined comprise the signifier *dog*. The signified for *dog* is, thinking most generally, a highly variable domesticated mammal. Combined, the signifier (*d-o-g*) and signified (domesticated mammal) comprise the sign *dog*. It may seem like a fairly obvious equation, but when you really think about it, the problem of the sign gets interesting.

Saussure argued that the relationship between the signifier and the signified was arbitrary, meaning that the sign has no necessary correlation with its referent (the concept to which it refers). Furthermore, the signified can function in two ways, as *denotative* (the concept itself) and *connotative* (the associations we make with the concept). We know that the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary because we see a range of signifiers (*horse, equus, cheval, cavallo*) across languages used to signify what people agree is the concept of a four-legged hooved mammal. Saussure also noted that while we are predisposed to see substance in language (see words as the direct signs of things), language is really a formal system of interrelationships, a form with social and historical conventions governing its function. Language is, in other words, a self-referential system of symbols.

You can imagine what problems result from this arbitrary relationship between the signifier and signified. When I write *cat,* you may think of *your* pet cat, while I may be thinking of *my* pet cat. The two may have in common *cat-ness,* yet practically speaking they are clearly not the same signifieds. My cat is not your cat. A cool cat, as they used to say long ago, was not even a cat at all, but a jazz musician. There is clearly a

relationship between signifiers and signifieds, but it is one that is defined socially, historically, and even personally. The relationship may also change over time as people invent new meanings for signs through repeated use (and even misuse). In the late 1980s, *bad* came to mean *good* or *bad,* depending on the context. We also know that across languages there may be differing degrees of discrimination with regard to the signifier/signified relationship. Most people have heard of the (always exaggerated) story of how many more terms there are for snow in the language of Eskimos (Inuit) than there are in English (this is called "The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax"). The principle does have some merit, however, because we know that words are created to name objects and events in our environment to which we need to make reference (e-mail was not a word 15 years ago) and in proportion to our powers or need of discrimination (such as among types of mullets). To the degree that our terminologies differ, so do our realities. If you think of reality as "that to which you can refer," then this makes perfect sense.

"What Are the Signs of What?"

The heading is the title of Burke's essay in *Language as Symbolic Action* that somewhat playfully supposes for the sake of perspective by incongruity that our customary way of thinking of words as signs of things is backward. Suppose, he suggests, that things are signs of words? (The Gary Larson cartoon discussed in Chapter 1 lives out this possibility.) In addressing this question, Burke develops a theory of **entitlement,** of naming, that can help us understand the power of language to reshape situations. The commonsense view is that words are signs of things, or in Saussurean terms, that a signifier refers to a signified. Burke writes: "Various things in our way of living, are thought to be singled out by words which stand for them; and in this sense the words are said to be the 'signs' of those corresponding things" ("What Are the Signs of What? (A Theory of 'Entitlement')," 360). In reversing this equation, he has in mind that words possess a "spirit" peculiar to their nature as words and that the things of experience are the material equivalent, "the manifestation of this spirit in visible tangible bodies" (361). When you say, for example, that "The man walks down the street," you have entitled a situation, but no one could illustrate this exactly because there is ambiguity in terms like *man* (tall, short, thin, heavy-set?), *walk* (upright, bent over, quickly, confidently?), and *street* (busy, quiet, tree-lined, wide,

narrow?). "The man walks down the street" has an essence that conveys meaning, but that essence waits to be filled in or matched with detail that gives it more precise meaning. In the absence of other details, two people might imagine very different men walking in very different ways down very different-looking streets. If this is the case, then a situation or thing in the world (as an act) possesses an essence or spirit that can be rendered in words. If we witness a dog walking down the street, we see a "dog-situation" that is a sign for "The dog walks down the street." Burke sums up:

> Thus, in mediating between the social realm and the realm of nonverbal nature, words communicate to things the spirit that the society imposes upon the words which have come to be the "names" for them. The things are in effect the visible tangible material embodiments of the spirit that infuses them through the medium of words. (362)

What difference does it make? We witness situations daily that we respond to with a glance, by registering and naming them (e.g., "You should have seen what happened!"), or by some other physical response. They become for us signs of words that share the same essence. At the same time, however, these situations are only situations to the extent that we possess terms for naming them. Each unique situation or thing in the world signifies, and its verbal representation is a distillation of its essence that the entitler (namer) attributes to it. A nicely trimmed lawn in a suburban neighborhood may be a sign of status, but it might also be a sign of materialism, or a sign simply that Joe has finally cleaned up his disgrace for a yard (depending upon your point of view). If you hear a cell phone ring in a crowded theater, you might see it as a sign of our global village, a sign of how inconsiderate people can be, a sign of an emergency, or just "a sign of the times." Things are signs of words, in this sense, and invoke a signifying act that draws from a range of socially or personally defined meanings normally assigned to them.

Entelechy and "Jumping to Conclusions"

The concept of entelechy originated in Aristotle. In his work (such as his *Metaphysics*) it referred to the inner potentiality that could make matter into form. It comes from the Greek word, *entelechia,* whose roots are

telos ("end") and *echein* ("to have"). Put most simply, entelechy is the actualization of form, which is in turn the end result of an act of becoming. It is "to have the end." You could think of a strand of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) as containing the essential matter that, through an entelechial process, manifests itself formally as a living organism. All the necessary ingredients, its essence, are there from the start. Entelechy is also the principle of generation implicitly invoked by the army's slogan, "Be all that you can be."

Burke borrows the concept of entelechy to explain the function of a terminology as a repository of potential meaning. Through a process of dialectical extension, a terminology can lead to conclusions that may be unanticipated initially but in the end always are traceable to their roots in a cluster of motives. When he says that at the very start our terms jump to conclusions, this is what he has in mind. Our terms are shorthand for motives, which in turn are shorthand for situations. Dramatism helps us unravel our terminologies so that we can see them as part of the motivational cluster that influences symbolic action, our attempts to adjust to and remake our situation.

The Five Dogs of Meaning

In his essay "Mind, Body, and the Unconscious," Burke provides another kind of pentad, this time one that maps the possibilities for defining and extending the function of the symbol and its signifying function. The process he describes involves, in essence, tracking down a term's "unconscious" with reference to the various ways that terms take on meaning. Terms are actions motivated by personal associations, lexical relationships, and intrinsic qualities of meaning. Here is a summary of Burke's map of the range of signification implicit in terms:

There are certainly many species of dogs, but in terms of *dog* as a sign, there are five types. First, there is the *primal dog,* which is the first dog that you knew or remember and who may have bitten you, licked your face, been your constant companion, and so on. This primal dog always lurks in your consciousness as a context or situation with which you associate new experience and that can be liberated under the right circumstances (by therapy, drugs, hypnosis, the right smell, etc.).

Second, there is the *jingle dog,* which concerns the term *dog*'s tonal relationship to other terms with which it might rhyme or share other

features of sound. As mentioned in Chapter 1, *dog* is god spelled backward. We call it a malapropism when people inadvertently substitute the jingle dog for the intended dog. A malapropism (named after the character Mrs. Malaprop in Richard Sheridan's play *The Rivals*) is the use of a word sounding like another but used in the wrong context, often to humorous effect, as in "The Constitution insures domestic hostility" (tranquility).

Third, there is the *lexical dog*, which is the dog defined in the dictionary. It is the most common of all dogs, representing the socially accepted meanings for a given term. The lexical dog is a definition. In practice, of course, people do not always have these definitions in mind when they use a term, so that variations of meaning (as in poetry) enrich the formal definition of the word.

Fourth, there is the *entelechial dog*, which is the perfect or ultimate dog. It is the dog you have in mind when you think of "dog-ness." Here is Burke's example:

> Beginning with the material substance, bread, let us next move to the word "bread." Once we have that word, through sheerly verbal manipulations we can arrive at a term for "perfect bread." Having got to that point, we find two quite different kinds of resources open to us. We may feel disillusioned about "reality" because the thing bread falls so tragically short of the ideal that flits about our word for "perfect" bread. Or we might be graced with the opportunity to discern, all around us, evidences of the way whereby even the worst of bread embodies, however finitely, the principle of an infinitely and absolutely "perfect" bread. ("Mind, Body, and the Unconscious," 73–73)

A dog like Lassie, because of his status as the dog-of-dogs, embodies the entelechial dog.

Last is the *tautological dog*. This dog functions like the spirit of dogness, so that when you see something normally associated with dogs (dog food, a "best friend," a doghouse, etc.) you invest it with the spirit of the tautological dog. In a more abstract sense, you often hear people say that they sensed something terrible was going to happen before it actually happened (a form of anxiety). It may be that there are signs of doom (tautological doom) that they notice, having invested black cats, for instance, with the spirit of bad luck.

The "primal dog," the "jingle dog," the "lexical dog," the "entelechial dog," and the "tautological dog" each represent different ways that ambiguity resides in our terms. That ambiguity can become a resource also. We can examine a term to look for its capacity for stretching, the possibility that it signifies in unexpected or nonobvious ways. To track the implications of a terminology requires a methodical attempt to unpack its meaning. From the perspective of the person who aims to teach, delight, or persuade, the ambiguity is there to exploit. Both processes of elaborating and exploiting ambiguity are characteristics of dramatism as an analytical method and rhetoric as both an analytical and applied art. The five dogs of meaning create openings for identification and consubstantiality as they jump to conclusions from the very start.

The Strategies of Dialectic: Merger and Division

People pursue meaning and leap to conclusions in other ways as well. In Burke's view, dialectic is the systematic working out of a terminology to its predetermined ends. Burke illustrates the process of dialectic with reference to Freud, whom he believed was especially adept at tracking down the implications of his own terminology. Burke would say also, however, that therein was Freud's weakness, the interpretive blindness that resulted from the terministic screen of psychoanalytic theory and its stress upon familial relationships as the origin of ego and sexual development. For example, association is a principle of concordance or agreement that allows us to chart terms by noting how ideas, images, or themes are correlated through overlapping ambiguity. In his essay "Symbol and Association," Burke provides a useful example that can also illustrate how terms act, seemingly of their own volition. Using the representative anecdote of the Oedipus story, for instance, Freud came to understand a particular dream symbol by making associations based on a principle, which he would then use to extend the meaning of the symbol. For instance, key terms of the Oedipal story, *Father-King-God*, may be associated, each representing a principle of authority. In Freud's terministic screen, *Father* is primary, while the others are derivative or

"projections" of the meaning of *Father*. Associations may initially be free, as in Freud's idea of "free association," but the individual consciousness ultimately sorts them into patterns through interpretation and synthesis.

Now here's the crux: while there may be individual free associations, the psychoanalyst rearranges them by using meaning existing in the personal, familial framework—the Oedipal anecdote—that comprises Freud's terministic screen for ego and sexual development. There could be some other formal pattern generating the associations (some personal representative anecdote), but the one imposed includes, for instance, an equation such as *Father-Paternal* or *Paternal-God*. Notice, however, that merging *Father* (Freud's key term) into *Paternal*, makes an equation that does not hold up because *Paternal* entails *Mother* as well. There is some doubt that *Father* is ambiguous enough to include *Mother* as part of its meaning, so the original terministic screen must flex or break if it's to account for such a discrimination.

The interpretation using "authority" as the controlling principle shows signs of breaking down. So Freud introduces another subsidiary anecdote, the Electra Complex, to try to account for female sexuality, but even that screen defines the female in terms of the male, as lacking but desiring the phallus, which from Freud's perspective, enables the dialectical process of tracking down the implications of the representative anecdote to continue. Since Freud's terministic screen for psychoanalysis does not change fundamentally at the level of the representative anecdote, *female* always means for him "not-male." Freud uses the resources of the **negative** rhetorically. In simple terms, this strategic move would be similar to painting "Not a Dog" on the tree in the Gary Larson cartoon discussed in Chapter 1. The man would have "cleared things up," but only with the verbal magic of the negative, which enables him to make an assertion with no positive reference.

The act of moving from the symbol to the anecdote then back to further interpretation enables higher orders of generalization, but it is propelled to its conclusions by its originating terms in a dialectical process. An argument could be made that while psychoanalytic theory presumes to be modeled on observation, it generates its conclusions and cures in a systematic tracking down of its originating terms (contained in its representative anecdote of *Father-Paternal* and *Paternal-God*), a process that the patient learns as well. When successful, the disparate as-

pects of experience fall together as a form. As many have pointed out, however, there is still a fundamental problem with the originating anecdote, which does not allow for the dialectical development of a well-rounded theory of female sexuality. Freud's frustrations and ultimate failure with his patient Dora make that clear. (See his *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria.*) The strategic (i.e., rhetorical) moves he makes unfold in a procedure of merger and division.

Burke illustrates the process of merger and division in dialectic with a card trick. Suppose you want someone to name a card that you have hidden in your pocket (e.g., the queen of spades). You can begin by asking the person to name the four suits (i.e., clubs, spades, hearts, diamonds), then to select two of those. The person chooses clubs and spades. You "merge" with the choice when you say, "Okay, now select one of these." The person chooses clubs, in which case you "divide" from the choice and say, "That leaves spades, right?" Then you say, "Name the four highest spades." The answer is ace-king-queen-jack. You respond: "Select two of those." If the person says, "Queen and jack," you merge with the choice and say, "Now select one of those." If the person replies, "Queen," you produce your hidden queen of spades to the great surprise of your victim. If when you ask the person to select two of the four highest cards and the queen is not included, you simply divide from the choice, saying, "That leaves so-and-so." If on the last step, the person chooses, for example, the jack of spades, you say, "That leaves the queen" and produce the card, again to great surprise (*A Grammar of Motives*, 415–16). The trick never fails as long as you do not forget what card you have hidden. Beginning with the terministic screen (clubs, spades, hearts, diamonds), each of the moves is simply a matter of merging and dividing meaning until the desired conclusion is reached. The victim of the trick has the illusion of acting freely, which makes the end so surprising. ("How did you know I'd pick that card!" is often the first reaction.) But the movement toward the conclusion has been scripted, initially by the scope and circumference of the four suits, then the process of merger and division as it operates with the person's selections.

This process of introducing distinctions and generalizations in the give-and-take of dialogue was the method of dialectic displayed in many of Plato's works. Plato's renditions are much more complicated, but you will see the process unfold. The challenge is to see such a dialectical process at work when the terministic screen is more complicated

than the four suits of playing cards (e.g., in psychoanalytic theory, for instance), which is all the more reason to pay attention to the process lest we be incapacitated by its blindnesses.

Plato's Gorgias

Plato (428?–348 BCE) drove a wedge between philosophy and rhetoric that still persists. His treatment of rhetoric in the *Gorgias,* an early work representing the views of Socrates on issues of ethics and rhetoric, is less than flattering. As you read this short excerpt from *Gorgias,* bear in mind that for Socrates, *rhetoric* was only a means to an (immoral) end and entailed, essentially, "lying to get what you want," in much the same sense we hear the term used in popular media today. However, in the *Phaedrus,* a later dialogue, rhetoric becomes a much more complex and philosophical art, one still contrasted (negatively) with dialectic but with considerably more overlap in aims than he allowed in *Gorgias.* Following the section from *Gorgias,* you will see how dialectic and rhetoric work together in *Phaedrus* and thus ways to see dramatism and rhetoric converge in interesting ways.

The characters of *Gorgias* are Socrates (the philosopher), Gorgias (a well-known teacher of rhetoric and a sophist), and Polus and Callicles (both admirers and students of Gorgias). Pay attention to Socrates' moves to see if you can see any cards up his sleeve (so to speak).

Translated by *Benjamin Jowett*

Plato

Gorgias (380 BCE)

Soc. Very good then; as you profess to be a rhetorician, and a maker of rhetoricians, let me ask you, with what is rhetoric concerned: I might ask with what is weaving concerned, and you would reply (would you not?), with the making of garments?

Gor. Yes.

Soc. And music is concerned with the composition of melodies?

Gor. It is.

Soc. O Gorgias, how I admire the surpassing brevity of your answers!

Gor. Well, Socrates, I do think myself quite good at that.

Soc. I am glad to hear it; answer me in like manner about rhetoric: with what is rhetoric concerned?

Gor. With discourse.

Soc. What sort of discourse, Gorgias?—such discourse as would teach by what treatment the sick might get well?

Gor. No.

Soc. Then rhetoric is not concerned with all kinds of discourse?

Gor. Certainly not.

Soc. And yet rhetoric makes men able to speak?

Gor. Yes.

Soc. And to understand that about which they speak?

Gor. Of course.

Soc. But does not the art of medicine, which we were just now mentioning, also make men able to understand and speak about the sick?

Gor. Certainly.

Soc. Then medicine also treats of discourse?

Gor. Yes.

Soc. Of discourse concerning diseases?

Gor. Just so.

Soc. And does not gymnastic also treat of discourse concerning the good or evil condition of the body?

Gor. Very true.

Soc. And the same, Gorgias, is true of the other arts:—all of them treat of discourse concerning the subjects with which they severally have to do.

Gor. Clearly.

Soc. Then why, if you call rhetoric the art which treats of discourse, and all the other arts treat of discourse, do you not call them arts of rhetoric?

Gor. Because, Socrates, the knowledge of the other arts is almost entirely concerned with some sort of manual operation; but there is no such physical activity in rhetoric which does its work and achieves its purpose entirely through the medium of discourse. And therefore I am justified in claiming that rhetoric treats of discourse.

Soc. I am not sure whether I entirely understand you, but I dare say I shall soon know better; please to answer me a question:—you would allow that there are arts?

Gor. Yes.

Soc. As to the arts generally, they are for the most part concerned with doing, and require little or no speaking; in painting, and statuary, and many other arts, the work may proceed in silence; and of such arts I suppose you would say that they do not come within the province of rhetoric.

Gor. You perfectly conceive my meaning, Socrates.

Soc. But there are other arts which work wholly through the medium of language, and require either no action or very little, as, for example, the arts of arithmetic, of calculation, of geometry, of playing chess, and many others; in some of them speech is pretty nearly co-extensive with action, but in most of them the verbal element is greater—they depend wholly on words for their practice and achievement: and I take your meaning to be that rhetoric is an art of this latter sort?

Gor. Exactly.

Soc. And yet I do not believe that you really mean to call any of these arts rhetoric; although the precise expression which you used was, that rhetoric is an art which does its work and achieves its purpose entirely through the medium of discourse; and an adversary who wished to be captious might say, 'And so, Gorgias, you call arithmetic rhetoric.' But I do not think that you really mean that either arithmetic or geometry is called rhetoric by you.

Gor. You are quite right, Socrates, in your apprehension of my meaning.

Soc. Well, then, let me now have the rest of my answer:—seeing that rhetoric is one of those arts which works mainly by the use of words, and there are other arts which also use words, tell me what is that subject with which rhetoric uses words to deal:—Suppose that a person asks me about some of the arts which I was mentioning just now; he might say, 'Socrates, what is arithmetic?' and I should reply to him, as you replied to me, that arithmetic is one of those arts which achieve their purpose through words. And then he would proceed to ask: 'Words about what?' and I should reply, About odd and even numbers, as many as there are of either sort. And if he asked again: 'What is the art of calculation?' I should say, That also is one of the arts which achieve their purpose wholly with words. And if he further said, 'what is it concerned with?' I should say, like the clerks in the assembly, that 'in all other respects whatsoever' it is like arithmetic, being concerned with the same subject viz. odd and even numbers, but it differs in so far as it con-

siders their numerical relations to themselves and to one another. And suppose, again, I were to say in reply to another question that astronomy too uses only words—he would ask, 'Words about what, Socrates?' and I should answer, words about the motions of the stars and sun and moon, and their relative swiftness.

Gor. You would be quite right, Socrates.

Soc. And now let us have from you, Gorgias, the truth about rhetoric: which you would admit (would you not?) to be one of those arts which act always and fulfil all their ends through the medium of words?

Gor. True.

Soc. Words which do what? I should ask. To what class of things do the words which rhetoric uses relate?

Gor. To the greatest, Socrates, and the best of human things.

Soc. That again, Gorgias, is ambiguous; I am still in the dark.

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. Gorgias's reputation as a philosopher never quite recovered after his slaughter by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, but scholars now recognize that he actually anticipates many of the insights of modern rhetorical theory, such as the provisionality of knowledge, the gap between the signifier and the signified, and the nature of terministic screens as perspectives that determine what can be known. His famous and much-discussed founding principles were described in his fragment "On the Nonexistent" as follows:

    a. Nothing exists.

    b. If anything did exist, it could not be known.

    c. Even if anything did exist and could be known, it could not be communicated to another.

    Do you agree with Gorgias? Why or why not? Do you find any parallels to Gorgias' principles in modern critical theory? How would you explain them?

2. The "Socratic Question" asks to what degree Plato fictionalized the life and thought of Socrates, who never wrote a word himself. To what extent has Plato shaped his content to suit his own purposes? How would we know? Do you see anything in Plato's representation of Gorgias or Socrates in

this excerpt that might lead you to believe he had "stacked the deck" against Gorgias?

Dialogue and Dialectic

Socrates gets Gorgias to swing along with him by posing the initial propositions—that is, that weaving is concerned with the making of garments; and music, with the making of compositions (the tautological dog). Gorgias says that rhetoric is concerned with discourse (not the making of discourse, conveniently enough). Socrates does not want to accept that association, so he divides from Gorgias, getting him to agree that rhetoric is not concerned with the discourse doctors use to teach their patients how to get well. From that point on, it is a rout. Through a series of leading questions, Socrates leads Gorgias to the conclusion that medicine and gymnastic must be arts of rhetoric, based upon his answers in the unfolding dialectic.

Gorgias tries to escape this apparent contradiction by noting that medicine and gymnastic involve external action, whereas rhetoric only has effects in discourse (i.e., mentally). Socrates claims befuddlement and begs to ask more questions, ones that make his point that other arts (arithmetic, geometry, etc.) also work wholly in language (or symbols). Gorgias submits, and by the end of this sequence, rhetoric becomes indistinguishable from the other arts which use words to effect their results. To achieve his purpose (e.g., to demonstrate that rhetoric is a form of flattery akin to cookery and "no art at all"), Socrates devises questions which he knows will drive Gorgias into a corner and expose the contradictions in his claims for rhetoric. When Gorgias disagrees with Socrates, it is a setup, because he will propose an alternative (divide) and end up again making propositions that Gorgias has to agree with (merge).

Dialectic, as illustrated in Burke's card trick and in this section of the *Gorgias,* is hardly the act of interactive invention that Plato claims it is in his more formal defenses of the art. Rather, it is an act that exploits the ambiguity of terminology in give-and-take, the act of dividing and merging meanings in the interest of reaching conclusions. Ideally, the dialogue would end up at a view transcending the limitations of the individual perspectives. Practically, however, the ends are predetermined, at least as they are represented in the Platonic dialogues and contrary to

Socrates' explicit statements about his desire for learning. Nevertheless, taken as a whole—as a systematic exploration of the resources and limits of a terminology—these same dialogues are remarkable for their thoroughness, for Plato's ability to draw out the complexity in a cluster of terms and their corresponding motives. From a dramatistic perspective, dialectic is, in Plato and in Freud, a systematic tracking down of the implications of what Socrates would call first principles—conclusions that become starting points.

Platos's Phaedrus

In the *Phaedrus,* Plato offers a more complex understanding of rhetoric and dialectic, one that sheds some light on the need to integrate the dialectical process of tracking down the resources of terminology with the aim of identification. The dialogue consists of an exchange between Socrates and a young student, Phaedrus, who desires to learn how to make a good speech. In the first half of the dialogue, we see three set-speeches, each debating the question of whether it is better to receive the love of a nonlover or a lover. Phaedrus offers the first by Lysias, his teacher (and suitor?), as a model speech. Lysias' speech argues that it is better to receive the love of a nonlover. Socrates then offers his own, better version, arguing the same point (and with some embarrassment, since he does not agree with the argument). Then Socrates offers a long and "proper" answer to the question.

Socrates discussion of truth, reality, and the form of the soul in his second speech sets the stage for the ensuing discussion of writing and dialectic. Phaedrus is awed by the beauty of the speech, so that rather than "sleep at midday" he is quite anxious to talk (259). Socrates proposes that they discuss "the way to distinguish good writing and speaking from bad" (259). Bad writing persuades from probabilities, not truth, and therefore tries to "produce resemblances through obfuscation" (261). This kind of writing is artless routine. Good writing, and there is such a thing, is "really hardly more than a pleasant game" (265), but "it is not without value" (265) if we can develop "the power to organize into a single comprehensive system the unarranged characteristics of a subject" (265). Forming meaning from the chaos of experience is one of the necessary powers. The other is "the ability to divide into species according to natural articulations, avoiding the attempt to shatter the unity of a natural part" (265). Socrates identifies himself with

these aims, saying "Now I myself, Phaedrus, am a lover of these divisions and collections, in order that I may gain the ability both to think and speak" (266). These are the powers of the dialectician, the person "capable of concentrating his vision on a unity that is natural and extending it to multiplicities that are natural" (266).

Despite Socrates' teaching, Phaedrus has not understood that good dialectic and good writing are the agencies for philosophical inquiry. He revives the issue of technical rhetoric (recipes, rules, etc.) and wants to learn its devices. To steer him in another direction, Socrates offers a representative anecdote about art and harmony that shows the futility of learning the recipes for rhetoric. His point is that Phaedrus wants to know the necessary preliminaries of the art, not the art itself (268). Phaedrus agrees and finally puts the question to Socrates: "How and from what source may one acquire the true art of rhetorical persuasion?" (269). Socrates answers that only Pericles and Anaxagoras were finished speakers. Then he describes how they became this way:

> Every great art must be supplemented by leisurely discussion, by stargazing, if you will, about the nature of things. This kind of discussion seems somehow or other to be the source of the characteristic we are looking for: that loftiness of mind that by all means and at all times strives to attain perfection. (270)

Writers must be willing to immerse themselves in uncertainty in order to understand the multiplicity of experience. In addition, says Socrates, we must proceed "scientifically, not merely by empirical routine" (270), if we are to become masters of the art of rhetoric.

Socrates does not admit that anyone with the ability to practice rhetoric as an art yet exists. Nevertheless, if such a rhetorician could exist, he would be as "scientific a writer as possible" (271). (By "scientific," Socrates probably means "systematic.") After Socrates outlines what this rhetorician would have to know—types of souls and so on—Phaedrus realizes "it does seem to be no small task" (272). Yes, answers Socrates, and therefore most believe "it would be foolish to wander off the track on a long and thorny path when you can take a short and easy one" (272). Playing devil's advocate, Socrates describes the ones who take the easy path, those who would "pursue probability while speaking and let truth go to hell and stay there" (272). Socrates finishes with a hypotheti-

cal conversation with Tisias, a paid teacher of the technical, rule-governed rhetoric with which Phaedrus is familiar (Tisias is also the purported founder of rhetorical arts). Socrates tells Phaedrus, "Unless a man reckons up the various natures of his future audience and gains the capacity to divide existent things according to their classes and to compass them by a single kind in each case in which they are severally one, he will never attain such science in speech as it is possible for a man to achieve" (273).

This activity of rhetoric described by Socrates is a synthesis of dialectic (merger and division) and identification (the nature of the audience). The process is "long and circuitous" (274), but "it's for great ends we must take the long way round" (274). As dramatism teaches us, tracking the resources of terminology is indeed a circuitous route, but as Socrates suggested long ago, the long and thorny path may be the only way to escape from the well-worn ruts of thinking that make us passive recipients of predetermined ends, of terministic screens that can blind us to alternatives. In the next section, we will see how a view of rhetoric as the synthesis of dialectic and identification helps us understand how people can be driven into a corner by the (limited) resources of their terminology and the terrible consequences for others that can result.

The Pentadic Ratios: Agent-Purpose

The agent-purpose ratio asks, what is the influence of the agent on the purpose? In what ways, in other words, does the agent-purpose ratio function as a motive? That question was a central one for Karl Marx (1818–1883), whose most famous proposition was probably that "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (*The German Ideology*, 247). By that he means roughly that who we think we are is not merely an act of will, but a consequence of our scene. We do not, in other words, shape something as complex as history and our place in it by an act of conscious purpose, rationality, or desire. Rather, history acts on the agent to shape consciousness, to set the course of a life, as an agency. The human struggle has always been to fight against such a process, to exert power over experience and others to shape life. It was Socrates' passion, certainly. Burke recognizes the problems posed by this dilemma and is quick to point out that our terminologies can be

tracked down for the sake of exposing the historical forces (the situation) that inscribes them in a cluster of motives. The agent-purpose ratio enables that process by showing us how the agent is motivated by purpose to act.

To illustrate, our representative anecdote will be the narratives of serial murder that have become so prominent in modern consciousness—both as represented in literature and film, and also in mythology and the news media. The aim is to show a rhetorical motive in the agents who perform the acts as well as in the literary or cinematic representations of the serial killer. In the following application of the agent-purpose ratio, the purpose of the serial killer is analyzed as consubstantiality; the act, as serial murder; and the agent, the killer who transforms himself by symbolic association with his victims.

Serial Narratives/Serial Murderers: Thomas Harris's Hannibal

Thomas Harris's *Hannibal* (1999) is the third novel in a trilogy that began with *Red Dragon* (1981) and continued with *Silence of the Lambs* (1988). *Hannibal* was much anticipated at the time of its release because even after the success of the film adaptation of *Silence of the Lambs*, Harris took 11 years to return to the narrative. The novel met with considerable fanfare and controversy for its treatment of cannibalism and of the heroine of the novel, Clarice Starling, who was played by Jodie Foster in the film version of *Silence of the Lambs* and by Julianne Moore in the adaptation of *Hannibal* (2001). *Hannibal* is just one treatment of a subject that has for many years caused great puzzlement and anxiety. There are the serial killings themselves, brutal acts that are especially terrifying in part because the motive seems to be tied to some inscrutable purpose without a logical cause, rather than to some situation (such as robbery) or even desire (such as revenge). The victims and killers are usually complete strangers, so the feeling that the killing has been indiscriminate and motiveless becomes a source of elevated anxiety. The legend of Jack the Ripper, who brutally murdered seven or more women in the Whitechapel district of London in the fall of 1888 without being caught, has been adapted in some form in the films of Alfred Hitchcock (*The Lodger, Shadow of a Doubt,* and *Psycho,* for instance) and more recently, in novels by Harris, Caleb Carr (*The Alienist*

and *Angel of Darkness*), and Bret Easton Ellis (*American Psycho*). Serial murder has also become a popular subject for television shows such as *Profiler, Millennium,* and *The X-Files.* The continual reappearance of real-life serial killers (such as Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Danny Rolling, Richard Ramirez, and Angel Maturino Resendez) fuels the cultural anxiety expressed by the consistent repetition of the serial killer narrative in fiction and film. In a trading back and forth of symbols, there has emerged a conventional form for the serial killer narrative, whether expressed artistically or violently. In *Hannibal,* Harris offers us a glimpse of the complex motives of an imaginary serial killer in such a way that we might come to understand that these are never motiveless crimes, that they are sometimes crimes of principle and desire acted out in a narrative on the victims, the principles they represent, and the culture that defines them. They can be seen specifically as an expression of the desire for identification and consubstantiality, both of which hinge on the agent-purpose ratio. Because of the popularity of the film adaptation of *Hannibal* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 2001), the narratives they tell are likely to continue to stand in the dark corner of the American consciousness.

The Rhetoric of Desire

In *Gorgias,* Socrates concludes (along with his reluctant but pliable interlocutors) that rhetoric is a form of flattery akin to cookery. Both are "knacks" rather than fully developed arts. Both are "experience[s] in producing a sort of delight and gratification" (462). Socrates explains the connection further:

> In my opinion . . . Gorgias, the whole of which rhetoric is a part is not an art at all, but the habit of a bold and ready wit, which knows how to manage mankind: this habit I sum up under the word "flattery"; and it appears to me to have many other parts, one of which is cookery, which may seem to be an art, but, as I maintain, is only an experience or routine and not an art. (463)

Socrates says elsewhere that cookery is but a "simulation" or sham of medicine. Rhetoric is likewise a simulation of politics. Both cookery and rhetoric attend to the body and not the soul (464), aiming only for the

pleasure of the moment. Pleasure for its own sake, of course, was hardly a lofty goal in Socrates' hierarchy of values.

Forcing this connection between cookery and rhetoric helps reveal a key rhetorical element of Thomas Harris's novel *Hannibal* and its anti-hero, Hannibal "the Cannibal" Lecter (a good example of the jingle dog at work). Recall that Burke contends that the primary aim of rhetoric is identification, which he distinguishes from persuasion. Unlike Aristotelian persuasion, identification allows for an unconscious factor in the appeal. In any rhetorical situation there is always a dialectical struggle between identification and division (people can never be identical or divided in the absolute sense). The unconscious figures in as the desire for what Burke calls consubstantiality or "sharing of substance." Consubstantiality can be achieved by different means, including the devices of form, which he calls a type of appeal, the "arousal and gratification of desire." We can also imagine ourselves to be identified with an other, which is the point at which the unconscious figures in. The desire is to be "substantially one" with another person, yet to remain separate as well. As we discussed in Chapter 1, this desire is pursued by transforming the principle that the "other" represents, an act of identification. "The 'desire to kill' a certain person is much more properly analyzable as a desire to *transform the principle* which that person *represents* (*A Rhetoric of Motives*, 13). Because transformation involves changing a thing from one state to another, it is arrestive and coercive, and, consequentially, an expression of power. The centrality of the ambiguous notion of substance in Burke's rhetoric liberates interesting possibilities for understanding the source and motivation of Hannibal Lecter's power at the same time that it might help us explain the convergence of his somewhat over-refined taste and his desire to kill. In the end, it is not a coincidence that we find in Hannibal the Cannibal his insatiable desire to kill—to transform the principles which his victims represent—coupled with an exuberance for the culinary arts (cannibalistic or otherwise).

For the purpose of analysis, we will focus here on the novel version of *Hannibal*. Ridley Scott's adaptation, itself the subject of much fanfare, keeps fairly close to the plot of the novel, except at the end regarding the relationship of the protagonists that develops. The plot of the novel *Hannibal* picks up the story of Clarice Starling, the FBI agent who in *The Silence of the Lambs* managed, with Hannibal Lecter's help, to

capture the serial killer Jame Gumb ("Buffalo Bill"). In the opening chapters of the novel, Starling finds herself under review by her superiors at the FBI after a botched drug raid in which she shot a woman holding a baby. Even though the woman had already murdered Starling's best friend in the raid, was holding a weapon, and Starling kept the baby from harm, one of her superiors, Paul Krendler, forces her reassignment, partly out of jealousy because of her previous success and notoriety, and partly because she had rebuffed his advances.

In a subplot interwoven with Starling's story, we learn about Mason Verger, one of the victims Lecter left alive. Verger had been persuaded by Lecter (and drugs) to mutilate himself and feed himself to dogs, reducing himself to a man with no face or eyelids, bedridden and living with the aid of a respirator in constant agony. Verger, the heir to a meatpacking dynasty, had used his wealth to launch an international manhunt for Lecter so that he could execute his plan for revenge, which Harris describes as follows: "At Christmas communions around the earth, the devout believe that, through the miracle of transubstantiation, they eat the actual body and blood of Christ. Mason began the preparations for an even more impressive ceremony with no transubstantiation necessary. He began his arrangements for Dr. Hannibal Lecter to be eaten alive" (101).

Meanwhile, in Florence, Italy, we follow the efforts of a greedy police captain, Rinaldo Pazzi, to verify the identity of Lecter, who had escaped miraculously at the end of *The Silence of the Lambs* to a third world country and now had assumed a new identity (after plastic surgery and after murdering his predecessor) as the curator of an art museum. In response to Verger's reward for information about Lecter's whereabouts, Pazzi shares his information, Lecter is captured (but not before killing Pazzi) and brought to a farm, where the plan is to train wild boars to eat him alive while a film director captures the scene. Lecter escapes, of course, then returns to the United States to take care of Verger once and for all.

Starling has been hot on Lecter's trail as well and eventually learns of Verger's plan. She tracks Lecter to Verger's farm, but Lecter captures her and takes her to his home, where he drugs her for weeks. (Verger is killed by his sister with a moray eel.) Lecter also captures Starling's old nemesis, Krendler, and the two dine on Krendler's brains while he is still alive. (This concluding scene was one reason Jodie Foster refused to

reprise her role as Starling in the film version.) Starling ends up as Lecter's companion in Buenos Aires, apparently now won over after Lecter's chemically induced transformation of her identity.

In Harris's formulation, Lecter is evil because he translates the aims of rhetoric—identification and consubstantiality—into their literal equivalent: cannibalism. The symbolism of cooking and killing are fused with a rhetorical motive in Harris's work as early as *Red Dragon*, when Lecter codes a secret message to Francis Dollarhyde (the serial murderer being sought) using *The Joy of Cooking* as their shared reference. This convergence of symbols continues through the controversial scene in *Hannibal* that begins with Paul Krendler saying to Clarice: "Hello, Starling. . . . I always wanted to watch you eat" (470) and ends—following a course of sautéed slices of Krendler's frontal lobe in a truffle sauce—with Lecter and Starling chatting about music. Lecter's evil—and power—is his ability to get inside someone's head with a vengeance. It is a symbolic representation of the power of the unscrupulous rhetorician whom our culture perhaps rightfully fears so much. As does Keyser Söse in *The Usual Suspects*, Lecter constructs an elaborate and dramatic fantasy that utilizes rhetorical principles to fashion, manipulate, and in terrifying irony, even consume identity.

An early chapter in *Hannibal* helps to illustrate Lecter's purpose, which is to transform Starling into a female version of himself who can also substitute for his dead sister, who had been cannibalized by starving soldiers. In doing so, he must persuade Starling to imagine their identification as a precursor to consubstantiality. Already a master of disguise, Lecter hopes that in this act, he can transform himself as well. In a scene early in *Hannibal* (Chapter 5), we follow Starling as she reads and responds to the letter that Lecter sends her following the shooting incident that opens the novel. In Chapter 4, we had just heard Director Turnberry tell Jack Crawford (Starling's immediate boss in the Behavioral Science Unit of the FBI) that Starling was going to have to be sacrificed to appease the media's call for someone to take the fall: "Oversight wants a meat sacrifice," he says. "Fresh, bleating meat. And so do the media. DEA has to throw them some meat. ATF has to throw them some meat. And we have to throw them some. But in our case, they just might be satisfied with poultry" (24). In Chapter 5, Starling is

trying to bring some order into her predicament when she hears the doorbell ring. It is a delivery from Lecter. The text of the letter reads as follows:

Thomas Harris
From **Hannibal**

Dear Clarice,

I have followed with enthusiasm the course of your disgrace and public shaming. My own never bothered me, except for the inconvenience of being incarcerated, but you may lack perspective.

In our discussions down in the dungeon, it was apparent to me that your father, the dead night watchman, figures large in your value system. I think your success in putting an end to Jame Gumb's career as a couturier pleased you most because you could imagine your father doing it.

Now you are in bad odour with the FBI. Have you always imagined your father ahead of you there, have you imagined him a section chief, or—better even than Jack Crawford—a DEPUTY DIRECTOR, watching your progress with pride? And now do you see him shamed and crushed by your disgrace? Your failure? The sorry, petty end of a promising career? Do you see yourself doing the menial tasks your mother was reduced to, after the addicts busted a cap on your DADDY? Hmmmm? Will your failure reflect on them, will people forever wrongly believe that your parents were trailer camp tornado bait white trash? Tell me truly, Special Agent Starling.

Give it a moment before we proceed.

Now I will show you a quality you have that will help you: You are not blinded by tears, you have the onions to read on.

Here's an exercise you might find useful. I want you physically to do this with me:

Do you have a black iron skillet? You are a southern mountain girl, I can't imagine you would not. Put it on the kitchen table. Turn on the overhead lights.

Mapp had inherited her grandmother's skillet and used it often. It had a glassy black surface that no soap ever touched. Starling put it in front of her on the table.

Look into the skillet, Clarice. Lean over it and look down. If this were your mother's skillet, and it well may be, it would hold among its molecules the vibrations of all the conversations ever held in its presence. All the exchanges, the petty irritations, the deadly revelations, the flat announcements of disaster, the grunts and poetry of love.

Sit down at the table, Clarice. Look into the skillet. If it is well cured, it's a black pool, isn't it? It's like looking down a well. Your detailed reflection is not in the bottom, but you loom there, don't you? The light behind you, there you are in black-face, with a corona like your hair on fire.

We are elaborations of carbon, Clarice. You and the skillet and Daddy dead in the ground, cold as the skillet. It's all still there. Listen. How did they really sound, and live—your struggling parents. The concrete memories, not the imagi that swell your heart.

Why was your father not a deputy sheriff, in tight with the courthouse crowd? Why did your mother clean motels to keep you, even if she failed to keep you all together until you were grown?

What is your most vivid memory of the kitchen? Not the hospital, the kitchen.

My mother washing the blood out of my father's hat.

What is your best memory in the kitchen?

My father peeling oranges with his old pocketknife with the tip broken off, and passing the sections to us.

Your father, Clarice, was a night watchman. Your mother was a chambermaid.

Was a big federal career your hope or theirs? How much would your father bend to get along in a stale bureaucracy? How many buttocks would he kiss? Did you ever in your life see him toady or fawn?

Have your supervisors demonstrated any values, Clarice? How about your parents, did they demonstrate any? If so, are those values the same?

Look into the honest iron and tell me. Have you failed your dead family? Would they want you to suck up? What was their view on fortitude? You can be as strong as you wish to be.

You are a warrior, Clarice. The enemy is dead, the baby safe. You are a warrior.

The most stable elements, Clarice, appear in the middle of the periodic table, roughly between iron and silver.

Between iron and silver. I think that is appropriate for you.

Hannibal Lecter

P.S. You still owe me some information, you know. Tell me if you still wake up hearing the lambs. On any Sunday place an ad in the agony column of the national edition of the Times, the International Herald-Tribune, and the China Mail. Address it to A. A. Aaron so it will be first, and sign it Hannah.

Lecter, of course, is trying to get inside Starling's head, and he succeeds. Immediately after reading the letter, she

heard the words in the same voice that had mocked her and pierced her, probed her life and enlightened her in the maximum security ward of the insane asylum, when she had to trade the quick of her life to Hannibal Lecter in exchange for his vital knowledge of Buffalo Bill. The metallic rasp of that seldom-used voice still sounded in her dreams. (32)

Lecter is playing the rhetorician's trick of projecting an identity for Starling to identify with, both his own and one that he thinks she imagines for herself. They share "disgrace and public shaming." And he wants her to question whether she shares the values of her parents or of those with whom she works, people like Krendler. With whom does she identify? She may or may not share the values Lecter imagines for her parents, but what is important is that Lecter has succeeded in getting her to imagine what those values are, to fashion herself in their image, which is one that Lecter has constructed for her. He ultimately wants to transform Starling in the interest of their consubstantiality ("we are elaborations of carbon, Clarice. You and the skillet and Daddy dead in the ground, cold as the skillet"). In this novel, it is the first step in his larger plan of making Starling his permanent matrimonial and dinner partner. Of course, Lecter has played another trick as well. He has managed to persuade Starling to imagine her head in an iron skillet, an image that will be developed more fully under different circumstances and for different motives when the two dine on Krendler at the end of the novel. The reflection of her head in the skillet is a symbolic representation of

Lecter's desire to slay Starling as well, not by cooking and eating her, but by transforming the principle that she represents, the Law, into the symbolic substitute for his long-dead sister.

Mason Verger's plan to serve up Lecter to a band of starving boars functions as a constrastive form of re-identification. The idea is that Lecter would be able to watch himself being eaten alive. Verger chooses boars because of his experience preparing animals for slaughter, but he also wants Lecter to see himself becoming a boar, with a tonal pun on "bore." For someone with Lecter's refined taste, becoming a boar would be intolerable. Verger's plan involved the process of transubstantiation, which is the symbolic expression of consubstantiality.

For Lecter, consubstantiality is necessary, but he translates it into its literal equivalents. In the weeks preceding his and Starling's banquet, he begins her gradual transformation with the aid of hypnotic drugs, conversations about her father, and then even her father's skeleton, which Lecter has unearthed and put on display for her. Lecter sees her changing, and begins to wonder whether there was "room for Mischa within Starling" (454). (We discover earlier in the novel that Mischa, Lecter's young sister, had been cannibalized by deserters early in World War II, while Lecter had narrowly escaped the same fate.)

Just prior to the dinner, Lecter prepares her for the final stage of her transformation. He believes that she must exorcise the spirit of Krendler that has made her life in the FBI miserable. Lecter tells her: "Clarice, dinner appeals to taste and smell, the oldest senses and the closest to the center of the mind. Taste and smell are housed in the parts of the mind that precede pity, and pity has no place at my table." Then he asks her to observe her reflection: " 'Look, Clarice. That delicious vision is what you are. This evening you will see yourself from a distance for a while. You will see what is just, you will say what is true' " (466) and " 'If you feel pain bloom inside you, it will soon blossom into relief. Do you understand me?' " Starling doesn't understand, exactly. " 'No, Dr. Lecter, but I remember what you said. Damn a bunch of self-improvement. I want a pleasant dinner.' " In Lecter's view, of course, a pleasant dinner is always all about self-improvement.

They dine on Krendler's frontal lobes. Just before they do, Krendler asks her, " *Who are you anyway?* . . . You're not Starling' " (472). After the first course (accompanied by Krendler's rather funny line, "Smells great!"), Krendler is reduced to singing day-care songs

while Starling and Lecter discuss the "return" of Mischa. After Krendler insults Starling, she threatens with exuberance: " 'See if I sound like Oliver Twist when I ask for MORE' " (474), which releases in Lecter "glee which he could hardly contain" (474). After dinner, Starling offers Lecter her nipple, with the promise that he would no longer regret having to give up his mother's breast for Mischa. Both Starling and Lecter are thus transformed: Starling by her desire for transformation of the principles represented by her father and Krendler; Lecter by his acceptance of the guilt he felt at his sister's fate.

Throughout, Lecter's method has been to transform a purpose, the doctrine of consubstantiality, that is at the heart of rhetoric into its literal equivalent, the embodiment or absorption of the other into the self/agent. Believing literally that you are what you eat, he and Starling have refashioned new identities for themselves, ones played out in their lives in Buenos Aires. What's most frightening is that although these identities have been concocted on a sham, they nevertheless seem to be serving them well. Harris might be telling us to be wary that the ruthless pursuit of our desire for community could make us all monsters. Burke makes a similar point in *A Rhetoric of Motives* when he calls war "the ultimate disease of cooperation," a situation that finds us simultaneously and ironically identified yet most divided.

Summary

According to Saussure, a sign consists of a signifier (sound image) and a signified (concept or referent). Signifieds are socially constructed meanings arbitrarily associated with the signifier. In Burke's formulation, a signifier also signifies an act and thus a range of associated motives, or it may signify other words, or things themselves may signify words. Because words (as acts) are loaded with motives, they "jump to conclusions" in a process called entelechy. Entelechy describes the function of a terminology as a repository of potential meaning.

Dramatism helps us unravel our terminologies so that we can see them as part of the motivational cluster that influences symbolic action. Symbols or signs carry with them (at least) five potential sources of meaning, which Burke labels as the *primal dog* (subjective), the *jingle dog* (tonal associations), the *lexical dog* (dictionary meanings), the *entelechial dog* (perfection), and the *tautological dog* (association). Each

"dog" represents a different way that ambiguity resides in our terms. Dialectic involves the processes of merger and division that act on this ambiguity to generate conclusions. Rhetoric functions as a synthesis of dialectic (merger and division) and identification (involving naming and transformation), whereby people seek consubstantiality.

▶ **Research and Writing Activities**

1. Select an important term or concept that is ambiguous or charged with meaning. Over a period of several weeks, track down its various meanings (primal, jingle, lexical, entelechial, tautological). Once you have collected numerous definitions and associations, analyze the possible "conclusions" implicit in your term or concept. Collect your definitions from dictionaries (like the *Oxford English Dictionary*), encyclopedias, and real people.

2. In Plato's *Phaedrus,* a discussion and elaboration of the nature of love is set beside an examination of the nature of rhetoric. What do the two have in common? At one point, Socrates also suggests that love is a form of madness. If so, what might that suggest about rhetoric?

3. In planning the film version of *Hannibal,* its producers faced the difficult prospect of persuading Jodie Foster to star in a film that would have her character resort to cannibalism under the influence of Hannibal Lecter. Foster had won an Oscar for her portrayal of Clarice Starling in *Silence of the Lambs,* which also garnered Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director (Jonathan Demme), and Best Actor (Anthony Hopkins). In the end, Foster refused to reprise the role, saying that she had made other commitments; this, after the script had been rewritten to suit her and lengthy negotiations.

   It is well-worn lore that in order to play a role in a film effectively, an actor needs to identify with the character she portrays. She needs to become the character as much as possible—to feel consubstantial, in other words, in a process that metaphorically represents one of the central themes of *Hannibal.*

   Are you surprised that Foster turned the role down? What motives, aside from the one offered, might there be? Extend your consideration by thinking about the parallel process of acting out an identity off screen, as part of the normal assertion of a personality. In what ways is acting on screen a natural extension of what we do

everyday? Have you ever had a shocking experience that made you feel like you were in a movie? How did it feel? What motivated that feeling?

4. Popularized by comedian Rich Hall, *sniglets* are words that should be in the dictionary, but aren't. When a sniglet catches on, it is called a neologism ("new word"). The sniglet *bovilexia,* for example, refers to the uncontrollable urge to lean out the car window and yell "Moo!" whenever you pass a cow. Sniglets are excellent examples of things as signs of words. The trick is to identify recurrent situations that seem to have no name, then to coin a neologism that would both stand in for it and convey its meaning by using key root terms. *Bovilexia,* for instance, is the combination of *bovine* ("cow") + *lexia* ("talk"), that is, "cow talk." See if you can identify some situations that should be the sign of a word and create some sniglets. Once you have done that, explain in what ways you think writing a poem, a short story, or a novel is like coining a sniglet. Can you explain the relationship?

5

The Public Memory, Rhetoric, and Ideology

❖

It is customary to think of memory as a repository—a storehouse of information, experiences, and images that can be accessed when we make the right associations, much like a library, an encyclopedia, or a hard drive. Memory is thus both the stored material and the mechanism of recalling or recollecting it. Memory is also thought of as an imprint of our emotional and interpretive responses to the world. Some have argued (e.g., Carl Jung) that from the evidence of historical and cross-cultural patterns of behavior, we can deduce that there are also archetypal memories, or archetypes, that transcend individual experience and that are essentially hard-wired into the human brain. Others describe memory as the union of visual and verbal processes. The Roman orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), for example, saw memory as an aspect of invention and argued that it was a plastic art of recalling and reinventing meaning by systematically associating visual and verbal concepts. Mnemonics, an art of memory, works by associating bits of information with visual correlatives; we can better recall the parts of an argument, for example, if we associate each part with a room in a house.

Dramatism is concerned with the process of memory because when conceived as an act, a word is charged with residual meaning and motive that we react to and thus can interpret. In Burke's view, words have

meaning for us as a consequence of our ability to forget the many contexts in which their signifieds have functioned (*dog* will not mean or refer to all the dogs we have ever seen, but to the primal dog or the tautological or some other distillation of *dog-ness*). Words have a lexical meaning (as in a dictionary), but they also have associational meanings as a consequence of their use in social circumstances (i.e., words *connote* meaning). They teach us to size up situations in customary ways because we have seen and heard others do the same. There is also the sense in which a word is representative of public memory, a rehearsal and example of the range of signifieds associated with the signifier. A word such as *freedom*, for example, contains the essence or spirit of the social situations in which it functions. *Freedom* reiterates (or reaffirms) this essence each time it is used. It may connote the meaning in public memory as well, depending upon the pliability of the verbal and social context. It is not hard to imagine, for instance, that in arguments about the abolition of slavery, opponents tried to convert *slavery* into a special case of *freedom*. Such arguments are only effective to the extent that social conditions enable and encourage them.

In this chapter, you will learn to see memory as it functions in the terministic screens of ideology and rhetoric. The analyses of the film *Toy Story 2* and Don DeLillo's novel *White Noise* provide useful models for further study of the ways that public memory is shaped by popular culture to serve ideological purposes. These works, both very different in subject matter and tone, still share a common trait: Both contest their means of representation, the terministic screens that give them life, even as they draw on its resources. In the end, dramatism helps us understand the mechanism of ideology as it functions in the realm of rhetoric, midway between identification and division. Dramatism investigates the interests, imaginary or real, that are aligned in the mutual act of identification. We somehow manage to agree with each other now and then, but how? To what end?

The Dissociative Memory and "Purposive Forgetting"

Burke said that he found the reading of Freud "suggestive almost to the point of bewilderment" (*The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 258). Some people find the reading of Burke reading Freud suggestive *all the way* to

the point of bewilderment. Nevertheless, to extend dramatism to questions of the role of memory, spectacle, and rhetoric in the process of identification and consubstantiality, let us look for a moment at Burke's attempt in the late 1930s to map the implications of Freudian theory for the analysis of the poetic process. By the end of this section, you should have a better understanding of how key elements of dramatism might be associated with Freud or Burke's own extensions of his concepts. In the concluding section of this chapter, we will see how Burke connects what he calls "the paradox of substance" to the rhetoric of catharsis, catharsis perhaps being the term that comes up most often when people think of Freud and Burke together. (When literary critics talk about Burke, they often peg him as a psychoanalytic critic.) There are many other points of contact between Burke and Freud worth exploring at greater length but that are beyond the scope of this chapter: form as the "arousal and fulfillment of desire," dreaming and the poetic process, frames of acceptance and rejection, the twelve propositions on the relations between psychology and economics, dream-prayer-chart, the "thinking of the body, and many others. We will, however, spend some time looking at the Freudian aspects of concepts like perspective by incongruity, terministic screens, and the big two—identification and consubstantiality.

To begin, I want to describe for you some of the insights to be found in Burke's "anatomy" of Freud in "Freud—and the Analysis of Poetry," which appears in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. The title of this essay is intriguing and somewhat misleading, so worth considering for a moment. Burke links *Freud* and the word *and* with a dash, suggesting the tonal pun, *Freudian* (Freud-and). Even if you do not hear the pun immediately, the essay still promises to describe the Freudian terminology that might be useful in literary analysis. Burke himself says early in the essay that he has been "commissioned to consider the bearing of Freud's theories upon literary criticism" (261). In the mid-1930s, critics were anxious for accounts of how Freudian terminology might be systematically applied to poetics. So Burke seems to promise to describe the character of a Freudian analysis of poetry, a Freudian poetics, in other words. The essay does deliver an interpretive screen (**dream-prayer-chart**), and while it is true that Burke is interested in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he does not really need Freud to elaborate the dream-prayer-chart system. The distinctively Freudian aspects of Burkeian literary analysis are, in the end, not ones that we can easily

catalog and then put to use in a psychoanalytic reading of the artist and his or her work. However, if we read Burke's title as implying that poetry itself is a form of psychoanalysis, as itself a "talking cure" (i.e., if we read the title as "Freud—and Poetry as [Psycho]analysis"), then we can see what he is up to in the essay, and more important, how Burke refigures one aspect of Freudian terminology for his own project of tracking down the implications of a terminology. My aim is to help you see how readers and writers refigure a personal situation in memory as a prelude to and enactment of identification.

What might Burke mean in suggesting that the poetic process is a form of psychoanalysis? To begin to answer that question, consider this insight from the essay:

> Psychoanalysis talks of purposive forgetting. Yet purposive forgetting is the only way of remembering. One learns the meaning of "table," "book," "father," "mother," "mustn't," by forgetting the contexts in which these words were used. [. . .]
>
> As we grow up new meanings must either be engrafted upon old meanings (being to that extent *double-entendres*) or they must be new starts (hence, involving problems of dissociation). (*The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 271)

By "purposive forgetting," Burke has in mind the process Freud describes as **repression,** which is a key component, perhaps *the* key component of his psychoanalytic theory. (Freud himself said as much.) For Freud, repression is a function of the Ego, which seeks to dispose of undesirable instinctual demands or ideas that carry unwelcome impulses. It is a type of forgetting that Freud illustrated with reference to what he called the "mystic writing pad" but that we now know as a magic slate, a toy that children use to write and draw pictures on. A magic slate has a piece of plastic film that can be lifted, erasing anything written on it. However, what is written on the film remains faintly etched on the black background behind the film. In a similar fashion, memory clears the present of unwanted or unneeded detail. A repressed memory or impulse is written deep into the magic slate and takes its place there with everything written previously. Repression for Freud is the silent expression of guilt. The psychoanalyst attempts to cure neurosis by focusing the patient on the reappearance of these repressed memories in dream

symbolism and, subsequently, on resymbolizing them in the terministic screen of psychoanalytic theory.

Repression, Memory, and Aphasia

Burke suggests that neurosis might be a kind of "incomplete forgetting," with the neurotic (and by implication the poet) engrafting emotion to a term by *not* forgetting a particular context in which a symbol might function meaningfully, or by engrafting the symbol itself with other symbols that may not have been suggested by the originating experience. One aspect of the symptomology of paranoia is the presence of a hegemonic, dominant idea with which the person interprets the world. In Burkeian terms, perhaps, paranoia could be seen as perspective by incongruity with a vengeance. What is interesting, I believe, is that Burke associates *repression* with the normal process of attaching meaning to symbols, a process intrinsic to the acquisition of language and meaning. It needn't be thought of as some mechanism separated from normal language processes.

Freud says in his "An Autobiographical Study" that his theory of repression "became the foundation-stone of our understanding of the neuroses. . . . It is possible to take repression as a center and to bring all the elements of psychoanalytic theory into relation with it" (quoted in *The Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 132). In Burke's reformulation, repression, with its corresponding mechanisms of condensation and displacement, is not simply a mechanism of memory that helps an individual dispose of undesirable instinctual demands. Rather, repression names the process of removing symbols from their context (decontextualizing them). Condensation is the process of compressing several sources of meaning into one. Displacement involves the recontextualizing or redeployment of symbols into new contexts. Both condensation and displacement have at their core a dramatistic, linguistic component. From this perspective, then, the poetic process involves the reinvention of motivating contexts or scenes. A poet's act re-creates the conditions that motivate an emotion. For that reason, we can analyze a poem as a writer's attempt to re-imagine her situation and thus change its fundamental characteristics. In Burke's essay on "The Poetic Process" (*Counter-Statement*), he notes that the content of a dream is a secondary interpretation and is added to account for or rationalize the emotions,

which are what prompt the dreamer-poet to invent contexts and content for the emotional material.

In his essay "The Other Road: Freud as a Neurologist" (which appears in *Freud: Conflict and Culture,* the companion volume to the Library of Congress's 1998 Freud exhibition), Oliver Sacks, the famous author of *Awakenings* and *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat,* describes Freud's early work in "Project for a Scientific Psychology." Freud links memory and motive to the concept of intention. Memory and motive are two key aspects of Freud's model of the mind. Sacks writes:

> The inseparability of memory and motive, Freud pointed out, opened the possibility of understanding certain *illusions* of memory, based on intentionality: the illusion that one has written to a person, for instance, when one has not but intended to; or that one has run the bath when one has merely intended to do so. We do not have such illusions unless there has been a preceding intention. (231)

Freud attaches motives to memory and to the processes of forgetting. The motives themselves are usually grounded in some desire, or in what he calls in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* "counter-will." Memory and motive are a dialectical pair. Missing in Freud's mixture is the symbol's function itself as a motive, and herein is the primary distinguishing feature of Burke's reformulation: Burke triangulates memory, motive, and symbol. The symbolic act is one prompted by intention and motive, but for Burke and as we discussed in Chapter 4, its terms function as acts themselves, creating new intentions in their interrelationships with other terms as the "five dogs of meaning" play themselves out.

Freud views symbols as symptoms rather than causes. For example, he explains the forgetting of names as follows:

> When we recapitulate the conditions for forgetting a name with faulty recollection we find: (1) a certain disposition to forget the name; (2) a process of suppression which has taken place shortly before; and (3) the possibility of establishing an *outer* association between the concerned name and the element previously suppressed." (quoted in *The Dictionary of Psychoanalysis,* 66–67)

Motivation and intentionality derive from formative contexts, in particular from childhood experiences that have been encoded with more

recent, even present experience. Freud's conception of aphasia (a loss of the power to use or understand words) is revealing in this regard. He explains aphasia as a sort of forgetting and a symptom of heavily repressed experience. Burke, however, would see aphasia as an inability to forget the multiple contexts of experience from which the meaning of words are distilled, a symptom not of repressed experience but of the presence of *too much* undistinguished meaning, ironically rendering a person speechless.

This distinction between Burke and Freud helps us conceive of the poetic process not simply as the engrafting of meaning to experience, but the reinvention and recontextualization of experience, a process driven by the symbolic resources at our disposal. Motivation and intentionality, themselves derivative expressions of desire, translate into terminologies and undergo transformation as individual terms take on motives and intentions of their own. Memory functions more like a pliant art of symbol-using than it does a repository of repressed experience.

We have examined some Freudian concepts closely because doing so helps us see how thoroughly the elements of dramatism are bound in language and more specifically, in terminologies and their associated motives. When we bring these concepts of purposive forgetting and the dissociation of ideas to bear on some now familiar Burkeian concepts, fresh distinctions congeal on the surface. For example, perspective by incongruity becomes the attempt to decontextualize meaning from formative experience (or ideology), which allows intrinsic symbolic motives free rein. For instance, to understand how training can be incapacitating, or how blindness can be a kind of insight, we must be capable of extracting "training" from the contexts that normally suggest its positive value (school, for instance), or blindness from its ideological association with disability. The purposive forgetting of experience is a necessary act that precedes dissociation. Purposive forgetting and perspective by incongruity are necessary components of ideological critique (the criticism of the "obvious" or commonsense interpretations of experience) and thus social change. Perspective by incongruity is not simply the pairing of terms from normally dissociated fields of experience or terminologies. It also helps resocialize (by re-imagining) the individual's private (and symbolic) reconstitution of experience. For another example, we might think of a terministic screen as analogous to the repressed contexts from which we abstract the meaning of terms. In that sense,

these contexts provide intrinsically the motives for their redeployment in new situations. In other words, memory filters new experience (one would only see a bush as a bear if one remembered seeing a bear). In yet another example, we might think of identification as the socialized dialectic of purposive forgetting—persons A and B willing for a time to align themselves on the basis of a shared and newly formed but imagined margin of overlap. Dramatism taps our predisposition to abstract meaning from context by first invoking what is shared between speaker and audience, then condensing and displacing elements of this experience in a new formulation. Finally, we might think of consubstantiality as the *desire* for forgetting purposively together, as the pleasure of socialized amnesia, which itself creates new occasions for acting together, for reexperiencing the world symbolically and for reinventing experience in the present. To become consubstantial (the final aim of rhetoric), we must forget (at least momentarily) who we are. This deliberate amnesia may explain why people often say they "forget themselves" in dramatic or sublime moments (during a beautiful song, reading a great poem, etc.) or even during public riots, when group consubstantiality bends the will of everyone.

Dramatism and Rhetoric as Ideological Inquiry

It is this latter concept—consubstantiality as the expression of a desire to act together forgetfully—that has some relation to a traditional function of rhetoric. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains that rhetoric is not concerned with certainties, but with probabilities. When people agree, when there is absolute identification, there is no motive for rhetoric. From this perspective, a certainty need not be a Truth, but something that people do not doubt and thus would not debate. However, where there is only probability, when people are neither absolutely identical nor absolutely divided, there is occasion for rhetoric. In Aristotle's view and as we discussed in Chapter 1, the function of rhetoric is to find out in any given case the available means of persuasion. In other words, its purpose is to examine the bases for agreement; the rhetorician's task, to examine what knowledge and forms of appeal might help build consensus. What means of persuasion exist in the margin of overlap? An answer to that question is the aim of rhetoric conceived as ideological inquiry.

Ideology is a complex term with a variety of contested meanings. Like rhetoric, ideology has a deep past and wide circumference. In its original sense, it referred simply to the study of ideas. Over time, it came to refer to a system of ideas organized to serve some political or social purpose, at least in its popular sense. On the one hand, ideology is often thought of as the content of "false consciousness," meaning that if a position is ideological, it is somehow based on falsehood or on some illusion that its proponent has unwittingly come to believe, as a result of a process of socialization. ("Mere rhetoric" has much the same meaning as false consciousness in popular parlance.) In this limited view, "common sense" is thought to be the core material of ideology. Common sense is what everyone is "supposed" to have (but not everyone does) and if you do not have it, you will never get it. From an early age, we are told to base our decisions on common sense, which is exactly as it says, a sense of things that people have in common. Common sense is resilient, ambiguous, and resistant to analytical approaches (because it is so elusive). It is the sort of thing people know when they see it, but do not ask anyone to define it. It is a version of secularized faith.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke offers seven different meanings for *ideology*. In the list to follow, I have paraphrased him and supplied examples discussed elsewhere in this book:

Ideology

1. The study, development, or criticism of ideas, considered in themselves. (For example, dramatism as an interpretation of interpretations could be considered ideology, the study of ideas.)
2. A system of ideas, aiming at social or political action. (*Mein Kampf* is ideology, a formal system of ideas designed to stimulate social and political upheaval.)
3. Any set of interrelated terms, having practical civic consequences, directly or indirectly. (Common sense is ideology.)
4. "Myth" designed for purposes of governmental or social control. (The "spook story" manufactured by Keyser Söse in *The Usual Suspects*.)
5. A partial, hence to a degree deceptive, view of reality, particularly when the limitations can be attributed to "interest-begotten prejudice." (Agent Kujan's eagerness to believe himself superior to Verbal by sanction of the law.)

6. Purposefully manipulated overemphasis or underemphasis in the discussion of controversial political and social issues. (The exaggeration of the other side's position in a political campaign by omission, exaggeration, or decontextualization, whereby the other side uses rhetoric, and our side speaks the truth.)

7. An inverted genealogy of culture, that makes of "illusion" and "mystification" by treating ideas as *primary* where they could have been treated as *derivative*. (The Marxist view, which holds that consciousness, e.g., ideas, are determined by life, not the other way around.) (104)

To Burke's seven meanings for ideology, we could add the following, based on the discussion of rhetoric as grounded in probabilities:

8. The real or imagined content of public memory, exercised in the margin of overlap between identities and maintained (or massaged) by hegemony. (*Toy Story 2,* for example, hinges on people viewing nostalgia as good and equating identity with purpose.)

This latter definition is distinguishable from number 4 ("Myth for purposes of control") because it is not limited to the political or social, but acts at the moment of contact or interface between distinct identities desiring consubstantiality. Meaning number 8 associates ideology with substance, about which we will learn more near the end of this chapter. For now, however, recall that the terms of the pentad are interrelated because they share a common ground or substance, however we might define the act (see Burke's "Introduction: The Five Key Terms of Dramatism" in Chapter 1).

Hegemony

Traditionally, *hegemony* refers to the predominant influence of one state over another, or "moral and philosophical leadership attained through active consent" (Bocock, 11). Most often, hegemony has been used pejoratively to identify the domination of one class of people over another. Like rhetoric or propaganda, hegemony is normally an epithet attributed to "the bad guys." From the West's perspective, Soviet hegemony reigned over Eastern Europe during the Cold War. (Saying otherwise cost then-President Gerald Ford dearly in the 1976 presidential de-

bates.) In a Marxist view, bourgeois hegemony represses the working class. As early as 1800, the term was used to describe madness: "all maniaks [sic] have a predominant idea, which . . . is hegemonick [sic] in most of their propositions" *(Oxford English Dictionary)*. However, the modern popularizer of the term, Antonio Gramsci, does not view hegemony as inevitably bad. Rather, it is

> the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed upon social life by the dominant fundamental group; this "consent" is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. (*Prison Notebooks*, 12)

Hegemony, then, is the "general direction imposed upon social life," a kind of ideological grease. It is what makes common sense common. Its agency is the language and imagery of culture—popular culture especially. As Gramsci sees it, hegemony should be actively (not passively) assented to through education and understanding, not through coercion or imposition by authority (Bocock, 22). Hegemony can liberate behavior in productive ways without alienating if people subscribe to its tenets willingly and consciously, as people critical of the sort of conclusions that hegemony offers. Hegemony both guides and reveals attitudes toward and perceptions of the world, functioning much like a terministic screen. Its specific terms are those supplied by ideology. Hegemony is, in essence, "ideological maintenance," an act expressed socially in the language and images of culture.

There are two primary forms of hegemony. The first consists of the set of methodological attitudes and facts that structure our responses to the world. This form of hegemony is our *training*, and as discussed in Chapter 1, training can be liberatory or constraining, depending upon the situation. A methodology is a set of what can be called "signifying practices," the customary terms (like jargon) and conventional forms used to construct, convey, and stabilize meaning. The second form of hegemony has a wider social dimension, acting as a kind of piety—the sense of what goes with what. It is a way of thinking about personal, social, political, or philosophical issues that has been absorbed uncritically by ritualized and coercive incantation or the ceremonious repetition of

common sense (some would say that TV talk shows do this quite well). Hegemony predetermines the elaboration of a term or a subject and limits the play of meaning possible within the structure. For example, suppose you are asked to write about an important event in your life. You choose to write about the loss of a dear pet. Your elaboration of the subject (and even attitude toward it) is severely constrained by the need to express sentimentality and sadness, to "build up" the character of the pet and its meaning in your life, to make the loss melodramatic, and then to suggest some sign of hope—for example, a new puppy comes (the film *Old Yeller,* 1957, is a prototypical example). The subject has a conventional form and attitude that goes along with it. It is possible to take another stance toward the subject, but doing so requires a deliberate effort to resist the power of hegemony. Imagine, for example, trying to write a dead-pet story that breaks all the conventions. What could you say and still "get away with it?" Not much if you want to avoid being labeled a social deviant.

The elements of dramatism work like a counterforce to the persistence of hegemony, causing us to be on guard for its normalizing function and to recognize its liberatory function when we see it. "Critical understanding of self," Gramsci argues, "takes place . . . through a struggle of political 'hegemonies' and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at a working out at a higher (and more personal) level of one's own conception of reality" (333). In the following analyses of *Toy Story 2* and *White Noise,* hegemony operates in its usual ways to shape and reinforce attitudes, but to each work's credit, that process is balanced by attention to the mechanisms of hegemony itself. *Toy Story 2* is less reflexive in this way than *White Noise,* the very subject of which is the cultural noise that competes for our attention. Nevertheless, both works provide good material for examining the function of rhetoric in the realms of the probable and the unknown, in the space of public memory, the substance of which determines our subjectivity and our desire.

"To Infinity . . . and Beyond!": The Case of Toy Story 2

Toy Story 2 (Dir. John Lasseter, 1999) was the successful sequel to Disney/Pixar Studios' first computer-animated film, *Toy Story* (1995).

Toy Story 2 depicts the adventures of a cast of toys who set out to rescue their leader, Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks), who has been stolen from a garage sale by an evil toy dealer named Al (voiced by Wayne Knight). Al has plans to reunite Woody (a cowboy doll) with other items in his collection of toys from "Woody's Roundup," with large profits on his mind in an age of baby boomer nostalgia. Al plans to sell all the toys to a Japanese museum for display, a prospect that Woody rejects at first but becomes receptive to after he sees himself as the star of the 1950s puppet show. Woody's pals venture far from home (where their little boy, Andy, plays with them and loves them) to search for Woody at Al's Toy Barn, Al's apartment, and then the airport, where Woody, Jessie (the cowgirl, voiced by Joan Cusack), Prospector Pete (voiced by Kelsey Grammar), and Bullseye (the horse) are loaded on an airplane bound for Japan. Woody and Jessie have a change of heart, realizing that they would rather be loved by a child than have immortality in a museum. Of course, Buzz Lightyear (the space ranger, voiced by Tim Allen) and the rest of the gang (Hamm, Mr. Potato Head, Rex, and Slinky Dog) rescue Woody and Jessie in the nick of time, and the toys return to Andy's house in a baggage loader, where sparks fly between Buzz and Jessie and everyone hopes to spend as many days as possible being loved.

Toy Story 2 makes many different rhetorical appeals to both children and adults. To understand the ideological basis of these appeals we should pay attention to the appeals made to both audiences. However for the purposes of illustration, we will look most closely only at Buzz Lightyear's character. Buzz functions as an ideological appeal to futurism and technology. He is the subject of identification in a world of terminal screens and the mass production of identities. We will also pay attention to the film as a postmodernist critique of new media, what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call "hypermedia" (*Remediation,* passim). *Toy Story 2* is a reflexive film, encouraging metacognitive awareness of the ways that the medium of film itself functions as an interface (another terministic screen) in scripting the experience of the spectator.

Buzz Lightyear developed a reputation in *Toy Story* as a bumbling but successful hero who, when he first arrived in Andy's room, did not know he was "only a toy." He believes he has landed on an alien planet as part of another Star Command mission. Woody and the others clue him in over time, but not without some resistance on Buzz's part. When Woody, always the voice of reason, insists that Buzz cannot really fly, he

accidentally propels himself around the room in an apparently success-
ful attempt to prove Woody wrong. By the end of the film, he has some
measure of self-awareness even though he still considers himself "Buzz
Lightyear of Star Command!" *Toy Story 2* begins with Buzz romping
through the galaxy on a mission to find the source of Emperor Zurg's
energy. He narrowly escapes an encounter with thousands of little green
men, then finds himself face to face with Zurg in an underground power
complex. Just as Buzz snatches the energy source (one AA battery), Zurg
ambushes him. They exchange laser fire, and then Buzz is blown in half,
his legs left wobbling upright. Needless to say, it is a disturbing moment
for children and parents. After a brief pause, we hear Rex yell, "Oh no,
not again! I'll never defeat Emperor Zurg!" Our perspective retreats out
of the frame, and we realize that Rex and Hamm have been playing a
Buzz Lightyear video game on the television set. This opening sequence
works like an overture to get our attention, but it also reminds us to be
suspicious of what we should interpret as real (within the world of the
film) and what we should see as a representation or imitation.

The jingle for *Toy Story 2*, borrowing from the 1976 Thin Lizzy
song, announces, "the boys are back in town," referring to Woody and
Buzz. We know from the first film that Buzz Lightyear has faced an iden-
tity crisis. As my five-year-old daughter Meagan put it, "He thinks he's a
real person." Suddenly at the beginning of this film we see Buzz disinte-
grated, and although we soon learn it is a video game, it is the first step
in his makeover. The new Buzz is no longer simply an "action figure"
subject to manipulation in a video game. That old Buzz has been de-
stroyed. What Buzz will take his place? (All the toys experience great
anxiety when they think of being replaced by the hottest toy.) Woody
experiences a similar tragedy in the beginning of the film. Just before
Andy leaves for summer camp, Buzz accidentally rips his arm half off,
causing Andy to leave him behind so that he can be fixed. Later in the
film, the arm comes completely off before it is restored (and Woody si-
multaneously discovers who he really is).

At different moments and for slightly different reasons, both Buzz
and Woody have forgotten who they are and where they come from.
Throughout the rest of the film, we see how they manage to reconstruct
themselves: Buzz from his status as an obliterated figure in a video
game, Woody from his inability to look to the past and his anxiety over
his future with Andy. Gradually, we see that Buzz's identity breaks apart

as he becomes nearly indistinguishable from the thousands of other toy
Buzz Lightyears we see at Al's Toy Barn (new and improved versions, of
course). Buzz has an existential crisis of sorts when he sees them and
ends up being repackaged (literally) as the new Buzz Lightyear, with one
of his surrogates escaping to battle Zurg, who is Buzz's nemesis. Like the
original Buzz we saw in the first film, this new Buzz mistakenly believes
that it is his sole mission to destroy Zurg. The others toys—Hamm, Rex,
Mr. Potato Head, and Slinky Dog—of course, do not recognize that this
new Buzz is any different from the "real" Buzz, so they accept him as
their leader. Pesudo-Buzz eventually leads them to Al's apartment, after
fighting off Zurg. The real Buzz, naturally, is not far behind. Once every-
one arrives, we see Woody faced with the dilemma of trying to decide
which one is the real Buzz. Each claims, "I'm Buzz Lightyear!" in the
classic form we have seen many times. The mystery is solved when the
real Buzz shows Andy's name written on the bottom of his boot. At that
moment, the heroic pseudo-Buzz hears Zurg coming to attack. During
their fight in an elevator shaft, Zurg reveals that he is really Buzz's father
(an allusion to the scene in *The Empire Strikes Back* when Darth Vader
says the same to Luke Skywalker). Pseudo-Buzz is delighted; a bit later
we see him playing ball with his "dad." Meanwhile, the real Buzz has suc-
ceeded in distinguishing himself from all the other Buzzes by virtue of
his status as Andy's toy. In a similar way, Woody concludes that his iden-
tity is also bound up with his role as Andy's beloved toy. Woody's new
identity is reshaped when he rejects his nostalgic commodification,
which is expressed by the desire to display him in a museum as a pris-
tine collectible from "Woody's Roundup." By the end of the film, every-
one has accepted that purpose as a legitimization of the self.

Of course, these quests for identity and purpose are packaged in a
film that itself explicitly encourages its viewers to spontaneously associ-
ate identity with an ethic of commodification. Therein is the film's ideo-
logical basis and the hegemonic assertion that individuality is defined
by one's status as an owner of property. To its credit, however, the film
also encourages identification with personified characters who reject
that commodification for what they see as a deeper purpose: to be loved
for who you are, not as a piece of property in an open economic market.
At work are the two conflicting ideologies that operate dialectically to
valorize a cult of individuality even as identity is defined in terms of
ownership, a subject/object dichotomy.

Toy Story 2 handles this opposition by appealing to the adult audience's nostalgia for toys, the objects that presumably define the quality of childhood. It is an appeal to baby boomers, those people who used to play with Slinkys, Lincoln Logs, Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head, Barbie, army men, and all the other toys of their youth. These toys are brought to life, and when they express a desire to be loved and "played with," the appeal to the emotions of the audience is strong. As Roger Ebert puts it in his review, "I forgot something about toys a long time ago, and *Toy Story 2* reminded me. It involves the love, pity and guilt that a child feels for a favorite toy. A doll or an action figure (or a Pokemon) is yours in the same way a pet is. It depends on you. It misses you. It can't do anything by itself. It needs you and is troubled when you're not there" (Internet). There is also, of course, an implicit appeal to the audience as consumers. It is no secret that much of the profit generated by animated films like this comes from spin-off toy sales. A film like *Toy Story 2* is perfectly designed to take advantage of the nostalgic desire for the toys of youth, whose sales following the film's release skyrocketed. The appearance in the film of toys like Mr. Potato Head no doubt resurrected his popularity (had it ever waned?). Because we come to pity the toys, there is even more incentive to purchase them. Put pity and nostalgia together, along with a message that you are what you own (and who owns you) and there is a very volatile and effective message to the audience to high-tail it to Al's Toy Barn. At this level, the film operates hegemonically to reinforce the values of consumer culture and to resurrect repressed or simply forgotten feelings (as Roger Ebert suggests). It is a persuasive message because it relies on the probability that adults will be capable of nostalgia for childhood and that children will want to grow up to be consumers. It is a validation of the imagined content of public memory.

To the film's credit, however, it also contests this ideology. Al the toy dealer is portrayed as ruthless, greedy, and disgusting. Collecting toys simply because of their nostalgic appeal is seen as a corruption of a toy's purpose. So while the film constructs its audience in consumer culture, it also attacks the purist expression of materialism. That attitude is conveyed in several ways, but particularly (1) by the film's acknowledging its status as a computer-animated film (its terministic screen)—scenes such as Buzz's opening battle with Zurg, the video of "Woody's Roundup," and the series of "out-takes" shown during the film's end-credits; and (2) by foregrounding the presence of "Tour-Guide Barbie,"

who gives Buzz and the gang a tour of Al's Toy Barn, cleverly announcing that prior to the first film, its producers didn't realize to what extent the film had such marketing potential and thus explaining why Barbie never made an appearance in the first film. So there is irony in *Toy Story 2* as well, represented by its willingness to expose the very mechanisms of its appeal.

The Pentadic Ratios: Scene-Purpose

The scene-purpose ratio asks to what extent the scene influences or contains the purpose. In what ways, in other words, do circumstances shape why we do what we do, as well as our explanations of purpose? In *Mein Kampf*, the scene-purpose ratio plays a profound role in Hitler's rationalization of his experience. He finds purpose by stressing his victimage in his life of poverty following his mother's death when he was a teenager. With the hacktivist movement, we saw that the rapid escalation of computing technology—the scene—contained implicitly the resistance that hacktivists would then muster. Its rapid growth called for someone to express restraint, putting the hacktivists themselves in the ironic position as technical specialists using the tools of the trade to tear down the trade itself. In the following analysis of Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, we will look at the ways the white noise of consumer culture shapes individual consciousness, working as a terministic screen of brand names, misinformation, objectification, and the fear that lurks beneath the superficial manifestations of culture.

Scene-Purpose in Don DeLillo's White Noise

In the following excerpt from Don DeLillo's novel, *White Noise*, we see Hitler's scene defined as the family drama, the Oedipal family drama theorized by Freud. DeLillo's darkly ironic novel is a story of "American magic and dread" and its narrator's attempts to deal with his anxiety over whether he or his wife will die first. Jack Gladney, the narrator, is a professor of Hitler Studies at College-on-the-Hill; Murray is his colleague and a professor of Elvis Presley Studies. "White noise" refers to the background noise that defines American culture through symbols of consumerism, materialism, and fear. The novel won the National Book Award in 1985.

Notice how DeLillo focuses our attention on Hitler in a manner similar to Burke's (see Chapter 2) by forcing the analogy between Hitler and Elvis with regard to their personal, familial scene, at the same time inviting questions about how each man became such a cultural force, albeit with very different aims and results. That Hitler and Elvis have both become the subjects for serious academic study in the imaginary world of DeLillo's novel also suggests an ironic commentary on the values of a system that would support such a focus.

Don DeLillo

White Noise, **Chapter 15**

I put on my dark glasses, composed my face and walked into the room. There were twenty-five or thirty young men and women, many in fall colors, seated in armchairs and sofas and on the beige broadloom. Murray walked among them, speaking, his right hand trembling in a stylized way. When he saw me, he smiled sheepishly. I stood against the wall, attempting to loom, my arms folded under the black gown.

Murray was in the midst of a thoughtful monologue.

"Did his mother know that Elvis would die young? She talked about assassins. She talked about the life. The life of a star of this type and magnitude. Isn't the life structured to cut you down early? This is the point, isn't it? There are rules, guidelines. If you don't have the grace and wit to die early, you are forced to vanish, to hide as if in shame and apology. She worried about his sleepwalking. She thought he might go out a window. I have a feeling about mothers. Mothers really do know. The folklore is correct."

"Hitler adored his mother," I said.

A surge of attention, unspoken, identifiable only in a certain convergence of stillness, an inward tensing. Murray kept moving, of course, but a bit more deliberately, picking his way between the chairs, the people seated on the floor. I stood against the wall, arms folded.

"Elvis and Gladys liked to nuzzle and pet," he said. "They slept in the same bed until he began to approach physical maturity. They talked baby talk to each other all the time."

"Hitler was a lazy kid. His report card was full of unsatisfactorys. But Klara loved him, spoiled him, gave him the attention his father failed to give him. She was a quiet woman, modest and religious, and a good cook and housekeeper."

"Gladys walked Elvis to school and back every day. She defended him in little street rumbles, lashed out at any kid who tried to bully him."

"Hitler fantasized. He took piano lessons, made sketches of museums and villas. He sat around the house a lot. Klara tolerated this. He was the first of her children to survive infancy. Three others had died."

"Elvis confided in Gladys. He brought his girlfriends around to meet her."

"Hitler wrote a poem to his mother. His mother and his niece were the women with the greatest hold on his mind."

"When Elvis went into the army, Gladys became ill and depressed. She sensed something, maybe as much about herself as about him. Her psychic apparatus was flashing all the wrong signals. Foreboding and gloom."

"There's not much doubt that Hitler was what we call a mama's boy."

A note-taking young man murmured absently, *"Muttersöhnchen."* I regarded him warily. Then, on an impulse, I abandoned my stance at the wall and began to pace the room like Murray, occasionally pausing to gesture, to listen, to gaze out a window or up at the ceiling.

"Elvis could hardly bear to let Gladys out of his sight when her condition grew worse. He kept a vigil at the hospital."

"When his mother became severely ill, Hitler put a bed in the kitchen to be closer to her. He cooked and cleaned."

"Elvis fell apart with grief when Gladys died. He fondled and petted her in the casket. He talked baby talk to her until she was in the ground."

"Klara's funeral cost three hundred and seventy kronen. Hitler wept at the grave and fell into a period of depression and self-pity. He felt an intense loneliness. He'd lost not only his beloved mother but also his sense of home and hearth."

"It seems fairly certain that Glady's death caused a fundamental shift at the center of the King's world view. She'd been his anchor, his sense of security. He began to withdraw from the real world, to enter the state of his own dying."

"For the rest of his life, Hitler could not bear to be anywhere near Christmas decorations because his mother had died near a Christmas tree."

"Elvis made death threats, received death threats. He took mortuary tours and became interested in UFOs. He began to study

the *Bardo Thödol,* commonly known as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead.* This is a guide to dying and being reborn."

"Years later, in the grip of self-myth and deep remoteness, Hitler kept a portrait of his mother in his spartan quarters at Obersalzberg. He began to hear a buzzing in his left ear."

Murray and I passed each other near the center of the room, almost colliding. Alfonse Stompanato entered, followed by several students, drawn perhaps by some magnetic wave of excitement, some frenzy in the air. He settled his surly bulk in a chair as Murray and I circled each other and headed off in opposite directions, avoiding an exchange of looks.

"Elvis fulfilled the terms of the contract. Excess, deterioration, self-destructiveness, grotesque behavior, a physical bloating and a series of insults to the brain, self-delivered. His place in legend is secure. He bought off the skeptics by dying early, horribly, unnecessarily. No one could deny him now. His mother probably saw it all, as on a nineteen-inch screen, years before her own death."

Murray, happily deferring to me, went to a corner of the room and sat on the floor, leaving me to pace and gesture alone, secure in my professional aura of power, madness and death.

"Hitler called himself the lonely wanderer out of nothingness. He sucked on lozenges, spoke to people in endless monologues, free-associating, as if the language came from some vastness beyond the world and he was simply the medium of revelation. It's interesting to wonder if he looked back from the *führerbunker,* beneath the burning city, to the early days of his power. Did he think of the small groups of tourists who visited the little settlement where his mother was born and where he'd spent summers with his cousins, riding in ox carts and making kites? They came to honor the site, Klara's birthplace. They entered the farmhouse, poked around tentatively. Adolescent boys climbed on the roof. In time the numbers began to increase. They took pictures, slipped small items into their pockets. Then crowds came, mobs of people overrunning the courtyard and singing patriotic songs, painting swastikas on the walls, on the flanks of farm animals. Crowds came to his mountain villa, so many people he had to stay indoors. They picked up pebbles where he'd walked and took them home as souvenirs. Crowds came to hear him speak, crowds erotically charged, the masses he once called his only bride. He closed his eyes, clenched his fists as he spoke, twisted his sweat-drenched body, remade his voice as a thrilling weapon. 'Sex murders,' someone called these speeches.

Crowds came to be hypnotized by the voice, the party anthems, the torchlight parades."

I stared at the carpet and counted silently to seven.

"But wait. How familiar this all seems, how close to ordinary. Crowds come, get worked up, touch and press—people eager to be transported. Isn't this ordinary? We *know* all this. There must have been something different about those crowds. What was it? Let me whisper the terrible word, from the Old English, from the Old German, from the Old Norse. *Death.* Many of those crowds were assembled in the name of death. They were there to attend tributes to the dead. Processions, songs, speeches, dialogues with the dead, recitations of the names of the dead. They were there to see pyres and flaming wheels, thousands of flags dipped in salute, thousands of uniformed mourners. There were ranks and squadrons, elaborate backdrops, blood banners and black dress uniforms. Crowds came to form a shield against their own dying. To become a crowd is to keep out death. To break off from the crowd is to risk death as an individual, to face dying alone. Crowds came for this reason above all others. They were there to be a crowd."

Murray sat across the room. His eyes showed a deep gratitude. I had been generous with the power and madness at my disposal, allowing my subject to be associated with an infinitely lesser figure, a fellow who sat in La-Z-Boy chairs and shot out TVs. It was not a small matter. We all had an aura to maintain, and in sharing mine with a friend I was risking the very things that made me untouchable.

People gathered round, students and staff, and in the mild din of half heard remarks and orbiting voices I realized we were now a crowd. Not that I needed a crowd around me now. Least of all now. Death was strictly a professional matter here. I was comfortable with it, I was on top of it. Murray made his way to my side and escorted me from the room, parting the crowd with his fluttering hand.

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. Jack Gladney, the narrator, describes the sort of hero-worship that characterized Hitler's followers. What similarities and differences do you see between the glamorization of Hitler and Presley? In what ways might this odd juxtaposition foster perspective by incongruity?

2. In his essay on Hitler, Burke warns that we need to be on guard against fascistic thinking (i.e., Hitler's "concoction") here in America. In what ways does popular culture, of which Elvis is the prototypical icon, seem to encourage trained incapacity or the reduction of alternative perspectives?

DeLillo uses Hitler (and Elvis) to comment ironically on the "white noise" that is consumer culture, ultimately seeing it as a manifestation of our fear of death. As we saw in the excerpt, Jack Gladney also sees that fear as a possible explanation for the response to Hitler and his "sex murders." DeLillo is writing in the mid-1980s, almost 50 years after Burke wrote his essay. With emphasis on the scene-purpose ratio, we could describe the pentad for DeLillo's act as follows:

Pentad 1—*White Noise*

Scene:	The mid-1980s, during President Ronald Reagan's administration and at a time when the Cold War still raged and materialism had become the new American religion
Purpose:	To show the harmful effects and causes of the "babble of brand-name consumerism" (from the jacket)
Agent:	Don DeLillo
Act:	Writing a novel about American magic and dread
Agency:	A novel published by a major publishing house (Viking Penguin)

To answer the question of how DeLillo's purpose was influenced by his scene, we can consider the evidence that he offers in *White Noise,* but we can also look at his previous novels (such as *The Names* and *Ratner's Star*). We can also look at how the theme of *White Noise* has evolved into later novels, such as 1988's *Libra* (the story of the John F. Kennedy assassination largely from the perspective of Lee Harvey Oswald), 1998's *Underworld* (a sweeping novel about American culture in the era of the Cold War), and 2001's *The Body Artist* (a novella about a woman/artist who uses her body as her canvas). One theme throughout all of this work is "representation." Western culture encourages us to imagine our experience through the lenses—the white noise—of mediated experience, through the slogans, brand-names, images, and media of popular culture. The white noise is the terministic screen of popular culture.

Jack Gladney and his family are always distracted by this sweep of data and over time come to view all experience through its vocabulary. We should also pay attention to the character of U.S. culture and politics in the 1980s, which obviously opens the door to many questions, such as, for instance, in what ways the Cold War and looming specter of nuclear war shaped American consciousness and fear.

If we describe the purpose in terms of the novel's terministic screen, at the level of the narrative describing Gladney's experience, the scene-purpose ratio might look like this:

Pentad 2—"American Magic and Dread"

Scene:	The world constructed for us by the "white noise" of consumer culture and behavioral norms
Purpose:	The fear of death
Agent:	Popular consumer culture
Act:	Shaping individual consciousness (i.e., hegemony)
Agency:	The language that comprises white noise

Two scenes in the novel help illustrate the effects of this scene (white noise) on purpose (the fear of death). In the first, Jack Gladney arrives at the airport to pick up his daughter. When she arrives, he discovers that the plane had nearly crashed, that it had suffered from severe turbulence, dropping from 34,000 feet to 12,000 feet in a span of a few seconds, with people wailing and falling all over each other. Here is how DeLillo describes the scene:

> Almost immediately a voice from the flight deck was heard on the intercom: "We're falling out of the sky! We're going down! We're a silver gleaming death machine!" This outburst struck the passengers as an all but total breakdown of authority, competence, and command presence and it brought on a round of fresh and desperate wailing.
> Objects were rolling out of the galley, the aisles were full of drinking glasses, utensils, coats and blankets. A stewardess pinned to the bulkhead by the sharp angle of descent was trying to find the relevant passage in a handbook titled "Manual of Disasters." (90)

At the moment of crisis, people look to the voices of authority—in this case, the people flying the airplane. Of course, they are not reassured by

the breakdown of "authority, competence, and command presence." The stewardess cannot act without reference to the "Manual of Disasters." Taken together, we see how at the moment of greatest fear, people look for the reassurance of the familiar voice of authority, the words that script our action and our thoughts.

In another scene, we learn that Jack's greatest fear is that he will die before his wife. Babette, however, wants to go first:

> She almost sounds eager. She is afraid I will die unexpectedly, sneakily, slipping away in the night. It isn't that she doesn't cherish life; it's being left alone that frightens her. The emptiness, the sense of cosmic darkness.
> MasterCard, Visa, American Express.
> I tell her I want to die first. (100)

At the moment of deepest contemplation of his fear and following a long paragraph in the same tone, the brand names—MasterCard, Visa, American Express—intrude spontaneously and unexpectedly. They are distractions typical of what intrudes elsewhere throughout the novel as Jack struggles to come to terms with Babette's addiction to Dylar (a drug that inhibits the fear of death). The cumulative effect of the terminology of popular consumer culture is a narcotic one, working by the same principles of hegemony deployed by Hitler. But there is nothing especially magical about it. The characters learn to perceive their lives and their acts through the lens of this terministic screen, which in the flow of media, rehearses over and over again the ideology that protects people from confronting their fears.

As with *Toy Story 2, White Noise* foregrounds that interface—the mediating function of language and images—that constitutes our experience. Both speak of the need to be aware of this process of representation (or re-presentation). At stake is whether we can manifest the response to hegemony noted by Gramsci: critical self-awareness of how hegemony imposes itself on the general direction of social life. Dramatism, conceived as the tracking down of implications in our terministic screens, enables this kind of human action by exposing the wrangle of ideas and words in the barnyard and the devices of rhetoric that seek our attention and allegiance.

The Rhetoric of Substance

In his introduction to *A Grammar of Motives* (see Chapter 1), Burke notes that the purpose of dramatism is not to dispose of ambiguity, but to study and clarify the resources of ambiguity. When we consider dramatism as an analytical method of rhetorical invention, it becomes possible to extend the definition of rhetoric from "the art of finding the available means of persuasion" to "the art of elaborating and exploiting ambiguity to foster identification." We elaborate ambiguity in the interest of identifying the margin of overlap midway between identification and division. We exploit ambiguity by reifying particular meaning, hoping that we have found a meaning somewhere in the middle that can be used to persuade others or foster their identification. From this perspective, rhetoric is a multipurpose art of both producing knowledge in social situations and applying that knowledge discretely and strategically to teach, delight, and persuade. Burke's discussion of the paradox of substance reveals just how ripe that activity can be for the sort of analysis dramatism enables.

Kenneth Burke

Paradox of Substance

There is a set of words comprising what we might call the Stance family, for they all derive from a concept of place, or placement. In the Indo-Germanic languages the root for this family is *stā,* to stand (Sanscrit, *sthā*). And out of it there has developed this essential family, comprising such members as: consist, constancy, constitution, contrast, destiny, ecstasy, existence, hypostatize, obstacle, stage, state, status, statute, stead, subsist, and system. In German, an important member of the Stance family is *stellen,* to place, a root that figures in *Vorstellung,* a philosopher's and psychologist's word for representation, conception, idea, image.

Surely, one could build a whole philosophic universe by tracking down the ramifications of this one root. It would be "implemented" too, for it would have stables, staffs, staves, stalls, stamens, stamina, stanchions, stanzas, steeds, stools, and studs. It would be a quite regional world, in which our Southern Agrarians might take their stand.

Unquestionably, the most prominent philosophic member of this family is "substance." Or at least it used to be, before John

Locke greatly impaired its prestige, so that many thinkers today explicitly banish the term from their vocabularies. But there is cause to believe that, in banishing the *term,* far from banishing its *functions* one merely conceals them. Hence, from the dramatistic point of view, we are admonished to dwell upon the word, considering its embarrassments and its potentialities of transformation, so that we may detect its covert influence even in cases where it is overtly absent. Its relation to our five terms will become apparent as we proceed.

First we should note that there is, etymologically, a pun lurking behind the Latin roots. The word is often used to designate what some thing or agent intrinsically *is,* as *per* these meanings in Webster's: "the most important element in any existence; the characteristic and essential components of anything; the main part; essential import; purport." Yet etymologically "substance" is a scenic word. Literally, a person's or a thing's sub-stance would be something that stands beneath or supports the person or thing.

Let us cite a relevant passage in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Chapter XXIII, "Of Our Complex Ideas of Substances"):

> 1. *Ideas of particular substances, how made.* The mind being, as I have declared, furnished with a great number of the simple ideas conveyed in by the senses, as they are found in exterior things, or by reflection on its own operations, takes notice, also, that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together; which being presumed to belong to one thing, and words being suited to common apprehensions, and made use of for quick despatch, are called, so united in one subject, by one name; which, by inadvertency, we are apt afterward to talk of and consider as one simple idea, which indeed is a complication of many ideas together; because, as I have said, not imagining how these simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some *substratum* wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result; which therefore we call *substance.*
>
> 2. *Our obscure ideas of substance in general.*—So that if anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents. If anyone

should be asked, what is the subject wherein color or weight inheres, he would have nothing to say but, the solid extended parts. And if he were demanded, what is it that solidity and extension inhere in, he would not be in a much better case than the Indian before mentioned, who, saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked, what the elephant rested on; to which his answer was, a great tortoise; but being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied—something, he knew not what. And thus here, as in all other cases where we use words without having clear and distinct ideas, we talk like children: who, being questioned what such a thing is which they know not, readily give this satisfactory answer, that it is *something;* which in truth signifies no more, when so used, either by children or men, but that they know not what; and that the thing they pretend to know and talk of, is what they have no distinct idea of at all, and so are perfectly ignorant of it, and in the dark. The idea, then, we have, to which we give the *general* name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist *sine re substante,* "without something to support them," we call that support *substantia;* which according to the true import of the word, is, in plain English, standing under, or upholding.

The same structure is present in the corresponding Greek word, *hypostasis,* literally, a standing under: hence anything set under, such as stand, base, bottom, prop, support, stay; hence metaphorically, that which lies at the bottom of a thing, as the groundwork, subject-matter, argument of a narrative, speech, poem; a starting point, a beginning. And then come the metaphysical meanings (we are consulting Liddell and Scott): subsistence, reality, real being (as applied to mere appearance), nature, essence. In ecclesiastical Greek, the word corresponds to the Latin *Persona,* a Person of the Trinity (which leads us back into the old argument between the homoousians and the homoiousians, as to whether the three persons were of the same or similar substance). Medically, the word can designate a suppression, as of humours that ought to come to the surface; also matter deposited in the urine; and of liquids generally, the sediment, lees, dregs, grounds. When we are examining, from the standpoint of Symbolic, metaphysical tracts that

would deal with "fundamentals" and get to the "bottom" of things, this last set of meanings can admonish us to be on the look-out for what Freud might call "cloacal" motives, furtively interwoven with speculations that may on the surface seem wholly abstract. An "acceptance" of the universe on this plane may also be a roundabout way of "making peace with the faeces."

But returning to the pun as it figures in the citation from Locke, we might point up the pattern as sharply as possible by observing that the word "substance," used to designate what a thing *is*, derives from a word designating something that a thing *is not.* That is, though used to designate something *within* the thing, *intrinsic* to it, the word etymologically refers to something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it. Or otherwise put: the word in its etymological origins would refer to an attribute of the thing's *context,* since that which supports or underlies a thing would be a part of the thing's context. And a thing's context, being outside or beyond the thing, would be something that the thing is *not.*

▶ **Tracking Down Implications**

1. When you hear someone say that an argument "lacked substance," what do you think they mean? What is the function of the substance term in such a usage? Following through on Locke's idea that *substance* is a term we use to signify "I know not what," what does a statement like "the argument lacked substance" *really* mean? Does it mean, "The argument lacked something, but I don't know what it is?" Can that ever be a sound judgment?

2. *Substance* terms like *thing* and *stuff* play a useful purpose, clearly, else they wouldn't pop up so often in our speech. Why do you think people need to use these terms? What do they help us do? When is too much *stuff* counterproductive?

3. Do you think a word like *the* (a definite article) has any meaning? What is the difference in meaning between the statements, "Hand me *the* book" and "Hand me *a* book"? What is *the* doing in the first sentence that *a* doesn't do in the second?

4. Burke recognizes, of course, that *substance* forms the middle of consubstantiality, which he identifies as an aim of rhetoric. What does it do to your understanding of rhetoric to think that its aim is to share substance, that is, "I know not what?"

Summary

The dramatistic view of language suggests that the meaning of a word is the result of purposive forgetting, a linguistic counterpart to Freud's notion of repression. Ideology, in its sense as the ideas in the margin of overlap between people, is the real or imagined content of public memory. It contains what a social group would just as soon forget, or has forgotten. It represents a deliberate form of repression, the result of linguistic necessity and our need to generalize from experience to make meaning. The implication is that when we persuade each other, we are trading in ambiguities, imagining some shared meaning that in the end is simply an expression of our desire for consubstantiality.

As an analytical method of rhetorical invention, dramatism suggests ways to extend the definition of rhetoric from "the art of finding the available means of persuasion" to "the art of elaborating and exploiting ambiguity to foster identification." We elaborate ambiguity in the interest of identifying the margin of overlap midway between identification and division, which is the realm of substance, a word that signifies something and nothing at the same time.

▶ **Research and Writing Activities**

1. Rhetoric has been maligned through the ages because of its capacity for generating legitimate arguments on both (or many) sides of an issue. Aristotle believed that while the truth alone should be enough to persuade, the rhetorician needed to understand possible counterarguments. The audience (judges, in his case) were corrupted by insufficient learning, emotional attachments to the issues, or an inability to follow the logic of a sound argument. A dishonest rhetorician will capitalize on these shortcomings. The honest rhetorician, then, needed to know all sides of an issue and how to influence the audience with appeals to character and emotions. Rhetorical invention served as a means of protection and preservation. Applied rigorously, however, rhetorical inquiry naturally *ambiguates* knowledge in the interest of multiplying perspectives.

   What is the value in knowing all sides of an issue? In what way can it be dangerous?

2. Excluding words like *a, an, the, thing, stuff, substance,* and all prepositions, make a list of the ten words you use most often in a typical day. Write a few sentences after each one explaining (1) why the word is useful, (2) where you learned it (if you can remember), (3) what it means, and (4) what word would be a good stand-in. When you have finished, write a paragraph explaining how these terms comprise an ideology.
3. Construct a pentad and corresponding analysis of a particularly effective ad campaign, commercial, or other type of advertising the purpose of which is coercive incantation.
4. Hegemony imposes itself on the general direction of social life through the symbols and images of culture that seek attention directly or that filter from person to person. What aspects of your life seem pre-scripted for you? How is this script communicated and reinforced? How do you acknowledge it? Are there hegemonic mechanisms providing direction that you haven't noticed until now? In what sense is hegemony necessary for social life? In what ways can it be dangerous? What might it protect us from?
5. Using the eight senses of ideology described in this chapter, think about where and when you have seen each of these senses playing out, then describe your criteria for deciding whether the act was, in at least one sense, ideological. For example, when was the last time you heard someone purposefully manipulate meaning by overemphasizing or underemphasizing something with regard to a controversial topic (e.g., in a speech)? How did you come to the conclusion that something was being over- or underemphasized?

Glossary

❖

Note: Bold words within definitions appear as entries elsewhere in this Glossary

act   Act is the key term in Burke's **pentad** and names what took place in thought or deed. The act refers to "what happened." The other terms of the pentad—**agent, agency, scene, purpose**—depend on how we define the act in any statement about **motives.** Burke's conception of language as **symbolic action** has been called a philosophy of the act because of its stress on the nature of the symbol as an act in a scene by an agent using agency for a purpose (see Chapter 1).

action-motion   Burke makes a point to distinguish action from motion because pure motion lies outside of any motivational cluster. Action involves **motive** and thus **purpose,** as well as motion. Motion, such as accidentally bumping your head or the movement of the tides, doesn't involve action. Burke would have us be on the lookout for **orientations** that reduce action to motion or that obscure "bait processes and food processes" (see Chapter 1).

aesthetic   An aesthetic is a system or philosophy used to analyze the nature and function of art or to explain the interpretive processes involved in responding to art, which includes literature (anything written or spoken), music, and the visual arts. It also names the set of formal principles with which a work of art achieves its effects. (see Chapter 1).

agency   Agency names the means or the instruments used in the performance of an **act.** Philosophies that privilege agency in the motivational cluster will stress the nature of the act as a process. In such philosophies, for instance, writing might be defined as typing letters into a word processor rather than as a poetic or persuasive act (see Chapter 1).

agent   Names who performed the act. Philosophies that privilege the agent in the motivational cluster will stress the act's basis in internal drives or as the result of some quality of the person who performed the act (see Chapter 1).

attitude   Burke later adds attitude as the sixth term to the **pentad,** making it a hexad. Attitude is an incipient act or a predisposition to act. Changing one's mind or attitude is a kind of action. Burke added this term to account for purely psychological acts that may in turn function as **motives** for other acts (see Chapter 1, pp. 32–34).

behaviorism   Behaviorism is the branch of psychology that takes the objective evidence of behavior (conditioned reflexes in response to stimuli) as the evidence of underlying behavioral principles. Behaviorism is not concerned with language processes or conscious experience. Burke opposed behaviorism with **dramatism** because of the former's reduction of action to chemical processes (see Chapter 3).

casuistic stretching   *Casuistry* refers to the process whereby particular meaning is resolved by reference to broader principles or ideals. The meaning of terms will change over time as their meaning is massaged by social forces that affect the meaning of those broader principles or doctrines. Burke calls this process "casuistic stretching" (see Chapter 3).

catharsis   Catharsis has a long history as a philosophical concept in **aesthetic** and poetic theory. In Aristotle's work, catharsis was linked to the purgation of strong emotions, such as pity and fear, through art, particularly tragic drama. Burke views the scapegoat mechanism as cathartic because it relieves or purges anxiety, unfulfilled desire, fear, pity, or other unsettling emotions by symbolically associating them with the scapegoat, which Burke sees as an error of interpretation because it blurs the nature of the motivating act or scene (see Chapter 2).

circumference   Refers to the inclusiveness of a term's definition relative to its context. For instance, when defined as "great works of art," literature has a narrower circumference than literature conceived as "anything writing or spoken" (see Chapter 3).

cluster analysis   As the analytical method of dramatism applied to literature, cluster analysis involves asking three questions of a text: (1) what goes with what? (an expression of piety); (2) what implies what? (interpretation by association and entelechy); and (3) what follows what? (form) (see Chapter 3).

consubstantiality   Burke links consubstantiality with the rhetorical motive, saying that it may be necessary for any way of life. It involves "acting together" on the basis of common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, or attitudes (see Chapter 1).

deduction   A kind of logic used for making inferences and conclusions drawn from premises and general or first principles. Deduction says, "given this, that follows" (see Chapter 3).

dialectic   In Burke's usage, dialectic involves the parallel processes of merger and division in the act of linguistic transformation. Dialectic may be thought of as "voices in a dialogue or roles in a play, with each voice or role in its partiality contributing to the development of the whole; or the placement of one thought or thing in terms of its opposite; or the progressive or successive development and reconciliation of opposites" (*A Grammar of Motives*, 403) (see Chapter 4).

division   The counterpart of **identification,** division is a kind of difference that distinguishes people from one another and thus makes **rhetoric** necessary. People are divided to the extent that they do not share common interests, sensations, images, ideas, or concepts (see Chapter 1).

dramatism   The analytical method and corresponding critique of terminology developed by Kenneth Burke. Dramatism stresses the function of language as **symbolic action** as one way to study human relations and the imputing of **motives** (see Chapter 1).

dream-prayer-chart   The three subdivisions for analyzing poetry in dramatism. When you view a poem as a dream, you examine its unconscious or subconscious factors. When you treat it as a prayer, you focus on its communicative function as a means of conveying information, persuading, or entertaining. Charting a poem involves the analysis of a poet's method of sizing up a situation (see Chapter 5).

entelechy   An Aristotelian concept that names the inner potentiality that makes matter into form. Burke uses entelechy to describe a terminology's generative capacity. Terms "contain" the necessary ingredients of their "conclusions" or potential form (see Chapter 4).

entitlement   The act of naming and renaming situations as a prelude to inducing new meanings or **orientations.** An act of entitlement is a variant of **casuistic stretching** (see Chapter 4).

exorcism by misnomer   A deliberate act of misnaming for the purpose of altering perspective. It is a kind of perspective by incongruity that disrupts the usual linkages of terms. For example, calling poverty an opportunity is exorcism by misnomer because it makes poverty appear desirable (see Chapter 2).

fascism   The political philosophy that Hitler used to rationalize his desire to eliminate the "parliamentary" and to induce (or enforce) cooperation. Fascism endorses stringent social, educational, and economic control and preaches belligerent nationalism and racism—all in the interest (noted its supporters) of disciplined unity and efficiency. Fascism derives from the Italian *fascista,* meaning "group," which in turn derives from the Latin *fascis,* meaning "bundle." Somewhat related terms include the Latin *fascinum* ("witchcraft") and *fascinare* ("to enchant," i.e., as in "fascinate") (see Chapter 2).

form   An arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form insofar as one part leads readers to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence. Burke sees form as a dynamic quality connecting readers and writers at the juncture of expectation and desire (see Chapter 2).

grammar   A rule-governed or relational system of formal principles. A grammar of motives refers to the relational principles of the pentadic ratios, each of which has a functional relationship with the others. In Burke's usage, a grammar is an interconnected set of generative philosophical principles (see Chapter 2).

hegemony   According to Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed upon social life by the dominant fundamental group. Hegemony may also be thought of as the process of ideological maintenance, the means with which **ideology** and common sense is preserved and disseminated.

identification   The aim of rhetoric, identification is distinguishable from **persuasion** because it allows for an unconscious factor in the appeal. People identify with each other on the basis of a real or imagined (unconscious) margin of overlap in interests, ideas, experiences, or feeling. Identification establishes a symbolic sense of **consubstantiality** between beings of unequal status. Identification is never absolute, but must be asserted because of **division** or difference (see Chapter 1).

ideology   Traditionally, ideology refers to the content or study of ideas, but it may also name those ideas that govern a particular orientation to the world, whether that orientation is real or imagined. In the context of **dramatism,** ideology also refers to the real or imagined content of public memory, exercised in the margin of overlap between identities and maintained (or massaged) by **hegemony** (see Chapter 5).

induction   A kind of logic used to generate or justify conclusions through the use of examples or evidence. It involves "adding up the evidence" to form conclusions (see Chapter 3).

logology   The study of words about words. Logology is Burke's extension of **dramatism,** drawing on the insight that words about God (theology) may well be thought of as words about words. He develops the method of logology fully in *The Rhetoric of Religion* (see Chapter 1).

logomachy   A war of words, a dispute over or about words. Burke sees much of everyday **symbolic action** as a kind of logomachy whereby people negotiate meaning and identification (see Chapter 2).

metaphor   In Burke's usage, metaphor is a type of trope, a device for seeing one thing in terms of something else. As such, it is a kind of perspective useful for bringing out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this. The meaning of one term is transferred to another.

metaphysics   A type of philosophy that is concerned with the fundamental nature of reality and being. It focuses on phenomena of thought outside or beyond observable experience. Literally it means *meta-* (after, above) + physics.

motive   A motive is a shorthand term for a situation. In Burke's view, a motive need not be thought of as intrinsic to an individual (as in the question, "What's *your* motive?"). Instead, motives are aspects of situations that may be externalized and represented by and through symbols. The terminologies that shape or define a situation may also carry with them motives of their own, outside of any individual **agent. Dramatism** would say, for example, that terms have minds (and motives) of their own and thus affect human agency (see Chapter 1).

negative   Burke calls the human animal an "inventor of the negative." By that he has in mind the power of language as a formal system for naming things or actions in terms of what they are not. We can, for instance, answer a question about what a thing *is* by saying what it *is not*. We can say that some substance is not a chair, for example, without ever having to make an assertion about what that substance is as an objective phenomenon. There are only positives in nature, Burke also observes. We can't literally point to a "not-chair." However, that doesn't prevent us from invoking the concept of the negative when it suits our purposes: in science, moral philosophy, religion, or any other system that explains or motivates action. Religion, for instance, can say "Thou shalt not" and have such pronouncements map the range of the possible (see Chapter 1).

orientation   An orientation is a general view of reality shaped by symbolic interaction with the objects of experience. Orientations may change, but at any given moment they are governed by such things as memory, ideology, training, piety, and social norms. **Dramatism** is a systematic method of coaxing new orientations by interpreting interpretations (see Chapter 1).

pentad   The pentad is Burke's constellation of key terms for understanding the attribution of human motive: **act, scene, agent, agency, purpose.** Every rounded statement, he says, should make some reference to each of these relational terms or principles. Burke later included **attitude** (an incipient act), making the pentad a hexad. Attitude is a mental predisposition to act (see Chapter 1).

perspective by incongruity   Perspective by incongruity enables new meanings by "extending the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and applying it to another" (*Permanence and Change*, 89). Examples are "trained incapacity," "exorcism by misnomer," and "bureaucratization of the imaginative" (see Chapter 3).

persuasion   The use of symbols by one symbol-using entity to induce action in another. In the classical sense, persuasion involved suiting the argument to the occasion, which included the nature of the case, the context, and the audience's predisposition toward the speaker and the subject. In Burke's formulation, persuasion also seeks to shape **attitude,** which is a predisposition to act (see Chapter 1).

piety   The sense of what properly goes with what. Burke does not restrict its use to religious contexts but instead sees piety as a kind of ordering principle governed by an ideological system or a set of principles that exert control on symbolic action (see Chapter 2).

pluralism   "Many-sidedness." Pluralism is the philosophy that values multiple perspectives and recognizes and even values distinct and perhaps contradictory values or orientations without the urge to reduce them to a unity or reconcile them to each other (see Chapter 2).

purpose   Names why the **act** was performed, in thought or deed, as one of five key terms in the dramatistic **pentad.** Like each of the other terms, our sense of purpose will change as the act is renamed, and even more so than the other terms, a particular

act may generate widely divergent and contending explanations of purpose (see Chapter 1).

purposive forgetting   Names the process of **repression** whereby a term's meaning is the result of a linguistic process of "forgetting" the various contexts in which a term functions. For example, we learn the meaning of *chair* by abstracting it from the multiple contexts in which chairs have appeared in our experience (see Chapter 4).

reduction   Refers to the deliberate narrowing of **circumference** by isolating one aspect of a term's **scope** and treating the resulting meaning as the essential characteristic. For example, defining human behavior in terms of chemical processes or stimulus-response is a reduction because it limits the circumference of behavior to nonlinguistic processes even though human behavior also involves symbol-use.

relativism   A theory that knowledge or meaning is dependent upon context or situation, that is, "relative" to some other system of meaning or principles. Relativism is often criticized because in principle it does not deal with questions of value or quality, opting instead to name the conditions of meaning. Burke tries to escape the charge of relativism by insisting upon **dramatism's** capacity for identifying rounded accounts of human motives (see Chapter 1).

representative anecdote   A story, definition, or analogy that functions as a form from which one can generate a vocabulary or terministic screen that adequately conveys the complexity of the subject. Burke views drama, for instance, as a representative anecdote for the study of human relations because it can account for the nature of the word as an **act** (see Chapter 3).

repression   Freud identifies repression as a function of the Ego, which seeks to dispose of undesirable instinctual demands or ideas that carry unwelcome impulses. It is a type of unconscious forgetting. Burke adds a linguistic component and purpose by viewing repression as a process of abstracting meaning from contexts. We learn the meaning of the term *apple,* for example, by abstracting its essence from (and thereby forgetting) the contexts in which *apple* has had a role in our experience (see Chapter 5).

rhetoric   In Aristotle's view rhetoric was the art of finding the available means of **persuasion.** From a dramatistic perspective, rhetoric is the art of elaborating and exploiting ambiguity to foster **identification** (see Chapters 1 and 5).

scene   With **act, agent, agency,** and **purpose,** one of the key terms of the **pentad.** Scene names where and/or when the act took place in a locus of motives (see Chapter 1).

scope   The counterpart to **circumference,** scope refers to a term's or concept's meanings across a broad range of contexts. For example, we can speak of **ideology** as a system of ideas, the study of ideas, an imaginary symbolic relation to the means of production, false consciousness, the ground of identification, common sense, and so on. Together, such definitions comprise the scope of ideology as a concept (see Chapter 3).

sign, signifier, signified   A sign is composed of two parts, a signifier (the sound-image) and the signified (the concept or referent). For example, the sign *dog* consists of the visual symbols or letters *d-o-g* and the sounds we use to pronounce the word (both comprising the signifier), as well as the concept of *dog-ness* or any specific dog that the signifier brings to mind. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that the relationship between the signifier and signified was arbitrary, meaning essentially that words have meaning as the result of a social process of negotiated meaning (see Chapter 4).

simulacrum   The simulacrum is a symbolic representation of reality, a secondary order that functions as if it were primary. So, for example, people might experience the world "directly" as if it were a text, a film, or some other form of representation of actual experience. Over time, the simulacrum erases itself as a representation and

becomes the real. The notion is a central concept in the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard (see Chapter 4).

substance   In its original philosophical meaning, substance (or sub-stance) was another name for "act" as a member of the "stance" family. In later uses, it is a term used to indicate "I know not what" and thus functions rhetorically as the ambiguous ground of identification (see Chapter 5).

symbolic action   Burke's philosophy of language's primary function as an act. Symbolic action refers to the conception that terms **act** as part of a **scene** involving an **agent**, a means (**agency**), and a **purpose.** Terms function, in other words, as the embodiment or externalization of motives. Our terms may interact to induce or re-motivate action as well, as in **perspective by incongruity** (see Chapter 1).

terministic screens   The concept that not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations by directing the attention to one field rather than to another, but that these observations are implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made. The terminology of any philosophy, or any other field that makes systematic observations using symbols, functions as a terministic screen, enabling certain perspectives while eliminating others (see Chapter 3).

trained incapacity   One example of **perspective by incongruity** because we normally associate *training* with *capacity.* Trained incapacity names the condition in which knowledge or experience may prevent someone from recognizing alternative perspectives or ways of acting (see Chapter 1).

Bibliography

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This bibliography has been divided into three parts. Part I (Primary Sources) lists works cited in the book. Part II (Additional Sources on Dramatism) includes works not cited in the book but that provide excellent examples of dramatistic and related forms of analysis. Part III (Suggested Readings) includes works by Burke and others that may be helpful for further study and research on subjects discussed in the book. For a searchable, online bibliography of over 1,300 works by or about Kenneth Burke, see the Virtual Burkeian Parlor at http://www.sla.purdue.edu/people/engl/dblakesley/burke/default.html.

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