

## Re-Visions

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Rethinking Kenneth Burke's "Questions and Answers about the Pentad"

***Editor's Note:* A budgetary paper "crunch" demands that we use the NCTE website for the the "extended" version of CCC. The opening paragraphs of each essayist appear here; the entire Re-Visions feature on Kenneth Burke appears at [www.ncte.org/cccc/ccc](http://www.ncte.org/cccc/ccc), "The Extended CCC."**

The next entry into our "Re-Visions" feature—a series that offers reconsiderations of particularly significant work in *CCC*—is a reappraisal of Kenneth Burke's "Questions and Answers about the Pentad," which originally appeared in December of 1978 (volume 29.4, 330–35). Included are commentaries by Dana Anderson, Debra Hawhee, and Christa Olson. The subject of these commentaries is readily available for reference at the *CCC* Online Archive ([www.inventio.us/ccc](http://www.inventio.us/ccc)). I welcome your feedback on this feature and suggestions for subjects of future "Re-Visions."

### Excerpts from "Questions and Answers about the Pentad"

Maybe my concern with matters of literary *theory* might be of some suggestive value to persons concerned with the teaching of literary *composition*. But what should I say? (330)



The roundaboutness figures along these lines. In the twenties, I began theorizing about the nature of literary form. Gradually such speculations developed

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into theories about the nature of language in general. I called these notions “Dramatistic” because they viewed language primarily as a mode of *action* rather than as a mode of *knowledge*, though the two emphases are by no means mutually exclusive. (330)



My job [in creating the pentad] was not to help a writer decide what he might say to produce a text. It was to help a critic perceive what was going on in a text that was already written. . . . My job was to ask of the work the explicit questions to which its structure had already implicitly supplied the answers. (332)



In these abstruse days of hermeneutics, semiotics, structuralism, deconstructionism, and transformational grammar—though all of them are in their ways quite noteworthy—it’s helpful to recall Malinowski’s prime representative anecdote for the study of symbolic action: a group of illiterate savages using language as a tool in the cooperative act of catching fish. Introducing that into my constant concern with poetical and rhetorical devices now seen as primitively exemplified in proverbs, I summed up our ways with words as strategies in situations, the term ‘strategy’ having attitudinal connotations. (333)



## **Burke Is Dead: Long Live Burke!**

*Dana Anderson*  
Indiana University

Kenneth Burke didn’t believe in an afterlife. But if one indeed exists, I can’t resist imagining what he would be doing there, right now, fifteen years since his passing. Is he still theorizing—or, better yet, theorizing about his own theorizing? Incurable self-critic, observer over his own shoulder, perhaps he labors to append his foundational tenet that we are “bodies that learn language” in light of his current deprivation of mortal coil? What if there is a god there for Burke to meet, beyond the ultimate linguistic principle he theorizes as a fic-

tional yet natural outgrowth of our symbol-using ability itself? Are the two chuckling over the words that Burke put in the mouth of this divine entity in the “Prologue in Heaven”? Or perhaps Burke whiles away the eternities composing his particular variant of concrete poetry—the “flowerishes” whose union of visual and verbal pith clearly gave him great pleasure even in his last years? Maybe he simply rests, reading Coleridge, pausing to admire a gloriously cooing pen of celestial wrens.

For us, mortals still, such musings seem confined to conjecture. Yet I will lay even money to all takers on this: If Burke yet exists, and if he is yet able to reconnoiter “the foibles and antics of . . . [our] ‘Human Barnyard’” as zealously as he once did, he is, at this very moment, obsessing over the Burkean legacy that seems certain to outlive his carnal form for a good long time yet (*Grammar* xvii). In his heyday as much as toward the end of his scholarly activity, Burke seemed to relish any opportunity to cast a backward glance at his work and help his readers discern the trajectory it embodied—or the trajectory he thought it *should* embody; as he explains in one such moment of self-editorializing, his 1967 appendage to 1931’s *Counter-Statement*, “Curriculum Criticum,” “one can sometimes make a position clearer by showing its place in a ‘curve’ of development.” But Burke well knew that, if for no other reasons than the “veerings of history” and the inevitable “changes in the mental climate” as he aged, tracing such a developmental curve in his theorizing would ever be a work in progress (213). Good thing he was no great fan of “finishedness” anyway (*Rhetoric* 306).

Writing in his self-interpretive, quasi-narrative mode, Burke reread and corrected himself as much as he did anyone else who had attempted to put his wide-ranging offerings to use. Frequently Burke speaks of himself in the third person to underscore the distance between his initial formulation of a problem and his current understanding of its “place” in the curve he scribes: “The book which he thought of as a monologue when he wrote it, has thus become in relation to his later books more like one voice in a dialogue” (*Permanence* 1); “He had early decided that. . . . But he soon came to see that . . .” (“Curriculum” 213). An especially apt example of his autocommentary is the 1983 afterword “*Permanence and Change: In Retrospective Prospect*,” in the third edition of that work. Here, in this amendment to a book that already underwent the addition of a prologue in 1953, Burke does it all. He thoroughly rearticulates both *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes toward History* in light of his current thinking (“t[ying] them in with the logic (or, as I’d now rather put it, the

‘logologic’) of my work all along the line”), praises some who have employed his ideas well, deftly corrects others who have misapplied him somewhat by “distinguish[ing] our positions,” and qualifies a “recantation” he had made in his prologue thirty years prior (295, 307). In this frequent and often bewildering vein of obsessive self-redaction, Burke always echoes for me a particularly impassioned line from a song by the Animals: “Oh Lord, Please don’t let me be misunderstood.”

Burke’s unflagging drive to chart his evolving thinking for his readers and, with the help of hindsight, to correct both himself and others as needed, is certainly one context in which to situate “Questions and Answers about the Pentad.” Writing in what he describes as “these abstruse days of hermeneutics, semiotics, structuralism, deconstruction, and transformational grammar,” Burke was eighty-one when the essay appeared (333).<sup>1</sup> A letter to Malcolm Cowley indicates that Burke had finally relented and purchased a hearing aid the year before (Jay 408). It is all the more remarkable, then, that an essay one might expect to measure itself out in the ponderous gait of an established elder statesman of criticism instead gallops like the jaunty “Reading While You Run” penned almost forty years earlier. The prose surges with a current that perhaps can only be generated by a dynamo five decades in the whirring. In 1947, only two years after the publication of *A Grammar of Motives*, Stanley Edgar Hyman’s laudatory chapter on Burke in *The Armed Vision* had predicted that, in the “current trilogy” Burke was laboring to complete, “a total pattern will emerge to embrace all his previous work. It will be probably the most all-embracing critical system ever built up for turning on a single poem” (384). But the Burke writing “Questions and Answers” thirty years later is a Burke who knows just what that “total pattern” is, even if publishing his trilogy’s capstone escaped him during his lifetime.<sup>2</sup> And the “critical system” he manufactured according to that pattern is as encompassing as Hyman presaged, even if the manufacturing process was much more of a spiral than an assembly line, necessitating the now-and-again—and again—retooling of earlier components, accomplished by the occasional afterword, foreword, and even the “Instead of a Foreword” (*Philosophy* v).

Arguably the heart of that critical system, and the heart of what Burke intends to clarify in “Questions and Answers about the Pentad,” are those five omnipresent terms that launched a thousand analyses. Burke is widely and rightly regarded as a rhetorical toolmaker without parallel. Yet of all the critical instruments born of Burke’s forge, none has better passed “the tests of long-

pull investment” than the pentad (*Philosophy* vii). A quick survey of the pentad’s circulation illustrates just how long that pull has been—and, even more impressively, how diverse the dividends this investment has paid out. Ronald Reagan’s Lebanon crisis, gay rights, the rhetorical strategies of impoverished farmers, feminist discourse, film criticism, narratives of high-risk behaviors, materialist conceptions of agency, public relations, Native American resistance movements, the politics of writing program administration, Ted Kennedy one fateful night in Chappaquiddick: all have been encircled and parsed by the overlapping Spirographic radiations of pentadic ratios. By my account, the most recent published application of the pentad uses the Dramatistic perspective on human action it affords to help studies of fan culture better conceptualize agency in new media environments, such as Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) (Davisson and Booth). Given Burke’s declared aim, in his “Appendix: On Human Behavior Considered Dramatistically,” of interpreting human motives through terminologies that enable “maximum scope and relevancy” (*Permanence* 275), the current state of the pentad is undeniably one of *mission accomplished*.

It merits acknowledging, then, that while Burke’s audience in the late 1970s was clearly at home enough with the pentad to take it into novel territory—here, Irmscher’s incorporation of it in a first-year composition handbook—we, thirty years later, inhabit quite a different “orientation” toward the pentad, to use Burke’s term. Defining that orientation is our acceptance of the pentad as an instrument of discursive analysis, not discursive production. And this is just what the Burkean critical system prescribes, as he makes clear in “Questions and Answers”: the purpose he claims in formulating the pentad “was not to help a writer decide what he might say to produce a text. It was to help a critic perceive what was going on in a text that was already written” (332). Understandably, then, the original exigency of the essay—considering how Burke’s “concern with matters of literary theory might be of some value to persons concerned with the teaching of literary *composition*”—seems foreign now in relation to the pentad. Of course, much of what Burke develops with an eye toward the analysis of literary works can, by reasonable extension, speak to the teaching of writing.<sup>3</sup> But as a compositional heuristic, as a way of understanding or informing the writing process itself, the pentad never really made it. To follow Hyman and make a prediction of my own about Burke, it is difficult to foresee a question in the future of writing instruction that would beckon for the pentad as its answer.

What worthwhile takeaway, then, might we glean from Burke's "Questions and Answers about the Pentad"? Aside from the fact that Burke's famous five may indeed prove relevant to invention and production—he does grant that Irmischer's "journalistic" employment is a "good use" of the terms—I suggest the following. Burke's "roundabout" and, in truth, "unwieldy . . . bit of narrative," as he describes his essay, is at least partly symptomatic of the self-deconstructive, self-reconstructive psychosis he exhibits at so many turns. But within this self-editorializing, here and throughout his work, stands an argument about theory and criticism with stakes much greater than the essay's rather uninspiring title suggests.

Let me try to bring that broader argument into relief by playing it against a much different perspective than my own. In his recent commentary for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Peter Holbrook presents what can only be viewed as a eulogy for Burke—not for the man, but rather for the whole of criticism conducted in his name. Apparent from his title alone—"What Happened to Burke?"—Holbrook's overall position is well encapsulated in his observation that, while "there are keepers of the flame still, I doubt many read Burke now. . . . 'Burkology' is just a memory" (11). Such a pronouncement may catch us off guard, especially if we have been getting our news of Burke's standing from other sources. Scott McLemee, for example, noted in a 2001 *Chronicle of Higher Education* piece that "in recent years, critics have read [Burke] with something like déjà vu: Burke's literary analysis extends to the most far-reaching speculations about those familiar topics in contemporary theory: language, power, and identity" (A26). And more recently, a discussion of five diverse book-length studies of Burke led Bryan Crable to declare in 2003 that "over a century after his birth, Burkean scholarship *matters*," his article title itself a bit of pre-scient chest thumping in Holbrook's direction—"Kenneth Burke's Continued Relevance" (118).

But Holbrook is resolved, and he has reasons. They center primarily on his estimation of Burke as the architect of a grandiose "System" of textual criticism—a system that, while once his claim to fame, is now his fall from it.

What partly explains his éclat is that he had, in his academic peddler's pack, an arcane System . . . which he could take out and demonstrate at one campus after another. . . . The irony with reading Burke now is that the System's glamour has faded because its insights have become the shopworn stock of literary and cultural studies everywhere: we bought his wares long ago, and his news is no longer news.

In Holbrook's characterization, Burke's demise is all whimper, no bang: appropriated rather than thieved, absorbed rather than consumed, his System's erstwhile luster has simply shaded into the great resplendent whole of arts and letters itself. And such are the fortunes of systems, academic and otherwise. Those that fail, collapse—conspicuously, often dramatically, and to a grating soundtrack of cable TV talking heads. Those that succeed, however, after any initial fanfare, become subsumed, natural, invisible—anything but glamorous, and certainly not newsworthy.

If it is fair to regard Burke as a rhetorical toolmaker, then it seems not unfair to consider him a maker of a system as well, however it be capitalized. The error of Holbrook's too-quick dismissal that Burke is "unlikely to be read much now" (11), then, comes not in casting Burke as the builder of a system but rather in narrowly misperceiving that system's aim. Holbrook holds that "the object of Burke's writings is understanding," and even "nothing less than an understanding of our understandings." Close—yet short of the mark, as I believe a final return to "Questions and Answers about the Pentad" can help illustrate. As Burke embarks on his quickstep self-review, he emphasizes a vital aspect of his critical system (and one that Debra Hawhee considers in much greater detail in her Re-Visions commentary): the grounding Dramatistic distinction of "view[ing] language as a mode of *action* rather than as a mode of *knowledge*" (330). If "knowledge" and "understanding" can be placed in the same cluster of terms, as I believe they are in Holbrook's perspective, then it is easy to grasp why he takes criticism's (debatable) subsumption of the Burkean system to mean the death of Burke studies and its tangle of "recondite interpretive machines" (12): if Burke's system intended to generate a certain kind of knowledge and understanding, and that knowledge and understanding have been achieved—so much so that they are "shopworn" in their banality—then the day of mothballing has arrived. After all, who needs cumbersome systems to tell us what we already know? (Or, to reductively paraphrase part of Burke's response to Irmscher, who really needs a pentad if all we're trying to do is ask who, what, when, where, and why?)

But as much knowledge and understanding as it may have produced about human symbolicity, the Burkean critical machine has always sought a more ambitious end. That end amounts to the term that Burke thought important enough to graft into the pentad/hexad through so many of his retrospective revisions: Burkean criticism is about *attitude*. As he writes in *A Grammar of Motives*,

our primary purpose has been to express towards language an *attitude* embodied in a *method*. This attitude is one of linguistic skepticism, which we synonymize with linguistic appreciation, on the grounds that an attitude of methodical quizzicality towards language may best equip us to perceive the full scope of its resourcefulness. (441)

Encouraging us to appreciate the “full scope” of language’s “resourcefulness” is indeed a call for greater knowledge and understanding about our symbolism. But the overarching “attitude of methodical quizzicality” Burke’s method or system “embodies” and intends to foster is something else entirely. For Burke, “attitude” is a form of action—“incipient action” (236). In other words, Holbrook’s myopic assessment of Burke’s obsolescence can be seen as a consequence of missing the Dramatistic lynchpin that “Questions and Answers about the Pentad” reiterates: Holbrook evaluates “as a mode of knowledge” a sprawling critical enterprise that Burke has ever expressed to be “primarily a mode of action” (330). Shorn of that perspective, Burke may indeed ring as hollow as the death knell Holbrook sounds.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for this claim of Burke’s superordinate attitudinal goal comes less from Burkean theory than from that particular bit of his practice I have been so long discussing—his methodical commitment to discerning the “curve” of one’s own developing life and thought, coupled with his quizzical readiness to remake and redirect that arc as he saw necessary. “Questions and Answers about the Pentad” demonstrates this in force; that it does so in the midst of what must have been the more pressing demands of octogenerity makes it that much more salient an example of the hermeneutic of our own selves his method hopes to instill. As he asserts, this method, along with the attitude it embodies,

should enable us to see our own lives as a kind of rough first draft that lends itself at least somewhat to revision, as we may hope at least to temper the extreme rawness of our ambitions, once we become aware of the ways in which we are the victims of our own and one another’s magic. (*Grammar* 442).

Such an ethic of agency has great promise in an era when ingenious critical apparatuses often seem like one-directional implements to be focused on everyone else. And a “methodical quizzicality” of “appreciation” and “tolerance by speculation” might also go a long way in a time when angst masquerades as political conscience beneath the now-ubiquitous banner, “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention” (442). To render this in terms that speak directly to the central qualm of “Questions and Answers about the Pentad,” we

might say that a Burkean perspective is dually, unalterably, analytic and productive: it enables the nuanced analysis of our symbol-saturated lives in the hope of making us act toward producing better ones.

All this, in conclusion, is why I am certain that my imagined Burke-in-the-beyond, whatever else he may be up to, is both monitoring our extensions of his thinking and revising that legacy out from under us all at the same time. If he is not yet drafting his own definitive version of the *Symbolic of Motives*, then perhaps he is scribbling an outline of his own response to greatly exaggerated rumors of his death, something I will not at all be surprised to find under the working title “Instead of a Eulogy.”

If the glamour of the system has faded, then may the comedy and quizzicality of its attitude shine. Burke is dead. Long live Burke.

### Acknowledgment

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### Notes

1. Burke’s quip in one of his flowerishes is particularly relevant to the timeframe of “Questions and Answers about the Pentad”: “The only known cure for being 80 is the still more critical state of becoming 81” (*Late Poems* 197).
2. While the status of Burke’s *Symbolic of Motives* is too complex to review here, both Rueckert and Wess provide helpful aids to understanding its place and importance in Burke’s body of work.
3. One excellent example of the pentad’s potential relevance as both an analytic and productive tool is David Blakesley’s *The Elements of Dramatism*.

### Works Cited

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## The Squirm

Debra Hawhee

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

In the six short pages of “Questions and Answers about the Pentad,” Kenneth Burke makes two things startlingly clear without coming right out and saying them. The first is that he did not exactly agree with adaptations of the pentad as a model for thinking in preparation for writing. And the second is this: his fit with composition studies without rhetoric as a mitigating term is at best awkward.

The piece’s “point of departure” (330) is the explanation and application of dramatism’s pentad in William F. Irmscher’s *The Holt Guide to English* (1976). That book’s fourth chapter, “The Subject: Generating a Topic,” centers on the pentad as a way of “helping thoughts grow” (29). Here is how Irmscher regards the pentad:

Trying to answer the questions that spring from the [pentad's] terms becomes a way of gathering resources for writing. The mind may not want to stick to the categories; it has a way of leaping from one to the other. That is not a disadvantage; the way the mind operates merely indicates that the categories are part of a whole. But making an effort to consider the categories separately overcomes haphazard thinking and becomes a way of seeing clearly. Thoughts occur constantly during the prewriting stage and continue even after we have begun to put words on paper. Basically, however, prewriting is advance preparation for all of the stages that follow. Thinking in a structured way has decided advantages. (30)

The mind and its “capacity to range freely” (30) dominate Irmscher’s discussion of thinking-for-writing, and he brings in the pentad as a method for simultaneously focusing and “growing” thought. Irmscher, in short, offers the pentad as an epistemological tool.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the very next section, in which Irmscher elaborates the pentad, is entitled “The Drama of Thinking.”

Irmscher’s focus on thought and thinking is what prompts Burke’s subtle departure, though that departure is difficult to discern at first thanks to Burke’s rhetorical squirming. As he writes in “Questions and Answers,” “my relation to the terms [of the pentad] differs somewhat from their role in the Irmscher handbook, yet there would be nothing invidious in the distinction. Both uses have their place” (330). And yet if “both uses have their place,” why does Burke proceed in “risking an exposition” of the terms’ development—that is, offering “answers” to questions raised by composition studies? He begins his “exposition” of the terms’ “roundaboutness” in this way:

In the twenties, I began theorizing about the nature of literary form. Gradually such speculations developed into theories about the nature of language in general. I called these notions “Dramatistic” because they viewed language primarily as a mode of *action* rather than as a mode of *knowledge*, though the two emphases are by no means mutually exclusive. (330)

At issue, for Burke, is Irmscher’s move from thought to language, his treatment of language as inherently, even exclusively, epistemological. What if, Burke seems to be asking—has arguably always been asking—we bracket language’s capacity to help us know, and view language instead as a mode of action? One (knowledge) makes thought the starting point, while the other (action) begins with language.

Burke makes this starting point clear later in his short article when he discusses his own relation to the pentad as a mode of criticism: “My job,” he writes, “was not to help a writer decide what he might say to produce a text. It

was to help a critic perceive what was going on in a text that was already written” (332). Whereas Irmischer equates the Burkean pentad with Aristotle’s topical system, Burke contrasts the two, noting that “Irmischer makes one mistake in comparing the pentad with Aristotle’s topics. In the *Rhetoric*, for instance, Aristotle’s list is telling the writer what to *say*, but the pentad in effect is telling the writer what to *ask*” (332). Saying and asking, knowing and acting. These are subtle distinctions, but as starting points for a theory of language, they make an enormous difference.

It is a difference that is nearly impossible to register in the lingering haze of the linguistic turn, just past the era during which theorists such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler built entire theoretical systems on the simple premise that language is always (and perhaps only) knowledge. And yet the difference between language-as-knowledge and language-as-action is one that mattered deeply to Burke, so deeply in fact that it dominated his writings in the late 1970s, when epistemological theories of language were taking hold not just in philosophy and literary studies but also in rhetoric and composition. It will be helpful, then, to briefly place “Questions and Answers” in relation to a small handful of Burke’s other writings from this moment, namely his now-famous exchanges with Frederic Jameson during the same year that “Questions and Answers” was published and his 1975 review of the second edition of J. L. Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words*. If Jameson turned out to be Burke’s nemesis, then Austin became his ally. And these allegiances formed exactly along the contours of knowledge and action.

Burke’s review of Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* is long and inspired, running nearly twenty pages and laying Burke’s own dramatism alongside Austin’s speech act theory, of which the most famous conceptual legacy is the performative, an utterance that—through saying—acts.<sup>2</sup> Burke’s engagement with Austin begins by distinguishing knowledge and action, specifically vis-à-vis theories of language:

Theories of language involve two kinds of speculation that are quite different yet by no means mutually exclusive. One might be called “scientific” because it gravitates about language as a mode of *knowledge*; the other “dramatistic” because it approaches language in terms of *action* . . . But I would confine the terms to a *terministic* emphasis. (147)

Burke’s reading of Austin underscores his insistence on the nonexclusivity of knowledge and action: “True,” Burke writes, “[Austin’s] theory of words as deeds is itself a contribution to knowledge. . . . But the systematic choice of a

dramatic approach to his subject implies that the pursuit of *knowledge* in such matters is best guided roundabout via speculations about language as a mode of *action*" (147). Worth emphasizing again is the point about the nonexclusivity of action and knowledge, a point Burke repeats in "Questions and Answers." While action may very well entail certain kinds of knowledge, these are nevertheless different emphases.

Burke's review of Austin helps him to formulate more precisely his stance vis-à-vis knowledge and action, and in doing so he invokes his famous late-career pair, nonsymbolic motion/symbolic action, as both the inspiration for and the object of dramatic inquiry. This pair also figures importantly into the "Questions and Answers" piece, guiding Burke's effort to clarify the distinctions between his view of the pentad and Irmischer's.

Burke's emphasis on action rather than knowledge also merits consideration these days, for it makes a difference in terms of how language gets theorized in relation to mind and body. Knowledge and action graft onto guiding polarities—body/mind, motion/action—and each emphasis yields a distinctive theory of language. In brief, nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action (NM/SA) work together as an irreducible pair, contiguous but distinct.<sup>3</sup> Reading the pair as the capstone of Burke's contributions places more stress on Burke's earlier books (*Counter-Statement*, *Permanence and Change*, and *Attitudes toward History*) than his later books on motives. In those earlier books, and especially in his return to them via NM/SA in the 1970s, Burke offers a potent critique of the dominance of language-as-knowledge.

Burke is quite fond of asserting the non-necessity of symbolic action for motion in terms of the arrival and evolution of the human species in general, and he does so in a number of like observations. In his reply to Austin he puts it this way:

Such nonverbal, nonconventional, nonsymbolic ground would be a realm of sheer MOTION in the sense that, if all *verbalizingly active* animals were erased from the world (as they in all likelihood some day will be) despite the absence of such speech acts there would still be the motions of the winds and tides, of the earth's revolutions about the sun, the processes of geology, astronomic unfolding in general, etc., all going their way without benefit of verbal clergy here on earth. ("Words as Deeds" 160)

And in "Questions and Answers" he is even more pithy: "Presumably the realm of nonsymbolic motion was all that prevailed on this earth before our kind of

symbol-using organism evolved, and will go on sloshing about after we have gone" (334).<sup>4</sup>

As he writes in "Questions and Answers," "The realm of the word is tiny indeed, as compared with the vast extent of wordlessness through time and space" (330). In the context of a whole universe of motion, the human body becomes a smaller-scale version of motion with its own motion principles. The first is what Burke calls the "principle of individuation," the notion that a body is more or less discrete, cut off from other bodies. That principle is, for Burke, empirical, private, and immanent. Notably, Burke uses examples of pain and death to explain the principle of individuation. In his review of Austin, for example, after designating "a realm devoid of speech *acts* a realm of nonsymbolic *motion*" (160) Burke writes,

Whatever the uncertainties of the metaphysical or grammatical "I" might be, such an out-and-out dramatic statement of the case would give us a purely *empirical* principle of individuation to build from; namely: the human body in *physiological motion*, each with the centrality of its particular nervous system whereby, however its pleasures and pains might resemble the pleasures and pains of other such bodies, it *immediately* experiences only its own. Hence there would be a drastic qualitative difference between a state wherein *it* rather than some other physiological organism immediately experienced some particular pleasure or pain. And whatever may be the continuity between such organisms and the environment of which they are a part, the centrality of each one such particular organism's nervous system would be born and would die as that individual. (160–61)

The NM/SA pair therefore traverses a temporal, experiential rift. The temporal aspect of this "empirical principle" brings to light the body's radical immanence—the way its breathing rhythms, its pains and pleasures, its life, persist only and always in the now. The immanence and singularity of nonsymbolic motion offers a pointed contrast to language, which rushes in to knit bodies together and to foster *interaction*, moving into what he calls at the end of the Austin review "the *collective* realm of 'culture'" (168).

Read in light of Burke's enduring terministic commitments—his favoring of action over knowledge, of bodies as much as language—it is no wonder that Jameson's attempt to read Burke's method as primarily ideological and therefore knowledge-centered stuck in Burke's critical craw. In his response to Jameson, entitled "Methodological Repression and/or Strategies of Containment," Burke invokes the motion/action pair more than once in order to show how Jameson tells only part of the story about his work's implications and to resist ideology as a category of thought only (412).

At issue in the scrum with Jameson, then, is Jameson's tagging of dramatism as a useful theory for ideological analysis. In the piece that started the exchange, "The Symbolic Inference; or, Kenneth Burke and Ideological Analysis," Jameson makes his aim clear:

I want to determine whether his work can be reread or rewritten as a model for contemporary ideological analysis, or what in my own terminology I prefer to call the study of the ideology of form: the analysis in other words, of the linguistic, narrative, or purely formal ways in which ideology expresses itself through and inscribes itself in the literary text. (509).

Jameson's first sentence situates Burke within a (then) recent movement in literary theory demarcated "by its emphasis on the primacy of language" (507), as opposed to, say, history or culture. But as Burke points out in his reply, to make such a move is to ignore the finer points of his theory of language as beholden to bodies as well as history and culture. After again noting his reverence for individual bodies in his reply ("Methodological Repression" 404), Burke goes on to discuss his theory of language "as a *social* product (hence essentially collective)," locating "the beginnings of 'the rhetorical situation' in attempts to establish identifications *atop* this rudimentary partisanship" (405). That partisanship, it should be noted, renames what he calls earlier "the divisive centrality of each body's particular nervous system" (404).

Ultimately, Burke objects to Jameson's desire to make him into an ideological critic as a "strategy of containment" that seeks to erase his commitments to bodies and language's role in establishing collectives. He emphatically departs from Jameson's calling "the 'centrality' of the 'self' (as a separate organism possessing immediate sensations not thus shared in their immediacy by other organisms) a mere 'optical illusion'" (413) while granting "that the individual, as a 'person,' dissolves into quite a complexity of *identifications* in the sociopolitical realm" (413). Here we see a very useful distinction between the physicality of individuals and the blurring of that individuality in the realm of the social.<sup>5</sup> In other words, for Burke, language does much to mitigate the individual distinctions imposed by the sheer fact of discrete bodies—this is what he calls identification. As he puts it in "Questions and Answers" in terms of the action/motion pair, "Symbolic action is public, social; but we live and die as individual bodies in the realm of nonsymbolic motion" (330).

While this point about bodies and language is crucial for understanding Burke's theories, and helpful in accounting for his affinity with Austin and his retraction from Jameson, what does it have to say to composition studies,

Burke's audience in "Question and Answers"? For starters, Burke's view of language as collective, public, and social action predicated on the motion of individual bodies would ask us not to ignore the constant push-and-pull of bodies and the social, even as it asks us to bracket a view of language as always-and-only knowledge. Language moves from place to place; it operates through and on bodies; it *does stuff*. Language draws things together and pulls things apart.

Where composition studies is concerned, Burke's theory of language would place rhetoric solidly at the center of writing, taking language—and here I mean the language of others—as writing's starting point, rather than one's "own" thoughts. Burke's own writing in the 1970s is an excellent case in point: the "Questions and Answers" piece is a response to Irmischer, and "Words as Deeds" responds in great detail to Austin's writing, while "Methodological Repression" replies to Jameson. Language cannot come about without bodies to write or speak, but perhaps even more importantly for the purposes of this piece, it cannot come about without other language to respond to.

Theories of language, Burke holds, need to be grounded in a flexible, multidirectional theory of rhetoric. Burke's innovation—to add the concept of identification to the mix—becomes crucial here. In his reply to Jameson, Burke writes that

although Aristotle's *Rhetoric* remains as enviable a text as it ever was, and I still view it as our central text, the term "persuasion" did not cover the ground that I felt should be a part of a modern rhetoric. To this end I proposed the term "identification," not as a substitute for the traditional approach but as "an accessory to the standard lore." (403)

Rhetoric, for Burke, is not wholly equivalent to identification, and it still encompasses persuasion, but the notion of identification helps Burke to get at language's capacity to bind even as it moves. Moreover, identification posits a model of rhetoric that depends on the already-swirling-about of language. This is a crucial point to convey in the writing classroom, a point that makes writing into a kind of joining of the fray more than an individual assertion. Here again is another way that Burke departs from Irmischer. While Irmischer's first chapter, "The Need for Rhetoric," places his book in the movement of composition toward rhetoric in the 1970s, its beginnings nonetheless reveal the awkwardness of the fit and might help account for his subtly skewed appropriation of Burke. Irmischer's first sentence reads "Rhetoric is the way the thoughts, feelings, and words of one person interact to influence another person" (3). The most noteworthy feature of this definition of rhetoric is its unidirectionality,

the way that one person influences another, the way that interaction happens not between people, but between “thoughts, feelings, and words of one person.” To be fair, Irmscher goes on to make a plea for the “ethical basis of rhetoric,” (4), to argue for “the importance of a vital and honest rhetoric in the twentieth century” (4), a rhetoric that persuades rather than, as he puts it, “demands” (4). While nothing in Irmscher’s two-page overview offers rhetoric as a form of response, he nevertheless offers rhetoric’s capacity to draw people together, to co-create “an identity of purpose” (3), and yet with a unidirectional definition, such drawing together might be difficult to imagine, let alone achieve, especially for the student readers of Irmscher’s book.

Burke’s “Questions and Answers about the Pentad” appears in the same issue as a piece by Joseph Comprone, “Kenneth Burke and the Teaching of Writing.” Much like Irmscher, Comprone offers the pentad as a scheme that would ask students to apply the terms of the pentad at each stage of the writing process.<sup>6</sup> And yet even though this piece considers an audience’s potential response, the writer herself persists at the center, as the “agent” question asks student to wonder “Who is writing this piece?” and seeks to have writers “create an image of themselves for readers” (338). In other words, “Who am I responding to?” becomes “Who am I?” For agency, a writer asks, “How are writers achieving their ends?” These questions are repeated in the prewriting stage and again at the revision stage. While Comprone argues against a notion of writing as “the product of thought,” suggesting rather that it is thought’s “actualization or dramatization” (336), the possibility of language as action, of writing as action (for which see Olson’s commentary in this issue), is utterly absent.

If Irmscher and Comprone are struggling to reconcile Burke with composition, and if it is a fit that makes Burke himself squirm, this is because their theories of writing are missing a robust, flexible, wide-ranging theory of rhetoric as an acutely public, highly mobile, ever-responsive and flexible art of acting through language. This is not to say that composition studies was completely bereft of such possibility at the time Burke published “Questions and Answers.” A look at other pieces in the same issue suggests the contrary. A piece by Patricia Bizzell entitled “The Ethos of Academic Discourse,” ruminates on television’s impact on students’ rhetorical sensibility, while a short piece by S. Michael Halloran focuses on style, propriety, and the moment of choice. Together these two pieces suggest that, in fact, what Burke calls traditional rhetoric was alive and well at the time, and that a belief in language as action was beginning to take hold. And yet as Sharon Crowley has demon-

strated in her polemic “Composition Is Not Rhetoric,” despite a quarter of a century (now more) of trying to bring the two together, they are nevertheless not the same. A look back at Burke’s shifty, squirmy response to use of the pentad in writing classrooms helps to diagnose why the fit between Burke and composition might be so awkward, and why such a fit is not even fathomable without rhetoric to smooth the way. Even today, for all of the talk in composition studies about producing citizens—and presumably these are citizens who act—perhaps composition and rhetoric still rest respectively, and too easily, on the wispy knowledge/action divide.

### Notes

1. It could be argued that Irmscher offers the pentad as a heuristic—as a means of finding arguments. Indeed, he offers Aristotle’s topical system as a similarly generative tool. But Irmscher’s focus on the mind and thought itself, together with Burke’s reading of Irmscher, leads me to categorize his use as epistemological.
2. Burke treats this review “as a kind of ‘work in progress’” (153) in which he will “see what might be done by a view of [Austin’s notion of] ‘illocutionary force’ as a synonym for ‘attitude’” (“Words” 153).
3. I flesh out this contiguous relationship in my book-length study entitled *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*.
4. In “(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action” Burke writes that “the realm of nonsymbolic action needs no realm of symbolic action; but there could be no symbolic action unless grounded in the realm of motion, the realm of motion having preceded the emergence of our symbol-using ancestors; and doubtless the time will come when motions go on after all our breed will have vanished” (811).
5. I would add that Teresa Brennan, drawing on neuroscientific research, has done much to challenge even the physical distinction between bodies on the lines of pheromones and smell. See also Holding, 317–29.
6. It is probably worth noting—though perhaps not necessary, given my own audience—that the 1970s were the heyday of process writing. See Sharon Crowley, *Composition in the University*, 187–214.

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## Burke's Attitude Problem

Christa Olson

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Taken together, the many dialects of Quechua, spoken from southern Colombia to northern Argentina, make it the most widely used indigenous language of the Americas. The official language of Tawantinsuyu, what we call the Incan Empire, Quechua spread north and south from Peru during the fifteenth century and continued to expand as a mission language even after the Spanish conquest. Today, most Quechua speakers also speak Spanish, but the language remains a vital part of Andean life and society. Quechua is a subtle language that allows speakers to shift the meaning of words through addition of multiple suffixes and infixes. So, when a Quechua speaker wishes to inflect an action with care or special concern, she adds the suffix -yku to her verb and communicates, adding in context and inflection, the intensity with which she wants her interlocutor to understand her meaning. For a non-native student of Quechua, -yku can be tricky. It does not convey a fixed sort of intensity (anger, love, concern), or even a quality of intensity (positive or negative), but rather simply communicates the presence of intensity. -Yku is equally able to

carry the exaggerated attention a drunk man pays to climbing his front steps, the tender touch of a father bathing his infant son, and the exasperated admonition of a teacher asking rowdy students to attend to his instructions. The suffix, common and versatile, marks the attitude that the speaker brings to or expects from the action. To put -yku in the Burkean terms of this Re-Visions feature, the suffix functions within the nexus of what Burke calls the “hexed pentad” (hexad): centrally about attitude, -yku must be understood through ratios of act, agent, scene, agency, and purpose.

Attitude and its addition to the original five terms of the pentad is one of the through-lines lacing Burke’s brief December 1978 contribution to this journal. In “Questions and Answers about the Pentad,” attitude is a leitmotif that allows Burke to range through many of the ideas and commitments motivating his work at the time. He describes his article, in fact, as “an account of how one thing led to another” (“Questions” 331). My essay, following Burke’s path from one thing to another, comes eventually to the importance of constitutions. To understand why constitutions are useful, however, we must, like Burke, stick with attitude awhile. After several nods to the term, Burke begins to elaborate on his use of attitude three pages into “Questions” when he explains the importance of circumference. He asks, “exactly how many terms are needed to specify the motivating nature of a scene?” He then responds, “the issue seems to involve the adoption of an attitude toward an unquantifiable Quantity X” (333). The “Quantity X” marks the scope of the circumference, and its creation is a matter of attitude, which is, as we will see later (and as Anderson argues in this issue), a matter of constitution. This reflection on attitude’s shaping of circumference leads Burke next to a brief mention of his debt to Malinowski and his concern with “strategies in situations” that, he says, have “*attitudinal* connotations” (333).

Left with Burke’s vaguely explained allusions and drawing on his work in other contexts, I approach attitude and its connection to composition by reflecting on the challenge of negotiating -yku in Quechua conversation. In this essay, I move from challenges of -yku attitude to the efforts of students learning to negotiate the attitudinal connotations of academic writing in its multiple forms and contexts. It is a truism of composition theory, following Bartholomae’s 1985 “Inventing the University,” that students entering the academy encounter a new language (or array of languages). I argue that the challenge of adopting an academic *attitude* greatly complicates students’ relationships with college writing and that a constitutive orientation to writing might well prepare students with strategies for academic situations. It has

been a while since I first tried to negotiate my own academic attitude, but my memories of trying to assume Quechuan attitude are still quite fresh. They serve nicely by way of illustration. Quechua is a difficult language for an English-speaker to learn even at a basic level. It is agglutinative, building meaning through addition of suffixes and infixes more than through modifiers; sentences are built in the form subject-object-verb rather than in the English form subject-verb-object, forcing an English-speaking student to recreate means of aural comprehension; word order is fluid since rhythm is of utmost importance and case markers establish word use. Learning Quechua, one is brought face-to-face with the sense that expressive potentials are shaped and authorized not only by the substance of language but also by the cultural motives that constitute it. Vocabulary is relatively easy to master; grammatical structures can be learned by rote and deciphered in writing; attitude is more slippery and, in application, more important.

In “Questions,” Burke ponders how his theories might benefit composition by turning to William Irscher’s use of the pentad as a basic tool for college-level topic development in the 1976 edition of *The Holt Guide to English*. Though Burke’s tone is never quite dismissive (he writes “my relation to the terms [of the pentad] differs somewhat from their role in the Irscher handbook, yet there would be nothing invidious in the distinction. Both uses have their place” [“Questions” 330]), one gets the sense that Burke is concerned by Irscher’s failure to engage the dramatic nature of the pentad, including the addition of attitude and the emphasis on ratios among terms rather than individual terms. In particular, it seems that Irscher’s reliance on the original pentad rather than Burke’s more robust hexad, thus omitting attitude, results in a fixedness that undermined the form’s analytical flexibility. In response, Burke uses “Questions” to distinguish his own wide-ranging, analytical use of the pentad/hexad from Irscher’s building block approach, beginning his essay with a question phrased as a statement: “Maybe my concern with matters of literary *theory* might be of some suggestive value to persons concerned with the teaching of literary *composition*” (330). Burke’s own concern with the utility of his work for composition seems an obvious and proper place to begin when revisioning the contributions “Questions” might make to today’s composition theory and practice. The distinction between language as knowledge and language as action that Hawhee explores in her commentary in this Re-Visions feature offers one important approach to Burke’s concern, for he implies that Irscher’s biggest departure from the intended use of the pentad is

his conception of language as knowledge. Leaving exploration of the action/knowledge distinction to Hawhee, however, I focus on what Burke's emphasis on attitude and the constitutive, active nature of language in "Questions and Answers about the Pentad" might tell us about the work of composition today.

Though Burke never concretely defines what his work contributes to composition, in "Questions" it eventually becomes clear that his approach to symbolic action as constitutive and language as, at base, *making* things argues a compelling case for a rhetorical orientation to composition. This essay suggests that our post-process moment's search for new theoretical directions warrants another look at Burke's emphasis on attitude, ratio, circumference, and strategies in situations. In particular, I ponder a Burkean contribution to already existing conversations about the activity and effect of student writing beyond the classroom. Imagining the texts that students produce and analyze not as codifications of thought but as acts and enactments in situations is a subtle shift (for some it may not be a shift at all); it is also an important one. Emphasizing the notion that student writing makes things and is itself constitutive of the university foregrounds not only the active-ness of writing processes (the activity of revision and response) but also the constitutive work that is the hallmark of academic writing. It also suggests that composition pedagogy might emphasize a constitutive attitude as key to helping students negotiate their relationship with academic writing, especially in terms of a sense among students that the writing they do matters and is actively productive, not just of a grade or of a set of writing skills, but of an ongoing, public conversation.

I find Burke's concern for context, for strategies in situations and the ways they undergird and authorize action, particularly useful for positioning student writing as constitutive. For Burke, it is the representative anecdote of the U.S. Constitution that allows him to articulate the importance of strategies in situations, and recent work in constitutive rhetoric ought to be of interest to composition teachers because it supports an orientation in composition pedagogy that takes seriously how students position themselves as academic writers, respond to the university scene around them, and make their own university through their participation in it.<sup>1</sup> After reviewing recent work engaging Burke's sense of constitution, I consider briefly how such work in constitutive rhetoric implies another, now less common use of constitution—constitution in the sense my grandmother meant when she walked down the block for her day's constitutional—a matter of health and physical coherence, a link between so-

cial action and bodily motion. I am particularly interested in conceiving of student writing within the circumference of students' lived experience of the university, arguing that grasping and enacting attitude is key to that constitutional orientation. This approach to constitutions as embodied begins with Burke's own invocation of constitutions as key to understanding his work in general.

Dana Anderson, in *Identity's Strategy: Rhetorical Selves in Conversion*, writes that Burke was "crestfallen" and "puzzled" at the lack of attention his work on constitutions received from scholars who seemed otherwise drawn to his study of substance and motives. Anderson argues that constitution became so key to understanding substance and motive that without it, engagement with Burke's other theories is incomplete (41). For Burke, motive, substance, and constitution are enmeshed, each nesting within the other. He reflects, "to deal with problems of motive is to deal with problems of substance. And a thing's substance is that whereof it is constituted. Hence, a concern with substance is a concern with the problems of constitutionality" (*Grammar* 338). In constitutions, Burke sought not so much a new theory of rhetoric as a representative anecdote that could synecdochally illuminate human strategies in situations (333). However, his engagement with constitutions clearly opens new possibilities in his concept of rhetoric as identification. Burke's "The Dialectic of Constitutions," in *A Grammar of Motives*, begins with an extended reflection on the anecdotes he might have used instead of the U.S. Constitution. What becomes clear, as he works through these rejected anecdotes, is constitutionality's broad utility for his purpose: the verb "to constitute" and modifier "constitutive" become regular features of his reasoning, outlining the sort of overarching applicability and effectiveness he seeks for his representative anecdote. Anderson, in fact, sees in Burke's discussion of anecdotes a shift from seeking a *representative* anecdote to seeking a *constitutive* anecdote that is "less interested in the faithful description of something *as it is* than in the description of *how it is declared to be that way*" (Anderson 41). Or, as Burke puts it, "what a Constitution would do primarily is to *substantiate an ought* (to base a statement as to *what should be* upon a statement as to *what is*)" (*Grammar* 358). Robert Wess describes this shift from representative to constitutive in terms of Burke's interest in transformation. He suggests that what is important, for Burke and for rhetoric, is "not conforming to an established script, but constituting a new one" (142). In "Questions," Burke continues to denote his use of constitution using the phrase "representative anecdote"; however, he is careful to note that what he seeks is a "generative model for the study of

language as symbolic action” and that the value of constitution comes from the fact that its “scope (circumference) as an *act* was so comprehensive that it set up and defined the over-all motivational *scene*, in terms of which countless personal acts of its citizens would be both performed and judged” (“Questions” 334). Constitutions, thus, are particularly useful for Burke because they both act and authorize action; they set a scene and an attitude. Put another way, constitutions simultaneously make the conditions in which they function and shape orientations toward change. Burke explains that because a constitution projects its action into the future by “center[ing] attention on one calculus of motivation rather than some other,” it “[encourages] men to evaluate their public acts in the chosen terms [of the constitution]” (*Grammar* 368). In *Grammar of Motives*, Burke means this point quite literally: the U.S. Constitution highlights specific rights and norms and values for greater consideration. The point, however, reveals the aptness of Burke’s representative anecdote for interaction with Althusserian notions of interpolation and hailing—a connection that Charland makes in his invocation of constitutive rhetoric as key to the making of a citizen audience.

Maurice Charland first transformed Burke’s use of constitutions into the term “constitutive rhetoric.” In “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*,” Charland picks up Burke’s argument that “Constitutions are of primary importance in suggesting what coordinates one will think by” (*Grammar* 367) to explore rhetoric that “calls its audience into being” (Charland 134). Building on Althusser’s argument in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” that we are “*always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects” (Althusser 117), Charland asserts that “the very existence of social subjects . . . is already a rhetorical effect” (133). For Charland, Burke’s turn to identification over persuasion pushes rhetorical scholars beyond their usual assumption of an extra-rhetorical audience, free to be persuaded, and instead encourages emphasis on the rhetorical processes that draw audience members into identification as members of the addressed group: a theory of constitutive rhetoric. Identifications, Charland clarifies, are rhetorical because “they are discursive effects that induce human cooperation” (133), and the key question for rhetorical scholars interested in a given audience is how members of that audience “come to experience themselves as” members (134). It is this process of “coming to experience” that Charland identifies as the effect of constitution. This emphasis of constitutive rhetoric offers composition a first point

of intersection. Attending to how students come to see themselves as part of the university through their writing is a necessary correlative to a focus on student writing as constitutive of the university. One weakness of Charland's ensuing discussion, however, is that while he challenges rhetoric's reliance on a pre-existing audience, for his case study on the creation of a *Québécois* identity he must rely on a semi-autonomous rhetor responsible for constituting that identity, in this case "supporters of Quebec's political sovereignty" (134). This orientation fails to accommodate Burke's (inter)active sense of constitution and makes audiences passive effects of constitution by those with greater power. Moving from "how students come to see themselves as part of the university" to "how students participate in the constitution of the university" requires another step—one that positions constitution as mutual act.

In *Identity's Strategy*, Anderson brings the focus of constitutive rhetoric to the broader ratios in which Burke located the constitution as "an *act* . . . so comprehensive that it set up and defined the over-all motivational *scene*, in terms of which countless personal acts of its citizens would be both performed and judged" ("Questions" 334). Here the focus of constitutive rhetoric shifts from the constitution of an audience to the self-constitution of identity, where identity is defined not in terms of a transcendental subject but in terms of a deployed articulation of self—a rhetorical identity. Anderson examines how conversion narratives "wield identity toward changing the beliefs and actions of the audiences they address" (Anderson 5) and is particularly useful for thinking about how individuals draw the circumferences within which they work and negotiate their own places within those circumferences: "A starting point for the rhetorical analysis of identity constitution, then, is to consider how authors define themselves 'in terms of' the various scenes in which they place themselves" (46). Gregory Clark's *Rhetorical Landscapes in America* also participates in this broadening of constitutive rhetoric, using it to explore how "the full range of symbols that constitute a person's social and cultural experience have rhetorical functions" and how "identifications occur in moments of communication, and communication occurs through rhetorical exchanges of collectively meaningful symbols" (3). Clark traces how individual citizens distinguish symbols in order to interrogate their identifications with the nation of which they are a part. Clark's broader point is to "attend to the ways that we use the resources of symbolicity to constitute from our common experience of the land that is our nation the landscapes that identify it and that identify us as its inhabitants, and thereby provide us with common purpose" (126). Clark

turns to a broader social constitution and the myriad forms of symbolic action that participate in constituting a national landscape. Though attending to the social rather than the individual as the unit of constitution, Clark joins Anderson in his emphasis on active, society-wide participation in constitution. He defines constitution and the work of constitutive rhetoric as “a public expression of the shared reality that interacting humans must construct for themselves, a construct within which they can establish the shared expectations and conventions of their social order” (127). What is useful here for composition pedagogy is the repeated emphasis on the dispersed nature of constitution. Those who participate in a public, be it a nation, a movement, or a university, are both shaped by and shapers of the constitutions enacting and authorizing the public. Expectations and forms are always in flux. Student writing, even in first-year composition classes designed to prepare students for college-level writing, can be seen not as a rehearsal for the academy or subsidiary play mimicking the real (research) work of the academy. Thinking about student writing (and student research, athletics, arts, performances, etc.) in constitutional terms encourages us to approach that writing as partially responsible for making the academy, constituting the academy.

So now, having given an overview of the current state of scholarship on constitutive rhetoric and some hints of its utility for composition pedagogy, I’ll make one final turn: bringing attitude and constitution more closely together to suggest a physical orientation toward both that I believe is especially useful for thinking about composition pedagogy. For Burke, constitutions are, most importantly, to be understood as “strategies in situations,” with “strategy” having “*attitudinal* connotations” (“Questions” 333). Debra Hawhee has argued that Burke’s use of “attitude” has distinctly physical origins. She grounds this argument in a study of how Burke took up Sir Richard Paget’s theories of language’s emergence from gesture and a desire to communicate attitude. Hawhee suggests that Burkean attitude “both stems from and manifests in generative, connective, bodily movement” (333). It seems to me that Burke’s primary complaint against Irmscher’s use of the pentad is his application of it as a neat formula for writing. Despite his own references to form at the beginning and end of the piece, Burke seems caught up in the messiness of his ideas. This makes sense, given Burke’s broader understanding of motives: “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” (*Grammar* xviii). In part, the addition of attitude to the pentad seems to be the vehicle for injecting this messiness and ambiguity back into the pentad. It also injects physicality and strategy. Oddly, for all of Burke’s emphasis in “Questions” on the analytical, rather than generative nature of the pentad, his insistence on attitude’s necessity seems grounded in the generative, constitutive nature of the term. It is attitude that makes an act have the full scope of its force. As Hawhee argues, “if gestures and sounds come together in the larynx, as Paget contends, then human speech is doubly infused with emotion and purpose, and together these movements form a palpimpsest with the broader ‘scene’ of bodily movements. . . . [Burke] renders the energy and emotion Paget locates in the dog’s body and in the human larynx with the single word, attitude” (339). Coming back, finally, to my opening anecdote, we might think about this convergence of energy and emotion in terms of the attitudinal suffix -yku. We might note that locating, carrying, and communicating attitude is one of the trickiest skills that students, either of Quechua or of academic writing, must pick up. If attitude is something we normally embody, something that in familiar forms of symbolic action feels almost innate, something constitutional, then learning to carry and communicate tone in a new form requires embodied engagement with the act. Attitude is slippery, carried in the body, and multivocal. Coming to terms with -yku requires more than reading about its use, encountering it in writing, or even practicing it in a classroom setting. It requires use: hearing and engaging the suffix in context. Students of academic writing also face the same challenge if they are to master the shifting, contextual attitudes of academic writing across the university. We know that there is no one way to write an academic essay. We know that forms and genres are generally in flux and that academic writers often break their own rules as they participate in their fields’ conversations. Students might be better able to engage those slippery attitudes of academic writing if they also saw their writing taking part in the constitution of the academy and were asked to take on the bodily orientations and attitudes of academic writers.

Toward the end of his brief article, Burke comes to a crux that seems to be as close as he gets to a response to his opening concern about whether his theories have a place in composition. On his way to a final caveat, he notes, “the logic (or logologic) of the hexed pentad (with its many twists and corresponding functions in terms of ratios and circumference) affords a serviceably over-all structure for the analysis of both literary texts in particular and hu-

man relations in general” (“Questions” 334). Irmischer was not concerned with writing as a constitutive, social act. For him, writing is most centrally the expression of pre-existing, internal information, a means of tapping into “what we know and feel or what we may think we know but cannot verbalize” (Irmischer 9). Writing, for Irmischer, made thinking concrete, “writing will finally be a visible proof of what we have produced in our thinking” (9), but it was not the stuff of creation, nor the stuff of social interaction. For Burke, symbolic action constitutes the social (see Hawhee’s commentary in this issue for more on Burke’s sense of language as social). When the emphasis, as in Irmischer’s *Holt Guide to English*, is on language as a means of “helping thoughts grow” and “devices that will help us generate thoughts without limiting the capacity of the mind to range freely,” language is presented as a means of knowledge (qtd. in Burke, “Questions” 331). What Burke suggests, and what I find so useful for considering composition pedagogy today, is that the point of engaging his hexad, its ratios and circumferences, its tools for analysis, is to foster strategies in situations; the hexad requires an attitude of constitution.

### Notes

1. One compelling instance of this orientation, though not inspired by Burkean constitutive rhetoric, is the Ethnography of the University Initiative (EUI) at the University of Illinois. EUI engages undergraduate students in research and writing about the university that is then made publicly available through an online database. An explicit part of EUI’s mission is to include undergraduates in the research mission of the university. Please see <http://www.eui.uiuc.edu> for more information.

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