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Empathy and Abjection after Burke (1): On the Rise and Fall of "Listening-Rhetorics," 1936–2023

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Abstract | What is it that leads rhetoric to succeed, or fail, as an instrument of persuasion? What is it in human psychology that makes individuals susceptible, or resistant, to rhetorical appeals? What are the moments and movements in recent history that have led theorists to revise their understanding of rhetoric in its aims and techniques? These questions underlie the two-part survey that follows.

It was in 1950—at mid-20th century—that Kenneth Burke published his *Rhetoric of Motives*, whose agonistic model of discourse rested in a group psychology of identification bound to a social anthropology of scapegoating. Through subsequent decades, Western rhetorical theory has stayed in touch with Burkean concepts; methods as diverse as Rogerian argument, Corderian expressivism, and Booth's "listening-rhetoric" took Burke's identification as a precursor and starting point. Though their vocabularies diverged, each shared an audience psychology grounded in "empathetic understanding" (Rogers), seeking common ground between opposing factions and the possibility of mutual assent (Booth). For the authors surveyed here wrote in times of war—from World War II and the Cold War to Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and the post-9/11 "war on terror." And each wrote in times of social-political unrest, with protests—often violent—raging across U.S. city streets and college campuses. Their collective aim was salutary: to reduce conflict, induce cooperation, and increase social cohesion.

And yet, with each version of this "new" rhetoric, a criticism arises. Whereas a rhetoric of empathy seeks to overcome divisiveness, the Burkean model remains agonistic at its core: identification entails division, and *vice versa*. So, even as the "new" rhetoric evolved, an alternative was being articulated in fields of feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies generally: Theirs became a rhetoric, not of identification, but of cultural/bodily difference. Representing what was largely unassimilable in the voice of the subaltern "Other," their critique of the rhetorics of "empathetic understanding" made these latter seem naïve.

Keywords | Audience Psychology, Cognitive Theory, Cultural Difference, (Burkean) Division, Embodiment, Empathy, Ethos, (Burkean) Identification, "Listening-Rhetoric," Narrative, "New" Rhetoric, Scapegoating, Understanding, Rogerian Argument, Wayne C. Booth, Kenneth Burke, I.A. Richards, Carl Rogers

> Rhetoric is the study of misunderstanding and its remedies.
>
> —I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (2–3)

> The progress of human enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*.
>
> —Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (41; emphasis in original)

War-weary like so many of his generation, the English philosopher, I.A. Richards (1893–1979) wrote that first epigraph in 1936; having lived through the Great War, he looked to language as a means of avoiding further violence. In making this hopeful claim, the English philosopher joined his American counterpart, Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) in seeking a revival—a renovation, actually—of classical-Aristotelian rhetoric: Reconceived as a social psychology of communication, their "new" rhetoric would aim at reducing conflict, inducing cooperation, and creating greater social cohesion. And, by rigorous pursuit of this renovated rhetoric, an enduring peace could perhaps be fashioned. But war came, nonetheless.

Writing the second epigraph in 1937, Kenneth Burke felt a similar urgency. He, like Richards, was well aware of the reigning state of affairs. The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) was in full swing, with Hitler's Germany (the generalissimo Franco's fascist ally) honing its skills in aerial bombardment of civilians. There were other wars, as well: between fascist Italy and Ethiopia (1935–1937), between Imperial Japan and the Republic of China (1935–1945). Meanwhile, Joseph Stalin was busy with his "Great Purge" (1936–1938), in which hundreds of thousands of Old Bolsheviks were executed and millions of Russians starved. Hitler, having overseen passage of the racist-antisemitic Nuremberg Laws (1935) two years prior, was building a concentration camp at Buchenwald (1937), with others to follow. Within a year, Austria would succumb to *Anschluss* (1938), absorbed into Nazi Germany; annexation of the Czech Sudetenland would come next (1938), followed by the invasion of Poland (1939)—and then world war.

Grounded in rationalism and an assumption of progress, the "human enlightenment" that Burke invokes above failed to provide the "peace for our time" that Neville Chamberlain, then-British Prime Minister, declared upon signing the Munich Agreement (1938)—a land-for-peace deal with Hitler that led literally to the dismantling and disappearance of the Czech Republic. Then as now, negotiation—the deployment of "good reasons" energized by persuasive, hortatory rhetoric—fails when one or more parties deal in bad faith (or prove, indeed, "vicious"). Burke would respond with an essay, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" (1939), which analyzes the tropes of Hitlerian-Nazi fascism, particularly its rhetoric of German unification through "the projective device of

the scapegoat" (99)—an age-old ritual of demonizing the Jew as the German people's common enemy.

By 1945, the gifts of "human enlightenment" would be revealed in Auschwitz and Hiroshima—technologies, respectively, of genocide and mass destruction.[1] Burke would devote much of his magisterial text, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), to an exploration of the group psychology that leads from competition and logomachy (or war-of-words) to war:

> Insofar as the individual is involved in conflict with other individuals or groups, the study of this same individual would fall under the head of *Rhetoric*. […] *The Rhetoric* must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the War of Nerves, the War. (23; emphasis in original)

Some seven decades later, that pretty notion of "human enlightenment" continues to fail us. As I write, "Putin's 'Battle'" dominates much of Western news media, though there are other conflicts in other parts of the globe—Niger, Syria, Yemen, Palestine to name several—where blood is being shed.[2] In the United States today, the Russian invasion/occupation of Ukraine competes with headlines over indictments brought against the nation's 45th President, Donald J. Trump, who continues to command the loyalty of millions despite being twice-impeached and facing criminal charges of conspiracy in insurrection. American democratic process has fallen under threat by what some (to parody Burke) might term "Trump's 'Battle'" to overturn the 2020 election results. As I write, he remains the presumptive Republican Party candidate in 2024, and many of Trump's followers have vowed to fight—legally, politically, and otherwise—on his behalf. The Burkean-dialogic "Give and Take" of party-politics has deserted us, and the intellectual today, particularly the student of communication and the ethics/ethos of rhetoric, is left to explain this desertion. As an American academician and historian of rhetoric whose research focuses on ethos, I look to Burkean theory and its offshoots for help in understanding the nation's current crisis; further, as a cultural critic whose

[1]In the 2nd edition (1959) of *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke drives this postwar message home: "In the twenty some years between the first edition of this book and its present reprinting, a momentous quantitative difference has entered the world" (Introduction). He continues:

> We refer to the invention of technical devices that would make the rapid obliteration of all human life an easily available possibility. Up to now, human stupidity could go to fantastic lengths of destructiveness, yet always mankind's hopes of recovery could be reborn anew. […] But now presumably a New Situation is with us, making it all the more imperative that we learn to cherish the mildly charitable ways of the comic discount. For by nothing less than such humanistic allowances can we hope to forestall (if it can be forestalled!) the most idiotic tragedy conceivable: the willful ultimate poisoning of this lovely planet, in conformity with a mistaken heroics of war. (Introduction)

"Burke's genius is peculiarly resistant to short citation" (*Modern Dogma* 167), writes Wayne C. Booth. I would say the same for Booth himself, as for I.A. Richards, Carl Rogers, and Jim W. Corder among other theorists cited in this present survey; for which reason, I beg the reader's indulgence (and thank the *LLIDS* editors) in allowing me to quote them at length. My excuse is simple enough: Where their own words matter, I prefer that they speak for themselves.

[2]Is it an irony of history that some media pundits and politicians (both here in the U.S. and abroad) have urged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to cut a deal with Putin, trading "land for peace"? (*When has that ever worked?*)

intellectual commitments extend to postmodern technoscience, I look to disciplines beyond traditional rhetoric—specifically, to cognitive science and "embodied narrative"—for insights into our collective future. Will the United States remain "one nation, indivisible"? Or will the union fracture, as some on both sides of the political divide have predicted?

I proceed on the assumption that rhetoric, in theory as well as in practice, evolves historically in response to the crises facing each generation (Conley 281). (Here, sadly, I see too little difference between the list of crises Burke faced in 1937 and those we face in 2023.) To this assumption, I would add the role that psychology has played in advancing rhetorical theory: As schools of psychology have evolved, so has our understanding of the processes underlying human communication generally and persuasion specifically. In exploring these twin themes, the following two-part history proceeds roughly decade-by-decade through the 20th century. With our entry into the 21st century, the swiftly-expanding fields of neuropsychology and narratology have brought stunning new insights into rhetoric, teaching us how, when, and why persuasion succeeds—and, concomitantly, how, when, and why it fails. If "the American experiment" in democracy falters,[3] it will be due in no small measure to our inherently human capacity *to resist persuasion*. (In point of fact, Burkean theory anticipates this resistance, to which cognitive science can at last "give the proof.") But, before proceeding further, I return to the Burkean epigraph above and to the hope it seems to express in "human enlightenment."

"Not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*": The fate of ethics, of communitarian politics, and of public discourse hangs on this sentiment. As a college student enrolled in humanities coursework (literature, history, philosophy, religious studies) in the 1970s, I remember more than a few conversations with fellow students on the subject of heaven and hell. Irrespective of the teachings of my working-class Roman Catholic upbringing, what I desired (for myself and others) is what I chose to believe. I argued against the existence of a hell and of a devil to claim it as his habitation; I saw sin as error and evil as an emotional/psychological/spiritual illness—an insanity. In wartime and in realms of power-politics generally (to which I'd wish to limit this present discussion), people commit crimes, yes: horrifying, outrageous crimes against God and humanity. The discussions turned inevitably to Hitler. "What about him? Isn't he burning in hell?" I hadn't yet read Joseph Conrad's depiction of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1899)—"But *his soul* was mad. […] it had looked within itself and, by heavens I tell you, it had gone mad" (83; emphasis added). Yet such was my youthful intuition: Hitler's was an insanity that infected a nation's people and afflicted the planet. Even as theologians warned of the existence of absolute, metaphysical evil, postwar psychologists of various stripes (Freudian, Jungian, Adlerian) set about psychoanalyzing Hitler the man, his upbringing, and the European political, economic, and cultural setting. They, too, sought the etiology of fascism.

[3]It's been a point of national pride that the American Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were literally "experiments" in democratic government, unheard of in 18th c. Europe. That "experiment" continues, though it was challenged during the American Civil War (1860–1865) and is under threat again today—literally.

It's been years—decades—since I've debated questions of Hitler in hell. It's not metaphysics or theology but the practice of discourse that now holds my attention. There are people today—leaders of political factions, leaders of nations—whose words, dispositions, and actions are, by my own observation, vicious. Whether they're evil or soul-sick in their person lies beyond human knowing. What makes Burke's assertion pertinent still—that "human enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*" (*Attitudes* 410)—is its hope that the "comedy" of human error *can* be corrected and cured without spilling over into that ultimate of tragedies, war.

Identification and the "New" Rhetoric

> Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the fall.
> —Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (23)

In invoking "Babel after the fall," Burke describes our current fractured discourse. Then as now, the declarations of opposing factions do not align; vocabularies (and their underlying values) crack apart and diverge; speakers address audiences, not with an aim to change minds but to strengthen their belief systems—to increase the divide separating sides in opposition. In describing this fallen state, Burke turns to a group psychology functioning within a binary of identification/division. For "identification," Burke tells us, "is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were truly and wholly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence" (*Rhetoric* 22).[4] (Such, alas, is the consequence of our scattering into nations and languages, as projected mythically in Babel.) Later in his analysis, Burke offers what he calls "perhaps the simplest case of persuasion" (55):

> You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his. […] True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience's opinion in one respect; but he can succeed only insofar as he yields to that audience's opinions in other respects. Some of their opinions are needed to support the fulcrum by which he would move other opinions. (Preferably he shares the fixed opinions himself since […] the identifying of himself with his audience will be more effective if it is genuine.) (*Rhetoric* 55–56; emphasis in original)

With this insight, a postclassical, post-Aristotelian "new" rhetoric was born.

[4]To give Burke's more detailed analysis, rhetoric "considers ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another" (*Rhetoric* 22). He continues:

> "Why at odds," you may ask, when the titular term is "identification"? Because, to begin with "identification" is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of *division*. And so, in the end, men are brought to that most tragically ironic of all divisions, or conflicts, wherein millions of cooperative acts go into preparation for one single destructive act. We refer to that ultimate *disease* of cooperation: *war*. (You will understand war much better if you think of it, not simply as strife come to a head, but rather as a disease, or perversion of communion. Modern war characteristically requires a myriad of constructive acts for each destructive one; before each culminating blast there must be a vast network of interlocking operations, directed communally.) (*Rhetoric* 22; emphasis in original)

Though much of the Aristotelian vocabulary remained, the classical terms would be harnessed to a more complex model of human psychology—particularly in its focus on psychic mechanisms of projection in audience response. In a published lecture, "Rhetoric—Old and New" (1951), Burke offers the following summation:

> If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the "old" rhetoric and a "new" (a rhetoric invigorated by fresh insights which the "new sciences" contributed to the subject), I would reduce it to this: the key term for the old rhetoric was "persuasion" and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the "new" rhetoric would be "identification," which can include a partially "unconscious" factor in appeal. (203)

Burke gives a list of these "new sciences" in anthropology, social psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and semantics, adding, "I would also include here psychosomatic medicine, concerned as it is with ways in which our very physiques are led to take on attitudes in keeping with the rhetoric or persuasive aspects of ideas—attitudes of such conviction that they are worked into the very set of nerves, muscles, and organs" ("Old and New" 203).[5] Though his description of "psychosomatic medicine" sounds primitive in comparison with neuroscience today, such a passage peers into our own medicalized, behaviorist present. In passages such as these, Burke announces a seismic shift in rhetorical theory, one reflecting postwar/postmodern discursive practice: The logos-grounded "good reasons" representative of an age of Enlightenment would yield to a range of psycho-physiological pressures, largely irrational and often unconscious in their workings. It's Burke who taught us to speak, not simply of (conscious) rhetorical *performance* or "design," but also of (unconscious) rhetorical *behavior*.

With this shift from persuasion to identification, the 20th century effectively splits in half rhetorically, transiting from the high-modernist "age of reason"—an age, quintessentially, of logos—into our own post-Holocaust, postmodernist age of ethos (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning" 21).[6] Still, the range of emerging "sciences" that Burke lists will effectively create their own binary, in that the social sciences come to privilege explanations of culture and the group, while schools of psychology privilege intrapersonal components of self-identity. This intra/interpersonal binary will drive subsequent ethos studies: Seemingly with each subsequent decade, rhetorical theorists

[5]It's apt that Burke includes psychoanalysis among the "new sciences" impinging upon postmodern rhetoric, since his own system draws heavily on Freudian concepts (see Alcorn; Davis; Baumlin and Baumlin, "Psyche/Logos"). Note that Burke himself is not influenced by Rogers in any direct way; it's his followers—Booth above all—who learn to view Burkean identification through the lens of Rogerian empathy.

Though largely interchangeable and mutually-reinforcing, Richards's "understanding," Burke's "identification," and Rogers's "empathetic listening" have subtly different stresses, as mapped within the Aristotelian *pisteis*: Whereas understanding looks toward logos, identification looks toward ethos and empathy (as the term itself implies) looks toward pathos.

[6]Whereas the classical-Aristotelian model grounds persuasion in logos or conscious rational argument, Burkean identification rests in an audience's largely unconscious projection of trust and authority upon the speaker. Hence, it's not the speech (logos) but rather *the speaker* (ethos) that drives the Burkean model. Again, I quote Burke: "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (*Rhetoric* 55; emphasis in original). The audience thus sees *its own* face, *its own* values, *its own* fears and desires reflected in the words and projected image of the rhetor. (None of this, needless to say, pertains strictly to logos.)

will discover and apply new models of psychology, which cultural theorists will then set out to adapt and/or critique. The following paragraphs survey these Burke-inspired pendulum-swings in contemporary argument and ethos studies.

From Burke to Rogers (and Back)

> Real communication occurs, […] when we listen with understanding.
>
> —Carl Rogers, "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation" (107)

> Everyone who talks about the threat of war faces two conflicting rhetorical temptations: to unite "insiders" for action against an enemy, or to invite "outsiders" to productive discussion. The drive for violent victory now does include a hope for future peace, but the drive for discussion—call it diplomacy, negotiation, genuine listening to the enemy—depends on hope for peace now. Ever since the disaster of September 11, 2001, we have been flooded with the first kind of rhetoric […].
>
> Though correcting misunderstanding through genuine listening cannot always produce reconciliation, it is the only alternative to violence or cowardly retreat from the scene.
>
> —Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetoric of War and Reconciliation" (1, 3)

In "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation"—a conference paper first published in 1951—Rogers made bold to declare "the whole task of psychotherapy" as a "task of dealing with a failure in communication" (106). He elaborates: "The task of psychotherapy is to help the person achieve, through a special relationship with a therapist, good communication within himself. Once this is achieved he can communicate more freely and effectively with others. We may say then that psychotherapy is good communication, within and between men" (106). "The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication," Rogers adds, "is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person, or the other group" (106). "[I]s there any way of solving this problem?" he asks rhetorically (107). His answer follows: "Real communication occurs, and this evaluative tendency is avoided, when we listen with understanding. What does this mean? It *means to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about*" (107; emphasis in original). Rogers's success as a therapist rests in this insight. He continues:

> If I can listen to what he can tell me, if I can understand how it seems to him, if I can see its personal meaning for him, if I can sense the emotional flavor which it has for him, then I will be releasing potent forces of change in him. If I can really understand how he hates his father, or hates the university, or hates communists—if I can catch the flavor of his fear of insanity, or his fear of atom bombs, or of Russia—it will be of the greatest help to him in altering those very hatreds and fears […]. We know from our research that such empathetic understanding—understanding *with* a person, not *about* him—is such an effective approach that it can bring about major changes in personality. (107; emphasis in original)

Delivered in 1951, it's Cold War anxieties that this lecture seeks to allay.

However fruitful to psychotherapy, Rogers's paper would have remained largely unknown among discourse theorists, were it not for the 1970 publication of the textbook, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, by Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike—a monumental text that would shape rhetorical theory and inform composition pedagogy for the next two decades. As Doug Brent writes in appraising the influence of this text, "the overriding impulse of rhetoric in the 60s, […] was to create a rhetoric of social cooperation. This was not a new goal of rhetoric. It is the goal that Kenneth Burke set in *A Rhetoric of Motives* [43] when he defined rhetoric as 'the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols'" (454).[7] As Brent suggests, Young, Becker, and Pike found in Rogerianism a component of the "new" rhetoric sought by Burke:

> As Young, Becker, and Pike put it, "as a result of rapid and mass means of communication and transportation, our world is becoming smaller, and all of us are learning to become citizens of the world, confronting people whose beliefs are radically different from our own and with whom we must learn to live" (8). Thus the human race has begun to resemble the "state of Babel after the Fall"—an image that Young, Becker, and Pike borrow from Burke to use in their first chapter. It was this increasing awareness that other people have not only different opinions but entirely different *systems* of opinions, different worldviews, that impelled Young, Becker, and Pike to look for new methods of bridging gaps between people.
>
> This, then, was the rhetorical climate in which Young, Becker, and Pike sought to create a new rhetoric designed "to induce changes that will result in greater cooperation among men" [223]. (Brent 454)

To illustrate the troubled public discourse of the 1960s and 70s, we turn next to Wayne C. Booth's writings, particularly his *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (1974).[8]

[7]More than define rhetoric, this same symbol-use lies at the heart of our humanness. In *Language as Symbolic Action* (1968), Burke defines us as follows:

> Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative), separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection. (16)

As Burke's 1968 book title suggests, language does more than "communicate facts" or states of being; rather, by means of its inherently symbolic nature, language acts upon audiences, serving as an inducement to cooperation. Language "does something," in other words, and what it "does" is move or dispose us collectively toward action-in-the-world. In a nonsocial, nonmoral materialist sense, the world merely "is." As a symbol-using animal, the human creature reshapes (or "reorders") the world, transforming "what is" into (presumably) "what ought to be." (As to our being "moralized by the negative," observe the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments, with its Thou Shalt Nots.) And if we're "rotten with perfection," as Burke writes, it's because our rage for hierarchy and order reaches beyond "mere" cooperation. Within the realm of the social—which, for Burke, equates with the realm of the symbolic—we become "symbol-misusing" animals when our rhetoric turns moralizingly authoritarian, coercive, antisocial, and ultimately inhumane.

[8]See also Booth's *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (1970). (For an analysis of Booth's decades-long engagements with Burke, see Rood.) In *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004), his last major work, Booth offers terms of his own coinage, each affirming his commitment to a rhetoric grounded in mutual, empathetic "understanding":

> Rhetoric: The whole range of arts not only of persuasion but also of producing or reducing misunderstanding.

Committed to a rationalist "philosophy of good reasons," Booth (1921–2005) sought to restore dialogue in a time of political unrest fueled by American military involvement in Vietnam. Redefining persuasion as "mutual inquiry or exploration" (*Modern Dogma* 137), Booth's "rhetoric of assent" aims not at the refutation of opposing views but at the discovery and affirmation of sharable common ground. He writes, "not only do we talk and write and create art and mathematical systems and act as if we shared them: we really do share them, sometimes. Sometimes we understand each other" (113). Though stridently logos-centric in emphasis, still there's a germ of empathy in Booth's system, in that we "infer other human beings' states of mind from symbolic clues" (114).[9] As a community marked by its diversity of values and beliefs, we needed to relearn rhetoric as an art *of listening*, as well as of speech.

Whereas Booth identified the problem, Carl Rogers (1902–1987) provided a systematic solution, his method of client-centered psychology transformed from Rogerian therapy into Rogerian argument. In the Introduction to *Modern Dogma*, Booth acknowledges the influence of Rogers on his system, specifically in supplying a "psychology of assent" (xvi).[10] As to the evolution of Rogerian therapy into Rogerian rhetoric, Booth acknowledges Young, Becker, and Pike's *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*: In a footnote, Booth writes, "Young, Becker, and Pike are, so far as I know, the

> Listening-rhetoric (LR): The whole range of communicative arts for reducing misunderstanding by paying full attention to opposing views.
>
> Rhetrickery: The whole range of shoddy, dishonest communicative arts producing misunderstanding—along with other harmful results. […]
>
> Rhetorology: The deepest form of LR: the systematic probing for "common ground." (10-11)

[9]Indeed, "the deepest of all human values," writes Booth near the end of his life, is "understanding—sympathetic, serious listening to others" (*My Many Selves* 133).

Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen offer a brief sociolinguistic history of the two interrelated pathos-terms, empathy and sympathy:

> The term "empathy" was coined in 1909 as a translation of the German "Einfühlung," a key notion in the aesthetic theories developed by German philosophers Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps […]. In Lipps's account, empathy was "understood as a phenomenon of 'inner imitation,' where my mind mirrors the mental activities or experiences of another person based on the observation of his bodily activities or facial expressions" […]. In this philosophical usage, empathy is [fundamentally] a "simulation" mechanism. […] Only later on, in the second half of the twentieth century, did empathy enter the vocabulary of scientific—and particularly social—psychology, but with a significant semantic shift: empathy came to be seen as the underlying cause of altruistic behavior, and it was conflated with "sympathy" or feeling compassion for another human being. (75)

As mapped within the Aristotelian *pisteis*, Booth's (and, before him, I.A. Richards's) "understanding," Burke's "identification," and Roger's "empathy" have subtly different stresses: Whereas understanding looks directly toward logos and identification toward ethos, empathy (as the term itself implies) looks toward pathos.

[10]Quoting from Roger's 1951 essay (106–07), Booth describes Rogerian therapy as a rhetoric in itself:

> Rogers tells us in effect that the supreme *ought* is to pass no judgments until we have taken in the point of view of the other man, whether he is a patient or an actual opponent. Rogers sees the "whole task of psychotherapy" as dealing with a failure in communication, a failure both within the patient and between him and the world. And he sees the therapist's essential task as subordinating his own feelings and evaluations in order to listen with understanding. Only when he can prove that he understands the patient's position as well as the patient himself (which includes his capacity to feel with him) can he hope to give real help in "altering the basic personality structure" of the patient—or of the rhetorical opponent. (*Modern Dogma* xvi; emphasis in original)

only writers on rhetoric who have seen the relevance of Rogers to new rhetorical views" (xvii). This would soon change.

In *A Way of Being* (1980), a retrospective on his career and methods, Rogers seeks to distinguish his model of "active" or "empathetic listening" from identification: "Empathy, or being empathetic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition" (140). With apparent reference to Burke, he adds: "If this 'as if' quality is lost, then the state is one of identification" (140–41). To the extent that identification functions *as a projective tendency* in audiences, Rogers's point is taken. It's in Burke's notion of consubstantiality that an "'as if' condition" is maintained:

> 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 they are, or is persuaded to believe so.
>
> Here are ambiguities of substance. If 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. (*Rhetoric* 20–21; emphasis in original)

Dennis A. Lynch is more emphatic on this point: While the term "empathy" is not used by Burke,

> […] its function stands forth clearly in his definitions, as well as in his own motives to rhetoricize the scene of social action. What Burke goes on to call the 'conditions of identification or consubstantiality in general,' for instance, are precisely the conditions of empathy, for they involve, as Burke said above, the bodily effort to enter, through 'speech, gesture, tonality,' into another's ways of being or life-world [*Rhetoric* 55]. (Lynch 6)

By the mid-1970s, the vocabularies of Burkean identification and Rogerian understanding had intermingled with other rhetorical-intellectual movements, including expressivist and existentialist models of communication.[11] The glue, as it were, that held these strands together was a commitment to "empathetic understanding" as an aim of

[11]For an existentialist model, see Halloran; for a fusion of existentialism and expressivism, see Corder ("Argument"). Throughout this present survey, the question of self-identity—a question foundational to existential phenomenology as well as to psychology—remains a point of contention. As the second part of this double essay demonstrates, both empathy and its abjection-opposite have been described within diverse rhetorical/cultural/social/ psychological/physiological models, some (like Rogerianism) grounded in conscious agency and intentionality, others in unconscious behavioral response. I have no interest in collapsing these many terms and traditions into one "grand narrative" or system; my aim, here, is to explore Burke's continuing presence within several evolving strands of postclassical theory and to show where theory currently stands in explaining/critiquing/directing contemporary discourse.

I should add that this present survey is far from comprehensive. The authors that I cite here and in Part 2—Halloran and Corder, Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds, Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen, Julia Kristeva and Georges Bataille, Maggie Hennefeld and Nicholas Sammond—represent a broad range of disciplines, methods, and commitments. For broader discussions of post-Burkean/postmodern developments in ethotic argument, see Barnet; Brent; Baumlin and Baumlin (*Ethos*); Baumlin and Meyer (*Histories of Ethos*); Condit; Davis; Lynch; Norton; Teich.

rhetoric—a commitment that would impinge on the ethos, ethics, sociology, and psychology of discourse. It would do so by redescribing rhetoric, not as an act of verbal domination, but one of vulnerability—*of the speaker put at risk* in seeking mutual understanding.

S. Michael Halloran's essay, "On the End of Rhetoric, Classical and Modern" (1975), was seminal in this regard. Our time is one "of fragmentation and isolation," Halloran observes, a time when argument can succeed only by the degree to which a speaker "is willing and able to make his world open to the other," thus risking "self and world by a rigorous and open articulation of them in the presence of the other" (627–28). Rather than maintain the speaker's expertise, power, or superiority over an audience, this model grounds ethos in the equal co-presence of self and other. In "Varieties of Ethical Argument" (1978)—an essay of similar influence—Jim W. Corder writes, poignantly, that we are "apart from each other,"

> and it may be, as Burke said, that the only thing we have in common is our separateness. Distances open between us. We keep trying to enter their world or bring them to ours. Often we fail, but we keep trying. The trouble is that our speaking-forth—the primary need and issue of any age—is complex, confused, and messy, and often creates as many problems as it solves. Language is our way of composing ourselves. It is our first and last line of defense, and we are vulnerable in each line. (2)

Thus Corder and Halloran affirm the risk facing speakers and audiences alike, as well as the need for developing a commodious discourse—one whose language opens a space, as it were, for the co-presence of self and other, as "we keep trying to enter their world or bring them into ours." Existentialist at its core, such a model turns ethotic argument into a collaboration, raising the audience up to an equal participant, valuing ethical self-revelation and communication over persuasion, demystifying charismatic authority, and seeking health and welfare above all.[12]

Elaborating on this thesis, Corder published his best known and most influential text, "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love" (1985):

> Argument is emergence toward the other. That requires a readiness to testify to an identity that is always emerging, a willingness to dramatize one's narrative in progress before the other; it calls for an untiring stretch toward the other, a reach toward enfolding the other. It is a risky revelation of the self, for the arguer is asking for an acknowledgment of his or her identity, is asking for a witness from the other. (26)

[12]This paragraph has been revised from my previous discussion, "Ethos" (276). If I may be allowed a personal reference, it's in the mid-1980s (with Corder as a colleague, mentor, and occasional co-author) that I joined the Burkean conversation, publishing on the subjects of ethos, the psychology of rhetoric, the rhetoric of empathy, and the "ethic of care." Premised in game theory and a postmodern psychology of the self-in-process—intellectual convictions to which I remain committed—my essay, "Persuasion, Rogerian Rhetoric, and Imaginative Play" (1987) gained modest attention, reprinted in manuals of research and teaching in argument (Teich); it was also critiqued—and understandably so—by Phyllis Lassner (230), whom I quote below.

And yet, perhaps paradoxically, Corder begins his essay by acknowledging a weakness in Rogerian argument. As a species, we resist threats to self-identity (or, as Corder puts it below, to our "narratives"):

> As for the texts that propose patterns of Rogerian arguments, I'd say that the recommended designs are altogether commendable and will sometimes work, so long as the argument isn't crucial to the nature of the narratives involved. Where arguments entail identity, the presentation of "a statement of how the opponent's position would benefit if he were to adopt elements of the writer's position" is about as efficacious as storming Hell with a bucket of water or trying to hide the glories of Heaven with a torn curtain. If I cannot accept the identity of the other, his kindness in offering me benefits will be of no avail. As for offering a "proposal for resolving the issue in a way that injures neither party," I'd say that in the arguments that grip us most tightly, we do injure the other, or the other injures us, or we seem about to injure each other, except we take the tenderest, strongest care. […]
>
> I am suggesting that the arguments most significant to us are just where threat occurs and continues, just where emotions and differences do not get calmly talked away, just where we are plunged into that flushed, feverish, quaky, shaky, angry, scared, hurt, shocked, disappointed, alarmed, outraged, even terrified condition I spoke of a little earlier. Then what do we do? (22)

What do we do, indeed?

A Cultural Critique

> When you are with Athenians, it's easy to praise Athenians, but not when you are with Lacedaemonians.
>
> —Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (55)

> At its best, serious rhetoric pursues understanding of the kind that results only when there is genuine listening to the opponent's position.
>
> —Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetoric of War and Reconciliation" (9)

> I hated it. The Rogerian model is male, masculinist, and denialist. It leaves no space to be righteous with anger. It denies that women have a right to be angry at being left out of most methods of persuasion and that anger is worthwhile listening to, even if it's threatening, because for women to be recognized, everyone needs to know how they feel.
>
> —A student in a "Women in Writing" course, quoted in Phyllis Lassner, "Feminist Responses to Rogerian Argument" (407)

As the 1980s turned to the 90s, the rhetoric of empathy—grounded in Burkean identification conjoined to Roger's "psychology of assent"—gave way to a rhetoric (and, more specifically, to an ethotics) of cultural difference. In "Rhetorics of Proximity" (1998), Dennis A. Lynch makes note of this shift:

> Rhetoric, we learned from modern theorists, cannot proceed without empathy—or if it does, it is sure to fail. Douglas Walton calls empathy "the basis of all persuasive argumentation" (255) […]. Empathy is both an attitude and a practice: it attunes our minds to the needs of others; it permits people who are arguing to

> discover, not just premises, but premises that work (in Walton's terms, "presumptive conclusions concerning your respondent's commitments in a dialogue," [255]); it also generates a social climate that is conducive to the long-term health of rhetorical practices.
>
> Kenneth Burke perhaps most clearly anticipated this turn toward empathy in the new rhetorics when he redefined the aim of rhetoric, persuasion, in terms of identification […].
>
> And yet in recent years empathy has been scrutinized, critiqued, and all but abandoned by many rhetorical theorists, especially by those theorists whose work fits within poststructuralist, postcolonial, or postmodern social theories (Jarratt, Faigley, McKerrow). Starting with the collapse of Rogerian rhetoric—built as it was on the concept of empathy—empathy more and more has seemed weak, epistemologically flawed, and politically suspicious. James Zappen, Lisa Ede, Jim Corder, and, more recently, Phyllis Lassner have argued that Rogerian rhetoric is complicit in a depoliticizing culture of self-realization and fails to acknowledge the "double bind" in which "active listening" puts "marginalized people" [Lassner 230]. (Lynch 6)

Part of the problem stems from the "new" rhetoric's continued, seemingly unreflective complicity in Enlightenment rationalism. As Janice Norton observes, "Burke's 'Definition' [of Man] unwittingly evacuates the body of corporeal substance, replacing it with an abstract universal: man, woman, child—their bodies are all interchangeable" (158). Thus, "Burke's shift of the master term for rhetoric from persuasion to identification ignores morphology and culture, holding onto the notion that fundamentally women's bodies can be understood by comparison to men's bodies and require no further theorizing" (Norton 158).[13]

In their own influential essay, "The Splitting Image: Contemporary Feminisms and the Ethics of *êthos*" (1994), Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds critique the disembodied "Enlightenment subject" with reference to positionality, "a place from which values are interpreted and constructed rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values" (47; 50). They add, "It is precisely the concept of *êthos* in rhetoric that theorizes the positionality inherent in rhetoric—the speaker having been created at a particular site within the contingencies of history and geography" (47). By its means, "we acknowledge and take responsibility for our positions in asymmetrical social structures such as gender, class, and race" (50). Indeed, it's the asymmetry within power structures that "puts the question" to Rogerian models. As Lynch writes,

> Those who start from positions of privilege seem to have no clear motivation to empathize with others less fortunate, at least motivation that is in line with "their" interests, while those who start from positions of relative disadvantage only stand to lose more ground by giving ground—through empathy—to their opposition. The social field is not even, and, given this critique, the call to empathize can

[13]"One direction this theorizing can take," Lynch adds, "is to rethink Burke's definition of 'Man' and 'learn to know ourselves as Diverse Bodies That Learn Many Languages' [Condit 279]. New rhetorics—postmodern, postcolonial rhetorics—[…] must keep the body squarely at the center of rhetorical exchange" (Lynch 10). See Celeste Condit's "Post-Burke: Transcending the Sub-stance of Dramatism" (1992). This heightened emphasis upon "embodiment" will drive Part 2 of this double essay.

> suddenly seem inadequate, as if hidden in that call were the bound-to-fail message, "Just listen, and in time the dynamics of power will flatten themselves out." (9)

This cultural critique of preceding models proves necessary, inevitable, and salutary, in that notions of positionality bring the *entire* Burkean model—that is, the interrelation and exchanges between identification and division—into play, with "division" supplemented by (or, perhaps, understood as) "cultural difference." Without acknowledging this difference, any rhetoric grounded in "empathetic understanding" proves naïve, largely ineffectual, and potentially abusive.

Embraced by feminist, African American, and postcolonial criticism among other discourses, the rhetorics of positionality and "embodiment" have shaped ethos studies well into the 21st century. "Clothed" and visible in its ethotic "markers of identity" (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning" 1), the embodied, culturally-situated speaker has at last replaced the disembodied rational agent as the subject of rhetoric. Empathy remains a focus of contemporary theory.[14] However, its models of psychology have evolved, as has our current understanding of the roles empathy plays in the construction (and performance) of ethos. Indeed, the last two decades having brought even deeper levels of embodiment—specifically, the cognitive-affective functions charted in neuroscience—into consideration. The history that I've charted so far is standard academic fare. In contrast, the insights of neuroscience remain only partially assimilated by theory, and these have strong implications for the study (and teaching) of the ethics, ethotics, and practice of rhetoric. A new field—call it neurorhetoric (Gruber)—is upon us, one that provides a unique map of the post-Burkean model explored thus far. By its means, the Burkean vocabulary will again be reinvented: this time, within the neuropsychological processes separating empathy from abjection.

With the turn of the 21st century, narrative studies have given reason to revisit empathy as a function of rhetoric. It will be a rhetoric grounded, not in logos nor even in ethos entirely, but in the effects of storytelling—in a union of ethos with the pathos-effects of mythos. And it will be a rhetoric grounded, not in humanist models of

[14]In her latest work, Condit harnesses Burkean rhetoric to a Deleuzian-inspired posthumanism: "'All living things are critics,' Kenneth Burke told us, and he noted that humans, in specific, are *bodies that learn languages*" [Burke, *Permanence* 5] (Condit, "Contemporary" 368; emphasis added). With that insight, Condit articulates a distinctively feminist practice which she terms "empathic listening," one sensitive to the multeity of languages encoded within all life, human and animal: "Within the embodied practice of empathic listening, a biosymbolic critic might seek for better life-scripts for human beings. The choices are all situated, constrained, even overdetermined. They are all rhetorical, but all living things are coders, and all the codes of living things are relevant to rhetorical critics" (371).

By imagining the (feminist) "critic as empath," Condit reaffirms the role of active, empathic *listening* even—and, indeed, especially—within asymmetries of power. For the "subaltern" voices of feminism, race, and postcolonialism demand and deserve a witness, which the empathic critic seeks to provide. Condit describes the practice:

> An empathic study does not seek to develop a single, tightly held position. Neither does it presume a universal stance or even a Hegelian dialectic of synthesis. Instead, the critic begins with a modicum of openness and uncertainty and simply tries to lend as empathic an ear as s/he possibly can to multiple voices. The goal is not to promote one "side" of the discourse over another, nor to synthesize, though either of those may sometimes be the product. The goal is to construct discourses one can best embody (whether at the social or individual scale). ("Contemporary" 370)

psychotherapy, but in behaviorist-affective models of neuroscience. With this forecast of the thesis fueling Part 2, the first part of this double essay comes to an end.

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