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Kenneth Burke as Educator: What His Theories of Aesthetic Form  
and (Non-Symbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action Suggest  
for Teachers in the Literature Classroom

Tara T. Boyce

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Kenneth Burke as Educator: What His Theories of Aesthetic Form and (Non-Symbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action Suggest for Teachers in the Literature Classroom

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Master of Arts

Burke scholars oftentimes overlook Burke's fundamental role as educator and how his work can and should be applied to the classroom. This paper explores Burke's theoretical works and centers on two concepts important to developing rhetorical skills necessary for functioning and participating in a democratic society: his theory of aesthetic form and his distinction between motion and action. Specifically, this paper (1) clarifies these concepts and explains how they relate to each other and the emotional experience of literature, and (2) demonstrates how these concepts work together to imply a new method of practicing rhetorical criticism in the literature classroom necessary to meet Burke's goals of education: to help students become critically aware of the symbolic influences working upon them and to make critical judgments about them. To do that, I explain Burke's theory of form outlined in *Counter-Statement*, as clarified in additional texts, and how this form engages readers in a sequential and dialogical process, which creates in readers a specific emotional experience. I discuss how this experience subjects those who encounter form to what I describe in Burke's terms as a "motional" and consequently passive experience. I then discuss how practicing a method of reflection during and after the experience of form can help subject this experience to critique, into what Burke defined as the realm of "action"—conscious, deliberative choice.

Keywords: Kenneth Burke, literature pedagogy, form, motion, action, emotion, reflection

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## Introduction

In a private interview with Gregory Clark in July of 1989, Kenneth Burke explained that two of his major theoretical works *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives*, both of which explore his concept of “symbolic action” and the role of critics to interpret others’ symbolic acts, were written as a result of teaching at Bennington College, a private liberal arts school for women. According to Clark, Burke wrote these texts with the classroom in mind, to teach pupils to ask questions. An interesting, though not too surprising concept: Kenneth Burke as educator. Though he is considered primarily a philosopher, theorist, critic, and at times remembered as a creative writer, Kenneth Burke was also a teacher of English at a variety of college campuses across the U.S., including Kenyon College, University of Chicago, New School for Social Research, Indiana University, Pennsylvania State University, and Syracuse University (Enoch 274-5). Jessica Enoch points out that in addition to being a teacher, Burke “considered a number of his critical texts to be educational in nature” (275). We see this in many of his lectures, interviews, and theoretical writings, which provide strategies or “equipment” for what he saw as one major role of public education: teaching students how to participate peacefully in a democratic society with competing interests and motives (Cahill). And yet, Burke scholars oftentimes overlook Burke’s fundamental role as educator and how his work can and should be applied to the classroom.

Some have acknowledged Burke as an educator and analyzed his theoretical writings as they reflect his pedagogical theories. Jessica Enoch, for example, explores Burke’s rhetorical situation and how it influenced his educational motives as seen in his major pedagogical essay “Linguistic Approach to Problems in Education” (LAPE). She argues that Burke’s teaching philosophy centers on a “pedagogy of critical reflection,” which aims to help students practice

peaceful living in the Cold War era. William Cahill explores and clarifies Burke's ideas on the goals of education to be that which helps students develop a "terminology" for analyzing human motives in order to prepare students for discerning, in Burke's words, the "clutter of machinery, both technological and administrative, which civilization has amassed in its attempts to live well" (qtd. in Cahill). Other curriculum theorists like Rutten, Mottart, and Soetaert have implemented and analyzed Burke's methods for teaching rhetorical criticism discussed in LAPE—specifically the dramatistic pentad method—into literature classrooms, providing case studies that verify the effectiveness of these approaches in teaching students how to analyze symbolic acts.

These scholars have highlighted Burke for his educational contributions and similarly, I'd like to draw more attention to Burke and his theoretical writings for their pedagogical potential. How does Burke help instructors develop methods that teach students in a democratic society to become rhetorically aware citizens, critical of the dominant social influences working upon them, and specifically the role language plays in those influences? To answer that question, I'd like to move beyond the techniques outlined in LAPE, which these scholars have already discussed—Burke's methods of indexing, terministic screening, the dramatistic pentad, and what Enoch labels Burke's "pedagogy of debate" (285-6)—and turn to Burke's other theoretical works to propose an additional method for teaching rhetorical criticism particularly in a literature classroom that is implicit in Burke's claim that literature is "equipment for living" (*Philosophy* 1-2, 296), that it is a means through which we discover "human ways of acting and forming relations in the world" (Cahill). In *Counter-Statement* Burke begins to describe a concept of aesthetic form that readers can use to understand how they come to identify with the world an author creates through the experience of reading it, a process that is profoundly rhetorical.

The method I propose involves critical reflection on the emotions aroused in the experience provided by the form of a literary text. This method is not explicitly outlined in any of Burke's writings. Rather, it is implicit in a set of his theoretical works and centers on two concepts important to developing the rhetorical skills necessary for participating in a democratic society: his theory of aesthetic form and his subsequent distinction between motion and action, which explains how form operates. Specifically, my project here is twofold: (1) to clarify these concepts and explain how they relate to each other in the emotional experience of an encounter with a literary text, and (2) to explain the method for rhetorical criticism that follows that will help students recognize the influences working upon them as they read and make critical judgments about them. To do that, I will explain how literary form, as Burke outlined it in *Counter-Statement* and clarified it in additional texts, engages readers in a sequential and dialogical process that gives them a specific emotional experience. Second, I will discuss how this experience subjects those who encounter it to what I will describe in Burke's terms as a "motional" and consequently passive experience. This is experience that happens to us rather than experience we might choose by taking action. Much of the experience Burke describes in his theory of literary form is "motional." We can turn that experience toward our control by subjecting this experience to critique, and so bring it into the realm of "action"—our conscious, deliberative choice. I conclude with a discussion of Burke's pedagogical motives and how this method meets those motives by preparing students for conscious, critical judgments.

#### Form as Sequential and Dialogical and, Above All, Emotional

Many have discussed Burke's theory of aesthetic form and how it can be applied to a variety of contexts, including national narratives (Rutten, Mottart, and Soetaert), national parks (Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes*), popular films (Greene), local news stations (Gronbeck),

congressional debates (Darr), and even gourmet food (Lindquist). None, however, have discussed form specifically in terms of emotion and how this emotional experience develops through what I will discuss as a sequential and dialogical process. Because I am interested in pedagogy for the literature classroom, I will focus on how this happens in the reading of literary texts.

For Burke, emotional arousal is both the purpose and the appeal of art. In *Counter-Statement*, Burke defines literature as “written or spoken words,” and literature as art as “literature designed for the express purpose of arousing emotions” (123). Burke defines art in this way because as a rhetorical critic he is concerned with its rhetorical effects—in this case, the rhetorical effects of having our emotions aroused. This is important to understand since it is because of the power of emotion to change people that Burke presents his theory of aesthetic form. For this reason, a further understanding of Burke’s theory of form as it impacts emotion is necessary. Here I will explain how Burke’s theory of form is a sequential and dialogical process aimed at prompting in others specific emotions about life experiences.

### *Form as Sequential*

Burke best describes his theory of form in *Counter-Statement*, which he published in 1931. He writes: “Form in literature is an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence” (*Counter-Statement* 124). Burke uses terms such as “desire” and “anticipation” and “gratification” to explain the experience of form as emotional. How this emotional experience is achieved is through the sequencing of events. Burke demonstrates this in a letter to Matthew Cowley dated November 20, 1924: “Form in art becomes defined by this system as the arousing of a desire and the satisfaction of that desire. If I, by so many pages, awake in the reader the wish to see, let us

say, a letter which one character has written to another, and at the proper moment produce that letter—that is form” (Burke and Cowley 167). According to Burke, this progressive increase in curiosity that ultimately reaches its climax is produced by an author creating an appetite in the mind of readers and then satisfying that appetite at the opportune moment. This experience involves a sequence of desires aroused by an author’s sequencing of events in a text. Each of those desires, in sequences, will lead readers to anticipate and expect what comes next, an essentially emotional process directed and manipulated by an author’s recounting of events.

Burke demonstrates how an author achieves this response with an example of how form works in *Hamlet*. Burke writes that the psychology of form experienced in *Hamlet* “is not the psychology of the *hero*,” in this case, Hamlet, “but the psychology of the *audience*” (*Counter-Statement* 31). As readers, we know Hamlet will approach the ghost but not when or how for the first time and the realization of those expectations at an opportune moment—in this case, the fourth scene of the first act, after the “blare of trumpets,” when we are least expecting it, although we’ve been expecting it all along. Experiencing this process of anticipation and gratification through promises made by an artist is form, which imitates lifelike crescendos—“The suspense of a rubber band which we see being tautened. We know that it will be snapped—there is thus no ignorance of the outcome; our satisfaction arises from our participation in the process, from the fact that the beginnings of the dialogue lead us to feel the logic of its close” (*Counter-Statement* 145). For Burke, then, it is not the information itself that satisfies us (though Burke does make a distinction between the psychology of form and this idea, the psychology of information, where “the reader’s interest in the work is based primarily upon his ignorance of its outcome” (145)), but the emotional process of experiencing the fulfillment of our desires and expectations as those desires build upon each other and accumulate like in a crescendo.

Experiencing this crescendo prompts in readers an emotional response: we are shocked, we are outraged, we are exuberant. In this way, readers find themselves desiring, wanting, yearning what an author intends for them. Readers not only witness or observe an author's experience; they experience an author's pattern of emotional anticipation and desires, expectations and fulfillment, as the literature takes them through a sequence of events.

By sequence, Burke does not necessarily mean that literature must recount events in the temporal order in which they occur. Anneliese Watt points out that Burke struggled with defining or restricting narrative in temporal terms because plots that rely solely on temporality are, in his own words, "simple" and "arbitrary." He writes about this in a letter dated March 15, 1921 to Scofield Thayer, the editor of *The Dial*, when he compares literature to music, distinguishing both music and literature from other forms of art because they center on time. He writes: "Literature and music, because they exist in time—in contradistinction to painting, sculpture, and architecture, which exist in space—had accepted this arbitrary thread of progress because it was the simplest method of establishing a temporal gradation which, while being graded, also retained the feeling of unity" (qtd. in Watt 51). Perhaps Burke described the "thread of progress" and "temporal gradation" of literature as arbitrary and simple because even the smallest, inconsequential narratives exist in time—I get up from the couch; then I walk to the kitchen; then I heat up my TV dinner. Though this may be narrative, it is not necessarily narrative art. Burke's ambivalence about literary works that rely simply on time as an organizing or unifying principle is emphasized when he contrasts this type of narrative with what he describes as "an essentially artistic progression," or what we might interpret as a higher level or more sophisticated narrative:

An essentially artistic progression, however, would have its basis in something more exact than this mere illusion of development (such as for instance a sequence of form units, expositional, argumentative, oratorical, narrative, or to look at it another way, lugubrious, brilliant, matter-of-fact, sullen, agitated, remote, chaotic, etc.) . . . In this way the elements of a prose fiction would be juxtaposed like the colors on a canvass: because one quality called forth another. (qtd. in Watt 51)

This “calling forth” of elements is the creation and fulfillment of desires, or form, and the experience of having those desires created and fulfilled is emotional. How the author calls forth those elements through the sequence of desires can and often does vary from the timeline of a plot.

This process of calling forth is slow and deliberate in literature. Unlike a painting or a photo in which others experience an artist’s emotional argument all at once, form is a process of building—an author arouses initial emotional responses in others and builds upon those emotions with new information to create new emotions. I’d like to focus on the word “process” as it pertains to form because, as I will demonstrate, Burke’s theory of form is a dialogical process between an author and an audience, an exchange of ideas and emotional experience. In this way, literature is rhetorical because its very form, whether narrative or not, conditions readers one emotion at a time—as a narrative does—to move up, toward accepting an author’s emotional experience.

### *Form as Dialogical*

In his essay “Rhetoric and Poetics,” Burke defines his theory of form not as mere self-expression, but as communication: “I began in the aesthete tradition,” Burke writes, “with the

stress upon self-expression. Things started moving for me in earnest when, as attested in *Counter-Statement*, I made the shift from ‘self-expression’ to ‘communication.’ The theory of form (and ‘forms’) centers in that distinction” (305). As Fritch and Leeper point out, Burke puts little emphasis on formalistic standards to evaluate aesthetic works; likewise, we might say Burke puts little emphasis on formalistic standards to *create* aesthetic works. The only standard Burke puts on aesthetic works is effectiveness—whether or not a work of art communicates by *arousing* particular emotional responses in an audience by creating “an appetite in the mind of an auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite” (*Counter-Statement* 31). But Burke doesn’t provide much detail about how to achieve this form. In fact, the definition itself is a definition of effectiveness. Hence, Fritch and Leeper conclude: “The arguer [or author, in this case] who best understands the thinking of the audience will more likely be able to provide a valid form for that audience.”

Form, then, for Burke, is a process in which an author must anticipate, react, and adjust to the perceived beliefs, values, and needs of an audience in order to evoke the correct emotional response within them. Therefore, we must think of form as an emotional experience of which readers must be convinced—that this is a valid form of “feeling” and learning about life experiences. In order to convince readers, authors undergo an exchange of ideas in the creation process, similar to an exchange of ideas in a two-person communicative act. If literature, as Burke points out in *Counter-Statement*, must ring true to the readers’ experiences lived outside of a literary text, an author must always have the audience at the forefront of her mind as she selects events, characters, acts, and scenes to narrate as she conditions the audience to expect and desire particular events, qualities, or outcomes. Though this exchange exists only in the mind of the author as she creates the literature, an exchange is happening with an imagined audience.

So form is not just communicative as Deborah Tannen means that term—aiming for “shared meaning, as well as perceiving coherence and one’s sense in the world” (qtd. in Povozahev 48); it is also dialogical in the sense that Gregory Clark explains it as an “exchange of assertions and responses” (*Dialogue* 30), in which one “communicate[s] not *to* others, but *with* them” (*Dialogue* 2), even if that exchange is happening between a reader and an author represented through a text. John Rodden explains that this process of communication, which aims to adjust people to ideas or ideas to people, ranges on a continuum of two poles. The first pole consists of an author telling an audience “only what they want to hear,” while the other pole consists of what we might consider dogmatic: “my viewpoint is the only reasonable/moral/etc. one” (154). Literary acts may reside anywhere along this continuum; however, I believe Burke would place *effective* literature, meaning literature with a compelling form, somewhere in the middle, since an author must negotiate her own wants and beliefs with those of her audience.

This process of influencing must be a series of steps that leads readers from point A to Z. It is one step to lead readers to anticipate a letter; it is quite another to lead readers to anticipate a protagonist’s suicide, as we see in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*. So, for example in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen conditions her audience to accept Darcy as a valid and equal partner for Elizabeth one step at a time: (1) his apology letter that explains his misdeed toward Jane, (2) his payment to Wickman to restore the reputation of Lydia, (3) his influence in reuniting Jane and Bingley. Inasmuch as readers accept these steps—meaning, they accept these actions as appropriate and distinguished forms of love—they will anticipate and be gratified by the match to come later, as the author intends for them, in this way, feeling the “correct” emotions an author intends for them. By correct, I mean the emotional experience an author intends for the reader to experience. This makes more sense if, for example, at the end of

*Twilight*, we do not want or desire Bella and Edward to end up together when the plot has led us to believe we should. In this case, we do not experience emotions of gratification, but instead emotions of annoyance or disappointment.

So form, for Burke, is dialogical, a communicative act exchanged between both author and reader, the result of which arouses particular emotional experiences in the reader. I have discussed the role authors play in this exchange with their audiences, but what part do readers play in this dialogical process? Burke's concept of form doesn't explicitly explore the role readers play in their experiences of form, for example, the role reader response plays in a reader's experience. Not all readers respond identically to a text and not all readers are identically affected by the expectations and desires aroused within them through form. Burke indirectly acknowledges this in *Counter-Statement* when he explains his term "modes of experience" and how both our physical bodies ("organisms") and our environments contribute to our variety of interpretations/understandings of the situations around us. He explains here that because of these two factors, none of us will have identical experiences: "The range of universal experiences may be lived on a mountain top, at sea, among a primitive tribe, in a salon—the modes of experience so differing in each instance that people in two different schemes of living can derive very different universal experiences [emotions, perceptions, sensations, etc. (148)] from an identical event" (150). And later: "[Patterns of experience] result from the combination of organism and environment—and organisms presumably differ as much as environments. A more sensitive organism, for instance, might need a less emphatic environmental condition to cause it pain" (151-2). Burke acknowledges that because of these differences, organisms, including readers, will not experience the same responses in relation to the same text. And yet,

Burke doesn't adequately accommodate the variety of readers' experiences in his discussion of form. Therefore, his theory of form needs further developing.

Louise Rosenblatt and John Rodden provide explanations that help us better develop Burke's concept of form by taking into account the reader. I acknowledge that Rosenblatt differs in perspective from Burke—Rosenblatt emphasized reader-response criticism and therefore centered her discussion on readers' interpretations, whereas Burke emphasized rhetorical criticism and centered his discussion on artists' influence. To clarify, I am not using Rosenblatt to support Burke's theory of form as it is. Instead, I use Rosenblatt to complete Burke's theory of form by discussing how a reader contributes to the emotional experience of form. In *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt explains the fundamental influence a reader has in the experience of encountering a text. She writes:

I have used the terms *transaction* and *transactional* to emphasize the essentiality of both reader and text, in contrast to other theories that make one or the other determinate. *Interaction*, the term generally used, suggests two distinct entities acting on each other, like two billiard balls. *Transaction* lacks such mechanistic overtones and permits emphasis on the to-and-fro, spiraling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning. The meaning—the poem—'happens' during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page. (xvi)

Rosenblatt acknowledges that aesthetic experiences are transactions between readers and an author represented through the text. Through form, the sequence of events may guide readers to feel a certain way about the experience, but Rosenblatt explains that as readers read a text, they bring their own experiences outside of the text to verify/validate/challenge/explore the text, in a

way, “negotiating” with the experience an author provides for them. John Rodden similarly explains that while reading a narrative, an audience will respond to an author—“bending toward him or resisting him” (154) and that often, readers will “[fill] in the missing links of [the] argument, placing it within the context of their own experience and relating to it in their own idiosyncratic way” (Rodden 154). Because readers insert their own backgrounds and this process influences their interpretations and consequently, their experiences with a text, readers will experience a text in a way that is most personal and meaningful to them. It is for this reason that I believe Burke saw the powerful rhetorical influence of aesthetic works. Through this dialogical process, readers are moved emotionally by what an author communicates to them through the text as well as what they bring with them to the text. This allows readers to be moved by a piece of literature, as Burke puts it, from “within” (“(Nonsymbolic) Motion” 829). Though readers are still in some ways subject to the experience an author gives them (for example they are given certain characters and situations within a text in which they can respond to), by inserting their own backgrounds and experiences into interpreting a narrative experience provided for them, readers’ emotional responses to a text can be intensely powerful.

#### The Effects of the Emotional Experience of Form

If form aims to arouse emotional experiences in readers and readers approach form by inserting their own experiences in order to be moved emotionally by it, what are the implications for Burke? As a rhetorical critic, Burke was concerned with the consequential effects of these emotional responses and Thomas Alexander suggests why. As readers, we don’t just get emotional; we get emotional *about* something, which suggests emotion is a means rather than an end goal in art. He gives the following example of *King Lear* to demonstrate how emotion works as an effect and a means:

To say that *King Lear* expressed the feeling or emotion of ‘King Lear,’ is not to answer a question, but to raise one. It calls for a patient and detailed experiencing of the work, the revelation of character through language and action, the relationship of the events, awareness of the underlying themes and the ambiguities, and an envisagement of the whole as dramatically enacted. The emotion evoked by the work will be about the work. (222)

So the emotions we experience through form are an effect and a means toward interpreting experience. In this way, as recent studies in neuroscience have verified, depending on the quality and intensity of emotion, we make judgments out of our emotional experiences—about the stimuli that prompt these emotional responses.

Mark Johnson, Robert C. Solomon, Lea Povozahev, and Brian Jackson have discussed how emotional responses, which range on a scale of pain and pleasure and intensity, determine our animal needs, our personal relationships, our social relations, and our cultural institutions and practices (See Johnson 283). In other words, our emotions impact our actions, which impact how we respond to and work with others. In life experiences, for example, watching a man yell at another man may evoke an emotional response of discomfort or displeasure in us that causes us to plug our ears, leave the room, or tell the man to “knock it off.” Similarly, witnessing a man kill another man may evoke a more intense emotional experience in us, somewhere along the lines of fear and horror. Our emotional reaction in this case may prompt us to run, hide, fight, or call 9-1-1, and suffer from traumatic stress for a long time afterward. Based on that emotional experience, we may conclude how thoroughly murder is wrong, bad, something we should “reject.” Consequently, we might lock our doors, build a fence around our homes, or eventually

propose laws that punish those who practice this behavior. Emotion, in both of these cases, prompts the judgments and actions we make.

Form in literature acts as a stimulus similar to stimuli in real life experiences because it prompts real, neurological emotional responses within us. Of course, as Burke points out in *Counter-Statement*, our experiences in life are much more intense and much more immediate than our aesthetic experiences: “A mere headache,” for example, “is more ‘authentic’ than a great tragedy; the most dismal love affair is more worth experiencing in actual life than the noblest one in a poem” (77). However, emotional response, when achieved either through real life stimuli or form in literature, will have its effects on our judgments and perceptions, however small they may be. The only difference is that the emotional experience achieved through literary form is prompted and manipulated and by an artist, whereas emotional experience derived from real life is not. In this way, literature is rhetorical for Burke because it explores experiences in life and interprets them through form to create particular emotional experiences within others.

An example of how emotional experience in life differs from emotional experience through form is if from the moment I wake up, I were to make a list of all my observances and interactions with my environment. For example:

- Alarm ringing
- Darkness
- I blink
- Husband nudges me
- A bird chirps outside a window
- I turn on the light
- My phone rings

- I don't answer the phone
- I brush my teeth

My experience here is random—a list of bullet point stimuli, which mean nothing in and of themselves, though they may prompt emotional responses within me. Perhaps my alarm ringing startles me, or my husband nudging me annoys me, or my phone ringing irritates me. But let's say I am so moved by what the bird chirping out the window means to me in contrast with my phone or alarm ringing that I write a poem to capture and communicate this experience to others. To achieve this, I begin with focusing on what the husband nudging me or the alarm ringing signals to me. I leave out some qualities or objects or events, while adding or emphasizing others. Perhaps I change the scene, or exaggerate the quality of annoyance. I then lead readers to anticipate some resolution from this current conflict. I introduce the call of the bird in the distance, then the fall of sunlight on the windowsill, then the growing clarity and beauty of the bird's call as it lands on a branch just outside my window. Through the sequencing of these events, I guide my readers through a process of appreciating the simple beauty amidst the busyness and redundancies (or annoyances) of each day. As readers read my poem, they participate in my emotional experience, which acts as a stimulus that evokes particular emotional responses within them. Though my readers bring with them their own backgrounds and experiences to the text, which accounts for the way in which we all experience a work of art somewhat differently (we all select and discriminate qualities within a work of art), my poem becomes a vehicle through which readers experience my pattern of perceiving and feeling experience around me. In this way, I direct or manipulate emotional experience for my readers by crafting a sequence of expectations and desires for them—they experience *an* emotional experience (my emotional experience) secondhand.

Through the very act of sequencing events and ideas, an implicit argument is created by an artist: See this in *this* way; Feel this in *this* way. So, when Burke writes in *Counter-Statement* that “experience is less the *aim* of art than the *subject* of art; art is not *experience*, but *something added* to experience” (77), he means art directs or creates specific experiences for readers to better direct their emotional responses. In this way, art *argues* something about experience—art communicates a judgment about experience. This is what Burke seems to mean when he explains that art “strikes its own specific attitude,” or invites others to “Come attitudinize with me” (*Late Poems* 26).

#### Emotion as (Non-Symbolic) Motion

The key, then, for Burke, is to be conscious of our emotions, what prompts them, and to make conscious judgments about them, since these judgments impact how we interpret and approach the world around us. But consciousness and judgment are vague terms so in order to discuss them, I turn to Burke’s theory of non-symbolic motion and symbolic action to discuss how emotion exists within the realm of motion and the implications of that.

In the correspondence between Burke and Wayne Booth, Burke often refers to what he calls his “motion/action pair” as the starting point for analyzing all of his theoretical work. In a letter dated September 16, 1978, Burke writes, “I’m so sold on my Motion/Action routine..., I have to approach all those things from my starting-point, for nothing else seems quite real.” In a letter dated September 18, 1978 Burke further emphasized, “I want to see everything discussed in connection with that tie-up [‘my Motion/Action routine’].” And finally, in a letter dated January 2, 1979 Burke makes the comment, “I insist upon the motion/action pair as the groundwork of a secular nomenclature for the discussion of human relations.” Clearly, this

motion/action pair is important to Burke and for this reason I will explain the distinction and how this relates to experiencing emotion through form and making judgments about those emotions.

*Non-symbolic motion*, for Burke, consists of the natural, biological, physical experiences that work within or upon us. This is what happens in the world or in our physical bodies, whether or not we are consciously aware of it. In contrast, *symbolic action* consists of the conscious, intentional, motivated, and symbolic experiences that attempt to make meaning of motion. In other words, as self-conscious human beings try to make sense of motion in their physical surroundings or within them, as they attach symbolic meaning to motion through language and other symbol systems, they begin to operate in the realm of action. Burke describes the difference between these two concepts in the following passage:

There can be motion without action (as the sea can go on thrashing about whether or not there are animals that have a word for it).

There can be no action without motion (as we animals could not have words for anything except for the motions of our nervous systems and the vibrations that carry our words from one of us to another through the air or that make words visible on the page). (“(Nonsymbolic) Motion” 814)

Both “systems” of experience impact our ways of understanding and interacting with the world and both are important aspects in influencing our quality of life, our own “motional” experiences, and actions. For example, an external motion, such as a tsunami, can cause severe damage to our physical surroundings. The impact of this can affect us in different ways, the first being “motional,” the second being “actional.” For example, how the tsunami can have “motional” effects is if, upon seeing the tsunami approach, our physical bodies experience shock, with or without our knowing it. Our legs freeze, our throats become dry. Or, let’s say, as the tsunami

approaches and we're hit by a large sharp object, and our physical bodies respond by bleeding, increasing our body temperatures and our white blood cell count in order to fight any potential bacteria or infection. These are embodied "motional" responses that happen within us as a result of an external motion, in this case, the tsunami. Both external and embodied motional effects exist outside our realm of control. How these motions can have "actional" effects is if they cause us to consciously act. For example, if, when we see the tsunami coming, we *decide* to run and we *strategize* a solution by *telling* others to run and find shelter. We are now consciously reacting; we are acting. In this case, the motion of the tsunami has affected our actions: what we need and want and choose, including our conscious actions about what to do with our new circumstances, which is expressed through our symbolic actions. We assign meaning to the tsunami and label it a disaster—something negative—and we make a concentrated effort to respond to it. The moment we begin to interpret through language (including thought, for example) or consciously do something about motion, we operate within the realm of "action."

*Symbolic action*, too, can have motional and actional effects. For example, a new government policy (a symbolic act) to increase gun control can cause motional reactions in others who may experience in their physical bodies emotions such as anger, or joy (depending on who you talk to). The policy can also cause actional responses. A group of protesters decide to gather outside the White House and together protest the new law. Or perhaps because of the new policy, gun killings increase or decrease as a response to or an interpretation of the new law. In this way, both motion and action have motional and actional effects; the only difference is in the realm of motion, we have no control, whereas in the realm of action, we do.

Burke seems especially preoccupied with the effects symbolic actions have, since it is the realm in which we do have control. In a 1973 letter to Booth, dated April 5, Burke implicitly demonstrates this concern. He writes:

Thus, if a certain chemical is injected into the blood stream, and a rise in blood-pressure results, here obviously is an event in the realm of motion. But if the same rise in blood-pressure produced by a piece of true or false information (in the old-fashioned meaning of the term ‘information’), here the sheerly physiological motions are obviously affected by ‘symbolicity’ (i.e., ‘action’).

Burke explains here that motional reactions can occur from symbolic actions—in this case, “information”—whether that be true or false information. What’s interesting in this passage is Burke’s use of the word “But” (“But, if the *same* rise in blood pressure . . .”) because it suggests that Burke is concerned not only with the effects of motion or action, but the cause of motional reactions. Otherwise, why must it matter *how* (either motion or action) the blood-pressure rises as long as it rises? The effects of the rise in blood-pressure will be the same on the physical body, regardless of whether or not it was intended, motivated, etc. In this way, Burke differs from the Behaviorists who only consider effects (scene), rather than on actor, act, and agency, elements of his pentad. Hence, Burke’s comment in a letter to Booth: “As vs. the Behaviorists, I absolutely insist upon a Dualistic position. And with regard to any and all other Isms, I insist upon the motion/action pair as the groundwork of a secular nomenclature for the discussion of human relations” (Jan. 2, 1979). Burke, here, demonstrates a particular concern with how symbolic action—as it is motivated by an actor—impacts our motion(s), and consequently, our human relations. Burke seems particularly concerned with symbolic action because symbolic action creates some responsibility. In “sheer” motion, or what Burke sometimes refers to as

“physiological motion,” there is no attitude, motivation, or desire. However, in symbolic action, there is, and because of this, Burke argues that we should especially be aware. And because of this, rhetoric as a means for inducing cooperation in each other is necessary—to have at least some say in the symbolic actions that impact or become our motion.

Emotion, as I discussed it earlier, exists in the realm of motion. Emotion is something that occurs within us as an automatic response to a stimulus; it is an experience of internal motion. Mark Johnson, who synthesizes recent discussions of emotions, defines emotion as the “neural, chemical, and behavioral responses to various stimuli that typically have positive or negative value” (58). Robert C. Solomon explains that these emotions are always triggered and that they happen in response to something, a stimulus, even though we may not be aware that we are experiencing them. Johnson similarly points out that emotions are not always interpreted or conscious by those who experience them. In fact, our bodies respond to situations emotionally first—our palms sweat, our hearts race—before we understand that we are feeling an emotion, for example, fear. For this reason, Johnson makes a distinction between emotion and feeling, stating, “Emotional responses can occur long before we become aware that we are *feeling* an emotion. . . emotional responses can operate beneath the level of consciousness” (59, emphasis original). Emotion “happens” to us, similarly to how a fever or cold “happens” to us as a result of a stimulus that triggers a response in us. We cannot control the stimulus that prompts the emotional reaction or illness (although we can try to prevent ourselves from encountering the stimulus); neither can we necessarily control our initial emotional bodily response to the stimulus. We can, however, practice conscious awareness of the responses within us, what caused them, and consequently, what to do with them. And for this reason, I propose a method of critical reflection on our emotions as we experience literary form.

### Reflection and Judgment as (Symbolic) Action

In the preface to the first edition of *Counter-Statement*, Burke explains how his chapter “Lexicon-Rhetoricae,” which outlines and breaks down his theory of form, provides a “machine for criticism” or method for evaluating works of art. He clarifies the purpose of this method as rhetorical criticism or “judgment” in the following statement:

As for our set-piece, the “Lexicon Rhetoricae,” it is frankly intended as a machine—machine for criticism . . . . It is a kind of judgment machine, designed to serve as an instrument for clarifying critical issues (not so much for settling issues as for making the nature of a controversy more definite). It seeks to perform this function by working out a set of “pivotal” or “key” terms for discussing the processes of literary appeal. (ix)

Here we see Burke as educator. Here we see Burke proposing that his theory be applied to the classroom and that it be applied with the end goal of teaching judgment or criticism. Burke implies that reflection on and discussion of these processes through developing a vocabulary of form and discussing how it works in texts is what teaches judgment or criticism. And if, as Burke writes in his chapter “Lexicon Rhetoricae,” “form *is* the appeal” (138) of literature, and form is the creation and fulfillment of desires, an emotional experience, reflection on and discussion of emotion, too, is key to teaching judgment or criticism of literary texts. Emotion may happen to us as we experience form, but if we can learn to reflect on those emotions in order to make judgments about how they are affecting us, we can gain power over the symbolic acts that influence our motions: our emotions.

By power, I mean we can make choices about how to interpret and respond to these influences. I bring up this idea of individual choice because I believe Burke was especially

concerned with it as he developed wide-ranging methods for practicing rhetorical criticism in his pedagogical theories. Burke acknowledged that much of what we need and want and choose to do is influenced by symbolic actions outside of our control, and therefore, being critically aware of how others' acts, specifically, how others' symbolic acts affect us is important for Burke because that gives us choices—whether or not to wield to those influences. This is the basis of Burke's pedagogical philosophy. Unless we are paying attention, the arousal of emotions can unconsciously shape our judgments and consequently, what we identify with—whether that be a character or an attitude or an ideology represented in a book, or a person or a movement we encounter in our real lives. This process can occur as a category of motion—it can happen to us without our knowing of it. Our critical task is to put that experience into the realm of action by subjecting it to choice and judgment. This takes us from the passive, “motion” realm of unconscious motivations and places us in the “action” realm of conscious, thoughtful, deliberative judgment.

How we subject our emotions to choice and judgment is through reflection and discussion. Experiencing an author's pattern of emotions, or desires, through encountering form, directs our own emotional responses during the reading of a text and this experience may play a role in directing our judgments about life experiences outside of a text. (For example, in Poe's “The Tell-Tale Heart,” by directing our emotional experiences, Poe can also direct our judgments about a subject outside of the text. When encountering the insanity of Poe's narrator, we not only tend to feel painful emotions (such as terror, disgust, repulsion), we may subsequently make judgments about insanity and characters who are insane outside of texts. In this way, our emotions guide or inform our judgments about the subjects within the art object, as well as subjects outside of the art object.) Since form creates emotional responses within us,

which are bodily experiences, carefully examining those bodily experiences is important if we are to consider ourselves as being rhetorically critical. And because we all experience emotional response somewhat differently, this reflection should be based on our personal emotional experiences.

Burke understood the significance of the individual experience because he understood the role the individual body played in both impacting our experiences as well as critiquing them. He writes in “Art—and the First Rough Draft of Living,”

As regards individuality, I assume that we should start as always by recognizing this fact (not a very edifying one but nonetheless basic and undeniable): My particular physical pleasures and pains are mine, not yours--and your particular physical pleasures and pains are yours, not mine. Though in our regional or national affiliations, and in our use of a common language, we are members of groups, thus sharing in a collective identity, to a large extent, our physical pleasures and pains are our private property. This state of affairs is due to the centrality of the nervous system. (162-3)

Ann Branaman explains that Burke understood that the individual body played a significant role in critiquing dominant systems and allowed for us to alienate ourselves from the dominant communities and ideologies of which we are all a part. In this way, our physical bodies become critical sources for judgment if we are aware of the experiences of our physical bodies and learn to make choices about them. For this reason, I argue that teachers of literature should implement discussion and activities that prompt students’ awareness of and appropriate reflection on their personal emotional experiences during and after experiencing narrative form.

Pedagogical theorists like John Dewey, Louise Rosenblatt, and more recently, Kathleen Yancey, have made strong arguments for why teaching reflective thinking in the classroom is constructive to learning and important in a democratic classroom. Dewey argued for reflective thinking because students learn through practice in the classroom not *what* to think, but “*how* to think well” (34). The practice of systematic reflective thinking, Dewey believed, would build habits of thinking processes transferable to thinking activities outside of the classroom. Rosenblatt argued for reflection because she acknowledges the differing experiences readers bring to texts and the need for students to learn to negotiate their experiences with the experiences of others, including authors. Similarly, Yancey makes reflective writing exercises central to her curriculum, explaining that the purpose of these reflective assignments is not only to increase learning and awareness of self because awareness is critical to rhetorical criticism, but also to make learning, reading, and writing more personal and meaningful to ninety-five percent of the reading public who will not become English majors (ix). None of these scholars, however, have proposed implementing reflection of emotional response to texts, particularly while experiencing those emotions, which is what I advocate here.

If, as Dewey said, reflective writing is goal-oriented and encourages habits of systematic thinking, what is the goal of reflective writing on our emotional experiences? Beyond awareness of our emotional responses to texts, I advocate for reflecting on and making judgments about our emotions in relation to a text. The goal of reflective thinking should be critical judgment and critical judgment cannot occur without an understanding of how our emotions are being influenced. To understand how our emotions are being influenced, we must be aware of the changes in our emotions, as they occur, as well as after in order to form appropriate, conscious judgments. And since form, as Burke implies, is a sequential and dialectical process, this is

particularly important. Therefore, the following questions are the types of questions teachers may ask their students to reflect upon during their reading:

1. What emotions and desires am I experiencing?
2. How is this text manipulating those desires? (Think of when your emotions began and/or changed. Track these changes if you can. Any words or events that specifically triggered these emotional responses within you?)
3. Which emotions or desires do you feel comfortable accepting? Why/why not?
4. What do those emotions do to your understanding of experience in this story? In other words, how do you feel about this interpretation of experience, how it is portrayed by this author? Do you agree? Disagree?

And after their reading experience, students may consider the following questions:

1. If literature argues about “what life means” (Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction* 141), what is this author arguing?
2. How does this author sequence events in order to make that argument?
3. Do you agree with how this author interprets experience? Why/why not? What do you accept? What do you reject?

One thing I want to point out in these reflective questions is that students must learn how to discern both the possible positive and negative influences of a text. In *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, Wayne Booth responds to rhetorical critics that focus on the negative aspects of rhetorical influence—being aware of the Hitlers, the religious fanatics, etc. However, Booth argues, equally, if not more importantly, for the positive aspects of rhetorical influence, which encourage mind and body to aspire higher. Not only do we guard ourselves against degrading and destructive influence, we must also aspire for elevating, inspiring, wholesome influence at

the individual and collective level. Wayne Booth calls this an attitude of “Why not?” or assent. Unlike Booth, however, I don’t believe we should teach our students to approach texts with an attitude of automatic acceptance, or the attitude of “innocent/right until proven guilty” that Booth suggests. Nor do I support what he calls the modern dogma theory either: that all influences are “guilty until proven innocent.” Instead, I adopt a neutral attitude that encourages looking for both the positive and negative influences of aesthetic experiences. This implies that practicing rhetorical criticism means discerning *both* that which inspires and that which degrades. (This kind of thinking, of course, also implies discerning neutral influence that doesn’t necessarily lean one way or the other.) To teach this approach to thinking and rhetorical criticism allows for us to build upon our understandings of both good and bad, rather than just focusing on one side of the spectrum. This approach allows for a more wholesome education that creates open and critical thinkers.

Of course, one thing teachers must always be wary of is emotional response based in misunderstanding, poor reading comprehension, or outright boredom or frustration as a result of a student’s experiences outside of the text. For this reason, students must be encouraged to share their responses with others, so that the class together can explore and provide alternate points of view. Kathleen Yancey similarly pushes for this kind of collective dialogue, as it is most fitting in a literature classroom:

In a classroom setting, particularly a classroom setting where literature is the focus, where collaborative learning is common, and where performance is a part of the delivered curriculum, reflection is concurrently an individual and a social opportunity to *pause*, to *deliberate*, to consider and to *embody alternatives*, and to articulate the curricula and the learning within and across them. (101)

Robert Kane also argues for this kind of teaching that encourages learning more together in *Through the Moral Maze*. Kane uses Plato's metaphor of the elephant, how all of us, touching different parts of the elephant, only know what we encounter with the elephant—one of us touches the foot, another the tail, another a tusk. In order to learn more about the elephant as a whole, we begin to share our different viewpoints of the elephant with each other. Even those with ill-intentions (perhaps someone makes up a part of the elephant) or those ignorantly touching the grass, rather than the elephant, may help us reevaluate and understand more of what it is we believe and find meaningful or significant about the elephant. For example, if someone suddenly shouts out, "What if what we feel doesn't even exist and we're imagining it?" we might need to think about our senses, whether or not we trust them, and whether or not we want to continue touching the elephant. Even these viewpoints can contribute to our understanding of what the elephant is by helping us develop what the elephant is not. To bring this back to our discussion here—the sharing of emotional responses to literary form—students can learn how others feel or respond to a text and compare or contrast their own experiences. Through the process, they can learn more about their own experiences and reevaluate them.

#### Burke's Educational Motives

In "Responsibilities of National Greatness," Burke explains that whatever influences our identification choices or what we choose to identify *with*—with what or whom we choose to align ourselves, whether that be a person, a country, an organization, a material, an idea, etc., is rhetorical. In other words: *What we choose to identify ourselves and what we choose to identify ourselves against* are rhetorical questions for Burke, which, I believe, caused him to explore how we choose to identify with something or someone and to develop pedagogical methods for critiquing these choices.

I bring up Burke's concept of identification as the object of rhetorical influence because emotion is the initial pathway to influencing those identification choices. The pleasurable or painful emotional experiences we have in response to a stimulus prompts the choices we make about whether or not to identify with the stimulus. That which influences our emotions, then, has the potential to influence our identities, or our identification choices. Literary form particularly shapes what we want and identify with through the emotional experience an author provides us. Readers can become subject to the emotions an author gives them during an experience of form: an author gives readers desires to desire. As readers experience an author's sequencing of events and accept the outcome of those events as believable and satisfying, they participate in a process of identification with an author.

Readers may not notice this identification occurring through their desires and expectations except when it does not occur. I mentioned earlier how if at the end of *Twilight*, we do not want or desire Bella and Edward to end up together when the plot has led us to believe we should, we may refuse to identify with an author, consequently forming an alternate identification. This is, whether trivial or profound, a process of identity formation. Whether we are consciously aware of it or not, the emotional experience of the text causes us to reevaluate our own understanding of conflict and experience demonstrated in the text. By accepting an author's experience, we may reinforce or confirm our understanding of experience in real life, which, on a scale of intensity, will influence how we at least think about and potentially respond to or act toward similar experiences in the future. This is still a transformation because it strengthens previous beliefs and attitudes. Similarly, by rejecting an author's experience, we develop our own judgment of experience itself—what it means, how to handle it, etc.—by forming judgments about what it is not.

Understanding a concept in terms of what it is not is how Lawrence Prelli, Floyd Anderson, and Matthew Althouse define Burke's general concept of recalcitrance. Specifically, they argue Burke believed recalcitrance to mean "the factors that substantiate a statement, the factors that incite a statement, and the factors that correct a statement" (97). This definition of recalcitrance can include both non-symbolic motions and symbolic actions that challenge/revise/provide an alternate view of reality, which, consequently, expand our understanding of our own experiences. For Burke, recalcitrant materials, including literary narratives, act as a catalyst for developing a more critical point of view of our experiences as these materials prompt us to reconsider and perhaps revise our assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews. In this case, literature, a symbolic act which creates "motional" responses within us (emotions) that challenge or cause us to question our expectations by providing contradictory or previously unperceived ideas, can expand our understanding of life in general, how we perceive the world, and how we negotiate our identities within this world. In this way, both acts of accepting and rejecting affect identity since both acts help shape our beliefs and understanding of life experiences and how to handle them. The key is to reflect on how our emotions influence those conscious or unconscious identifications during and after reading in order to consciously choose what to align ourselves with or against.

My point here is that everyone needs to be conscious of how art, and particularly, literature, influences us to make judgments about whether or not to accept that influence. I have described one method for teachers of literature to do so that would advance Burke's pedagogical motives, or goals, that I share. For Burke, education involves recognizing and understanding the symbolic acts that influence our choices. That is why Burke expanded his category of rhetoric, of the influences we should subject to critique, beyond traditional argumentation into non-

traditional regions, particularly into modes of expression such as art, broadly defined. This is the point of his book *Counter-Statement* and why he developed the dramatic pentad and indexing methods outlined in LAPE. Burke was not only concerned with how explicit arguments work on our emotions, but also how the pervasive implicit arguments we encounter work on them. In fact, Burke seemed especially preoccupied with the effect implicit arguments have on us because these symbolic acts have the potential to be even more powerful in shaping the emotions that comprise our identification choices because we are not used to the idea that entertainment or high art are rhetorical. We tend to approach both with our critical guard down, leaving ourselves vulnerable because we are not attending to how we are being influenced. This is not to say that art is malicious and devilishly manipulative. However, having witnessed two world wars, the development of the atomic bomb, and multiple genocides during his lifetime, Burke emphasized conscious rhetorical criticism in the classroom to teach that being aware of how symbolic acts have motivational and actional influence is necessary for personal and societal peace. It is for this reason that I, too, have focused on how literature is particularly and powerfully rhetorical because it creates emotions and desires within our physical bodies that have the potential to impact our judgments and actions.

### Conclusion

I make this case because as an undergraduate and graduate student at Brigham Young University studying both English literature and creative writing, the idea that art is rhetorical was foreign to me, and generally rejected by teachers and peers. My study of literature, reading it or writing it, focused on ideas within the text without reference to their effects on us students. One professor in a contemporary American literature course even exclaimed, “Don’t ever begin a comment in this class with ‘I feel!’” But, as I’ve discussed here, “I feel” begins the expression of

rhetorical influence, a process that is pervasive. Indeed, the expression “I feel” begins the process of transferring our emotional experiences we experience in relation to a text from the realm of motion into the realm of action. As students reflect on how symbolic acts have motional influence on them through the experience of form, they learn the need to make judgments and choices about those experiences as they occur and after because their identities are at stake. Through this practice, students learn how to operate within the realm of action, and specifically in this case, how to take control of their identities by carefully choosing which emotions and desires to accept. In this way, we teach students to take control of the development of who they are and what they believe. Here it is in Burke’s terms:

[As] the individual learns to anticipate [others’] attitudes toward him . . . [he] becomes aware of *himself* in terms of *them* (or generally, in terms of the ‘other’). And *his* attitudes, being shaped by their attitudes as reflected in him, modify his ways of action. Hence, in proportion, as he widens his social relations with persons and things outside him, in learning how to anticipate their attitudes he builds within himself a more complex set of attitudes, thoroughly social. The complexity of social attitudes comprises the “self” (thus complexly erected atop the purely biological motives, and in particular, modified by the formative effects of language, or “vocal gestures,” which invites the individual to form himself in keeping with its social directives). (*Grammar* 237)

Literature classes are the best place to reflect upon how others attitudes and symbolic acts can shape our own emotions and identifications because the experience of form is intended to be emotional and personal. As literature teachers help students practice making important and meaningful judgments critical to the formation of their identities, they provide students with the

kind of practice for making judgments that help students become more conscious and careful of their identities outside the classroom. In this way, we teach students not just crucial thinking skills, but critical life skills. And for Burke, this was the goal of education and the motive behind much of his work.

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