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TOWARDS A RHETORIC OF ROLES: SELF-FASHIONING AS INVENTION STRATEGY
IN THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of English

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Jacob Levi Robertson

APPROVED:

James L. Kastely, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

James T. Zebroski, Ph.D.

Margot Backus, Ph.D.

Paul Butler, Ph.D.

Ann Christensen, Ph.D.

Gregory Clark, Ph.D.
Brigham Young University

Steven G. Craig, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Economics

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ABSTRACT

Rhetoric and composition studies addresses the problem of student self-presentation by appealing to the discourse of social roles: the “roles” of Writer and Reader, Rhetor and Audience. But this role-rhetoric is only vernacular, not theorized, so the concept remains too abstract to be practical for rhetorical analysis and invention. This dissertation analyzes the role-rhetoric in rhet/comp discourse to discover what it reveals about rhetoric generally and in order to develop a more rigorously theoretical *rhetoric of role*. I examine the evolution of Kenneth Burke’s role-rhetoric during the development of “dramatism,” arguing that it provides a foundation for developing a rhetoric of role that allows rhetors to draw, potentially, from the gamut of human social roles as commonplaces for self-fashioning, and I consider what this tells us about rhetoric and persuasion, and suggest some ways this rhetoric of roles might inform pedagogy.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family:

To my children, Zion and Enoch,
The most important students I will ever teach
When first I held you in my arms
I felt the weight of my responsibility as a Father
I did this for you.

And to my beloved wife,
Cori
The love of my life
The reason I do everything I do
Your support means everything.

I love you.

“The main ideal of criticism is to use all that there is to use”

Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 23.

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to *A Rhetoric of Motives* (*ROM*), Kenneth Burke’s “philosophy of rhetoric,” Burke writes that a central purpose of his book is to “develop” the study of rhetoric “beyond the traditional bounds,” to show “how a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized, or thought to belong” (xiii). Chief among the objects Burke redefined as “rhetorical” were human sociality in general, and human identity in particular. Individual identity, Burke argued, is the product of a dialectic between society and the individual—what his “Linguistic Approach to Problems of Education” (*LAPE*) referred to as the “*drama of human relationships*” (6, his emphasis).¹ Unlike the social sciences of his time, however, Burke does not use the term “drama” metaphorically; rather, for Burke, the term “drama” is a pun, and quite a serious one: Burke’s use of the term “drama” plays first on his reader’s vernacular understanding of the term “drama” as a scripted and staged art of human performance, and in this respect, the term suggests our nature as role-players; but his pun also plays on the ancient Greek root *drama*,

¹ I recognize there are ideological implications to using the term “human” here as an abstract, universal term (in the manner of Burke) when my dissertation is clearly situated in a Western intellectual context and in an American university experience. So, in using the word “human” as Burke uses it—in an attempt to symbolically see beyond the human divisions to a more general “human” nature based in language—I in no way mean to minimize the diversity of human experience, nor to characterize the ideas in this dissertation as a one-size-fits-all solution to the problems of division that come with diversity. Rather, I am simply following Burke’s lead, using the word “human” as a term that both subsumes and surmounts the idea of persons as both biological and social organisms; this attempt to surmount human divisions through an act of abstraction is a way to see through *symbolic* divisions in order to provide new perspectives for seeing, and then acting in, the often unpredictable specificity of diverse social contexts. For a further discussion of the idea of “human” within the context of a rhetoric of role, see the conclusion to chapter four, “Towards a Rhetoric of Roles,” page 159.

which denotes *any* human action.² So, Burke's use of the term "drama" suggests the complexly *motivated* aspect of all social activity. Further developing this idea in his later work, *The Philosophy of Literary Form (PLF)*, Burke argues that we understand humans best when we understand them "neither as animals nor machines [. . .] but as actors and actors" (311), or persons³ whose individuality is determined by the rhetoricality of the actions they perform in relation to others.

Thus, while humans are certainly "biological organisms" that "exist and operate according to the laws of motion" or nature (physics, biology, and the like), humans are also social agents that exist and operate according to the laws of language and symbolic action.⁴ This latter set of laws involves the "network of purely *symbolic* acts and symbol-guided purposes" that inform and direct human social activity, a "symbolic action" of rhetorical interaction that is evident in every walk of life, "ranging from the lowly processes of book-keeping and accountancy to the over-all terminology of 'right,' 'justice,' 'beauty,' 'propriety,' 'truth,' the 'good life,' etc., in which the logic of a given social order comes to an ideal, theoretical head" (*LAFE* 6). The historical moment into which one is born, Burke argues, makes available certain

² According to Andrew King, "Burke's doctrine of Dramatism was developed from Walter Pater's original insight that theatre was the *Mass with secular vestments*. Pater's phrase suggested to Burke that drama was our fundamental sense-making frame and that it was at the root of our capacity to act in the world" (35).

³ Our modern English term "person," which carries the connotation of an individual self, ironically traces its roots back to Greek and Roman theater: the *persona* was the mask worn by ancient actors which informed the audience which character the actor was performing.

⁴ Writing regarding Burke's "action/motion pair," Bryan Crable argues that this dual perspective on human activity as originating not solely in biology but also in sociality allows us "to better reflect upon our accounts of what is 'natural' (race) and what is merely 'social' (culture, ethnicity), and thereby avoid a second determinism, a self-imposed prison of inadequate ideas [. . .] by attending specifically to the vocabularies of embodiment that we adopt to discuss them—we act to minimize the dangers of potentially reductive vocabularies" (134). "The pair," Crable continues, "provides the best vantage point from which to examine our vocabularies for their dialectics and rhetorics of embodiment—and thus more reflectively and adequately to draw the lines between the symbolic and nonsymbolic features of our experience" (134-35).

symbolic *sub-stances*⁵ that act not so much as scripts for the actor, but perhaps more like stock characters: categories of person, or personalities, or selves, that are defined by the actions such types of persons perform in relation to other types of persons (*PLF* 108-12). By using these symbolic materials, individual persons develop their identities through the process of socialization (*PLF* 112), which Burke characterizes as a process of separating us from our “natural condition by instruments of our own making” and providing us a “second nature” that, while artificial, is no less real (*LASA* 13).

As we mature, indoctrinated into our peculiar symbolic worlds, more symbolic resources become available for our use, and, as we use them—or as they are used by other individuals, and by society-at-large, to identify us within the framework of society’s symbol-system—an individual identity is fashioned. The crafting of an identity, then—or, to use Stephen Greenblatt’s terminology, the fashioning of a self—is accomplished in cooperation with (and, sometimes, in resistance to) the society and time in which we live. The availability of these symbolic resources is the essential component of human social agency: agency, or “free choice,” is perhaps best

⁵ For Burke, the term “substance,” part of the “Stance” family of words that “all derive from a concept of place, or placement” (*GOM* 21), was fundamental (pun intended) for understanding identification and identity. “Literally,” Burke writes, “a person’s or a thing’s sub-stance would be something that stands beneath or supports a person or thing” (*GOM* 22), so even though the term is “used to designate what a thing *is*” in essence, the term does this by reference to “something that a thing *is not*” (*GOM* 23). Thus one of our key words for what we are, our identity in an essential sense, actually refers to “an attribute of [our] context” (*GOM* 23), suggesting that *essential* identities can only be understood by reference to the contexts from which they arise, or which make them essential. This Burke calls the “paradox of substance” (*GOM* 21), which, he argue, provides the motive for identification, or the desire to achieve “consubstantiality” with another: while an individuals can never be “identical” with another, “he may *identify* himself with” the other if he can be “persuaded” to believe that “their interests” are “joined,” thus “two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common” (*ROM* 20-21). Burke refers often to the “ultimates of motivation” or “God-terms” (*GOM* 74), those “principles” or “firsts” that “give us our cues” for action (*GOM* 73), appealing to the idea of divine as the “prime mover” in order to further illustrate human identity as arising from a shared social context. He writes: “All gods are ‘substances,’ and, as such, are names for motives or combinations of motives. [. . .] However, such concepts of motivation are usually developed to the point where their original reference is obscured, being replaced by motivational concepts peculiar to a specialized priesthood and to the needs of class domination” (*GOM* 43-44). In other words, as such concepts develop over time, “modifications peculiar to specific local scenes” are introduced (*GOM* 44) which “break down the universality of motive into [a] narrower reference” (*GOM* 45). These overarching (or under-girding) ideas inform identity, and enable identification: thus “The British official’s habit, in the Empire’s remotest spots, of dressing for dinner is in effect the transporting of an idol, the vessel of a motive that has its sanctuary in the homeland” (*GOM* 44).

defined not as absolute freedom from limitations, but as a “choice among possibilities,” and is delimited by our individual situations, including the available social/cultural symbolic resources, as well as by how well we are taught to manipulate those symbolic resources that are made available to us, and whether or not we can do so artfully and conscientiously (Greenblatt, 256).

Individual identity, then, is not a static *thing*, or something one has merely by virtue of existing. Rather, identity is dynamic, an ongoing *performance*, an interactive process we engage in, and one in which elements of “persuasion” are fundamental. For Burke, there is always an element of “self-persuasion inherent in the socialization process” which involves both a “proper internalization of symbolic materials” and a continual performance of that internalization for others. “I incessantly present my identity to others,” Bryan Crable writes, “so that it can be examined, judged, and ratified by others,” and due to this dramatic, interactive, dialectical quality to human sociality, “to be human is to be called, even *impelled*, to rhetoric, to a process of self-persuasion and [self]-presentation; the former builds character, while the latter garners audience approval and reinforcement of this [self] construction” (“Rhetoric, Anxiety, and Character Armor” 10-11).

To see identity in this way, as an ongoing rhetorical and as the act that informs other rhetorical acts, and, therefore, the “sub-stantial” act informing acts of persuasion, and to see the self as something continually composed through performances of symbolic action, resituates the “sciences” of psychology and sociology as variations on the study of rhetoric. This, perhaps explains why Burke chose to name such acts of self-fashioning, in his own rhetorical theory, with a term borrowed from Freudian psychoanalysis: “identification.” Essentially, Burke sought to reclaim rhetoric from its post-Enlightenment and post-Romantic demise by defining it as more than just a narrowly dogmatic collection of tropes and figures in language, and redefining it

philosophically as a theory and art of sociality through identifications, and as a study of the symbols used to perform such identifications.⁶ Such a definition broadens rhetoric significantly from its ancient definition as the study and art of mere persuasion (which Burke characterizes now as a more limited, although not unrelated, concept).

Such a definition also suggests a way to resituate rhetorical pedagogy: since the study of rhetoric is the study of human sociality in general, and the study of human identities as necessary components of human relationships, a central concern of rhetorical education must be training students in the art of self-fashioning. A rhetorical education must train students to see individual and group motivations as informed by larger, symbolic influences that are grounded in sociological and historical contexts. A rhetorical education must train students to see the symbolic resources by which certain types of persons enter and exit relationships with other types of persons, and to analyze the symbolic resources with which persons and relationships are fashioned, or defined. A rhetorical education must train students to see the nature of such relationships in terms of the symbolic resources societies provide for acts of self-fashioning, train them to see how our groups, and our group vocabularies, define us as individuals. Rhetorical education, then, must not start and stop with persuasion, but must identify those symbolic

⁶ John Bender and David E. Wellerby argue that “rhetoricality” is a better term than “rhetoric” to define this new, bigger, post-Enlightenment and post-Romantic “generalized rhetoric that penetrates to the deepest levels of human experience,” because “Rhetoric is no longer the title of a doctrine and a practice, nor a form of culture memory” but more “like the condition of our experience” (25). They argue that Burke “presents an especially forceful illustration of [their] argument” because “his analyses are rhetorical in their basic orientation; [. . .] Burke’s vocabulary can be taken as a lexicon for a modernist rhetoric: terministic screens, entitlement, representative anecdote, strategies of motivation, master tropes, scene-act ratio, god-term, temporizing of essence,” etc. (36-37). The desire to continue calling rhetoric “rhetoric,” Bender and Wellerby argue, is an attempt to reclaim ancient rhetoric for modernity, is nothing more than an attempt “to reconstitute for the present a unity of tradition that no longer exists,” so what is happening “in those cases where the rhetorical tradition is invoked” is merely “the satisfaction of a nostalgia or the legitimation of one’s enterprise of inquiry through a venerable genealogy” (37-38). While I agree with much of what Bender and Wellerby have written—particularly their claim that Burke provides a new lexicon for modern (and post-modern) rhetorical analysis and invention, this work will continue to use the term “rhetoric” as Burke did in his works, and as contemporary rhetoric tends to use it, as a blanket term for all symbolic action generally.

vocabularies that frame the world for us, and that frame us within the world, orienting us towards certain things while simultaneously orienting us against other things.

A rhetorical pedagogy emphasizing the study of symbolic identifications is, for Burke, the logical basis for a system of education because, for humans, the material and the symbolic are always inextricably entwined: we engage with the material through the symbolic, and the materials of the material are always already interpreted through the framework of our symbol-system. A given physical reality is *not* a reflection of really-real-reality itself, but a reflection of the *ideas* a society *imposes* upon reality, and by which it orients its people to respond to the symbolically framed materials of that material world.⁷ Whenever we enter into any relationship with another person, therefore—whether it is an actual, embodied relationship, such as a face-to-face conversation, or a un-embodied relationship, such as the composition of an essay—the web of terms and symbols that constitute the “terministic screen” through which we interpret reality inescapably informs our understanding both of that relationship itself and of all the participants in it. Rhetoric, therefore, becomes a study of “*the entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects upon one another*” (Booth, *The Rhetoric of RHETORIC*, xi). And as the study of symbols (which are both things and actions), rhetorical education shows us “how rhetorical analysis throws light” on the workings of “human relationships generally” (*A Rhetoric of Motives* xiv) while, alternately, showing us how an understanding of human relationships generally “throws light” on rhetorical analysis.

If Burke is correct, then an understanding of how human sociality and identity are rhetorical (an understanding of human beings as symbol using and symbol abusing animals) must be developed before students of any discipline can learn the “art of persuasion” within a

⁷ The old actor’s adage, attributed to Stanislavski—“acting is reacting”—may very well be a kind of summation of the human experience from a Burkean perspective: human actions are always responses to situations. Perhaps, then, there is more to the old *theatrum mundi* metaphor than mere metaphor would suggest.

particular discipline's rhetorical culture. This is an important point for teaching composition in the schools: since persuasion is a function of identity, students cannot be effectively taught to persuade *within a given discipline* until they are taught how to fashion identities within that discipline. But since a freshman composition teacher cannot realistically be expected to prepare all students for every conceivable rhetorical situation they will encounter in the diverse professional disciplines they will eventually enter, rhetoric and composition theory requires an abstract concept that can help students see specific identities and situations in principle. This dissertation argues that, by providing rhetorical theory with such a principle for analyzing the relationship between arguments and identity, we will improve rhetorical education generally, and I will argue that, in our current socio-historical moment, an effective, abstract concept for teaching students the rhetoricality of identity is to teach them a rhetorical theory of roles and role-performance.

Rhetoric and Role Performance

The assumption that human beings are role-players is fundamental to rhetorical theory: in both our theoretical discourse and the textbooks we use to teach that theory, our discipline often appeals to the idea that effective rhetorical engagement involves understanding one's role in a particular rhetorical situation. However, self-fashioning as an art, and as a rhetorical act, is rarely, if ever, addressed directly, much less theoretically, in the rhetorical classroom. When an appeal to roles is made in either theory or in textbooks, that appeal is made through a vernacular discourse of roles, selves, and identity, where these concepts are taken for granted but never "theorized," never analyzed to explain what it is that the use of these terms adds to our understanding of rhetoric itself.

This is not to say we never discuss *ethos*, or the character and authority of the speaker, because, of course, we do: as a key principle in rhetorical theory since antiquity, volumes have been written on the idea of character and authority and credibility, and every first-year composition textbook that is informed by rhetorical theory addressed the concept. But one's *ethos* is not the same as one's Self; indeed, one must first fashion a Self before one can have *ethos*—or, as Richard Lanham puts it: “How can I be sincere when I haven't yet put together a self to be true to?” (*Style* 155). A rhetor can only be “ethical” if a framework of ethics, grounded in a logic of identities, is at work to begin with. That framework must not only provide some understanding of what is required of a rhetor in the many roles he or she is called upon to perform, but, most importantly, it must provide some understanding of how those roles place the rhetor in relation to other persons in that relationships. In other words, before a pedagogy can help students answer the question “What am I to do in this situation?,” it must first teach them to answer the question: “Who am I to be in this situation?”

And it doesn't help that the roles a student might be called upon to perform in any given situation are numerous, and often cumulative: human being, writer, rhetor, critic, advocate, “Good Person,” expert, entertainer, etc. Our textbooks often speak about learning to be a “good writer” or learning to be an “academic writer,” but this is a mode of discourse that assumes the reader has a theoretical understanding of roles and relationships. While textbooks often dedicate whole chapters to explaining what it means to be a “Good Writer” or an “Academic Writer,” the definition of “Good Writer,” as Lee Ann Carroll suggests, is so different in the different disciplines of academia that teaching students to be a “Good Writer” is useless unless they have some framework for seeing Good Writer as a role they are called upon to play, and one that means different things in different situations (5). Thus the current discourse on the roles we ask

students to perform is inadequate unless we also provide a sense of what roles, in theory, are, and how they are fashioned rhetorically, and how they relate to notions of identity and self. Only with a rigorous *rhetorical* theory of how selves are fashioned through roles can students use the idea of roles as a lens for finding, in a variety of situations, the available means of self-fashioning (and thus of persuasion).

According to Lanham, the idea of “self” in the Western world is largely the product of an ancient and ongoing ideological “struggle” between the idea of a “central” self, what Lanham playfully calls *homo seriusus*, and the idea of a “social” self, which he calls *homo rhetoricus*. Alongside these competing ideas of the self are two competing ideas of society: “society as drama and society as highly serious” (*Motives of Eloquence* 9; 34). However, not only do we not teach the existence of this conflict (and so fail to provide students with a framework for seeing the different ideas of the self that exist in their own culture), but we don’t teach an equally important principle: that these two ideas (the central and the social self) need not be in conflict with one another at all.⁸ Rather than seeing identity in terms of an either/or choice between essential categories, a rhetorical education (particularly one informed by Burke) can teach

⁸ Burke might have defined such an excessively polarizing categorization as “melodrama.” Herbert W. Simons calls melodrama “the enemy of understanding, including self-understanding” and writes that Burkeans ought to “abhor melodrama” because “[t]he obvious problem with melodrama is its excessive simplicity. All good on one side, all evil on the other. No in-betweens. [. . .] Comedy,” on the other hand, Simons writes, referencing Burke’s *Attitudes Towards History*, “offers the maximum in ‘forensic complexity.’ No hand of fate, no deus et machina, to intervene. Just people with their ego needs and foibles getting life terribly mixed up. Critics/theorists usually juxtapose comedy to tragedy, but, given Burke’s special take on it in ‘Poetic Categories,’ I think it is best seen in contrast to melodrama. Burke’s comedic frame is a way of undoing some of the damage wrought by melodrama” (“Burke’s Comic Frame and The Problem of Warrantable Outrage”). Burke’s “notion” of the “comic corrective” involved seeing things from multiple perspectives rather than by reference to “polemical, one way approaches” (*ATH* 166). A *rhetorical* comic attitude “is neither wholly euphemistic, nor wholly debunking—hence it provides the *charitable* attitude towards people that is required for purposes of co-operation and persuasion, but at the same time maintains our shrewdness concerning the simplicities of” our own and others’ material interests (*ibid*). A “comic frame,” then, is an attempt to move past either/ors and into a perspective of “both/and” (*LAPE* 31). “Via the ‘comic frame of acceptance,’” Ann Branaman writes, “Burke suggests that there is a more just and less exclusive way of arriving at ‘ultimate order’” and because the comic frame “considers human life as a project in ‘composition,’” or in which one “works with the materials of social relationships” based in difference, the comic frame “offer[s the] maximum opportunity for the resources of criticism” through “a multi-voiced dialogue in which each voice is modified or enriched by contributions made from others” (453).

students to see identity as cumulative: as persons learn and perform more roles, their social identity, and thus their ability to act in society (and, potentially, between cultures) expands.⁹

Indeed, as Lanham argues, the “durability” of the rhetorical tradition from antiquity clear up through modernity was due to the way that a rhetorical education “habituated its students to a world of contingent purposes” (*Motives of Eloquence* 7): rhetoric empowered students to vacillate between a central and a social self (or, at the very least, to see the relationship between the central and the social selves as fluid), and rhetorical education did this by training its students to read situations and selves not as static and essential, but as recurrent and dramatic. Rhetorical education defined selves as categories of social being from which arguments could be made, and because identity was characterized as categorical, identities were transferable from situation to situation: the abstract nature of categories makes the category itself recognizable in a variety of settings.

Lanham is always quick to point out that there is an element of fun to be had in such role-playing, an element of “pleasure” in trying on different styles (*Style* 17; 115-16). Contemporary rhetorical pedagogy, however, tends to be highly “serious,” and increasingly so with the advent of high-stakes testing and the hyper-competitive nature of modern capitalist society—indeed, one could argue that it is getting more serious all the time, and with the kinds of anxiety such hyper-

⁹ Jessica Enoch uses the term “symbol wisdom” to describe the goal of a Burkean critical pedagogy. Enoch argues that, for Burke, “the primary problem of education” is “competition” (279), and that a pedagogy that could “cancel off” the “ambitions” of competition is one that would make students symbol-wise (280). Burke argues that, to do this, requires making students “fearful” of symbols and symbol use, or afraid of the ways that symbols and symbol-users might manipulate them. This requires more than merely replacing a competitive attitude with “tolerance” or “good will” or “respect for the rights of others” (*LAPE* 14), but to inculcate a kind of curiosity that will lead students to “study” the Other, to “be affected by him,” and “incorporate him,” and “to learn from him” (*LAPE* 23). “Overall, then,” Enoch writes, “Burke’s dramatistic pedagogy requires that students do more than appreciate difference;” they need “to immerse themselves in the various sides of a debate to learn how each side is made and re-made through” symbolic action (Enoch 281-82). “Before students even begin to formulate thesis statements and argumentative tactics, they would learn to inspect carefully and precisely those texts that linguistically create certain positions and arguments” (Enoch 292). One such “text,” I would argue, is the pre-defined qualities of the relationships students enter whenever they interact with some Other, qualities that fundamentally inform the possibilities to act rhetorically.

competition fosters, the potential dangers that arise from overly narrow identifications are exponentially increased. Yet rhetoric textbooks, in particular, tend to focus on the highly serious activities of “academic” and “political” argument by referring, in highly serious tones, to roles such as The Academic Writer or The Scholar,¹⁰ and then defining such roles, when they define them, in such overly narrow ways that they may actually be fostering the kind of narrow identifications we want to avoid, rather than providing students with the kind of abstract categories that will allow them to see how a sense of the rhetorical in roles and selves can actually become a resource for creating connections with others, rather than divisions. Budding academic writers, specifically those being introduced to academic writing for the very first time, such as our students in freshman or first-year composition courses, are not well served by the heavy tone and high-minded seriousness of the textbooks—*not* because these activities are neither high-minded nor heavy, as Lanham seems to suggest, but because rhetorical theory as it is currently taught provides these students with no counterbalance to an essentialistic ideology of the self.¹¹

¹⁰ A note on my use of capitalization: to avoid the overuse of quotation marks, and for ease of reading, I will capitalize the names of roles when I use a term as the title of a specific role, as I do here when I write “The Academic Writer” and “The Scholar;” when I use a term in a more general sense, to refer to a person who might inhabit the role rather than the abstract title for the role itself, I will write the term in lower case, as I do in the subsequent sentence: “Budding academic writers [. . .].”

¹¹ Karen Kopelson, quoting James Baumlin, argues to the same effect regarding the role of the Teacher in the composition classroom. She argues that a performance of neutrality, or objective distance in the role of Teacher, rather than an overt politicizing of the rhet/comp classroom, may allow teachers to better connect with resistant students (121): almost invariably, “Western intellectual culture has tended to embrace the ‘central,’ serious, or . . . philosophical model of selfhood over the ‘social,’ dramatic or rhetorical model,” a seriousness that is evident in our obsession with “authenticity,” and that permeates our instruction in academia. Kopelson, however, argues that an emphasis on the ancient idea of *metis*—a kind of altruistic hypocrisy that she variously characterizes as “cunning,” “stratagem,” “deception,” “disguise,” and “masquerade,” and a critical pedagogical stance that she likens to Socratic dialogue and Burkean dialectic (129-30)—might be necessary on the part of teachers, in order to “*open doors* for students, to prevent them from shutting out critical social issues they would likely script as merely personal” (129). Kopelson’s discussion suggests a link between role, style, and persuasion in rhetorical relationships, one that I will explore later in Chapter 4, “Towards a Pedagogy of Roles.” It also suggests that the concept of self-fashioning is not just something that teachers should explore just for the sake of students: to be more effective, teachers should explore their own self-fashioning behaviors, as well, and to act in transformative

Rhetoric and composition classes do not, in other words, provide a framework for students to see their own Selves as performative and cumulative. Rather, as Patricia Bizzell argues, we teach academic writing “not simply [as] teaching [students] to think or to grow up” but “teaching them to think in a certain way, to become adults with a certain set of intellectual habits and ethical predilections” (325). Students who operate with an understanding that a Self is everything they are may see such a teaching as a challenge to their “core” being, and thus may see higher education as an attempt to reject one core self and to take on another, when the reality is something quite different: what we are asking them to do is to see that identity itself is contingent and rhetorical, and that they must learn to identify themselves differently in different situations.¹² Yes, we want our students to transform: when we ask freshmen writers to learn the basics of “academic writing,” we are not merely asking these students to acquire a new skill, but to acquire a new identity. However, when we ask students to transform their identity without providing a theory of identity as rhetorical to ground that transformation, one that contradicts the popularly held, Romantic notion of the self as essential and static, and which redefines it (or, at the very least, co-defines it) as contingent and fluid, we run the risk of threatening our students

ways, teacher must also make their performances in the role of Teacher more rhetorical. To use Burke’s phrase, teachers must bring themselves “to the edge of cunning,” not hypocritically, but in the sense that such “rhetoric [. . .] is discursive action concerned primarily with audience and reception and thus always ‘framed for [its] effect’ [. . .] ‘the tactical use of resources at hand’ [. . .] precisely what Burke calls ‘identification,’ a term which,” for Kopelson, is closely related to the idea of *metis* (136). However, while Kopelson offers her argument as “one reply” to the pervasive questions: “How might we speak, as whom might we speak, so that students listen?” (142)—questions which, while focused on the role of the Teacher, specifically, are variations of the question I am asking here—she doesn’t recognize that, in order to even approach such questions first requires a framework (a “program” and a “vocabulary” to quote Burke) for re-defining the concept of the self in rhetorical terms, and for approaching identity or self-fashioning in a methodical, constructive way.

¹² As Lanham argues, because “Thought can express itself only through style” and “the devices of style are not limitless,” the kind of curriculum necessary is one that inculcates a form of “self-consciousness” on the part of the student (*Style* 155-59). For Lanham, this meant a self-conscious focus on one’s writing style, but the appropriate complement to a style-conscious pedagogy must be a focus on identity and identity fashioning, because we cannot “ask someone to develop a style before he has a self to start” (*Style* 156).

deeply held sense of Self-as-Being rather than changing their notion of what a self is to begin with.

The essentialistic, highly serious discourse of self in contemporary Western culture can often make it seem like what we are asking our students to do is to abandon who they are, or who they think they are, so that they can become something else, the Someone Else that academia wants them to be (a position which, quite frankly, helps to perpetuate anti-intellectual and anti-academic criticisms). Such a project is something that many students will, therefore, resist. One of the most famous illustrations of this struggle is found in Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*, a series of essays in which the Mexican-American academic Rodriguez details, in highly serious fashion, the struggle he experienced as he grew into an academic and away from his migrant Mexican roots: Rodriguez details his "resentment," his "nervousness," and even his "shame" as he grew "embarrassed by [his family's] lack of education" and realized that "education was changing me" (*Greene and Lidinsky* 21-22). It is especially interesting that Rodriguez's essay "Scholarship Boy" is the selection that one particular textbook—Greene and Lidinsky's *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*—uses as a model for the "literacy narrative" assignment: the essay's highly serious tone, coupled with its dramatization of a conflict between Rodriguez's old familial and cultural allegiances and the new allegiances he is making by taking on the roles of Academic and Intellectual, seems to reinforce the idea that, to become an Academic means abandoning a previous identity and sense of self to take upon oneself a new identity, one that is wholly distinct, even alien, and often antagonistic, to one's former self. The new self, this essay suggests, is designed to supersede and erase all evidence of the former self.

But training in the practices and traditions of higher education need not be like this. By foregrounding a different ideology of identity in undergraduate education, we can give students a

framework for interpreting the Self as a cumulative project: as roles are acquired *in addition to* the roles one has previously performed, and by which one has come to define their Self, what develops is a multifaceted “core” self that allows a person to see and perform one’s core self differently as different situations require.

Such “Action,” as Burke writes, “requires a program,” and “a program requires a vocabulary” (*ATH* 4). A “developing person,” such as an undergraduate student in higher education, “requires a vocabulary” if their development is to be carried out programmatically, with “awareness” (*ROM* 18). To combat the essentialistic ideology of the self that our students bring to the classroom, and which is often the cause of the kinds of self-dissonance that Rodriguez’s essay dramatizes, we need a program and a vocabulary for addressing the self—or, at least, specific presentations of the self—as something situational and contingent. The ancient Greek Sophists, Lanham maintains, “provided a brilliant education in politics and the social surface” with “training in the mechanics of identity” through a pedagogy that “offered a selection of roles” a student could “try out” (*Motives of Eloquence* 7). Rather than trying to make a person into a specific type of person, rhetorical education presented all identities as situational, and provided an education that helped persons read situations and fashion presentations of self that best suited the needs of a particular moment.

In other words, part of the reason rhetorical pedagogy lasted so long—from the ancient world to the early modern world—is because rhetorical education approaches the idea of the Self not necessarily as “single, solid, substantial, and important” (*Motives of Eloquence* 81), but as sets of publicly pre-existing identities persons can occupy, or publicly designated spaces from which persons can operate in their relationships with others—selves as roles. These “roles” provide pre-existing expectations and authority attached to a functional identity whose actions

and motives are recognizable and categorical reflections of particular social situations. But rather than teaching students to see identity as this kind of a rhetorical construct, and thus as a commonplace from which to argue, contemporary rhetoric, particularly first year composition, barely teaches the concept of rhetorical identity at all, much less how to fashion an identity by means of one's rhetorical performances in a writer/reader relationship.

Since modern Western society already has a vernacular terminology of social roles and role-playing which suggests that persons are rhetorical "actors" and rhetorical "acters" whose agency is delimited by sets of social rules and expectations not of their own making, I argue that rhetorical training by means of a rhetoric of role-performance can provide both a program and a vocabulary for teaching students of rhetoric the contingent nature of self and identity—if the concept of roles and role-performances is effectively theorized within a rhetorical framework.

The logic of roles is the logic of society in general, the means by which individuals are subtly educated, and by which selves are fashioned and individuals are "socialized," in any culture. *Mimesis*, to use the ancient term, the idea of seeing patterns of identity and imitating them, is the way people learn and the way we become persons, and at any given historical moment, human agency is delimited by the available "spaces" or social categories from which persons are allowed to build selves through symbolic action. Therefore, because human beings are by nature role-players, and because human sociality in general is based on this particular logic, a role-based pedagogy is well suited to preparing persons to craft or fashion rhetorical identities, and for using identity as the logical foundation for a method of systematically considering one's options in any given rhetorical engagement. I argue that we can use role-logic in contemporary rhetorical pedagogy to better instruct students in rhetorical principles; that an analysis of social role-logic will improve our understanding of rhetoric generally; and that an

understanding of role-logic will transform the idea of roles into a practical tool for rhetorical theory by characterizing it as a commonplace for analysis and invention. Developing such a program and vocabulary is the purpose of this dissertation.

Thesis

I will begin by analyzing the discourse of “roles” in contemporary composition theory. I will argue that, while contemporary rhetoric and composition studies have appealed to a vernacular terminology of roles for decades, our discipline has yet to theorize the concept of role sufficiently within a rhetorical framework, and therefore has yet to make this concept practical for rhetorical instruction. Diverse scholars and theorists, including Kenneth Burke, Walter Ong, Richard Lanham, Thomas Newkirk, James Moffett, Stephen Greenblatt, Wayne Booth, and many others, have all employed what I will call a “role-rhetoric,” in that they employ the term “role” in its vernacular sense to refer to the “function” or “job” of a particular agent in a larger hierarchical system. While certainly some of these theorists were informed by the “role theory” of 20th Century social science, none of those who employ this terminology have gone on to develop an actual “*rhetoric of roles*”—that is, none of them have theorized this concept within a rhetorical framework, and so the concept remains impractical for rhetorical theory and pedagogy.

This failure to theorize role within a rhetorical framework creates a two-fold problem for using a role-rhetoric in both theory and pedagogy: first there is the problem of employing the term “role” in a vernacular sense without methodically exploring the concept for its theoretical implications. By largely ignoring the implications of this idea for rhetorical theory, the use of the term does not improve our understanding of how rhetoric actually works in the world. Because it does nothing to improve rhetorical theory, the abstract nature of the concept can become an

impediment to understanding rhetoric rather than providing a practical tool in the explication and analysis of rhetorical action. Even those few scholars who have addressed the principle more directly, employing the idea of role somewhat methodically as a component of a theory of composition or rhetorical action, haven't examined the implications of this idea for rhetorical theory generally—they do not ask how understanding the idea of human beings as role players can help us better understand how rhetoric works, or why we think in terms of roles, or how rhetorical theory can take advantage of this concept in order to analyze and perform rhetorical acts more effectively. The term itself, and the terms that derive from it, remain largely abstract and vernacular, with no sense of how to use them systematically or methodically to better understand rhetorical practice.

The second problem with the use of the term “role” in contemporary rhetoric and composition theory is the way that our use of the term draws too heavily on the concept's origins in the art of theatre. While the terminology of “drama” has long been considered an effective way to talk about human relationships, not only in rhetorical theory but also in sociology and psychology, there are limits to the use of the drama as metaphor for human interaction. Invoking too strongly the theatrical connotations of “role,” as scholars such as Ong, Greenblatt, and Lanham have done, only serves to reinforce the classical criticism of rhetoric as an art of hypocrisy (a perspective that some scholars, such as Lanham, have fully embraced). Moreover, the theatrical connotations of the term make any use of a role-rhetoric in pedagogy highly questionable, not only because many students will resist any doctrine that seeks to turn them into “actors” (or, as Lanham likes to playfully characterize us, “hypocrites”), but because developing a society of hypocrites and manipulators is probably not the best goal to strive for if what we want is an effective and ethical citizenry.

My first two chapters, then, will analyze the vernacular use of the term role in rhetoric and composition studies in order to discover the perspective this concept provides for rhetoric and composition theory, in general. In chapter one, “The Discourse of Roles in Rhetoric and Composition,” I argue that the term “role,” as it is currently used in contemporary rhetorical theory, suggests a theory when there actually isn’t one: we use the term with a sense of the theoretical, but the concept is impractical because it hasn’t been developed in a theoretically rigorous way. I will specifically address the way rhet/comp scholars write concerning the “roles” of Writer and Reader with a vagueness that makes the term insufficient to inform a theoretical use of role in the composition classroom. However, I will also argue that compositionists’ use of the term role does suggest some ways that we might begin to develop the concept of role into a significant theoretical concept, particularly in light of Kenneth Burke’s use of this term in the development of his “dramatistic” method of critical analysis. I will suggest that Burke’s use of the term “role” over the course of his works provides an intellectual foundation for developing a rhetorical role theory because Burke’s “dramatistic” framework encourages us to think about roles as central to identity, and identity as central to persuasion. Such a framework allows rhetors to potentially draw from the limitless categories of human social roles as resources for rhetorical self-fashioning.

Chapter two, “Kenneth Burke’s Rhetoric of Roles,” will analyze Burke’s evolving use of the concept of role in the development of dramatism. The term “role” is presented in connection with a constellation of other terms, (including “agent” in *A Grammar of Motives* [GOM]; “identification,” “transformation,” and “division” in *A Rhetoric of Motives* [ROM]; “office” in *Attitudes Towards History* [ATH], and “entitlement” in *Language as Symbolic Action* [LASA]; and “occupation” in *Permanence and Change* [P&C]) to suggest a theoretical foundation for

thinking about the ways that humans are, individually and collectively, oriented in their attitudes towards themselves and others by reference to roles. Burke ultimately defines “a human role” as “certain slogans, or formulae, or epigrams, or ‘ideas’ that characterize the agent’s situation or strategy” and which name “properties both intrinsic to the agent and developed with relation to the scene and other agents” (*GOM* 511), and from Burke’s evolving rhetoric of roles, we can come to characterize human roles as pre-existing sets of symbolic resources that enable persons to operate within a particular symbolic hierarchy. Roles can be theorized as formal categories of social action that are traditional, defined by a specific socio-historical moment, and by which humans are placed (or, potentially, place themselves) in relation to one another. The knowledge of roles as symbolic resources, an understanding of how they are defined, and a sense of how they are to be performed, is transmitted and acquired through an education in the symbols, terms, and titles by which persons and groups are named or “entitled” (*ROM* 21).¹³ These role-titles imbue (or, alternately, impose) individuals and groups (or types of individuals and groups) with an identity, as the role-titles represent complex sets of socially recognizable expectations or authority, acts that can and can’t be performed in various types of relationships (or by various classes or types of persons in relation to various other classes or types of persons). As an individual matures within a particular sociality, the symbolic role-titles acquired through their socially-categorized behaviors become the materials by which the individual fashions an individual self, and that collection or selection of personas by which one can present a “self”

¹³ In Burke’s own estimation of his multi-volume project, *A Grammar of Motives*, essentially, discussed the source of motives in the “sub-stance” or shared understandings of a particular community, while *A Rhetoric of Motives* explored the impulse to persuasion, motivation’s source in a desire to identify with and divide from some community or other; Burke’s unfinished *Symbolic of Motives* was supposed to address “identity as titular or ancestral term, the ‘first’ to which all other terms could be reduced,” discovering the source of motivation in the desire for individuality or “uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself” (*RoM* 21). Developing a rhetoric of roles, then, moves towards the “symbolic” in the individual sense, conceiving the development of a unique, individual self as an act of artistry that takes the “substance” that society provides, the categorical *types* upon which society is built, and fashioning unique divisions and identifications through the medium of the individual self.

becomes the individual's public identity (*LASA* 362; 370). Burke's career-long discussion of identity as a rhetorical construct crafted through role-performances thus provides the basis for developing a rhetoric of roles to inform rhetorical pedagogy.

This leads to my final two chapters, which will move towards fashioning the concept of role into a practical commonplace for use in rhetoric and composition pedagogy by analyzing what this rhetoric of roles does for our understanding of rhetoric generally, and by suggesting some ways that this rhetoric of roles might inform composition instruction. Chapter three, "Towards a Rhetoric of Roles," addresses the theoretical perspectives gleaned from our analysis of these appeals to role-rhetoric in rhet/comp discourse, and addresses three key components of this "rhetoric of roles" that will improve our theoretical understanding of rhetoric in general: the naming of roles, which is related to what Burke's "theory of entitlement;" the fashioning of identity through identifications; and an emphasis on rhetorical situations as human relationships, an emphasis which characterizes persuasion as a function of role performances. Chapter four, "Towards a Pedagogy of Roles," will then illustrate how this more rigorously theorized rhetoric of roles can inform rhetorical pedagogy and composition instruction by suggesting some ways that role-rhetoric might be systematically employed as a commonplace for analyzing and fashioning identities in a freshman composition curriculum.

CHAPTER 1: The Discourse of Roles in Rhetoric and Composition Theory

Even if we remove the term “role” from its obvious theatrical moorings and employ the term in a more mundane, vernacular sense, we cannot ignore a fundamentally dramatic orientation to our uses of the term “role” in everyday speech: just as with roles in staged dramas, social roles provide fundamental motivations for social action by reference one’s placement in a larger, coherent, over-arching social narrative. When we speak of such things as the “role” of the fuel injector in the combustion engine, or the “role” of testosterone in the development of a fetus, or the “role” of humans in climate change, in every case the term “role” connotes an activity or action that might best be defined as that agent’s *systematically pre-determined* function or job in relation to some other agent or agents in a complex system of *systematically pre-defined* relationships.

It is in this everyday, vernacular sense that the term “role” is most commonly used in rhetoric and composition studies. When we speak abstractly of the “role” of the Rhetor, or the “role” of the Orator, or the “role” of the Writer, or the Reader, or the Audience, we mean is that each of these is part of a larger system of interactional logic, and that each one is a socially recognizable category of person with certain expectations incumbent upon them as they act in relation to other persons in that system. The person who performs the role of Public Speaker or Academic Reader or Theatrical Audience inhabits an “office” (to use Cicero’s term), and the name of that office suggests not only certain actions that the person so entitled will perform, but certain unspoken expectations, responsibilities, and duties that the role-performer has to others in a particular, recognizable, pre-defined relationship. These name-titles for the available roles within a particular rhetorical situation, in other words, are abstract concepts that gain meaning by

reference to an understood, and socio-historically delimited, context. Cicero's use of the term "Orator," for example, did not merely suggest to Cicero's original audience what the term "Public Speaker" suggests to us; rather, it derived its meaning for that audience from Cicero's historical context: the term denoted a set of specific, recognizable social tasks, and a social placement with relation to others, within the public traditions of Republican Rome. While later rhetorical theorists would employ the same term in different contexts, the term itself would actually mean different things to each distinct socio-historical moment, depending upon the functions, or actions, that a person performing the role of Orator was expected to do within that particular ideological and political situation, or symbolic hierarchy (the Greek *polis*, for example, or the Renaissance English court, or the revolution-era United States).¹⁴

In contemporary rhetoric and composition studies, writers such as Walter Ong, James Britton, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Richard Lanham, Thomas Newkirk, Lee Ann Carroll, and Kenneth Burke, have all appealed to the term "role" in their writings on rhetorical theory and composition pedagogy in much the same way that Cicero employed the term "office," as a term that address the performative nature of identity. However, while each of these scholars addresses the fact that persons placed in rhetorical relation to one another, such as writers and readers, perform multiple, complementary "roles" in that relationship, by-and-large these scholars have

¹⁴ Burke referred to this as "analogical extension" (*ROM* 21-22), a concept which Bryan Crable argues is key to understanding Burke's claim that dramatism is literal and not metaphorical: "When I call someone 'a thief,' after they have robbed me at gunpoint," Crable writes, "I am speaking literally—I am engaging in analogical extension, classifying this situation 'as' similar to others" situations that have a similar character; I am not, however, "representing the situation 'in itself'" (332). But notice that Crable, to define this term, appeals to the logic of roles; role terms, then, are one way that we engage in analogical extensions: when "I am applying or extending a category or character to a current, unique situation, because I judge it to be similar to another situation that I classified in this way," I am engaging in "the *Burkean (ontological) equivalent of literal speech*" (332, italics in original). This ability to see similarities between situations, and to then define one situation by reference to terms that also define some other situation, symbolically or linguistically attributing certain characteristics to the situation, is essential to "language as symbolic action," Crable argues, but notice that there is an important level of abstraction that is necessary for terms to transfer from one situation to another. This abstract nature of role-terminology will be an important point in this chapter, and having access to Burke's concept of "analogical extension," while not necessary to comprehend the use of roles as a rhetorical concept, helps to illuminate why a role-logic works.

used the term “role” only in its vernacular sense; there is no sense of systematically theorized idea regarding what the term “role” means in a *rhetorical* context.

Sheldon George, for example, in his article “The Performed Self in College Writing,” argues (in contrast to Thomas Newkirk and Cynthia Selfe) that teachers can use “theories of culture and subjectivity” to help “shape” both teachers’ “views” on their “role as teacher” and guide students in “developing an awareness of their identity as multiple and recognizing the ever-changing roles they move through the different venues of their academic environment” (320-21). George, as others have before him, recognizes the performative connection between student identity and the roles students are asked to perform in writing (322), an awareness that developed out of his inability to help a particular student “improve the depth” of her own writing and to see “the narrative identities required for success in my class” (324). While this perceived failure in his teacherly role leads George to develop a curriculum that seeks to help students “distance [themselves] from the notion that the historical facts of their biography make up the full substance of their identity” (325) and to see their personas in writing as a “characters in their own texts” (326) rather than manifestations of what Lanham would have called the students’ “core self,” part of the failure, as I see it, is in the uncritical, untheoretical terminology composition theory employs to conceptualize the performance in self in writing.

What does it mean that students are called upon to perform multiple, ever-changing roles? What does it mean that writers and readers are called upon to perform multiple roles in relation to one another, and what roles are available to be performed, both generally and in particular situations? How does one discover these, and how does one know when one is performing the *correct* role for a particular situation, and performing that role correctly? How does one correct a role performance when one performs a role poorly?

Perhaps more importantly, how does knowing that there are roles and role-players in rhetorical situations improve one's understanding of rhetoric in general? And how do instructors teach the concept of roles systematically so students become better writers and readers? In sum: in what ways are roles "rhetorical" and in what ways does rhetoric help one perform one's roles more effectively? Without a *rhetoric* of roles to guide our thinking and teaching, composition teachers such as Sheldon George are left with an unwieldy vocabulary for discussing writerly and readerly "roles," a vernacular terminology that lacks theoretical rigor, and so fails to provide a practical program by which students might see, and compose, situationally effective identities.

This chapter, therefore, examines the discourse of roles in contemporary rhetoric and composition theory in order to move us towards an answer to these questions, in order to determine what it means, in a rhetorical context, to perform a "role." I argue that, because the use of the term "role" in rhet/comp theory is merely vernacular, because it lacks theoretical rigor, the current discourse of roles in rhetorical theory is not practical for use in the rhet/comp classroom. However, I will also argue that, despite the uncritical use of the term, our discipline's discourse of roles does suggest some pedagogical and theoretical possibilities inherent in the concept of roles, and points us in the right direction for using the concept of roles to improve our understanding of how rhetoric works.

I will begin by addressing the abstract nature of role-terms, in connection with the abstract nature of classical rhetorical terminology generally, and will argue that, while the use of abstractions in rhet/comp theory has been criticized over the last century, abstraction is the very quality that allows a principle to be transferable from one situation to another. I will then analyze the uses of role-terminology in rhetoric and composition theory, and will characterize the inadequacy of the current discourse of roles in rhetoric and composition as a struggle to mine the

benefits of our role-term abstractions while avoiding the drawbacks of an abstract terminology. As with all abstractions, I assert, the dissonance between the impracticalities and the practicalities of abstractions can only be surmounted by analyzing abstract terms thoroughly in order to reveal the shared contexts that give those abstractions their usefulness. I will then conclude that, by analyzing the development of Kenneth Burke's use of the term role over the course of his works, we can theorize roles within a rhetorical context to direct us in discovering the shared social contexts that give role-terminologies their usefulness.

In Defense of Abstractions

It probably goes without saying that, in classical rhetoric, while the roles of Rhetor and Audience were primarily theorized spatially and temporally, those theoretical placements were themselves based on shared sociological assumptions that modern civilizations no longer share with their ancient counterparts. The sociological contexts that gave meaning to the "role" of the Public Speaker, or Orator, and to his audience—their functions in relation to one another—were the culturally acknowledged times and places when specific types of speeches, spoken in specific ways, were to be expected. Thus an abstract principle such as "character"—which, as Nancy Christiansen argues, was the most important component to the "Delivery" or "Pronunciation" or "Utterance" or "Action" of a speech (304)—was a term that was understood by both speaker and audience because, in any given rhetorical situation, the abstractions of that term were already taken care of by the sociological context: the time, the place, and the purpose provided the context that allowed the audience to know if the Rhetor was doing his job correctly or not.

In those ancient rhetorical performances, the relationships between persons participating in acts of public rhetoric was often a given, as well: what defined the moment was a shared

understanding of the ceremonial circumstances drawing audience and rhetor together, and, in most instances, some fundamental knowledge about the persons participating in that rhetorical situation could be assumed because, to be there at all, one had to occupy a certain place in the social hierarchy, and one was expected to have been educated in a certain set of traditions. Fundamental attributes of identity would be taken-for-granted in both audience and rhetors alike, and because the role of Orator, or Public Speaker, was a role only certain classes of person were authorized to perform (he would definitely be male, for example; he would definitely be free), the only unknown quantity would be how “good” a person this person was. Words and gestures could be expected to be, in the words of Thomas Wilson, “an apte ordering both of voice, countenance, and all the whole bodye, accordynge to the worthines of suche woordes and mater” as “fit” the culturally recognizable situation, because other concerns, such as race, class, religion, and nationality were pretty much assumed. Therefore, ideas such as “apte” and “worthiness,” while seemingly vague and abstract, were actually intelligible because rhetor and audience alike enjoyed the context of a shared understanding regarding what was apt and what was worthy *in this specific situation*: the audience could thus judge the “vtterance” of an orator to be “a fit deliuering of the speach” (Christiansen 304-5) because everyone understood what “fit” meant in this particular kind moment; the speaking of *this particular kind* of speech would be expected to belong to the appropriate genre, have the appropriate tone, and be in the appropriate style suitable to *this particular kind* of public moment.

Likewise, such abstract “criteria” as “propriety” and “correctness” and “clarity” and “ornateness” and “appropriateness” (Christiansen 305) were effective terms for making rhetorical judgments because, right up through the pre-modern era, everyone who mattered shared the same intellectual commons to provide the context for defining such terms. However,

when the group of “everyone who mattered” began to expand exponentially in the modern period, and when people came to the Teacher to be educated who did not share the same basic intellectual commons, or the same class background, that the classical rhetorical curriculum needed to give meaning to its abstract terminology of judgment, then those abstractions, it seemed, had to be abandoned.

According to Robert J. Connors, rhetoric and composition pedagogues rejected rhetoric’s abstractions during 19th Century, and did so wisely, in Connors’ estimation: the abstractions of ancient rhetoric no longer supplied an effective terminology for rhetorical judgment (291; 308). Thus, Connors argues in *Composition-Rhetoric*, the modern composition curriculum is partially the result of, and a response to, the cultural dissonance experienced between teachers and students when education became more generally available in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Historically, rhetors, and therefore teachers of rhetoric, relied on a shared tradition of “common knowledge;” indeed, to make persuasive public arguments requires such an “intellectual commons” so that abstract principles such as “coherence” and “beauty” make sense (308). But when schools began to draw students from the uneducated masses who did not share (or had not been educated in) the particular traditions of the elite, Connors argues, general education saw a “retreat from invention” in the classical sense, a rejection of rhetorical invention through classical tropes, figures, and topics (or commonplaces). The pedagogies of the ancient rhetorical *paideia* had to be replaced in modern education, and new pedagogies had to be developed, pedagogies designed to train students to compose the same kind of non-personal, public arguments that are only possible through access to a shared social knowledge that provides objective standards of judgment. Connors argues that the research paper, that staple of 20th

century composition pedagogy, seems designed to provide students practice composing such “non-personal” or “public” rhetoric by acquiring a shared knowledge base (297-99).

But in abandoning abstractions in principle, rhetoric and composition kind of threw out the baby with the bathwater. The abstractness of ancient rhetorical terminology is at least partially explained by understanding the Orator as a special social role, one that is defined by a shared sociological understanding. Abstractions such as “purity,” “propriety,” “precision,” “unity,” “clearness,” “strength,” “harmony,” “beauty” (Connors 262), and even such abstractions as “decorum,” which the British Renaissance handbooks of rhetoric situate as “the central concern” in the rhetorical “art of character-fashioning” (Christiansen 298)—all of these vague, abstract pedagogical terms became a hindrance to rhetorical theory *only after* access to a rhetorical education became generally available, and *only because* the intellectual commons that provide context for such abstractions was lost, when the “wide reading” in a shared literary and cultural tradition that was “a necessary part” of the Old Rhetoric could “no longer be assumed” (Connors 308).

It was *also* only after the loss of this shared context that what it meant to be a Rhetor or a Writer became problematic. What this suggests is *not* that abstractions, in and of themselves, are bad pedagogy—as Richard Lanham argues, the basic terms of rhetorical judgment, while “impossibly vague” are also “so indispensable that they keep being reinvented under one guise or another” (*Analyzing Prose* 216). Rather, what this discussion of abstractions suggests, at least partially, is that, even anciently, a rhetor’s performance was primarily judged by the kind of “self” the rhetor was expected to present in a particular social scene: “character” and “ethics” and “authority” and “credibility” are terms that are intelligible only through a common intellectual context that situates the self within a particular moral system within a particular

symbolic hierarchy. But abstract concepts such as “good” and “bad,” especially in terms of personal qualities, are simultaneously general *and* situational: a “good” person will act in certain, “appropriate” ways *in this kind of situation* because a “good” person understands and respects the traditions that tell him what behaviors “fit” this particular type of situation.¹⁵

Under such a system, an “argument” or speech was composed in such a way that the Orator could place on display—could *perform*—certain commonly accepted social understandings. This is why “delivery” or “performance” was the concluding “canon” of rhetoric (and why, in most contemporary rhetorical theory, “delivery” is so often dismissed as a relic of ancient oral rhetoric): it was the performance of self, in antiquity, that proved that a rhetor was “knowledgeable” or “ethical” or “logical” by reference to the shared social context that made such abstractions intelligible by suggesting that the person speaking was the type of person who should be listened to. Today, however, the idea of “should” is much more open for interpretation.

A shared social context made it so that an audience could remain unburdened by considerations of what counted as “fit” and “apt” and “appropriate,” and so they were free to concentrate on the content of speech, and not on the moral fiber of the individual, or on something so fundamental as the “appropriateness” of the speaker’s “self.” But, again, they could only do this because certain elements of that “self” were already a given, acquired through “proper” training, with the particulars determined by what Burke would have referred to as “scenic” considerations: the time, the place, the historical moment, the socially defined and largely ritualistic expectations that such a moment called for in that particular society—all those

¹⁵ In his “translation” of Cromwell’s Christian rhetoric into Marxist rhetoric to show how “The *general* statement of historical motives in terms of dialectical materialism is as ‘mystifying’ as any such statements in terms of ‘Providence’—for in both, all reference to minute administrative situations is omitted” (*ROM* 113-14), Burke illustrates how audiences who are unversed in a particular shared context will often see abstractions where there are none: “Might the Marxist critique of ideology be partly misled,” Burke asks, “by the fact that only the ‘ideas’ survive in the literary or esthetic reliques (sic) of the past? Any over-all term, such as honor, loyalty, liberty, equality, fraternity, is a *summing up* of many motivational stands” (110), and “any ultimate terms of motivation must, by their very nature as ‘high abstractions,’ omit important ingredients of motivation” (113).

socially pre-determined elements that give context and which enable an audience to define such things as the “correctness” and “fitness” and “appropriateness” of the speech. The ancient rhetorical terms for defining rhetorical situations by differences of purpose and place (deliberative, forensic or judicial, epideictic) remain with us, but while these situational terms, anciently, helped provide the context for judging rhetorical action by the society’s shared understandings, they are inadequate for us today, though modern rhetorical theory still attempts to shoehorn modern situations into this ancient terminology, with debatable success.¹⁶

Each of these “genres” called for correspondingly different styles, different content, and different attitudes on the part of the speaker by reference to a shared social context. But, for classical rhetorical theory, these terms served just fine because the social moment itself provided the context necessary to determine a particular speech’s public function, and thus to judge it according to the abstract terminology of rhetorical theory. So “decorum” was “the ability” of the rhetor “to conform to physical and *cultural* constraints” that were understood and always already informing the situation (Christiansen 305, emphasis mine); it was the ability to perform an appropriate understanding of social expectations; it was, thus, entirely “ethical” in nature, but it was also intelligible by the audience (that is, those who mattered), because they shared an understanding of what “decorum” meant *in instances such as this*.

¹⁶ Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert Connors argue that this “tripartite classification is well-nigh exhaustive” in terms of its ability to express the variety of rhetorical situations; however, in their explanation of these terms, they supply additional terms to further modify rhetorical situations: for example, “*deliberative* oratory” is “also known as *political*, *hortative*, and *advisory*” (23). Each of these additional terms is not directly synonymous to the term “deliberative;” rather, each suggests *different* kinds of particular situations persons engage in during deliberation. Contrary to what Corbett and Connors state, therefore, in order to make the original, abstract rhetorical term “deliberative” meaningful requires the addition of terms by modern rhetorical theory to significantly modify the original, more abstract term. The additional terms represent an attempt to move towards more specificity. This doesn’t mean that these original terms of ancient rhetoric are absolutely inadequate to modern situations, but it does illustrate how the classical terms themselves serve only as an entry point for further discussion: they are inadequate *in isolation* to define modern rhetorical situations without a further exploration of the particularities of context.

This is also why, in the ancient tradition, vague titles such as Orator or Public Speaker were sufficient to define the individual's role in a public moment, and why such terms—and related terms like “Writer”—are inadequate now: while the ancient rhetor's relationship to his audience (the functions of the functionary) were a given based on obvious and understood social delimitations, such is no longer the case. Is it appropriate for the President of the United States to go on Saturday Night Live? What defines the appropriateness or inappropriateness either of his presence there, or of what he says and does while there? As Crassus argued anciently, the rhetor who has “not so far succeeded in understanding what character they are appearing in”—that character being defined by the socio-cultural understandings at work in the particular rhetorical situation—“cannot properly apply the rules as they speak” (Christiansen 307), but in the modern world, what are the rules?

It is, therefore, incumbent upon contemporary rhetoric and composition pedagogy to figure out how to help students compose a “character” according to “the rules” in a period when the rules are uncertain—or, at least, not very obvious—and in a period when identity is so much more than merely character. To do this, we need to provide students (and ourselves) with a theory that does not so much give them a rigid context, but, rather, helps them to see, for every unique situation, the particular contexts that make the abstract principles of rhetoric intelligible for that particular situation in which they find themselves.

Another important point to note here: anciently, the role of Public Speaker (as a socially recognizable category corresponding to a set of typical public functions) was largely defined in terms of what has also come to be recognized as an extremely vague concept: “persuasion.” Following Kenneth Burke's reading of Cicero, “persuasion” might best be described as “moving” or “bending” some other person or persons to the will of the speaker (*Attitudes*

Towards History 359), an action which, according to ancient theorists, was accomplished by stirring up audience passions (Christiansen 305). These “passions” were understood anciently in primarily supernatural terms, as something like spiritual possession or even (in more modern parlance) viral infection, a framing of the situation that modern rhetorical theorists would almost universally reject. However, while these ancient and early modern theorists’ ideas about the mechanisms at work in persuasion might have been centered in a magical world view, they clearly recognized, as we do, that *something* invisible was operating within and between orators and audiences that allows them “to behave and think differently” when acting “as human beings in collectivity” than when acting as “human beings in isolation” (McGee 452), something that gives audience and rhetor what Burke called “consubstantiality” (*ROM*, 21): a shared “sub-stance” or foundational set of ideas that allow persons to argue and, in the best of cases, come to an agreement—a “spiritual” commons.¹⁷

Michael Calvin McGee characterized these invisible, “spiritual” forces that explain human sub-stance with his term “ideograph,” what might best be defined as “condensed forms of ideology” (Burchardt 451) that, for McGee, are the “link” between rhetoric and ideology because through them “attention is called to the social, rather than rational or ethical, functions of a particular vocabulary” (McGee 457). Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler, in their analysis of the use of Iwo Jima flag-raising imagery in political cartoons, demonstrated how images, and not just words and phrases, can be ideographic in nature: when particularly potent images are “used strategically in the public sphere,” they “reflect not only [the] beliefs, attitudes, and values of

¹⁷ In much the same way that he draws on the principle of the divine to explain his ideas about sub-stance, Burke’s use of the term “spirit” is playfully employed as a variation for terms like “idea” and “ideology” in order to make the point that all humans have a “spirituality” of sorts, a set of ideas (both intrinsic and extrinsic) that inform our actions and reactions (*GOM* 46-47). In explaining this, I have purposefully avoided using the term “metaphor” to describe Burke’s use of spiritual concepts for ideology because, in the same way that Burke does not see “the drama of human relations” as a metaphor, but as literal, so he clearly does not see spirituality and ideology as metaphorical but as linguistic or symbolic variations on a theme.

their creators, but those of society at large” (487). Using the logic of Burkean symbolic action, we can extend the definition of the ideograph even further, to include not just words and phrases and images, but behaviors, and sets of behaviors, such as we find categorized under the titles of social roles. The rhetoric of roles that we appeal to in rhetoric and composition theory and pedagogy provides what amounts to an ideographic vocabulary of self-fashioning, a “spiritual” explanation of persuasion as a function of human identifications that is sociologically grounded. This ideographic vocabulary is enabled not through words alone, but by means of *socially recognizable sets* of actions, including words and ideas, which work to craft a sense of an individual Self as a sociological phenomenon.

Each of the theorists I address in these pages—Kenneth Burke, Walter Ong, James Britton, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Wayne Booth, Richard Lanham, etc.—has appealed to the idea of humans as role players; however, by appealing to a role-rhetoric to theorize the idea of an individual’s function within a certain sociological context (including the “roles” of Writer and a Reader in rhetorical situations), each has also succumbed to our modern version of Old Rhetoric’s tendency towards abstraction. Rather than dismissing this impulse towards abstraction, however, I suggest that this illustrates the importance of abstractions for pedagogy: while the concept of roles may be expressed abstractly (in that there currently exists no theoretical context to give role-terms meaning), the abstract nature of role-rhetoric also suggest a method for understanding why rhetorical pedagogy is attracted to such abstractions in the first place, and how to make such abstractions work in theory and pedagogy. By analyzing the role-rhetoric of rhetoric and composition, we not only recuperate the idea of abstractions for rhetorical pedagogy, but we come closer to understanding how role-logic helps us better understand rhetoric itself.

Role-Rhetoric in Composition Pedagogy

The problem with our current use of the term “role” is the taken-for-granted nature of the concept: treating the concepts of role, such as the roles of “Reader” and “Writer,” as self-explanatory in terms of the relationship such terms set-up between the agents in the situation provides only limited direction for using the concept of roles as a commonplace for rhetorical invention. Ong, in his use of the concept, tries to move away from abstraction, but by doing so without a rigorous, theoretical approach to the idea of “role” itself framing his discussion, Ong’s approach to the use of roles as a commonplace becomes impractical and unruly. He argues, for example, that a writer’s “role” is to persuade a reader to accept and perform the readerly role into which the writer has “cast” the reader. The terminology he uses to name these roles is unhelpful in the same way that terms like “clarity” and “correctness” are unhelpful *in isolation* for directing essay revisions: we as teachers may understand what the terms mean because we have a specific understanding of what we are asking our writers to do, but our understanding as teachers is based on a theoretical context that gives these terms meaning. For students who do not share the intellectual commons of our shared ideological and educational context, however, such terms are impractical: we all want to be correct, don’t we? But what does “correct” mean in this particular situation? If a writer’s job is to cast readers into a particular role in a particular rhetorical situation (and we all want our readers to agree to perform that role), what roles are available in different circumstances, and how does this “casting” happen? And what if the reader rejects the role he or she is cast to perform? And why would they do that, anyway?

As I stated, the terms Ong uses to define these readerly roles are unruly and lack theoretical rigor. Ong suggests that writers might cast their readers into roles such as

“entertainment seekers” or “reflective sharers of experience” or “inhabitants of a lost and remembered world of prepubertal latency” (60), but, while these terms appear to be more concrete than terms like “writer” and “reader,” when we actually analyze the terms, we realize that their concreteness is an illusion: what does “entertainment” mean in this particular situation? Some people find non-fictional historical biographies entertaining, while others don’t find reading entertaining at all. So how does one figure out how to define “entertaining” in a particular instance, or how does one determine if “entertainment” would even be “appropriate” for this particular *type* of situation? And as regards the other roles: what kinds of “experience” are we talking about, and what does it mean that we “share” it, and what does it mean to “reflect” on it? (Don’t even get me started on that last one).

Despite the unruly nature of Ong’s terminology, he is clearly onto something, introducing rhetorical theory to a potentially important concept for understanding and teaching rhetorical composition. But he stops short of exploring, with any degree of theoretical rigor, the far-reaching implications of his discovery. Indeed, “the roles readers are called on to play,” from Ong’s perspective, simply “evolve without any explicit rules or directives” (61); they are a mystery. This, far from making the concept of roles useful to teachers and students, only makes it more difficult to grasp. Ong simply dismisses any need for theorizing roles at all, characterizing the mechanisms by which we cast and are cast in roles as beyond theorizing.

One important thing that Ong does do, however, points us in the right direction: Ong attempts to name available roles. This act of naming approaches a method for inventing through roles: while the names Ong selects have only the appearance of specificity but are actually just compounding the confusion by compounding abstractions, the act of naming itself seems to be important. The question is: how do we name roles methodically so that the act of naming is

useful? Ong, unfortunately, doesn't answer this question, but we can see that *beginning* with a role-name as an abstract term and then working to understand the direction that name provides by exploring a specific context can be a fruitful exercise. If we are casting our reader into the role of Entertainment Seeker, for example, we might ask what makes an "entertainment seeker" in our specific writing situation? Intellectuality is entertaining for some persons, while simple escapism and spectacle are entertaining for others. Clearly, different kinds of roles speak to different kinds of relationships, and it is the relationship itself, to some degree, that informs the roles each participant will perform.

The unhelpful nature of Ong's role-names also suggests something important: how we *name* the roles we are called upon to perform, or that we are calling upon our audiences to perform, is quite important. All that is missing is a method for doing so. Ong's imprecise, haphazard method for naming roles suggests that the roles we play as human beings—not just in the writer-reader relationship, but in any rhetorical situation—might be called anything, or any combination of things. This method suggests nothing, though, about how we might teach students to name roles, nor does it suggest a method for understanding the relationship between a role name and the rhetorical strategies a student is expected to perform in a given rhetorical situation. And by simply suggesting that there is no logic to the naming of the roles we play, that roles just happen, without rhyme or reason, without pattern or program, without method, Ong leaves us with the possibility of a pedagogy, but with no practical sense of how to implement that pedagogy.

Perhaps the most important nugget of wisdom that we glean from Ong's essay is this: the way we approach identity in rhetorical relationships, in the classical paradigm of a general Rhetor speaking to a general Audience, or of generalized Writer composing a text for some

generalized Reader, is simply insufficient to encapsulate the multiplicity of potential rhetorical situations, or of potential rhetorical *relationships*, that rhetors (or orators or writers or public speakers) may enter into with their auditors (or audiences or readers). So while Ong fails to develop anything more sufficient to address the problem (which is ironic, since Ong's essay "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction" opens by critiquing the current literature for its failure to "broach directly the question of readers' roles called for by a written text" [56]), he successfully reveals an important problem in rhetoric and composition theory, and simultaneously suggests a potential solution to that problem: that problem is the problem of roles—despite the fact that Ong provides his reader with no practical guidance on how a rhetor might attack the problem because he fails to theorize what "role" means in a rhetorical context.

Ong also leaves us with another problem: how does one construct an audience role, or how does a writer understand the specific role she is being called upon to perform in order to call upon her reader to perform the logical role in response? After reading Ong's essay, a writing instructor would have little guidance on how to teach her students how discover or invent roles to perform, much less in how to teach students to use roles to invent arguments. So, while Ong recognizes that there are roles to be played and relationships to be entered, Ong, himself, does not "broach directly the question of readers' roles called for by a written text" but, instead, simply addresses the fact that they exist. While this isn't much of a theory, it is at least a place to start.

Writers, to use the concept of role systematically as a commonplace for rhetorical invention, need to be concerned with more than just "the ways in which readers have been called on to relate to texts," as Ong puts it (56). They also need to be concerned with the ways readers and writers have been called upon, by a text as a unique rhetorical situation, to relate to one

another. A writer cannot simply invent an audience for a text, or “pick up [a] voice, and, with it, [that voice’s] audience” (Ong 59-60), because voices aren’t invented *ex nihilo*; they are sociological in nature. Voices, styles, are performances of a self—but, to paraphrase Richard Lanham: how can I perform a self if I don’t know what self I am supposed to perform? Audiences, moreover, aren’t imaginary objects to be picked up and carried along willy-nilly; they are individuals—or, perhaps more precisely, *types* of individuals, persons defined by their loyalties and their allegiances and composed of pre-existing identities whose values need to be identified and addressed.

This is the logic behind lessons on *ethos* and *pathos*. A writer must recognize that when a reader takes up a text, he is entering into a relationship with the Writer-as-Other who produced the text, and, contrary to Ong’s assessment, the writer must recognize that there are always “rules and directives” in relationships, even if those rules and directives are not “explicit.”

Wayne Booth suggests a way for us to begin thinking about this psychology of the reader: upon engaging a text, a reader implicitly asks herself questions aimed to categorize her relationship to the author: “Should I believe this narrator, and thus join him? Am I willing to be the kind of person that this story-teller [sic] is asking me to be? Will I accept this author among the small circle of my true friends?” Such readerly questions, while not the only questions readers ask but merely types of questions types of readers ask in types of situations, are also not limited to “readers” specifically, but to all auditors and audiences “from the beginning of time” (Booth, *The Company We Keep*, 39). Readers engage in the Writer/Reader relationship through the critical lens of the hierarchically arranged values systems that make up the reality of their extra-textual life, but whereas Ong presents a reader who is a “fiction” and thus almost infinitely malleable, Booth presents a reader who is a “person,” and thus an agent unto himself, capable of

making informed choices, and, therefore, capable of being something other than what the writer would have him be. From this perspective, a text can be interpreted as an offering (489), not a self-centered exercise, but an attempt at engagement—a medium for building a relationship. We don't "create" audiences, in other words; we invite audiences to enter relationships. And even those relationships are not created from nothing: they are *socio*-logical in nature, and generically or categorically identifiable as a particular *type* of relationship between particular *types* of persons.

The reader of a text, Booth suggests, does not engage with a text in isolation, or in an ideological vacuum; textual engagement, rather, is a unique instance of engagement between persons, "*people meeting as they share stories*" (*The Company We Keep* 170). This focus on writing as a particular kind of human relationship leads Booth, with his co-writers Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams in *The Craft of Research*, to discuss the need for writers to "connect" with their readers by "creating roles" for themselves and their readers to perform. As he did in *The Company We Keep*, Booth and his co-authors use the concept of roles to emphasize the relational aspects of rhetorical situations; they even take their discourse of roles one-step further than Ong did, by emphasizing the "dramatistic" (or social and interactional) nature of roles-in-relation: "we can't avoid creating *some* role for ourselves and our readers," the authors write, because readers "will infer them from our writing whether we plan them or not," therefore, "roles are worth thinking about before you write a word" (*Craft* 18).

Booth and his co-authors, while they alternate general role-terms such as "expert" and "teacher" and "students" with more specific role-titles structured as phrases, such as the writerly roles of "I've Found Some New and Interesting Information" (19) and "I've Found an Answer to an Important Question" (20), as well as readerly roles such as "Entertain Me" (21) and "Help Me

Understand Something Better” (22), they do not develop any systematic method by which students can take the concept of roles, practice with it in a variety of situations, and then use it methodically to analyze situations and invent arguments that are useful in those new situations. They don’t, in other words, provide a theory with which a writer can learn to name roles himself, and then to perform the appropriate kinds of rhetorical strategies that would communicate that role to a particular kind of reader so that the reader can perform an appropriate role in response. Still, much like Ong, Booth, Colomb, and Williams clearly see the concept of role as a useful, and even a necessary, component of rhetorical theory, and they strive to make it more theoretically rigorous and practical. However, also like Ong, their presentation of the concept is found wanting.

This is not their fault. Without an actual theory in place to explain what roles are in terms of rhetoric, and how to name them, and why they are important, Booth, et al, are left with nothing more than a vernacular understanding of roles to work with. This vernacular use of roles *seems* practical, but it remains too abstract to actually *be* practical.

Like Ong and Booth, James Britton, in his discussion of discourse types, suggests that there are multiple roles writers and readers are called upon to perform in a given rhetorical relationship; and, also like Ong and Booth, Britton attempts to specifically name the roles available to players in a particular writer/reader relationship. However, unlike Ong and Booth, Britton attempts to do this more systematically, more theoretically—and, ironically, he achieves this specificity through abstraction. Like Booth’s and Ong’s role-terms, Britton’s abstractions emphasize actions that writers and readers might perform; however, Britton offers possible role-terms that categorize writerly and readerly roles in such a way that the roles themselves are

transferable between situations, and thus make roles available for use as a method for discovering the possibilities of rhetorical action in a variety of situations.

He does this partially by focusing on genres as types of literary situations: the roles adopted by writers and readers in relation to one another, or those roles that they are called upon to perform in relation to one another, are situational, much as we see in classical rhetoric. The roles themselves are a function of the genre a writer writes in, or that a reader chooses to read. Depending on the genre, Britton argues, the writer either performs the role of Spectator (as in “poetic” discourse), the role of Participant (as in “transactional” discourse), or a “shadowy” role lying somewhere between Spectator and Participant (as in “expressive” discourse). What is significant here is that Britton characterizes genre as a key factor in determining what kind of relationship a reader expects to enter into with a writer, and it is in this way, Britton argues, that a genre should direct the writer in his selection of roles: as a key to understanding the kind of relationship the writer and the reader are entering. Once the writer understands the kind of relationships she is entering into with her reader, she can determine the appropriate roles each is to perform in this particular relationship (158).

The terms Spectator and Participant are actually somewhat more helpful than the terms rhetor, orator, writer, reader, and audience, and much more helpful than something like Ong’s “inhabitants of a lost and remembered world of prepubertal latency;” however, they are also more abstract than either Ong’s role-terms or Booth’s role-terms. Britton’s terms seem to recognize that, in order for the concept of role to be theoretically useful, role-terms must be not only abstract, and thus transferable from situation to situation, but they must be named in a systematic way, and that system must provide manageable actions that participants can perform in relation to one another and that the Other can recognize as actions performed in some

particular type of social relationship. The terms Writer and Reader, in this respect, provide very little specificity about the actions the agents perform in relation to one another, but the terms Spectator and Participant suggest more specific acts the agents are doing, something that can be understood as a kind of social activity—and this is especially true if we combine these terms with the term Writer: “Writer-Spectator” and “Writer-Participant,” or “Reader-Spectator” and “Reader-Participant.” Britton’s role-terms name the writerly and readerly roles in such a way that they not only convey a recognizable (although still quite vague) type of person, but, significantly, a recognizable relationship between those persons based on recognizable sets of action, or on systemic functions that each role-player performs in relation to the other.

Each of these scholars—Ong, Booth, Britton—suggests that the naming of roles is a key factor in making roles useful as a rhetorical pedagogy. Suggests, but does not specify.

Richard M. Weaver, in his essay “To Write the Truth,” states that the role of the writing teacher is to teach students “the right names of things” (27). While the abstract term “right” could be considered as problematic here (in line with Weaver’s penchant for moralizing), if we investigate the term “right” for its context, we might revise Weaver’s line thusly: teachers need to teach students *the most rhetorically efficient names for things based on the parameters of the particular situation*. Characterized this way, we see that what Weaver meant was simply this: the first step in addressing problems of rhetorical and compositional pedagogy is learning how to name things.

Burke’s term for this is “entitlement,” and he purposefully played on the connotations of that word. “Entitlement,” or the giving of titles, refers simultaneously to “naming” things as well as to an endowment of power, authority, and agency. When we bestow a thing with a particular title, Burke suggests, that title not only becomes a sign for the thing so named (“doormat,”

“footstool”), but the thing so named becomes the sign or the symbol of the title we have given it, and of all the qualities of the thing so named (*LASA* 378-79). Entitlement enables us to symbolically endow anything we name with the qualities of the thing that a particular name or title represents, the “thing” becoming the “sign” of the “words” we use to identify the thing (“I will make the earth my footstool,” “Don’t be a doormat, Rob!”). In like fashion, whenever a society names or “entitles” a particular set of socially recognizable actions in such a way that those actions become a role a person might inhabit within a social hierarchy, the name of that role becomes the “sign” representing all of the actions expected out of any one performing that role. The role-title endows the person performing the role with the authority to engage in the functions of that office. And this is not merely limited to titles of office such as “President,” or “King,” or “Hero,” but to any titles of “office:” Father, Mother, Friend, Colleague, Fool, Lover, Jerk, Moron, Bigot, Racist, etc.

By placing Ong, Booth, and Britton in conversation with one another, in a framework of ideas provided by Kenneth Burke’s “theory of entitlement,” we begin to see more clearly how the concept of roles might be theorized in a rhetorical context. By introducing the desires of the audience and the idea of audience choice inherent in the concept of literary genres (in that readers choose the genres they want to read, genre being a manifestation of certain desires for certain kinds of textual or rhetorical experiences), both Booth and Britton re-affirm the agency of the reader in the Writer-Reader relationship,¹⁸ and suggest that the relationship between writer and reader is one of agents acting in relation to one another, with each performing a specific

¹⁸ Or, at the very least, genres, being socially pre-shaped sets of desires and expectations, make the communications intelligible and set the conditions for success and failure in rhetorical acts. Those conditions are, primarily, relational in nature: they are defined implicitly by the *type* of relationship suggested by the genre, and by the roles participants might feasibly perform in relation to one another given that particular situation. Choice, then, is partly prescribed (or, at the very least, delimited) for both reader and writer by social conventions—but those social conventions, by their very conventionality, become resources that writers and readers, rhetors and audiences, might use to communicate intelligibly, and artfully, in a given rhetorical relationship.

function in that relationship. Actions, then—and specifically actions that place agents in relation to one another—form the context that give roles their potency, but, specifically the fact that what we are dealing with *actions in relation to*. The role-names by which we entitle persons convey a sense of these personified actions as recognizable sets of expectations within recognizable relationships: writers and readers in their roles as Writers and Readers are doing something specific, such as “spectating” or “participating” to use Britton’s terminology, or “befriending” to use Booth’s, or “seeking entertainment” or seeking “a shared experience or a lost world of prepubertal latency,” as Ong put it. Both reader and writer are persons, active agents and co-participants in the rhetorical relationship that the text represents, and both agents are defined by the acts they are called upon to perform in that relationship. The relational aspects of the roles, therefore, are part of what forms the context that give these roles meaning, and that make the role-terms intelligible. Those relationships, then, are what need to be explored theoretically.

Ong’s failure to account for the agency of *both* the reader/audience and the writer/rhetor *in relation to one another* is Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford’s chief criticism of his position. For these authors, Ong overstates a rhetor’s power in a rhetorical situation by understating the agency of the audience: no matter what a writer does, an audience can refuse to perform the role into which they are cast (89). We can problematize this situation further by arguing that not only can the reader reject the proffered role but the act of writing or speaking is, inherently, to enter a hierarchical relationship in which the reader/auditor actually holds a significant level of power: readers and audiences come into a given rhetorical situation not as passive fictions to be “bent,” but as pre-defined selves, or types of self, looking for satisfaction of pre-determined desires or expectations (however much those expectations and desires may, themselves, be socially constructed). So the rhetorical situation itself—a political rally, a church service, the drive-thru at

the local fast-food restaurant, a classroom writing exercise, an article sent out for publication—not only insinuates some pre-existent rhetorical parameters, but also suggests some pre-defined rhetorical relationships. As a Writer, one must discover a way to conform to the pre-existent standards of sociality implicit in those relationships, and, to be a “Good Writer,” one must discover a way to do this artful, in a way that makes the individual performance stand out in a way that crafts an *individual identity*. And the standards one must navigate, as Britton and Booth illustrate, are suggested in the very naming of one’s role in a particular relationship.

Situationally, then, the audience can never be constituted merely as a fiction, because the real persons in the audience—the Audience-as-Agent—have authority, too (and, one might add, some level of responsibility for determining the parameters of their particular relationship to any potential writer). In any given interaction, there is a pre-existent sociality at work that cannot be ignored. While the writer can “imagine” a “fictive” audience, then, her imagination is limited to the kinds of audience that are socially available by reference to the kinds of roles available to be performed in this type of socially recognizable relationship. Eventually, a written work must be read, and so it must speak to some *type* of audience or another; that audience will carry some name or another constitutes it categorically, and the act of naming the audience in and of itself will inevitably denote some actual persons who are entitled by such a name in their real life, the name itself having a history, a tradition, and certain sets of expectations and orientations that define it and that define those who accept it, by virtue of some pre-existent loyalties.¹⁹

¹⁹ Perhaps this is what Ong meant by saying that the audience is a “fiction,” and that one can simply “pick up a voice and an audience with it,” but, as Ede & Lunsford argue, writers do not so much create audiences as they “discover” them, “address” them and “invoke” them because, in any given Writer-Reader relationship, there will be a sense of some already-existing audience that certain ideas will affect in certain ways when presented in certain ways by certain types of persons. As soon as the Writer begins to perform a particular role within (or against) a certain hierarchy of ideas (through his choice of genre and his rhetorical strategies, including his style, his self-presentation, etc.), his audience is already out there, waiting to participate in certain predefined ways in the particular type of rhetorical relationship that is established by this particular way of framing the conversation. This

Role-Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom

No matter how egalitarian we would like to imagine our classrooms to be, the power differential in the classroom is functionally hierarchical—not necessarily in the sense suggested by Paolo Freire, where those performing the role of the Student are passive, empty vessels to be “banked” with knowledge by the one performing the role entitled “Teacher” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 72), but in the sense that, ideally, a person takes on the role-title “Student” hoping to learn the skills necessary to ultimately play a different role, and so the student goes to a Teacher because Teachers know what Students do not. The explicit and implicit hierarchies that inform the relationship suggested by the roles we call “Student” and “Teacher” can illustrate something like the hierarchies at play in Writer/Reader relationships: in performing the roles incumbent upon him as both Teacher and Reader-of-Student-Essays, the role of Teacher is an extreme (and in some ways frightening in our modern, highly competitive Capitalist economy) example of the potential authority implicit in the role of Audience.

Lee Ann Carroll, in her book *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers*, writes concerning the results of a longitudinal study at Pepperdine University. Her central thesis is that students need time—and need to be given time by institutions and faculty—to develop as writers. General composition courses simply “can’t and cannot be expected to prepare students, in a single semester, or even two semesters, for every conceivable rhetorical situation that academia will throw at them because academic writing is simply too contextual” (72). Hers is not a radically new position: in his “report” on the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar, *Growth Through English*, John Dixon argued that facilitating student growth through language

already-out-there audience is always-already waiting to perform one of many potential roles such relationships and persons call upon them to perform.

“requires a willingness on the part of subject specialists, in the sciences for instance, to allow for a *gradual* development of scientific purposes in language, rather than to impose a sudden switch” (69). But what is new in Carroll’s perspective is her suggestion that what causes so many problems for students writers is the myriad of roles they are asked to perform, followed by the intense focus into discipline-specific roles.

Carroll argues that it is a “myth,” a “fantasy,” that one course, or even a couple of courses, can be expected to “fix” once and for all every conceivable problem with a student’s writing *before* they reach the discipline-specific classrooms because, as with all living things, writers mature over time, as they “learn new, more complex, and often quite different ways of writing in their major disciplines” (6). Each of the “various disciplines teach[es] ways of writing that are not only different, but, often, contradictory” because each one “presents unique problems in constructing the audience and the self,” in “stating a question,” in “methods of support,” and in “organizing and managing complexity;” moreover, each discipline has its own “complex web of social practices” or traditions “that shape what can and cannot be said” (7). Given all of this, Carroll asks how students are supposed to “negotiate these unfamiliar practices” when “experienced writers” within these disciplines are “often unable to articulate exactly what they do” (7).

This, Carroll argues, is the role that first year composition can play in the academy. First year composition courses provide “a space in the curriculum for students to think directly about conventions of writing” and “practice in needed ‘skills’ [. . .] at the beginning of students’ college careers” without the additional burden of needing “to ‘cover’ a specific content” as would be the case in a given discipline-specific class (87). But, if this is what college

composition *should* be, how do we determine what skills *should* be taught, what skills or ideas will transfer, not only from situation to situation, but from discipline to discipline?

One way to do this, I suggest, is to see the concept of the self, of identity, as a rhetorical commonplace. This is accomplished by providing students with a rigorous theory of roles, such as Lanham argues was available in the ancient rhetorical tradition. This theory would provide a method for entitling roles abstractly, so that they are transferable between situations, but with titles that are also functional, suggesting certain socially recognizable sets of actions. This way, the idea of roles and role-playing becomes a lens through which students can approach new writing situations, a strategy for invention. Defining the process of becoming a “Good Writer” as a process of maturation through the acquisition and performance of social roles provides students with not just an abstract concept that is transferable from situation to situation, it provides students with a theoretical lens for approaching situations and finding the available means of persuasion by seeing persuasion as a function of the Self one presents in a given situation. Composition courses can aid a student in this maturation by “support[ing] students’ development as they learn to take on new roles as writers,” something, Carroll argues, needs to not only happen in “first-year writing courses” but in the “more specialized academic majors” as well (xiv). However, the first-year composition course can’t help students take on new roles without some theory of what roles are in a rhetorical context, a theory that will enable students and teachers alike to see the roles that are available to perform in a given situation, and direct them in deciphering the expectations of a particular type of role in a particular type of situation so that it can be performed “appropriately.”

As with those who came before her, Carroll recognizes that an understanding of role performances is central to an understanding of rhetorical performances, and that teaching roles is

not just an important aspect of composition instruction, but of education in general. But the absence of a theoretically rigorous rhetoric of roles makes it difficult to articulate just how we teach these roles to students, or what we will be teaching them in terms of role performance. Simply stating that students need to be taught to take on new and more complex roles isn't sufficient to make the idea of roles a viable tool for rhetorical invention. How are we to teach students to write for a variety of roles if we haven't even a means of seeing those roles and their rhetorical qualities? How are we to "support students' development as they learn to take on new roles as writers" if we have no theory to teach students how to see roles *rhetorically*, as resources for discovering the available means of persuasion? If we are to teach students how to engage with complicated materials, we need to first provide them with the tools to see the problem that confronts them, a vocabulary to articulate that problem, and a method to solve that problem.

It is for this reason that Ede and Lunsford suggest that a writer "address" or "invoke" (rather than "create" or "fictionalize") a more specific audience during the composition process. To say this another way: writers should compose as though they are participating in "real," or socially recognizable, relationships. However, in making this suggestion, Ede and Lunsford further illustrate how important it is to have some sort of theory in place that helps us define these relationships and the roles that pertain to them, some sort of method for theorizing what roles writers and readers, rhetors and audiences, actually perform in relation to one another.

As with the previous scholars, Ede and Lunsford focus on the naming of the role: how we name these writerly and readerly roles provides a particular sense of the *actions* and *attitudes* that should be performed by readers and writers, and provides a sense of the *expectations* that will place the participants in relation to one another. Moreover, these names should place the participants in socially recognizable ways: Ede and Lunsford suggests role-names such as

“friend” and “critic” and “colleague”—terms that anticipate more specific kinds of audiences, more particular kinds of relationships, and a more “real” sociality. By performing these more specific roles, writers performing the role of Critic-Writer or Friend-Writer, or Colleague-Writer, Ede and Lunsford argue, are more clearly delimited in their rhetorical actions, and such role-titles more clearly delimit for readers the possible responses they can rationally perform in their roles: in the same way that the Reader of Criticism will not expect the same kind of relationship, or the same kind of attitude, or even the same kinds of information, as the Reader-of-Entertainment or the Reader-of-Journalism, the role-titles Reader-Friend and Reader-Colleague express very different relationships, and thus different sets of expectations, attitudes, and engagement. When a rhetor names her relationship to the reader in certain ways, then, and composes in a mode that suggests such a relationship, she implicitly limits the potential ways that a reader can rationally re-act (Ede and Lunsford 89). Such specificity of role makes the rhetorical situation more manageable, and the naming of roles, if done systematically, makes the concept of writerly and readerly roles more practical within rhetorical theory.

In any given sociality, we are “never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives” and thus we always “live under certain constraints” (MacIntyre 213), partially because we “enter human society” by being “drafted” into particular “roles” (MacIntyre 216). These roles, whatever they are named, act as publicly pre-existing identities that a person can occupy, publicly designated spaces in which a person can operate in relation to other persons because they come with commonly acknowledged expectations and authority. And just as the role-titles by which one is named in society matter a great deal for the production of an identity, so these role-titles can direct rhetorical invention, if we understand the act of naming itself and are thus taught to name things, as Weaver suggested, “rightly.” But “we have to learn what”

these roles and their constituent, socially recognizable sets of acts “are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed,” because “the range of potential roles an audience may play” in any given rhetorical situation—and the variety of roles that writers might play, as well—is simultaneously various and limited (Ede and Lunsford 89).

Alastair MacIntyre asserts that the central question any human asks is “What am I to do?” This is as true for humans in the classroom as it is for humans in other walks of life, and we learn the answer to this question in our public careers in the same way that we do over the course of our indoctrination into the ways of our particular society: by playing our parts in the relationships that make up our everyday existence (MacIntyre 216). However, the hierarchical and social nature of our symbol-systems precludes any rhetor from communicating in a voice wholly of their own choosing; a rhetor may not be given the opportunity to communicate as a “friend” or a “critic” or a “colleague,” since the roles rhetors and audiences are called upon to perform depend first upon the particularities of the rhetorical situation, particularities that extend beyond merely the other persons in the immediate rhetorical relationship and include relational frameworks within the society and culture at large.

This is the situation encountered in the typical academic writing situation: students can’t simply be told by a writing teacher to “choose” randomly an audience or to “pick-up” a voice—by which we mean a style and an attitude—because the vast majority of the writing they will do will require them to work within pre-existing frameworks of rhetorical expectation. So to teach writerly and readerly roles informed by Ong’s role-rhetoric alone does students a disservice—*unless* role-titles such as “friend” and “colleague” and “critic” and the voices one might pick-up

to go along with the role being performed, are used methodically as a way to show students the relationship between roles and rhetorical relationships and style and voice in general.

Thus far, what our analysis of role-rhetoric in composition studies has revealed is that role-rhetoric is only effective if we use it as a method for analyzing relationships and so discover a role that one could effectively perform in a given situation; if we develop it as a method for choosing among the available rhetorical strategies; if we use it, in other words, to see what “voices” are available to “pick up” in a particular situation in order to identify one’s self as the kind of self the situation is calling upon the individual to perform.

Richard Lanham has argued, repeatedly, that “man” is “fundamentally a role player” (*Motives of Eloquence* 4). However, while our “dramatic” nature provides us the “motive” to be “eloquent” (*Motives of Eloquence* 11), we humans are, nevertheless, simultaneously enchanted by and antagonistic towards “hypocrisy” and “ornament” in language, or what Lanham calls “the opaque style” (*Style: An Anti-Textbook* 71). Perhaps this is merely because we don’t want to be hoodwinked: recognizing the enchanting, deceptive, “mystifying” potential of language, we are wary of language that is overly enchanting or mystifying, and assume it to be deceptive. So while Lanham wants teachers to think about rhetoric less seriously, to approach writing more playfully by focusing on surfaces and styles and how they produce effects in audiences, and by allowing students to play with surfaces and styles so they get a feel for the “pleasure” to be had by toying with language—a not altogether unworthy goal—Lanham never theorizes, in any obvious and rigorous way, the relationship between rhetorical “styles” and the “roles” we play. However, his extended discussion of style over the course of several works does suggest a relationship between style and rhetorical effectiveness in a particular role, and he presents us with some constructive ways to think about developing a rhetoric and pedagogy of roles.

Early in his career, Lanham characterized language as fundamentally playful and performative in nature—even the “serious” language that we see in what Lanham would variously refer to as “Mumblespeak,” “Bureaucratese,” “Academese,” “The Plain Style,” or “The Official Style.” Lanham characterized “style” as “a response to a situation” (*Style: an Anti-Textbook* 88): when new situations arise, new styles must be developed to respond to those situations and “to *define a situation* and a personal role within that situation” (49). A style that aims to be “clear, brief, and sincere,” as the “plain” style does, or a style that does not draw attention to itself as style because it eschews the drama of “eloquence” and “display” found in an “opaque” style (*Analyzing Prose* 118) is not necessarily more “virtuous” than a flamboyant style (193), but it could be considered a more “appropriate” response to a situation which conceives of the Other as one who either dislikes or distrusts linguistic spectacle. While it may be true, as Lanham argues (repeatedly), that “clarity” in style is “a cheat, an illusion” because “the world *is* not clear; it is *made* clear” (*MOE* 22), if making the world “clear” is what the situation expects of the rhetor (as we find in the academic discourse students are supposed to learn in first year writing programs), then, to be effective, a rhetor must stylistically “respond” to that situation with a style devoid of ostentatious “tricks” and “opaque” rhetorical performances, because such things “are just not done” (*Analyzing Prose* 79): those are the rules. Alternately, whenever we, in the role of Reader, encounter a style that attempts to make the world “clear” (in whatever terms define “clarity” for such situations), we can say that we have discovered a person performing the role of Writer-Clarifier. Thus naming them, we can place them, and we can understand, to some degree, the type of relationship that this text is inviting us to participate in.

Rather than being told to figure out a voice, and thus a role, then, students need to understand the logic informing the relationship between a particular voice and a particular role;

they need a rationale for that voice that is grounded in the rhetorical situation as a relationship between humans. There is an appropriate time to use “Academese,” and there is a time not to use it; there is a time to be funny, and a time not to be funny; “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn [. . .] a time to rend, and a time to sew” (Ecclesiastes 3.4-7)—but how do we know the right time? How, in other words, do we learn, for any particular situation, the answer to the question: “What am I to do?”²⁰

Conclusion

In the composition classroom, we teach the concept of *kairos*, or the opportune moment, in order to provide students with a term that will help them understand that timing is important to argumentation. However, we rarely make a connection between *kairos* and style, or attitude, or identity. To help students figure out when is the right time to use a particular style, or to express what kind of emotions, or to perform a particular kind of self, requires a theory (or a way of seeing) and a method (or a way of performing) that enable students to discover the relationships between self, situation, and style that filters them through the lens of those socially-prescribed rules that regulate social action. The kind of style that is most effective in a given situation is

²⁰ MacIntyre, of course, is not the only person to pose this question; in a real sense it is the question that stands at the heart of all academic discourse, at the heart of philosophy and morality and drama and science; it represents our desire for an entry point into a discussion. But a beginning, to paraphrase Frank Herbert, is a very delicate time for ensuring that all the balances are correct. Burke argues that to begin a discussion of anything, one must ensure that he is beginning with the appropriate “representative anecdote” (*GOM* 60). As Crable argues, the “terms” one uses to engage in an “inquiry” provide “context” for our subject, and because of this, that terminology and its “presuppositions” ultimately “shapes and guides our interpretation of the subject [. . .] just as terms that presuppose a supernatural basis for human life affect our interpretation of human beings;” but since “we cannot avoid the use of terms,” what we need is a “representative anecdote” that is “*correct*” and “*adequate* to our subject matter,” or which provides the most effective or appropriate perspective (“*Perspective of Perspectives*” 320-22). How students answer the question “What am I to do?” in terms of roles, then, largely depends on the discipline specific role-terms that are available to them: the role-terms act as representational anecdotes, as reflections, selections, and deflections of reality based on certain presuppositions (*GOM* 59). The key to deciding which one to use would be, as Crable argues, to find the anecdote—in this case the “role”—that is most representative of the situation in which one finds themselves, to find a role-term that doesn’t “over-reduce its subject matter, forcing it into a simplifying conceptual framework,” but one that “conforms to the contours of the subject-matter” (326).

clearly related to the kind of *self*, or the identity, that the situation expects the rhetor to perform, or that the rhetor wants to present in the particular situation, but whether that is the “right” self or the “wrong” self for that particular moment depends largely on context. Currently, while rhetorical theory is informed by volumes and volumes concerning the importance of style, it has no way to read and express contexts in terms of self-fashioning *as a function of stylistic choices*, nor does it have a method for discovering such contexts, or for directing such choices as a means of crafting an identity. Our instruction in style, then, is often lost on students who, while they may gain a particular understanding of particular styles, still don’t know why to use *this* style instead of *that* one *in this particular type of moment*, because there is no real theory for teaching students how to see the relationship between styles and selves, or for seeing performed selves as functions of stylistic choices.

A highly regulated form of writing, such as academic writing, demands that students take on an largely unfamiliar *type* of voice in order to perform what, for most students, is a very alien *type* of self, and to do so for a very specific and intensely authoritative Audience in a relationship which is wholly Other to their everyday experience. Moreover, the College Writing Teacher Reader-of-Essays does *not* perform the same role as the High School English Teacher Reader-of-Essays our students have become familiar with throughout grade school, no matter how alike the two relationships may superficially appear to be. Rather, the College Teacher and the University Professor are each a particular type of persona inhabiting a particular role within a particular hierarchy, and, as Carroll points out, that role changes from discipline to discipline across the system. Each different disciplinary hierarchy will define the rules for role performances differently, but this significant and fundamental bit of understanding is rarely if ever made clear to students; it is not made clear in our textbooks; and it is not made clear in the way that role-

rhetoric is used by the rhet/comp scholars we have just explored. So if our academic student writers are to encounter a variety of academic readers inhabiting a variety of roles within a variety of hierarchies, roles and hierarchies that provide those readers with very specific, and often conflicting, sets of expectations concerning the acts writers *should* perform (Carroll 7), how do we, as rhetoric and composition teachers, provide our students with an abstract method for discovering, at any given moment, how to answer the question “What am I to do?”

To be effective rhetors, students not only need to see the potential roles rhetorical situations call upon them to perform, they need to see the concept of roles itself as a theoretical framework for selecting the rhetorical strategies that will allow them to perform their roles effectively. But this non-theory of roles, as currently employed in rhet/comp discourse, is insufficient for this purpose: it does not provide students with an effective framework for learning what roles are available, or expected, and it does not teach them how and why to choose a voice, a tone, a style, or what makes a particular tone, voice, or style effective within the *pre-*determined parameters of a particular writer/reader relationship. In approaching rhetorical invention through a discourse of roles but failing to develop the concept of roles in a theoretically rigorous way, rhet/comp scholarship fails to make the concept of roles practical for rhetorical theory and pedagogy.

Despite this, however, each of these writers has suggested the potential usefulness of the concept of roles in teaching us how rhetoric works. Britton, for example, suggests that when a writer takes upon himself the role of Participant or Spectator, that the writer is acting as proxy for the reader, showing the reader the role he or she is expected to perform (so, at times, rhetorical situations call upon writers to perform the role of Proxy Audience). But there are many different ways that a writer can be called upon to perform this role, many different kinds of

“Spectator” a writer can potentially perform for, or in collaboration with, a particular audience: some situations may call upon writers to be Spectators-in-Proxy, beholding for the reader and enabling them to experience something they can’t except through the writer’s words; some situations call upon writers to be Objective Spectators, who act at an intellectual distance from the object of discussion, not acting as Judge, but merely Observer, holding the object up for the reader’s inspection and allowing the reader to judge for themselves; however, other situations do call upon the writer to judge, perhaps acting as a Skeptic or Cynic, or as an Apologist.²¹ Each of these instances calls upon the writer to perform a variation on the Spectator role, but each performs that role in different ways that are *pre*-determined by the situation itself.

Ong suggested that the list of potential roles is potentially limitless: there are literally countless possible variations for naming the roles that rhetors may be called upon to perform—just add adjectives!²² But this is because there are literally countless particular rhetorical situations. The abstractness of the terminology of roles, therefore, is both an asset and a distraction: the abstract and general nature of the terminology allows us to transfer the idea suggested by the role-title from situation to situation, but without a theory of how roles work in

²¹ We find examples of rhetorical strategies informed by social roles in classical rhetoric, as well. Despite the fact that Cicero had access to the conventions of classical rhetoric that delimited specific “scenes” of rhetorical action in terms of purpose and style, in his writing he appealed to the “moves” of socially recognizable roles that fleshed out his *self* as he embodied the role of Orator, moves that established a particular, socially recognizable relationship between himself and his reader that further defined the moves he made in his role as Orator. In *Orator*, a letter to his friend, Brutus, Cicero performs not only the role of Friend and Colleague, but the role of Apologist, defending his oratorical practices against his critics. This letter actually characterizes rhetorical styles in terms of personalities (VI.1-3). In *De Officiis*, Cicero performs the role of loving Parent—not only to the addressee, his own son, Marcus, but, by proxy, “to the whole of Marcus’s generation” (Kennerly 121). And in the dialogue *De Oratore*, Cicero writes himself as one among a cast of characters, each with a particular role, or part to play, in the unfolding drama, with Cicero casting himself as the central figure, the role of Teacher and Sage, instructing his Pupils in the ideal practices of the ideal orator.

²² This adding of adjectives will become important, and be addressed in more detail, later in this work. Here, however, I simply want to state that it is the infinite permutations of role possible through such specification (or expansion) that helps students move from role as a rote exercise of invention towards role as a resources in artful self-fashioning: after beginning with limited, generic roles, students can learn to creatively fashion individual selves (rather than fictionalize audiences) by means of the various permutations of role possible through terminological experimentation.

rhetorical situations, and without a way to understand how we employ roles in specific situations as a commonplace for rhetorical analysis and inventions, the concept of naming provides no practical guidance for rhetorical invention or analysis.

This, then, is how we help students answer the question “What am I to do?”: we teach them to discover the particulars of the relationships suggested by a rhetorical situation by providing them with a way to use the concept of roles methodically in order to discover the roles particular situations call upon them to perform, and in order to see how these roles direct rhetorical action. To do this requires a theory: we must look at the concept of roles from the perspective of rhetorical theory to discover what this concept tells us about rhetoric and how it works. But the scholars we have looked at thus far have not provided us with a sufficient understanding of what the concept of role means in a rhetorical framework to allow us to do this. They have only ever used the term “role” in its vernacular sense.

In the context of his work on rhetoric as symbolic action, however, and particularly as he developed his “dramatistic” method of rhetorical analysis, Kenneth Burke regularly appeals to the idea of roles in human sociality as rhetorical, and he links humans’ mimetic nature directly to the problems of rhetoric. Because the development of Burke’s appeal to a rhetoric of roles develops incrementally, and because it is more nuanced and complex than those we have yet encountered, and because the concept was so central to the development of Burke’s rhetorical theory, a condensed discussion of Burke’s rhetoric of roles cannot be covered in this chapter in a way that would do justice either to them or to our immediate project. Therefore, I will dedicate the next chapter to a thorough analysis of the development of Burke’s rhetoric of roles over the course of his career. This analysis of Burke will lay the foundation for a rhetoric of roles for the composition classroom, which will be the topic of the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 2: Kenneth Burke's Rhetoric of Roles

While many contemporary rhet/comp theorists acknowledge the importance of Kenneth Burke's ideas to rhetorical theory, and while many compositionists have wrangled with the necessity for a rhetorical approach to identity in the rhet/comp classroom, none, to my knowledge, have attempted to *systematically* employ Burke's ideas in pedagogy to inform self-fashioning or identity creation in a text. Generally, scholars and pedagogues such as David Blakesly, Jessica Enoch, Bryan Crable, Andrew King, etc, employ Burke's ideas for *analysis*, just as Burke's own essay on pedagogy, "Linguistic Approaches to the Problems of Education" focuses primarily on the analysis of symbolic acts. And even Peter M. Smudde, whose "constructivist" pedagogy is aimed at developing students' who are "citizen critics" or "poetic humanists," provides no systematic suggestions as to how students might actually invent such personas through specific acts of self-presentation in a text: what rhetorical strategies or stylistic choices help students *present themselves in the role of* Citizen Critic or Poetic Humanist in their writing and speech? What rhetorical choices define *the role of* Citizen Critic or Poetic Humanist? So, while Burke's ideas have been used to help students navigate a world of symbols *before* they write, they have not been analyzed for ways they might inform student symbol-use *in the act of composition*—and this despite the fact that Burke has plenty to say on symbolic action *as action*, on identity as a key factor in persuasion, and on the relationship between symbolic action and identity formation.

This chapter, therefore, argues that one way to begin thinking about Burke's ideas as a pedagogy for self-fashioning can be found in Burke's evolving use of the concept and term "role" over the course of his works. I present the development of Burke's role-rhetoric by breaking Burke's project *not* into two phases, as William H. Reuckert, Michael Overington, and

others have done (Branaman 452),²³ but into three *stages* in his use of a role-rhetoric: the period of *Counter-Statement (CS)* and *Permanence and Change (P&C)*; the period of *Attitudes Towards History (ATH)* and *The Philosophy of Literary Form (PLF)*; and the period of *A Grammar of Motives (GOM)* and *A Rhetoric of Motives (ROM)*. I will argue that Burke's move from a purely vernacular role-rhetoric to a more theoretically rigorous role-rhetoric as part of the development of "dramatism" suggests not only how the concept of role informed Burke's developing system of analysis, but how the concept of roles informs rhetorical theory generally, providing the basis for a *rhetoric* of roles that can direct self-fashioning in rhetoric and composition pedagogy.

The Stages

In *The Philosophy of Literary Form (PLF)*—a collection of essays published near the middle of his career and which could be seen as the climax or "turning point" in the development of his "dramatistic" method of rhetorical analysis (being both the apex of what had come before and the foundation of what would come after)—Kenneth Burke attempts to "outline" and "codify" some points of the "philosophy" of human behavior discovered through a contemplation of the formal structures of literature. He comes to the conclusion that "ritual drama" is *the* "calculus" or "vocabulary" or "set of coordinates, that best serves" as a framework "for the integration of all phenomena studied by the *social sciences*,"²⁴ and "as the logical

²³ Branaman argues that these two phases of Burke's works are "interdependent:" that is, that his later, "linguistic teleology" phase is only intelligible through the earlier, "social teleology" phase (452). My three-stage breakdown is not meant to critique or replace this two-phase reading of Burke's work; I am simply tracking the development of a particular term. However, even within the two-phase framework, it is still arguable that Burke's evolving understanding of human beings as social role-players, and thus of the concept of "role" as a fundamental idea for understanding how language works rhetorically, played a key "role" in the shift from a social to a linguistic teleology.

²⁴ Robert Wade Kenny, in his examination of Burke's contributions to the field of sociology, argues that the key distinction between Burke's ideas and those in sociology is sociology's desire to explain human behavior in terms of "norms" in contrast to Burke's suggestion that "norms" are "inadequate" to fully explain the "complexity" of human motivation. An example of this inadequacy is the "role theory" of sociology, which sees "traditional roles" as norms

alternative to the treatment of human acts and relations in terms of the mechanistic metaphor”

most often employed in science (*PLF* 105-06)²⁵. “Drama,” for Burke, is *literally*, and not

metaphorically, what human sociality is—not in the old *theatrum mundi* sense that “all the

world’s a stage,” but in the sense that the term “drama” represents the *literal* complexity of

human motivation in all aspects of social activity.²⁶ However, while Burke appealed to dramatic

of behavior; however, the fact that sociological role theory cannot account for the complexity of human motivation is illustrated by the fact that key role theorists—including Erving Goffman, Robert K. Merton, C. Wright Mills, and Nelson Foote—turned to Burke in an attempt to address some of the problems with sociological role-theory. While space does not permit a full exploration of the distinctions between sociological role theory and the “rhetoric of roles” this argument is working towards, I think it’s important to note a distinction between the two: where sociological role theory characterizes roles as the “norms” that determine behavior, I’m arguing that Burke characterized roles more like “forms” through which human beings perform. In this respect, the Burkean mode is similar to a later development in sociological role theory that Wade does not mention: Peter Callero’s assertion that roles are not so much social norms as social resources.

²⁵ As Crable writes: “we [humans] ordinarily relate to one another ‘as’ persons, not ‘as if’ we are persons. [. . .] it is not as though we ordinarily treat one another ‘as’ machines or ‘as’ animals, on occasion pretending ‘as if’ we are persons. Indeed, we can, for various purposes, act ‘as if’ another is an animal or a machine—whether under the guise of medicine or genocide—but, Burke argues, this is not our everyday way of dealing with one another. [. . .] Burke therefore contends that it is the scientist who offers a metaphorical approach to the study of motivation, not the dramatist” (Crable, “Defending Dramatism as Ontological and Literal,” 334).

²⁶ Many have taken issue with Burke’s insistence that dramatism is not metaphorical but provides “a literal way of speaking about the human condition,” Bryan Crable suggests that this criticism of Burke is based on a misunderstanding of Burke’s theory of the nature of language. Crable argues that, for Burke, there is a “paradox inherent within representational views of language” (“Defending Dramatism as Ontological and Literal,” 331). Language is not just representational (certain terms refer to or represent certain material things) but language is active: to use language involves “*the decreeing of substance, the creation of a thing’s character* through its contextual placement” (329). The assertion that “either dramatism is ontological, a literal statement about human reality, or it is epistemological, one metaphor/perspective of reality” must define the term “literal” as something like “*the only accurate way of treating its subject* [. . .] an absolute reflection of reality” and thus “incompatible with the notion of perspective,” this, however, is not Burke’s position (325). Burke defined dramatism as ontological rather than epistemological in contrast to “scientism,” which “discusses language in terms of *knowledge*—representation, naming, definition,” and “as a vehicle through which an observer may gain accurate knowledge of the world” (327). A “scientistic” education “simply involves learning the referential connection between word and thing,” whereas a dramatistic education approaches “language [. . .] in terms of action” and “as a mode of conduct,” as something that “does not merely represent the world, but *acts* upon and within the world” (327). If we consider language as “primarily the representation of a nonverbal referent by a verbal symbol,” Burke suggests, then we ignore the fact that, in order to “represent something, we must *identify* it as having a particular character and place the appropriate verbal label upon it” (Crable 328; *italics mine*). Thus, Crable argues, dramatism is both ontological *and* literal, not epistemological, because “language [is] constitutive and not representational, a *decreeing* of substance rather than a *reflection*” or re-presentation “of reality” (Crable 331). For our purposes here, this means that a “scientistic” education, one that teaches symbol-users to look at language solely as means of knowing the world, encourages us to ignore the *act* of language use, that language also teaches us to know the world in certain ways and to *ignore* the world in certain ways; language itself prepares us to act and, by orienting us, acts upon us. Burke wants us to focus on *the act of representation*, not just the representations themselves; dramatism provides a framework for doing that.

Ethan Sproat takes this discussion of epistemology and ontology in Burke a step further, suggesting that, in some ways, Burke essentially collapses the distinction between ontology and epistemology: Burke “reconceived” epistemology by “reposition[ing] the question ‘what is knowledge’ away from knowledge’s relationship to the

literature and to social roles from the beginning in order to illustrate his ideas, it is in *PLF* we first see Burke use the idea of “drama” systematically as a method for analyzing rhetorical, or symbolic, acts, and in that method, the term “role” acquires, for Burke, a much more theoretically rigorous application than it had enjoyed in his previous works.

Burke appeals to the concept of roles throughout his career, but, as I stated earlier, we can see three stages in the development of that appeal: in the first stage, the era of his books *Counter-Statement* (*CS*) and *Permanence and Change* (*P&C*), Burke appeals to a discourse of human social roles in order to illustrate his ideas concerning the nature of human conflict. Situating human conflict as something that arises from the primarily symbolic and “formal” nature of sociality, Burke’s early role-rhetoric appeals to social roles as a common social experience. As we see in the discourse of roles in rhetoric and composition generally, Burke’s role-rhetoric at this stage is simply vernacular, as in his use of role-terms drawn from the world of art and literature, such as “critic” and “artist” and “poet,” which terms are juxtaposed with more mythic role-terms like “hero” and “villain,” and with more mundane role-terms such as “worker” and “athlete.” This vernacular role-rhetoric simply illustrates how attitudes are oriented towards certain things and against certain other things by the connotations of the terminology used to name their occupations within a particular society’s symbol system.

external world (i.e., knowledge’s ultimate container) and nearer to knowledge’s relationship with the rest of knowledge (i.e., what is contained in the container). [. . .] For Burke, drama and dramatism are, thus, dialectical tools with which we can perceive and epistemologically appreciate all other perspectives” (337).

If this seems supremely contradictory—that theorists see Burke’s dramatism as ontological *and* epistemological, both metaphorical *and* literal (despite his insistence that dramatism is ontological, Burke also insisted that it recuperated epistemology from Nietzsche and de Man; despite the fact that he insisted on dramatism’s literality, he was a stark proponent of metaphor)—no worries: as Arthur Quinn stated: Burke “is one of those thinkers for whom consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds; don’t get tangled up in his definitions which never quite workout anyway. [. . .] an edifying as opposed to a systematic philosopher [. . .] seeking himself, and exhorting [others] not so much to know truth as to embody wisdom, dramatism as a way of life” (231).

During the second stage, the era of *Attitudes Towards History* (ATH) and *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (PLF), Burke's role-rhetoric begins to coalesce into a more theoretically precise *terminology* of roles: a "biological organism" becomes a "person" (ATH 380), Burke argues, as the individual participates in the "drama of human relations" (LAPE 6) and "adopts a role" (or is symbolically placed via a role-logic) in "relation to" the hierarchical social "system" that defines that particular "historical situation." Here Burke develops the idea that our roles, and the role-terms that represent them, not only "prepare us *for* some functions and *against* others," but also prepare us "for or against the persons representing these functions" (ATH 4-5). It is in this middle stage, then, that the concept of roles becomes more clearly a theoretical concept for begins, and Burke begins to reveal the possibilities of role-logic as the foundation for a *rhetorical* theory of identity (and, by extension, a rhetorical pedagogy of identity, or of self-fashioning).

In the final stage, the era of *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives* (or what has come to be called Burke's "Motivorum"), the theory of roles that Burke seems to be developing in PLF fades into the background—or, perhaps more precisely, sinks beneath the surface, becoming the foundation of dramatism itself, as is evident in Burke's choice of key terms occupying the points of the dramatistic pentad (agent, agency, act, scene, purpose, and later "attitude"). Clearly this shift does not mean that Burke is simply dismissing and replacing the concept of roles with the concepts on the pentad; rather, role-logic becomes the *sub-stance* for Burke's entire "dramatistic" perspective of human identity: human beings, as role-players, become "agents" only insofar as they learn and understand the social resources available to them, resources that are largely intelligible by reference to the terminology of social roles and the

categorical classes of social relationships that a particular society in a particular historical moment provides.

So, while the concept of humans as role-performers is evident in all his major works, from *Counter-Statement* (CS) through *Essays Towards a Symbolic of Motives* (SOM), previous to *PLF*, Burke's role-rhetoric lacks any theoretical rigor; in *PLF*, his role-rhetoric acquires the theoretical rigor necessary to form the basis of dramatistic analysis; and from *PLF* onward, the concept forms the foundation of Burke's thinking about human beings as social agents. "Role," then—a heretofore uninvestigated principle in Burkean theory—must be understood as a key term in Burke's critical vocabulary, and his use of this term suggests not only the potential of this idea as a theoretical concept in rhetoric and composition studies, but suggests that this concept reveals something significant about the nature and function of rhetoric in the real world. It also provides the theoretical resources for developing a theory of self-fashioning that can be used as a commonplace of invention in the rhetoric and composition classrooms.

First Stage: The Era of *Counter-Statement* and *Permanence and Change*

From the beginning of his career, Burke employed the logic of roles as a "formal" means of expressing a Self, that social phenomenon constructed through the performance of available Self-types. While "One man attains self expression by becoming a sailor," Burke writes in *Counter-Statement*, his first major work, "another" expresses his or her *Self* "by becoming a poet" (CS 53). For Burke, whether it was generic forms of literature or categorical forms of typical human action, "A form is a way of experiencing" which has "a prior existence in the experiences of the person hearing or reading [and, we can add, viewing or experiencing, even if

only by proxy] the work of art” (CS 143).²⁷ And if “form,” is the “creation of an appetite [. . .] and the adequate satisfying of that appetite” and involves “the psychology of the audience” (CS 31)—or in the case of the drama of human sociality, of the society of Others who compose the “audience” of that society in which, for which, and *be-fore* which we live—then a writer’s “manipulations of a reader’s desires,” as Burke asserts, must “involve the use of what the reader considers desirable” (CS 146).²⁸

²⁷ Gretchen K. G. Underwood writes: “it is clear that Burke’s work on the five terms was taking *form* even before its first mention appeared in print in his book *Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941), and long before it debuted as ‘the pentad’ in *A Grammar of Motives* (1969a).” Underwood argues that “Burke’s definition of form” in *Counter-Statement* as “the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite” (CS 31) “anticipates his introduction of the pentad” and, in particular, the “internal use” of the pentad, or the ratios that are developed in *A Grammar of Motives*. Burke’s definition of form was part of an ongoing attempt to (in Burke’s own words) “develop a method that could be used to help critics frame questions that would help them uncover the motives and assumptions implicit within a text.” This perhaps explains why so much of Burke-informed pedagogy focuses on analysis. But analyses must also be communicated, and at the point of communication with some other, self-presentation and persuasion become key concerns. Burke’s repeated references to social roles, beginning in *Counter-Statement*, signify the first steps in what will eventually become dramatism itself, and are significant for understanding the problem of self-fashioning, on the part of a rhetor, as a more nuanced understanding of classical persuasion: “The appetite essential to form,” Underwood writes, “is often created by a series of temporary frustrations – moments when we are unable to clearly identify with one another – which are adequately resolved when we finally see ourselves as consubstantial with another either because our interests are joined with theirs or we are persuaded to believe that they are joined.”

²⁸ Anis Bawarshi writes that, in recent years, we have seen “a dramatic reconceptualization of genre,” or of the formal in literature, “and its role in the production and interpretation of texts and culture” (335). Bawarshi names Burke among a cadre of scholars who have informed this re-conceptualization of genre (339), and I would argue that Burkean ideas that trace their genesis back to CS would be the principle framework for rethinking and expanding the definition of genre in art. Burke’s expansive theory of form allows for categorical “structuring and classifying” to move beyond “a mainly literary textual universe” and towards a redefinition of genre “as typified rhetorical ways communicants come to recognize and act in all kinds of situations, literary and nonliterary” (335). Bawarshi argues that, with such a redefinition, “genre” is now situated as “an overarching concept that can explain the social roles we assign to various discourses and those who enact and are enacted by them” (338). This new definition of genre sees genres “in the constitution not only of texts but of their contexts, including the identities of those who write them, and of those who are represented within them” (335). However, as I mentioned in my opening chapter, I do not see this as a new discovery, but a re-discovery of the way ancient genres situated speakers in relation to their audiences through an abstract terminology of rhetorical situations: “communicants and their contexts are”—and were—“in part functions of the genres they write;” genres, then, must be seen as more than just “a classificatory device or an a posteriori interpretive tool in relation to already existing texts,” or merely “formulaic writing,” but “genres constitute all communicative action” (335-36) and thus have “a sociorhetorical function” (339): “as individuals’ rhetorical responses to recurrent situations become typified as genres, the genres in turn help structure the way these individuals conceptualize and experience these situations, predicting their notions of what constitutes appropriate and possible responses and actions. This is why genres are both functional and epistemological—they help us function within particular situations at the same time they help shape the ways we come to know these situations” (340). So the concept of “genre allows us to study the social and the rhetorical as they work on one another, reinforcing and reproducing one another and the social activities, *the roles, and the relations* that take place within them” because “This recursive process is what genre is” (357, emphasis mine).

Here in *Counter-Statement*, at the very beginning of his critical project, Burke expresses the relationship between individual human action and social influence according to the logic of a rhetoric of roles. Possibilities for individual self-expression are presented as socially recognizable types— “hero” and “villain” and “poet” and “politician”—with each of these “roles” characterized as performing a recognizable, formal function within the larger “drama” of human interaction. Writing that “Certain channels of expression will block others” (CS 53), Burke appeals to a rhetoric of recognizable social roles to support his assertions: “To become an athlete, for instance, I must curb my appetite for food and drink [. . .]” (CS 54). Notice that there is a connection here between the role one is performing (or wishing to perform: the role-title by which the individual wishes to be named or recognized) and the particular sorts of *acts* the individual will need to perform in order to be recognized by the social audience as that particular role. Later, however, Burke suggests that the easy divisions of identity-based-in-roles that this passage seems to suggest are not necessarily as simple or exclusive as he has made them appear to be, and to support this assertion, Burke again appeals to a logic of roles, to the idea that specific things have specific functions in relation to other things in a system: “the role of opposition is by no means negligible in the shaping of society,”²⁹ Burke writes, and so the shaping of an individual is accomplished not by the “victory of one ‘principle’” over the other, “but the partial incorporation” of multiple principles. Thus “the artist,” Burke writes, differs from a role like Politician in that he “exploits human potentialities in a different way than a politician” (CS 71). Moreover, for “every poet who became a poet after failure in business, there are at least a hundred business men who became businessmen after failure in poetry” (CS 73).

²⁹ Unless I missed something, this is Burke’s sole use of the actual word “role” in *Counter-Statement*, but even if there are other, random uses of this word that I have overlooked, it is instructive that, at this point in his critical project, Burke uses role-terminology only in its vernacular sense, *not* as part of developed critical vocabulary.

We see here that there is for Burke, from the very beginning, a sense that identity creation, or self-fashioning, is a cooperative effort between the individual and the “Other,” and the concept of the Other is not only representative of particular persons, but is categorical, representing society as a whole through particularized *types* of persons-in-principle. Because the human mind by nature categorizes, all social action (and, for Burke, there is no other kind of action for humans) will be “categorized” according to recognizable types, and those types will be characterized as personal, or person-ated, in nature. Societies develop roles as sets of recognizable actions that become associated with recognizable types of persons who have a recognizable function within the overarching narrative of the social hierarchy. The performance of these roles communicates, through symbolic action, who the person is and what group or groups the person belongs to. And as Burke’s ideas developed over time, how one society or individual chooses to name these categories becomes as important as having an awareness of these categories at all.

Burke would later characterize *Counter-Statement*’s “quest for the norm” or for a “theory of form” as “a systematic search for a dialectic of many voices [. . .] a study of the varied ways in which men seek by symbolic means to make themselves at home in social tensions” (CS xi). Burke writes in the preface to *Permanence and Change* that “*Counter-Statement* [. . .] considered the principle of socialization primarily in terms of literary form,” while *Permanence and Change* (P&C) “widens the motivational orbit” to address the formality of “communication” generally, as communication is “grounded in material cooperation;” *Attitudes Towards History* (ATH) “moves still farther from the specifically literary into the realm of human antics generally” (P&C xlix; lv-lvi), or to “man’s life in political communities” (ATH, Introduction). So Burke characterizes his own development during this stage as a move from discussions of formality in

literature to a more developed discussion of “form”-ality between persons and within communities. In this period, he increasingly appeals to what he would eventually call a “dramatistic” rhetoric, focusing on humans as motivated “actors” in relation to each other individually and collectively. Early in the development of his “dramatistic” method, role-logic would figure prominently in his exploration of the socializations that occur with, by, and within communities. Social roles begin to be seen as something like the nexus between group psychology and individual human identity.

In *Permanence and Change*, Burke considers the way humans “orient” themselves with and to one another in societies through their language practices. We do this, he argues, through formal (or formulaic) acts of naming. In a critique of high criticism’s dismissal of “escapist” writers (a prelude to his discussion of the “scapegoating” of individuals), Burke writes that naming a person according to the acts that person performs, “While apparently defining a *trait of the person referred to*,” actually “convey[s] the *attitude of the person making the reference*” (*P&C* 8). The act of naming a thing conveys an attitude towards that thing, an attitude that originates in the symbol-system of the socio-historical moment, placing persons in relation to, and in communion or disunion with, other persons by reference to categorical terms for typical, recognizable relationships based in recognizable actions—“occupations” and “preoccupations.” As he often does in *CS*, Burke again appeals to specific examples of roles to illustrate his point:

A racketeer who would not care *why* he was tough would be spellbound by a prize-fighter. A salesman, sick of a day’s work and determined to think no more of it until tomorrow, will go to a motion picture and watch in delight the building-up of some character with precisely the brass, the ingenuity, and the social life which are the ideals of his calling [. . .] that exemplifies the ideals of his trade: the

ideal fears, the ideal hopes, the ideal methods that equip one for the business of selling. (*P&C* 38).

While these occupational preoccupations can lead to an “occupational psychosis” that causes a person to see all things through the lens of his or her particular orientation, Burke asserts that these occupational preoccupations also provide us the materials for developing critical lenses to frame and interpret reality. Our “orientations” provide us with our motives for speaking and acting. “Whereas all organisms are critical,” Burke writes, the human organism specifically “seeks by verbalization to perfect a methodology of criticism” which assumes action as arising from “the attempt to reason;” thus *human* criticism must focus on “a consideration of motives which he”—that is, the human Critic—“assigns for his acts” (*P&C* 18). For beings that are by nature socially oriented *through language*, such a critical method would, naturally, be an order of logic arising from the rationality provided by our immediate sociality’s role terminology.

The idea of “orientation” as a socializing phenomenon is developed further in *Attitudes Towards History*, in Burke’s theory of “acceptance frames.” Burke broadens his theory of social orientation by theorizing it as a framing of what is acceptable and rejectable, and, again, he does this by appealing to the way society provides roles for us to perform. Indeed, it is in *ATH* that Burke moves from a role-rhetoric that implies a theory, crafted by an appeal to social role-term that personify the types of human actions he’s discussing, to role-rhetoric more explicitly theoretical, employing the term “role” with increased theoretical rigor. Burke characterizes acceptance frames directly in terms of social roles, using the actual term “role” for the first time to describe social categories that orient humans by moralizing and directing our actions situationally and, significantly, relationally. “Action requires programs,” Burke writes, and “programs require vocabulary.

To act wisely, *in concert*, we must use many words. If we use the wrong words, words that divide up the field inadequately, we obey false cues. We must name the friendly and unfriendly functions and relationships in such a way that we are able to do something about them. In naming them, we form our characters, since the names embody attitudes; and implicit in the attitudes there are cues for behavior. [. . .] You personally may never be called upon to “act,” in the brute sense of the word. You may act, a generation later, in the names and attitudes you bequeath to your children. [. . .] These names shape our relations to our fellows. They prepare us *for* some functions and *against* others, *for* or *against* the persons representing those functions. The names go further: they suggest *how* we shall be for or against. Call a man a villain, and you have the choice of either attacking or cringing. Call him mistaken, and you invite yourself to attempt setting him right. [. . .] The choice must be weighed with reference to the results we would obtain, and to the resistances involved. By “frames of acceptance” we mean the more or less organized system of meanings by which a thinking man gauges the historical situation ***and adopts a role*** in relation to it” (*ATH* 4-5, bold and italics mine).

Who we call “villain” or “hero,” who we categorize as “critic” and “poet”—each of these role-titles, or acts of *en-role-ment*, is, Burke argues, a socially informed “frame of acceptance or rejection,” a categorization by which we orient ourselves and others, or are *oriented* by our society, by frames that influence and inform our attitude and that direct and define our actions as individual members of a society and in relation to other members of society, as well as in relation to society, in general. These roles-titles name sets of recognizable action, which are characterized as modes of being: acts that are performed to convey a recognizable identity.

Burke's role-rhetorics suggest that not only is individual identity constructed through the performance of social roles (and the language of those social roles), but individual relationships are formed this way, as well. These categorical "types" of relationships are the situations in which we make our choices, and thus our selves, through an appeal to and performance of the symbolic resources for defining identity that are provided by our society in a specific historical moment. It is for this reason that, in *Permanence and Change*, Burke comes to the conclusion that "the ultimate metaphor for discussing the universe and man's relations to it must be the poetic or dramatic metaphor" (*P&C* 263), because *individual* identity is not only *the result of* groups, but *group* identity is *the result of* cooperating individuals working within a socio-historically situated symbol system, and such a context is readily intelligible by an appeal to the conventions of dramatic literature because such a context is the essence or *substance* of dramatic literature. In a drama, a character has no identity without reference to the role, or function, he or she performs in the larger poetic work; likewise, in a society, an individual has no identity (as opposed to individuality) without reference to his or her "role," or pre-determined set of functions, in the larger social system. Without a role to perform there is no way for persons to "identify" themselves (though recognizable, symbolic acts) to other persons, or even to themselves. Decision making, according to Burke, can be considered "dramatistically" (meaning in terms of "motivated action," but also in terms of "how things fit together with other things") primarily because decisions, and the desires that lead to them, aren't the result of individual will alone, but are informed by larger, invisible social forces exerting their influence upon our faculties—just like the decisions made by characters in a play.

Second Stage: The Era of *Attitudes Towards History* and *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

In the essay “The Seven Office,” an “appendix” to *Attitudes Towards History*, Burke offers a preliminary “terminology of motives” that is, essentially, an attempt to subsume all human roles as originating from certain basic roles that name certain basic social functions. That is: “The Seven Offices” is an attempt to provide an abstract vocabulary of basic social roles and the acts that each represents.

Burke defines the basic types of social personas by naming the expected acts they perform in relation to others in society, and he calls these acts “offices” or “duties” (*ATH* 359), words that connect his ideas with classical rhetoric though Cicero (or which are, perhaps, an attempt to translate these ancient concepts into a modern context). Burke writes that there are “basic offices [. . .] that people perform in their relations to one another,” and that these offices correspond to the “acts” the officers holding those offices perform: “Govern, serve (provide for materially), defend, teach, entertain, cure, pontificate” (*ATH* 358-59). These actions are, at this stage in the development of Burkean thought, the root acts that correspond to the most basic social roles, and each corresponding social role is the embodiment or “personification” of the “duties” or expected acts of that office: the duty (or function or situation) we express with the verb “govern,” for example, calls for corresponding nouns that personify the “governing roles” that will name the persons who perform the actions called for by the specifics needs of the governing situation. Thus “govern” includes role-titles such as “emperors, kings, tyrants, dictators [. . .] labor leaders, ward bosses, moderators, chairmen [. . .] legislatures, and judiciary” (*ATH* 359). And because there can be no duty without a relationship to some Other, while one’s duties or responsibilities arise from the nature of the situation,³⁰ the situation is inherently relational and personal: our socially prescribed roles motivate us to action towards some Other

³⁰ Richard Vatz, in an essay on the myth of the rhetorical situation, argued that situations do not in-and-of themselves have a nature, but that natures are imposed upon them by societies. I address this critique in the subsequent chapter, “Towards a Rhetoric of Roles.”

who is also performing some socially prescribed role. And these roles delimit the parameters of acceptable action, prescribing and proscribing action that is acceptable, orienting us in relation to those others—and, significantly, placing us in the social hierarchy.

Thus Burke's discussion of occupation and employment in *Permanence and Change* becomes, in *Attitudes Towards History*, just a sub-category of the social roles we are given, and which orient our performances in a given sociality by providing frames of acceptance and rejection in relation to social Others who are, themselves, conceived in categorical or "formal" terms. The occupations that give us our "psychoses" are the very things that place us in relation to our society hierarchically.

Which leads Burke back to the issues of motivation he first addressed in *Permanence and Change*, to the orienting "magic" of symbols as motivating vessels. Burke uses the example of an alarm clock: "This need of arising," Burke writes, "is a *situation*" or pattern of life which is firmly situated in some role the individual is playing; when the clock sounds, its sound is "but a shorthand term" for a more pressing (and sometimes, more oppressive) set of orienting motivations, for "the clock has said, in brief translation: 'This is the time for you to arise, since you live at such-and-such a distance from your office, the trip requires so-and-so many minutes' ... etc." (*P&C* 221). Without the duties associated with the role of "worker" (a type of "servant," one of Burke's basic offices of human sociality), the man has no "motivation" to arise. The alarm clock, then, does not provide the motive; the clock and its bell are but symbols, reminders of the actual role the individual has to perform, which is the actual source of the laborer's motive. Thus, for Burke, one's roles in a larger social hierarchy must be a chief consideration in any analysis of motivation.

If *Attitudes Toward History*, which Burke himself characterized as both a “sequel” to and “revision” of *Permanence and Change* (*ATH* 377), sees the introduction of a more theoretically rigorous role-rhetoric into Burke’s critical vocabulary through the employment of the term “role” as a critical term, it is in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* that we see Burke begin to employ the term more theoretically as he moves towards the development of his “dramatism.”³¹ The nexus of this development in Burke’s thought is his essay “Twelve Propositions,” written as a response to Margaret Schlauch’s review of *ATH*. Here, Burke appeals to the concept of role in an explication of his developing ideas about “identification,” ideas which appear to be further developing earlier discussions of “orientation” and “frames of acceptance.” “Identification” is a term Burke appropriates from Freud whom, according to Andrew King, Burke “greatly admired,” particularly for his “verbal methods of unearthing the hidden motive.” Burke “wanted to discover the social motive, not the individual motive,” because he was sure “that these programmatic messages were responsible for a great deal of mischief” in any given culture—culture being defined as “a set of recipes that lie just below the surface of consciousness,” as “forms” that “embodied methods, expectations, and moral beliefs about the rightness of certain acts,” a moral orientation that, “in a coherent and relatively stable culture,” individuals “not only accept” but “actually want” (34). “Identification,” then, was the perfect term to appropriate from Freudian psychoanalysis because, as Matthew Potolsky writes, Freud’s term identification “rethinks both ancient and current theories of mimesis” in that it “describes the way in which one

³¹ Rueckert’s breakdown of the formal development of *PLF* as “symbolic of Burke’s whole development,” illustrates how the essays in this book are the turning point in Burke’s development of dramatism: “The book begins with a consideration of poetry as symbolic action, and then moves to a consideration of symbolic action as drama, to all poetry as drama, to ritual drama as the essence of poetry, to ritual drama as the paradigm of all linguistic action” (128). In “reducing” all symbolic action to “its most perfect or ideal form,” Burke positions “drama as the archetype” for “human relations” (*ibid.*); it naturally follows that if drama is the “perspective [. . .] best suited to the study of language and linguistic action generally” (129), then humans must also be seen as role-players—not metaphorically, but literally. So it is logical that here, in *PLF*, is where Burke moves from the vernacular use of roles as a theoretical ground to the more explicitly theorized use of the term role that will characterize the rest of his works.

[individual] assimilates itself to another, and internalizes this role model as a pervasive ideal” (119). The Freudian self, much like the Aristotelian self, “arises from an unconscious imitation of others,” and “Selfhood and identity [. . .] comprise a mimetic amalgam of those who have influenced” the individual, and both result “from the accumulated roles we borrow from others” (ibid). In other words: “We are the people we have imitated” (ibid). For Freud there are different kinds of identifications, too: the “core” identifications that are formed in childhood, such as identifications with parents and a common culture; and the more transitory identifications that develop as we mature (Potolsky 120), including identifications with political groups and the like. But, importantly, these identifications are “subconscious,” and so, as the source of our self or our identity, which is created through “emotional bonds” (ibid.), Freud’s identification amounts to a “radical rethinking” of classical rhetorical theories of mimesis.

In Burke, such imitation becomes *the* core concept for a rhetorical theory. “Men enact roles,” Burke writes; “They change roles. They participate. They develop modes of social appeal. Even a ‘star’ is but a function of the total cast. People are neither animals nor machines [. . .] but actors and actors [. . .] **one’s identification as a member of a group is a role**, yet it is the only active mode of identification possible” (“Twelve Propositions” 310-11; bold mine).³² In this last statement, Burke is clearly no longer appealing to a merely vernacular, an even theatrically informed, sense of the term “role,” and though his use of this term will continue to evolve with time, we can see here that the idea of human beings as role-players occupies a central position in Burke’s development of the concept of rhetorical identifications.

³² It is important to note here that Burke’s definition of “identification,” as James Kastely points out, “does not mean collapsing one’s ways into the ways of another, but it means that a genuine persuasion”—and, by extension, a genuine identity—“requires the speaker to establish a common ground with the audience” (236). Roles, as the social forms for fashioning a self, are the “common ground” from which persuasion is possible because they are the substance for identification.

While Burke's theory of identification, and its relationship to persuasion, are more fully developed in *A Grammar of Motives* (GOM) and *A Rhetoric of Motives* (ROM), it is significant that earlier, in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, as Burke begins developing identification as a *rhetorical* theoretical concept, that he appeals to a role-logic to make identification intelligible. However, he does not do this as he has done in the past, through implication; now, "role" has become, explicitly, a key theoretical term: the roles we perform in relation to others *are* our identities, placing us in relation to others. And so, if identification, in Burke's thinking, is preliminary to persuasion, then roles are fundamental to persuasion, as well, and a key concept for understanding rhetorical action, because roles are the substance of identification. Social roles are the social materials that make persuasion intelligible, and even possible, because they are the source of identity.

Burke states that the "introduction of the word 'identified'" into his critical terminology is also introduced "the importance of the *name*" or title in rhetorical acts. Identifying something symbolically by "labeling" it with a name and placing the thing in relation to other things by the application of a recognizable "title," a term that authorizes the thing so named to perform a particular function within the social hierarchy—this is essentially a "problem of identity" for Burke, and, in literature as in life, "you will often find a change of identity, signaled by a change of name" which "has a variant in change of clothes, or a change of surroundings" (PLF 27). His argument here clarifies and amplifies a similar argument made in *P&C*: that an act of naming conveys *the attitude of the speaker* much more than it reveals anything inherent about the nature of the thing so named. However, by revealing a link between naming or "entitlement" as he would later playfully term it (*Language as Symbolic Action* 359), and identity or role-performance, Burke suggests not only that the act of naming reveals our "orientations," but that

an analysis of our acts of naming, and of the names with which we have been entitled, can reveal the way we *have been oriented* by our society. Take this logic a little further and we discover this: by analyzing the names with which society names persons and actions by reference to role-titles, we discover not only the orientations of society itself, but the resources through which we might navigate the hierarchies of a given sociality. We become, in a word, agents.

In *PLF*, Burke characterizes these “roles” as synonyms for “personalities” and “selves.” A self, Burke argues, is constructed through “the incorporation of [. . .] social idioms” (*PLF* 112) which are the “collective revelation” and the “social structure of meanings by which the individual forms himself” (*PLF* 108). These social idioms form the “context of situation” (111) or “the scene” in which all rhetorical action occurs: “human affairs being dramatic,” Burke writes, it follows that “the discussion of human affairs becomes dramatic criticism” (*PLF* 114).

Burke’s use of the term “role” in *PLF* is something of a counter-statement to the use of the dramatic metaphor in the social sciences, which, since the writings of George Herbert Mead in the early part of the 20th Century, had developed a “role theory” of human sociality and the human self that drew upon the theatrical, metaphorically, and conceived of human beings as “role-players.” The “error” Burke sees in the approach of social sciences, however, is their “attempt to appropriate the scenic calculus”—that is, scientific methods and motives—as a means “for charting” the essentially dramatic acts of human actors (*PLF* 114).³³ Social science’s

³³ Branaman argues that sociologists should reconsider Burke’s contributions to “the identity controversy” (443). For Burke “identity is defined in terms of social categories” and as “a *tool*” or “*critical instrument*” whereby “the critic can cunningly appropriate capitalism’s language of domination” (and, I would argue, *any* language of domination, since, as Burke argues, “hierarchy” is an impulse inherent in language itself) “towards his own ends” (444). Thus Branaman argues that, while Burke by no means resolves the debate” regarding “precisely [. . .] how identity might serve as an instrument of social critique,” he “does look at the problem of identity in a way which speaks to issues raised on both sides of the current debate” in sociology (444-45). It is significant for our discussion here that, in Branaman’s reading of Burke, “identity” becomes a “critical strategy” only if one makes their “critique [. . .] within,” and not against, “the language of the dominant culture” (449)—or, as Burke would later phrase it, to “identify” one’s “ways” with those of the other (*ROM* 55). What is missing in this attempt to reclaim Burke for sociological purposes is the very same thing that is missing in rhet/comp’s attempt to employ Burke for pedagogical

“role theory” wanted to be able to approach the person as a strictly biological organism informed by strictly biological motives—as a thing in motion rather than as a thing motivated. This approach, however, makes sociology’s use of the dramatic metaphor merely a dramatic *metaphor*. But drama, for human beings, is not merely metaphor, because humans themselves approach problems of sociality as agents informed by social ideas, and employ these ideas as resources that they use for individual purposes. For this particular biological organism, in other words, the drama of life isn’t merely metaphorical but literal: role-players are *literally* what human beings are, because society *literally* places us in relation to one another ideologically by giving us functions to perform in society. Of course, “there is an interaction between scene and role”³⁴ or personality, or self, but, for Burke, while all “verbal action” is “grounded” in the “material interests” or “material structures” that make up the “context of situation” or “historical scene” in which the drama of human relations unfolds, these material considerations are always approached symbolically for humans: the trappings of the material are always already interpreted through the complex symbolic meanings that we as symbol-using social animals, goaded by the

purposes: before identity can be used as a critical strategy, we first need a way to understand a particular culture’s language of identity, a method for seeing identities *as* critical strategies, and a way to talk about the language of identity and how it works in a particular culture. Sociological role theory, working from the “mechanistic” metaphor that Burke rejected, fails at this because it doesn’t approach persons as agents; the rhetoric of roles discussed in the next chapter, however, taking Burke’s lead, does, and attempts to reveal what the language of roles does for such agents in rhetorical terms, or how the language “acts” and how agents might act through it. The subsequent chapter, “Towards a Pedagogy of Roles,” attempts to present a method and a vocabulary for using that rhetoric in the classroom—not a method and vocabulary invented out of whole cloth, but one that employs the very terminology of identity already at work in academic and popular culture.

³⁴ Here we encounter, in a preliminary draft, the agent-scene and act-scene ratios developed more fully in *A Grammar of Motives* (GOM). However, there is one significant difference between these “ratios” as composed for the *Grammar* and the ratios as presented in the “Philosophy:” where the *Grammar* gives us an “agent”-scene ratio, “The Philosophy” gives us a “role”-scene ratio: in the earlier version, the term “role” occupies the place of Burke’s later key term, “agent.” And this is not the only example of this alteration. In a footnote, “The Philosophy” presents the term “agent” (which will become *the* umbrella term embracing all words for human being as a social actor) as subordinate to the term “role,” a kind of role that persons perform: defending his “suicidal” reading Percy Munn’s actions at the close of Robert Penn Warren’s novel *Night Rider*, Burke argues that Munn’s actions are “symbolically suicidal” because after Munn fires his gun “he languishes, sinking from the *role of agent* into a role of complete passivity” (81, *italics mine*). If, as Burke wrote earlier, “there is an interaction between the scene and the role” (PLF 114 -15), then it would seem that a “role” is something of a nexus between the scene—the “contexts of situation” (111) or “the point in history when we are born” (110)—and the “agent,” or the individual who navigates the scene by using the resources the scene provides.

spirit of hierarchy, have imposed upon those material things. “Hence, dramatic criticism takes us into areas that involve the act as ‘response’ to the scene” (*PLF* 111-12; 114-15). Burke came to the realization that we do not come to better understand humans *as humans* by analyzing them as either “animals” or “machines,” but “as actors and acters” (*PLF* 311).

This is why Burke famously calls literature “equipment for living.” By this, he means that literature’s “proverbial” nature makes it a tool with which humans “name typical, recurrent situations” (*PLF* 293) in human experience, and by which humans’ innate sociality provides formal responses to those situations—responses that, because they are formal, can be imitated. Literature is thus mimetic in nature not only because it is an “imitation” of reality, but because it is comprised of “recipes for wise living” and provides “strategies” or “attitudes” or “methods” for “dealing with *situations*” (*PLF* 293; 295-97): it provides us with methods for identification. When a “poet” (Burke’s word for creative writers generally, but a word which we can apply broadly to any writer, “literary” or otherwise) writes, Burke argues, the enactment of the role of Poet-Writer is “the enactment of a dramatic role. The poet is play-acting—and so we must not consider his work as merely a symbolization of his private problems” (*PLF* 19), but, by reading his clustering of symbols, readers may note that “there are respects in which the clusters” of symbols through which the poet operates, “(or ‘what goes with what’) are private, and respects in which they are public” (*PLF* 22). So sometimes we “get” what the poet is saying because his symbols and their meanings are of a publicly available sort, and sometimes we don’t “get it” because he uses his symbols in ways that are private or personal: we may interpret them to mean something, but we may interpret wrong. Even such private or personal symbolizations, then, are read by the Poet-Reader as though they were *meant to be* “public” in nature—even if the Poet-Reader, for her own purposes, *elects* to read and apply them privately. This lends something of

an “incantatory factor” to literature, a sense in which literature is, proverb-like, meant to “function as a device for inviting us to ‘make ourselves over in the image of the imagery’” (*PLF* 116), to change ourselves according to what is called “good” and “bad” in that literature; it calls upon us to “imitate” it by accepting its clustering of symbols as reality, as truth.

So literature³⁵ provides persons in a particular socio-historical moment with “equipment” for both comprehending and composing personalities or selves by providing a symbolic terminology of self-fashioning actions and ideas that can be imitated, or mimicked, or performed. Literature, in other words, provides roles for us to play; it shows us ways of defining relationships and selves so that we can perform those roles in own particular sociality. Burke writes that in “the work of every writer” we will find such “associational clusters [. . .] acts and images and personalities and situations” that “go with [the poet’s] notions of heroism, villainy, consolation, despair, etc.” (*PLF* 20). To accept a particular notion of heroism is to accept—or, perhaps more accurately, understand in advance—the proposition that one who acts in the ways defined as “heroic” in this particular piece of literature is what makes one a “hero” in the world that produced this piece of literature; therefore, if *I* act in such a way—even if my act is only reminiscent of the attitude named “heroic”—then I take upon myself a new self: the role of the Hero, as defined in relation to the “scene” of my historical reality. Self-fashioning, then, like literary composition, is, for Burke, *not* creation *ex nihilo*, but, essentially, generic, involving the eloquent, artful manipulation of pre-existent “forms” of self (the resources of human sociality) and the “arousing” and subsequent “fulfilling of desires” in an audience, or society (*CS* 31; 124)

³⁵ And, I would argue, it doesn’t matter if the literary “word” is written or spoken, or whether it is an actual text or a “text” composed of symbols (such as clothing) or embodied actions (such as gestures), as long as they can be interpreted as recognizable ideas, or clusters of ideas, Burke means all of these when he uses the term “literature.” Movies and paintings and sermons and political tracts and religious rituals and the beauty queen’s wave: all can potentially be considered “literature” in this respect.

in order to elicit a response from the audience that would be expected by such a performance of that form.

Third Stage: The Era of *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives*

While the *term* role fades into the background as Burke's theoretical focus turns to human beings as "agents" in *A Grammar of Motives*, the concept of roles, and humans as role-players, is not dismissed in this shift. Rather, the logic of roles continues to operate as the substance of Burke's thinking, as Burke seems now to recognize that human beings are agents *because* they are role-players. In *GOM*, as Burke shifts his focus from "role" as a key term to "agent" as *the* key term for persons dramatically engaged in a particular sociality, it is by appeals to the logic of roles introduced in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* that Burke makes this human agency intelligible.

In *PLF*, we saw Burke equate roles with both "personalities" and with the "social idioms" by which such personalities, or selves, are constructed, writing that "by the incorporation of these social idioms we build ourselves, our personalities, i.e., our *roles*" (*PLF* 112; italics in the original). We saw him appeal, as he so often does, to literature to explain himself: in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Shaw dramatizes the act of self-fashioning through the medium of roles and social idioms "in an almost terrifyingly simplified form, as we observe [Shaw's] heroine building herself a character synthetically, by mastering the insignia, the linguistic and manneristic labels of the class among whom she would, by this accomplishment, symbolically enroll herself" (*PLF* 112). However, Burke takes issue with Shaw's critique of human role-playing-as-mere-hypocrisy, calling it a "heresy" of identity-fashioning through roles, and, to emphasize this point, he presents the "counter-heresy" perpetrated by James Joyce's overly

“individualistic, absolutist, ‘dictatorial’ establishment of a language from within” exemplified in Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* (published in 1939—only 2 years before *The Philosophy of Literary Form*). Both the Shavian and Joycian “heresies” of human-identity-as-role-performance present “the isolation of one strand” of this concept of self-construction, and each develops that concept “to the point where ‘conclusion’ cannot be distinguished from ‘*reductio ad absurdum*’”—

“Shaw’s heroine, in making herself over by artificially acquiring an etiquette of speech and manners, is ‘internalizing the external’;” Joyce’s language, on the other hand, “externalizes the internal;” but both extremes lead to “an impairment of communicability” (*PLF* 112-13; 221) when communication is the very thing social roles are meant to enable.

This line of thought developed in *PLF* is not forgotten in Burke’s *A Grammar of Motives*; rather *GOM* continues to equate personality with role, and Burke’s dramatism develops this theory in such a way that one can approach the idea of man-as-performer with a more balanced, middle-road, “orthodox” approach than we find in either Shaw or Joyce—or, to put it more simply: dramatism helps us see that, while humans, in the role of role-playing-agent, *can* be hypocritical, they need not be. Again employing an example from literature (our “equipment for living”), *GOM*’s discussion of “naturalistic” writers characterizes the Naturalist’s or Realist’s tendencies towards starkness as “point[ing] up his thesis by too narrow a conception of scene as a motive-force behind his characters; and this restricting of the scene calls in turn for a corresponding restriction upon personality, or role” (*GM* 9). The Naturalist author, like the scientist, attempts to translate human motivation as solely arising from the scene in which he finds himself—but, for Burke, scenic considerations can only be part of the rationale behind

human motivation.³⁶ Indeed, human action within a scene is often a response *to* a scene, and not merely a response originating *from* the scene.

This discussion of what Burke calls “the scene-agent ratio” is designed to broaden our understanding of Burke’s role-logic within a rhetorical framework by situating the human animal not as a role-player in a metaphorical sense (like an actor in a play), but as a role-player by the very nature of its situatedness in language and sociality: the only restrictions upon personality, Burke seems to suggest, are those placed upon us by the availability of roles to perform in a particular socio-historical moment. “If” a writer “took [a] hero’s state of mind as [the] point of departure” for crafting a novel, Burke suggest, then “the whole scene” which is crafted around it “becomes a mere aspect of the role, or person (“agent”)” (*GOM* 10).

The role-rhetoric employed in *A Grammar of Motives*, then, begins to see the disparate strings of Burkean thought that have developed over the course of his works merge into a holistic theory of human motivation that is grounded in an understanding of human as agent-role-performers. That is: the relationship between human society and human motivation finds their nexus in the concept of the social role. As with actors on the stage, so with “acters” in the

³⁶ William Benoit provides some valuable insight into what we mean when we speak of “motives.” He writes that, usually, when we discuss “a motive,” what we appear to mean is “a construct that represents the complex of forces that act on agents to produce events,” or “a phenomenon that exerts a directive force that activates and shapes behavior, simultaneously providing an explanation for that behavior,” but, he argues, “there is an alternate reading of Burke’s term ‘motive’” as ideas and terms “that help coordinate human behavior, but do not cause or generate action,” or as “utterances that usually occur after actions, intended to explain, justify, characterize, or interpret those actions. Thus, motives are not cognitive, private, or situational factors that prompt, impel, create, or cause action, but are accounts, linguistic devices that function to explain, justify, interpret, or rationalize actions” (69-70). So, Benoit suggests two types of motives at work, motives he calls “motive(I)” or “an internal, cognitive motivating force, and motive(D),” or those after-the-fact expressions of motive we encounter in discourse (70). Benoit argues that it is motive(D) that rhetoricians must focus on because we have no real access to motive(I), since it is wholly internal. Thus Burke, in the opening to *GOM*, focuses on “What is involved *when we say* what people are doing and why they are doing it” and is concerned with “the *attributing* of motives (xv, italics added)” (71).

“scene” of sociality: our roles are the resources *through which* human motivation is not only cultivated by society (scene), but manifest by individuals (agents).

The logic of roles, then, continues to act as the “sub-stance” by which Burke explicates not only his key term “agent,” but dramatism more generally. To develop a practical system for understanding “what is involved, when we *say* what people are doing and why” (*GOM* xv, italics mine), Burke first (in his own words) needed to find a “representative anecdote” that would provide a “vocabulary” or a “calculus” that was “supple and complex enough to be representative of the subject-matter it [was] designed to calculate;” he needed a vocabulary with “scope,” but which “also possess[ed] simplicity, in that” it could be “a reduction of the subject-matter” (*GOM* 59-60)—that subject matter being the relationship between “personality” and “action,” “two terms” Burke writes, “that might be merged into one term, ‘role’” (*GOM* 60). The term “agent,” then, was clearly not designed to displace the term “role” in Burke’s calculus (as the shift from the role-scene ratios of *PLF* to the agent-scene ratios of *GOM* might at first seem to suggest). Rather, Burke adopts the term “agent” because it accurately represents the human situation *in terms of roles*, in that human agency is a function of roles, as Burke had already argued over the course of his works. In other words, humans are agents *not* in spite of the fact that they are role-performers, but because of it. The connotations of the term “agent” suggest the individual as “active,” as “acter,” in that “agents” are motivated beings, willful and “free;” but it also suggests the limitations inherent in our situatedness: agents are free, but also confined by circumstance—and human agents are limited in their symbolic actions by both their sociality and their physicality, by the immediate options, or performative resources, available to them in their particular version of reality. Thus the term “agent” perfectly captures the tragedy of the

human problem: we are beings of will who are free to choose, and yet we are trapped by the limited choices life presents to us.

In a given society, an individual, or a person, manifests their will through a performance of that particular society's pre-existing roles, which, as symbolic and idealized social personalities that are "a personalizing of essence," act as pre-existing categories of self or identity that enable us to participate in pre-existing types of relationship (*ROM* 13-15). Indeed, it is, again, by an appeal to a rhetoric of roles that Burke illustrates such delimitations to human agency. He writes: "the term 'agent' embraces not only all words general or specific for person, actor, character, individual, hero, villain, father, doctor, engineer, but also any words, moral or functional, for *patient*, and words for motivating properties or agents, such as 'drives,' 'instincts,' 'states of mind.' We may also have collective words for agent, such as nation, group, the Freudian "super-ego," Rousseau's '*volente generale*,' the Fichtean 'generalized I'" (*GM* 20). The key term "agent" thus refers to *the ability to select* from among the potential roles a person may perform *and the ability to act* in those roles once selected; moreover, the term both encompasses all the potentially available social roles and simultaneously can be considered a role itself because, as Burke suggested in *PLF*, it is through the performance of roles that agents "identify" themselves *as Selves*, and thus identify their relationships to other agents/role-performers, just as it is through their performance of roles that they "identify" their relationships, and thus their Selves, to themselves as individuals situated in a sociality. Each act of identification, therefore, is a "role" to be performed—a function in a relationship, a recognizable category of personality type, a social form or public space from which one can make or perform arguments, a predefined category of purpose and motive that is possible because our desires to *be someone* are aroused and fulfilled *in terms of* categorical social expectations.

“A human role,” Burke writes, “may be summed up in certain slogans, or formulae, or epigrams, or ‘ideas’ that characterize the agent’s situation or strategy,” and these “summings-up”—that is, the titles by which we name or “entitle” humans in terms of roles—“involves properties both intrinsic to the agent and developed with relation to the scene and to other agents;” that is, these role-titles are “derived from both the agent and from various factors with which the agent is in relationship” (*GOM* 511-12), including the agent’s particular social hierarchy. An agent acts, and other agents respond, by reference to the attitude ascribed to those acts by a particular role-title available to them and through which they are provided potential orientations towards those acts. For example, an agent may feel anger at not getting what they feel they are entitled to; they may call such an act “being cheated,” and call the person who performed the actions a “Cheater;” alternately, an agent may see or meet a person whose image has been celebrated in popular culture, and so they may entitle their feelings of awe and intimidation in the presence of such a celebrated person “being star-struck” and the person who inspires such feelings they may entitle “Celebrity.” An agent names the acts of some other agent based on the way they feel towards such acts, and the name selected infuses those acts with the “spirit” (to use Burke’s term) of the name, thus orienting an “audience” of hearers towards the acts, and thus to the person so named, by reference to the attitude the name itself encourages the audience to have in relation to the person and acts performed. The role-titles society provides orient us *rhetorically* in relation to one another by placing our acts, and thus our persons, on a spectrum somewhere between “acceptance” and “rejection.”

This involves us in what Burke calls the “paradox of substance.” “Substance” is the term that is “often used to designate what some thing or agent intrinsically *is*,” its essential nature (*GOM* 21); however, as Burke points, although this word is “used to designate something *within*

the thing, *intrinsic* to it, the word etymologically refers to something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it” (*GOM* 23). As Bryan Cable has written, “When we identify an entity, when we state what it is, we necessarily relate it to its context—by separating it from that which it *is not*” (“Defending Dramatism” 328). As *social* organisms, we are always already placed in relation to Other persons or things, even when the terms of slogans, formulae, epigrams, and ideas that inform that relational placement are not obvious or audible. Moreover, the terms by which we are named are, more often than not, subtle, invisible, almost imperceptible, and when we do entitle someone intentionally, such as a “Cheater” or a “Celebrity,” how we choose to entitle that Other reveals less about the innate, essential, or “substantial” nature of the thing so named than it does about the namer’s orientations and loyalties. However, even if we attempt to avoid any *explicit* acts of labeling, our actions towards others will *implicitly* entitle them, since we will perform acts *as though* we had labeled the person we are acting towards, the acts we perform revealing our orientation. Even more complexly, while we may entitle someone *explicitly* with a specific role-term such as “Cheater” or “Celebrity,” our actions may still reveal orientations that *implicitly* contradict the expected actions suggested by the explicit role-title. And we may ignore the act of entitling at all, taking an audience’s focus away from our role as Entitler by orienting our audience’s attention through actions alone, relying on the audience’s social intelligence to correctly entitle or “rightly name” the moral or ethical nature of the person being acted towards.

Subtly orienting audience attitudes towards certain acts by reference to the role-term as substance, as the referent by which we want the actors to be entitled, affirms one’s group affiliation, and thus one’s loyalties, without the namer ever having to explicitly define their identity by direct verbal reference to an affiliating or identifying title. A rhetoric of roles thus provides “a general *body of identifications*” (*ROM* 26), a method for identifying or discovering,

collecting and categorizing, personifying and understanding the *abstract* slogans, formulae, epigrams, and ideas that characterize the *rhetorical* situations and *rhetorical* strategies acceptable to a particular group. By using roles rhetorically, an individual person can identify herself or himself as a recognizable *type* of person by invoking the symbolic behaviors of that particular category of person, or by acting in a particular way towards some Other person that invokes symbolically the title by which the actor wants the audience to name the acted-towards. And since identifying one's self to others, Burke asserts, is preliminary to any act of persuasion—"You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language [. . .] *identifying* your ways with his" (*ROM* 55)—a systematic understanding of the rhetoricality of roles can help a rhetor better identify *how to identify themselves and others* by orienting the rhetor to any available sets of socially recognizable actions by which one can identify Selves in socially recognizable ways in a particular situation or relationship, and thus be more persuasive.³⁷

³⁷ Through his discussion of the paradox of substance, Crable writes, "Burke offers a critique" of the idea of language as "epistemology," or "the idea that language primarily involves representation and definition" as a method for knowing the world: while "To define something is to make a statement about the thing's essence or being, its inherent character, its *substance*," Crable writes, a particular terminology "is not simply matching verbal label and nonverbal entity," but "Definition requires the selection of a particular circumference from which the entity receives its 'intrinsic' character. This is to say that a thing is not so much *represented in* as *constituted by*" the terminology with which we choose to characterize it ("Defending Dramatism" 328). "For Burke," Crable continues, "language involves the *decreeing of substance*, the *creation of a thing's character* through its contextual placement" and he illustrates this with an example of Burke's own: "To call a man a friend or brother is to proclaim him consubstantial with oneself, one's values or purposes. To call a man a bastard"—or, perhaps more appropriately for our time, a "bigot"—"is to attack him by attacking his whole line, his 'authorship,' his 'principle' or 'motive' (as expressed in terms of the familial)" (*GOM* 57). The paradox of substance thus "highlights the paradox inherent in a representational view of language;" in doing this, Burke "rejects the idea that literal speech—and, by extension, dramatism itself—can offer an Absolute reflection of the world" (Crable 331)—and in doing this, Burke is partially responding, as he does throughout much of his work, to the critique of knowledge offered by Friedrich Nietzsche and Paul de Man. In his essay on "The Correspondence of Kenneth Burke and Paul de Man," Ethan Sproat argues that dramatism was partially an attempt to "salvage epistemological study" from Nietzsche's critique of it, which de Man also espoused, believing that "the metaphoric nature of language is aberrant" because "it sublimates 'the real' without any observable medium" (Sproat 335). This, for de Man, has "dangerous epistemological implications for conceptions of the self" (Sproat 335), and is thus of interest to this project specifically: de Man suggests that the metaphoric nature of human interaction with the world suggests "that the idea of individuation, of human subject as a privileged viewpoint, is a mere metaphor," and any knowledge humans acquire via their senses is thus "his own interpretation of the world" and nothing more than "vanity" (Sproat 335). Burke, however, places a more positive spin on the metaphorical nature of human interaction with the world, accepting the metaphoric nature of language not as "aberrant" but as "normative and the basis of all perspectives" as suggested in his essay "The Four Master Tropes" (Sproat 333; Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 503). Burke counters Nietzsche's and de Man's tragic take on

Burke's appeal to the terminology of role in the development of his dramatistic "grammar of motives" demonstrates the usefulness of dramatic criticism as a framework for analyzing the rhetorical nature of all personalities and relationships, and for revealing the social hierarchies that construct them. But Burke's appeal to roles also illustrates how a *rhetoric* of roles might serve as a commonplace for identity-fashioning in the rhetoric and composition classroom.

Composing public personas, Burke suggests, or constructing social selves, is analogous to composing fictional theatrical personalities (or characters or roles) because both social actors and

the ultimately "purposeless" nature of human intellect with the suggestion that, while the universe may have been around for eternities before us and will keep going for eternities after, "note that, for better or worse, by evolving our kind of organism, the wordless universe of non-symbolic motion is able to comment upon itself" (Sproat 335-36). By employing the framework of drama as a method for commenting on the complexity of human motivation, then, Burke's dramatism challenges Nietzsche by suggesting that "a universal perspective of epistemological reference is impossible" because "all language and thought is irreducibly and subjectively symbolic" (330); drama gives us just such a method for finding a "universal perspective" or "perspective of perspectives" (*Grammar* 512) because the dialectical form of drama suggests "the possibility of a perspective that could involve all other perspectives" and through which we could *know* the world (Sproat 330). If we understand ideas as the characters in the drama of an argument, and characters as the ideas in the argument of a drama, then "drama" is a method for placing any number of "terms" or ideas in dialectical relation to one another by re-presenting their relationships on the framework of human sociality; such an "interaction of terms upon one another" has the potential to "produce a *development* which uses all the terms" (*Grammar* 512), or to arrive at a super-perspective that provides exactly the kind of Absolute "knowledge" that Nietzsche and de Man argue is impossible—and in doing this, Burke resurrects, to a degree, the ancient agnosticism of the Sophists. "Burke," Sproat writes, "both concedes and rejects Nietzsche's and de Man's critique" of the ultimate unimportance of "human intellect and symbol use" in the world, and his concession and rejection hinges on two different definitions of the term *world*: in one sense, "world" refers to "the non-symbolic environment in which humans as symbol using animals find themselves" or the literal world "that goes around the sun," what Sproat refers to as "world-in-motion," in another sense, however, "*world* is the collection of human society in general," or all those Others to whom each Individual is placed in relation to by virtue of the fact that he or she is in the "world" and human—this world Sproat calls "world-in-action," and this world of human sociality, Sproat argues, doesn't actually exist without human symbols, "for intellect and symbol use are the very stuff out of which the world-as-action is made" (336). Yet, while "dramatism"—or what might be defined as socially motivated action between socially-constructed persons—is ontological, or the way persons exists in the world, Burke "salvages epistemology via the most complete form of perspective he calls dialectic—the 'perspective of perspectives'" (Sproat 337). Dramatism thus employs the vocabulary of drama because the human *being* engages with the other human beings in the world *mimetically*, by re-presenting the things of the world-as-motion via symbols in the world-as-action; because we come to *know* the world-as-motion through the world-as-action, "the pursuit of universal epistemology should concern itself with replicative, rather than applicative, perspectives," and "If a particular perspective has a necessary component that induces replication, such a perspective will be better suited to account for other perspectives. It would be, in a word, dialectic" (Sproat 337). And drama is just such a framework for dealing in multiple—and potentially endless—perspectives. Indeed, it could be argued that the "drama of human relations" is the Ur-drama that humanity is enacting, not metaphorically but literally, to arrive at knowledge; thus the metaphor "all the world is a stage" is both ontological *and* epistemological, both literal and metaphorical: we are literally enacting a metaphor through which we are discovering knowledge of what it is to *be*. Dramatism thus suggests that human existence-as-sociality is the ultimate play, while the term "drama" is the ultimate play-on-words.

stage actors appeal to recognizable sets of behavior—“kinds” or “types” or “classes” of symbolic action (*ROM* 115, 143, 163, 177)—in order to make their performances recognizable to their audiences. To say this another way: social agents appeal to commonly understood “substances,” or contexts of situation, to make their mimetic reality intelligible. Just as each character in any work of drama, even the “star,” is but a “function of the cast as a whole” (*PLF* 310), so it is in “real” relationships: each Self in that relationship is but a function of the relationship itself, in that a Self is defined by reference to the body of identifications made available by our particular society in our particular historical moment *for communicating one’s Self in a relationships such as this*.

And as with drama, where certain types of character become character *types*, so with the drama of social relations: certain sets of socially recognizable acts become associated with certain types of social agents, giving individual persons a social character as they act in relation to others in that society. As these types develop over time, they become resources (“agencies” in Burke’s terminology) for social performers to construct or compose recognizable social selves or personas, which they construct for themselves through the performance of typical actions, and selves they construct for others by application of those terms. These types, then, become resources for the creation of “identity,” for the fashioning of self and character. And, borrowing the terminology of the stage drama, these categories of persona that inform the expectations and responses of others in the social drama are called “roles.”

Like Burke, however, we do not employ this terminology metaphorically; it is literal: individual social actors are *literally* parts of a whole in terms of their social identity. And the vernacular term “role” having long since lost the theatrical connotations of its origins, it makes it all the more useful for describing actors in the social drama than it might otherwise be. In

vernacular use—and therefore, in Burke’s role-rhetoric and in the role-rhetoric we find in rhet/comp studies generally—the term “role” suggests not a specific fictional character or character type, but, more precisely, the *character* of the character, its function or job as grounded in a sense of social action. To refer to anything’s “role” is to refer to its job or function in a larger complex system. Thus Burke’s use of the term role corresponds to the Cicero’s use of the term “office” (a term that is largely impractical in modern vernaculars) and, in the same way that the term “office” placed persons in terms of expected action within the larger symbol-system of Republican Roman sociality, an appeal to roles in modern Western vernacular places things in relation to other things by virtue of their ideologically-informed purpose or function in relation to other actors or agents in a particular system, as well.

What this means for students of rhetoric is this: social roles can be commonplaces for rhetorical invention. Once sets of action can be “personified” in terms of human classes, or recognizable categories of human personality, and classified in such a way that the particular category provides real flesh-and-blood persons with a recognizable function, or role, to perform in that particular system of relationships (that is: it characterizes them as *types* of persons in *types* of relationships doing *types* of things in a *type* of system) those personified types become resources for composing identities within that system, resources for seeing what rhetorical strategies one *should use* to communicate or fashion a self in a situation—if, that is, a person is aware of the *idea of roles* as a resource for self-fashioning. A rhetoric of roles for composition and rhetoric classrooms, therefore, must be designed to provide a lens through which students can see a given social system’s symbolic vocabulary or terminology of available performances for composing identities, and for identifying such things as intention, authority, motive,

character, relations, attitudes, values, etc. *through rhetorical strategies*, stylistically. A rhetoric of roles, fashioned on the logic presented by Burke, can do that.

To make students rhetorical *agents* first requires helping students see the relationship between one's roles and the act of persuasion. In *A Rhetoric of Motives (ROM)*, in which Burke illustrates how the grammar developed in *GOM* might be employed, both the term "role" and the concept of roles are used repeatedly to illuminate the "mystery" of the relationship between identification and persuasion,³⁸ especially in Burke's conclusion that "the relation between

³⁸ See, for example, Burke's discussion of Milton's "poetic reenactment of Samson's role" (5); his discussion of "essence," which argues that role-terms appeal to a logic of an essential nature to define the character of a "person's individual identity in terms of" an originating essence (such as we see in the term "bastard," an en-role-ment in terms of parentage) or in terms of the thing's potential end, "fulfillment," "fruition," or "perfection:" "instead of calling him 'a criminal by nature,' you say 'he will end on the gallows.' [. . .] In either choice (the ancestral or the final) the narrative terminology provides a *personalizing* of essence" in that "depicting a thing's *end* may be a dramatic way of identifying its *essence*" by characterizing it in terms of a perfect ideal (13-17). In his discussion of identification, Burke's repeated appeals to a role-rhetoric often define "properties" or "the resources each has at his command," as well as "autonomous" or "intrinsic" identifications, as when one is "motivated" by reference to some "specialized activity:" science "educators" become "conspirators" in the pursuit of federal funds to improve science education, while "the shepherd, *qua* shepherd" protects the sheep in order to prepare them for slaughter and the market, so we are "in the region of rhetoric when considering the identifications whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class" (26-28). To explain how such "autonomous" categories do not create a categorical division of moralities, Burke again appeals to role-rhetoric: "one's morality as a *specialist* cannot be allowed to do one's duty as a *citizen*" because "a specialty at the service of sinister interests will itself become sinister" (31, *italics mine*). When theorizing "self-deceptions" as a sort of identification used to "protect an interest merely by using terms not incisive enough to criticize it properly," Burke writes: "A misanthropic politician" plays-up a "mankind-loving" façade in order to get the votes needed to position himself to do good: "Whatever the falsity of overplaying a role, there may be honesty in the assuming of that role itself" (36). He also appeals to role-logic when theorizing the role or "function" of terms *as terms* in rhetorical acts (44). His discussion of ancient rhetoric focuses on the "role" of the orator, with rhetoric as an art as the education and the activity of the orator (49-55), that by which the orator is able to perform his "offices" (especially 70, 73-74, 76-77). The "titles" that en-role persons—such as "mother"—"body-forth" a particular "principle" by providing a term that encapsulates "ideas and images both" (86-87), and Burke's focus on Bentham's "resentful" discussion of such "archetypes," defined as "the images that underly (sic) the use of abstraction," (including "the linguistic device whereby, when the king is meant, we say instead the Crown or the Throne; instead of churchman, the Church or the Altar; instead of lawyers, the Law; instead of a judge, the Court; instead of rich men, Property") necessarily appeal to a role-rhetoric (90-91), as does his discussion of the Marxist "division of labor" which leads to a "cleavage of society into different social and economic classes" and, thus, a multitude of roles and titles (105-06). Burke writes that *The German Ideology* "pictures man under communism" as "a Jack-of-all-trades" that never defines himself by a single role, such as "hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic" because he is constantly shifting roles at will (109). The logic of roles illuminates Burke's discussion of Carlyle and the "mystery" of social order (115-116, 288), and, in particular, the subject of "vestments" of authority (118-22, 211-12), as well as the "magic of the hierarchical order itself" (124, 210, 264, 279-85; see also 306-307, 312, 332-33), themes Burke continually approaches through role-logic, as when he discusses hierarchy in general, Diderot, and La Rouchefoucauld (137; 142-44; 147-48); his appeal to the role-term "hero" (a noun) to illustrate how "abstract ideas" such as "justice" might "disclose their meaning more fully if we treat them realistically as *verbs*" rather than as "*weakened images*" (152); his discussion of Pascal's adoption of roles in his writings (157); and his extended discussion of Machiavelli's "Administrative" rhetoric (158-166); and

‘identification’ and ‘persuasion’” is grounded in the fact “that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications” (*ROM* 46). Persuasion for Burke is “communication” that occurs not so much between “this entity and that entity” as between “*this kind of entity and that kind of entity*” (*ROM* 176-77); it, therefore, involves the artful, resourceful crafting of a self that has authority in a particular situation, and such authority is invoked by fashioning one’s self, through symbolic actions, so that those actions appeal to the socially available type or category of person and personality that would have authority in one’s particular relationship.

In other words: persuasion is a function of role-performance. The enactment of socially recognizable sets of personifiable categories of social action allows the Other (the “Audience”) to name the rhetor, either explicitly or implicitly, by reference to that socially recognizable type or “class” of person (*ROM* 49, 55, 70, 73, 75, 250). Such “entitlement” allows the audience to know how they can respond to the rhetor. This, perhaps, is what Walter Ong meant when he said that a writer needs to pick up a voice and an audience with it: the performance of an identity not only allows the audience to identify the rhetor as “one of us,” but allows them to place the rhetor *among us* in a hierarchical sense (*ROM* 86, 115-23, 136-45, 152-53, 205, 210).

Roles being nothing more or less than the vocabulary of selves in a society, therefore, the rhetoric of roles should be central to rhetorical pedagogy—which returns us to the idea of

his discussion of the hierarchical logic of courtship, illustrated through analyses of Shakespeare. Burke explores the sexual roles provided by the poem *Venus and Adonis* as representative of “classes” of person (209; 212-216), and by the psychoanalytical terms for sexual roles, which he discusses later (279-85; see also 301-304). This logic of roles-in-courtship expands in Burke’s extended discussion of the role of the “courtier” in courtly and post-courtly relationships via Castiglione and Kafka, (221-44, esp. 223, 225-29, 230, 232, 233, 234-35, footnote on 236, 237, 238, 239, 240). He appeals to role-rhetoric again in his rebuttal to Kierkegaard’s self-serving use of the Isaac myth: Burke defines roles such as “father,” “only son,” and “sacrifice” as something like Aristotelian “topics,” as “places” from which God could persuade Abraham about the principle of sacrifice (252-53, 260-62). Burke also does this in his explications of the rationalizations of the Christ sacrifice (255, 266, 328). Then there is his reference to the actor/audience relationship as approaching “pure persuasion” (270, 282, 285-86), and his discussion of “god” and the “god-term” as the “ultimate” in “dialectical tendencies,” where Burke personifies language’s “temptation” towards an “ultimate transcendence” of “brute objects,” or the material world, in the title-term “God” because “a god unites generalization with personification” (276-77, 298-301, 331-332), a theme, and the use of role-logic to explicate it, that is revisited in Burke’s analysis of the eighteenth chapter of the Apocalypse of John (291-93).

literature, and social education, as “mimetic” in nature: in “The Language of Poetry ‘Dramatistically’ Considered,” one of the essays that would have made up Burke’s unpublished *Symbolic of Motives* (SM), the concluding volume of his “Motivorum,” Burke considers the ironic centrality of *mimesis* to the development of “individuality.” While accepting the translation “imitation” for the Greek word *mimesis*, Burke points out some ways the word “imitation” can “mislead” us in understanding what *mimesis* actually entails, and he suggests several other terms that help “loosen up” the concept of *mimesis*: “*miming* of an action,” “ritual figuring of an action,” “stylizing of an action,” and “symbolizing” of an action (SM 6-7). Clearly, for Burke, *mimesis* suggests something significantly more complex than the overly simplistic connotations in the term “imitation.” Rather than being a term for an inferior copy and a rote imitation, *mimeses* suggests a process of development and maturation through the performance of prescribed roles that teach a person how to *be* in a given situation, that provide an answer to the question: “What am I to do?”

Imitation or modeling continues to be an important pedagogical tool in composition, but Burke’s expanded definition of imitation illustrates why a rhetoric of roles is necessary to rhetorical education: to “imitate” for the purposes of becoming one’s own person requires first a sense of “human types” that can be understood in categorical terms, types that are associated with specific, recognizable sets of action, the performance of which communicate to others the “type” of person we want to be recognized as. The type, as an ideal, presents a model of “perfection” that can direct rhetorical actors, informing us when we are “straying from the path,” so to speak. As we perform our roles in relation to others, Burke argues, we develop our personalities through *mimesis* and towards *entelechy*, which Burke defines as “the idea that a given kind of being fully ‘actualizes’ itself by living up to potentialities natural to its *kind*” (8,

bold and italics mine).³⁹ “Given the full range of human characters and situations,” Burke writes, “there [is] not merely the entelechial imitating of man’s noblest potentialities *qua* man” but “the actualizing of human types within the species” (*SM* 10). Thus, “Human personality is not just ‘pure.’ It is formed with reference to social roles” (*SM* 43).

The concept of human agency is only intelligible for Burke by an appeal to roles because social roles both define and delimit the “agent-ness” of humans as social beings. Humans, Burke suggests, are only agents insofar as they are given roles to perform—that is, to “imitate”—in relation to other persons who are also performing or imitating complementary roles. This is what human sociality *is*; this is the ur-situation of all rhetorical situations, the “ultimate situation” which characterizes all human situated-ness, and thus all human motivation.

Conclusion

Burke’s appeal to the concept of roles has far-reaching implications for the use of roles as a commonplace in rhetorical pedagogy. Because “roles” (as both terms and ideas) define and delimit human action, they are also, potentially, resources for human performance—that is: because they define performance, they can also be used to direct performance. Because they are

³⁹ Burke’s discussion of “perfection” is often seen as a rejection of the concept of perfection since “perfection” is so often misused; however, I think he intended us not to abandon the concept of perfection, or of ideals, but to think more complexly, and more humbly, about them. His discussion of *entelechy*—of the process of reaching towards perfection—is unappetizing for modern audiences partly, I think, because we live in a post-Christian, post-religious age and are still trapped between the optimistic rock of that seemingly unattainable Messianic command—“be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect” (The Holy Bible, Matt 5.48)—and the pessimistic hard-place of Materialist ideology suggested by the pop-artist Sting’s proverbial plaint: “to search for perfection is all very well, but to look for heaven is to live here in hell” (“Consider Me Gone”). This, however, is merely the presentation of two extremes, and the concept of perfection can have varied meanings. Every culture has ideals that direct action: Aristotle’s virtues were different from Cicero’s, which were different from Jesus’s, and Luther’s, and Jefferson’s, and Marx’s; but the need for ideals remained because they operate, to use Woodruff’s metaphor, as a “north star:” we don’t follow it to reach it so much as to ensure we don’t get lost on our journey (*First Democracy* 18). While, as Clark Rountree argues, the “perfect” wife in Taliban Pakistan and the “perfect” wife in Baptist Alabama are two very different conceptions of “perfection,” and the process of entelechy involved in each would be vastly different (“Revisiting the Controversy over Dramatism as Literal”), the abstract ideal suggest by the term “Good Wife” still informs the actions and responses of actors in that particular sort of relationship, just as such abstract ideals inform the actions of actors in *all* relationships, including writer and reader relationships.

the stuff from which we form our personalities, the “types within the species” by which we “identify” ourselves in relation to others; and because the terms by which we name or “entitle” roles provide us with “orientations” and “occupations” that define us as selves in relation to other selves within a particular social system; and because these role-titles themselves suggests sets of actions that are nameable in personal terms that “frame” us and others for acceptance or rejection—because of all these things, theorizing roles within the framework of rhetoric and composition pedagogy, and doing so in a way that makes the concept of social roles practical within rhetorical pedagogy, has the potential to make rhetoric more intelligible to students of rhetoric, and thus to make rhetorical pedagogy more effective.

Potentially, developing a method for effectively naming rhetorical roles so that the names with which we name them suggest the type of relationship a rhetor is entering into can help students of rhetoric and composition more artfully select among the situationally-available rhetorical strategies in order to fashion a self that would be most effective as a “response” to the particular situation. For composition pedagogy, specifically, this would involve naming the roles and relationships that students are most likely to find themselves in as Academic Writers, and to do so in a way that would teach them naming as something of an art form, making a rhetoric of roles a practical tool not only for navigating the demands of academia, but for navigating the rhetorical waters of everyday life.

“Insofar as situations are typical and recurrent in a given social structure,” Burke tells us, “people develop names for them and strategies for handling them. Another name for strategies might be *attitudes*” (*PLF* 296-97). Just as the various literary forms (epic, tragedy, comedy, satire, lyric, the grotesque) suggest types of situations and present types of strategies for dealing with them, there must also be corresponding social forms to embody the situations and strategies

that are recurrent in the rhetorical classroom, and a way to talk about those situations that would help students better understand the roles they are called upon to perform in academic situations. Moreover, making the idea of roles a resource, or commonplace, for composing student selves in first year composition makes the idea of roles available for students to discover and compose selves in other rhetorical situations, as well, not only in academia, but outside of the classroom. The idea thus becomes a resource students can transfer from situation to situation, a critical lens through which they can see how rhetoric works in different situations: students can take the idea of roles and use it as a critical lens for looking at all rhetorical situations in order to discover and use the means of identification and persuasion available in *particular* situations more effectively.

By examining Burke's evolving appeal to the concept of roles, this chapter provides a foundation for doing just that: for employing the logic of roles to better understand how rhetoric in general works. From *Counter-Statement*, where the concept appears in embryo, to Burke's unfinished *A Symbolic of Motives*, Burke's idea of humans as role-players (or, perhaps, more accurately, role-performers, where "play" is conceived of as a subset of performance), and of human action as "dramatic" (both metaphorically and actually), as well as his use of the concept of role as a means of typifying both human actors and human action, help us see better the "dialectical" nature of human sociality, and to the place of roles in understanding and participating in that dialectic: roles are the resources society provides for "self-fashioning;" they are our "equipment for living" within particular types of situations as particular types of person in relation to other types of person within particular symbol systems. The logic of roles, then, is essential to understanding the logic of rhetoric, and, as it was in the development of Burke's critical method, "role" can become a key critical concept in our students' evolving understanding of themselves, and of society, as rhetorical.

CHAPTER 3: Towards a Rhetoric of Roles

Contemporary rhetoric and composition theory already appeals, if only vernacularly, to role-logic. The evolution of Kenneth Burke's role-rhetoric during the development of dramatism provides a "calculus" to help us theorize (or see what is happening in) a vernacular role-rhetoric so we can make role-rhetoric more practical in rhetoric and composition pedagogy. This chapter, now, seeks to make the terminology of roles a practical and valuable component of rhetorical pedagogy, and to do this, the role-rhetoric currently employed in rhet/comp discourse must be more rigorously theorized into an actual *rhetoric* of roles. By "*a rhetoric*," Barry Brummett explains, rhetorical scholars "usually mean one or more of three non-exclusive ideas," including: 1.) "a handbook or guide for *practice*" which provides "improved *performance*;" 2.) "a *theory* of how persuasion works" which provides "improved *systematic understanding* of how rhetoric works in the world;" 3.) "a *critical method* of analysis" or "techniques of noticing" which provide "improved *focused understanding*, or *appreciation*, of particular rhetorical events or [. . .] *types* of events" (116). This chapter deals primarily with the second and third areas of Brummett's definition, while the subsequent chapter—"Towards a Pedagogy of Role"—will develop a "guide for practice," presenting some ideas for how to use a rhetoric of roles in a typical composition classroom.

As we have already seen, rhet/comp theorists (including, but not limited to, Ong, Ede and Lunsford, Booth, Britton, and early Burke) employ a vernacular terminology of roles in quasi-theoretical ways. However, without an express theory of how role-rhetoric improves our understanding of how rhetoric works, and without a theory of how role-logic is rhetorical, these theorists fail to make the concept of role itself practical for rhetoric and composition pedagogy. Their use of a role-rhetoric *suggests* how one might use this idea as a resource for rhetorical

analysis and invention, but they do not follow through on their suggestion and actually *develop a practical theory*. Our analysis of Burke's development towards a more theoretically rigorous use of the term "role" helps us see not only that such a theory is needful (as he seemed to develop one himself—at least one that worked in the background of his ideas), but Burke's evolution in his use of role-rhetoric helps us see what the vernacular role-rhetoric *does*, what makes it symbolically useful, and thus what makes it rhetorical in the first place. By so doing, Burke's role-rhetoric shows us how an actual *rhetoric* of roles, or rhetorical role theory, might improve our understanding of rhetoric in general. It also suggests some ways in which we might use a role-rhetoric more methodically to improve our students' understanding of the rhetorical nature of identity, and how we might use it to improve the practice of rhetoric in the rhet/comp classroom with a more theoretically focused emphasis on self-fashioning in acts of invention.

It is human nature, Burke suggests, to conceptualize individual persons categorically or in terms of class, as *types* of persons; we do this, he asserts, by reference to the sets of socially recognizable actions such *types* of persons are expected to perform in particular *types* of relationships or situations—that is: by reference to the socially constructed category of person the individual fits into (*GOM* 511). Role-titles symbolize those publicly pre-existing identities that persons in a given socio-historical moment can occupy in order to make arguments, and social roles, themselves, are, in effect, publicly designated spaces from which persons can operate because, for each "role" that a society provides, there are expectations and authorities attached to the functional identity composed by that role. All of the acts that a person performs in a given situation, taken together as a set, thus suggest the "role" the person is performing in that particular situation. These recognizable sets of acts, and the various titles for them, function to socially identify a person by reference to a shared symbol system, or intellectual commons,

which makes such action intelligible in the first place. These acts, in other words, provide an individual with an intelligible Self *through which* the individual can actually communicate. And when we speak, vernacularly, of the “role” of a particular thing in a particular system, naming it according to the term or title for that particular “role,” other, complementary roles, and the relationships between those roles within that particular system, are also suggested by that role-title. *All* of them. But they are *only* suggested. Discovering those roles, and understanding the relationships between them and the ideological orientations of the system to which they pertain, are the work of analysis—but that analysis cannot be undertaken without a program and a vocabulary for doing so.

And this is why I have referred to the current use of role-rhetoric in rhetoric and composition as “quasi-theoretical:” because it lacks a program and a vocabulary. The vernacular concept works merely as a short-hand way to ground rhetorical action in real-world sociality based on a readily accessible context for expressing rhetorical action in personal terms; it does *not* provide an understanding of why this role-rhetoric does what it does, of why it is useful in the first place, or how to use it. Therefore, just as abstract terms like “coherence” and “precision” appear useful in “isolation” (Connors 293) but lack the ideologically “context” necessary to make such terms useful as a guide for writing, so too with the uncritical use of role-rhetoric in contemporary rhetoric and composition studies: it fails to make the concept of roles a manageable, practical tool for rhetorical analysis and invention—not simply because it is abstract, but because it fails to provide a method for contextualizing its abstraction.

Even Burke’s appeal to role-rhetoric, which employed the concept more theoretically than perhaps any other rhetorical scholar, does not, in-and-of itself, make the idea of roles a practical tool for analysis and invention because it doesn’t theorize the concept explicitly. Burke

appeals to the concept, yes, and clearly the idea of humans as role-performers is a key theoretical concept for understanding “dramatism,” but Burke doesn’t leave rhetorical theory with anything more than a sense of the concept’s potential, nor does he explain what makes the term “role” itself useful as a method for seeing, in particular situations, the available means of persuasion and identification. The term which drives his theory, in other words, is not, itself, expressly theorized.

However, even though Burke’s appeal to role-rhetoric doesn’t provide “a handbook or guide for *practice*,” as I illustrated in my last chapter, it does suggest a theory, and suggests what, theoretically, the idea of humans as role-players reveals about “how persuasion works.” Burke’s role-rhetoric suggests that an *actual rhetoric* of roles might provide “improved *systematic understanding* of how rhetoric works in the world,” and, therefore, it suggests some ways that role-logic might be used, systematically, as “a *critical method* of analysis” that provides “techniques of noticing” and “improved *focused understanding*, or *appreciation*, of particular rhetorical events or [. . .] *types* of events” (Brummett 116).

Based on what we have thus far discovered regarding the role-rhetoric employed in rhetoric and composition studies generally, and in Burke specifically, I submit three ways that a rhetoric of roles would provide improved *systematic understanding* of how rhetoric works, and improved *focused understanding* of rhetoric in particular situations. These are: 1.) the way a role-rhetoric personifies sets of rhetorical action through acts of naming or “entitlement,” and the social orientations, and social relationships, such names invoke; 2.) how, by doing this, a role-rhetoric foregrounds the relational aspects of rhetorical situations, in that it characterizes rhetorical situations primarily as relationships between persons, or as symbolic relationships between recognizable *types* of persons who perform recognizable sets of action in relation to

other, recognizable *types* of persons; 3.) the fact that, by providing a framework for self-fashioning that is rooted in recognizable, named sets of interpersonal action, a role-rhetoric provides a method of self-fashioning by reference to these role-terms, the role-terms acting as framing mechanisms for selecting among rhetorical strategies in order to fashion rhetorical identities that can persuade (or “act together”) through identifications. By focusing on these three components of role-rhetoric, we can begin to see how a rhetoric of roles might be used as a commonplace for rhetorical invention, one that will help rhetors discover a sense of agency in any given rhetorical situation; and, perhaps most importantly, provide a new understanding of “persuasion” as a function of role performances.

The Role of Entitlement

First, role-rhetoric helps us to see that the terms we use to name persons and situations matters: there is a relationship between the name or title by which we call a person or thing, and the actions and expectations we have for them, or the things we expect that person or thing to *do*. Exemplary of this is Burke’s analysis of the “Role of the President” in the “Constitutional” situation of U.S. politics. The situation this office presents is a sort of “problem”—namely, to discover a “happy” unity among the many “contradictory motives” at work in the body politic. Thus, despite the “constitutional” limitations on his actions, the *role* of President is still very much “like that of any ruler,” in that he must “find some unitary principle from which all his major policies may consistently radiate” (*GOM* 391). No matter the individual inhabiting the office, the “audience” (which includes the citizens of the United States, other elected officials, and other world leaders) responds to the acts of that individual based on how successfully he or

she embodies the ideal suggested *to them* by the name or title “President,” or by how well that person conforms to the expectations of the office “entitled” by the term.

The role itself then, and how it places the person so named in relation to those he acts in relation to, becomes the motive for presidential action: the President is expected to “preside,” and while the terms for both the office and the acts are vague and abstract, they are still the definitive terms by which the actor or performer will be judged. Indeed, it is the very abstraction of the terms that makes the role-title useful as a tool for identity creation: while the term “preside” (and thus the role of Preside-ent) is more complicated than either of these terms, taken “in isolation” (as Connors phrased it), might seem to suggest superficially, *all* sides of the political spectrum, and all *historical periods* for which these terms are ideologically significant, will appeal to the terms (referencing both public and personal definitions) to argue their individual and group critiques of a particular president’s performance as President.

The terms, in other words, are malleable, or transferable from situation to situation, *because they are abstract*. While the title may represent a generally accepted placement in a particular social hierarchy, the role-title itself (necessarily limited in scope and capable of myriad definitions by a variety of audiences) will still be the reference to which all parties will make their appeals—not despite the term’s abstract nature, but because of it. As the identity that lends authority for certain actions, it is necessarily abstract if it is to act as the commonplace from which arguments will be composed and personified.

This reveals what may appear to be a problem with our current rhetoric of roles—indeed, with any theory of roles: the terms we use to “en-role” persons and things are *necessarily* abstract. Contrary to the claims of current-traditional rhetoric, that’s a good thing for students. . . if we don’t make it a bad thing. As I argued previously, the abstractness of role-terms is not

unlike the abstractness of the ancient rhetorical terms⁴⁰ that, according to Robert Connors, composition studies rightly abandoned in the 19th Century because terms such as “Coherence and Precision in isolation [. . .] may seem useful and even genuinely descriptive, but only because of the informed interdependence that exists” in the minds of the teachers trained in a certain way of reading such terms—a training that students “very seldom possess” (293). Without some “informed interdependence” or common understanding to give those terms context, role-terms, too, are impractical tools for identity-fashioning, as illustrated by my discussion of the role-rhetoric employed in contemporary rhetoric and composition discourse. Abstractions can only be understood by reference to a shared ideological orientation, and so role-titles “in isolation” are as likely to lead us astray as they are to direct us rightly. But this is no reason to abandon such terms; rather, it’s an invitation to direct our pedagogy in particular ways: the terms themselves can serve as commonplaces for investigation, and through analysis and discussion of those abstract terms, the terms themselves will become more concrete *in terms of the immediate situation*. Through this kind of discussion and analysis, abstractions become the lenses through which students discover the specifics of context that give those terms their power.

In the opening weeks of my freshman composition classes, students are required to compose a welcome page for their electronic portfolios, and to develop, in consultation with me, a research agenda for the semester. About two weeks in, each student gives a short presentation to the class, introducing both themselves and their research agenda to the other students. One semester, in the fall 2012, as I was implementing some of my research on role theory into the

⁴⁰ The abstractness of role-titles may also provide a method by which we can reclaim the abstractness of old rhetoric, as well: the arguments I make here concerning the good and bad of the abstract terms of role-rhetoric can also apply to terms such as “clarity” and “unity” and “cohesion,” which have fallen into disuse: rather than reject them wholesale, discussing what these terms mean and the fact that they can mean different things in different situations can help students transfer such terms, and the ideas that they represent, to different situations: they become commonplaces for knowing how to look at rhetorical situations, starting points for deciding what to look for when composing.

classroom, I introduced the term “professional” as a key concept for students’ classroom performances. “I want you to be consummate professionals” I told them, “so, with every act you perform in these presentations, the one thing you want to embody more than anything else is the role of the Professional—whatever that means to you.” To give them an idea of how to act as “Professionals,” I showed my students a handful of TED talks, and we discussed the elements of those presenters’ performances that made them not only interesting and inspiring, but which told us that these were “Professionals.”

What I *didn’t* do, however, was lead my students in a discussion of discovery; I failed to help my students analyze these roles and discover the interdependence between actor, scene, acts, purpose, and means (i.e.: the points of the dramatistic pentad). I failed to help students see how and why certain kinds of rhetorical acts (such as stylistic choices, vocabulary, etc.) communicate the role of “Professional,” or how the idea of “Professional” is different in different situations (TED is not, after all, a conference of regional Baskin-Robbins managers). Of course, I had no rigorously theorized *rhetoric* of roles to use in order to inform such a discussion and analysis, so my students received the role-term “Professional” in theoretical isolation—and the results were, by and large, less spectacular than I had hoped for (but, honestly, just about what one would expect). Of course, this wasn’t the student’s fault: the students had no framework through which to determine the context for the role-term “Professional” in the particular situation into which I had placed them.

I admit, the activity was highly experimental, in that I gave my students very little direction as to what I expected from their self-presentations other than a handful of equally abstract and isolated terms: “scholarly persona,” “professional attitude,” and the like—but I was experimenting, and wanted to see what my students would do if they were only given the *title* of

a role to perform, with little direction other than that term to “entitle” their actions. However, in doing so, I inadvertently discovered the core of the problem with role-rhetoric specifically, and with abstractions generally, the same problem that, according to Connors, nineteenth-century composition teachers began to discover was a problem with the classical topics of invention: the idea of a role, itself, and access to a role-title, is not just too abstract to be of use as a means of invention for the student, but it is too abstract *because* it is both too far outside their realm of student experience, and too situationally determined. Without discussing the role of the Professional theoretically in order to reveal the relationships between the role-title, the role as an identity-fashioning resource, and the rhetorical strategies (such as stylistics) that invoke or convey that role in particular situations, how were my students supposed to know what rhetorical strategies would accurately communicate professionalism, especially in terms of a Professional Academic?

Most of my students, unsurprisingly, put little effort or thought into their presentations—not that I blame them: at the time, I was still struggling myself with how to use the concept of roles as an effective pedagogy, and so fell back into an overly *theatrical* understanding of role-performance that probably hindered more than helped the majority of my students.

However, just as Burke argued: “drama” can provide an effective way to think about rhetorical and social action. The vast majority of my students fell back on self-fashioning strategies they were familiar with when confronted with the kind of role-ambivalence and uncomfortable self-dissonance that I thrust upon them by demanding they perform a wholly unfamiliar role (Landy 246-47), but one student did not. While most students ended up performing the persona they had always performed in writing (what might be called the High School Student), one student “dramatized” a Professional “self” in a very “theatrical” way.

This student began by telling the other students that “Professor Robertson” had asked him to come into the classroom and speak to them about his area of research. He brought up his welcome page, which was a straight-up imitation of the faculty webpages we had looked at as models, and he used this page to focus his discussion of his past research. The assignment had explicitly instructed students to avoid referring to themselves as students (an instruction very few students followed), so as this student mentioned his “previous research,” he made no mention that all of it had been done during his senior year in high school or in previous college classes; he simply segued from previous research to the impetus for his current research agenda on education, arguing for the need to refine classroom practices to better serve the needs of the rising generation of students and scholars.

It is important to note here that, despite the theatricality of his approach, this student was not an actor or theater student: he was a business major. It is also important to note that he was not performing a “character” in the sense that he presented a Self fundamentally at odds with the “core-self” or person the students would all come to know as the semester progressed. Rather, this student simply took the *idea* of the role of the Professional and allowed that term to direct him in all of his rhetorical choices—including word choice, tone, attitude, etc.

The students were completely fooled.

I might have said “persuaded,” but I want to make, at least theoretically, a distinction between “persuasion” and “being fooled:” the former is an act of agency, an “acting together,” as Burke defined it, and the result of an artful exposure to facts and reasons; the latter results from an act of hypocrisy, and is accomplished through an artful *withholding of information* on the part of a rhetor. The ability to “fool” others is, at least partially, what caused rhetoric (as a means of engaging with and understanding the world) to fall into disrepute. “Persuasion,” however—the

art of acting together through role-performances—is not an act of theatre and hypocrisy (or, at least, it doesn't have to be).⁴¹ While, in a few moments of public speaking before a none-the-wiser audience, my student was able to present himself as a professional academic (it was, after all, only a few days into the semester, and so too early for the students to know each other well, the perfect time for the students to be easily “fooled” into believing that the student was none other than the person he claimed to be), I suspect it would be a very different thing for the student to convince a group of actual scholars that he was a Scholar, if for no other reason than the fact that actual scholars, while they may have taken his word at face value initially, eventually would have required more than merely his word that he was a scholar. In other words: to pretend a role is one thing, to perform a role is quite another.

Many of the scholars in rhetoric and composition who employ the theatrical metaphor to characterize the rhetorical world view—such as Richard Lanham, who argues for a theatrical conception of “rhetorical man” as “fundamentally a role player” (*Motives of Eloquence* 4), and Meredith Love, who, like Sheldon George and Thomas Newkirk, argues that we need to be teaching students the concept of “the writer-as-character” (13) and who argues that “what we should be teaching these students is *acting*” (22)—while none of these theorists is incorrect, exactly, each does fail to make clear (within rhetorical context) the significantly distinct connotations between the terms “theater” and “performance” that performance scholars such as Victor Turner and Richard Schechner have made, a distinction that contemporary composition scholars, such as Della Pollock, Jenn Fishman, and Ryan Claycomb have also adopted. While the

⁴¹ This assertion returns us to our discussion, in the introduction, regarding Burke's definition of “dramatism” as literal and not metaphorical: while undoubtedly humans can be seen as “actors” in a metaphorical sense, the world being “like” a stage, this is not *necessarily* what is involved in rhetorical interaction. Rather, drama, or “acting together,” is just what human beings do. From this perspective, it is the staged drama that is the metaphor, since the staged drama gets its “materials” from the socio-historical moment in which it occurs and attempts to re-present those materials as accurately as possible (*PLF* 110).

term “theatricality” conveys an assumption of artful deception, or a connotation of artful manipulation of reality to create a fiction, or a sense that one’s ability to do is nothing more than superficial or illusory, the term “performance” suggests actual ability and knowledge, the acquisition of skill (and, potentially, artistry) in a particular task.⁴² Yes, our students need to pay attention to surfaces—it is, after all, not enough to know something, but one must *appear* to know something as well, they must “identify” themselves, through idiomatic performance, *appear to be* who they say they are and identify themselves by the proper insignia that they belong to the group they claim to belong to—but we do not want to suggest that the idea of performance stops at the level of surface. We, as teachers, want to *en-able* and *em-power* our students to actually perform the tasks they are expected to be able to perform.

This rhetoric of roles is designed to do just that: to provide a vocabulary and a program to help students and teachers of rhetoric discover what needs to be *done*, rhetorically, in a particular situation, in order *to be* the kind of person, or to convey the kind of persona, a situation requires. A rhetoric of roles can help students see the sorts of rhetorical acts they will be expected to perform in particular situations. It will also help them use the roles they have performed previously as a framework for discovering new roles to perform in unfamiliar situations (thus making the abstract useful by making it transferable from context to context). It is in this sense, I argue, that we as teachers must do as Love argued and teach our students to be actors—or, rather, we need to teach them to be “acters,” agents, role-performers. While there is certainly a metaphorically “theatrical” or “dramatic” element to that, I want to employ these terms here in the way Burke did, not as metaphors, per se, but as literally what humans do: “act” to be “seen”

⁴² The attempt to make this distinction, especially within a rhetorical context, is ancient, as evident in the Platonic dialogue *Ion*.

(and understood) by others.⁴³ Rather than seeing a personality as a “mask” or “character” that is a person puts on (as in the theatrical art of staged drama), we see “*personal-ity*” as something a person *does to be* or *exit* situationally: it is the person’s ethicality, their “character.” Personality thus becomes a form of “symbolic action” that students learn to tweak to the demands of a particular scene in the “drama of human relations” (Burke, *LAPÉ*, 4-6).

While abstract terms orient us to shared social perspectives, they also tend to hide our “trained incapacities,” the ideological blind spots that we have been taught to ignore (*P&C* 7). As Burke argued: just as

A red square is like a green square when considerations of shape are uppermost [. . .] considerations of color make a red square like a red circle. In the complexities of social experience, where the recurrence of “like” situations is always accompanied by the introduction of new factors, one’s total orientation may greatly influence one’s judgment of likeness. (*P&C* 13)

And we may add to that, one’s framing of acceptance and rejection. “A good Catholic may feel that priests and guides are alike; a good Marxian may feel that priests and deceivers are alike. [. . .] Orientation is thus a bundle of judgments” that informs our responses, not only to situations and acts, but to persons and groups in those situations performing those acts (*P&C* 13-14). But notice that such orientations are reliant on the titles by which we “en-title” the object of judgment. Therefore, when we orient ourselves, or others, towards or against some object through the application of a term—whether that term is laudatory, derogatory, or somewhere in

⁴³ I have already addressed the Greek origin of *drama* as referring to all action; the word *theater* also has a Greek origin, *theatron*, meaning “a seeing place,” and related to the Greek word *thea*, or “viewing.” If “drama” is the action that takes place in a “theater,” then the relationship between human action in general (*drama*) and “theatricality,” or action meant to be seen, is, perhaps, more complicated than the term “metaphor” allows.

between—we must first consider, however glancingly, what defines something as “laudatory” or “derogatory” by reference to our shared ideological orientation.

In respect to a particular person performing the role of “President” (returning to our previous example), that means first having some shared sense of the role of President *as a role*, as an abstract category of person that is, nevertheless, made concrete in particular situations, as defined by reference to a recognizable set of actions. And what is true of this one role is true for the other abstract terms we use to entitle *all* roles: they are made intelligible by reference to a shared orientation. So while the Orator or Rhetor or Speaker “speaks,” and the Author or Writer “writes,” and the Reader “reads,” the Audience “listens,” and the Spectator “sees,” what it means *to be a Writer* or *to be a Speaker*, or *to be a Listener* is different in different sorts of situations.

How, then, do we move from the impenetrability of abstraction towards the practicality of concreteness? Connors argues convincingly against the use of abstractions, but Connors’s wholesale dismissal of abstractions is premature: he throws out the baby with the bathwater without considering why we humans tend to think in abstractions to begin with, and why rhetoric and composition theories continue to employ them. As Edward Sciappa once wrote in his dismissal of the “if it’s everywhere, it’s nowhere” critique of “Big Rhetoric:” “to define a term broadly does not necessarily make that term meaningless or useless” (268). Chris Holcomb and M. Jimmie Killingsworth, in their essay, “Teaching Style As Cultural Performance” argue that even such abstractions as “clarity, correctness, ornamentation, and propriety” are merely cultural touchstones, “virtues” that “do not simply describe the technical merits of a completed oration, but are, instead, guides to performance and action [. . .] criteria defining cultural excellence” (120). Such terms are ideals that have meaning within particular socio-cultural contexts, but

which, once their meaning is understood and their definition ingested, are meant to provide directions for performance in various, even unrelated, situations.

Abstractions are meant to be ways of looking at the world *through society* so that one can compose suitable, occasional arguments. Abstractions (as with the “ideas” of Platonism or the rhetorical “spirituality” of Kenneth Burke) provide a sense of direction, a jumping-off point for rhetorical action. This doesn’t mean that these abstractions don’t need to be discussed or theorized more specifically in a way that will make them applicable to particular situations (what is “beauty” in a particular instance? Can’t it be “grotesqueness” in some other instance? What is “teaching” in a particular instance? Can’t it be indoctrination, or foolishness, or even learning, in other situations?). Using an abstract term as a point of entry into action—as a commonplace of invention—if it is done methodically and conscientiously to determine what, in this particular instance, the idea needs to mean, is the beginning of the art of rhetoric, and perhaps the beginning of *every* art: if I am going to construct a chair for a particular purpose, I first need access to the *idea* of a chair, and if I don’t have access to the idea, I need to learn it.

Abstractions, then, play an important role in socially orientating individuals, and if we employ abstract terms, such as role-titles, as the means of prompting a discussions about what those terms mean—including how they might be variously defined, and (perhaps most importantly for a study of rhetoric) how they might reveal hierarchical orientations of acceptance and rejection—these abstractions provide a lens for revealing or “identifying” the socially acceptable symbolic actions for any particular situation. Moreover, such abstract terms give us a critical vocabulary with which we can discuss the ideological “contexts” that allow for shared social understandings—the “intellectual commons” which, Connors argues, was lost in the waning days of rhetorical education. Discussing such terms theoretically, as rhetorical tools

rather than manifestations of “nature,” can help students define what gives such ideas their power in discourse, and this suggests some potentially fruitful pedagogical uses for the kinds of abstractions we find in role-rhetoric, particularly the abstractions of role-titles: if such discussions become a method for seeing how cultural symbols can be rhetorical resources, using, discussing, and defining cultural abstractions such as role-titles can make us, in Jessica Enoch’s words, “symbol-wise.”

This kind of wisdom, according to Burke, is acquired through “the charting of equations,” by discovering or “indexing” (Enoch 283) “what equals what,” such as “what ‘hero’ is to equal, what ‘villain’ is to equal, what ‘wisdom’ is to equal, etc.” and when “certain elements equal ‘good’ and certain elements equal ‘bad’ (or, what is often more important, if certain elements equal ‘socially superior’ and certain elements equal ‘socially inferior’) then in contemplating” such “equations” we discover the means not only for seeing how such symbols work *in* their audience to create ideological identifications, but we can see how they might be used *on* audiences or *for* audiences to create identifications (Burke, *LAPE* 12). Such an analysis allows abstractions to become more concrete as we see how they work rhetorically, and, in this same way, the rhetoric of roles becomes more than merely a vernacular terminology based in a shared, but vague and abstract, ideological orientation; it becomes a commonplace of rhetorical analysis and invention.

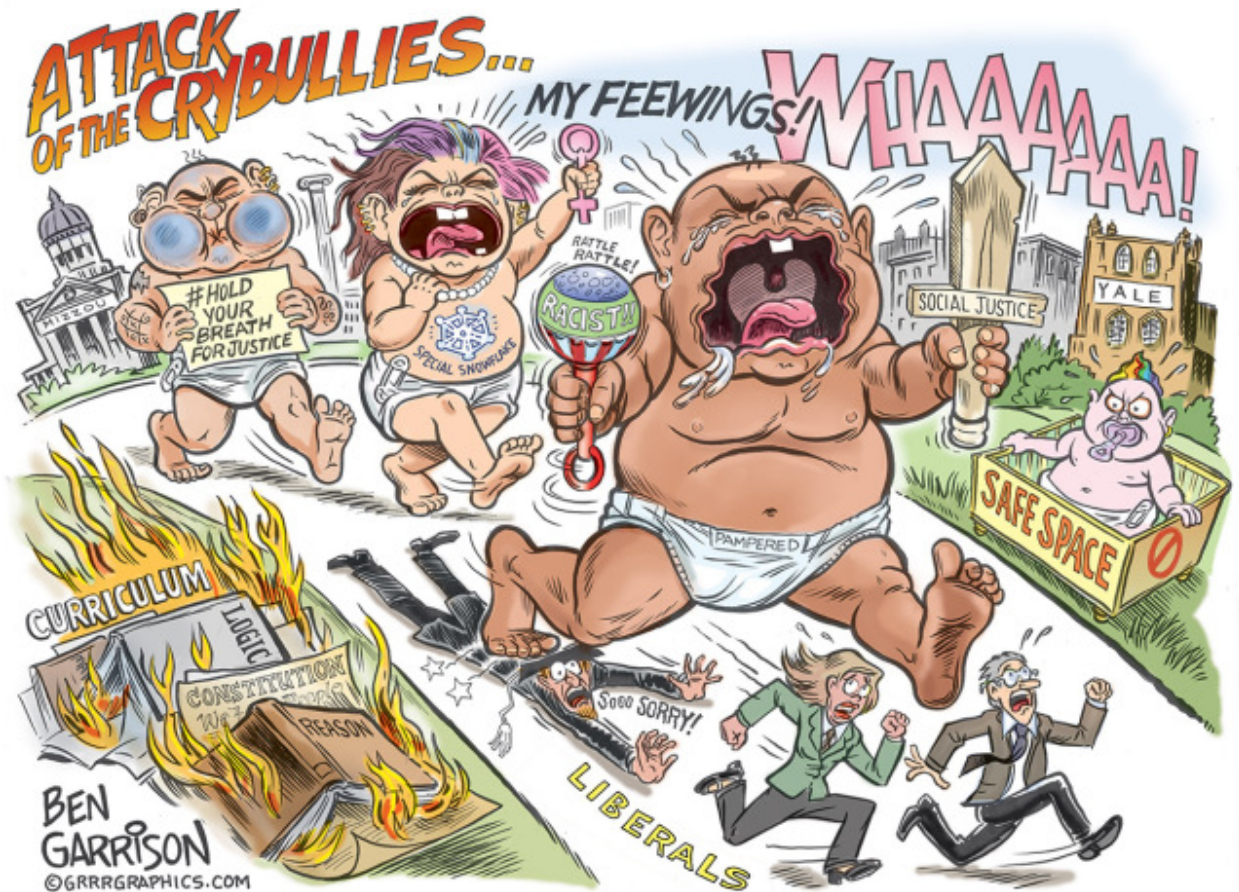
Take, for example, a very recent, and increasingly popular term that is floating around social media: the term “cry-bully.” First used in early 2015 by the self-described “militant feminist” writer Julie Burchill, a blogger-pundit for the conservative British periodical *The Spectator*,⁴⁴ Burchill defines the “cry-bully” as “a hideous hybrid of victim and victor, weeper

⁴⁴ It’s important to note that a British “conservative” and an American “conservative,” despite areas of overlap, are different ideological orientations and should not be conflated.

and walloper.” Essentially, Burchill ascribes her new role-title to anyone willing to “claim that ‘safe spaces’ might be violated by the presence of someone who thinks differently to them.”

Burchill not only “entitles” specific celebrities and politicians with her newly-minted role-term (Jeremy Clarkson, Perez Hilton, Stephen Fry and “anti-bullying campaigner” Ester Rantzen, for example), but she uses the term to identify entire special interest groups, as well—specifically “Islamists” and “The transexual (sic) and pimp-lobbies.”

In the United States, conservative pundits recently adopted this term, as well, including the libertarian political cartoonist Ben Garrison, and conservative political commentator Roger Kimball. These pundits have each employed the term in their critiques of certain special interest groups and university students whose activism focuses on speech codes, campus rape, racism, and gender equality. While most conservatives would not deny that rape, racism, and gender inequality are “bad” in principle, these pundits’ argue that such issues are purposefully overblown by activists in order to create an atmosphere where more politically “liberal” (but, the pundits would argue, less “free”) campus policies can be implemented.



As rhetorically interesting as the term itself is, however—and especially the fact that it is so new, an invented term produced through the ironic fusion of other identifications (“bully” and “cry-baby”)—what the use of this term teaches us about the relationship between roles and identification is even more interesting: those who use the term (or term like it) invariably employ it as a short-hand method for identifying their own “conservative” political credentials, simultaneously identifying an “Us” by creating a category of “Them” that can be rejected *because it can be named*. Kimball, for example, the author of *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Have Corrupted Our Higher Education*, writes that “the crybully [. . .] has weaponized his coveted status as a victim,” and deploys that weapon to silence speech that the offended party

finds objectionable. Clearly, the role-term Victim, in isolation, doesn't serve the needs of this particular rhetorical situation: while it is possible to use the term sarcastically (for example, through the use of ironic quotation marks), Kimball and his "Us" require a more particular and effective name, one that carries the right *attitude* in its connotations, one that allows Kimball and his "Us" to not only reject this Other, but to reject them in the right way.

The statuses Kimball chooses to focus on in his critique—"race and gender"—are two categories of persons that conservative pundits in the United States have been particularly antagonistic towards—opposed, that is, to the overt politicization of these statuses. At the same time, these status categories are also often identified with "liberal" causes—that is, as weapons of "the enemy," because, historically, liberals see these groups as those most in need of extensive help in achieving and maintaining civil rights. The term "cry-bully," because it simultaneously expresses a kind of moral weakness *and* a form of immoral power, provides Kimball and his "team" with a term that, ironically, *entitles* (or authorizes) his "Us" to react a certain way towards those so "entitled:" while "cry-bullies" may be victims of a sort, from the conservatives' perspective, they use that victim-hood as a form of ill-gotten power with which they might lord over others. Having an enemy so named, Kimball can logically—that is, according to the rhetorical logic of roles—argue that these "crybullies" and their tactics are the "toxic fruit" of the campus radicalism of the 1960s (a period of intense Leftist political ideology that is often seen as "villainous" in Conservative circles) and vilify the Other through an application of the appropriate *attitude*.

I do not mean to take a side for or against the use of a term like "crybully," or for or against the current wave of discontent sweeping college campuses, or even for or against the "conservative" versus "liberal" political perspectives. Rather, this example, and my discussion of

it—the role of “crybully” and the way that this role-title is deployed in public discourse—simply serves to illustrate that the logic of roles is a *rhetorical* logic, and specifically a *dramatistic* logic: the role-title “crybully,” like all role-titles, does something, and that something is meant to persuade by means of identification.

So, there is a logic to the use of roles, and central to that logic is the way we name things. There is rhetorical significance to role-titles we employ, and to the use of role-rhetoric in general. And if this is true in vernacular discourse spaces, it should be true in rhetorical theory, as well. The rhetorical logic of entitlement by the application of role-titles suggests how important it is to think through our role-rhetoric and understand what it is doing, how it is doing it, and what use such an understanding could be to rhetoric and composition pedagogy. The usefulness of a rhetoric of roles for the composition classroom, specifically, is the way that the logic of roles provides a method for conceiving the not-immediately-present-but-nevertheless-real rhetorical audience in simultaneously abstract *and* concrete terms. Role-titles are concrete in the sense that, through analysis, they reveal a sense of audiences as “real,” flesh-and-blood persons with intelligible, and socially informed, motives, desires, interests, concerns, values, etc. But they are also abstract, and thus mutable, because they conceive these persons as *types* or categories of persons, and thus as *identities* that can be defined variously in different situations, or identities that are transferable between contexts. Entitlement is thus a commonplace for invention, a method for discovering rhetorical strategies because role-titles reflect the social classes or categories of person that are ideologically available for human performance, the symbolic acts that such persons are authorized to perform, and role-titles suggest the attitudes that society itself has authorized towards persons and things so entitled.

Entitlement, in other words, orients, and Burke's playful pun "entitlement" plays off two senses in which this word might be understood: first, by reference to its root term, "title," which allows us to define "entitlement" as the act of title-giving; second, by reference to its more common sense of authority-giving: to be "entitled" in our common vernacular is to have the authority to perform certain acts—or, by reversal, it might also mean being placed in a position of non-authority, defined by what one is not allowed to do rather than by what one is empowered to do. The term "cry-bully" is certainly of this latter sort. Burke's pun also suggests that authority, in a rhetorical & symbolic sense, is to some degree a function of titles, or of naming. Through role-titles (which are summarizing terms for social attitudes and social positions), a rhetoric of roles provides a method for analyzing and understanding, theoretically at least, acts of persuasion by orienting rhetorical action in terms of the pre-conceived frames of acceptance and rejection suggested by a society's naming or entitling practices.

In his book *Language as Symbolic Action (LASA)*, while theorizing how "things become the signs of words," Burke notes that by "mediating between the social realm and the realm of non-verbal nature," the words we use to describe things infuse those things with "the spirit" of a society's ideological orientation, or the attitude "that the society imposes upon the words which have become the names for them" (362). This means that, for any particular social reality, role-titles are "the visible tangible material embodiments" of society's attitudes towards certain sets of acts that define those certain types of persons in certain situations. The role-title characterizes society's attitude toward a person or thing, and through the logic of role-titles, humanity and human nature themselves "become a vast pageantry of social-verbal masques and costumes" (ibid), while each of these actors, themselves, becomes a symbols of society's attitudes and orientations. "Each title" by which we "entitle" persons within particular social situations,

“would sum up the overall trend or spirit”—that is, social attitude—“informing or infusing the range of details that are included under this head [. . .] until we got to the all-inclusive title that was technically the ‘god-term’ for the whole congeries of words in their one particular order” (370). The “god term” would be the ultimate abstraction for a particular class. This process allows us to move from the situational specifics in such things as “the lowly processes of bookkeeping and accountancy to the over-all terminology of ‘right,’ ‘justice,’ ‘beauty,’ ‘propriety,’ ‘truth,’ the ‘good life,’ etc., in which the logic of a given social order comes to an ideal, theoretic head” (*LAPE* 6). If we are to analyze things in terms of their titles, Burke writes, “instead of starting with the relation between words and the things of which the words are the signs, we start with the verbal expressions [. . .] that are to be treated as ways of entitling, or of summing up, non-verbal situations” (*LASA* 370).

That is what role-titles allow us to do, and what this rhetoric of roles teaches us to do with them: role-titles “sum up” situations *in terms of* persons and the relationships between them. The names by which we entitle persons, the abstract terms by which we impose an identity, are thus *the key component* of the rhetorical theory of roles, for it is at the point of naming or “entitling” a role with an abstract title that the role becomes a “resource” for navigating the social system, or social hierarchy.⁴⁵ As Burke suggests: naming is simply a shorthand for identifications, and it is by the authority of these names that we place Selves socially, identifying ourselves and others both in terms of hierarchical relations and in terms of character. Essentially, role-titles say who we are in part by saying what we do and who we are with.

⁴⁵ I borrow this term “resource” from sociologist Peter Callero, who, writing in the tradition of sociological “role theory,” argued that seeing roles as sociological resources as a way to overcome a significant shortcoming of sociological role theory: namely, “its inability to explain the dynamics of power” and “its tacit acceptance of inequitable structures” (230). While Callero doesn’t mention Burke as a source, Burke’s ideas, as I have illustrated here, not only anticipated the sociological critiques of role theory (including his assertions regarding the inevitability of hierarchy, but not of specific hierarchies), but laid the foundation for the *rhetorical* perspective of social roles that I am developing here. Callero, as a sociologist, doesn’t make the connection between a role as a symbolic resource and that resource’s rhetoricality, but Burke does.

Part of the way role-titles do this is by reference to the associated value judgments that the role-titles suggest, connotations that are both hierarchical (referring to where a particular type stands in terms of social status) and ethical (referring to the degree to which society at-large accepts or rejects certain actions in certain situations, persons framed as acceptable or unacceptable based on the summative name ascribed to those persons and their actions). These value judgments orient our attitudes towards the person and actions (situationally contextualized) and toward the sets of action they become associated with. Thus, the act of naming frames audience attitudes, and their potential actions and reactions. A rhetoric of roles, because it provides a program and a vocabulary for explaining these very elements, can direct rhetors in selecting rhetorical strategies by providing a framework for understanding how, in an ethical and personalizing sense, certain rhetorical acts will be perceived by particular audiences.

Because roles name persons by reference to a shared social reality, even actions that are not socially normal or socially recognizable become, ironically, socially recognizable through the application of terms that characterize them by reference to their strangeness and unrecognizability: “Strange,” “Alien,” “Other,” etc. However, “the ‘same’ act can be defined ‘differently,’ depending” upon the “scene or overall situation *in terms of which* we choose to locate it,” or the words with which we choose to entitle or name it; and, since humans beings, in a *dramatistic* analysis, are primarily to be analyzed as “acters,” this is not only true of acts, but of the persons who perform them (*LASA* 360). The fact that we are oriented (as passive term) towards actions and reactions, persons and groups, by reference to pre-existing social categories does not in anyway undermine our agency as individuals in a particular rhetorical transaction, however. The act of naming is, itself, a rhetorical act: we orient by naming.

By re-naming, therefore, we can also re-orient: “The futurist,” Burke writes, “to praise war, needed only to recite its *horrors*, and call them *beautiful*” (*ATH* 32). While “comedy” as a genre “warns against the dangers of pride,” it does so by a shift of “emphasis” from “*crime* to *stupidity*,” transforming “villains” into “fools” and “picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*” (*ATH* 41). This tactic of renaming is also illustrates one important way that agents resist any act of persuasion: if I would call a person a “criminal” in order to persuade the officers of justice to punish him, another might entitle the same person “mistaken” or “stupid,” or call him a “victim,” in order to persuade those same authorities for mercy. Political “liberals,” in an attempt to persuade the public to accept one version of reality, entitled certain classes of person as “victims” in order to encourage sympathy for their plight; political conservatives, in order to prevent the exercise of certain level of power that might accompany the entitlement of victimhood, coined the term “cry-bully” not just to stave off that power-play, but in order to, themselves, acquire the power and authority to *actively resist* the act of persuasion political liberals were attempting. Thus, a rhetoric of roles not only reinforces the agency of the agents in any act of persuasion, it simultaneously suggests an important, and heretofore largely uninvestigated, method by which such resistance is enacted: through the logic of roles.

Seeing the variety of titles by which a role might be named becomes a productive form of rhetorical analysis, in that the rhetor can expose and explore not only his audience’s ideological orientations, but his own. It becomes a means of rhetorical invention by providing a “general body of identifications” (*ROM* 26) through which a rhetor can anticipate potential reactions to her rhetorical strategies, and by which she can categorize rhetorical strategies as sets of action that fashion certain types of identities. While it is probably impossible to plan for and satisfy every ideological position in a given rhetorical situation, seeing the way one’s actions might be

interpreted by seeing how they might be named can inform a rhetor's choice of rhetorical strategies, prepare her to anticipate counterarguments, and allow her to craft a self (including her character, or *ethos*) that is likely to be most effective for her purposes in a given rhetorical situation. The term for a "role" refers to both the words with which we entitle those roles, and to the actions those words entitle or categorize or summarize. Because of this, the acts themselves can be read through a rhetoric of roles, with sets of acts becoming the "sign" of a particular role-title even in the absence of the role-title as a term. Thus, rhetors can train themselves to see actions in terms of role-titles as a way to frame rhetorical action in rhetorical situations. When we observe persons performing certain actions, those actions themselves can orient us in the same way that the role-title itself might: if the title and the acts encourage the same attitude, then they are equally accessible as frames of identification and division—if we are looking at those acts through the logic of roles—which, as I have already suggested, we already do *implicitly*, and which, through a rhetoric of roles, I want to help us do *explicitly*.

In connection with all of this, it is important to recognize how the "entitlement" ascribed to (or imposed on) a person by their role-title is both a descriptive judgments (in that it describes the acts performed and their place in our social hierarchy) and also a value judgment (in that even the most neutral of terms is ethical, especially when applied to a person). Hierarchies of moral values are best understood *not* as black-and-white, "either/or" situations in which a particular social ideology "either" accepts "or" rejects acts and persons, but as a spectrum, with acts and persons placed by the degree of acceptance and rejection that a particular society entitles them with. Social roles are a function of the social order, and, as Burke asserts, "order is impossible without *hierarchy*" or "a ladder of authority that extends from 'lower' to 'higher,' while its official *functions*"—or the actions performed by various roles—"tend towards a

corresponding set of *social ratings*” (ATH 374). A rhetoric of roles, and its logic of role-titles as symbols of ideological orientation, provides a method for rhetorical analysis of social hierarchies by reference to the way its role-terms place persons hierarchically. Close analysis of these largely abstract role-terms can make rhetors aware of the hierarchies they operate in, not just so that (when necessary) they can conform to the expectations of the hierarchy and thus argue more effectively, but so that (when appropriate) the trappings of a particular hierarchy might be exploited or challenged to change it. Bullying, for example, is something that contradicts the principles of political liberals, who are opposed to using entrenched privilege to exploit and oppress; by coining the term “cry-bully,” then, not only has the author created a role that sounds good (an echo of the term “cry-baby” which capitalizes on that term’s connotation as a power-play), but she has coined a term which demonizes her political opponent by entitling their actions in such a way that they embody exactly the opposite of the opponent’s own value system (a pretty brilliant rhetorical flourish). A rhetoric of roles is aptly suited to the analysis of such moves because it reveals one important mechanism of the hierarchical motive: the way hierarchies orient persons and attitudes.

A rhetoric of roles, moreover, suggests a relationship between one’s social role and one’s authority, or social capital. Identifying and performing one’s role is, effectively, a rhetorical act, one which, I would argue, is an initial step towards effective persuasion. To be persuasive, or to “act together,” one must first accurately identify one’s role and the roles of those one is placing oneself in relation to. Though his list was “tentative,” Burke’s “seven offices” provide a useful (albeit preliminary) vocabulary for examining situations by means of entitlement, a way of abstractly naming basic actions that one might perform, or the basic roles that might be available for orienting a rhetor in a given situation. Burke names the “basic offices [. . .] that people

perform in relation to one another” as “Govern, serve (provide for materially), defend, teach, entertain, cure, pontificate (minister in terms of a ‘beyond’)” (*ATH* 358-9). Each of these action terms identifies ways to think through situations, or to direct rhetorical exploration, according to the logic of roles: the terms inform one’s selection of rhetorical strategies based on what they want to do, or what they want to accomplish—that is, how they have been symbolically placed—in relation to some others. Rhetorical strategies that present one as a “Defender” (or, to use the classical term, “Apologist”) will be selected for how well they communicate defense of an idea *in the particular situation*, while rhetorical strategies for one who wants to perform the role of “Entertainer” will be chosen based on how well those choices entertain *in the particular situation*. In each case, rhetorical strategies are selected based on the role-title one is attempting to invoke, or the set of actions that communicate the kind of Self one is seeking to present, or fashion, in the particular situation. A rhetoric of roles, then, helps rhetors see how certain verbal acts invoke, in certain audiences, particular role-ideas in particular situations, how certain acts “identify” oneself and others by providing a recognizable identity.

The Role of Identification

Considering the fact that an act of naming or entitling doesn’t happen in a vacuum, but that any act of naming must be informed by the general discourse practices of the society in which that act transpires, naming reveals the “ingredient of partisanship” that, according to Burke, is “natural” to rhetoric, a “partisanship that is sometimes reinforced, sometimes truly or falsely transcended” through individual and communal acts of identification (“The Rhetorical Situation” 264). Partisanship (what might be defined as the goal of persuasion) is a form of “*acting together*” made possible by invoking “common sensations, concepts, images, ideas,

attitudes that make [us] *consubstantial*” or “substantially one” with some “person other than [ourselves]” (*ROM* 21). Recalling Burke’s definition of “substance” leads us, then, to the following understanding: naming things is not only a form of identification, but a form of imitation or mimesis, for when we name things, we are “acting together” consubstantially, in a symbolic sense, with and within our historical moment.

Whether we are discussing self-fashioning (Stephen Greenblatt), character-fashioning (Nancy Christiansen), self-presentation (Erving Goffman) or self-performance (Thomas Newkirk), or *ethos* (Aristotle)—all variations on a theme—a rhetoric of roles reveals an important sociological component that precedes the “acting together” we call persuasion: that component is an individual’s identity within a particular hierarchical relationship. While a “thing’s identity” is, according to Burke, “its uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself,” to identify one’s “Self” requires a method by which one can be “identified”—that is, to have one’s uniqueness created by placing it in relation to others (*ROM* 21). Thus “Identity,” as Steven Mailloux writes, “whether individual or collective; whether sexual, generational, racial, ethnic, national, or religious; whether homogenous, hybrid or conflicted—is interpreted being” (85)—interpreted, that is, through the lens provided by our society in a specific historical moment.

A rhetoric of roles situates role-logic as the primary medium through which identities are formed and by which they are interpreted. Such things as group affiliation, character, authority, etc. are all identified, either explicitly or implicitly, by reference to hierarchically situated roles within a system. Role-logic is the means by which we compose, or “identify,” selves in any given socio-historical moment.

In traditional rhetoric, the role of Public Speaker (or, in composition, the role of Writer) was *the* role one performed when speaking (or writing) in public; while that role appears

impractically abstract now, it was originally defined by reference to a shared knowledge base—the same shared knowledge that contextualized other rhetorical terms like “clarity” and “brevity” and “sincerity” (Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*, 8). Such abstract terms were shorthand for the ideal performance expected from a person performing such a role.

When the potential “public” audience expands exponentially, however, as it has in the modern world with the proliferation of electronic media, the shared understandings that provide the context for defining such abstractions is lost and the definitions become insufficient because they fail to direct rhetorical action for the new, massively complex values-laden situation. As we discussed in chapter one, most of the classical and modern discourse of rhetorical performance has been what Burke might have called “scenic” in nature, focusing on the “situation” itself: while identity and relationships were clearly important components of rhetorical situations, they were also generally accepted, pre-existent quantities in rhetorical situations: a speaker, by virtue of the fact that he was speaking publicly, was already evidently a certain *type* of person. The right to speak publicly with any kind of authority was limited to those who inhabited social roles already empowered to speak publicly, and whether or not a person belonged to “The Audience” depended largely on their social standing.

The modern right to speech, however, has given rise to a proliferation of what Michael Warner calls “publics” and “counterpublics,” and with the advent of readily available media (first printed media, but most recently electronic media, and especially the Web), we find ourselves in a situation unparalleled in human history in terms of potential audience identities: one writer or speaker can now easily be read or heard by innumerable potential audiences with a multitude of identifications, all of whom not only have the power to respond but, if pressed, have the power to react *en masse*. In such a rhetorical situation, understanding the relationship

between role and identities, and role-performances and identifications, is of paramount importance if one is to be an effective rhetor. While in the age before the “freedom of speech” the act of public speaking was itself a recognizable public role—the Orator of Cicero, the Rhetor of Aristotle, the Gentleman of the British *paideia*, the Citizen of early American Republicanism—our current rhetorical scene, which Richard Lanham has characterized as an “economy of attention,” requires a knowledge not just of rhetorical figures and tropes and styles, but a knowledge of identities, what and how they communicate, and how they attract different kinds of attention. A rhetoric of roles, while it doesn’t ignore the scenic aspects of rhetorical situations, foregrounds the human aspects by grounding rhetorical action in relationships that are *types* of relationships between *types* of persons. It bases itself, in others words, in the logic of identifications.

As Barry Brummet argues, we “create texts to say who we are and to call out to others” (118), but we employ a role-rhetoric because it suggests *how* we know who we are in the texts we create, and what kinds of Others we are calling out to. Yes, a writer can assume that if he is writing to a Reader, then that Reader wants to read—but *what* does she want to read? Why is she reading? What is she looking for? Alternately, *why* is the Writer writing? What is he trying to accomplish? What kind of Reader is he looking for? We must not think of “rhetoric” solely “in terms of some one particular address” or text, Burke argues, “but as a general *body of identifications* that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reënfacement (sic) than to exceptional rhetorical skill” (*ROM* 26). Social categories or classes of identity are bodies of identification, the mechanism by which identities are not just interpreted, but invented. A rhetoric of roles provides a method for unpacking these pre-

packaged personal identifications, and it does this by treating identification as kind of performance.

Post-modern rhetoric has been moving past the essentialistic, static terminology of Self that we have inherited from the Romantic tradition, and a rhetoric of roles provides a way to do just that, as well as a vocabulary for doing it, in that a *rhetoric* of roles encourages us to look at identity as a continuous composition of Self, or to interpret identity as a perpetual work-in-progress in which the Self is an ongoing creation composed through interaction and cooperation with others and with society itself. Through the performance of certain symbolic actions—including the application of role-titles and the performance of role-act sets—a self is “fashioned” over time and in (symbolic) space. Like words and ideas, the roles and role-titles society asks us to perform (and sometimes demands, and sometimes forbids) are the vocabulary through which we develop and communicate and compose our identity.

This does not mean that there is no such thing as uniqueness or individuality, but it does suggest the means by which uniqueness and individuality are achieved: individuality is the result of one’s artistry in role-performances. Just as every work of poetry written in a single language is a unique piece of art produced through (and often despite) the limitations of grammar, vocabulary, and the ideological understandings available in a particular language at a particular period in history, so every self is a unique piece of performance art, the creation of individuality achieved through (and often despite) the limitations of the grammar, vocabulary, and limitations of self available in a particular society. Through a unique performance of the pre-determined sets of action that make up the socially recognized vocabulary of role performances, individuals “identify” themselves as individual selves (who we are); and we do this by what we do and how we do it (attitude), and by doing so in a way that this self can be named by ourselves and others.

Part of composing a self or an identity is identifying “allegiances” (*ATH* 20-21), and thus placing oneself in society through the performance of “certain slogans, or formulae, or epigrams, or ‘ideas’ that characterize [our] situation or strategy” as agents in a “dialectical” or “dramatic” relationship with other individuals in our society, and with society itself (*GOM* 511). A rhetoric of roles provides a framework for understanding such placements and a terminology for discussing such placements. Role-titles and role-act sets are the rhetorical symbols by which we name and perform potential roles.

However, those role performances need not mention the name the performer intends to invoke; they need only perform the acts that would be so named in the particular situation. If, for example, a writer wants to identify herself as a “Witty Conservative Pundit” AND as a “Militant Feminist” (as Julie Burchill does), she has only to perform the behaviors that identify a person as a Witty Conservative Pundits and as a Militant Feminists and she invokes these role-titles without ever mentioning them—invokes them as a way of identifying her Self. Moreover, the way she chooses to name or identify “the enemy” by employing (or, in this case, creating) a role-title that places her in relation to some Other (and does so in identifiable ways), also identifies her Self as friend to those who would want to name or identify their enemy in a like manner. In this way she creates an Us in relation to a Them, and those who belong to her team are able to “act together” (or be persuaded) by the performance. The role-titles she employs, and the role-act sets she performs, engage the values and prejudices of her group, and thus identify her and her relations to the Others by acting in ways that invoke certain values of certain groups in her particular historical moment.

Because a rhetoric of roles characterizes persons in terms of socially recognizable sets of actions—their function or job in the immediate relationship as that role’s actions have been

defined and named by the society at large—such a rhetoric *necessarily* places the role-performer in relation to other role performers. This is, of course, the whole thrust of rhetorical theory back into antiquity: rhetoric is, at its core, a theory for understanding how and why people act and react in relation to one another. However, by foregrounding identifications in sociological terms, a rhetoric of roles takes the classical rhetorical focus on *ethos* (and, as I will address momentarily, *pathos*), or on character as an aspect of shared values, and categorizes the ethical by personifying it into recognizable types of *characters* who act in *recognizably* ethical ways that define or classify their identity. Such recognizable identities, “identified” and qualified by the terms we use to name them, orient individuals agents (whether rhetors or audiences) toward one another and within society: they tell us who we are; they tell us what we do; they authorize us for some things and disqualify us from other things; they moralize not just acts but persons, placing us with some things and against other things—and they do this not only individually, but collectively as well.

In terms of both rhetorical analysis and rhetorical invention, then, to take on, or impose, or invoke an identity, for one’s self or some Other—to fashion a self—is an act that allows a rhetorical inventor to theorize effective and ineffective rhetorical action. Fashioning (or anticipating) an audience through role-logic provides a framework for selecting among the myriad rhetorical strategies at one’s disposal because it suggests recognizable personas to imagine as one is composing (not only the personas of the audience, who they might be and, therefore, how they might respond, but one’s own persona as a *response* to that potential audience). Such *audience fashioning* as a component of rhetorical invention provides a framework for anticipating (and, therefore, to a degree managing) audience expectations and reactions as a response not just to a person’s rhetoric, but to a person’s self. By making action

representative, the rhetoric of roles transforms human action—the performance of identity—into a rhetorical lens, or rhetorical figure, or rhetorical commonplace, through which rhetorical selves can be identified, interpreted, analyzed, and performed. Through such a rhetorical lens, rhetors can systematically analyze and select among available rhetorical strategies. In other words, it provides a means by which to see, in a given situation, the available means of persuasion.

By emphasizing the agent-ness of audiences, however, a rhetoric of role also discourages rhetors from underestimating the participatory role of the Other in a given rhetorical situation: “persuasion” must be seen as “acting together,” and not merely as “bending” and audience to the rhetor’s will. As I discussed earlier, and as Ede and Lunsford made clear in their critique of Walter Ong, the always already role-performing Audience can always choose to entitle things differently from the Rhetor. A rhetoric of roles, then, does not allow for imagining some active rhetorical agent manipulating some passive, a-rhetorical audience “called into being” by the rhetor’s will alone. Rather, just like the rhetor himself, the audience, in their various roles, must be recognized as “real” agents themselves (even if they are, at the moment of composition, “imaginary”). A rhetoric of roles is, therefore, uniquely adaptable to the necessities of a multi-mediated Internet age in that it encourages the rhetor *not* to think, as Ong suggests, that one should just “pick up [a] voice, and, with it, [an] audience” (59), but encourages the rhetor, in his role as Rhetor, to ask: “what *types* of persons might see or hear or read this? And what *types* of person might these actions make me appear to be to such a person?” By presenting a terminological framework through which rhetors can understand audience *members* in the abstract as concrete rhetorical selves, or *agents* who are already actively performing rhetorical roles in pre-existing rhetorical relationships, a rhetoric of roles suggests that rhetors think of their audiences as *rhetors*, as well: they are not just an abstract audience, but they are active Listeners,

trained and prepared in some capacity, loyal to some group or other, and pre-prepared to respond to whatever anyone ever says. The role of Audience, then, becomes an active, rhetorical performance that is informed by the socially-constructed identity embodied by the *individual audience member*—and any audience must be recognized as consisting of a multitude of such potential identities. A writer composing through the lens of a rhetoric of roles, then, need not simply invent or create a fictional audience out of thin air but, as Ede and Lunsford suggest, she can create “real” audiences with whom (not just “to” whom) she can communicate, and for whom she can construct more effective rhetorical performances by focusing on the construction of a recognizable, individual role performance herself.

Moreover, this rhetoric’s emphasis on identity-as-performance and on self-as-fashioned suggests some ways to teach the concept of identity in the context of the rhet/comp classroom: identity, a rhetoric of roles suggests, is an acquisition of experience. The multitude of roles we learn to perform over time become a treasure trove of knowledge, experience, and authority, which we, as individuals, can draw from to compose symbolic acts as a function of our cumulative identity. Moreover, because roles are abstract and mimetic in nature, they are transferable from context to context, malleable in nature, and can thus inform rhetorical self-invention in both familiar and unfamiliar situations. The more experience one has—that is, the more roles one has performed—the greater the likelihood of responding effectively in any given situation. Because a rhetoric of roles emphasizes the active, performative nature of identity, it theorizes identity by defining identity and self in simultaneously essentialistic *and* non-essentialistic terms, as a perpetual work-in-progress that is never “finished.” Identity, because it is performed repeatedly and is transforms with each performance, is perpetually acquired and reacquired; it is something one *does* over time.

Thus, seemingly temporary roles, such as the role of the Student—and indeed, even non-temporary identities, to some degree, such as Son or Brother—become more than merely short-term identifications that one takes on for the few years and then discards. Rather, roles such as Student become fundamental orienting mechanisms we can draw from repeatedly whenever we are presented with a situation/relationship that is similar in nature to that in which we learned or used or performed an earlier role. Thus, even short-term roles provide individuals with ways of interacting with the world that further aid us in the construction, or composition, or fashioning of the Self (or the “core” self) through rhetorical action. But such transportation of roles requires a program that helps one develop the artistry necessary to see how one seemingly unrelated role might inform our perspective on a new situation by suggesting some ways of placing one’s self in relation to other selves.

In a rhetoric of roles, then, there is not only a fundamental sense that every act of communication must transpire in some type of recognizable relationship between recognizable type of persons. We recognize personality types—we “identity” other “identities”—by what those persons do, by what role they play in relation to ourselves. With this focus on the personal agent-ness of the Other, persuasion is never a foregone conclusion in any rhetorical interaction, but a give and take, a process of dialogue, a dialectic that is interactive in nature: a person speaks, intending to persuade; the audience hears and filters what is said through their “terministic screen” of identifications; then the audience responds and the speaker must inhabit the role of Audience as the former Audience presents its ideas; then the speaker speaks again, refining and revising his ideas, before the audience responds again in like manner.

This, of course, is the very type of “conversation” that an academic essay is supposed to re-present. Ideally, if both parties are “friendly,” or “collegial” (to use Ede and Lunsford’s

terms)—and if, as in Plato’s idealized conception of dialogue, both parties are seeking truth—the parties will, through the recognition of what is valid and what is invalid in both their own ideas and the Other’s, arrive at a meeting of the minds, where the self-centeredness of extreme individuality (the negative kind of “pride” that was once conceived of as a vice in antiquity) will give way to a kind of “us”-centeredness, or to the kind of unity (“consubstantiality” or “acting together”) that politics and religion often pursue. While this ideal is difficult to achieve—especially in our current atmosphere of political and ideological divisiveness—it is the ideal presented by a rhetoric of roles, and a teacher who employs this rhetoric should make this plain when teaching students to use this rhetoric as a framework for rhetorical training. Seeing the Self as necessarily related to and developing out of an interaction with the Other would tend to weaken the human tendency to view the world through the limited lens of selfish interests.

Self-fashioning grows out of frameworks of intellectual, moral and ethical indoctrination (what kind of character persons should be and what kinds of things they should value), as well as placement within a particular hierarchy, but self-fashioning is neither entirely self-directed and conscientious, nor solely the act of a hierarchical authority imposing its will on persons and ideas lower on the totem pole. Self-fashioning, rather, is better characterized as an act of dialectic (in the Burkean sense of that term), an act of coming to see and understand the hierarchical relationships at work in a sociality to such a degree that one can use the roles one has been placed into within that hierarchy as resources for navigating and remaking that reality. As a “social product” (*LASA* 361), one’s performance in a role “involves properties both intrinsic to the agent and developed with relation to the scene and to other agents” (*GOM* 511); yet it is only through a *conscientious* participation in the dialectic between self and society, term and terminology, that agency is possible. A rhetoric of roles provides a method of making some of

the unconscious elements of the social dialectic conscious, or visible—a method for seeing and participating in that dialectic intentionally rather than accidentally.

A rhetoric of roles not only provides a framework for the fashioning of rhetorical selves, but suggests that, in any given rhetorical situation, selves are always rhetorical constructs crafted through the performance of pre-defined *types*: an individual's presented self (whether conscious or unconscious) is constructed or composed by the individual's rhetorical choices as those choices suggest a *type* of person in a particular socio-cultural context. When a rhetor sees that both one's own presented self and the understood self of some Other as an artful construct delimited by pre-existing sets of social action suggesting a *type* of person, the concept of self and the act of self-fashioning are made available both as commonplaces for the invention of the *Rhetor's* rhetorical self, and as a means of anticipating the potential needs, desires, and reactions of an *Audience* of such rhetorically constructed selves. The concept of role becomes a way of categorizing rhetorical choices in terms of the *type* of person certain rhetorical acts make a rhetor appear to be, and in terms of how certain Other *types* of persons might respond to those rhetorical acts. And, coming full circle, the terms used to characterize the role itself, or the relationships to which they pertains, become the commonplaces from which rhetorical invention begins.

This rhetoric, therefore, and what it suggests about the nature of rhetoric itself as an art, has significant implications for the idea of persuasion—for what persuasion is, how it works, and the patience and effort required to accomplish it.

The Role of Relationships

Burke “located the rhetorical situation in an individual divisiveness prior to all class” (*ROM* 147), in “the social motive” that is “prior to the individual,” and he defined the “individual identity” as “conceived in terms of” the “principle” that has been “implanted” in that individual as a member of his group or class (*ROM* 148). Thus, identity itself could be considered a form of persuasion, the kind of “acting together” that Burke argues provides the *sub-stance* which allows a self to be performed. Defining identity—whether of an individual or a group—as “acting together” suggests that a rhetoric of roles not only provides a framework for analyzing human identity but for placing those identities (and the actual humans identified by them) into theoretical relationships with one another (whether that Other is an individual or a group). Because roles, by their nature, place persons into relationships with others and with society at large, a rhetoric of roles emphasizes the relational aspects of rhetorical situations and effectively defines rhetorical situations as relationships—or, rather, as *types* of relationships between *types* of persons.⁴⁶

Lloyd Bitzer, who first addressed the concept of rhetorical situation directly, defined it as “the context in which speakers and writers create rhetorical discourse” (1), and as “a natural context of persons, events, objects, and relations” (5). However, Bitzer’s definition of “situations” and what makes them rhetorical presents some ideological problems: while Bitzer

⁴⁶ While I think Jeffrey W. Murray places Burke and Levinas in a valuable dialogue with one another, I also think that his thesis is founded upon a fundamental misreading of Burke. I agree that “Burke’s notions of recalcitrance and irony” provide a “groundwork for a full dramatic description of the phenomenological encounter with the Other and of the nature of the ethical encounter” (23), but I think Murray is incorrect that “Levinas’s philosophy of ethics can be seen to indict much of Burke’s work for failing to adequately reflect the Other;” Murray sees Levinas’s theory of ethics as “in contrast to Burke’s theory of dramatism,” in that “Levinas would insist that ethics must build its terminology around the Other as opposed to the agent” (25). Murray sees Burke’s focus on “otherness” rather than on “other persons.” However, this is inline with the abstractions that inform Burke’s method: we do not interact with persons, Burke argues, so much as *types* of persons, and our identifications (also abstractions) are what inspire us to react in the ways that we do. While Levinas’s terminology may provide a different vocabulary (instructive in terms of its perspective) for discussing one element of what Burke is getting at, I don’t think that this vocabulary “indicts” Burke at all: the Other “agent,” and understanding how and why that Other “agent” acts, and how and why we as “agents” act as we do towards that Other, is a primary concern of dramatism at every stage of its development; it is a key practice in the purification of war.

argues that situations themselves are either rhetorical or not depending on the “exegesis” of the situation itself (that is, on whether or not the situation itself demands or calls for a response), Richard Vatz challenged that assertion, arguing that situations do not, in and of themselves, have exigence: *situations* do not call for a response, *persons* do. Thus the nature of a situation cannot “call into existence” a “rhetorical discourse,” according to Vatz, because situations do not have inherent meaning; rather, meaning must be ascribed to situations by the participants in those situations (158). Meaning is made evident, it is not self-evident, and so Vatz is concerned by what appears to be Bitzer’s uncritical approach to reality: a rhetorical situation of the type Bitzer conceives suggests a reality in which meaning is obvious for all participants rather than reality being an impression fabricated through discourse. Vatz argues that “statements” do not “describe situations,” as Bitzer claims, but “only inform us as to the phenomenological perspective of the speaker,” the use of any “term,” Vatz writes (quoting Burke), does little “more than convey the attitude of the person making the reference” (154). According to Vatz, “meaning is not intrinsic” but, rather, “we learn of facts and events” and, as persons reading reality through the lens provided by our particular time, place, and personal experience, we give those facts and events a meaning, or they are provided a meaning “through someone’s communicating them to us” (156)—and even when we ascribed the meaning ourselves, we can only interpret and articulate that meaning through the dark glass of the symbols and names provided by our socio-historical moment.

And yet, while Vatz is correct, a rhetoric of roles suggests that Bitzer’s perspective is not so easily dismissed as Vatz would like to suggest. While situations are, indeed, made meaningful only by the participants in the situation and by the social framework through which those participants interpret reality, it is not always the *immediate* participants who make a situation

meaningful. Rather, for many situations—perhaps most situations—meaning is, at least partially, inherited, inscribed into certain *types* of situations by tradition. Thus, we, as persons delimited in fundamental ways by the perspectives available in our socio-historical moment, enter situations that are already, to some degree or another, infused with some meaning or another by history, society, and culture. Situations, then, *do* have meanings that are both ascribed to it by persons (often historical in nature and not immediate participants in a particular situation) and meanings which, over time, become inherent to the nature of situation *in the minds of the participants*. This is because situations become *typified* and *categorical* in human society.

This does not make meaning any less human, but it does mean that to enter a situation is to enter a relationship that is meaningful for very rhetorical reasons. To approach situations through a rhetoric of roles, then, is to approach situations as *types* of relationships, situations always already inscribed with meaning either between individuals whose identities are largely defined by appeals to historical/social/cultural type-casting, or between those individuals and their social system. The actions of each—individuals and societies—will then be selected and/or defined by reference to the repertoire of potential acts for their effectiveness *in these types of situations or relationships*, as responses that typically (that is historically, sociologically, ideologically) work in such particular moments.

Thus it is not only the persons that “call upon” performers to perform, but the “exegesis” of the situation itself as a *type* of situation to which meaning has already been ascribed, a meaning that is often taken-for-granted. While it is always useful to analyze such taken-for-granted-ness, if one is to approach the rhetorical situation effectively, he must also understand that situations, by virtue of their nature as relationships, *do* have an inherent exegesis that must also be addressed in any act of persuasion. It is through these pre-existing exegeses that society

itself “calls upon” persons to act in particular ways in particular situations, and it is by the pre-defined types of choices that are available for individuals to make in such relationships that an individual’s identity or “self” is created. *This* exegesis of the situation allows relations to be defined and re-defined, and, ultimately, allows for the possibility of persuasion, or “acting together.”

Ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski’s scene of Trobriand Island fishermen at work, which both Bitzer and Vatz appeal to in order to substantiate their own arguments, is illustrative of what I mean: the language of the fishermen, Bitzer writes, is described as “functional” language arising from the situation (4)—but the language only functions in this situation because that particular situation has been infused with historic and cultural meaning by reference to the relationship between the participants. The fishermen, each in his role as Fisherman, placed in relation to other fishermen performing the role of Fishermen in concert, means that what they will talk about and how they will talk about it—the discourse itself—will be called “into existence as a response to the situation” (5). But the situation itself does this by how society has ascribed a nature to that particular situation, and thus to the participants in that situation, which we can analyze through the rhetoric of roles: because situations, including a relationship between Workers, are relational by nature, and relationships transpire between persons whose selves are composed through role performances (the role of the Fisherman, in this case), and because roles and their relationships are made meaningful *not by these specific* persons in *this specific* moment, but as a function of the socio-historical moment in which the persons act, the actions of each agent in the situation, according to the historical, social, cultural, and ideological precedents that have defined this *type* of moment categorically, *inscribe* meaningfulness to the moment due to the fact that each player is a particular kind of Player placed, by the “exegesis” of the

situation, into a particular sort of relationship with other Players (in this case, Trobriand Island Fisherman performing his role as Fisherman in cooperation with—that is, in relation to—other Trobriand Island Fishermen).

At the level of modern politics, a rhetoric of roles helps us see the same thing, whether we are discussing audience members' partisan-informed responses to the actions of a particular American President, or to readers' partisan-informed responses to a writer, such as Julie Burchill, and her use of a term like "crybully." A rhetoric of roles helps us see that the responses of the rhetorical agents that make up a given Audience (no matter how diverse) can be, to some degree, anticipated by the "exegesis" of the situation, which exegesis can be discovered as a function of the roles available in that particular rhetorical situation—or, rather, that *type* of relationship. Because meaning has been given to particular *types* of situations/relationships before the participants ever participate in them, in order to "invent" effective rhetorical discourse, one can analyze a situation/relationship through a rhetoric of roles to determine what role one is asked to play (or which one wishes to play), and what type of relationship that role suggests in the particular situation (including what role or roles are likely available to other participants in the situation or relationship), and through this lens, one can see the potential rhetorical strategies that are available and what their likely effect will be on particular audiences in that particular situation because the situation or relationship can be interpreted *in terms of* the meaning already ascribed to it by "tradition."

The concept of roles generally, as well as the ideologically delimited individual roles themselves, become commonplaces for rhetorical invention when we see how roles provide a way for rhetors to categorize situations by understanding them as types of relationships between types of persons. As Alan Brinton wrote, we must see that "The nature of the act as rhetorical is

dependent upon connections with a particular sort of situation” (235). This type of categorization is exactly what role-logic provides: through this rhetorical lens, rhetors can potentially see all situations as types of relationships between types of persons in a particular social system and use that perspective as a method for understanding persuasion and identification. Understanding that all persons are always already involved in a web of situations that are, by virtue of their situatedness in a historical moment, always already rhetorical (or, we might say, *typically relational* or relational in typical ways), a rhetoric of roles provides a method for sorting through the variety of rhetorical strategies that a rhetor might be presented with by providing a framework, and a vocabulary or terminology, for thinking about personality in terms of *type*, and for theorizing what rhetorical acts will communicate what types of persona. By naming or entitling the type of person one seeks to perform in a given rhetorical relationship, and naming the potential types of persons that one might be placing themselves in relation to in a given rhetorical situation, a “role” becomes a commonplace for rhetorical invention, a method for sifting through rhetorical strategies to see how they communicate in a given scenario to certain types of people, and to see how they compose in a given scenario a certain type of personality.

Persuasion, Burke argued, is a function of identifications, or of identities, and since roles are the resources of identification, persuasion is related to role-performances. In our modern “economy of attention,” as Richard Lanham calls it, “persuasion” must “create [. . .] a participatory drama” and it “must include, if it is to have dramatic vitality, a vociferous opposition” (*The Economics of Attention* 59). A rhetoric of roles teaches us a way to create just such a participatory drama—as Julie Birchill did with her “cry-bully” invention—by either drawing the lines of identification around already existing relationships and identifications or by creating new identifications by creating roles into which persons might be cast. Persuasion

begins with persons and ideas being placed in relation to one another, and doing so in human terms; it isn't just group-think, and it isn't just ideography, although these are clearly important elements of persuasion. Rather, persuasion is getting one human to commit to you as a human for the purposes of "acting together." A rhetor does that by providing roles that each person in the drama of the argument can perform—that is, giving each person in the situation a reason to be there by giving them something to do. A rhetoric of roles reveals that the ideas, and terms, and arguments one shares in a particular rhetorical situation must "act together" not merely to craft a particular identity for the rhetor, but to craft the identity in such a way that the rhetor is understood by the audience to be performing a particular, and recognizable, role in relation to the audience, a role the audience needs them to perform, and which allows or invites or encourages the audience to perform a particular type of role not just in relation to the rhetor, but in relation to the world the rhetor and audience share.

In his book *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Wayne Booth appeals to a rhetoric of roles—specifically the roles of "friends and pretenders"—to explore what I would argue is a useful metaphor not only for describing the "many relations we are asked to build, or that we can build on our own, with the various authors" we read, but for exploring how a rhetoric of roles might better inform composition pedagogy. That metaphor compares reader/writer relationships to the "kind of live encounters a given reading experience is like" (169). Booth describes the role of Friend, for example (one of the basic role-titles employed by Ede and Lunsford, as well) as a function of certain types of action, with "three types of friendship based on three types of gift a would be friend might offer," including the gift of "pleasure," the gift of "profit or gain," and the gift of "company" that is "good for its own sake" (173).⁴⁷ Booth

⁴⁷ Booth's categories—particularly this multifaceted category of Friend—can be used in conjunction with Burke's "basic offices" to direct rhetorical action in terms of self-fashioning, but, more importantly for our work here, they

distinguishes the varieties of friendships through further specificity, appealing to a vocabulary of roles that amount to subcategories of each type of friendship: “People who become friends only because they give each other pleasure,” such as “sexual partners” and “members of gourmet cooking clubs;” friends whose friendship is based “only on some immediate gain,” such as “business associates, teammates in professional sports, partners in a marriage of convenience;” and “full friends” who “offer each other [. . .] shared aspirations and loves of a kind that make life together [. . .] an end in itself,” such as the Aristotelian friends in virtue, or the love of “mothers in regard to their children” (173-74). Where literature is concerned, the kinds of friendship “diverge” even more as Booth suggests some ways to determine the kinds of friendship different kinds of authors offer after the initial “cry of invitation” in an author’s title or opening lines: “pleasure” may be humorous pleasure, as we get in “jokes” or “farce,” or it may be the pleasure of being offered something “useful,” such as the “aggressive practical advice” of the “docu-dramas [. . .] or stories about business triumphs;” authors may offer “moral instruction,” such as “Sunday school versions of Bible stories, or [. . .] case studies” in psychology or the “lessons of the great apologues;” we may be offered “visions of a higher reality,” such as we have in “parables and myths,” or “warnings,” or something like “a chance to live together [. . .] with a new friend” (174-75). The point of this exercise, for Booth, is to get his reader to consider any textual object *not* in merely object-terms, as a “puzzle” or a “game,” for example, but in person-terms, or as a relationship: authors as “companions, friends” (175).

Booth’s discussion of literature as readers and writers performing the role of Friends in a Friendship illustrates the way a rhetoric of roles might be employed in the composition classroom: the kinds of questions Booth wants “ethical critics” to ask regarding the way a

illustrate a method by which context might be ascribed to abstract role-terms by the addition of contextualizing adjectives. This method will be explored more fully in the subsequent chapter, “Towards a Pedagogy of Role.”

particular work will affect the audience “*after* the last page is turned,” are similar to the kinds of questions writers should ask when approaching issues of self-fashioning. An ethical critic might ask questions like: “Will this fiction help form a character who is hypersensitive, properly sensitive, or insensitive; intellectually pretentious, thoughtful, or shallow; rash, bold, or timid; bigoted, tolerant, or wishy-washy?” (*Company* 169); a self-fashioning rhetor, on the other hand, might ask questions concerning her rhetorical choices: what kind of a person or character will I appear to be if I phrase this in this way? How does it change who I appear to be if I talk about this particular thing in this particular way? What if I use this word rather than that word?

The role we are asked to perform in a given rhetorical situation can help us answer such questions. If, in a research paper in a biology class, a rhetor takes on the primary role of Storyteller or Apologist rather than Scientist or Researcher or Critic, he will undoubtedly make rhetorical choices that suggest he has inadequately identified the kind of relationship he is in, he will make choices that will fashion a character that is not appropriate to that situation, and he will, thereby, weaken his effectiveness as a rhetor.

While a rhetoric of roles isn’t the only method by which rhetors can be taught to think of their audiences as agents rather than objects, employing a rhetoric of roles does foreground this element of rhetorical interaction. A rhetoric of roles ask the inventor of arguments to approach both reader and writer as rhetors, as role-performers. A rhetoric of roles, moreover, argues that a rhetor persuades not by “bending” an audience to her will, but by providing or suggesting roles into which audiences can en-role themselves, often engaging the audience by reference to roles they are already performing, and by taking on a complementary role in relation to them. Rhetors persuade, a rhetoric of roles suggests, by “acting together,” and the performances of self

necessary to achieve such consubstantiality are, more than anything, the “art” in the art of persuasion.

Roles, as agencies (or resources) for experience, provide perspectives: perspectives on the world, perspectives on the self, perspectives on society, perspectives on others. Providing the audience with roles to perform alters—or, in the best case, expands—the audience’s perspectives so that they can see more than they did before. Antagonism in rhetorical situations, for example, may perhaps be best described as arising from an attempt on the part of a rhetor to remove an audience’s perspective and replace it with another, or even when a rhetor attempts to undermine a different perspective *for* an audience. Such strategies create an “us-versus-them” mentality that, while most often associated with rhetoric, is actually very rarely persuasive (except to those who are already members of your Us). The kind of rhetoric that gets things done, however, (if by “get things done” we mean creating bridges of commonality between persons who are not predisposed to see their likenesses) is, more often than not, the kind of rhetoric that unites people by providing roles for the audience to play that allow audiences to *unite perspectives*. Such performances do not ask rhetors to abandon roles they have played in the past and which, in many ways, have come to define them, nor does it ask them to reject perspectives that have served them well; rather, it asks them to create new roles, or composite roles; it provides roles that offer a complementary perspective rather than a contradictory one. This form of argumentation has often been called “dialectic.”

A rhetoric of roles thus adds to the art of persuasion a sense of what creates perspectives in the first place—or, at least, one of the many ways that we create perspectives. The study of persuasion, when analyzed through the rhetoric of roles, looks at two things: first, the way that we manipulate role-terminology to entitle persons and to create roles, and, second, the way we

perform role-acts as a means of entitling ourselves and others in order to encourage a particular *attitude*.

Through its explanation of the mechanism by which relationships are understood, identities are composed, and social hierarchies are revealed, a rhetoric of roles provides not only insight into the mechanisms of persuasion, but a way to analyze the relationship between persuasion and identification (*ROM* 55)—that is, a critical method for analyzing how rhetoric works in the world, and improved systematic understanding of persuasion, in general (Brummett 116). By presenting rhetorical identity as a role performance, a rhetoric of roles reveals a key mechanism that facilitates persuasions: who we are, or who and what we present ourselves to be, in relation to Others, as a function of the social hierarchies that we are situated in, through rhetorical actions. Thus a rhetoric of roles provides a vocabulary for explaining *how* identity is the necessary antecedent to persuasion. By crafting a recognizable identity, one who says and does the kinds of things that he “should” do in a given role in a given relationship, a rhetor develops the *ethos* (including the character and authority) necessary to persuade. And by doing this with a particular *attitude*, with a certain panache or stylizing, he does so artfully.

This is not to backpedal on what I said earlier: human beings are active agents in any rhetorical transaction, not passive machines; however, the rhetoric of roles, grounding itself in a logic of *personal-ity* types, relationships, and hierarchies, also suggests that, in any rhetorical transaction, there is a level of *artistry* at play for both Persuaders, Persuadees, and Resisters. One cannot simply resist a particular kind of argument because it suits them (despite the fact that our orientations or identifications may motivate us to resist even in the absence of a rationale for resistance). Rather, resistance to a persuasive argument requires the artful resituating of persons into new relationships (such as we saw earlier with our discussion of re-entitlement). Resistance,

to be meaningful, must be *performed*, but performed *rationally*, even when that performance is just internal. We must, in other words, persuade ourselves before we can act, and such persuasion occurs by drawing or redrawing the parameters of an argument by naming or renaming its constituent parts, including the participants, and thus, the relationships. This is accomplished by manipulating the identifications of the symbolic components of the drama, as we see done in the term “crybully:” political conservatives cannot simply accept the victim-status of certain types of victims not only because they do not agree with the victim’s rationales, but because the conservative *identity* is threatened by those rationales; and yet, the status of “victim” is so rhetorically powerful in the current socio-political climate, that political conservatives cannot simply dismiss those vying for victim-status, either; thus, conservatives have been forced to create a new category of person, one that recognizes the Victim status, but which also both effectively re-identifies that status in such a way that the conservative resistance to that status is rational because it effectively (from both the conservative *and* liberal perspectives) re-characterizes that victims-status into a threat, a power-play. Until such a role-term could be coined, conservatives would have been forced to play the “bad guy” role for hating this particular form of victimhood—despite how vehemently they reject that “bad guy” role. But by redefining the victimhood status of their critics into a rational bad guy role, conservatives can rationally reject the victimhood status of their enemies *and* reject their “bad guy” role that they have been placed in.

There is a relationship between *logos*, *pathos*, *ethos*, and *kairos* that a rhetoric of roles suggests: because it presents an audience as not merely hearers, but as arguers in their own right, actively engaging with the arguments presented and actively resisting or integrating those arguments based on the role they’re performing and how that identity places them in relation to

others and to society itself, a rhetoric of roles suggests that one does not persuade simply by saying the right things at the right time in the right way. More complexly, a rhetoric of roles characterizes persuasion as a function of a rhetor actively considering the variety of agents and agencies at work in his audience, and saying things in such a way that *the audience* identifies the rhetor as saying the right kinds of things at the right time *because she or he is the right kind of person* to say those things. Rhetors must *identify* Others in ways that create teams—an Us and a Them—and that encourage audience members to identify with certain roles because they specifically *don't* want to identify themselves through other, less ethically acceptable roles.

This is what Quintillian means when he says that the ideal Orator is the good man speaking well: the “good man” is a person who the audience can consider the right kind of person at the right time. Thus the “ideal orator” must consider the agency of the agents who make up his audience, and try not only to appear to be what the audience needs him to be, but to do so in such a way that he can be, for them, the type of person who is in the process of working to become the type of person who can be trusted because he has performed the kinds of roles the audience needs him to perform—not just at this particular moment, but in the future, as well.

Conclusion

For Burke—in fact, for many rhetorical theorists throughout history—rhetoric is *the* quintessential human art. We see this most clearly in Burke's definition of “man:”

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. (*LASA* 16).

So if we were to consider “human being” not merely as our species of biological organism or animal, but in a more humanistic fashion as one “role” we humans play, the clauses of Burke’s definition present one way to look at our human-ness as a role by defining acts that are involved in performing the role of Human: when one is performing the role of Human, they make, use, and misuse symbols (that is, they engage in rhetoric); they make divisions between right and wrong by saying “no” to things (that is, they engage in morality); they separate themselves from nature by non-natural instruments (including the aforementioned symbols, but also including physical instruments, such as technology); they are idealistic, and these symbolic ideals represent the “perfection” of a thing that the Human is always judging humanity in contrast to, and while there is an absolute necessity for such perfections, there can also be an insurmountable grotesqueness to them. To be useful as instruments of judgment, ideals must be placed in hierarchical orders, with some things entitled as “better” and some things entitled as “worse,” and it is the idea or “spirit” of this hierarchy that motivates humans, in their role as Human, to act, and that gives humans the motivation to make instruments and symbols, and to say “yes” and “no.”

A rhetoric of roles suggests that persuasion (“acting together” or “consubstantiality”) begins by getting humans to first play the role of Human in relation to one another. To do this, a rhetor uses (or misuses, or creates) symbols to name issues, persons, ideas, or groups, and to name them in such a way that the names express positives and negatives, framing the object to orient the audience so that they can identify the acceptable and the rejectable. When the rhetor does this in such a way that the ideas or persons are ordered hierarchically (usually within pre-existing hierarchical orders), the hierarchy itself becomes the tool that the rhetor uses to “goad” her audience to accept a particular “perfect” way to act or be Human in the world. But the rhetor

herself must also demonstrate something of a “perfect” role performance, placing herself hierarchically so that she is properly authorized to act as she does, properly authorized to use the symbols she uses (or properly authorized by the symbols she uses).

A rhetoric of roles thus reveals two important elements in every act of persuasion: 1.) how rhetors must go about persuading their audience to accept the rhetor’s particular identity in a particular situation, and how they must go about persuading the audience to take upon themselves an identity in relation to it; and 2.) how persuading someone of an actual *argument* (the ideas or content of a particular argument) is a function of how those ideas are named in such a way as to place them within a particular hierarchy of goods and evils. And the rhetoric of roles suggests that both of these are accomplished by connecting with our basic humanity through the medium of roles.

A rhetoric of roles, approached methodically and theoretically rather than merely vernacularly, provides a framework for seeing selves as resources, and for constructing effective selves in rhetorical situations. It provides a method by which students can be shown that a particular sort of self will be constructed by our rhetorical choices, whether that self is fashioned conscientiously or not; it provides a vocabulary for discussing those constructed selves, and a framework for orienting rhetors to focus on the self that is constructed through our rhetorical actions. It provides a way for rhetors to think of audiences as agents actively engaging with the acts and words of rhetors, and a terminology for discussing the mechanism by which audiences are oriented for or against certain ideas and arguments *in terms of* the personalities and allegiances suggested by the rhetor’s rhetorical strategies. Audiences are, of course, always agents, and may thus reject any proffered roles, but a rhetoric of roles provides a manageable vocabulary and a method for theorizing audiences as agents based on the role the audience-rhetor

performs in relation to the speaker's ideas, the audience's own allegiances, and the social hierarchies that make up their shared reality. Persons, therefore, are conceived, in a rhetoric of roles, as agents actively looking for whether or not they *should allow themselves* to be persuaded in a given situation by weighing the signs and symbols a particular rhetor employs, and seeking to expose the identifications suggested by the rhetor's identity. Thus, a rhetoric of roles characterizes persuasion not as something the rhetor does *to* the audience, but as something the audience does *with* the rhetor, as both "act together" by employing the resources of their particular sociality to create or fashion a perspective on reality—to see whether or not a *shared reality* is possible. By so doing, a rhetoric of roles takes the idea of human beings as role performers, and the roles these humans perform, as common places for rhetorical invention, and for rhetorical analysis.

How this might translate into classroom practice will be the focus of our subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 4: Towards a Pedagogy of Role

Composition pedagogy already appeals to a rhetoric of roles, not just in the theories of composition written for academic journals intended to be read only by professionals in the field, but in the textbooks written to be read by students in freshman composition courses. *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing (AB)*, for example, one of the most widely used textbooks in freshman composition courses, opens its first chapter (“Thinking Rhetorically About Good Writing”), with a quote from historian Rodney Kilcup which argues that “the way to help people become good writers” isn’t to teach them “the rules of grammar” or “a four-part outline” or how to “Consult experts and collect the useful information,” but to teach them what is most “crucial” is “having a good, interesting question” (5). Even though there is no formal theory of roles in rhetoric and composition, from its very first lines we see that the *AB* is concerned with teaching students to understand the behaviors of the role they are taking on—the role of Writer, or, more specifically, the role of Good Writer (15)—and they do this throughout the text via a discourse of roles, referring repeatedly to what “writers” do in relation to their readers.

Another textbook, John Goshert’s *Entering the Academic Conversation (AC)*, also begins by explicitly defining the Academic reader/writer relationship in Burkean terms, as a “conversation.” The textbook then explicitly defines the “role” that, it argues, students are expected to perform in that relationship:

We want to challenge the notion that *your role* is simply to discover and report facts to readers. While the kinds of writing you’ll do here are intensely academic, and often quite traditional, they are also intensely personal. You’ll see *a role* and

even requirement for your own creative engagement with the questions and texts on which you choose to focus. (12, italics mine)

Goshert not only suggests that his reader—first year college students—come into the first-year composition classroom already possessing a sense of their role as Academic Writer, but suggests that their impression of that role is incorrect. From this point on, *AC* appeals repeatedly to a role-rhetoric in an attempt to disabuse its readers of their preconceptions, defining writerly acts in terms of the writerly identity such acts suggest: “Academic thinkers,” “legal scholars,” “research writers,” “academic writers,” etc.

In another widely used textbook, *From Inquiry to Academic Writing (AW)*, Stuart Green and April Lidinsky also introduce students to “academic writing” by appealing to a rhetoric of roles. They define “academic writing” by differentiating the variety of academic roles, or academic identities, students may be called upon to perform in a variety of academic genres over the course of their career as academic writers: it’s “what **scholars** do to communicate with other **scholars** [. . .]. It’s the research report a **biologist** writes, the interpretive essay a **literary scholar** composes, the media analysis a **film scholar** produces,” and in order for students to do it, *AW* argues that students will “have to learn how to *think*, like an **academic**, *read* like an **academic**, *do research* like an **academic**, and *write* like an **academic**” (1, italics in original, bold mine). Of course, none of these authors expects students to be able to think, read, do research, and write like scholars after only a semester or two of writing instruction—or even necessarily after four years of general academic education. Developing a scholarly persona requires years of study, practice, dedication, preparation, and intensely focused labor. But, more importantly for our purposes here is that each of these texts employs a role-rhetoric to explain itself to its readers, who are undoubtedly first year students who are just being introduced to academic writing, and

each textbook takes for granted that its reader will comprehend the role-rhetoric being employed. Moreover, each text's appeal to role-rhetoric implies that freshman composition is designed to teach students the skills necessary to craft an *identity* in writing, and that part of crafting an identity in writing happens before the writer ever writes; indeed, each argues that the ability to craft an identity in writing comes from being steeped in a shared base of knowledge and behavior—what *AW* will later call “habits of mind” (2) but which includes habits of behavior—within which one is able to create and articulate points of view.

While each of these textbooks appeals to a role-rhetoric, that rhetoric, because it is untheorized, is unable to articulate to students a few fundamental facts that, I argue, would help students argue from their place of *en-role-ment* more effectively. First is the fact that what academic writing situations call upon students to perform *are actually roles*, and that a writer's authority and effectiveness—that is, their ability to be persuasive—in any given rhetorical situation is a function of how well they perform the role the *particular* academic situation calls upon them to perform. Second is the fact that, by seeing their rhetorical situations as relationships between role-performing persons, writers can better determine the parameters of the role they are being called upon to perform *as a role in relation to* some other person performing some other role. Third, that naming the roles and the relationships that pertain to a particular rhetorical situation, and naming them in such a way that role-titles evoke a sense of the writer's purpose and expected actions in that relationship, provides a means of framing the situation in personified terms, and such “entitlement” can be a means of seeing, in the particular situation, the available means of persuasion, and of crafting an identity or “self” suitable to that situation because it fulfills the expectations of the particular type of reader envisioned by the relationship.

A pedagogy of roles teaches students to read situations through a rhetoric of roles by moving students through a process similar to that modeled by Booth. We begin helping students see rhetorical situations as relationships between persons performing roles and then naming the kind of relationship being entered to frame the situation. Then, teachers and students working in collaboration will name some roles that each relationship-name suggests, role-names that are “dramatistic” in nature, or that suggest rhetorical actions and attitudes that rhetors will perform as a function of the role. Through classroom discussion, teacher and students move to define some variations inherent in the named roles, and to define the attitudes, authority, and orientations such variations suggest, in order to provide a more specific *identity* for both the writer, and the potential readers who may make up their audience. And, after this process has made some possible roles in the rhetorical relationship commonplaces for rhetorical invention, the process stage of the writing classroom can be dedicated to ensuring that the stylistic choices the writer makes actually suggest the role that the writer has taken on.

The following chapter attempts to illustrate this process. I begin by tentatively naming some reader-writer relationships that first-year composition students are often asked to participate in, as well as some roles that are suggested by those relationship-names. I will then sub-divide each role through the use of modifiers to suggest some different identities (in terms of attitudes, orientations, and authorities) that one might craft while performing that particular role.

To focus this discussion, I reference some common first-year writing assignments as described in the representative textbooks I have already introduced: Ramage, et al’s *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* (AB), Stuart Greene and April Lidinsky’s *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* (AW), and John Goshert’s *Entering the Academic Conversation* (AC). I will suggest some ways that a rhetoric of roles might help us define, in relational terms, the rhetorical

situations suggested by these assignments: specifically, I will look at the way that a rhetoric of roles can inform the kinds of public personas these assignments ask students to perform by directing compositional choices to convey, or create, appropriate selves in particular relationships.

In doing this, I do not mean to suggest that the names I use to entitle these roles and relationships are the only names that can be used, or even necessarily the names that should be used. This pedagogy presents neither an exhaustive taxonomy of roles nor a manual on style. Rather, I hope it illustrates some of the ways that a rhetoric of roles might begin to be employed in the composition classroom as a framework for rhetorical invention. It is, I believe, the role of the Teacher to guide her students in determining how and why to entitle certain roles and relationships so that the titles work for those particular students in that particular classroom situation, and so that the concept of roles, itself, is understood to be an abstract concept that rhetors can transfer from context to context. Thus, this pedagogy is meant only to model a method, not to provide a taxonomy of terms.

Relationships and Roles in the Freshman Composition Classroom.

Since the rhetorical situation, or rhetorical relationship, one is entering determines the role or roles that the persons in that relationship can reasonably be expected to perform, I want to begin by naming and defining some typical rhetorical relationships students often encounter in first-year composition. The terms I have chosen to entitle these relationships is designed to accurately characterize the relationships themselves, and also to suggest certain kinds of roles that might be used as commonplaces for rhetorical analysis and identity invention. The terms are abstract enough to frame the rhetorical situations in general terms, but specific enough to provide

a sense of rhetorical identity as a function of one's expected role (or function or task) in relation to some Other person or persons. This abstractness also provides a focus for further exploration in the classroom, as well as a means for developing individually in one's role performance: the class discussion should guide students towards more specificity and concreteness, modifying these abstract terms until they better suggest the attitude, orientation, and authority the writer wants or needs in a specific situation. I also strived to name both the roles and the relationships in terms that are familiar enough for my readers that the titles can serve as prototypes or models to be renamed and reconceived as individual classroom circumstances necessitate.

The relationships (and associated roles) I will focus on are:

- Entertainment relationships, with roles such as Narrator and Storyteller
- Agonistic relationships, with roles such as Cynic and Apologist
- Analytical relationships, with roles such as Critic and Researcher

Again, this list is not meant to be an exhaustive taxonomy of the potential relationships and roles we see in academic writing situations; neither is it meant to reflect any necessary hierarchical order for teaching (narrative relationships *do not* have to be taught first, *do not* have to be followed by agonistic relationships, etc.). This list also shouldn't be construed to suggest that these roles and relationships are mutually exclusive: a writer may very well see his role as that of an Apologist (for example) though he finds himself in an Analytical relationship; he may, alternately, find himself in a situation that requires playing more than one role at a time. There is ample room for overlap: a Critic can most certainly be an Apologist and a Poet in the very same composition. What I'm doing here is arranging these terms to emphasize the rhetoric of roles as a

framework for thinking, and the role itself as a springboard for analysis and invention, or as a commonplace from which to begin thinking rhetorically in terms of identity and action. This simplistic naming of potential relationships and entitlement of roles merely provides a necessary entry-point for discussing rhetorical action as a function of roles-in-relationships, and for illustrating how the rhetoric of roles might be used as a tool for analysis *and* invention.

It should be apparent almost immediately that each of these titles suggests fundamentally different rhetorical relationships, and that each of these roles suggests fundamentally different orientations for crafting an identity through action, suggesting different motives and different strategies of engagement based on both the type of relationship suggested and the types of persons or selves the name is placing a rhetor in relation to. However, while these titles clearly provide more direction in terms of rhetorical action and attitude than the terms Writer and Rhetor provide alone, the actions they define in particular are also up for interpretation, and, therefore, the titles require further discussion: though all critics, for example, do certain things that define them as Critics, there are many ways to “critique,” many attitudes one can have in the act of critiquing, many orientations from which one might choose to critique, and many potential types of authority one might perform in the act of critiquing.

In this respect, the role-titles I use, while more specific than “Writer” and “Reader,” are still far too abstract to be of use for the average student; but, ironically, I’d argue their abstractness is their best feature: the abstract term provides a direction to begin exploring the relationship one is entering, and should be further contextualized by addition of modifying adjectives. Therefore, once the roles and relationships are named, the teacher’s role is to lead a discussion aimed at more precisely defining the type of relationship that is suggested by the role-title, as well as the variety of potential roles suggested by the relationship. Specifically, teachers

should focus on what the particular relationship-*titles* suggests about the potential *attitudes* participants will likely bring into the relationship (towards one another and towards their objects of discussion). Of course, there could be many potential attitudes, or variations of a single attitude, with each one presented as a potentially different posture for a rhetor to take in that relationship, and with potentially different responses to anticipate from the audience, but once some of those potential attitudes are indexed, the class can begin investigating the *roles* that both rhetor and audience are being called upon to perform in that particular *type* of relationship, and how the attitudes suggested by the relationship-title, and by the writerly and readerly role-titles, might inform the rhetorical choices of each player. How do the role-titles “orient” each performer (ideologically, emotionally, professionally, personally, etc.)? What types of “authority” does each role title imbue the writer with? Etc.

Through discussion, the students collaboratively invoke and create a shared base of social knowledge to inform and direct their selection of rhetorical strategies, as well as to inform any peer-group discussions (if a teacher chooses to employ that particular pedagogy). In this discussion, the teacher’s role is that of Facilitator, Guide, and Expert: the rhet/comp instructor, as source of specifically *rhetorical* knowledge (particularly terminology), can guide students in the selection of name-titles, and of modifying terms that help students further contextualize those name-titles, as well as in the selection, naming, and explanation of rhetorical strategies that might help fashion an effective Self in the role under discussion, including stylistic strategies. The titles can then lead to a discussion of acts that such a role would perform, and the kind of self that these acts would suggest to the reader. These “acts” would, of course, be rhetorical acts, and would allow teachers to open up discussions on sentence style, word choice, grammars,

content, figures of speech, the “topoi,” and organization as a reflection of the identity the writer wishes to fashion through a particular role performance.

Entertainment Relationships: The Roles of Storyteller and Poet

Henry James famously declared that “the only obligation” of creative writing “is that it be interesting” (14); more recently, moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt writes that “The human mind is a story processor, not a logic processor” (281); and composition theorist Richard Lanham has argued that the advent of modern technology, particularly the spread of “Internet or the World Wide Web, has moved the human economy from an economics of stuff to an economics of attention” (*The Economics of Attention* 13). Taken together, these thinkers suggest that one of the most basic human *rhetorical* needs is the need to be entertained. It’s not that humans are naturally irrational; rather, the human mind operates on the logic of narrative and pleasure: it needs to be interested. “Everyone loves a good story,” Haidt writes, and so “every culture bathes its children in stories” (Haidt 281).

Because fashioning a self, or crafting an identity, begins with the stories one tells about themselves and their relations to others, a narrative assignment can be an excellent way (but by no means the only way) to start exploring methods for crafting an identity, or practicing self-fashioning. In many freshman composition classes, the first assignment student writers are asked to compose is some kind of narrative, such as the “literacy narrative” detailed in both *AB* and *AW*.⁴⁸ While I don’t want to suggest that lessons in narrative are the “right” way to begin

⁴⁸ While other writing assignments precede the narrative assignment in both *AB*’s and *AW*’s writing sequences, and the narrative doesn’t appear at all in Goshert’s *AC*, three of the schools where I’ve taught first year writing had a general curriculum outline for graduate instructors or adjuncts mandating that teachers start with a narrative assignment (although I am led to believe that this is becoming rarer and rarer). When I worked as a high school teacher, moreover, not a year passed that students weren’t asked to compose narratives. But it is not simply the ubiquity of the narrative assignment which leads me to begin with a discussion of narrative; narrative is simply a

instruction in college level writing, or in a rhetoric of roles, I do want to defend the practice of writing stories as something that can be instrumental in moving students towards excelling at academic prose. “Creative” and “expressive” writing is not only the most substantial experience most students have with self-directed reading and writing, it is the rhetoric they most regularly experience and practice: they hear stories, and tell stories, and come to know themselves and others through stories. Narrative is probably the most recognizable and most comfortable genre for many of our students, so it is wise to use it, when possible, in order to help them grow as writers.

Narrative can also be a relatively low-stakes form of writing—not, however, because narrative is a lesser form of writing, but because the kinds of narratives college classes ask students to write are usually autobiographical, a genre of writing that draws directly on students’ personal experiences, the one area of knowledge they probably feel most comfortable with in terms of “expertise.” Because many students come into the university assuming a knowledge economy that is beyond them, asking students to perform expertise in themselves rather than in a particular discipline has the potential to engage the student from a place of relative confidence (in terms of subject matter, if not in terms of generic or formal expectations). Thus narrative writing can be an effective tool for introducing the concept of self-fashioning through roles—especially because, to be effective, narrative writing cannot rely on a “personal” vocabulary or self-originating rhetorical practices. Rather, personal stories must be made accessible to others by reference to some external, shared terminologies and standards of communication, appealing to group understandings that are grounded in an intellectual, social, cultural, emotional

great way to introduce students to a variety of genres, to discuss genres in terms of relationships and roles, to discuss the relationships between genres and attitudes, and then to discuss the kinds of attitudes, orientations, and authority certain identities suggest in certain situations.

commons—what Burke calls “the psychology of the audience” (CS 31). Thus narrative writing introduces the student to the concept of the Other because stories are written not for one’s self alone, but for some Other to read.

Because of this, the story must be, above all, interesting, entertaining, and this is the key reason I have chosen “Entertaining” as the name-title for this type of relationship. Writers of narrative must understand that the reason readers read stories is, first and foremost, to be entertained. To entertain the reader, then, should be the writer’s primary concern when composing a narrative, and all rhetorical choices should be made with that overarching *function* in mind: to perform the role of Entertainer.

Of course, there are many different ways to entertain, and once that relationship is named, teachers can use the term as a springboard for discussing the multitude of ways writers entertain audiences. For Burke, the “poetic categories” are frames for orienting attitudes of acceptance and rejection, and because of this, such categories can provide a terminology for directing just such a classroom discussion. Each poetic category “stresses its own peculiar way of building the mental equipment (meanings, attitudes, character) by which one handles the significant factors of his time” (ATH 34)—or, in our students’ case, the significant factors of their immediate rhetorical situation. A writer can entertain in “epic” fashion, for example (including that more folkloric variety of the epic, the “fairy tale”);⁴⁹ alternately, a writer can entertain in “tragic” or in “comic” fashions (with each of these terms potentially meaning a variety of things). Odes and elegies, pastorals and satires, burlesques and grotesques, didactic preaching or poetic musing: each of these categories not only suggests a different way to

⁴⁹ I have had students write fairy tales to help them develop an understanding of genre and to gain a sense not only of how writerly identities are crafted through rhetorical strategies, but how such identity crafting strategies are delimited by genres.

entertain, it suggests different attitudes that writers might take in relation to their readers.

Different attitudes mean different relationships, and different relationships mean different roles.

What, for example, is the attitude of the Tragic Narrator as compared to the Epic Narrator, or the Didactic, or the Comic? What sorts of writer/reader relationships are suggested by each of these, and what sets of predefined actions and expectations does each suggest in relation to the other? What sort of persona is required to build that kind of relationship? And what sorts of rhetorical strategies does each suggest to fashion such a persona, including word choice, content, perspective, ideological orientation, etc.? What exactly is it that makes something “tragic” as compared to “comic,” or what rhetorical strategies make something *sound* tragic or comic? What is unique to tragedy/comedy/epic/etc. that people find “entertaining” in that particular genre? Aristotle suggested, for example, that tragedy is “cathartic;” if this is the case, in what ways does the term “cathartic” help direct the writer to act *in relation to* their audience as an Entertainer?

Along with these poetic categories, student intentions could be further delimited and directed by appealing to Burke’s “basic offices,” or his terms for the most basic social motives (govern, teach, heal, entertain, serve, defend, pontificate). Each of these terms could be explored through discussion, its definition slowly narrowed so that it will provide not only an orientation for the writer (and, by extension, for the reader), but a framework for crafting a particular identity in relation to the reader by directing rhetorical choices. What does it mean, in the context of entertaining an audience, to Teach, or to Heal, or to Pontificate? A teacher could ask students, for example, to write a literary narrative in an “epic” mode, and to do it with the desire to “heal” their readers, or to perhaps “heal” their readers’ attitudes, if the reader is imagined as one who is negatively predisposed to college (perhaps because of their family situation, or because of their

economic circumstances, because of class consideration, or simply because they think another four years of school would be boring). The writer, then, might choose to compose a literacy narrative in which the Narrator-Protagonist must overcome impossible odds (familial, economic, classist, personal) to be able to attend University. To do this in the epic mode might involve characterizing the narrative as quest for higher education, or as a great adventure; alternately, the writer could choose to entitle himself through the tragic mode, as a Tragic Poet who details the personal inadequacies that kept him from succeeding in education, or by highlighting the great sacrifices required to get his chance at an education; or, the writer might choose to entitle herself through the comedic mode, casting herself in the role of the Fool who must learn by hard experience the necessity for education.⁵⁰

Offering these terms to students as a way to get them thinking about their role in a particular writer-reader relationship, as I said earlier, would not be designed to provide a rigid taxonomy of the students' possibilities, but to open up a conversation about roles as places from which to craft identities. The poetic categories and the basic offices would act as rhetorical resources, commonplaces from which rhetors can begin the act of invention. Their purpose is to provide a vocabulary to get students thinking about possibilities—as Burke said: a program needs a vocabulary, and a “developing person,” such as a student, requires a “program” and a “vocabulary” for their development to be methodical and conscientious (*ATH* 4; *ROM* 18). The role of the Theorist is to provide such programs and vocabularies; the role of the Teacher is to guide and direct the student in acquiring the vocabulary and in practicing the program. The role

⁵⁰ This is very much what the two literary narrative models published in *AW* are designed to do, though the authors had no access to a rhetoric of role to direct such discussions: while each takes a different attitude towards schooling, Richard Rodriguez's “Scholarship Boy” and Gerald Graff's “Disliking Books” each presents the journey towards education in something like an epic formula (a tragic-epic in Rodriguez's case, and a comic-epic in Graff's). In each, the rhetorical choices of the author are informed by the identity the author seeks to craft, and the role they want to play in relation to the reader; and while each primarily performs the role of “Entertainer,” each also performs roles that could be entitled such things as “Preacher,” “Epic Narrator,” and “Critic” simultaneously as he tries to convince his reader that anyone can overcome seemingly impossible odds to receive an education.

of the Student is to acquire, practice, and perfect the use of such vocabularies and programs over time. Thus, the first step to using a rhetoric of roles pedagogically is to teach students how to employ this rhetoric as a method for naming or “entitling” situations (or types of relationships) and roles (or types of persons), and then to work through exercises that explore the connotations of those terms and that provide some practice in using those terms as a lens for developing rhetorical awareness. But we want to do this in a way that doesn’t characterize this method as limiting; we want the students to see the method as expansive, and potentially limitless, in order to illustrate the usefulness of the role-rhetoric framework itself in a variety of writing situations, and its transferability from situation to situation.

In both textbooks that assign a narrative essay, the assignment’s description focuses on the *literary* components of narrative, including plot, and character development, and dialogue, and imagery. However, there is no mention of how the writer, herself, is crafted through particular rhetorical choices, nor is there any discussion regarding how important the writer’s *apparent* personality is (that is, her performance of *a personality*) to the reader’s experience of the narrative, or to the reader’s *enjoyment* of the narrative experience. In the freshman writing classroom, this is the most important reason, I think, to use a narrative assignment in the first place: to illustrate the relationship between writer personality and reader engagement, and to illustrate how that relationship is largely defined by the expectations of the rhetorical situation itself. In my experience, the attitude of first year writing teachers towards the narrative assignment is of two polarized kinds: one group loves the narrative assignment because it allows students more room for creativity and self-exploration; the other group hates the assignment because it doesn’t seem to prepare students for the kind of writing they will be doing in the college classroom. This either/or perspective fails to see the ways in which acts of creativity and

self-exploration can be employed to prepare students for activities that do not *appear* to be creative or self-explorational (both of which academic writing actually is, contrary to popular belief).

Perhaps this is why, increasingly, the narrative assignment is being phased out of first-year writing courses and replaced with something more “argumentative” and “rhetorical,” like a classical argument or an opinion essay. Employing narrative assignments as a way to explore the rhetoric of identity creation in rhetorical situations. However, through a rhetoric of roles, narrative assignments provide a means of satisfying both groups: it not only allows students to write more “creatively,” but it does so in a way that suggests the need for seeing the “creativity” and “artistry” in all forms of writing because, as a writer develops an individual identity through her rhetorical choices, she must be certain that the identity fashioned engages and entertains the reader by reference to the expectations of that type of writer/reader situation.

Narrative, then, can be used as a way to explore the way we fashion selves in writing through rhetorical choices that *identify* us as a type of person we want to appear to be in relation to particular moral hierarchies and to other kinds of persons and groups existing in our particular historical moment. Jonathan Haidt illustrates this by quoting from Keith Richards, the “rebellious” lead guitarist of the rock band The Rolling Stones, who, as a boy, was kicked out of his school choir the moment his voice changed: when he was informed that he “would have to repeat a full year in school to make up” the classes he had missed for choral events, and “the choir master didn’t lift a finger to defend” him, Richards said that, from that moment on, he and his friends became “terrorists”:

I was so mad, I had a burning desire for revenge. I had reason to bring down his country and everything it stood for. [. . .] If you want to breed a rebel, that’s the

way to do it [. . .] That's when I realized that there's bigger bullies than just bullies. There's them, the authorities. (282-83)

For Haidt, the psychology on display in Richards' narration of events suggests that the moment he narrates "transformed him in ways" that had "obvious political ramifications [. . .] once Richards came to understand himself as a crusader against abusive authority,"—that is, once Richards came to comprehend (or, perhaps better said, craft or fashion through role-logic) his role in relation to his historical moment and the players in it—"there was no way he was ever going to vote for the British Conservative Party" because the "life narrative," and thus the identity or self, that he had constructed "fit too well with the stories that all parties on the left tell in one form or another" (283).

When we read this narrative from a rhetorical perspective, and particularly when formed by a rhetoric of roles, what we see is an act of self-fashioning that is fundamentally informed by a role-based logic: Richards fashioned an identity by casting himself in the roles of Outcast and Rebel and Terrorist. Of course, he was not alone in that act: his teachers and his historical moment helped fashion that self and made those identifying terms and actions available to him. The choice of identifying concepts oriented him towards some things (acceptance) and away from other things (rejection), and once that happened, there were only so many groups he could symbolically align with: he was still an agent, but his experiences delimited the potential agencies he could choose from by orienting him in particular ways. And once his situation cast him in the role he was to play, his rhetorical choices would be largely defined by reference to that role, including his political choices. I reiterate: it isn't that Richards' agency was taken from him; rather, it was delimited: based in his experiences and the rhetorical resources available to him—including the potential roles he could play—his options for self fashioning, and thus for

rhetorical and symbolic action, were now directed towards certain performances of self, certain modes of identification. Is it possible that an awareness of his situation as a role player might have altered his choices, caused him to see different avenues of self-performance that were available to him? I don't know—but I like The Rolling Stones, so, let's be grateful for small favors.

What this illustrates is that narrative essay writing not only provides a potential space for students to explore their own roles in relationships, but it provides a space for exploring the ways that the “rules” of society, as the “intellectual commons” or the social resources available for self-fashioning, have informed our choices, as well. That intellectual commons can include genres of stories as well as genres of personality. Stories communicate by appealing to socially recognizable formulae—those impersonal, abstract factors which writers and readers share because they both belong to a particular symbol system. Such formulae may include key phrases and words, such as the “Once upon a time” that characterizes a fairy tale, or key rhetorical moments, such as the narrative “turn,” that “earned [. . .] moment of epiphany” (17) which Newkirk argues is characteristic of the personal essay. This may also include socially defined roles, such as Rebel or Queer or Conservative.

Narrative thus presents some potentially ideal opportunities not only for students to explore the meaning of “good” writing as informed by a shared social commons, but, also significantly, for teaching students how to fashion an identity through particular, genre-specific performances of the role of Writer as a performance of a particular writerly or social role. We may choose to entitle the role of the Entertaining Writer as Storyteller, for example, or as Narrator, but each one of these suggests certain acts, a certain orientation, certain attitudes that the writer so entitled is authorized to perform, while precluding other types of behaviors that, in

the particular situation, would not be as effective or appropriate. “Storyteller,” for example, not only denotes a person who “tells” a “story” (thus suggesting, of course, the idea of plot but also of person), but it also carries connotations that require the writer to be an Entertainer in a different way than the term Narrator does—and the connotations of these particular titles are very different from the connotations of the role-title Poet, or Playwright. To assign a literacy narrative, then, is to ask not only for performance in a different genre than that of “poetry” or “fairy tale,” but it is to ask for a very different persona than one might have as Poet or Fairy Story Teller. And we could delimit the personality of the writer even further by adding modifiers to the title: Tragic Narrator versus Comic Narrator versus Grotesque Narrator; Comic Storyteller versus Grotesque Storyteller versus Didactic Storyteller. Etc.

As I said earlier, I do not want to muddle this chapter with taxonomies and rigid definitions. The definitions that a particular teacher and her class develops regarding particular roles may be, in their specifics, different than any definitions I develop here. Indeed, the same teacher may develop different definitions from semester to semester, just to keep things interesting. But it is important to recognize that while the definitions may differ in their specifics, the goal of the *rhetoric* is the same: to help students see roles as a resource for rhetorical action. Just as the specific roles become commonplaces for analysis and invention in specific writing situations, the *idea* of roles, in general, is also meant to become a commonplace for analysis and invention. As students begin thinking, moving towards specificity by discussing a term, developing and defining a title’s possible permutations, the discussion should suggest how the role-rhetoric frames the possibilities for rhetorical actions. The increasingly specific term itself, then, should function less as a balance beam and more as a signpost, delimiting the students’ potential rhetorical choices by directing and guiding students in the fashioning of situationally

effective identities or selves. As in all writing, unconsidered stylistic choices can unintentionally create the impression of a rhetorical self that is at odds with the writer's intentions; a rhetoric of roles can bring students' attention to this fact. By guiding inexperienced rhetors to consider multiple rhetorical strategies through the self-fashioning frame of the rhetor's role in a given relationship, teachers can facilitate and direct student awareness of rhetorical situations *as relationships* between persons who define themselves (and thus their relationship) through rhetorical performances of the readerly and writerly roles suggested by a writerly performance in a particular genre.

It is helpful that, in the textbooks I survey here, the directions for the "Narrative" assignments appeal to a vernacular understanding of the concept of roles. Specifically, these assignments ask student writers to "Reflect on your experiences as a *reader*" by "focusing on at least one turning point, at least one moment of recognition or lesson learned" (*AW* 27, emphasis mine). Another text asks students to "portray your literacy experience in terms of a breakthrough or transforming moment that created a new sense of yourself as a *reader, writer, or learner*" (*AB* 144, emphasis mine). Using these appeals to vernacular role-rhetoric as a starting point, teachers can enter a discussion of role-performances by employ a rhetoric of roles, and thereby illuminate the potential, more specific roles that students may want to perform in their own narratives as a function *of the specific relationship* they want to have with their reader, and as a function *of the specific kind of person* or ethical character they want their reader to identify them as possessing.

For example, in autobiographical narratives, such as the literacy narrative, the reader expects the Narrator or Storyteller to "narrate" experiences leading up to a transformative moment of earned epiphany. According to Thomas Newkirk, framing and detailing this narrative turn *is the role* of the Writer of Autobiographical Narrative, and the specific expectation of the

Reader of Narrative. The writer needs to be made aware that the reader of narrative wants to have a particular kind of relationship with the narrator, something relatively intimate. They want to know not just what the narrator learned, but to know the narrator as a person; not just to feel that the narrator's epiphany was earned, as Newkirk argues, but *through* the narration of the epiphany moment, to feel that they now know the narrator himself a little more, to feel transformed themselves in some way, and to feel their relationship with the narrator transformed, as well. In a word, they want to feel *consubstantial* with the narrator, and this is the "persuasion" at work in narrative as a genre. And if the reader comes away feeling something less than that, it isn't because the reader is mean; it's because the writer isn't doing his job.

Agonistic Relationships: The Roles of Cynic and Apologist

Despite the fact that narratives and poems most definitely make arguments, students don't usually consider "narrative" and "poetry" among the "argumentative" forms of discourse. To our students, arguments involve combat, persons defending or attacking particular positions or ideas. This is *not* what argument is, of course, and one of the first things we often have to do as freshman composition teachers is disabuse our students of this misunderstanding. However, students do encounter such combative relationships, and so, in order to teach the variations of argument in freshman composition, we need to first come up with a way to entitle these combative or challenging rhetorical relationships in order to differentiate them from other forms of argument. The title I have chosen for these kinds of combative relationships "Agonistic."

The term *agon* is Greek in origin, like many of the other terms students encounter in our rhetoric courses. It means variously "challenge," "struggle," or "conflict," and we have students write in agonistic relationships to teach them how to take a strong stance on something they truly

believe or against something they disbelieve.⁵¹ In such relationships, it is important to fashion an identity that is confident, and to understand the kinds of conflicts that might arise through the use of certain kinds of symbols. However, it is equally important to be able to fashion an identity that is wise, knowledgeable, thoughtful, and ethical, and to craft a self that can stand up for what is right. That being said, agonistic relationships need not necessarily be *antagonistic* in nature, even though students have a tendency to conflate the two. I will address this point more a little later in this section, but I want to begin where the students are, by approaching the agonistic in terms of the *antagonistic* as a way to introduce this relationship to students.

In agonistic relationships that are *antagonistic*, the players and their ideas are named in ways that place them in war-like conflict with each other: some persons and ideas “heroic” and others are “villainous.” The heroic and the villainous, in this kind of situation, are named or entitled by reference to a shared moral ideology: where personal narratives written in the “epic” mode can be agonistic in that the Writer-Hero of the story struggles towards the moment of epiphany against his own pre-epiphanic ignorance, the agonistic relationships of traditional public argument present a conflict between persons in terms of their hierarchically-placed ideas or ideals: the writer holds the right ideas, some Other holds the wrong ideas, and those wrong ideas must be revealed as the villainous ideas that they are, and be condemned.

Because right and wrong ideas of course belong to some persons or groups, the person or group who holds them must be named or “framed” (to use Burke’s terminology) in terms

⁵¹ The choice to instruct students in a combative form of rhetoric may at first seem counter-intuitive, especially since the theorist which has informed this project most profoundly is Kenneth Burke, whose entire project was a self-described attempt to move “towards the purification of war” and whose only writing on an educational curriculum, “Linguistic Approaches to the Problems of Education,” wants to employ dramatism to make students afraid of symbols, and to cut off the very antagonistic and competitive impulses that can lead to war by making students afraid of antagonistic symbol use. However, such goals are not necessarily at odds with teaching combat-argument, if the strategies are taught in such a way to make students distrustful of the potential usefulness of such antagonism—which, if you pay attention to Facebook, Twitter, and other online forums, wouldn’t be very hard to illustrate. Moreover, there is a time to be combative—a time to defend and a time to attack—and students must first be prepared for the kinds of rhetorical combat they will undoubtedly encounter, before they can disarm it.

sufficiently positive or negative to elicit the appropriate level of acceptance or rejection by a reader. However, as Burke argues, how we choose to name the enemy or the friend says more about the namer than it does about the named, and so the way that the “enemy” Other is characterized—what role they are cast in—will largely depend on what the writer wants to accomplish, or what kind of persuasion he wants to perform. If, for example, defeat (or exaltation) is the goal, the writer must successfully vilify (or sanctify) the Other. That goal will help determine the role, and the attitude, the writer chooses in relation to both his audience and his object of study.

In her “cry-bully” essay, Julie Burchill chose to characterize the Other (the “cry-bully”) in what amount to foolish terms: the “evil” isn’t evil like war crimes are evil or like child porn is evil; this evil is worthy of ridicule, and must be met with disdain, not violence. But thus far, in our post-civil rights historical moment, those who can effectively argue from the role of social minority and historical victim have the moral high ground; ridiculing, them, requires that they are first entitled in ridiculous terms, named in a way that authorizes disdain. Disdain can only be authorized, though, if it is morally righteous, and that requires the disdained thing to be rightly named. So Burchill develops a term to do this: “cry-bully.” In a historical moment where the abuse of power is recognized as a supreme moral evil (indeed, it is the ultimate source of victimhood), the use of victimhood as an abusive power, the use of one’s humble station as a source of power and pride and lording-over, can be characterized as a double-evil worthy of double ridicule—not violence, perhaps, but certainly ridicule.

Burchill clearly, then, takes up not merely an agonistic role in relation to her object of disdain, but an *antagonistic* role. If we were to name the role Burchill is performing, we might choose a title like “Cynic,” and if we were to employ Burke’s poetic categories to characterize

her attitude, we might consider her poetic category to be Satire or Burlesque, a kind of dark comedy in which the goal is not necessarily redemption but expulsion. Her tone is certainly sarcastic, and the language she uses is humorously poetic—all rhetorical strategies that can be traced back to the role she is performing, or to her function in a particular system. Take, for example, the parallel structure and echoing consonance in a phrase like “hideous hybrid of victim and victor, weeper and walloper,” or in her finger-pointing accusations of celebrities’ hypocrisy:

Jeremy Clarkson is a prime cry bully, punching a producer and then whining in *The Sunday Times* about ‘losing my baby’ (The baby being *Top Gear* [a television show]). Perez Hilton, recently of the CBB house, is a good example too, screaming abuse at his wretched room-mates until they snapped and hit back, at which point he would dissolve in floods of tears and flee to the Diary Room to claim that he felt ‘unsafe’. Stephen Fry is one, forever banging on about his own mental fragility yet mocking Stephen Hawking’s voice at a recent awards ceremony. Esther Rantzen — an anti-bullying campaigner — strikes me as another.

Burchill’s role of Satirizing Cynic, however, is slightly different from the role performed by Roger Kimball, who introduced Burchill’s term to the U.S. in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion editorial about the recent rash of campus protests on U.S universities. Kimball chose hyperbole as his chief rhetorical device, characterizing crybullies not as fools in need of ridicule, but as enemies of the state, seeking to undermine the American way of life. While there is, here and there, an element of sarcasm in Kimball’s prose, his attitude is less Satire or Burlesque than it is Didactic, at times Tragic and Epic, and bordering on Elegiac: campus crybullies, Kimball argues,

include “student and faculty protesters” who, in one instance, “physically prevented reporters from photographing a tent village they had built on public space” and in another instance were the “angry mob” who “forced back” a “student photographer [. . .] while Melissa Click, a feminist communications teacher at Mizzou, shouts for ‘muscle’ to help her eject a reporter;” these are they, Kimball writes, who have “weaponized [their] coveted status as a victim.” These are not images of the ridiculous, but of an intense power struggle, and of power abused. And the behaviors Kimball describes provoke him to ask, rhetorically, in the classic fashion of a lament: “What is happening?” as though the immorality of the scene should be obvious to anyone who is paying attention. He writes that these protests on race and gender have “marked an important turning point” that allowed crybullies to add “the pleasures of aggression [. . .] to the comforts of feeling aggrieved” (a lovely chiasmus made all the more pleasing through the use of sound effects).

Kimball does admit that there are those in higher education who are resisting this “trend,” and he employs this dichotomy of what was with what is becoming in classic Conservative fashion, by appealing to a brighter and more noble past—in this case, ancient Greece, and the Aristotelian virtues:

Courage, Aristotle pointed out, is the most important virtue, because without it you cannot practice the others. Courage has been in short supply on American campuses. Those independent-minded students at Claremont provided a breath of fresh air. It will be interesting to see if it penetrates the fetid atmosphere that has settled over so much of American academic life.

Of course, what the “crybullies” do doesn’t count as courage in Kimball’s scenario.

If Burchill could be characterized as playing the role of Satiric Cynic, Kimball might best be characterized as portraying a Didactic or Elegiac Apologist: where Burchill's essay simply ridicules a group of people, naming them in such a way that their hypocrisy is revealed, Kimball's essay, though it also ridicules, is much more concerned with lamenting something lost in this particularly unsavory turn of events: he is defending a way of life which seems to be slipping away, and he is doing so by casting the Other in the most unsavory, yet still rational, terms available. Kimball wants alternately to wake people up to the wrongs that are being done, and to persuade them to fight to defend what is being stolen—the right to free speech, the “marketplace of ideas,” and the academy as a training ground for public conflict—while Burchill seems, on the surface, anyway, to be unconcerned with such things: she speaks from a different position of moral authority, one that gives her a different attitude and thus allows her to employ different methods, such as simple verbal attacks on the offending group, attacks that simultaneously prepare others to make the same sorts of attacks. So while Burchill's language is a language of offense, Kimball's language is a language of defense: he speaks from a position of (self-perceived) moral strength and, simultaneously, from a position of (self-perceived) political weakness.

We must make it clear to students that strongly developed writers probably do not sit down and think: “I wonder what role I am performing in this rhetorical relationship?” However, the perspective that a rhetoric of roles provides does remove some of the mystery regarding why strong writers are strong writers. At some point in their development, strong writers must begin to see, and imitate, the patterns of identity and identifications that are available in a given society. Most do this unconsciously—or, at least, un-theoretically—and begin to perform these identifications in the process of composing, though the process of *mimesis*: then, over time and

with practice, expert writers attune themselves to their society's symbol-system, even if they don't consciously understand the mechanism of their attunement. For students who wonder why they can't write as well as someone else, revealing this mystery can provide a means for them to begin attuning themselves, as well.

By illustrating the relationship between the roles to be performed and the relationship situating those roles, a rhetoric of roles becomes available as a framework for students who struggle to invent arguments. By analyzing others' rhetorical performances in terms of roles, students can more easily see the element of self-fashioning inherent in rhetorical performances. The rhetoric of roles becomes a commonplace from which students can more effectively invent rhetorical strategies because the rhetoric of roles helps them see the relationship between the rhetorical strategies and the self (and thus the relationship) that is being fashioned. A writer seeking to "win" an antagonistic argument will need to take on a role, and en-role their opponent, in such a way that the writer's ideas can be perceived as some variation of "good" while the opposing ideas (and those who hold them) can be characterized as some variation on "bad." While Kimball and Burchill (and other writers) may not do so consciously or theoretically, they certainly act as though there are "villains" and "fools" and "victims" and "heroes" who perform as components of their rhetorical relationships. They act as though there is an "us" and a "them," act with a sense that there is a "bad" and a "good" to be named in their particular situation. Student writers can do this, as well, by first understanding the nature of relationship they are entering with their reader, and then casting themselves in a particular role and focusing on what they want to accomplish: do they want to insult the opponent? Save them? Redeem them? Transform them?

This leads me back to what I said previously: agonistic relationships need not be *antagonistic*. By pointing this out to students, we can begin to instruct them in ways to argue without “arguing,” to, as Burke put it, “modify this intrinsically *competitive* emphasis” and allow education to become “a *technique of preparatory withdrawal*, the institutionalizing of an attitude that one should be able to *recover at crucial moments*” (LAFE 14-15). A rhetoric of role thus adds a necessary component to Burke’s dramatistic pedagogy by educating students into a rhetorical tradition that isn’t necessarily person-*versus*-person, but (potentially, at least) person’s “acting together” for a common good.

When engaging in Agonistic relationships, I have suggested two basic roles student writers might be called upon to play, roles I refer to as “the Apologist” and “the Cynic.”⁵² These two role-titles have a long history in rhetorical theory, “apologist” deriving from the Greek word *apologia* or “speaking in defense” and “cynic” from the Greek *kunikos* or “dog-like,” a term which was almost certainly employed insultingly by ancient Greeks to reflect the animalistic rejection of social conventions by the followers of Antisthenes and, later, of Diogenes of Sinope. Both roles seek, however, to position themselves in agonistic relation with (and not necessarily *to*) their audiences; *attitudinally*, they position themselves as “challenging” preconceived notions, or the status quo: the Cynic (and the related role, the Skeptic), engages this challenge

⁵² A word here about the decidedly negative connotations of the term “apologist:” students may be put-off by this term because it sounds too much like “apology,” which, vernacularly, is what someone offers when they have done something wrong. The connotations of this term, therefore, may make the student performing the role of Apologist feel that, in defending their position, they have something to “apologize” for, which is not necessarily the case. For this reason, there are other terms besides Apologist that teachers might want to use, such as “defender,” or “proponent,” or even “advocate.” The goal is to select a name that students can connect with, and that also suggests the acts they will perform in relation to some other person or group. The words “skeptic” and “cynic,” too, have fallen far from their roots: whereas “skeptic” used to mean someone who was thoughtful about a topic, now it tends to mean someone who doubts the veracity of a proposition in an almost knee-jerk fashion, and whereas the term “cynic” was always highly negative, even in antiquity, modern connotations make “skeptic” and “cynic” almost synonymous. Other terms for “cynic” and “skeptic” therefore might include words such as “doubter,” or even just “critic” (a term which also has some negative connotations but which I will be using for its more neutral possibilities later on in this chapter), but also a word like “deep thinker” or “critical thinker” or even simply “analyst.”

from a perspective of doubt, while the Apologist challenges preconceptions of doubt from a perspective of belief. Indeed, one way teachers might introduce these roles is by playing Peter Elbow's "believing and doubting game," an exercise suggested in the *Allyn and Bacon Guide* (49).

As always, these role-titles aren't the only ones available, and they are presented here as starting points, for the way that they place the rhetor in relation to their object of study and to their audience. The roles themselves would then be explored through class discussion, so that the varieties of attitude, orientation, and authority might be catalogued or indexed to provide students with an even clearer, more specific direction for rhetorical invention. What rhetorical strategies might an Apologist use, for example, who was interested in being perceived as a Healer (or a variation on the Healer role, as a Redeemer)? What of an Apologist who wanted to take the attitude of an Ode, or to defend by way of the Grotesque (or to defend *the way* of the Grotesque)?

Exploring the variety of names through which students might entitle their roles will also allow students to see how naming a role can often be a complex act in itself, and how the methodical addition of adjectives to a role-title (a strategy suggested in both Walter Ong's and Wayne Booth's role-rhetoric) can provide a clearer direction and a narrower focus for the development of one's argument as a function of one's performed self. This kind of exercise provides a way of working towards specificity in terms of self-fashioning and strategy selection, and one way to make this process most effective is to choose modifying terms that suggest attitudes: for example, "Friendly Skeptic" suggest one way to approach a situations, while "Angry Skeptic" suggests another; "Intellectual Apologist" suggest a very different attitude from "True Believer," or "Devil's Advocate." The role one performs, and the self crafted through

one's rhetorical strategies, and thus the reader-writer relationship itself, alters depending on the way one modifies the terms of engagement (or, if you prefer, the terms of courtship).

Students can also explore how the act of modifying a name to move towards specificity, and how one's entitlement of one's writerly role, can significantly influence the relationship one has with the readerly Other. If the student is passionate about their topic and chooses to perform an *antagonistic* role such as "Angry Skeptic" or "Offended Apologist," what limitations do such writerly roles impose on readers' ability to "act together" or to achieve consubstantiality? How does delimiting one's own rhetorical options through the choice of such a role (or any role, really) also delimit the potential roles that readers can perform? And what can the writer do to anticipate readers' role performances, not only stylistically, but argumentatively, in terms of content?

However a teacher and his class choose to entitle the Agonistic roles, as with the Entertaining roles, for a rhetoric of roles to be practical as pedagogy, the role-titles should be crafted on a relatively simply base-term, and should make a student's function in a particular relationship clear—in this case, students are either to defend a particular proposition, or to attack one. Such clarity of purpose can help students focus on the role at hand, while simultaneously appreciating the potential of this rhetoric as a critical lens. Writing assignments in which students might benefit from an "Agonistic" understanding of roles and relationships include *AB*'s "strong response" essay (118) and "classical argument" assignments (353), and *AW*'s "identifying an issue" essay (84-85), as well as any assignments that ask students to practice reading "with" or "against the grain" (*AB* 98-99; *AC* 214-15). These are "Agonistic" relationships because the writer's ideas are often placed in conflict with the ideas of some portion of her readership (or with the ideas she is reading). Agonistic roles are important roles for students to inhabit,

however, primarily because agonistic relationships are likely the most common sort of overtly rhetorical situations students will encounter outside the classroom, in the public sphere, and they need to be able to navigate such situations, and to experience the frustration and even futility of such situations, if they are ever to learn how to diffuse such situations. Whenever students share their deeply held ideas on the Web—on Facebook or Twitter, for example—they are placing themselves in potentially agonistic relation to others.

Writing assignments that lend themselves to agonistic relationships that are not necessarily antagonistic include *AB*'s "informative-surprising" essay (187), which asks a student to take a topic, summarize common assumptions about that topic, and then provide "new, surprising information that counters or 'reverses' the common view;" students in this essay are asked to "imagine readers who hold a mistaken or overly narrow view of [the] topic" and the writer's "purpose is to give them a new, surprising view" (187). To characterize the Other as "mistaken" but not "evil" is to take on an agonistic, but not *antagonistic*, attitude towards both ideas being criticized *AND* those who hold those ideas. While it is possible to make those who hold such ideas feel stupid (to place one's self in *antagonistic* relation to the Other), it is equally possible to orient one's self very differently, choosing to be a Friendly Teacher, for example, or a Compassionate Healer. If the writer's role is to change one's mind by presenting information an audience may not have at their disposal, to correct a mistaken idea, one need not be violent or confrontational in approach: a Muslim feminist choosing to "defend" her religion by providing new information about Islam, information that she believes a typical Christian-American audience wouldn't have access to (for example, the wide variety of "Islams" that exist across the globe; or examples from her own life that suggest how modernized many Muslims in the U.S. actually are; or even interpretations of the Qur'an that provide context, and counterarguments, to

more radicalized interpretations that result in terrorism)—she need not be insulting to her Christian-American audience’s lack of knowledge or experience, nor need she be insulting about their beliefs, nor need she be “proselytory” in her tone. Rather, by choosing to entitle herself as something like a “Friendly Informative Apologist,” she can direct her tone and her rhetorical strategies towards outreach, and a friendly broadening of her audience’s understanding, while simultaneously correct audience misunderstandings without *antagonism*.

Not only can such an assignment invite students to research a given topic more deeply (thus developing the “intellectual commons” necessary to write persuasively, knowledgeably, and objectively about their topics), but it can provide students with an opportunity to perform agonistic roles without antagonistic intent. Even in these less antagonistic agonistic relationships, the roles of Cynic and Apologist can be instructive, especially in how each of them might be modified to perform non-antagonistically in particular relationships.⁵³

In agonistic relationships, there is definitely one part of the audience that constitutes the writer’s “Us” (those who share at least a variation on the writer’s perspective). In most cases, this is the *actual* target audience for an agonistic writer’s rhetoric. But there is also a portion of the reading audience who obviously constitutes a “Them” (those readers who will disagree with the writer’s perspective, and will often do so vehemently). This “Other” audience, however, is not

⁵³ While participating in an agonistic writing assignment, teachers and students both may be tempted to gravitate towards heavy political or philosophical problems, but this isn’t the only way to teach students how to argue in agonistic rhetorical situations. Pop culture provides a particularly low-stakes area of interest to explore identity fashioning in agonistic relationships, and to learn to enter pre-existing conversations (such as we experience in academic writing). People feel strongly about music, sports, movies, video games, and about popular literature, including pulp novels and comic books—and the Web is full of blogs and articles and videos of fans arguing their own perspectives on pop culture themes. Having students write movie reviews, for example, or discuss sporting events, or having them go online to explore the ins-and-outs of certain areas of fandom, such as the fanatical conversations Star Wars fans have about the “prequel” trilogy, or having them participate in tabloid conversations about the lifestyles of celebrities, can allow students to experience participating in both agonistic and antagonistic relationships or conversations without forcing them into the heavy political or moral conversations. Specifically, students will get to experience that key component of agonistic rhetorical relationships: the “public” and “groupy” nature of this sort of rhetoric.

merely in conflict with the writer, but with the entirety of the “Us” for whom, or with whom, or as whom, the Agonistic Writer is writing. Thus, in agonistic relationships, the writer becomes something of a mouthpiece for a particular “Us” in a particular conflict. This suggests a great responsibility on the part of the writer in any agonistic relationships: the writer’s authority derives from how well he plays the role of Mouthpiece for the Us he is representing in the agonistic relationship, how well he re-presents, or embodies, or identifies himself as the perfect or ideal Us, and how well he prepares other members of the Us to engage in successful combat *after* they have read his argument. Whether performing a variation on the apologist or cynic roles, however, a participant in an Agonistic relationship must perform an ideal personification of the ideals of those who are most likely to accept his argument; this is how the Agonist rallies his Us *against* (or, when not *antagonistic*, in contrast to) his Them—and that attempt to perform a sort of perfection, to act as representative, will inform the choices one makes in terms of word selection, voice, tone, attitude, and content. This is “the Good Man speaking well.”

The nature of the rhetor’s relationship with his audience in Agonistic situations, however, suggests the need to engage in *research* to ensure that the rhetorical performance of the role of Mouthpiece is as perfect as can be. Research allows a rhetor to gain the information necessary (or to substantiate the claims being made) to effectively construct a credible, authoritative identity that accurately represents the group the rhetor is trying to identify with, and does so credibly in the sort of relationship in which the rhetor finds himself. In pop culture fandom, for example, participants must be steeped not just in *an affection* for the object of study, but in the lore of the particular subject. In this respect, *Star Trek* fans, sports fans, and foodies are all alike, though their knowledge bases are drastically different: the Fan (as with any identity), whether

Cynic or Apologist, is a particular sort of identity, and the writer must be able to identify himself according to the appropriate identity markers.

Other assignments that provide an opportunity to explore agonistic rhetorical relationships and roles include the *Allyn & Bacon Guide*'s "synthesis" essay (310), a "rhetorical analysis" essay (*AW* 49; *AC* 202-209), or a simple "opinion editorial" assignment (using models drawn from popular online or print news sources, such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*).

To provide students practice arguing from a variety of roles, and to reinforce how important self-fashioning is to rhetorical practice, I suggest giving students the opportunity to invent from multiple roles in their agonistic relationships. This can be done during the revision process: by inventing from different roles, students begin to see the different kinds of strategies available to them, and how exploring a variety of responses to a particular situation can enable them to discover a wiser way to perform a Self in a given situation. If the student chose to compose an essay as a Sarcastic Cynic, for example, how might things change by revising from the role of a Friendly Skeptic, or a Wise Apologist? How does repositioning one's self through a rhetoric of roles change the dynamic with the audience? Doing an exercise like this in group work can allow a student to have his peers express which position worked better, which was more persuasive. By taking on an entirely different role during the revision process, the student writer not only sees how different identities are fashioned in writing, but the student may discover a more effective approach to a particular rhetorical problem.⁵⁴

Agonistic relationships need not be considered higher stakes rhetorical situations than Entertaining relationships. Just because a rhetorical situation involves confrontation doesn't

⁵⁴ This is, clearly, a variation on the ancient rhetorical pedagogy of arguing all sides of an issue.

mean it has to be angry, hateful, or rude. However, much like personal narrative assignments, agonistic relationships do often demand that students engage the deepest parts of themselves and hold them up for scrutiny. Whether they are recounting some childhood trauma or sharing their political positions on sensitive topics, personal narrative assignments and agonistic assignments can open students' most cherished beliefs to attack. Even when students do their best to defend those beliefs, that defense may not be strong enough, and so these assignments must be handled with care on the part of the teacher.

But just because such assignments are potentially sensitive is no reason to avoid them because participating in these types of rhetorical relationships also provides the opportunity for students to fully explore the relationship between persuasion and persona by focusing on what certain rhetorical actions say about the person performing those acts, acts that identify the individual and that communicate that person as a particular *type* of person. Thus attitude becomes a significant component of the rhetoric of roles to explore in both Entertainment and Agonistic relationships, and the teacher can suggest attitudes that the student may want to experiment with (or, alternately, she can name the kinds of attitudes that come across in a particular piece of writing and allow the student the opportunity to determine if the attitude that comes across was the attitude the student was going for): "I am humble;" "I am smart;" "I am witty;" "I am resourceful;" "I am provocative;" "I am proud;" "I am obliging;" "I am domineering;" "I am compromising;" "I stand my ground;" "I am accommodating;" "I am principled." When students are confronted with the fact that an audience has read them as "domineering," when they were going for "principled," the rhetoric of roles can then be employed to help them re-position themselves, to reconsider their rhetoric choices, and to re-

engage their topic not necessarily from a different perspective, but from a different facet of their persona.

Analytical Relationships: The Roles of Critic and Researcher

In her essay on the work of rhetorical critic Michael Leff, Barbara Warnick made the claim that “Leff exemplifies the critic as *artist*,” while a critic also performs the roles of “analyst” and “audience” and advocate,” among others, “criticism is a performance, and the critic’s role is to demonstrate a proper response to the text’s artistry” (232). Warnick’s definition of a critic, while specifically a definition of the role of Rhetorical Critic, provides a framework for defining the role of the critic in general: a critic (in the most neutral sense of that term) is one who analytically observes something—be that an object, a text, an event, an act—and then seeks to embody, symbolically, an appropriate response. Since “critical thinking” is one of the “outcome goals” for freshman composition according to the Council of Writing Program Administrators (*AB* xxxvi-vii), it is expected that one of the most important roles students in freshmen composition courses will take on is the role of the Critic.

If the role of the Critic is to embody, to some degree, an appropriate response to a particular text, or argument, or situation, such responses cannot be merely “subjective” and still be persuasive. The very idea of “appropriateness” suggests pre-existing criteria for judgment that are external to the individual, criteria that allow a particular judgment to be “objective.” The function of the critic is to perform those criteria while simultaneously arguing for why a certain object does or does not conform to those criteria. This is true whether we are discussing an Aesthetic Critic, a Moral Critic, or Political Critic, or a Dog-Show Critic. It is not enough that an

argument or an art piece or a meal pleases an individual; to be a critic, it must please the individual by reference to certain standards that are not individual, but communal.

The role of the Critic is performed, to some degree, in every rhetorical relationship students participate in. This is partially because “all living things are critics” in that “all living organisms interpret [. . .] the signs” all around them and, through experience, learn to make and revise judgments about what to do and how to do it (Burke, *P&C* 5). The poet and the storyteller must be critics to decide what strategies to use to move and entertain and interest their audiences, and, to be successful, they must use experience to alter what fails and repeat and improve what works. Apologists and cynics are critics in that they must analyze their own ideas, or the ideas held by others, in light of the values of their society, and then position those ideas in such a way that the placement is persuasive, advocating for or against the ideas by reference to the ideological hierarchy of the particular symbol system.

When teaching the role of the Critic in analytical relationships, we emphasize the critical aspects of human perception; what a rhetoric of roles adds to our rhetorical pedagogy is an emphasis on critical writing as steeped in sociality. Critics are not just people who make judgments, they are persons who makes judgments or pronouncement according to certain socially accepted standards and practices that characterize them as members of a particular group (that is what, to a large degree, is meant by “objectivity”). The Critic must identify herself as steeped in such standards and practices; she must express her judgments and pronouncements in such a way that those judgments declare her to be well-versed in the standards and practices recognized by the target group as the sort of criticism she is engaging in, standards and practices which must have been learned prior to writing. Teaching such standards and practices is part of

what the Teacher should teach so that the Critic can exemplify the standards and practices of her tradition or discipline through the act of writing.

Analytical relationships—be they “aesthetic,” scientific,” or “moral,” in nature—are all supposed to be objective in this way, relying on certain standards of performance that are shared by both writer and reader. In this respect, there is a necessary element of expertise (the role of Expert)⁵⁵ to analytical writing. To write a movie review, for example, requires a shared understanding of what makes a “good” movie as opposed to a “bad” movie, and the ability to analyze, and then articulate, the extent to which the movie succeeds or fails according to objective, traditional criteria of taste. To write a scientific paper, one must be able to analyze an object or process of scientific interest according to certain pre-existing criteria of scientific analysis, and then articulate one’s findings to those who share a common understanding of that scientific method. To judge something on moral grounds, a rhetor must first share with her audience a common moral tradition to be able to analyze the actions or nature of a certain thing within a moral hierarchy, and then be able to articulate a moral judgment within that moral framework. All this suggests a certain artistry involved in analysis and in the work of criticism, regardless of what students (or teachers, or academics) may initially think.

This type of relationship—the Analytical—suggests to me two complementary roles: that of Researcher and that of Critic. In order to analyze, students must first have in place a framework for analysis. Alastair MacIntyre called such frameworks “practices” and “traditions.” “Practices,” MacIntyre argues, “always have histories and [. . .] at any given moment what a

⁵⁵ I mentioned earlier the role of Expert. Both the role of Critic and Researcher could be subsumed under the heading of Expert, and since there is a level of expertise required for arguing persuasively in Agonistic relationships, both the Apologist and Cynic/Skeptic roles could be considered variations on an Expert role, as well. Because the term Expert, like Writer and Reader, gives little direction regarding either attitude or specific actions a rhetor is to perform in relation to an Other, I have chosen not to suggest this role-title for a pedagogy of roles. Rather, the role of Expert should be considered a necessary modifying term to all of the role-titles we are discussing here.

practice is depends on a mode of understanding it which has been transmitted often through many generations” (221). A disciplinary practice is “transmitted” and “reshaped” through the medium of a “tradition,” which, contrary to the negative connotations that term has acquired over the past century or so, is best described as “an historically extended, socially embodied argument [. . .] in part about the goods which constitute the tradition” (222). Institutions such as the university, or a particular sect of a religion, or even institutions that don’t seem like institutions at all, such as “a farm, or a hospital”: all are “the bearer[s] of a tradition of practice or practices [. . .] constituted by a continuous argument as to what” that particular institution is, what it ought to be, what it is good for, and what “good” means within that particular tradition (ibid). Thus “Traditions,” MacIntyre writes, “embody continuities of conflict” (ibid).

A Critic is a rhetor who argues within a *particular* tradition—or, in the case of academia, within a particular discipline. In order to identify himself in the role of “Critic,” a critic must be able to fashion a self that is something of an Expert in the “habits of mind” and the behaviors or practices (“the continuities of conflict”) that define the particular tradition or discipline he is part of. This requires something of an apprenticeship during which the proto-Critic acquires the necessary experience, through years of study and practice and back-and-forth with mentors, to master the habits of mind and the practices of the tradition, to “discipline” himself according to the rules of the particular conversation he wants to participate in.

When students enter any kind of analytical rhetorical relationship, such as we have in “academic” writing, they need to understand that they are entering into a tradition, a “conversation” as each of the textbooks, at some point, characterizes academic writing. Research is the act by which the Researcher steeps herself in that tradition, that discipline, and the practices that inform the particular type of conversation that the discipline or tradition engages

in. If the student is writing a movie review, for example, in order to write an effective review he must first do her research—not just watching the movie to understand the plot and characters, nor merely getting to know something of the “behind-the-scenes” information concerning the artists who crafted the production, but she needs to get a sense of the movie review as a genre, and the Movie Reviewer as a role: what kinds of things do Movie Reviewers know? What sorts of things do they talk about? How do they talk about those things? Why? What are the elements of good or bad movies *as articulated within the overarching conversation of film criticism* that is taking place in my particular historic moment? What characterizes “goodness” and “badness” in terms of films, and—just as importantly—how do movie reviewers characterize what defines the good and the bad in movie reviews themselves? What sorts of words do they use?

When we assign a research essay, then—the assignment that, more often than not, is the capstone assignment in freshman composition courses—we must direct students to acquire knowledge on two levels: the first is knowledge of the issues being addressed within a particular critical tradition, and the second is an understanding of how knowledge and language are used in that critical tradition, especially in terms of how they are used to fashion critical identities *within* that particular critical tradition. Be it research in something as frivolous as pop culture or as significant as human rights, student assignments that focus merely on the first level of research will always result in poor research essays because the acquisition of facts *is never* just about acquiring facts to transmit (contrary to what Connors suggests, students are not merely “mediums” in the research essay). Rather, the information students gather is designed to help them *fashion a particular sort of Self* within a particular intellectual tradition; it is about crafting a critical identity. Research for the Apprentice Movie Reviewer, then, needs to steep the student in the traditions of the discipline of “movie reviewing” (the terminology movie reviewers use to

talk about good and bad movies, for example, and how that terminology and the things they talk about are used to craft a Movie Reviewer identity; the kinds of things Movie Reviewers talk about, such as the acting, directing, soundtrack, cinematography, script, etc.). While research for a civil rights topic may seem more serious than research for a film review, in that it must steep the student in the traditions of civil rights activists (including the terminology civil rights activists use to talk about the good and the bad in politics, and how that terminology and the things they talk about are used to craft a Human Rights Activist identity), *in the abstract* the role of Researcher, in both traditions, is doing the same thing: acquiring the information necessary to craft both an argument and a persona that fits the expectations of the particular relationship as defined by the particular intellectual tradition.

Students who are asked to write an academic research essay, on the other hand, must be taught how to steep themselves in the traditions of the “Academy,” including the fact that there is no one type of the “Academic Writer,” but several discipline-specific permutations of that role. Each discipline has terminologies that academics in those different disciplines use to craft discipline-specific identities, and by employing those terms expertly, Academics identify themselves by the way they talk about academic topics, the terminology or jargon they use, the things they talk about, etc. All of these things work together to craft an Academic identity.

Research, then, isn’t just about *knowing* about the topic, or even knowing *the topic*: it’s also about knowing how people express that knowledge within particular traditions. This is what it means to acquire an identity, and acquiring the ability to identify *the means of identification* in a particular discipline, rather than adopting a particular, discipline specific identity, *should be* what we teach our students how to do. To quote Meredith Love again: we need to teach our students acting.

A rhetoric of roles provides a framework for addressing research from this perspective. A rhetoric of roles encourages students to think of knowledge not merely as the accumulation of facts and ideas and vocabulary, but as the accumulation of resources for fashioning identities. First-year writing classrooms' research essay assignments, when informed by a pedagogy of roles, would de-emphasize the discipline specific knowledge (the kind that, quite frankly, we haven't the expertise to teach them, and which they will only actually acquire once they enter their upper-class or graduate, discipline-specific course), and would instead emphasize a situationally transferable rhetorical knowledge, knowledge about how knowledge and language are used to fashion critical identities *within* a critical traditions in general. It would do this not for the purpose of making students Language Experts in any particular critical tradition, but to help them to see the centrality of identity fashioning to *all* critical traditions. And, feasibly, any critical tradition could be used as an example of how critical identities are crafted within critical traditions generally.

This is, ironically, illustrated by what has come to be referred to as "The Sokal Affair." In 1996, Alan Sokal, a professor of physics at New York University, revealed in the magazine *Lingua Franca* that a paper of his, recently published in *Social Text*, was a hoax. He had been disturbed by what he saw as "an apparent decline in the standards of intellectual rigor" in "the American academic humanities" and so wanted to discover if an essay full of "nonsense" would be published by "a leading North American journal of cultural studies [. . .] if (a) it sounded good and (b) it flattered the editors' ideological preconceptions" ("A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies"). The essay was published, and this seemed to confirm, not only for Sokal, but for many in the U.S. at large, that Sokal was correct: that there is a strain of "subjectivist thinking" in the humanities that is not simply "false" or "meaningless," but, in Sokal's view,

“insane” and “absurd.” “There *is* a real world,” Sokal writes, and “its properties are *not* merely social constructions,” and the fact that he was able to get a paper published that claimed otherwise, simply because it’s “utter absurdity” was “concealed through obscure and pretentious language” made Sokal not just sad, but it “angered” him.

Perhaps most interesting is the fact that, in his admission, Sokal himself reveals (albeit in belittling terms) how and why such a hoax might be rationally possible:

Professional communities operate largely on trust; deception undercuts that trust. But it is important to understand exactly what I did. My article is a theoretical essay based entirely on publicly available sources, all of which I have meticulously footnoted. All works cited are real, and all quotations are rigorously accurate; none are invented. Now, it's true that the author doesn't believe his own argument. But why should that matter? The editors' duty as scholars is to judge the validity and interest of ideas, without regard for their provenance. (That is why many scholarly journals practice blind refereeing.) If the *Social Text* editors find my arguments convincing, then why should they be disconcerted simply because I don't? Or are they more deferent to the so-called “cultural authority of technoscience” than they would care to admit?

What role an inordinate deference to the “cultural authority of technoscience” in the humanities played in the publication of Sokal’s essay is debatable, but the role of “trust,” of *ethos*, in written academic conversations is a key factor in understanding how such a thing could have happened. The whole idea behind the academic conversation is the expectation that “experts” in particular fields will invent new and interesting perspectives for viewing the world and humanity’s place in it. These ideas are first tested for their possible significance, then published and sent out into the

world to test their viability, but the assumption is that all ideas submitted by “experts” are done in good faith—because one role of the Expert is to further knowledge by participating in the academic conversation, and for that to happen, experts need to trust other experts, especially experts in other areas of expertise.

It is telling, then, that Sokal wasn’t interested in letting his ideas sit for a year or two to see how other “experts”—including, but not limited to, physicist and social scientists—might respond to his ideas. Rather, Sokal revealed his hoax almost immediately, allowing the hoax itself to be the topic of conversation, as well as the hoax’s apparent confirmation of Sokal’s perceptions of a lack of intellectual rigor in the humanities. Time—the true test of ideas in the humanities—was the important missing factor: Sokal’s ideas themselves didn’t have time to get discussed, and possibly dismissed, by those in the discipline.⁵⁶

But it is equally telling how Sokal was able to make it past the first hurdle in the academic conversation: as a writer, he first had to sound like a particular kind of Expert. To accomplish that required years of research on his part, and years of practice honing his Expert voice. By virtue of his role as a professor of physics at a prestigious university, Sokal clearly had a pre-formed academic identity to fall back on (something your average academic outsider, such as a freshman in first year writing, wouldn’t have); Sokal’s ability to craft such an academic persona was the result of years of writing and research in his own area of research. But Sokal also, by his own admission, familiarized himself with the *de jour* theories and jargon of social science in order to ensure that his use of *their* theoretical language was accurate, something he

⁵⁶ It is equally interesting that now, not many years after the Sokal Affair, the sciences, too, are being publicly reprimanded for their failures in scientific rigor: several studies have come out in the last two or three years demonstrating that many published scientific findings have failed to be replicated. A 2013 article in *The Economist* reported that “Academic scientists readily acknowledge that they often get things wrong. But they also hold fast to the idea that these errors get corrected over time as other scientists try to take the work further. Evidence that many more dodgy results are published than are subsequently corrected or withdrawn calls that much-vaunted capacity for self-correction into question. There are errors in a lot more of the scientific papers being published, written about and acted on than anyone would normally suppose, or like to think.”

was only capable of doing because he was already practiced at it in another discipline.⁵⁷ To use the terminology correctly, Sokal knew, in advance of writing, that he would have to have an intelligible command of the terminology of social science (whether he believed that terminology was ludicrous or not); and, importantly, in order to succeed—that is, to be convincing, to be persuasive as a function of his role, to be able to “fool” them—Sokal not only needed a strong command of the language and ideas in social science, he needed a command and knowledge of the ideas and language of physics, something he had acquired through years of study, and something he *knew* his readers would not share—they would just have to trust him.⁵⁸

More significant, then, than what Sokal wrote, was *who he appeared to be in his writings*, and who his readers interpreted him to be based on the socially expectations the situation trained them to have for that kind of relationship. Sokal could not have hoodwinked members of the academic community without being so steeped in the academic traditions to begin with (and, as I

⁵⁷ This is, interestingly, one of the reasons Robert Wade Kenny offers for Burke's rejection by sociologists: it's not that they didn't like his ideas, it's just that Burke spoke his own language, and so sociologists really didn't know what to do with him: “Burke [. . .] spent decades trying to introduce his thinking to sociologists,” but because of “his limited grasp of how sociology functioned as a discipline” he was “unable to identify the steps necessary and the language necessary to make his primary contribution within that community. For most sociologists, statements such as ‘Logology is my epistemology and Dramatism is my ontology,’ or ‘Dramatism is literal,’ confound, more than clarify, the significance of Dramatism to sociological investigation. Things would have been much clearer had he said: *Where some presume that structural forces order social life, and others presume that social life is best explained in terms of functional features, I argue that social life is ordered by dramatistic forces, under the general conditions I set forth for their emergence, perpetuation, transformation, and decline.*”

⁵⁸ In their response to Sokal's admission, also published in *Lingua Franca*, the editors of *Social Text*, Bruce Robbins and Andrew Ross, argue exactly this: “From the first, we considered Sokal's unsolicited article to be a little hokey. It is not every day we receive a dense philosophical tract from a professional physicist. Not knowing the author or his work, we engaged in some speculation about his intentions, and concluded that the article was the earnest attempt of a professional scientist to seek some kind of affirmation from postmodern philosophy for developments in his field. Sokal's adventures in PostmodernLand were not really our cup of tea. Like other journals of our vintage that try to keep abreast of cultural studies, it has been many years since *Social Text* published direct contributions to the debate about postmodern theory, and his article would have been regarded as somewhat outdated if it had come from a humanist or a social scientist. As the work of a natural scientist it was unusual, and, we thought, plausibly symptomatic of how someone like Sokal might approach the field of postmodern epistemology, i.e., awkwardly but assertively **trying to capture the ‘feel’ of the professional language of this field**, while relying upon an armada of footnotes to ease his sense of vulnerability. In other words, we read it more as **an act of good faith** of the sort that might be worth encouraging than as a set of arguments with which we agreed. On those grounds, the editors considered it of interest to readers as a ‘document’ of that time-honored tradition in which modern physicists have discovered harmonic resonances with their own reasoning in the field of philosophy and metaphysics. Consequently, the article met one of the several criteria for publication which *Social Text* recognizes” (bold mine).

said previously, whether or not his ideas would have been embraced by actual scientists we will never know). So what enabled him to pass himself off with a believably academic persona is simply this: he was one, and so was able to enact the performance of the Academic role and identify himself believably as a scholar (not a social scientist, obviously, but a scholar, nonetheless). This is a key lesson that students of rhetoric, and particularly those who wish to succeed in academic writing, need to glean from this Sokal Affair, and it is a lesson that is made most clearly by appealing to a rhetoric of roles.

Rather than leaping into a particular academic discipline, however, teachers may want to choose something more manageable for their own students. A movie review, or a critique of an advertisement, could be an excellent way to introduce students to the role of the Critic, as well as introduce them to the idea of a public conversation. The Movie Critic is a relatively familiar role—most of our students have read movie reviews at some point—and, as a variation on the role of the Aesthetic Critic, the Movie Critic appeals to objective criteria of judgment to make his arguments. While, just as with the other roles, it would be necessary to first discuss with the class and develop a shared understanding of what the Movie Critic does, and what kind of a relationship he participates in, by analyzing models and discussing what constitutes this particular role (what kind of a relationship does the Movie Critic enter upon writing? What is his function in that relationship? How should that function direct him in his choice of words, in his phrasing, in his attitude, in his personality, in the content of his text?). This sort of Aesthetic Critic role can lay the foundation for students to play the less familiar role of Intellectual Critic or Academic Critic. Whereas the Aesthetic Critic wants to help readers make judgments about a particular work of art based on objective rules regarding taste (and to influence the terms of that reader's tastes), the Intellectual Critic (such as a Rhetorical Analyst or the Scholar) wants to help

readers make judgments based on shared values regarding good reasoning or strong thinking, while a Moral Critic wants to help readers make judgments from shared values regarding right and wrong. Intellectual Critics seek to influence how a person responds to ideas, to influence the reader's frameworks for thinking and therefore to influence the way they make judgments in general—this may include moral judgments and philosophical judgments or “truth claims.” The Moral Critic provides another variation on this theme, but in each instance, research will be required to perform one's role effectively. Students need to immerse themselves in the traditions that each kind of criticism entails, reading critiques and analyzing language in order to discover what constitutes an effectively fashioned and appropriate critical identity within a particular critical tradition.

The rhetorical analysis assignment found in each one of these textbooks can help students move in this direction. Because the classical rhetorical tradition provides a focused terminology for analyzing and naming acts of persuasion, including terms for appeals to emotion (*pathos*), to reason (*logos*), to ethics (*ethos*), and to biases (fallacies), the rhetorical analysis assignment provides an opportunity to lead an entire class in the practice of research, the acquisition of a vocabulary, and the analysis of an object according to objective standards of judgment. A rhetoric of roles adds to this exercise an ability to see not just the strategies themselves, but a framework for how particular strategies work together to create a particular type of relationship between particular types of persons—how they work to fashion an identity. Indeed, the rhetorical analysis assignment lends itself particularly well to practicing a neutral, or unbiased, voice, something that is especially important for students to acquire if they are going to eventually take on the role of Academic Writer, but which they often discover is especially difficult to perform.

The acquisition of a neutral voice, and the kind of identity or persona that such a voice provides, suggests that research writing requires much more artistry than inexperienced writers would suppose. Research writing demands that students acquire the kind of intellectual commons necessary to make “public” arguments based on accepted standards of shared knowledge, the kind of shared knowledge that will enable them to believably perform the role of Expert *and* Unbiased Critic in disciplines that are very narrowly focused. The neutral voice, ironically, requires a high level of artistry and sophistication to perfect, and thus makes the research paper notoriously challenging for new academic writers because the artistry of research writing is hidden in a way that it isn’t in “creative” writing. Research writing appears so dull, so plain, so informative—but the academic, neutral voice, like any other voice, is, as Richard Lanham argues, a put on, a performance: the world is not clear, it is *made clear*.

Beyond the artistry of the voice students are expected to take on, the role of Researcher in the typical academic research essay also expects students to ask a focused, interesting, open, and rigorous question, and then demands that they be able to read and acquire a localized, discipline-specific knowledge on that sufficiently narrowed topic in order to develop an interesting and specific answer to that question, and an explanation for that answer, and to then frame that answer cogently and eloquently in the language of a discipline they were just introduced to—literally, a few weeks ago! And to do so poorly, inexpertly, is to place their grade in jeopardy, which, in the mind of the student, places their GPA in jeopardy, which places their future job prospects in jeopardy, which places their future *future* in jeopardy.

That’s a lot to put on kids in their late teens and early twenties!

Just as process pedagogy represents an attempt to move beyond the crushing weight of producing a perfect product in an area of study students have only recently learned (that is,

composition and rhetoric), a rhetoric of roles provides another means for teachers to ease students towards a key aspect of academic writing—self-fashioning—without straining to produce a perfect text in a limited amount of time. Teaching research writing with an emphasis on the *role* of the Researcher or Scholar, rather than on the *text* that the students are producing, has the potential to allow students to better understand the process-nature of writing, *and* the process nature of self-fashioning. Process isn't just about producing a better text, it is about learning the things one needs to learn in order to present one's self effectively within the expectations of particular situations. The text in a classroom like this becomes not a product to be produced so much as a tool for discovery and practice.

Research writing, therefore, rather than being one of the highest-stakes writing assignments students engage in, should be one of the lowest stakes forms of writing, approached with a reverence for the difficulty inherent in such an artform. These assignments should allow students writers time to acquire knowledge, multiple opportunities to acquire and experiment with vocabulary, with form, with identity, as students not only practice the behaviors of scholars, but practice embodying those behaviors to practice identifying themselves as scholars in their prose. No matter how much we “bank” students with a knowledge of scholarly practices, only time will make them expert performers of a scholarly persona. So, while freshman composition won't make students into scholars, it can allow them to practice the *role* of the Scholar, and provide them with a critical lens for framing discipline-specific expectations in their other classes as a function of self-presentation: the critical lens of a rhetoric of roles.

Thus a rhetoric of roles directs research and research writing by orienting students to the social and relational qualities of these activities: through directed research, a writer gains a sense of what it means to belong to a particular group (the discipline) and how rhetors in that group

“identify” themselves to one another (the relationship); it asks them to focus on the symbolic actions (behaviors of language, topics of interest, attitudes, purposes, perspectives, style) that identify one as belonging to a particular academic discipline. From this perspective, the actual discipline the students write in is less important than the way the teacher uses the disciplinary trappings to illustrate the identifying moves in writing. Identification, and not a particular discipline, becomes the topic of study.

Such a writing class could choose to focus on almost anything: literature, science, pop culture, philosophy, politics, theater, media, or any number of other topics, because this pedagogy recognizes that, in a semester or two, students aren’t going to acquire an expert performance of the identifications of any particular area of study. Rather, the class would be designed to introduce the students to *the idea* of that are roles to perform in academic writing, and to give students practice using role-logic as a lens for seeing and practicing self-fashioning in academic relationships. As with Sokal, the students’ actual expertise in a particular discipline would be less important than their growing ability to fashion—or, at least, practice fashioning and performing—particular kinds of persona by reference to the roles they are asked to perform in the particular disciplinary relationship.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation should not be read as the definitive statement on the theory and use of roles in composition and rhetoric. As its title implies, it is a beginning, an attempt to move *towards* the use of roles in the classroom. It is designed to get scholars and pedagogues in rhetoric and composition thinking in terms of roles, and provide them with a vocabulary and a program for doing just that. In the same way that the list of potential roles to perform in the rhet/comp classroom is not meant to be an exhaustive taxonomy, but an illustration of a method, so it is with the rhetoric I have outlined: this is meant as a starting point, an *in*. It is meant to be developed, expanded, and improved.

There may be other ways, besides those I have explored here, that a rhetoric of roles improves our understanding of how rhetoric works in the world, and other ways that it might improve our pedagogy, but this much is certain: there are many relationships that students are asked to enter in academia, and many ways to name those relationships (Scientific relationships; Business relationships; Artistic relationships; etc.); there are many relationships *beyond* the classroom, both public and private, that our students, as persons, will be expected to participate in (Bureaucratic relationship; Family relationships; Sexual relationships; Occupational relationships; etc.), and in each of these relationships, they will be asked to perform particular roles. It is not the intention of this project to *limit* the potential ways we might think about relationships and our roles in them; rather, I want us to begin thinking according to the logic of roles, to make us aware of the ways relationship, and our roles in them, *delimit* our rhetorical agency. By understanding that logic is always already at work in the world, we can start using this logic as a framework for action in the world. We already do this by our nature; this dissertation simply seeks to provide a terminology, or a rhetoric, through which we can see and

discuss this logic's workings, and so use it as a resource to navigate our relationships and craft our identities more effectively and more conscientiously.

It is also important that we not see a rhetoric of roles as somehow replacing the pedagogies that currently inform rhetorical theory, or as a magic bullet to fix all of the problems students have in learning to write. At the risk of sounding melodramatic or cliché: the struggle is real! Becoming “good” at anything, including writing, is a process that takes hard work and sacrifice. This pedagogy, then, rather than replacing, is meant to complement what we already have. The rhetoric and pedagogy of roles should enable us, as pedagogues, to explain more fully what we already know about rhetoric, to provide our students with a lens for seeing rhetoric at work by employing a terminology that is derived from their own lived experience. This should enable them, and us, to practice rhetoric more effectively. A rhetoric of roles provides an additional method for framing, organizing, and directing classroom discussions on styles; on rhetorical situations; on *kairos*, and on ethical, emotional, and logical strategies and fallacies by suggesting a rationale for the strategies we select.

Moreover, his rhetoric and pedagogy of roles suggests some ways that composition teachers might respond to student writing: by focusing on the type of person students want to appear to be (or fail to appear to be) in their writings, as a result of their rhetorical choices, we can provide a rationale to direct student revisions that is currently missing in rhetorical pedagogy: a focus on identity, or self, as a function of one's rhetorical choices. Thus, a rhetoric and pedagogy of roles acts as an addition and extension to what already works in rhetorical theory and pedagogy.

Ong's theory that a writer should just pick up a voice and an audience with it becomes less haphazard when seen through the logic of a more rigorously theorized rhetoric of roles: it is

not to create a “fictional” audience out of whole cloth, but to artfully choose from among the types of audiences a particular situation suggests are likely. Potential rhetorical strategies will be selected for how they communicate to these particular, *pre-conceived* and *pre-existing* audiences, and will seek to appeal to the values suggested by the roles those audiences will likely perform, for how they place the writer in relation to particular Other sorts of selves, and for how they fashion or craft a particular sort of self that audiences will recognize and thus be able to respond to. When the rhetor chooses well, the reader will recognize the signs that define a particular sort person in a particular sort of relationship, and that performance of self will delimit the potential roles an audience may rationally perform in response. While, for every relationship, there are myriad roles that a person might perform, there are only so many ways a person can rationally react to certain behaviors: if an individual in the audience is to *name* the acts of a rhetor in such a way that it validates their reaction to the rhetor, that individual must necessarily consider the acts, attitudes, and authorities performed by the rhetor as part of their response, and they must be able to rationalize the role they are casting the rhetor or writer into by reference to a sociologically sound role-logic. You can’t just go around calling people crybullies; there has to be a reason for it. And if you want to avoid being entitled as a Crybully, you have to act conscientiously to avoid that role-label.

Anticipating every possible potential role, with every possible permutation thereof, is, of course, impossible. Thus the conversation is “ongoing,” the drama unending. But, regardless of the unending nature of the conversation that is transpiring at the moment in history when one is born (*PLF* 110), conversations, by their very nature, transpire between persons, persons have identities and orientation and allegiances, and these must be identified as functions of the roles one performs. Understanding this fundamental piece of rhetorical knowledge can go a long way

to helping dedicated rhetors develop into more artful, and more conscientious, writers and speakers, readers and auditors.

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