

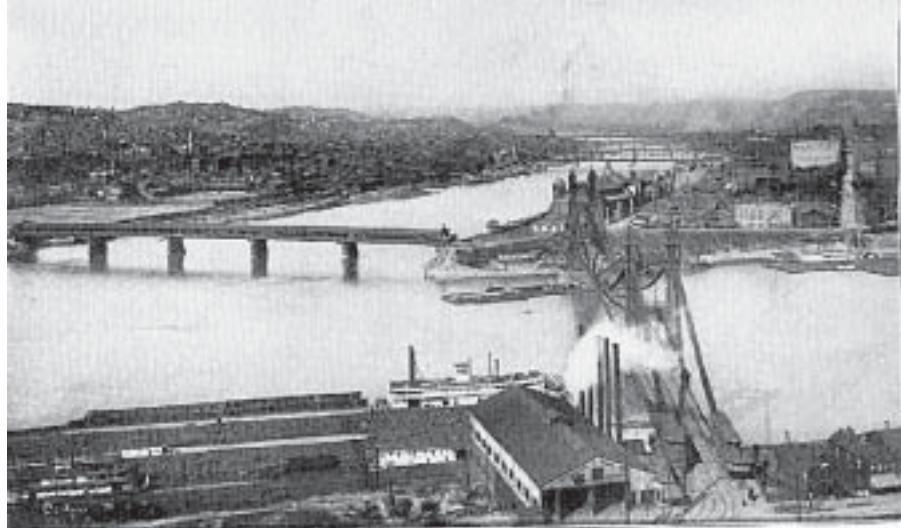
The Kenneth Burke Society

Volume 10 Number 1 June 1995

Newsletter



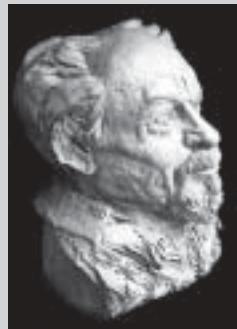
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from 1897 through 1996



Burke's Centenary

The bronze bust of Kenneth Burke sculpted by Virginia Molnar Burks is housed in the Pattee Library at the Pennsylvania State University. Photos are of the clay bust from which the bronze was cast. Taken in 1985 and copyrighted by Virginia Burks, they are used with her permission.

"Continuing the Conversation"



By Star Muir

Planning for the 1996 Triennial Kenneth Burke Society Conference is underway with dual aspirations of recalling Burke's tremendous contributions to the life of the mind and bringing together diverse disciplines and interests to explore future directions for Burkeian scholarship. The conference will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at Duquesne University, 9-12 May 1996, the beginning of what would have been KB's 100th year. The conference theme is "Kenneth Burke's Centenary: Continuing the Conversation."

Pittsburgh was a natural choice for the conference—a return to KB's birthplace to celebrate his centennial. The "perfection" of this return to origins was too compelling to ignore in selecting the conference site. Surveys from the Society's last conference indicated concern for a location easily accessible to a variety of schools and individuals. Pittsburgh is centrally located with a new international airport and is an exciting and interesting city for a conference as well.

Conference planners have arranged housing options and exceptional rates. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hyatt, two blocks from campus. Rates at the Hyatt, which houses an excellent restaurant and exercise facilities, are \$85 single/double and \$95 triple/quad. Surveys from the last conference indicated concern for low cost options for graduate students and/or faculty. Excellent dormitory rooms with access to campus exercise facilities will be available at \$17 per day for double occupancy. There is also a University meal plan available for conference participants if they desire, but prices (which will be low) have not been set.

Duquesne University should be lovely in May having hosted graduation the week before. An enclave of academe on the edge of downtown Pittsburgh, the campus should afford participants both a quiet place for thoughtful interaction and a quick entrance to a city with great sights and acclaimed architecture. Thanks in part to support by the University and funding solicited from external sources, the conference should be able to serve exceptional food and attract notable speakers to reflect on Burke's centenary and keep the conversation going.

Burke's Centenary

Pittsburgh, PA 9-12 May 1996

Conference planning seems at times like an effort to bureaucratize the imaginative vision of the ongoing conversation. Several items are being considered in the planning process. We hope to provide participants with some of the following experiences:

- An array of lively seminars on significant issues in this ongoing conversation
- Panels of reviewed papers on thematic aspects of the conversation
- A plenary session on early Burke experiences including a historical discussion of the "Drama of Pittsburgh" in 1900
- Notable speakers from a variety of disciplines
- An open session on teaching KB
- A display room highlighting photographs, sculpture, artifacts, and juvenalia
- A celebration featuring Tom and Steve Chapin's performing songs and music by KB
- Several receptions
- A sumptuous banquet

All of the details are not settled, but we are anticipating a lively conference with a variety of activities and sessions plus ample opportunity to exchange ideas and insights as well. We are still seeking grant monies to support speakers and events and would be grateful for any input members might have. The Kenneth Burke Society has exactly one chance to celebrate Burke's centenary and to dance with tears in our eyes over Burke's recent departure. In the spirit of the conversation, we hope Society members and friends plan to attend this special event. See you in May of 1996!

Sessions are scheduled for the Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Sciences (to be completed January '96)

The Conference Planning Committee consists of the following individuals who can be approached with comments, suggestions, and reactions: Elvera Berry, Roberts Wesleyan College; Thomas Carmichael, University of Western Ontario; Sheron J. Dailey, Indiana State University; Greig Henderson, University of Toronto; William Hall, LaSalle University; Phyllis M. Japp, University of Nebraska; James Klumpp, University of Maryland; Richard Thames, Duquesne University; and David Cratis Williams, Northeast Missouri State University.

The Program Selection Committee is co-chaired by Greig Henderson and David Cratis Williams, who will also, as currently planned, edit a volume from the conference presentations.

The Convention Planner for 1996 is Star Muir, who can be contacted at the Department of Communication, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, 22030; or (office) 703-993-1093, (fax) 703-993-1096, (home) 703-330-6918, (e-mail) smuir@osf1.gmu.edu. Local arrangements are being handled by Richard Thames, who can be contacted at the Department of Communication, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, 15282; or (office) 412-396-5077, (fax) 412-396-4792, (home) 412-366-1602, (e-mail) thames@duq2.cc.duq.edu.

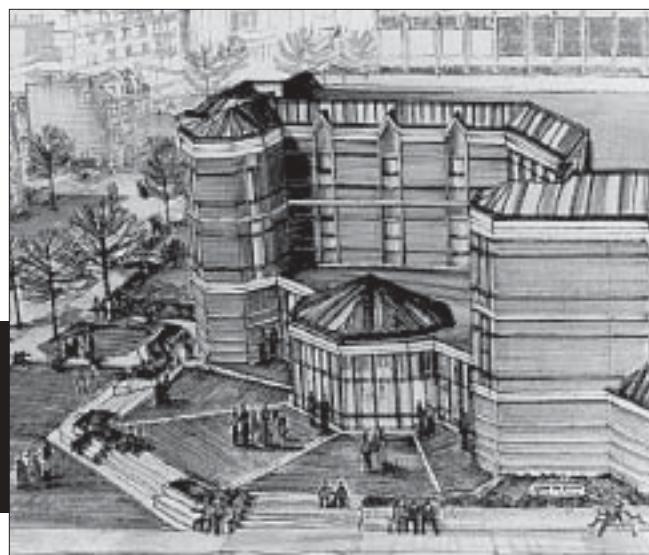


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Given the interdisciplinarity of Burke studies, the editor has long advocated the KBSN's serving as a clearing house for bibliographic data. Accordingly members are urged to send information on primary and secondary publications to correct or update any published Burke bibliographies. Though the editor and his research assistant were astonished by the extent of the information compiled, they undoubtedly missed much. Our thanks to Robert Wess.

"Introduction." In Howard Nemerov, *New & Selected Essays: With an Introduction by Kenneth Burke*, pp. ix-xx. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985.

"Poetry as Symbolic Action." In *What Is a Poet?*, Essays from the 11th Alabama Symposium on English and American Literature, ed. Hank Lazer, pp. 157-73. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987.

Primary Bibliography: Kenneth Burke, 1985 to 1995



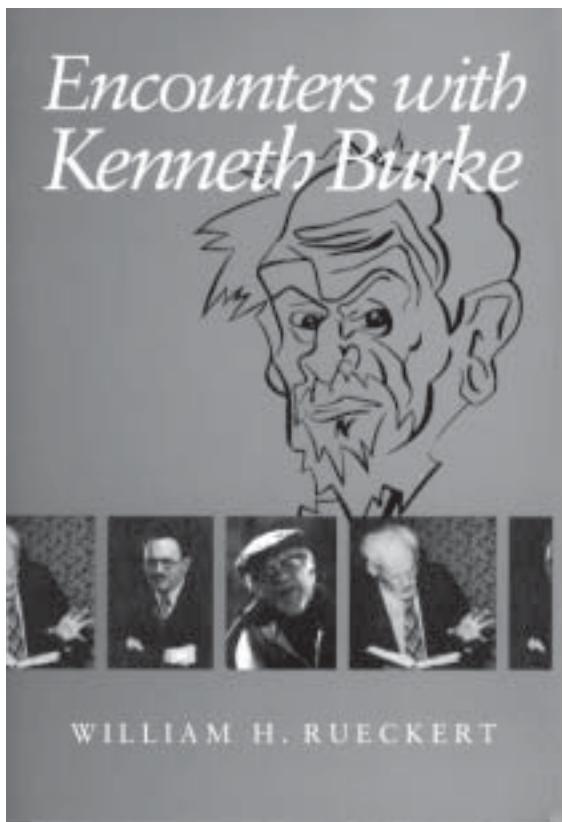
"Panel Discussion." Louis Simpson, Charles Altieri, Helen Vendler, Marjorie Perloff, David Ignatow, Denise Levertov, Charles Bernstein, Gerald Stern, Kenneth Burke, Hank Lazer, Gregory Jay. In *What Is a Poet?*, Essays from the 11th Alabama Symposium on English and American Literature, ed. Hank Lazer, pp. 185-225. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987.

"Communications to P/T." *Pre/Text*, 8 (Spring/Summer 1987), 156.

"Poem." In *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke*, ed. Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia, p. 263. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

The Selected Correspondence of Kenneth Burke and Malcolm Cowley, 1915-1981, ed. Paul Jay. New York: Viking Penguin, 1988; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

"Auscultation, Creation, and Revision." In *Extensions of the Burkeian System*, ed. James W. Chesebro, pp. 42-172. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993.



William H. Rueckert
Encounters
with Kenneth Burke
Urbana and Chicago:
University of Illinois Press,
1994. pp. xvii + 248
\$32.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper

Reviewed by
Greig Henderson
University of Toronto

William H. Rueckert is the key figure in the first generation of Burkean scholars. It is no exaggeration to say that his landmark study—*Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations* (1963, 1982)—was largely responsible for bringing Burkean studies into being. Moreover, his *Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke, 1924-1966* not only collected various responses to Burke's work but also provided a comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Rueckert's centrality in the history of Burkean studies gives ample reason to celebrate the publication of his uncollected essays on Burke. History, however, need not be invoked. The book's intrinsic excellences are manifold. Rueckert knows Burke intimately on both a personal and an intellectual level, and much of the brilliance and charm of these essays derives from their personal note. Rueckert's is not the voice of Criticism Incorporated, and the dialectical exchange between his personality and Burke's ultimately produces a rare meeting of minds. Rueckert's enthusiasm for his subject has not diminished over the years, and the passion of his engagement with Burke is an energetic reminder of what criticism can be. It provides a welcome antidote to the stultifying professionalism that has enervated contemporary theoretical discourse.

Encounters with Kenneth Burke is divided into four sections. The first consists of three summarizing essays; the second analyzes individual texts (*A Grammar of Motives*, *Attitudes Toward History*, and *Towards a Better Life*); the third explores Burke's ideas about logology, ecology, and technology; and the fourth reproduces earlier essays on Kennedy's inaugural address and on Burke's affinities with the Geneva School.

The first section pays homage to the multifarious nature of its subject. In "Some of the Many Kenneth Burkes," Rueckert ranges expertly over the entirety of Burke's writings and displays Burke in his various guises as aphorist, comedian, dialectician, logologer, dramatist, and poet. Often, by necessity, those of us who confront the superabundance of ideas in the Burkean corpus resort to focusing on *one* of the many Kenneth Burkes, and the salutary function of this eloquent essay is to remind us, in the words of *Permanence and*

Change, that “a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing.” There is little doubt that Rueckert knows the many Kenneth Burkes more deeply than most, but even he presumes only to discuss *some* of them.

In “Rereading Kenneth Burke: Doctrine without Dogma, Action with Passion,” Rueckert contends that “criticism as a way of life, rather than system building, is what accounts for the logic and integrity of Burke’s career.” For Rueckert, the vocation of criticism demands what John Henry Newman calls real rather than notional assent. The authentic critic does not simply articulate a set of notions to which he or she gives intellectual assent; those notions take on a concrete and imaginative validity in his or her life. Rueckert extends this idea in “A Field Guide to Kenneth Burke” by presenting a historical account of the movement in Burke’s thinking from literary criticism *per se* to social and cultural criticism, linking the development of Burke’s ideas to significant moments in his life and times.

they were 50 years ago. For, as Burke reflects in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, “any terminology is suspect that does not allow for the progressive criticism of itself.” It seems doubtful that we can improve upon the attitude of smiling hypochondriasis Burke advocates: “the attitude of a patient who makes peace with his symptoms by becoming interested in them. . . [and in this way develops] an attitude of appreciation.” Whatever literature may be or whatever history may be, “criticism had best be comic.”

In “Comic Criticism,” the second essay in this section, Rueckert builds on this theme by showing the pivotal role that *Attitudes Toward History* plays in the elaboration of Burke’s mature thought and by assessing its overall place in the comic criticism it inaugurated. The third essay, “Symbolic Action in Kenneth Burke’s Novel, *Towards a Better Life*,” is a virtuoso reading of a highly underrated work of fiction. With tact and respect, Rueckert subtly inserts

Rueckert’s Encounters with KB

The second section analyzes individual texts. In “Criticism as a Way of Life: Kenneth Burke’s *A Grammar of Motives* Forty Years Later,” Rueckert meditates on that 1945 classic and proclaims his faith in “a kind of epistemological idealism.” “You have to believe, as Burke does,” he writes, “that the knowledge you produce and the means by which you spread it—the written word—will help to purify war, promote tolerance by speculation, and foster the principles of wonder, resignation, tolerance, and sympathy that are necessary for sound human relations.” Today the virtual omnipresence of dissipation and fanaticism, the two evils against which *A Grammar of Motives* inveighs, might seem to point to the futility of Burke’s neo-liberal ideal and the neo-stoic resignation that accompanies it, but in the absence of any less than disastrous alternatives, his and Rueckert’s admonitions against faulty or limited vocabularies of motives seem as relevant in our own historical moment as

aspects of Burke’s biography into his analysis so as to illuminate and enrich his delineation of the work’s symbolic action. The qualified optimism he brings to his interpretation of the novel’s problematic ending, together with his sense of the text’s overall function as a rebirth ritual, seems dead-on. One hopes that this essay will provoke new interest in Burke’s rhetorical and stylistic masterpiece.

The third section explores Burke’s ideas about logology, ecology, and technology. Rueckert is painfully aware that “rhetoric has no morality,” that it “can manipulate the logological principles in any way it likes, to any ends.” As he so wisely observes, “the logologer must become a rhetorician who is both poet and ecologist, or else he will be left with nothing but the ironic perception of the logologer—which is that man is rotten with perfection and will pollute everything he touches. Rhetoric and logology are not enough.”

“Encounters,” continued on page 39

The Legacy of Kenneth Burke

EDITED BY
Herbert W. Simons & Trevor Melia



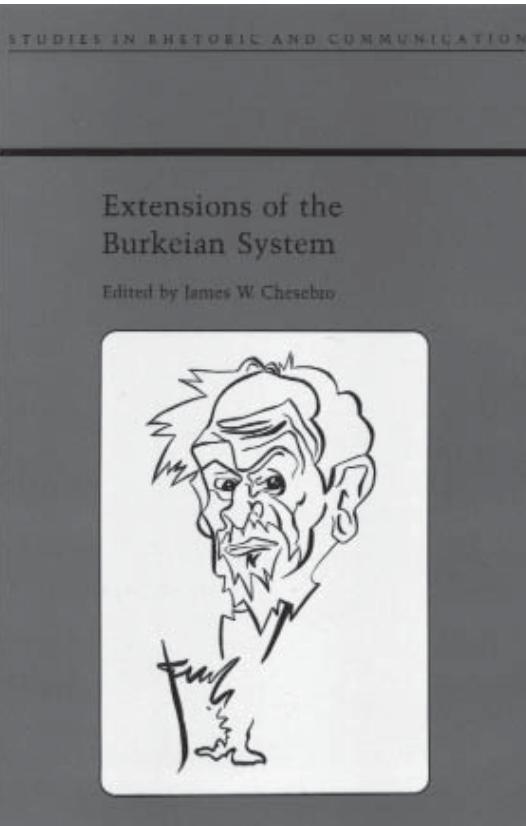
The Legacy of Kenneth Burke
Edited by Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia

**Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. pp. ix + 331
\$37.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper**

Reviewed by
Greig Henderson
University of Toronto

The Legacy of Kenneth Burke is a superb collection of essays edited by Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia. As Simons points out in the introduction, “Burke’s distinct blend of theory and social commentary has ranged over a dizzying array of subject matters—among them anthropology, linguistics, religion, oratory, fiction, history, economics, philosophy, and politics.”

KBS Conference Books:



Extensions of the Burkeian System
Edited by James W. Chesebro
Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993. pp. xxi + 350
\$39.95 cloth

Reviewed by
Andrew King
Louisiana State University

We owe a debt of gratitude to James Chesebro. He and a few others have seen to it that Kenneth Burke’s unique thought got a full and fair hearing from a new generation of scholars. While many of Burke’s literary contemporaries are being placed in minor pantheons, his work remains a living force. Burke’s voice still engages us and his ideas seem in a state of

Thus it is no wonder that Burke, an interdisciplinary maverick and unrepentant synthesist labouring independently in a world of professional specialists, was relegated to the margins of academic scholarship for the greater part of his career. Nevertheless, in today's decentred "pluriverse of discourses," the seemingly marginal has an uncanny way of becoming the pivotally important. Burke's life-long *sine qua non*—that literature as a mode of symbolic action is inextricably linked to society and history and is not a privileged kind of language that exists in its own separate and autonomous sphere—is now a commonplace of contemporary critical theory. After some 70 years of remarkable productivity—the slaughter-bench of 20th-century history also has its comedic and ironic consummations—Kenneth Burke is now a major player in the rhetoric of the human sciences.

The Legacy of Kenneth Burke supplements rather than supplants its predecessors, *Critical*

Responses to Kenneth Burke, 1924-1966 and *Representing Kenneth Burke*. In its appendix, Richard Thames updates Armin Paul Frank and Mechthild Frank's definitive checklist of Burke's writings and adds to William Rueckert's selective bibliography of writings about Kenneth Burke. From a purely bibliographical point of view, the book is indispensable to the Burkean scholar. More importantly, it engages its predecessors dialectically. The implicitly antagonistic views of Burke put forward in *Representing Kenneth Burke* by two prominent Marxist critics, Frederic Jameson and Frank Lentricchia, are explicitly dissected by Christine Oravec in "Kenneth Burke's Concept of Association and the Complexity of Identity." And David Damrosch's "The Rhetoric of Allegory: Burke and Augustine" confronts and counters John Freccero's "Logology: Burke on St. Augustine," another essay from this earlier collection. Moreover, the appendix reprints

Philadelphia to New Harmony

becoming. This is because Chesebro has done what many others have failed to do. A great thinker needs adversaries far more than he or she needs disciples, and Chesebro has treated Burke's work not as a closed system but as a kind of resource that must be shaped anew for every challenge or question. Chesebro's preface "opens" Burke's work in T. S. Eliot's sense. He questions the adequacy of Burke's system in explicating feminist and multicultural discourses (xx). He wonders if Burke's optimism is actually closer to Petrarch's than the deep pessimism of Derrida. He asks if Burke is not mired in the perspectives of the old print culture and in the old western ideal of the polymath. In short, Chesebro asks for vigorous scrutiny and constant interrogation. He would agree with Everett Lee Hunt who, when asked at the 1982 ECA program in his honor if young rhetoricians did not need folk heroes, answered smartly: "Nobody needs heroes with clay feet."

This volume is the product of an open call for papers. 43 essays were submitted and considered by a selection committee that included Bernard Brock, James Klumpp, Dale Bertelson and Timothy Thomson. The review process was blind and the board not only selected the manuscripts but provided editorial suggestions for the initial drafts. This fearful labor continued for more than a year. Finally, Chesebro organized the volume in four movements. These movements represent the ways in which Burke's system might continue to act as a fructifying influence in contemporary thought.

The result will not please Burke's hero worshippers, those scholars whom D.K. Smith once called "seekers for The Brain of the Cosmos." Burke gets some rather rough handling in the process. The first three chapters are historical extensions of his thought. In "A Field Guide to Kenneth Burke—1990," William H. Rueckert "Extensions," continued on page 11

Legacy

Burke's 1935 speech, "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," and Lentricchia's trenchant analysis of it in *Criticism and Social Change*. It is fitting that the volume should include an excerpt from this book, which, in aligning Burke with thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci and in pitting him against thinkers such as Paul de Man, is the most responsible for bringing him into the contemporary critical arena. *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke* furthers and extends the cause by showing dramatism and logology in cooperation and competition with other terministic screens and by allowing Burke's writings to take their rightful place in the domain of critical theory and the human sciences.

Simon's opening essay provides an excellent introduction to Burke's perspectivism and a use-

been made before, Signorile's pairing of ratios and causes is innovative and enlightening, as is his general discussion of symbolic requiredness and the compelling nature of symbols. Donald McCloskey's piece on economics subjects the rhetoric of the dismal science to Burkean scrutiny.

The remaining essays take up more traditional issues in rhetoric, criticism, and theory. Establishing a substantive connection between Burke and Cicero, Michael Leff counterpoints those commentators who put undue emphasis on the Aristotelian components of Burke's rhetoric. Leff contends that the Burkean and Ciceronian view of discourse as act, along with their identification of knowledge with eloquence, recognizes "the aesthetic in discourse without alienating the aesthetic from the pragmatic functions of language." Simply put, the comparison Leff draws between *De Oratore* and "Four Master Tropes" is a *tour de force*.

Focusing on Burke and Coleridge, Jane

Philadelphia

ful summation of the essays to follow. He rightly sees dramatism and logology as occupying a middle ground between the extremes of unreflexive objectivism and self-debilitating nihilism. Burke's linguistic scepticism and art of mistrust, he convincingly maintains, constitute a comic and ironic frame that aims to demystify but not to debunk.

The following four essays discuss Burke's influence on disciplines other than literature. Joseph Gusfield analyzes Burke's significance for the study of social action, contending that Burke's "recognition of the unity between art and human action . . . constitutes the bridge between sociology and literature." Trevor Melia's essay on dramatism and scientism examines Burke's critique of the cult of correlation, while Vito Signorile examines the status of causality in social explanation by juxtaposing Aristotle's four-fold conception of cause with Burke's dramatistic pentad. Although such a juxtaposition has

Blankenship shows the ways in which both critics see language as constitutive of social reality and explores their reflections on the role of magic and mystery in human story. As she points out, Burke was always fascinated with Coleridge's desynonymizing discriminations and with the extent to which language thinks for us. "While we are using language, it is using us."

Cary Nelson and David Cratis Williams consider Burke in relation to poststructuralism. Nelson's essay is a dazzling exercise in "end-of-the-line" thinking. Noting that "one cannot write except as an agent of the very verbal structures one may want to expose and criticize," Nelson offers us a glimpse of the deconstructionist abyss. Perspectivism and pragmatism, he implies, may be but eulogistic names for relativism and nihilism. This is a dreadful doubt, but it should not be repressed, and Nelson's essay has the salutary effect of bringing it out into the open.

"Legacy," continued on page 40

Extensions

provides a remarkable biography. Burke wrote out of his disappointment and out of his hope. But he was not one of those social critics who was awakened by the hammer-blow of the depression. Burke's mind and sensibility were built up in layers. Rueckert notes that Burke is constructed of the things he has done but also shaped by the things he has left undone, the things he has deliberately elected not to do. Reuckert's piece is followed by 130 pages of a previously unpublished essay written more than 50 years ago by Burke, a remarkable evocation of hard times in America. We see Burke riding the train with cardboard boxes, suitcases, dogs, and children. We see Burke conversing with a farmer worried that the disinherited proletariat will squat on his fields or take over his house and

of Burke's idea of the negative is enormously suggestive. Arnie Madsen's "Burke's Representative Anecdote as Critical Method" is brilliantly rendered. Madsen turned the idea over in his mind for several years before writing the article and it shows the marks of white nights when he preferred thinking about Burke to healthful sleep. The language exhibits the compressed fluency of matured thoughts. As a power theorist, I found Dale Bertelsen's chapter on transformation enormously useful.

Part Three concentrates on programs and politics. Jane Blakenship, Timothy Thompson, and Anthony Palmeri discuss Burke's life long ambivalence toward technology. In the 1960's some members of the academy jokingly called Burke a modern luddite because of his incredibly spartan lifestyle. In the early 1960's he proclaimed himself a "Rachael Carson Man" and proclaimed by his life and daily behavior a level of commitment that went far beyond that of most urban activists.

New Harmony

grange. We hear him chiding his friends who have given up on literature as too trivial; Burke was more shaken than we knew by the attacks on poetry from a quarter he did not expect, the New York literati. He is clearly distressed: "It is as if one could not properly start the Revolution without first killing off a few poets" (p. 90).

Burke's solution to the tension between social imperatives and a love of discourse "that makes nothing happen" is brilliantly explicated by Greig E. Henderson's "Aesthetic and Practical Frames of Reference: Burke, Marx, and the Rhetoric of Social Change." Burke's peculiar construal of Marx allows him to conflate both practical and aesthetic problems.

Thus, part one, a part that occupies just over one half of the volume is Burke's past and present. The second set of methodological extensions notes the ways in which specific Burkeian ideas can be useful to the rhetorical and literary critic. Richard Gregg's exploration

Part Four deals with Philosophical Extensions. Robert Cathcart's essay skewers Burke's dramatism as print based and his opposition to technology as based upon a flawed understanding of media. Then Cathcart softens the blow; dramatism can be saved; it must be merely reparameterized for a new more sensate era. Brock's final essay traces the evolution of Burke's philosophy. It is a daunting task, but Brock's essay does justice to the myriad-minded one.

This is a powerful book. It cannot be read all at one go. Despite the fusillade of doubting questions the book is written by people who still care about Burke and think that what he said still matters immensely. The pace and fury of the book reminded me of the first three books by the writer who called himself Trevanian. The book is not a benediction, nor a reverent little *memoriam*. It is a book that thrusts its insolent boards directly into the faces of the authorities and cries "Avanti!"

Greig E. Henderson
Kenneth Burke:
Literature and Language
as Symbolic Action
Athens: University of
Georgia Press, 1988
pp. xvi + 216
\$27.50 hardcover

Reviewed by
Robert E. Garlitz
Plymouth State College

"Spring is the Mischief"

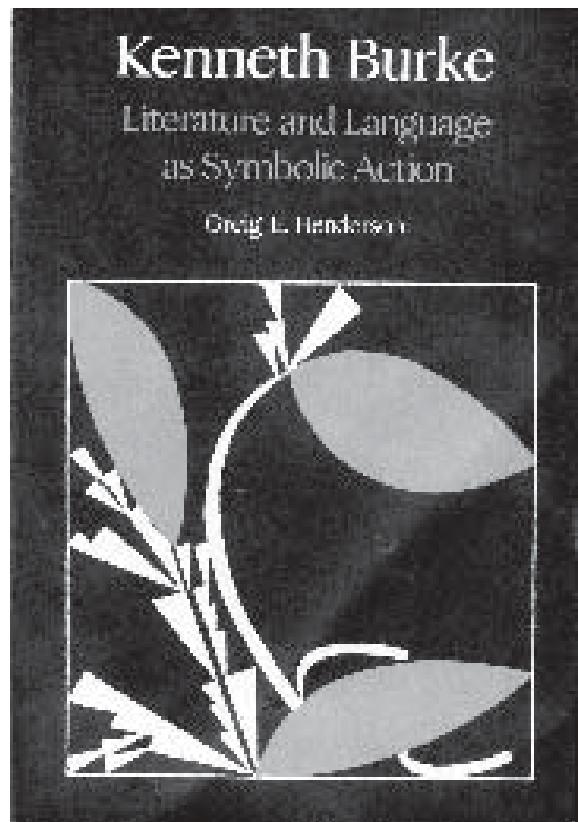
One of the early delights in Greig Henderson's book is his discussion in Chapter Two of Robert Frost's "Mending Wall." He takes the poem as a representative anecdote for the rhetorical situation and shows how to apply some of Burke's key rhetorical theories. It is a brilliant and powerful demonstration and it set me to thinking about Burke and Henderson.

I have always thought of Burke as pretty much a "something there is that doesn't love a wall" sort of guy. One reason is that I have always thought that the single best phrase for Burke is the one Howard Nemerov used—"everything, preferably all at once." Henderson seems, on the other hand, to be a "good fences make good neighbors" sort of fellow. His main concern is that by developing logology, Burke "hardened the categories" and thereby compromises and betrays the achievements of dramatism. Later in the book, Henderson acknowledges, however, that this worry is more a matter of his perception than it is Burke's real drift.

That there is a discontinuity between dramatism and logology is my own invention to the extent that I offer a *more rigid* definition of dramatism than Burke himself does. . . . All this is a long-winded way of saying that logology is reductive only when it is not integrated with dramatism, in the most comprehensive sense of the latter term. To the degree that one downplays the transactional model, one tends to lapse into intrinsic criticism. In spite of this *imposed* value judgment I believe that logological analysis can do useful conceptual work for the practical critic. . . . (131, italics added)

One important function of this imposed value judgment is to give the book an underlying dramatic tension and plot.

In its conceptual design, the book operates synchronically. Rather than trace the narrative history of Burke's career and development, Henderson "undertakes to describe the system as an existing whole without respect to its history" and



studies “certain key themes that recur throughout Burke’s work and examine[s] them in contexts that often extend beyond their original scope” (2). Henderson offers Burkeans a superb, comprehensive review of Burke’s thought or newcomers a remarkably clear guide through the territory. The book thereby complements William Rueckert’s fundamental exposition of Burke’s system. Henderson does not, however, as he makes clear, achieve “anything resembling that ‘wonderful kind of simultaneity and coherence’ Rueckert speaks of, primarily because I do not believe that it exists” (2). It is the “contradictions and disharmonies” in Burke’s development that Henderson wishes to grapple with.

To set the stage for this agon, Henderson uses Chapter One to set forth the dramatistic theory of literature, using the topic of the intrinsic and extrinsic as it has dominated critical work in this century. Chapter Two then explores fine points of theory and practice, reviewing some of Burke’s

The turning point of the book comes in Chapter Four, “Word and the Word.” The question is whether logology is not after all rather a kind of death, to put as dramatic a face as possible on the idea of disharmony and disjunction. In this reading, all the fluid vitality of dramatism as a method of studying the barnyard scramble of competing perspectives is reduced if not lost when Burke turns to studying the internal logics and perfect implications of terminologies. Henderson sees it as a turn from methodology to ontology.

Logology converts methodological priority—the heuristic method of treating communication as primary to all categories of experience and of adopting the poetic perspective of man as communicant, a dramatistic method first developed in *Permanence and Change*—into ontological priority—the logological view that language is the source and origin of all value because it affords the peculiar

Literature and Language . . .

essays on drama and fiction. Chapter Three takes up Burke’s theory of language and situates his work on perspective by incongruity, dramatism, and rhetoric in relation to philosophers such as Austin, Quine, and Derrida. Lentricchia’s work on Burke comes into play most importantly in this chapter, but Henderson’s stunning achievement here is to thread us through these competing theories of language and value with remarkable concision, deftness and assurance. After he has done this, he warns us of his work’s limitations: “I have consistently used the term ‘dramatism’ as if it really demarcated a common intellectual space that the various philosophers I have cited occupy. Yet the parallels, however real, are admittedly enforced” (106). Perhaps so, but the task has been extremely helpful and necessary for further understanding Burke’s achievements and for putting them into dialogue with competing and cooperative approaches.

possibility of the negative, the possibility of saying ‘no’ to ‘thou shalt not,’ a view that finds its ultimate expression in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. If logology seems in part an abandonment of some of the tenets of dramatism . . . , the motivation behind Burke’s hardening of the categories is obvious enough. For Burke envisages his perspectivism as a way of coming to terms with the chaos of conflicting interpretations endemic to an era of instability, as, to use his own expression, a frame of acceptance. Over the years, it would seem, he comes to feel the necessity of imposing some sort of absolute value on language itself. And for Burke logology is in some sense a surrogate theology. The analogies he makes for heuristic purposes betray a psychological need for a sense of permanence akin to a religious faith in the curative power of word made flesh. (105)

Henderson

In spite of, or along with, his caution on this point, Henderson nevertheless continues to follow Burke's lead and proceeds in the next chapter to discuss Eliot's "Burnt Norton." In one sense he is trying to re-convert the ontology of logology back into a critical methodology but he also re-enacts the *pattern* of Burke's turn from dramatism to logology by using logology to study so theological a poem as *The Four Quartets*. I wondered why it might not have been better to "test" logology against a much less "suitable" work—a poem by Adrienne Rich or Charles Bukowski, say, to see just how universal logology might or might not be.

Nevertheless, Chapter Five on Eliot's quintessentially logological poem explores the "fit" between Burke, Eliot, and St. Augustine. Henderson aligns and re-aligns these three minds and texts in exciting and illuminative ways. If logology can help us do *this* with words and texts and symbolic dramas, well, then, let's use it! Here we partake of marvelous critical thought and philosophical inquiry worth doing indeed.

I have not emphasized, perhaps, what a delightful sense of subdued wit suffuses the book, the sort of serious playfulness Burke loved and valued. Listen to the note Henderson sounds at one point in this chapter, reminding us that when we read Burke we look forward to what might be called "the pleasures of exasperation."

This matter of the negative and the tautological cycle of terms is inordinately complicated, and it will not make complete sense, if it makes sense at all, until we have considered the other analogies. This makes for an interesting note in passing. . . . For the analogies mutually imply one another, and any order in which they might be presented would be equally as intelligible or confusing as any other, which offers little consolation for the reader but a rhetoric of consolation for the expositor. The chordal vision, though logically prior, must be temporally posterior. (142)

Henderson has our sympathies and the right to this breather because he has been doing such an astonishing job of clarification and commentary, exposition and loving wrangle with Burke's thought.

In the process, Henderson's anxieties about logology become softened somewhat. At the end of Chapter Four Henderson had stated, "But the most dangerous aspect of logology is that it *might seem* to endorse what I have called, somewhat derisively, following Hirsch, the myth of semantic autonomy. I do not think, however, that this is the case" (149, italics added).

And by the end of Chapter Five he notes

The reason why logology is to my mind a fruitful methodology when applied to the *Four Quartets* is that Eliot's religious frame of acceptance views historical reality *sub specie aeternitatis* and thus brings to bear upon that reality an essentially ahistorical or synchronic mode of apprehension while paradoxically, at the same time, striving to find the ultimate purpose or meaning of history. Hence the fact that logology *tends* to downplay the scenic term of the dramatistic pentad makes for a *felicitous complementarity*. (183, italics added)

By the time we reach the Postscript it seems that the worry about ontology displacing methodology becomes lessened in view of the much more dangerous forces of "linguistic nihilism that pervades much of contemporary criticism" (185). When viewed in the much larger drama, Burke exemplifies the noble rhetorician who shows us how to continually search for meaning and purpose and find it.

This is a splendid book, but I confess I was intrigued and puzzled and finally not convinced by Henderson's treatment of logology. I have always thought that Burke insists that a separation between the two is not possible and that any sort of act involves both dramatism and logology. That is to say, methodology is always ontology and ontology is always methodology.

One key to the judgment Henderson creates and imposes on Burke can be found in his tracing of one arc in Burke's career:

In *Permanence and Change* the focus clearly is on change, particularly on changing interpretations of reality, but the yearning for permanence is omnipresent. By the time he arrives at *The Rhetoric of Religion*, almost thirty years later, permanence has been achieved. Language has been enshrined as the source of all value, and the logological perspective has become the extraperspectival standpoint from which one may evaluate other perspectives. (81)

“Evaluate” strikes me as the most problematic term. It seems to me that the dialogue between The Lord and Satan at the close of *The Rhetoric of Religion* makes clear that logology is a place from which all other -ologies and dramas might be contemplated and studied but not evaluated. Logology does not set itself up as a measure against which all others are to be judged. Rather it constitutes that proscenium within which the

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* or Winterston’s *Written on the Body*. As soon as I choose—for whatever reasons and motives—I become imprisoned and empowered with the language and terms implicit in the act. The same is true if I choose to paint a picture or write a concerto. And my choice implicates me, at least for the duration of my writing of the essay, in a discovery of a limitedly “absolute” value (the value of doing the critical act), a “surrogate theology,” a psychological need for a sense of the permanent value of doing the essay (a contribution to my field or literature or posterity in some sense)—all of this akin to religious faith, at least for the time being, and faith in the curative power of my words about Winterston’s novel made flesh in my critical act of dramatistic-logological understanding-enfleshment.

In other words, every symbolic action involves one in not just a hermeneutic circle but a dramatistic-logological Möbius loop!

... As Symbolic Action

Impresario invites The Lord and Satan to have their dialogue. And all symbols, words or images or sounds, like the Impresario, are clothed half in formal elegance and half in rags—that is, the source of value and the source of blame. That is one way the history of theology in the west “perfected” the terminology—by treating the word as perfect godhead and perfect scapegoat. Logology sees symbolic action much as theology does—as both principle of order and principle of victimage; if principle of praise, then simultaneously of blame as well. It puzzles me why Henderson passes up the chance to round out his wrestling match with Burke by stressing the both/and over the either/or.

Rather than being seen as a “hardening of the categories,” logology should be viewed as both a hardening and a softening—the terms for Order work whenever we choose to act.

Suppose I want to write a critical essay on a recent novel. I might choose between, say,

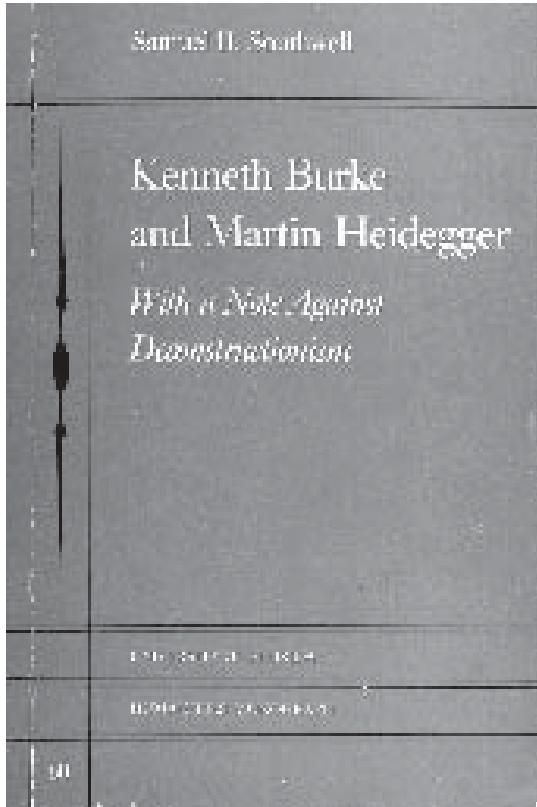
Because he sees how act implies ontology, Burke is the noble rhetorician who counter-states the nihilists and demonstrates how our quests for meaning are of value.

And so, to circle back to Frost’s poem, we would see the ontology at work in the rhetorical drama, in the terms, and even in the silences and absences not worded between the lines of “Mending Wall.” For instance

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.

He will not go behind his father’s saying.

Underneath and behind the whole scene—the two neighbors and the frozen-ground-swell under their wall—are the absent mothers, and the unspoken ground of being, earth, on which the wall is mended, and in which both men and their trees are rooted. Terms for order and victimage are implicitly present in the drama of every act of knowing and unknowing.



Samuel B. Southwell

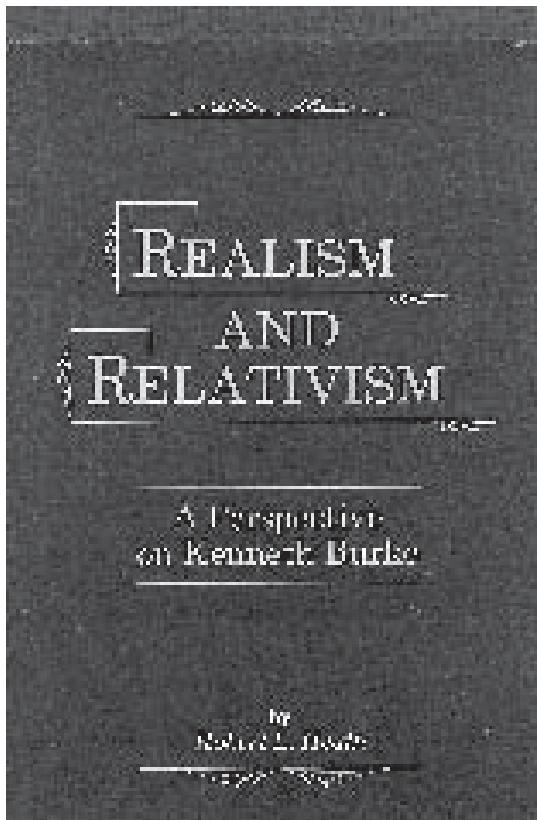
***Kenneth Burke and Martin Heidegger:
With A Note Against Deconstruction***
**Gainesville: University of Florida
Press, 1987. pp. ix + 156
\$16.95 paper**

Reviewed by
Kirk Junker
University of Pittsburgh

"What Does Positivism Have to Do With Burke?"

This book would be more suitably entitled *Against Deconstruction: With A Preface on Kenneth Burke and Martin Heidegger*. Southwell's prefatory discussion of Burke and

Realism and Relativism



Robert L. Heath

***Realism And Relativism:
A Perspective on Kenneth Burke***
**Macon, GA: Mercer University Press,
1986. pp. xii + 270
\$36.95 cloth**

Reviewed by
Wade Kenny
University of Pittsburgh

Here is a book I would recommend for anyone seriously interested in Kenneth Burke. Stitch-bound, it is a volume of impeccable quality with more durability than it should ever need—certainly more than present editions of KB's own work; a crime for which we should all be dragged to the street and flogged.

Heidegger spans only five chapters totalling 72 pages. It is largely a cut-and-paste amalgam of quotations, as Southwell himself forewarns when he states in his introduction that he has “resorted in the following study to a massive use of quotations” (9). The sixth and concluding chapter followed by a “Note” against deconstruction, together totalling 58 pages, are Southwell on his own. It is in this latter half of the book that one suspects that he or she has found Southwell’s purpose in writing the book—Southwell’s seemly seeking Burke’s and Heidegger’s support in his project to show that the theories of deconstruction “will not bear analysis” and that the theorists of deconstruction, namely Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, “cannot be taken seriously” (87). The tone of the book is reactionary fear—fear of the “tendencies” in modern thought “to consider language as totally determinative of man” (75), and “to give up, at long last, the Cartesian dream of certainty” (76). And it is

deconstruction which most scares Southwell, for he sees “deconstruction” as but a “strategic euphemism” for *destruction* (79).

Two aspects of this diatribe on deconstruction are particularly shocking. First is that he would specifically use the work of Burke and Heidegger to support a positivist polemic against deconstruction. Second is the more general notion that he would wish to posit positivism against deconstruction at all. So why are Burke and Heidegger the vehicle for setting up this polemic? This remains the most puzzling aspect of Southwell’s book to me, for even he notes that he must torque the duo’s works to be able to use them in support of his core thesis, which he calls his “causal hypothesis.” Southwell’s causal hypothesis serves as a “positivistic simulacrum of Heidegger’s phenomenological description and as a reference point for identifying the positions of both men [Burke and Heidegger] on the role of language” (10).

Burke and Heidegger

Heath’s goal is to bring Burke to the forefront of 20th century social thought, by suggesting Our Father refutes epistemology in favor of a thinly glazed social-pragmatism. The issue of ontology, though mentioned by times, never really has its day in court. Of course by now the book is twice around the block, with hardly a murmur from anyone. *Realism and Relativism* has been treated like the neighbor’s dog—it barks, and growls, and even shows its teeth; but it never gets out of the yard, so why bother paying attention to it? By the time this review is complete I hope to have given an answer.

In writing, I presume the reader’s prior acquaintance with Barry Brummert’s commendable review (*QJS*, 1987, 359-60). I hope to supplement that writing, in part with the chapter by chapter synopsis which follows.

In “The Early Years: A Perpetual Grailism,” Heath conjures a Burkean relativism, *essentially* by tugging on our temporal heart strings. Thus,

in 40 pages of disjointed intellectual biography, we learn that Burke “started out” an aesthete, but was markedly changed “by the depression” so that his preference for the aesthetic over the epistemic eventually capitulated in favor of a language theory that is premised upon social efficacy. According to Heath, Burke’s aesthetics were relativistic (8-14), his social values were relativistic (14-24), and his views on philosophy and ideology were relativistic (25-37). To Heath’s credit he employs a wide range of Burke’s scholarship to create this argument, from seldom referenced articles to archival sources. The fact that his reading of this esoterica is a selection, reflection, and deflection should leave no mar on him—the Barnyard of Burke’s greater scholarship is a dialectical arena in which we should all perhaps wrangle. Still I do have my concerns: on the one hand the chapter’s pretensions to intellectual biography are humbled by its disjointedness, on the other

continued on page 20

Southwell

Southwell's causal hypothesis is an edifice erected out of hypothetical biology in an attempt to save the positivist's referential notion of language from what he calls the "scorched-earth cultural policy of postmodernism" (1). This hypothetical biology is loosely tied to one whom Southwell tells us is the common intellectual ancestor of both Burke and Heidegger—Friedrich Nietzsche. In abbreviated form, the causal hypothesis runs as follows:

The argument might begin with Kant's famous statement: "Concepts without intuitions are empty; intuition without concepts is blind." . . . The hypothesis assumes that nonhuman animals are, as Descartes maintained, automata. . . . Their sense organs are simply transfer systems for information which has as its only consequence the successful or unsuccessful stimulation of instinctive energies.

In the nonhuman brain, Southwell's hypothesis continues, sense organs have neuronal links only with triggering mechanisms of instinctive action. There are no neuronal links between the visual and the auditory-vocal system. . . . Such neuronal links are established or utilized when animal sounds begin to be referential, that is, when the neurological correlates of specific sound patterns come to have stable links with the neurological correlates of specific visual stimuli in a way that circumvents or modifies sense-instinct linkages. . . . This means that now every visual stimulus effects a potentiation of the auditory-vocal system. To the extent that this occurs, the visual stimulus elicits "meaning"; it becomes a conscious visual experience. . . . In accord with such a hypothesis, language becomes the *cause* and the sustaining content of consciousness. (10-11)

Southwell immediately admits that "Burke and Heidegger would find this hypothesis abhorrent both because of its pretension to exhaustively explanatory power and because of its reliance

upon causation" (11). So why use it? Because this notion of causation is rooted in positivism. Moreover, Southwell insists that if Burke's and Heidegger's conceptions of language were translated into positivistic terms, the result would be something close to this causal hypothesis. I am tempted to dismiss this entire construction due to its admitted artificiality and forcibly contrived nature. In short, it is irrelevant to either Burke or Heidegger. But at some level I find the relationship of positivism to deconstruction to be intriguing. I also find the explicit assertion of out-of-vogue positivism against the currently more trendy deconstruction to be a courageous project. One might even call it an example of Burke's "perspective by incongruity." Furthermore, one might believe that using positivism to explain or discuss Burke is not necessarily out of step, when one considers Burke's "paradox of substance"—whereby linguistically, one can only use what a thing is not to explain or discuss that thing.

As Southwell notes, Burke speaks on both Heidegger and positivism in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, wherein he aligns Heidegger's "comic" reification of the quasi-substantive nothing with his own logological way of thinking, setting both against positivism: "Whether or not [Heidegger's reified negative] actually refers to anything, it is a 'reasonable' operation linguistically [as a contextual counterpart or ground of Being]. . . . Where positivism would simply dismiss such operations as sheer nonsense, logology must watch them as carefully as a Freudian psychologist watches the nonsense of a patient's dreams" (21).

In the Epilogue to *The Rhetoric of Religion*, "Prologue in Heaven," the Lord chastises Satan's inability to comprehend the ineffable by noting that problems arise in talking about the ineffable only for positivists who "think of words as being relevant only when they are *about* something" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 288). And what Southwell says of "deconstructionism," I want to observe of positivism as well—it "has had the value of helping us to recognize our alternatives" (80). I am also here reminded of the words of Hölderlin, reflectively quoted by Heidegger in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology": "But where danger is, grows the saving power also."

Southwell seemly wants to cling to Burke and Heidegger as saviors of referentiality who can also incorporate and overcome scorched-earth post-modernism. Southwell finds Burke's metabiology consistent with the hypothetical biology of his causal hypothesis (13). He derives support for his linguistic positivism from the basic and general notion that Burke and Heidegger root their own notions of language in philosophies of being, as opposed to necessarily nihilistic philosophies of becoming. With this common ground of being-based language theories in hand, he sets out to do battle with the destructive deconstructionists. But in doing so, Southwell retreats to what looks much like the old haunt of realism versus anti-realism. Same war, new battle. I think Southwell has in this maneuver miscalculated the lack of exclusivity among the camps he would separate. His narrative separates the positivist from the deconstructionist. He limits the positivist to the notion of referentiality in language and depicts the deconstructionist as a Gorgian radical relativist who would espouse Derrida's claim "Il n'y a pas d'hors texte." Compare however the radical relativist resigned to the inability of knowing anything outside language who may take that inability as an invitation to make all the world linguistic, with the logical positivist likewise resigned to the inability of knowing anything outside language who may attempt to turn language itself into an epistemological enterprise—a science modelled on the sciences that assume the *capability* of knowing something outside language—and thus make all of language like the putatively non-linguistic objects of the world.

Early on (10), Southwell announces that he wishes to achieve clarity regarding Burke and Heidegger by virtue of his causal hypothesis. Clarity is of course a worthy goal in any case and a particularly good one when discussing deconstruction. But one can say also that the clarity which Southwell hopes to achieve is a self-defeating clarity. Why are Burke and Heidegger not already "clear"? What must be removed? What must be removed is the very nature of Burke's and Heidegger's non-positivistic use of language. Ironically, I think the very hospitality of Burke's works which allows something as

foreign as positivism to be read out of it is the same element which Southwell wants to remove. Similarly, the same non-standard language which Heidegger uses and which Krell and others have translated so artfully into English, which opens itself to even a positivistic interpretation, Southwell wishes to "translate." Southwell would have us believe that the lack of clarity is due to Burke's and Heidegger's style, that underneath the style is a prose nugget that can be described or explained a different way. Wrong. The language is not "only" the medium. In non-referential languages such as Burke's (at times) and Heidegger's (most of the time), changing the meaning is changing the "truth"—and necessarily so.

So what can we learn from this positivistic translation of the two non-positivists, Burke and Heidegger? Should we just stop with dismissal? Southwell has chosen for himself two figures for whom the moniker of "positivist" is out of place. Yet there are aspects of both whereupon a discussion of positivism, particularly in the light of postmodernity into which they are often read today, should be explored. Southwell does a service in suggesting positivism where others would not dare, but he mislocates the connections of it to Burke and Heidegger.

Southwell's portrayals of Burke's and Heidegger's work are not radical; his transgression is that his way of seeing these texts is currently out-of-fashion—he sees as a positivist. But he does so honestly, like Comte himself, rather than resisting the day's negative spin on the genre and instead labelling himself something more fashionable.

In addition, this work serves as a ladder by which to enter the complex thought of Burke and Heidegger on language. We need such a ladder because most if not all of us find ourselves thrown into a world dominated by a positivistic comportment toward itself and language. It is a crutch with which we are all born when we learn that language makes one-to-one references to an objective material world of being and beings. But, like the ladder referred to by Wittgenstein in the penultimate paragraph of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, once we have climbed it, we must throw it away and read Burke and Heidegger without this crutch.

the biography is so loosely connected to any philosophically grounded understanding of relativism that it fails to make its argumentative point.

“An Experiential Aesthetic” counters the first chapter’s biographical style by providing a smorgasbord of Burke’s writings spanning 40 years; nevertheless one may as easily obtain the argument presented therein by reading a text such as *Counterstatement* or perhaps the titular essay from *The Philosophy Of Literary Form*. By this chapter it becomes apparent that Heath intends to reside within a style of Burkeography that he later critiques (*QJS*, 1991, 81-82), substituting the argument “Burke is a realist/relativist” for a “here are the main arguments that Burke has made” strategy. It could be argued, then, that Heath is guilty of a classic Burkophile’s crime—substituting a summary for an argument. When such a crime occurs the result is always a limit and a failure—however, by virtue of its varied sources and significant citations, I would say that Heath’s effort here is the most thorough of this type to date.

Again there are some interesting anecdotal references, in particular a tracing of the critical correspondence between Burke and Waldo Frank on the relationship between epistemology and aesthetics.

“Separated By An Instrument Of Our Own Making” is a peculiar chapter which demonstrates how language overlays the material scene forming a human experience which, though always provisional, gets regarded as certain, in the manner of a trained incapacity. While telling this story, Heath lapses into a lukewarm discussion of association/dissociation, the negative, and entelechy, following immediately with a discussion of positive, dialectical, and ultimate terms. Heath seems to suggest elements of the first triad can be sequentially paired with those in the second. This prayerful connectedness strikes me as particularly ironic in that Heath draws a vague *distinction* between contextual and geometric substance (168) which can be summarily dismissed by virtue of a citation from the *Grammar* (26, ln. 5-6). Heath does provide a

variety of good quotes, including the extended passage whereat Burke characterizes things as “the signs of words,” (91) and “reality is what things do for us” (92) alongside “Nothing could be farther from ‘food,’ for instance, than a mere word for it” (93). The chapter contains a weak and perhaps spurious summary of the six analogies between language and the supernatural which Burke discusses in the first essay of his *Rhetoric of Religion* (118). Unlike Heath’s compression of “Four Master Tropes” (68), this logical summary is a marked disappointment.

“The Dancing Of An Attitude” contains several of Heath’s strongest moments. It is in this chapter particularly that he addresses the relationship between language and the extra-linguistic foundation upon which it acts as referent (123). By contrast with other popular arguments at that time, Heath is dead center on this topic and has aptly critiqued those who would speak of worldless text in Kenneth Burke’s name. Addressing the issue that symbols overlay “reality,” Heath discusses how these symbols are related to the patterns of activity that emerge for us as social agents, causing our words about reality to become inextricably entwined with our patterns of living. As is the case with other chapters, Heath slips in a surplus: a brief discussion of semantic and poetic meaning.

“Homo Dialecticus” is, to my mind, the book’s best chapter—alone making the book worth its purchase price, regardless of criticisms I have launched here. One need but read this chapter to realize that Robert Heath is no negligible Burke scholar. The section “A Dialectic Of Realism” (159-165) is the chapter’s best, but I would recommend the entire chapter to anyone who wants a thorough analysis of substance and its relationship to dialectic in general. For those who are in any way enfeebled by the *Grammar*, this chapter should be *required* reading.

Of course, “Rhetoric Through Identification” is the chapter one might approach most hopefully, and Heath does a fair job of it. He is accurate and thorough, and he does address some crucial issues. Heath argues that the need for order requires people to see the world in similar ways, and that rhetoric participates in the creation of

that similarity. My only disappointment is that Heath did not take his discussion of substance over from the previous chapter into a discussion of consubstantiality in this chapter, because I feel the connection makes more apparent the argument he is creating. Heath also makes some interesting and appropriate comments on the relationship between property and propriety in this chapter. Most refreshing of all, he does not say stupid things about identification.

Of the last chapter, “Poetry: The Use Of Language For Sheer Pleasure,” I would say but this: read Rueckert instead.

The summaries above should leave a reader wondering, “what all this has to do with realism and relativism”—my question while reading the *text* and Barry Brummert’s reason for discounting Heath in his critique. Heath might have done better: given that he apparently had not yet read the unpublished *Symbolic*, he could have skipped his weak chapter on poetics and laid out instead a concluding chapter that made realist-and-relativist sense of what he had done. Or he could have created such arguments in the chapter-by-chapter conclusions. These in themselves are a puzzle, for they do not seem to draw conclusions, but rather proffer summaries. And they are not good summaries. Peculiar. Perhaps it is just as well—I have yet to understand why so many seem bent on “understanding” Burke by playing symbolic “Pin The Tail On The Donkey.” It strikes me as a perverse craving to emasculate KB’s writing and suggests a misreading of his work at the most introductory of levels.

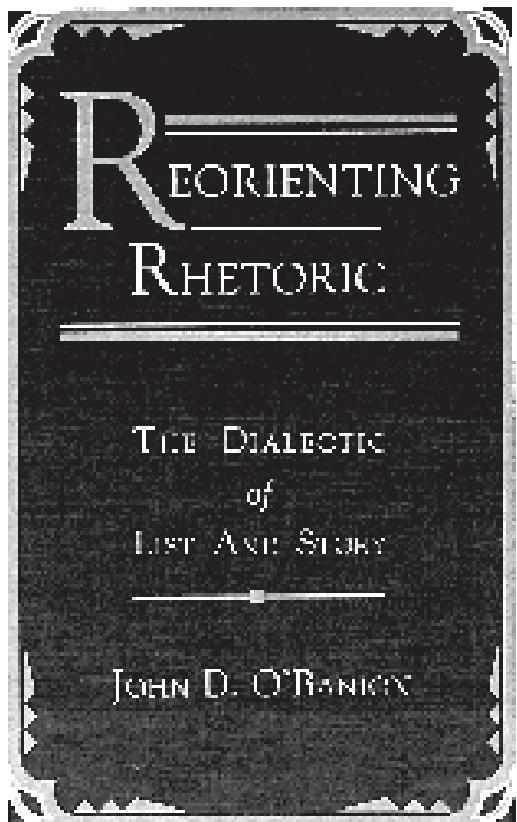
It is possible Heath felt his *description* of Burke’s writing demonstrated the realism/relativism thing. It is also possible that the realism/relativism thing got stuck onto the text as an afterthought—such things happen. The most generous explanation I can imagine is that Heath saw the terms as heuristic or pedagogic devices. The problem, however, is that they are philosophically loaded—they could potentially do to Burke what critics claimed my first professor’s text on philosophy did: set the discipline back 100 years! One cannot heap such baggage onto Kenneth Burke—the rest of us may not be willing to carry it.

Nevertheless we are not required to read Heath’s text through his title, and we can content ourselves with the book’s value as an exegetical source. Brummert claims Heath’s book could serve such a role definitively, but I would offer a caution. As an exegetical piece, the text is problematic because it aspires to argument. Granted that all texts will be perspectives, we can nonetheless recognize, as Heath acknowledges in this book, that some perspectives are more tenable than others. My concern is simply this—that Heath’s half-hearted struggle to attribute a relationship to a philosophical position (realism/relativism) infects the text with a general suspiciousness that makes me question its use as either a supplement or a substitute for Burke.

There are also issues of saliency. Taking the most concrete example, compare Burke’s characterization of how a wren coaxed one of its young to the edge of the nest, then jerked the youngster’s lower mandible, causing it, “to lose balance and tumble out” (*Language as Symbolic Action* 4), with Heath’s statement that the wren, “grasped the beak of the fledgling and pulled it from the nest” (86). The difference here, though subtle, is a difference. In that light, consider the questionable meaning-status of the following: “In pre-symbolic times, humans treated experiences as images, raw perception” (120)—but an example. In Heath’s favor, however, I would like to conclude that this is the closest to a good exegetical text on Burke that I have seen. Brutally edited and rewritten it could be that one text which would stand through time alongside Burke’s own work as a definitive introduction. And I believe Heath is capable of such a revision. Burke’s books will be remembered, but there has not yet been a book about Burke that will be. It is no small compliment to suggest that Heath’s book may go some distance in that direction. As it presently appears, the text requires close scrutiny and a critical eye—not so much for the big picture, but for the little ones that flit by one sentence at a time. Is the text worth such a reading alongside its purchase price? Definitely. Heath’s exegesis is masterful at points, and he is at his best when clarifying Burke’s most obtuse arguments. He deserves an audience.

John D. O'Banion
***Reorienting Rhetoric: The
Dialectic of List and Story***
**University Park:
The Pennsylvania State
University Press, 1992**
pp. xviii + 294
\$35.00 cloth

Reviewed by
David Blakesley
**Southern Illinois University,
Carbondale**



In March of 1923 Malcolm Cowley wrote to Kenneth Burke: "You believe that a critic should judge a book, according to aesthetic laws which he formulates. In effect, you believe in using the book as a text for an essay on Form. More modest, I believe in defining a book" (Jay 140). Ten days later Burke answers that "[t]he judgment of a book involves formulating the principles by which the book should be judged. In a critical age, the emphasis switches from these formulations as means to these formulations as ends" (Jay 140-41). Cowley's commentary of the purpose of Burke's reviews was fair; Burke didn't deny that his reviews went beyond defining a book to formulating principles from it to help him refine his own critical theory. The book reviewer's dilemma—simply put, whether to "define" a book or to "use it"—brings to the fore problems of orientation, of which Burke had this to say in *Permanence and Change*: "(a) There is a sense of relationships, developed by the contingencies of experience; (b) this sense of relationships is our orientation; (c) our orientation largely involves matters of expectancy, and affects our choice of means with reference to the future" (18). In reviewing John D. O'Banion's *Reorienting Rhetoric*, I both "define" and "use," mindful that my orientation has been developed at least partly by my contingent experience of reading the book and that this orientation results both from my expectations in general of a book whose primary influence is Burke and from those O'Banion creates for his readers. I hope I have chosen my means prudently.

As suggested by the first part of O'Banion's title, *Reorienting Rhetoric* re-tells the story of rhetoric, from Plato to Burke and beyond, emphasizing how our conception of its history has been filtered through the lens of logic and list. The second part of the title—*The Dialectic of List and Story*—refers to O'Banion's thesis: "The major tasks facing contemporary rhetoric are the recovery of the art of thinking narratively and the reinstatement of that art of knowing alongside logic" (19). Throughout its history, rhetoric has been conceptualized and judged primarily under the rubric of logic. Consequently, says O'Banion, "To a large extent, the future of

rhetoric—whether viewed as a reclamation of classical rhetoric or as a formulation of a ‘new’ rhetoric—depends on the ability of rhetoricians to understand that logic decontextualizes what narration contextualizes and that logic treats as ‘congruent’ what narration understands as ‘continuous’” (102). Hence, in *Reorienting Rhetoric*, O’Banion seeks to contextualize the continuous dialectic of list (logic) and story (narrative), both being fundamentally rhetorical ways of knowing. Burke figures prominently in the book as the rhetorician who has understood best the complementary epistemological orientations of list and story. (The two Burkeian insights that O’Banion returns to again and again are dramatism, which he says is primarily narratival, and logology, which he says is Burke’s fusion of narratival and logical thought.) As O’Banion points out, however, the “book is not intended as a full-fledged interpretation of Burke” (xiii).

Reorienting Rhetoric joins Robert L. Heath’s

of Narration” and focus on the numerous rhetoricians and philosophers after Quintilian who assigned the art of narration inferior epistemological status and thus shaped current conceptions of rhetoric (how things *are*). A short final chapter argues that Burke’s pentad might be the holistic perspective for “understanding the demise of rhetoric, as well as the work still needed for its reclamation” (268). Throughout each of these sections, O’Banion assembles an impressive array of characters who speak eloquently on the importance of narration or the consequences of its diminished role in rhetorical “knowing,” including—in addition to Burke—Cicero, Quintilian, Vico, Jack Goody, Richard Rorty, Alasdair MacIntyre, Hayden White, Ernesto Grassi, George Steiner, Donald Verene, Alfred Schutz, Stephen Pepper, Walter Fisher, Walter Ong, Erich Fromm, Jim Corder, and Thomas Sloane, among others. Also present in O’Banion’s story are those characters who have

Reorienting Rhetoric

Realism and Relativism and Greig E. Henderson’s *Kenneth Burke: Language and Literature as Symbolic Action* as yet another book demonstrating the wide range of Burkeian critical theory.

Readers will expect a book arguing on behalf of “narratival knowing” to demonstrate the art it explains, and thus O’Banion tries to write his book “in the form it discusses” (jacket), claiming that it is “strongly narratival, both in substance and in form” (4). The book is structured in three parts, or “three bundles of judgments” that provide “narratival guidance” (18). In line with Burke’s statement in *Permanence and Change* that “orientation” (or understanding) is “a bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they may be” (PC 14; qtd. in O’Banion 18), O’Banion devotes his first four chapters to “The Twin Modes of Classical Understanding” (how things *were*) as discussed and exemplified in Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Chapters 5-11 describe “The Demise

contributed to narration’s demise, including Aristotle, Augustine, Gutenberg (indirectly), Ramus, Descartes, Hume, and Blair.

O’Banion’s long, complex story begins with his understanding of the list/story dialectic—and before I discuss his representation of a few of the characters in the drama (Aristotle, Cicero, and Burke), the two terms of the dialectic need brief explanation. In *Reorienting Rhetoric*, “list” is the form of discourse utilized by logic or systematic thought; “story” is the form utilized by narratival thought (14). As such, list and story encourage or presume two ways of thinking, which O’Banion identifies as *List* and *Story* (15). In their application, “List records scientific truth, with logic providing tests of a List’s accuracy and universality. Story embodies aesthetic ‘truth’ (meaning), with narration providing guidance in revealing and discovering such situationally bound meaning” (15). As O’Banion sees it (siding with Goody), List has

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come to be the primary agency of Western logic, science, technology, and “rationality” (11). Story has persisted, but its relevance to the process of understanding (in rhetoric and Western philosophy in general) was virtually ignored after Quintilian, who called it the “heart of rhetorical thought” (O’Banion 76). Burke reintegrates list and story in his demonstrations and discussions of rhetorical inquiry.

In O’Banion’s story of classical rhetoric, Aristotle is the antagonist; Cicero and Quintilian, the protagonists. “In Aristotle’s hands,” O’Banion writes, “all thought, including thought about rhetoric, became subservient to the demands of logical systematicity” (42). Commentators have for quite some time believed that Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* should be read as a handbook for producing persuasive speech, often finding his descriptions of the composing process “functional and practical” (Randall 286) or worse, “reductive and mechanistic” (Arrington 325), because of his “resolute turn toward logic” (O’Banion 19). O’Banion argues that Aristotle’s rhetoric is flawed because he was convinced that logic was “the major means of effecting agreement” (52). And even more consequential for the history of rhetoric, “Aristotle’s intense allegiance to logic continues to be shared by most Westerners, including most contemporary rhetorical scholars” (42). The ease with which Aristotle’s understanding of rhetoric is both identified as logical and dismissed as overly instrumental is troubling because as William A. Covino has demonstrated, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is hardly as “logical” as it seems. If we ignore his peremptory tone and the apparent conclusiveness of his pronouncements, we can read the *Rhetoric* as a “‘dramatistic’ tissue of open philosophical inquiry that, of itself, represents the activity of rhetoric. . . . Aristotle tends to ambiguise the content of his most decisive pronouncements, pronouncements neatly schematized by those who savor utilitarian rhetoric” (Covino 32). O’Banion rejects utilitarian rhetoric, but in

reducing Aristotle’s theory of rhetoric to logical epistemology, he misses the chance to tell the story of how the *form* of the *Rhetoric* demonstrates logic’s insufficiency.

O’Banion finds in Cicero’s dialogue, *De Oratore*, a revaluation of narration’s role in the process of rhetorical thought: “Elevated to the mode of thinking that makes oratory possible, narration was for Cicero the ‘fountainhead’ of wisdom, the ‘river’ on which the oration flowed, and—to extend Cicero’s metaphors—the port toward which the orator navigated” (61). To substantiate this claim, O’Banion quotes extensively from the dialogue. Yet while he acknowledges that “the use of dialogue is itself more obviously narratival than the essay format” (58), he attributes these quotations exclusively to Cicero, never mentioning that the lines are spoken by characters often at odds with one another, such as Crassus, Antonius, and Caesar. In his efforts to support his thesis, O’Banion neglects the aspect of Cicero’s text which demonstrates narratival thinking, the dialogue dramatizing conflicting views on the nature of rhetoric. Later in his text, O’Banion maintains with Burke “that the highly systematic and logical task of seeking ‘equations’ blinds interpreters to the role narrative plays in texts, both in their creation and in their interpretation” (77). In seeking his own equation, O’Banion misses the opportunity to discuss how the *form* of *De Oratore* illustrates the narratival principles he values so much.

Burke plays two roles in *Reorienting Rhetoric*. Many of his concepts provide O’Banion with the critical machinery for narrating the history of rhetoric and commenting upon it. More provocative, however, is O’Banion’s perceptive reading of the dialectic of list and story in Burke’s own work and explanation of why many of Burke’s critics find his work enigmatic, if not muddled. O’Banion concludes that “praise or blame for his work turns on attitudes toward logical coherence and narratival unity” (256). Those who reject his work believe that knowledge results from rational logic and that narrational thought is unsystematic. Burke’s mixed reception, says O’Banion, is “the result of extreme prejudices in favor of science, logic,

mathematics, and forms of demonstrable proof and of equally extreme biases against traditional ways of understanding, such as are available in rhetoric, poetry, and history" (261). O'Banion argues persuasively throughout the book that Burke's aim is to unite list and story dialectically, a point driven home by Burke's description of logology as a method: "Formally, the investigation heads in an attempt to study the point at which narrative forms and logical forms merge (or begin to diverge!), the exquisite point of differentiation between purely temporal and purely logical principles of 'priority'" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 3-4).

Implicit in *Reorienting Rhetoric* is a reconceptualization of rhetorical invention, not simply as the "invention of arguments" but as the multiplication of perspectives and the elaboration of ambiguity. O'Banion's insight that "[f]or lists to make sense, they require a story" (164) suggests to me that rhetorical inquiry begins by identifying the "lists" that shape and guide human relations, then dramatizes the contexts which lead to them and make them meaningful. To illustrate, in *Permanence and Change* Burke explains that Henri Bergson's "system" of "planned incongruity" posits reality as a unity, a synthesis. Language "approaches" this reality by cultivating the use of contradictory concepts. Citing Karin Stephen's explanation of Bergson's idea, Burke writes, "The events of actual life are continuous, any isolated aspect of reality really merging into all the rest. As a practical convenience, we do make distinctions between various parts of reality. . . . We find our way through this ever changing universe by certain blunt schemes of generalization, conceptualization, or verbalization" (92). Logic and lists are "blunt schemes" for stating recurrent patterns in this unity and should not be mistaken for reality itself. What we want, Burke argues, is a method that dramatizes these logical formulations by narrating the temporal essence from which they emerged—what Burke calls "the great central molteness," (*Grammar of Motives* xix). Lists are congealed distinctions that require narrators and narratives. If the history of rhetoric is the ambiguous "synthesis" we hope to represent, we

need to be especially rigorous in narrating as thoroughly as possible the scene-act ratio which enlivens these distinctions and makes their transformation possible.

O'Banion's story of the List-Story dialectic is highly suggestive for Burke studies and for revisionist histories of rhetoric. The stridency with which he tells the story, however, may be *Reorienting Rhetoric*'s Achilles' heel. He admits early in the book that it includes "many more block quotations than contemporary taste allows" (xii). The hundreds of quotations may offend taste, but they also reveal the strategic problem he faced: whether to tell a story or prove a point. I think it is safe to say that O'Banion opts for pamphleteering rather than inquiry; he makes his point, but in doing so he sidesteps the complicated and difficult task of showing that the logical formulations of rhetoric throughout history are inseparable from the narrative that precedes or contains such distinctions. Nevertheless, *Reorienting Rhetoric* does enable others to begin their stories *in medias res*. O'Banion has set the stage.

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"Encounters," continued from page 7

Nature—the realm of bodies, nonsymbolic motion, and speechlessness—is supplemented by language—the realm of symbol systems, symbolic action, and technology. That technology and the counter-nature it makes possible may be the entelechy of humankind is a terrifying prospect. Rueckert's ruminations on Burke's thoughts about such perfection are timely and important. The final essay in this section, "Kenneth Burke's Encounters with Walt Whitman," which examines, among other things, the connections between human body, natural body, and body politic, will interest students of Burke and Whitman alike.

The first essay in the last section deals with the rhetoric of Kennedy's inaugural address. In "Not/But," Rueckert charts the movement in Kennedy's speech from competition to cooperation, division to merger, and war to peace. He adroitly demonstrates how the negative cluster of terms surrounding war is cancelled or purified by the positive cluster of terms surrounding peace. Covenant gives way to prayer, "there shall be" to "may there be."

The final essay considers the affinities between Burke and the Geneva School. According to the criticism of consciousness associated with this

school, the literary work is a verbalization of authorial subjectivity, and the reader must strive to attain the consciousness of another. In an ideal scenario, the animating subjective principle of the author, its verbal embodiment in the formal perfection of the text, and its incorporation into the receptive subjectivity of the reader dynamically interfuse. Such an interfusion, Rueckert maintains, is comparable to Burke's insistence that "the forms of language and the forms of self" interanimate each other and that "every kind of structural progression in a verbal work derives its symbolic content from its origins in the life of the creating self and from the functional action of language for the self."

Encounters with Kenneth Burke is an intelligent, perceptive, stimulating book. Rueckert is one of Burke's best readers and, perhaps more important, his kindred spirit. That Burke inspired such an able and devoted critic is a tribute to them both.

NEXT ISSUE: *Reviews of Kenneth Burke & Contemporary European Philosophy edited by Bernard Brock, Landmark Essays on Kenneth Burke edited by Barry Brummert, Kenneth Burke & Ideology by Steven Bygrave, Wild Knowledge by Will Wright.*



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1878 by the priests and brothers of the Holy Ghost, Duquesne University carries a more than century-old tradition of providing a unique liberal and professional education with an emphasis on moral values, a dedication to quality teaching and a commitment to service. Today Duquesne University serves more than 8500 undergraduate and graduate students, offering more than 150 programs on the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels in its nine schools: the College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts & Sciences and the schools of Business Administration, Education, Health Sciences, Law, Music, Natural and Environmental Sciences, Nursing, and Pharmacy.

The Communication Department at Duquesne offers bachelor's degrees in either Communication Studies, Journalism, or Media Studies and master's degrees in either Rhetoric and the Philosophy of Communication or Corporate Communication.

The Kenneth Burke Society is a nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of New York since 1988. Annual dues of \$20 for faculty and \$10 for students entitle members to a year's subscription of the *Kenneth Burke Society Newsletter* (see insert). The Newsletter is published semi-annually under the Society's auspices and produced in the Communication Department at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA 15282 (phone 412-396-6446; fax 412-396-4792). Readers are encouraged to "join the fray" by submitting letters, abstracts, or manuscripts that promote the study, understanding, dissemination, research, critical analysis, and preservation of works by and about Kenneth Burke. Authors should prepare manuscripts following MLA or APA guidelines and submit both a paper copy and a 3.5 inch disk file using any established Macintosh, MS-DOS, or Windows wordprocessor.

Editor—Richard H. Thames, Duquesne U.

Internet: thames@duq2.cc.duq.edu

Assistant—John McInerney

"*Legacy*," continued from page 10

Williams considers the margin of overlap between Burke and Derrida by meditating on the difference between pure determination—the technological perfectionism leading to nuclear holocaust and the obliteration of humanity—and pure indeterminacy—the ultimate meaninglessness of language that leads to the abyss of nihilism.

The final essay appropriately belongs to William Rueckert, who has ably pled the Burkeian cause for more than 30 years. Viewing Burke's life



KBS News and Announcements

Burke scholars are invited to submit 1996 convention **seminar proposals** consisting of a topic, a 50-100 word summary of purpose and procedures, a list of required advanced readings, and a coordinator's name, address, and *curriculum vita*. Proposals should be sent by 1 October 1995 to Star Muir at George Mason University (see insert) for Planning Committee review.

§

The film on KB that Harry Chapin had been producing before his death has been completed under the supervision of Chapin's wife. Transferred to a 15 minute videotape, it is now available from the Society for \$50. All profits go to the Society. Contact Star Muir.

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Recent obituary and memorial issues of the *KBS Newsletter* are available for \$4, and a xeroxed packet of back issues for \$12. Contact Star Muir.

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The Society is in the process of compiling an updated history which will identify early stages in the formation of the Society, summarize the themes and seminar reports from each of the triennial conferences, and give background information on the nature and function of the Society. Paid members will be entitled to a forthcoming *Directory* as well as the *Newsletter*.

and works as doctrine without dogma, action with passion, Rueckert sagely observes that "criticism as a way of life, rather than system building, is what accounts for the logic and integrity of Burke's career." Enacting its essentializing title, *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke* is eloquent testimony to that logic and integrity.

An earlier version of this review appeared in the now defunct Horns of Plenty: Malcom Cowley and His Generation, 2 (Spring 1989), 55-57.