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PLACING BURKE'S BOOK OF MOMENTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF HIS WORLD VIEW AND ITS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AS EXPRESSED THROUGH HIS COEVAL NON-FICTION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Burke is easily recognized as one of the foremost rhetoricians of the 20th century. His contribution to rhetorical theory can scarcely be measured during this time in which he still survives as a living legend. His contributions to the world of thought transcend the dimensions of rhetoric alone, however, although he is perhaps most famous for his dramatistic theory of rhetoric and general language usage. Indeed, the history books may well be unable to document the full effects of his work if the observation of William H. Rueckert gives any indication. Rueckert, in compiling an enormous bibliography of "Works About Kenneth Burke" that may already be well outdated, prefaces his work with a note saying "In general, and from principle, the bibliography is confined to works directly about Burke. It would have been helpful and interesting to have included here a listing of essays and books...which show the direct or indirect influence of Burke; but it has become obvious to me that such a compilation was beyond my knowledge, patience, and talents. For such a listing, I substitute the flat, declarative statement that Burke's influence is massive." [italics added]

In focusing on Burke's rhetorical theory, and dramatism in particular, it is sometimes difficult for rhetoricians to clearly grasp the full extent of this massive influence. Burke's range of knowledge and intellectual pursuits are diverse, to say the least, as his eclecticism is evinced by the multitudes of abstruse references in his works. Perhaps Denis Donoghue's assessment in his essay on Kenneth Burke in Reading America: Essays on American Literature...
states this point best: "It is still not clear what kind of writer Burke is: It doesn't seem adequate to call him a literary critic, a poet, a novelist, a short-story writer, a sociologist, or a philosopher of history. Perhaps we should simply call him a sage, and think of the latitude traditionally taken by such a mind." With this thought, and in light of the tendency for academicians to tend towards breaking the "big picture" down into their own little "pieces of the pie," a general question that suggests itself is, "How do the various pieces of Burke's published production relate to each other?" If, in fact, it is valid to take an approach that suggests the individual works of an author can be examined as a continuum representative of (at least partially) unified thought (the "New Criticism" school of literary theory would strongly object to this notion), then it is reasonable to assume that some valuable insight from one work (or set of works) might more clearly illumine the others, and in turn illumine more clearly the world view of the author in question.

In the case of Kenneth Burke, the works that seem to have received the least attention from scholars are those constituting his artistic production. While debates frequently rage over Burke's philosophy, particularly in the areas of literary criticism and rhetorical theory, his artistic output in comparison is sliding slowly into obscurity. Marianne Moore, in her essay "A Grammarian of Motives" (a title explicitly taking into account Burke's philosophical production from A Marianne Moore Reader would surely lament this fact: "...fortunately for us [Mr. Burke] has been impelled to think and to teach. A philosopher, a grammarian of motives, a methodologist and precisionist, an authority on language...an artist...A poet in what
he says and in knowing how what is said has been said, he has--
Coleridge fashion--doubled roles and planted two harvests, so that in
each we have the best strengths of both." Burke himself would seem
to agree with this when, in "Curriculum Criticum" from
Counterstatement, he says "two works of fiction (The White Oxen and
Towards a Better Life) which the author published early in his career
and which, whatever one may think of their intrinsic merit, have
been of great value to him, because he can remember them now as
from without, whereas once he experienced them drastically from
within--and he has found this double vision useful for his analysis of
motives. The same goes for verse he has written now and then over
the years." Acknowledging Burke's multifarious modes, we now turn
to this artistic "field less harvested" so that we might examine one
set of productions in light of the other in order to truly examine the
"best strengths of both."

BURKE'S ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

Fiction

Burke's work as a fiction writer consists of two volumes, one a
collection of short stories (The White Oxen) and the other a novel
(Towards a Better Life), both of them published early in his career
(1924 and 1932, respectively). Although little (if any) attention is
now given these works by the literary world, if Gorham Munson and
an anonymous reviewer from the New York Times Book Review
might be considered as a representative sample, Burke's work was
well received at the time it was released. Munson's article claims
"An Amazing Debut" for Burke and says that although he "has not before this published between book covers, he has already collected a watchful audience," and "When one strikes prose as firm and smoothly adjusted as that of Mr. Burke, it is the time to swear that the small number of distinguished American writers has increased by one."

The question of how these fictional works parallel his philosophical development, however, is harder to answer, if only in that they can be placed in merely one spot on what Burke himself clearly admits is a continuum. For some other scholar the question of how these books may be located within the overall Burkean scheme of development may well be a fruitful one, however: In fact, in "Curriculum Criticum" as Burke reviews all of his works he says of Towards a Better Life, "Enigmatically, it contains in germ many implications that the author has subsequently translated into explicit critical theorizing on motives, both poetic and general." This alone should be enough to somewhere drive a serious student of Burke into his fiction.

Likewise, Burke's shorter fiction in The White Oxen and Other Stories may also be fruitful ground for new insights. The benefits of looking at The White Oxen as compared to Towards A Better Life comes in that one can look at his development over time. Although there is no indication of what year each story was written, the "Author's Note" says "They are arranged approximately in the chronological order of their completion, and represent, it seems to me, a certain progression of method. In stressing one aesthetic quality, we lose others. I see these stories as a gradual shifting of
stress away from the realistically convincing and true to life; while there is a corresponding increase upon the more rhetorical properties of letters. It is a great privilege to do this in an age when rhetoric is so universally despised." At the very least then, one should be able to trace the development of some of Burke's formal, topical, and social concerns up to 1924, although he had not by that point yet produced any non-fiction against which it could be compared. Setting aside questions of, as Burke puts it, their "intrinsic merit" it might also be interesting to outline what exactly constitutes this rhetorical concern of Burke and show its development in *The White Oxen*, since this concern seems to be a precursor of his non-fictional interests.

**Poetry**

Burke's published poetry consists of two volumes, the *Book of Moments: Poems 1915-1954* and *Introduction to What: Poems 1955-1967*, which can be found together in *Collected Poems, 1915-1967*. The *Book of Moments* will be the sole focus of this paper for two reasons: 1) Burke's development can be clearly traced over time within the same medium, whereas the fiction works would not provide the same historical continuity and embody a separate set of formal concerns and constraints which make comparison difficult against the poetry from the same period in time. 2) The major developments in Burke's thought (many would argue) and his seminal works came from this earlier life period of time which the *Book of Moments* encompasses, whereas *Introduction to What* covers a limited later span less crucial in understanding Burke's development. The previously mentioned anonymous reviewer of
The White Oxen, although speaking of Burke's fiction, insightfully remarks, "Whether he pushes his further effort toward a more cohesive synthesis of imagination and intellect, or abandons the myth for the metaphysics, he is a creative intelligence to reckon with." The question of Burke's development implicit in this comment is one that can be at least partially examined by looking at the Book of Moments.

DEVELOPMENT OF THESIS

One advantage (and pleasure) in reading Burke's poetry is that, somewhat paradoxically, in comparison to his non-fiction it is often easier to understand what Burke is trying to say. (For lack of a better categorization and for the sake of convenience, poetry will inadequately be grouped with fiction throughout this paper to avoid calling Burke's other work "non-artistic;" instead we label them as "non-fiction.") Gerard Previn Meyer is undoubtedly acquainted with Burke's typically convoluted prose style when he opens his review of the Book of Moments entitled "The Enemy of Bureaucracy" by saying: "Those students of Kenneth Burke who know his work for its difficulty, mainly, will be relieved to discover in his latest book--his first collection of poems, by the way--an eminent readability...As delvers into Burke's prose well know, this man is accustomed to provide his audiences with an embarass de richesse--"too much drought [note: the reference is to Burke's poem "The Problem of Moments"] perhaps standing for his employment of a tremendous variety of abstract terms...On the contrary, as a poet, Mr. Burke is by
no means hard to get at." [italics added] In fact, "He reveals himself in these 'excerpts from a sporadic personal diary' as disarmingly open-faced..."

This paper will now employ the proposition that Burkean thought is clearly revealed in this "sporadic personal diary" of his called the *Book of Moments*, and will attempt to use this advantage in clarity to help trace (or parallel) his poetic development with the development of his world view as seen in several of his non-fiction works. In particular, Burke's *Counterstatement, Permanence and Change, Attitudes Toward History, A Grammar of Motives*, and *A Rhetoric of Motives* will be taken as representative samples of his thought from the period of time under consideration. It should be noted that this paper is not in any way intended to be a critical review of the *Book of Moments*, nor even a remote attempt to exhaustively trace all of the possible parallels; rather than explicating individual poems or poetic methods in the manner of a critic, this paper will instead assume a more historical perspective, focusing on Burke's poetry as it can be categorized in large groups divisible into a time scheme commensurate with general developments in Burke's thought. Although this scope is in some ways too broad, it sufficiently serves as an introduction to understanding the general impetus behind the *Book of Moments* so that individual poems could then, if so desired, be more fruitfully examined at the individual level of analysis. Perhaps more significantly, this approach avoids the necessity of making pretentious assumptions about this writer's ability as a literary critic.
With that, it now seems adventitious to give a brief overview of Burke's *Book of Moments*.

**BOOK OF MOMENTS: AN OVERVIEW**

**Contents**

The poetry found in the Book of Moments is idiosyncratic, which is undoubtedly a true reflection of their author. The artist's material ranges from erotica, socio-political topics, alcohol, philosophy, theology, prose exercises, whimsy (including a nursery rhyme), and "Flowerishes." Furthermore, a wide variety of styles are employed in the writing, styles not necessarily connected in any apparent way. Much of the diversity is undoubtedly a partial result of the broad time span they cover, as well as a reflection of the personality of Kenneth Burke, but this is an issue to be discussed later. The "Flowerishes," however, deserve special mention here because it was not possible to place them in a time frame with the resources that were available. Basically, the Flowerishes included in the collection are sets of stylized epigrams. The arrangements of these pithy sayings are artistic enough to create in themselves a visual appeal, which only serves to heighten the effect of the individual selections, some of which include: "They say alcohol reveals our true selves. But which of our true selves is that?" or "for one man to buck a bureaucracy is like punching a frog" and "Which will it be? 'Live and let live'?--'Kill or be Killed'?" Some of the sayings are merely amusing, others are of a more speculative, philosophical nature, and several (including those above) reflect
themes of interest to Burke throughout his work, but in general no apparent pattern of organization seems discernible.

In addition to these Flowerishes, other anomalous selections include the prose exercises also included at the end of the work, including a "Project for a Poem on Roosevelt," but these may be examined within their chronological context.

**Initial Responses to the *Book of Moments***

Of the critical responses to Burke's poetry that were reviewed here, only one was clearly negative: Donald Davie, in *Shenandoah* said of Burke that "his playfulness...is just masculine horsing around, with bits of not very bold bawdry. When Burke remembers to be lyrical, it gets rather embarassing, but some of his squibs...are entertaining for as long as they take to flare and sputter." Davie closes by noting that Burke is an "influential critic" but does not examine any implications of this fact within the poetry or, for that matter, examine much of anything else in his cursory, one-paragraph critique. This response was in contrast to the other reviews, which, although they were not monolithically positive, were definitely highly favorable. Most of these will be referred to extensively throughout the rest of this paper.

**THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF KENNETH BURKE**

The opening paragraph of W.C. Blum's review of the *Book of Moments* remarks that Mr. Burke's collection of lyrics, epigrams, satires, and night thoughts covers so many years in such a variety of
styles, none of them fully exploited, that the easiest thing will be to
treat it as a history, stopping to inspect landmarks and make
comments." This observation seems remarkably appropriate to the
task of this paper and, indeed, seems to reflect an incisive
understanding of Burke himself--an understanding which is
undoubtedly the product of James Sibley Watson Jr.'s (a.k.a. "W.C.
Blum") close friendship and personal mentor relationship with Burke,
a relationship developed from their time spent working together for
The Dial. Blum, with this close connection, is not the only one to
notice the historical nature of Burke's work however: Denis
Donoghue says in Reading America, "I see Burke's interests as having
developed in three phases, with plenty of continuity to complicate
the narrative of change. He found in himself enough evidence that
new affiliations never entirely suppress old ones." Although Blum's
mention is not of any particular stages per se, it seems reasonable to
believe that, if Donoghue's conception of "Burkean phases" in general
is correctly hypothesized, that these same phases might very well be
specifically reflected in the Book of Moments with its span of over
three decades.

Donoghue's conception of Burke's three stages are 1) An
Aestheticist/Bohemian stage; 2) Literature "as equipment for living"
stage; and 3) "Tracking down the implications," searching for a
critical completeness, or, an entelechy stage. Donoghue gives a more
brief summary as follows: 1) Aestheticism.
2) Communication.
3) Entelechy.
Although all three of the stages Donoghue conceptualizes are useful in providing insight, they do not seem entirely apt in describing Burke's development. For one thing, Donoghue elaborates Burke's Dramatistic theory under the first phase, aestheticism, which ignores the fact that although Dramatism may be implied in Burke's early works, it is not as explicitly laid out as the formal system which Donoghue describes until *A Grammar of Motives*, which was written well after the time you would find scholars arguing that Burke was still in his aestheticist period. Additionally, although Donoghue is correct about the "Communication stage" providing equipment for living, he is relatively vague in tracking down the specific implications of this in Burke's thought; in this case, we refer to the socio-political implications. Donoghue's final phase, Entelechy, does provide useful insight, but needs to be linked to Burke's specific conception of Dramatism (and dialectic), ideas Donoghue either misplaces or does not pursue.

If the author himself can be viewed as a reliable authority concerning these sorts of matters, then it is appropriate that Burke's own view of his developmental stages is consulted. In "Curriculum Criticum" Burke speaks of his development as embracing: 1) Aestheticism/individualism (the *Counterstatement* era); 2) "Interdependent, social, or collective aspects of meaning" (seen in *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History*); and 3) Examining "linguistic structures in their logical, rhetorical, and poetic dimensions" as part of his *Motivorum* project (including *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives*), or, more explicitly, Dramatism and its implications. Although Burke does not go so far as to clearly
lay out and defend this three stage developmental process (but then, again, Burke rarely does anything clearly!), the structure just suggested is unquestionably there to be seen in "Curriculum Criticum."

Taking the best insights of Donoghue and combining them with those of Burke, the following stages are postulated:

1) Aestheticist/Individualist-Bohemian Stage.
2) Social/Collectivist Stage.
3) Dramatist/Entelechical Stage.

It is with this framework as our guide that we examine the contents of the Book of Moments, although it should be noted that while the poems are laid out roughly in reverse chronological order, few of the poems are specifically dated which, again, makes their placement within a time frame more general than specific.

STAGE 1: AESTHETICIST/INDIVIDUALIST-BOHEMIAN

Within the Book of Moments Burke's first stage is clearly delineated by the gap between the type of poem seen in "Atlantis" and that seen in "Plea of the People," which was written in 1933. It is only from reading Blum's review that we know the exact date of the composition of "Atlantis" (1928), but even without knowledge of this five year gap it is almost impossible to miss a significant poetic change in Burke's work. Counterstatement, Burke's first major non-fiction work, was published during the time in between these poems (1931) and, although clearly reflecting the aestheticist viewpoint, it also begins paving the ground for Burke's second, or social/
collectivist stage. Even within this first period of his poetry which lasts until 1928 some might want to search for a substantive change-Munson seems to trace an internal development of this sort within the aestheticist stage when reviewing *The White Oxen* by noting that "Mr. Burke was first interested in subject matter, but as he has matured his interest has been more and more transferred to questions of technique and form. We are thus required to take up a purely aesthetic approach to his later work" but this same trend does not appear in Burke's poetry. At best one might merely support Munson's assumption that "In this field of aesthetic engineering Mr. Burke is a discoverer, a remarkable inventor, a creator of cool and lovely designs."

It is a seemingly trivial, but significantly noteworthy fact that by far the largest number of poems written during this period lasting through "Atlantis" were written in first person, in fact, fully two-thirds of them. Unlike some individualist poetry, this is not to say that Burke is inaccessible however. Actually, it is relatively simple to read and understand, which seems to reflect Burke's view as expressed in "Adepts of Pure Literature" from *Counterstatement* that there is a point where one should avoid "the reduction to absurdity of individualism in art" an absurdity which implies that the artist "spend one's life talking to oneself." However, in the same chapter Burke at least to some extent seems approving of the view that "art, by becoming a matter of the individual became an end in itself," a notion that is clearly in keeping with the value of art qua art that one would expect from an aestheticist viewpoint.
Topically, one can also see a parallel between *Counterstatement* and the *Book of Moments* in Burke's analysis of Remy De Gourmont: Specifically, the comment that De Gourmont "admires Catholicism in that it is preserving the rich pagan institutions over against the aridity of Protestantism" and "an inevitable corollary to such an attitude towards the Church was De Gourmont's insistence upon the primacy of sex." One suspects Burke is sympathetic to these feelings in that his own poetry from the period is marked by frequent reference to Greek myth and use of Greek imagery, along with several prominently erotic themes.

Continuing in this "chapter-by-chapter" form of comparison of Burke's poetry against *Counterstatement* becomes difficult, however, due to *Counterstatements* somewhat fragmentary nature as a collection of separate essays hurriedly rushed together for publication. It is a matter for a professional critic to decide whether, in accord with "Psychology and Form," Burke has successfully avoided the "psychology of the hero" and replaced it with the "psychology of the audience" by creating "an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite." It does seem within bounds to assert that Burke's poems during this period cannot be construed as succumbing to the pressures of the "psychology of information" that Burke so laments--his emphasis clearly seems to be upon eloquence as opposed to surprise and suspense, with his poem "Rhapsody Under the Autumn Moon" being perhaps the best example of this. Blum seems to make the same observation concerning Burke's concern with aesthetic matters of
eloquence (if less directly) while explicating poems from this time period.

The "Poetic Process," like "Psychology and Form" is somewhat too abstract for our purposes to be specifically used in applying Burke to an analysis of his own poetry. In detailing how an emotion gets transferred into a symbolic channel, a central issue for Burke seems to be how a proper artistic balance is struck between the extremes of utterance (spontaneity), which leads to artistic barbarism, and the extreme of pure beauty (means exclusively as an end) "which leads to virtuosity, or decoration." In Burke's later poetry we see in both whimsical and serious moments a relative lack of self-conscious expression, while his poems from this aestheticist period seems to lean toward the side of more polished virtuosity; again, this seems to be the same observation made by Blum when speaking of "From Outside" as being Burke's most poetically competitive effort of the volume.

"The Status of Art," in presenting a series of attacks upon the place of art and then proceeding to cast doubt on these attacks is not explicitly reflected in the poetry other than that Burke obviously finds value in art. "Program" and "Lexicon Rhetoricae" are significant in understanding Burke's poetry, or at least in elucidating the transition between Burke's first and second developmental stages. (We here skip "Thomas Mann and Andre Gide" as being too specific for our purposes.) To understand "Lexicon Rhetoricae" it is helpful to read Burke's comment from the Preface which states that "it is frankly intended as a machine--machine for criticism, however, not for poetry (which, as someone has said, is always beyond the last
formula)." For our purposes, if we cannot use it as a machine for poetry we can at least use it to understand Burke's central concern of the book, and subsequently the entire aestheticist period of his life. This concern is with form: "Form in literature is an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence." And subsequently, "Form, having to do with the creation and gratification of needs, is "correct" in so far as it gratifies the needs which it creates."

There are other aestheticist concerns that emerge as well. Burke then discusses patterns of experience universal to all, and it is these experiences which at heart are very individual in nature, that lie at the root of his early poetry; love, shame, fear, loneliness...all of these themes appear in his first set of poems. But when Burke speaks of ritual, using symbols to exploit beliefs (ideology) to gain an effect, we are delving into the realm of rhetoric. This concern does not explicitly appear in the poetry of the time, but it does emerge more clearly at a later point--perhaps because the "Lexicon Rhetoricae" was written well after "Atlantis," it lends itself more clearly to social and collective considerations than aesthetic ones: At least this case may be strongly presented for "Program."

"Program": Transition to the Social/Collective Stage

It has by now become obvious that Counterstatement is not wholly adequate as a representative piece of non-fiction for examining the poetry of Burke's aestheticist/individualist stage--but neither does it come close to fully embracing the key facets of his
social/collaborative phase, either. *Counterstatement*’s transitory nature comes from its method of composition, parts of it having been written both before and after the stock market crash of 1929, a factor that causes it, says Burke in "Curriculum Criticum" to "show signs of its emergence out of adolescent fears and posturings, into problems of early manhood." Although vestiges of this are already appearing in "Lexicon Rhetoricae," this trend becomes most apparent in "Applications of Terminology" and "Program."

In "Applications of Terminology" we see Burke first begin to seriously struggle with the social implications of his art, in particular with "The exhortation that the artist 'deal with life.'" Burke does not seem to wholly accept this exhortation, undoubtedly as the result of his aestheticist tendencies: "Underlying the proletarian attitude is the assumption that literature must be 'useful,' that it must serve to eradicate certain forms of social injustice, and that it can eradicate these forms of injustice only by dealing with them specifically. It overlooks entirely the fact that...the literature of the imagination may prepare the mind in a more general fashion." The poetic hiatus that Burke took during the time he wrote those sentences is noticeable for its silent voice, however--it is almost as if Burke were taking time off to decide what he truly believed to be the role of art, particularly his art, in social change.

"Program" seems to play a key linking role between the first and second stages in this case, because it holds to some of Burke's more individualist tendencies, yet introduces the concerns that become so compelling during his next stage. In fact, "Program" seems almost entirely anomalous when considered in the light of all
the other material in Counterstatement unless one looks at it from the as yet to be discussed angle of "Bohemianism." Anti-industrialist/big business/powerful central government political tendencies of Burke's clearly emerge in his "Program," completely unlike his poetry just prior to that time. Although one may easily be confused as to just how he intends to remedy the problems he despises, the answer seems to come in the form of Bohemianism, or "which emotions and attitudes should be stressed and which slighted, in the aesthetic judgement of today." Donoghue is insightful in linking this response to Burke's first developmental stage:

"[Aesthetics] proposes the bohemian life as a response to the social conditions otherwise imposed by bureaucracy, the corporations, banks, and government at large. Literature and art are presented as counterstatements to the statements made by the rough magicians in power." Burke elucidates this even further by saying in the preface that this "Program" was "a hypothetical translation of Bohemianism, or Aesthetics, into its corresponding political equivalents." This connection then makes clear how, even as he prepared to enter his second major developmental stage, echoes of his first were still resounding. It is unfortunate that none of these echoes may be seen in the Book of Moments because of the five year gap during this transitional period: But, as mentioned before, perhaps this silence in itself speaks volumes as to the major reformulation occurring in Burke's thinking. At least in this case one has no fear of establishing some arbitrary division of his poetry: When Burke's social/collective phase emerges in the Book of Moments, it arrives with distinction.
As Blum clearly states it, the "ominous silence was broken after five years by poems of social protest."

STAGE 2: SOCIAL/COLLECTIVIST STAGE

With the poem "Plea of the People" in 1933 Burke's poetry became doggedly single-minded in focus. With the exception of three poems, "One Light in a Dark Valley" (an "Imitation Spiritual" set to music by Burke and later recorded by his grandson Harry Chapin on the album "Dance Band on the Titanic"), "Lullaby for Oneself as Adult Male," and "Enigma," all of the poems until "The Wrens" (which appears to have been written sometime during World War II) are poems of social, political, and economic concern. Burke's Communist sympathies during the troublesome years of the Great Depression are no secret, and it appears that during this time he turned away from the idea that poetry need not be directly useful (proletarian) in eradicating social injustice. The timing of this poetry coincides with the period that saw the publication of his works Permanence and Change (1935) and Attitudes Toward History (1937). Although form continues to be of importance to Burke to the extent that form is unavoidable in any aspect of life, both his poetry and the non-fiction works abandon what were previously Burke's primarily literary concerns to deal with broader interests. In the case of Permanence and Change the emphasis is on "a system of ideal cooperation" while Attitudes Toward History takes a more "realistic" look at human communication.
In the words of Donoghue, "It seems clear, however, that the Depression forced Burke to acknowledge his own version of the gravitational pull, and to develop his work beyond aestheticism. He proposed, in this second phase, to read literature 'as equipment for living'...Poems, plays, and novels were approached as strategies for dealing with particular situations." Similarly, Meyer states that "This jump from sophistication to naivete, coupled with a deeply-felt experience of the Depression, would account for a view of society that echoes the old socialist diatribes." Indeed, one would not be unreasonable in claiming that the poetry of Burke's from this era is not so much "art" as it is pure propaganda, assuming a distinction can be made between the two. In Burke's defense of his speech to the American Writer's Congress, April 26, 1935, he says "I think we are all agreed that we are trying to defend a position in favor of the workers, that we are trying to enlist in the cause of the workers...I am trying to point out that there is a first stage where the writer's primary job is to disarm people. First you knock at the door—and not until later will you become wholly precise." And this is perhaps where *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History* might be able to show how Burke "knocks at the door" with his poetry; because Burke himself mentions that "The fundamental thing that I want to emphasize again is my belief that there is a different problem confronting the propagandist from that which confronts the organizer. The propagandist's main job is to disarm...the propagandist must use certain terms which have a certain ambiguity and which for that very reason give him entrance into other areas."
It seems that *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History* might suggest some of these methods which Burke wishes to employ. In fact, immediately the concept from *Permanence and Change* of identifying "trained incapacities" leaps out of a poem like "Thoughts on War" where the incapacity identified is in this case the very ability to perform war, and the consequences of how the whole process of constructing the war machine blinds one to the very consequences of war itself. Burke also handles questions of motives in poems like "For a Modernist Sermon" and "An Industrialist's Prayer," although in these cases he is exposing a seamy side of motives correlating with the industrialist world view. In the time he was writing he saw this particular world view as part of an occupational "psychosis which might be variously called capitalist, monetary, individualist, laissez faire, free market, private enterprise, and the like..."

In other clear parallels between his *Permanence and Change* and *Book of Moments*, "Plea of the People" seems to embrace the distinction between "necessitous" and "symbolic" labor that Burke discusses, with labor striving for more than physical survival but also for symbolic victory, to have a "moral" purpose for the toil of the working class. This theme embraces Burke's point that "Occupation and morality are integrally intermingled." One also sees Burke making a strong argument by analogy in "For a Modernist Sermon," comparing the bourgeois "heaven" to the proletarian "hell." A final obvious parallel between *Permanence and Change* and the poetry from the 1930's may be seen in Burke's introduction of "Human Behavior Considered Dramatically" in *Permanence and Change*. 
Although at this point it was not fleshed out into the well-defined system that is now recognized as Dramatism, a hint of later developments are to be seen in "Thoughts on War" even by the simple use of Dramatistic language in the line "not scenes for wise acts."

Although it is more difficult to point to specific instances of similar parallels between *Attitudes Toward History* and the *Book of Moments*, some general observations may be made. In particular, Burke's transition from speaking of "Naive Capitalism" in *Attitudes Towards History* to his positive hopes for "Emergent Collectivism" is clearly revealed in the poetry: Burke says that this stage (Emergent Collectivism) of "historic drama should be left partly unfinished, that readers may be induced to participate in the writing of it" and this is exactly the realm of propaganda found in his social/collective poetry: Burke's poetry suggests collective directions for those who want to take them, by means of voicing anti-industrialist/war/etc. sentiments and implications. It is more difficult to locate the "comic frame" mentioned in *Attitudes Toward History* within the poetry of this time, unless one considers the poem entitled "Enigma," which is slightly more reminiscent of his aestheticist period, and the way it describes the comic frame's very process of being "observers of themselves, while acting" as a representative case.

In light of this paper, perhaps the most interesting item in *Attitudes Toward History* is Burke's mention that "A book is in itself a symbolic act of synthesis...However, the very fact that the work of art is a symbolic act of synthesis makes difficulties for those who would break it down by conceptual analysis...An author's work is
presumably deeply personal. And there is a strong reluctance to part with the truly personal..." Of course, this statement of Burke's touches at the very core of this paper, in its attempt to break down his artistic synthesis found in the *Book of Moments* into an analysis in three parts. At this point then, although more parallels in poetic content and philosophic content could be drawn, rather than dealing with minutiae it seems more advisable to examine the way in which Burke's poetry may be seen as propaganda, especially because this topic provides a transitional device into Burke's next major stage of development.

**Propaganda: Transition to the Dramatistic/Entelechy Stage**

There is something of a paradox to be found in considering the poetry of Burke's social/collectivist stage as propaganda, because as such, it does not seem to measure up to or remotely reflect Burke's very own standard as expressed in his speech to the American Writers's Congress. Burke's thought on the subject is elaborated in this lengthy quote: "a poet does not sufficiently glorify his political cause by pictures of suffering and revolt. Rather, a poet makes his soundest contribution in this wise: He shows himself alive to all the aspects of contemporary effort and thought (in contrast with a certain anti-intellectualist, semi-obscurantist trend among some of the strictly proletarian school who tend to imply that there is some disgrace attached to things of the mind...The complete propagandist, it seems to me, would take an interest in as many imaginative, aesthetic, and speculative fields as he can handle...If he shows a keen interest in every manifestation of our cultural development, and at
the same time gives a clear indication as to where his sympathies lie. This seems to me the most effective lon-pull contribution to propaganda he can make...Reduced to a precept, the formula would run: Let one encompass as many desirable features of our cultural heritage as possible--and let him make sure that his political alignment figures prominently among them..."

Using the above criteria, Burke should be no less than the paradigm of propagandism, with his wide breadth of knowledge and his diversity of interests that go beyond complete categorization. But his poetry of the time does not follow his own formula. Although his social/collectivist period poems are far from anti-intellectualist, they lean much farther toward the side of proletarianism than they do to the embracement of social eclecticism that he advocates in his speech to the Writer's Congress. The poems are by no means obscure, and works such as "Plea of the People" are so blatant in their message as to never present a danger of being confused with any aesthetic interest that might have remained as a remnant of Burke's earlier years. Although Burke's speech was given in 1935, the poems of the era simply do not adequately reflect an attempt by Burke to "propagandize his cause by surrounding it with as full a cultural texture as he can manage...a process of broadly and generally associating his political alignment with cultural awareness in the large." In the context of the Book of Moments, this idea seems to have a more latent quality that emerges only in the third stage of Burke's development. The one possible exception to this rule is Burke's "Project for a Poem on Roosevelt," which does not readily lend itself for comparison with the other poems for two reasons: One
being that it is only a project (outline) and not a completed poem, and secondly, it is not possible to determine exactly when it was written, and subsequently whether or not it then belongs to the group of poems that should be classified as belonging to Burke's second or third stage; the very fact that it cannot be precisely located in itself lends credence to the notion that it may serve a role in understanding propaganda as part of the transition into Burke's third stage.

In general however, one may boldly state that Burke's Dramatistic/Entelechical period is not nearly propagandistic to the extent of his social/collectivist stage, but one may see that third stage more closely embodying the propagandistic ideals Burke espouses in his speech to the Writer's Congress.

STAGE 3: DRAMATISTIC/ENTELECHICAL STAGE

The third stage in the delineation of Burkean thought is by far the most difficult to cross-examine with the corresponding poetry in the Book of Moments. The first reason for this is that the transition from Burke's social/collective era poetry to the third stage, although obvious, is not causatively obvious. Unlike the stock market crash and ensuing Depression that clearly precipitated Burke's shift from aestheticism to collectivism, no such incident can be be specifically pointed to as precipitating the third stage. One could reasonably make the argument that the economic prosperity associated with the increased industrial production caused by World War II erased the social conditions that fueled Burke's poetry during the 30's. But this
would not take into account the anti-industrialist, anti-war Burkean world view, which did not appear to radically change. Granting that the war did, in fact, play at least some role in the change, we could argue that a shift in philosophical concerns or interests associated with Burke's explicitly elaborated dramatistic scheme is that which is more greatly reflected by the poetry itself. Another reason is that, in spite of the fact that Burke still engages in social commentary, by and large the bulk of his whimsical material is to be found here, something Blum observes in saying "We note that Mr. Burke is writing verse oftener, especially light verse..." Unfortunately, there seems to be no good reason to explain this except perhaps the "eccentricity of age."

Before examining A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives it may be fruitful to continue the train of thought regarding propaganda that concluded the previous section. One can readily assert that Burke's world view did not radically change when examining the poetry after his social/collectivist period; but though socio-political issues may no longer be the predominant theme of the remaining poems, they are still to be found with a fair degree of frequency, though wrapped in more sophisticated packages.

Reminiscent of his speech to the Writer's Congress, Burke yet again defends the same approach to propaganda as before, in his "Foreword to Book of Moments": "Ideally...the complete lyrist would not shun the didactic ["doctrinal", "propagandistic"]; but he would range among them 'moodily'..." The difference in this case is that Burke's assertion is ex post facto, after his Book of Moments had been completed. With the exception of "An Old Liberal Looks to the New Year, 1953," a rather blatant anti-McCarthyite poem that reads like doocool composed for a progressive pop song, the tone is much
more subtle in Burke's later political poetry; one is a satirical erotic poem ("The Conspirators") that playfully toys with the idea of amassing private property; another ("Invective and Prayer") buries its message within more indirect language than that characteristic of Burke's poems during the 30's. Perhaps more interestingly, in general Burke seems to revert back towards a more aestheticist approach. In composing several nature poems he seems to more implicitly create a sort of propagandistic tension between states of natural beauty and the modern, mechanized, industrialized world:

This contrast may be explicitly noticed in a poem of social commentary such as "Idyll, With Interruptions" about a glorious California scene besieged by smog, and in "Temporary Wellbeing" where, what is apparently Burke's view of the good life is spoiled by greed.

All of the poems that include some form of social commentary are more sophisticated than his earlier work (perhaps with the exception of "An Old Liberal...").
illustrating his view that propaganda need not be explicitly proletarian in nature. This is perhaps best revealed in the poem "Archai," which is an "eclectic/intellectual" poem that salutes Saint Thersites (Thersites was, in the words of Blum, a "much maligned early pacifist and critic of heroes") in an attack on militarism in a militaristic age. Gerard Previn Meyer notices this old aestheticist tendency re-emerging when he states "Kenneth Burke is more the Old Bohemian than the Old Bolshevik," citing Burke's own "Second Exercise for Year's End" which claims "Bohemianism, the only remedy for Bureaucratism." In fact, Meyer also notices the re-emergent "natural" (aesthetic, or Bohemian)
emphasis contrasting with modernism in Burke’s poetry when explaining "But truly, if his social protests posit any sort of political alignment, it’s more a Thoreau-going party of one [italics added] than the one-party state. Burke is an inveterate enemy of bureaucracy." In fact, both of the prose "Exercises for Year's End" reflect this Bohemian, anti Bureaucratic view in a more intellectually abstract fashion than the social/collectivist stage.

**Entelechy**

Although Donoghue’s placement of dramatism within Burke’s developmental framework remains suspect, he lends a useful conception to understanding Burke’s third stage by calling it entelechy. As Donoghue says, entelechy is “Aristotle’s word for the complete expression of some function, or the condition in which a potentiality becomes an actuality, or, for Burke, the rounding out of a vocabulary partly for the pleasure of seeing it rounded.” In this case a Webster’s dictionary definition serves to make the point clearer: Entelechy is “a vital force urging an organism toward self-fulfillment in some philosophical systems.” Dramatism appears to be the vital force in the case of Burke, or, as Donoghue says of Burke, it is “the determination to leave no linguistic resource untried.”

This entelechical view, although not exclusive of the earlier stages, clearly replaces or at least subsumes them. For example, Burke, at the end of his original preface to *Counterstatement* remarks that he “would look upon literature as the thing added—the little white houses in a valley that was once a wilderness.” This clearly aestheticist viewpoint is in contrast to that which Burke states in his
preface to the second edition, which was written in 1952, during the period of time now under consideration: "...on looking over the original preface I'd incline to ponder now the closing reference to literature as 'the thing added--the little white houses in the valley that was once a wilderness.' I'd incline to ask: 'How does this writer use 'white,' 'houses,' 'valley,' and 'wilderness' in other contexts?' And I'd wonder whether he had remotely in mind the line in the sonnets: 'By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.'"

Dramatism is involved in the entelechical approach because it is the tool Burke develops to search out all the implications—A Grammar of Motives develops the possibilities and A Rhetoric of Motives looks at how those possibilities may be used. These concerns are clearly voiced in the Book of Moments. For example, in A Grammar of Motives Burke asks what would constitute a "pure act" or "pure drama," and then asserts that "the concept of an ultimate or consummate act, is found in the theologians' concern with the Act of Creation." This same concept is perfectly reflected in the poem "Creation Myth." Similarly, just as Burke shows an interest in "God terms" and the examination of theological issues by means of the mechanism of dramatism, the poetry of this period also reflects these considerations: Poems such as "Neo-Hippocratic Oath," Lines in the Spirit of Negative Theology," and the "Dialectician's Prayer" all explicitly touch on theologically-tinged issues, if not directly upon theology themselves, frequently raising some sort of "God-term" to a position of transcendence within the poem.

More than just these specific issues and interests in A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives correlate with the material
found in the *Book of Moments*, however. Dramatism and entelechy are revealed in a broader sense in Burke's poetry. The key piece of information we have in understanding their connection to the poetry is to be found in the "Foreword to *Book of Moments*": "Lyrics are 'moments' insofar as they pause to sum up a motive. They are designed to express and evoke a unified attitude towards some situation more or less explicitly implied." Gerard Previn Meyer, in quoting from the same passage asks, "Does one catch a hint here of Burke's famous 'dramatism'?"--the answer to this "rhetorical question" is a resounding "YES!" Burke not only explicitly links his volume of poetry to his dramatistic concern with motives, but links implications for poetic action as well. Because "Ideally, perhaps, one should break down a motive into many different kinds of moment" the "ideal lyrist would probably speak through as many shifting personalities as the ideal dramatist." These comments of Burke reflect his entelechical concern to see things rounded out, but unfortunately Burke confesses that in poetry this is not realistically possible. What we receive to explain this impossibility is the theory of moments. (As Meyer observes, "Kenneth Burke would not be himself if he didn't have a theory!") Basically, the theory of moments says that "regardless of the many moods a person experiences in a day, only some of them lend themselves to his particular ways of expression...for a spell, he may be invaded by some quite different element that, for him, falls into the pattern of a momentary poem."

This "Problem of Moments" (a poem that Marianne Moore calls "a masterpiece") becomes the introductory piece for the entire book,
an introduction to the history of Burke's moments by noting how impossible it is to escape "tyrannous moments." Although this poem serves as an introduction to the *Book of Moments*, in many ways it is not the centerpiece. In light of Burke's philosophical concerns, the "Dialectician's Prayer" may be seen as filling that role: The "Dialectician's Prayer" seems to be Burke's best answer to the "Problem of Moments" in that it recommends a method (dialectic) that uses a cooperating competition of voices to pursue its end, the process of which is an end in itself. Although it is somewhat subtle, dialectic seems to be a concern of Burke's all throughout this later period of poems. Meyer also seems to note this when he says that "The tone of these 'moments' is more often than not conversational, frequently dialectical..." Blum goes even further, saying in reference to *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives* that the "Dialectician's Prayer" is a sort of verse preview [of the] fully worked out ways of homo dialecticus."

The "Problem of Moments" is still, however, haunting. Although there seems to be some question as to whether the dialectical process may be *applied to poetry*, perhaps *poetry may be applied* as a part of the overall process; if Burke's poem "Two Conceits Anent Love," written in response to a friend's comment that "I enjoyed your analytical comments on Death. But a more difficult assignment would be a treatment of Love" is any indication, the dialectical use of poetry is exactly what Burke is attempting, which accounts for the dialectical tone Meyer observed. All in all, the *Book of Moments*, specifically this section containing the later poems, at least in *theory* grapples with Burke's notion (from the "Foreword")
that "a writer would never proffer a candidate for canonization without also attempting to write as good a brief as possible for the *advocatus diaboli*. Only by a maximum of such free ranging could poetry best help to keep us free."

**CONCLUSION(S):**

What conclusions may be drawn after so briefly paralleling Kenneth Burke's poetic development in relation to his philosophy, covering a span of almost forty years and three major developmental stages? To answer this question we could recapitulate the highlights of the body of this paper, stressing the commonalities and differences between the various stages, but perhaps it would be of greater significance to ask a more specific question, a question that Burke himself would undoubtedly enjoy; perhaps it would be of greater significance to understand why we examine the poetry of Kenneth Burke at all: "What is the value of Kenneth Burke's poetry?"

Our first answer to this question is obvious, in that it is the premise upon which this paper rests, as such it is a grand return to the introduction. The premise may be recapitulated by Burke himself, speaking of Counterstatement in "Curriculum Criticum": "Since one can sometimes make a position clearer by showing its place in a curve of development, there is the possibility that *Counterstatement* might be placed in terms of later [other] books written by the same author. Also, when one has been through changes in the mental climate, a graph of his responses to the veerings of history might be at least clinically of value." It is exactly
these "responses to the veerings of history" that we have traced in the *Book of Moments*, believing that its inclusion of material from several critical periods in Burke's life gives us a valuable tool in tracing Burke's "curve of development," and subsequently clinical insight into the thought of Kenneth Burke.

But in some ways we have still begged the question of what value is to be found in Kenneth Burke's poetry. Another answer to this question might then be that the *Book of Moments* provides a unique record of Burke's thoughts in a way that cannot be unfolded and refolded again, several times over, in the same way that a philosophy might be. Although he is actually speaking of his fiction, Burke's "Preface to Second Edition" of *Towards a Better Life* carries the weight of this same implication: "And whether these early stylistic exercises are storm or bluster, they are of a sort that, for better or worse, the author could not now contrive to unfold again."

From the "Foreword to *Book of Moments*" what we have then is "Some of the past moments, here recovered from my records of dead selves..." These past moments, dead or not, reflect some of Burke's most deeply held fears and dreams. They do something the most profound and personally autographed philosophical text could never do: In the words of Ciardi, "Above all, the poems when put together, generate the sense of a real person--learned, bourbony, getting on to mortality as a bit of a hard case but still, and always, sweet on life."

Perhaps this, then, is the greatest value of Burke's poetry, reaching beyond the clinical and getting to know Kenneth Burke as a real person, cutting through the layers of words and academic ivory towers others have constructed around him. This--and one other
thing. In Burke's Preface to Second Edition" of *Towards a Better Life* he also states that "In the last analysis, a work of art is justified only insofar as it can give pleasure." Disregarding whatever importance the correlation between Burke's poetic and philosophical development might hold, we turn to different considerations as we close with one of his short poems, in its entirety. In some ways the poem may be used to more fully understand Burke as a fellow human being, if viewed as a sort of metaphor for the way we are typically accustomed to considering Kenneth Burke. Secondly, and more importantly, the reader can now make at least part of the final value judgement: Does Kenneth Burke's poetry give pleasure?

**INCIPIENTLY, BY THE SEA**

Dozing, he forgot his whereabouts
Then lo! awakening to the cosmic roar
Of the sea
(The onrushing, perpetual sea)

He never saw the sea
So jammed with water
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