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SPEAKER AND GAVEL

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SPEAKER AND GAVEL

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The editorial policy of *Speaker and Gavel*, the official journal of Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha, is to publish referred articles dealing with theory, practice, or criticism of public argument and decision making. We are particularly interested in receiving articles in the following areas: (1) Contemporary rhetorical criticism, (2) Issues and controversies in academic forensics, and (3) Decision making. We welcome submissions from undergraduate and graduate students as well as DSR-TKA alumni and faculty.

Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript which should be prepared according to the *MLA Handbook* (1985 edition). Include a cover letter identifying author(s) and affiliation. Remove all references in the manuscript to author and affiliation to facilitate blind review.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Speaker and Gavel* contains two sections that in different ways illustrate the versatility of rhetorical criticism. The first section includes three Burkeian analyses of the same speech, Russell Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds." These articles originally were presented in a Speech Communication Association seminar on Burkeian Criticism. All participants were asked to respond to the same speech, applying any Burkeian concept they thought would be useful. When they shared their criticisms, they were pleased that no two approaches were the same. Phyllis Japp employs a medical metaphor as she presents a cultural criticism. She concludes that "Conwell's medicine was designed to curb restlessness and discontent." Richard Thames draws on the relationship between rhetoric and poetic as he argues that Conwell is able to reconcile capitalism and Christianity. Star Muir relies on Burke's representative anecdote to trace Conwell's transformations of technology and "progress." After discussing their criticisms, they considered whether there were any minimum requirements for a "Burkeian" criticism. As the diversity of their applications suggests, the participants did not feel any specific concepts were necessary to call a work "Burkeian." Special thanks is extended to Dale Bertelsen and James Klumpp who served as special editors for this section and who conducted the SCA Seminar from which these papers originated.

The second section points toward what is becoming an increasingly fertile field for rhetorical criticism—popular culture. In this case, we have three approaches to the analysis of music. David Kosloski uses Bormann's fantasy theme approach to examine the rhetorical strategies employed by singer Tracy Chapman that enable her to extend the vision cultivated by the folk-rock artists of the Sixties. Timothy and Deanna Sellnow draw upon Susanne Langer's theory of aesthetic symbolism in studying Bruce Springsteen's tragic rhythm. Their method is especially innovative because they consider both the lyrics and music. In the final piece, Anthony Palmeri studies John Cougar Mellencamp as a representative of contemporary protest rock, and assesses the future of protest music in America. Today the electronic media play a major role in shaping our lives and identity, so rhetorical criticism of the popular culture needs to become commonplace. It will be through the analysis of our popular culture that we will be able to gain a better understanding of what's important in American society and where it's going.

"A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR MAKES THE MEDICINE GO DOWN": DR. CONWELL'S "FEEL GOOD" CULTURAL TONIC

Dr. Phyllis M. Japp
University of Nebraska

European critical theory and British cultural studies, as these are disseminated among American scholars, are bringing renewed attention to the work of Kenneth Burke.¹ Note Samuel Southwell's observation:

Most of what has occurred in the explosive development of critical theory in recent decades has been anticipated and often quite fully developed in the work of one man, Kenneth Burke. A revised Marxism, a revised Freudianism, hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, reader-response theory, theory of ritual, speech-act theory, even a kind of deconstructionism, and much that is called postmodernism—it is all to be found in Burke. (1)

Recalling Gramsci's caution that ideology and hegemonic practices are tied to unique national histories and mythologies within which they must be located and understood, many scholars are searching for a vital critical theory of American culture. It is in the context of such discussions that Burke's name is frequently mentioned, for conviction is growing that he has developed nothing less than such a theory.

Dramatism as Cultural Theory

For the communication scholar, viewing Burke's writings as a critical theory of American culture requires only a subtle shift in perspective—an enlargement rather than a negation of the disciplinary tradition of Burkean theory and criticism. While an indepth discussion of dramatism as cultural theory is not possible in these pages, I attempt to exemplify that approach in my interpretation of Russell Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds," using what I believe is Burke's clearest explication of the interdependency of culture and symbol, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (PLF) as a critical perspective.

Written before *Grammar of Motives* (GM), where Burke addressed his pentadic terms in their complexity, PLF demonstrates both the breadth of his vision of culture and the utility of dramatism as a critical theory/method for illuminating the relationships between "political programs" and "cultural concerns in general" (PLF vii). Here, as elsewhere, Burke is concerned with the links between "situations" and "strategies," with how humans "size up situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them" (PLF 1). Although humans understand the world in and through language, Burke insists that such understanding is neither abstract nor ideosyncratic, for "situations are real; the strategies for handling them have public content" and remain to some degree constant from person to person and era to era (PLF 1). His critical

¹ For re-evaluations of Burke, see Southwell, Merod, Gunn, Lokke.

program, then, is aimed at understanding how material conditions are defined and addressed attitudinally in and through the symbolic forms that determine meaning and delimit appropriate action (PLF 2–3).

In PLF, Burke chooses “medicine” as his controlling metaphor for working out the interplay of culture and symbolic processes, a metaphor that continues to inform his subsequent writings. If social collectives are bodies, Burke suggests, symbolic forms are both symptoms—evidence of bodily conditions—and medicines—strategic forms that function as “promise, admonition, solace, vengeance, foretelling, instruction, charting” in addressing those conditions (PLF 296). Such medicines can be homeopathic or allopathic, i.e., they can treat either by inoculation or antidote.²

Burke as Cultural Critic

As critic, Burke at times begins with his diagnosis of a general cultural malaise or dis-ease, be it behaviorism, technology, war or other enduring human problem, and directs his inquiry toward discovering both the symptoms of disease and preferred strategies of treatment. At other times, he begins with specific historical situations, i.e., with political/literary/rhetorical texts that suggest an undetected disease lurking in the cultural psyche and inquires what that text is medicine *for*, i.e., to what socio-cultural situation does it constitute a strategic response that works to alleviate discomforting symptoms? To posit these as alternate starting points is inaccurate, of course. As master physician, Burke plays general against specific, diagnosis against therapy, in a circular reflexive process that reveals the complexity of the connections involved.

To do Burkean cultural criticism, then, is to begin with a recognition of the interdependency of culture and discourse and move to search out and illuminate the implicit connections between situation and strategy, between cultural dis-eases and symbolic medicines. Such a focus means, for example, that the creation of a text for close analysis involves a temporary and artificial separation of one dimension of cultural experience from others rather than an application of pre-determined concepts to a pre-selected speech text. The text created is simultaneously symptom and therapy, both a *part of* and *separated from* its cultural context.

Acres of Diamonds

Russell Conwell’s “Acres of Diamonds” is an ideal focus for the critic seeking to understand the interplay of symbol and situation, for it cannot be adequately understood in isolation from its cultural context. Yet one does not require an arsenal of Burkean terms to discover that the speech reflects its times, the era in which Social Darwinism was introduced, when captains

² PLF, p. 65. Traditionally homeopathy is grounded in the principle that health requires a balance of opposite bodily humors. Homeopathic remedies seek to restore equilibrium in the system, often by inoculation of a similar or complementary substance. Allopathic medicine defines illness as the result of an invasion of the bodily system; treatment introduces an antidote or corrective into the system to drive out the invader.

of industry founded economic dynasties, when Fredrick Jackson Turner challenged the nation to turn from the rural, Western frontier and find the same excitement in urban and corporate expansion. If one considers the speech as both symptom and medicine, however, one can raise a less obvious question: What disease is manifested in these symptoms and how does this medicine serve to inoculate, alleviate, cure, intensify, and/or irritate the pieties and hegemonies of its situation and, by implication, our own?

Burke advises special attention be given to three features of a cultural text—to beginnings, endings, and “watershed moments,” those “changes of slope where some new quality enters” (PLF 78). Applying these suggestions to Conwell’s speech, the critic need go no further than the title to find a strategic name for a situation, a name that both suggests the disease and predicts the mode of treatment. “Acres” and “Diamonds,” the major terms, embody two powerful but contradictory mythic strains in American culture, strains that Conwell will manipulate to fit his specific situation. The first, “acres,” celebrates the enduring vision of the American yeoman farmer cultivating his place, nurturing his land. Acres evokes a sense of continuity, denotes a vista from which one can scan the horizon yet remain anchored in one’s place. “Diamonds” presents an equally compelling vision of the American character in its suggestions of movement, risk, adventure. The term urges one to leave the security of tradition and the comforts of home to search out new places and spaces. It evokes the fascination with the unknown that is also part of the American cultural psyche, as it encourages exploration, sustains visions of unlimited horizons.³

The terms are both complementary and contradictory. Both acres and diamonds are fundamental elements of the American mythos, yet they pull in opposite directions, juxtaposing as they do the familiar and the exotic, the responsibility of family and community with the unencumbered freedom of individual endeavor. The sexual connotations echo the disjunction: acres evoking images of planting and reaping progeny, the fertility of earth mother; diamonds, glittering and exciting, the enticing call of the siren. If acres are wife, diamonds are mistress.

The two visions are reflected in a variety of American cultural forms—in literature, proverbs, sermons, song, political rhetoric. On the one hand, we are exhorted to tend our acres, to stay in our social and physical place, establish roots, become pillars or foundations in our communities. True happiness, we are assured, will be found in our own back yards, by marrying the girl next door, raising a family, and brightening the corner where we find ourselves. But the opposite vision is simultaneously reinforced. We are encouraged to search for diamonds, to go forth, “go West,” conquer the wilderness, pioneer in industry. If the “acres” theme urges us to stay in place, “diamonds” entice us away.

³ See Blakey and Tolansky for a review of the complex of meanings associated with diamonds. Tales of adventure, risk, greed, wealth, and supernatural intervention dominate the history of diamond exploration and possession. The folklore of diamonds is equally instructive, e.g., a diamond worn as a magic amulet transferred its hardness and strength to the man who wore it, promising both sexual and military prowess. Procured by the male at great cost, the diamond is worn by the female as a token of love and/or sign of ownership.

The two themes, complementary in the abstract, create a composite vision of American character. However, when called into play in a given historical moment, they imply conflicting imperatives, creating cultural dissonance. Thus, in specific situations one or the other must be given priority, for they support opposing constellations of values, one calling for constancy, stability, tradition, the other risk-taking, innovation, change. In the cultural as well as the individual psyche, such contrary injunctions can lead to confusion, frustration, hostility, or paralysis of will.

Yeoman Farmer vs. Self-Made Man

Conwell's era, for example, held two contradictory visions of success, the yeoman farmer and the self-made man. The American yeoman was envisioned as a man of simple desires. Of "middling income," he diligently worked his acres, occupied his place in the social structure. He defined wealth as having a bit beyond "basic needs" and desired above all "freedom from economic or statutory subservience, and the respect of the society for fruitful, honest industry" (Burns 1). As the country rapidly industrialized, these yeoman values were transplanted onto the urban craftsman, worker, and small entrepreneur. For the urban yeomen, as for their rural counterparts, success was envisioned not as attainment of riches or fame, but as "competence, independence, and morality" (Burns vii).

In contrast was the vision of the self-made man. Unlike the yeoman, success to this American meant the accumulation of assets well beyond basic needs. The self-made man defined success as material wealth and the "consequent social position" that such wealth could provide (Burns vii). The prerequisites for success were "initiative, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and forcefulness" (Cawelti 5). As the yeoman celebrated moderation, conservation, stability and security, the self-made man extolled risk-taking, conspicuous consumption, and change.⁴

In Conwell's title, then, one finds the juxtaposition of motives that pull in opposite directions; different definitions of success embedded in different value systems. Yet both motives are an essential feature of the American character, both necessary elements in the cultural psyche. Neither is an alien virus, to be subdued and destroyed. The remedy must strive to bring the two into balance, preserving both while strategically reducing dissonance for those in this particular situation.

Conwell's Cultural Tonic

Conwell thus addresses the need for cultural equilibrium, prescribing a medicinal balancing act. Note that he does not force a choice between the visions—his title is not "Acres or Diamonds," but "Acres of Diamonds." The two contradictory demands are retained but realigned, the conflict between acres and diamonds, between the values of the self-made man and those of

⁴ As Cawelti notes, the very concept of a self-made man is an Americanism; in other languages terms such as *nouveau riche* point to the newness or novelty of the acquired status, not to the efforts of the individuals who achieved success. Indeed, they imply a "condescension which is absent from the American term" (2).

the yeoman, alleviated by narratively joining the two visions so that the first, acres, *produces* the second, diamonds. While appearing to call for risk-taking and change, then, Conwell is instead emphasizing stability and tradition. But if acres are prescribed, diamonds remain in the cultural program, preceded by, grounded in, and generated by acres.

Conwell's maneuver illustrates Burke's emphasis on the value of ambiguity. As a strategic symbolic resource, ambiguity allows those who support various political agendas, at various times, to take advantage of the play between meanings, at times stressing one injunction, at times another (GM xv–xxiii). The perennial tension between home and adventure, between going and staying, is already reduced here in Conwell's title by his suggestion that one can "go by staying," i.e., can partake in the adventure of the diamond hunt by staying in one's place. (Conversely, of course, one can "stay by going," a strategy that compelled an earlier generation of Americans to go forth and settle the frontier and would urge a future generation to protect their place by leaving it to fight a war.) In Conwell's time, when stable pools of cheap labor were needed in centers of industry, ambiguity was exploited by exhorting people to find adventure, excitement, and wealth in their geographic, social, and economic placement.

Conwell elaborates upon the medicine prescribed in his title by introducing an ancient folk tale and three American variants and shaping a remedy by his exegesis of the four narratives.⁵ The original parable, "Acres of Diamonds," is age-old, born in the cradle of civilization, the land of the Indus, Tigris, and Euphrates. Conwell relates the tale of how Ali Hafed, "contented because he was wealthy, and wealthy because he was contented," became poor, i.e., discontented, when he coveted what he did not possess, diamonds. Abandoning his land and family, Ali-Hafed went in search of exotic treasure and lost both his wealth and his life. The man who purchased his land, however, discovered that those very acres contained diamonds, although he did not recognize them as such. What Ali Hafed sought was indeed in his own back yard, discovered by one who sought it not.

Transformations: Old World to New World

While part of Conwell's desired treatment is here—the injunction to stay in one's place—this is an old world tale. The strategy must be shaped to fit a new historical situation. In the old world, the simple act of being in place, on one's land (village, tribe) could be a sufficient condition for acquiring wealth. Nor were diamonds the reward for labor expended, they simply were there, a feature of the environment. The new world, however, requires a different moral vision of success. American folk tales feature activity, energy, and ambition, not old-world qualities of luck, passivity and fatalism. In the new world, wealth must be earned. Our land yields its riches only to those who work it, not to those who merely settle upon its acres.

⁵ Conwell tailored his address to his audience as he traveled the country, resulting in many versions of the speech. The version I used was delivered in Philadelphia, his home city. Other versions may well be different; any definitive critique of the speech would require a look at similarities and differences in the many extant versions.

In his three Americanizations of the tale, then, Conwell supplies the missing elements. First, he tells the story of a gold-seeker who sold his land to Colonel Sutter. Sutter erected a mill to harness energy from the stream that ran through the land. In the sands of that stream, he discovered a wealth in gold. Had he not built the mill and built it at that strategic spot, gold would not have been found. Even more to the point is Conwell's second variation. The owner of a rocky, unproductive Pennsylvania farm sold his land and set out to try his hand at oil exploration. The new owner, hard at work when the previous owner "had scarcely gone from that place," was working to provide water for his cattle when he discovered oil on the land. Again, had he not been working industriously, he would not have reaped reward. Conwell's final variation nails home his point. A young Massachusetts farmer sold his acres and went in search of wealth. Before the young man "had scarcely gotten out of the old homestead," the new owner energetically bent his back to dig out the potatoes that the young man had planted. As he was lugging his burden laboriously homeward, he discovered in the surrounding rocks a fortune in silver.

Conwell's variants, then, reinforce the new world moral, the American work ethic. Wealth is earned—secured by toiling, building, planting, reaping. Only as people were physically engaged in working their acres was wealth discovered. Notice that the reward also has changed. Americans do not reap diamonds from their acres; diamonds are the tender of the old world. American acres yield gold, silver, oil—symbols of economic stability and industrial progress. Thus, the moral in the American versions of the tale is subtly shaped to speak of adventure as working one's acres, of diligence rewarded and labor repaid in the coinage of *our* realm. Such medicinal strategies were especially needed in a time when immigrants arrived with their visions of American streets paved with gold, of wealth for the taking, only to find themselves living in crowded tenements and laboring in dreary factories and sweat shops.

Via his four parables, Conwell has re-formulated the general theme of his title into a specific moral injunction for his situation—work your own acres to find diamonds, you will discover wealth by doing your duty. But how is wealth defined, if not as diamonds? Conwell completes his course of treatment in a series of symbolic equations. Equal terms, Burke notes, can be substituted for each other and he advises the critic to watch such equations for the implications of these substitutions, especially for moments of transformation when perspectives are subtly reversed (GM xvii).

Transformations: Wealth to Greatness

Conwell's substitutions are particularly instructive, foreshadowed in his original parable when he described Ali-Hafed as "content because he was wealthy and wealthy because he was content." He now proceeds to dematerialize wealth by equating it with a set of terms that denote emotional states/traits rather than physical possessions. Wealth is variously defined as contentment, acceptance of and adherence to one's place, alliance with nature and the land, honesty, duty, character, purity, consistency, power, godliness or piety, caring for others, industry, motivation, common sense.

(In a parallel set of equations he also de-materializes poverty by equating it with discontent, displacement, the unnatural or artificial, dishonesty, lack of responsibility, impurity, inconsistency, irreverence, lack of character.) Thus, while Conwell began by suggesting that wealth *leads* to such non-material states/traits, he now implies that wealth *equals* these. Wealth is thus transformed, no longer measured in material possessions or social status but in qualities of character.

Most of Conwell's substitutions are accomplished indirectly, embedded within his folksy anecdotes. In one such story, for example, a rich man's son and heir is really poor, ridiculed because he is lacking in character and devoid of industry and common sense. By implication then, those who possess such qualities are wealthy, suggesting that the least affluent member of Conwell's audience is rich by comparison to the effete and ineffectual young snob prancing about in the story.

As Conwell proceeds with his substitutions, he reaches what Burke would call a watershed moment, a substitution that constitutes a major turning point in the text. For Conwell, it is the moment when energies are redirected, the prize re-defined, when "greatness" rather than wealth is the reward for one's labor. Conwell has now transformed his initial maxim, "the wealthy are great," into its opposite, "the great are wealthy." But what is greatness if not material wealth? The great man, we find, is plain, straightforward, practical, responsible, humble. He is the American yeoman—rural or urban—the average citizen occupying his place in the social hierarchy. Conwell's anecdotes now feature men and women of character, rather than men of material wealth. Greatness was Abraham Lincoln, the plain and humble man in the White House, great not because of his wealth or his office but because of his character. The great man is not the general commanding an army but the anonymous soldier doing his duty, the man of "little means." Above all, greatness is good citizenship, it is the responsible father and husband, the industrious wife, the reliable employee, the conscientious neighbor. Via these anecdotes, wealth has been redefined as greatness; greatness is envisioned as fulfilling one's place in the social structure. Greatness, therefore, can be found in any acre or lot in life.

Transformations: Personal Gain to Community Betterment

Conwell's final transformation—his ending—is equally instructive. He is no longer concerned with what makes a great *person*, but with what makes a great *place*: "I have come now to the apex of my thought. I have come now to the heart of the whole matter and to the center of my struggle: Why isn't Philadelphia a greater city . . ." (49–50). In the end, then, Conwell prescribes not individual achievement but community betterment. The American yeoman's acres are his village or neighborhood, his place in the factory or mill. It is here that he must labor to subdue disorder, here that he must demonstrate civic responsibility. He closes:

To be great at all one must be great here, now, in Philadelphia. He who can give to this city better streets and better sidewalks, better schools and more colleges, more happiness and more civilization, more of God, he will be great anywhere. . . . He that can give to his city any blessing, he who can be a good citizen while he lives here, he that can make better homes, he that can be

a blessing whether he works in the shop or sits behind the counter or keeps house, whatever be his life, he who would be great anywhere must first be great in his own Philadelphia. (59)

Thus, Conwell has effectively reaffirmed and validated the social hierarchy. Economic wealth, earlier defined as a god-given reward, is really *not* within the reach of all. The rich retain their divine right to power and status. For the rest, however, Conwell provides consolation. Wealth may prove illusive but greatness is within the reach of every man and woman in his audience.

Conwell's "Spoonful of Sugar"

"Acres of Diamonds" is an affirmation of the common man of American mythology, great not because he is materially wealthy but precisely *because he is not*. It celebrates the foot soldier tending his acres, not the soldier of fortune in search of diamonds. Contrary to popular opinion, Conwell is not dispensing advice on how to get rich but providing comfort for those unlikely to do so. From one's place, he argues, one can symbolically transcend one's material situation. "Acres of Diamonds" is not about changing one's status but about being content with one's lot in life. It is not about the accumulation of wealth but about maintaining the dream of that possibility while pragmatically accepting its improbability. As Burke notes, such rhetoric provides "consolation" disguised as "exhortation" as it "plays down" a realistic definition of the situation and "plays up" a cheap solace (PLF 293; 299). By bathing his listeners for a few hours in an aura of success, Conwell makes them the equals of both Eastern potentates and American self-made millionaires.

Conclusions

Conwell's medicine, then, is designed to curb restlessness and discontent, to prevent challenges to the social structures and institutions that sought to impose their visions of order upon a diverse American populace. In the end, it addresses perhaps the most fundamental disjunction in American culture, that which exists between individual and community, an especially crucial conflict in Conwell's America. As Henry Wiebe notes, the tension between personal and communal values reached a critical point in the late nineteenth century:

... countless citizens in towns and cities across the land sensed that something fundamental was happening to their lives, something they had not willed and did not want, and they responded by striking out at whatever enemies their view of the world allowed them to see. (44)

In the midst of social chaos, people "tried desperately to understand the larger world in terms of their small, familiar environment . . . to impose the known upon the unknown, to master an impersonal world through the customs of a personal society" (Wiebe 12). The challenge, then as now, was to reconcile American individualistic and rural values to the realities of life in a rapidly urbanizing society (Cawelti 239).

In an era when, for many, the American Dream of success seemed mired in a nightmare of anonymous futility, Conwell's "spoonful of sugar" sweetened the bitter taste of broken dreams and unfulfilled promises. Like the

patent medicines of his day, Conwell's tonic was energetically marketed as a cultural cure-all. Like those tonics, it was more anesthetic than antidote, a "feel good" formula that dulled the senses as it alleviated the symptoms, but did nothing to treat the underlying conditions that caused those symptoms. Conwell's skillful recipe of entertainment, exhortation and inspiration inoculated millions of Americans against the pain of probable failure by preserving their belief in the possibility of success.

Burke's Critical Perspective on Culture

As a theory of culture, Burke's perspective illuminates the relationship of culture and symbolic form in a text such as "Acres of Diamonds." Dramatism situates human experience in the tensions between abstract and particular, situation and strategy, freedom and constraint, familiar and novel, allowing the cultural critic to trace the process by which humans symbolically define and refine those tensions. As critical method, dramatism privileges neither the authority of history nor the indeterminateness of language as it illuminates the complex interplay of rhetoric, culture, and history as particularized in rhetorical strategies for specific situations. The contemporary American "medicine show," like that of Conwell's era, offers a variety of cultural tonics—scientific, technological, political, ideological, intellectual. Burke's critical theory of culture provides a valuable perspective through which the critic can assess these strategic medicines for the dis-eases of our time.

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A FLAWED STONE FITTING ITS NINETEENTH CENTURY SETTING: A BURKEIAN ANALYSIS OF RUSSELL CONWELL'S "ACRES OF DIAMONDS"

Dr. Richard H. Thames
Duquesne University

May other analysts join me in tracking down the ways in which the realm of
sheerly world powers becomes endowed with the attributes of "secular di-
vinity."

—Kenneth Burke¹

Russell Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds" was one of the great successes of the nineteenth century. But ask a college graduate to name a famous speech from that time, and he or she most likely will name Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" or his "Second Inaugural," neither of which were as well received in their day as "Acres of Diamonds." Why Does Conwell's speech not live like Lincoln's? Because, from the perspective of Kenneth Burke, Conwell's virtues are primarily *rhetorical* and Lincoln's *poetic*. Unfortunately, this answer is far from helpful since Burke's distinction between rhetoric and poetry is itself sometimes supposed to be far from clear.² An investigation of Conwell's inspirational speech from Burke's perspective may both clarify Burke's distinction and at the same time explain Conwell's success.

Rhetoric and Poetry

At first glance, Burke's distinction between poetry and rhetoric appears uncomplicated. Poetry involves symbolic action undertaken for its own sake without reference to purposes in the practical realm; rhetoric, on the other hand, involves symbolic action undertaken with reference to precisely those purposes, purposes of socio-political cooperation and/or competition. Poetry entertains us as symbol-using animals through the sheer exercise of symbols, unfolding or explicating implications contained within a given terminology; rhetoric moves or bends us, inducing actions or shaping attitudes that imply desired actions. Poetry proceeds without regard for an audience, while rhetoric requires one. Poetry pleases, rhetoric persuades.³

Complications arise where poetry and rhetoric overlap and the difference is not as easy to discern as it is to define. Poetry may draw upon rhetoric

¹ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: World, 1962) 523.

² See Wilbur Samuel Howell, "Kenneth Burke's 'Lexicon Rhetoricae': A Critical Examination," *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975).

³ Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 295–96.

for poetic purposes and rhetoric upon poetry for rhetorical ones. Burke observes that Sister Miriam Joseph illustrates *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* by quoting from his plays "the kinds of figures enumerated in Quintillian's work on rhetoric," while Longinus quotes "equally from poet and orator (Homer and Demosthenes)."⁴

Even if you write a drama simply for the sake of writing one, says Burke, you must write about *something*. Poetry and rhetoric intertwine, since you or your potential audience will be interested in some subjects rather than others.

These subjects involve tensions, or problems—and since you can't make a drama without the use of some situation marked by *conflict*, even though you hypothetically began through a sheer love of dramatic exercise, in the course of so exercising you tend to use as your subject matter such tensions or problems as exercise yourself, or your potential audience, or mankind in general. Thereby you become variously involved in ways of "resolving" such tensions or problems. And even though your drama is still motivated poetically by the love of the exercising for its own sake, it becomes so interwoven with the problems you symbolically resolve, people tend to see these problems as the motivating source of your activity.⁵

Though the poet may be satisfied to dramatize practical or moral conflict, the rhetorician seeks to resolve it by favoring one faction or compromising. In the process, he might call upon the resources of poetry to advance his argument. Pleased by his poetry, an audience might be more disposed to adopt the position he advocates in his rhetoric.⁶ Once the situation to which he speaks ceases to be felt as an immediately burning issue, his attempts to move an audience to practical decisions can be enjoyed for their ability to move sheerly poetically. "Demosthenes was definitely a rhetorician at the time he wrote," says Burke, but "his persuasiveness becomes more like sheer literary appeal" once the partisan purpose that led him to speak has lost its immediacy (emphasis mine).⁷

Rhetoric is *factional* for Burke, arising from and perpetuating division;⁸ it is also *historical*, being intended for a particular audience at a particular time and place for a particular purpose.⁹ Poetry, on the other hand, is *universal* in that human beings respond to it not as members of a faction but as animals that use symbols; it is timeless in that its purposes and pleasures are internal to language, involving actualization of the potentialities of any given terminology.¹⁰ When the cycle of a work's inner consistency is revealed or finished, resolving tensions exploited for the pleasure of exercising symbols, a "healing" catharsis purely internal to language results.¹¹

⁴ *Language as Symbolic Action* 296 and 305.

⁵ *Language as Symbolic Action* 29.

⁶ Kenneth Burke, "Rhetoric—Old and New," *Journal of General Education* 5 (April 1951) 203–04.

⁷ *Language as Symbolic Action* 296.

⁸ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) 22.

⁹ *Language as Symbolic Action* 296 and "Rhetoric—Old and New" 204.

¹⁰ *Language as Symbolic Action* 28–29.

¹¹ *Language as Symbolic Action* 161 and 298.

Rhetoric attempts to overcome division through *identification*. Division, for example, exists between the rich and the poor. If both can be persuaded to identify with the same motive, division is overcome to the extent that both perceive themselves as united in a common enterprise.¹² *Misidentification*, however, might prove the more apt term,¹³ for the poor may not only remain poor but also cooperate with the rich to maintain the status quo rather than conspire against them to resist it. Such misidentification constitutes *mystification*, since division between rich and poor is obscured by unitary terms ("as with terms whereby a state, designed to protect a certain structure of ownership, is made to seem equally representative of both propertied and propertyless classes.")¹⁴

Divisions intrinsic to hierarchy may be obscured by rhetoric, but the fissures remain, generating tensions that must be resolved if the hierarchy is to be maintained. The desire to overcome division yet at the same time preserve privileges associated with rank gives rise to a diseased form of cooperation, such as war, in which unity within one group is achieved by means of opposition to another.¹⁵ The "cause" of divisive tension is located in a dialectical opposite which is driven away as unclean; that is, a *scapegoat is named and sacrificed*.¹⁶ Thus, division is perpetuated, division being the means by which a particular division is "remedied." Given rhetoric's partial and partisan nature, its "solutions" are partial and partisan too. The only "rhetoric" that truly overcomes division is poetry.

Burke and Conwell

When the political situations for which Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and his "Second Inaugural" were written had passed, the speeches were not forgotten. Their poetic qualities initially enhanced their rhetorical effectiveness but ultimately enabled them to transcend the time. To read Lincoln today is to be moved by his poetry. To read Conwell is to be moved neither by his poetry nor his rhetoric. As will be seen, there is hardly enough poetry to give Conwell's speech life; what rhetorical life it possesses depends upon the extent to which the tensions it addressed still live or upon the critic's ability to resurrect the context in which it triumphed.

Lincoln's speeches transcended the partisanship of the war during which they were delivered. In them he sought primarily through linguistic action to end the division tearing the nation asunder. In contrast, Conwell's speech is mired in the partisanship which must be imaginatively revived for its success to be understood. He sought to end division too, but not primarily through linguistic action, rather the social-political acts of mystification and scapegoating.

¹² *A Rhetoric of Motives* 22.

¹³ See Trevor Melia, Review of *A Rhetoric of Motives, Philosophy and Rhetoric* 3 (Spring 1970) 124-27.

¹⁴ *Rhetoric of Motives* 108-09.

¹⁵ *Rhetoric of Motives* 22.

¹⁶ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) 406-08, and *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970) 190.

"Acres of Diamonds"¹⁷

Conwell opens with four parables which appear to have the same moral. Ironically, each story's principal character goes in search of something (diamonds, gold, oil, silver) which he unknowingly possesses already. As story follows story, the principle characters ironically grow more knowledgeable about that for which they search but still fail to find it because they never look in their own backyards. The morals are many: how obtuse men are, how they repeatedly fail to realize the value of what they already have, how they foolishly abandon all they have of worth in search of wealth, how greed and discontent blind them to the riches at hand and goad them into pursuit of riches that forever elude them.

How is the audience to interpret these parables? Conwell hints at the conclusion of the first: the Arab guide who told him of Al Hafad's futile search was insinuating "there was a certain young man that day traveling down the Tigris River that might better be at home in America." Conwell's introduction indicates that he had taken that advice to heart, returned to America, and there discovered riches in "Acres of Diamonds." He contrasts the success of his speech ("thrown together perfectly at random, spoken off-hand without any special preparation") with the failure of others (studied, worked over, adjusted to a plan). Though he had travailed and, as he suggests in the title story, even travelled (in search of something?), he implies that the speech is like a "diamond" he found in his own backyard. There are other diamonds, he continues, to be found as easily by his listeners.

After his introduction and stories, Conwell announces what may be to some his startling interpretation: the moral is that we "ought to be rich," that we "have no right to be poor" (as if being poor were immoral). Though he has hinted that diamonds are to be interpreted *metaphorically*, he now insists that diamonds, gold, oil, and silver are to be interpreted *literally* instead. The basis for this interpretation lies in the contrast between these stories and those he relates later in the speech, a contrast between *failure* and *success*. Conwell appears to think of the early stories as parables of *business failure* since the later are tales of business success: riches are to be found, not by digging for diamonds far from home, but by discovering a product or providing a service of value to neighbors. But he also appears to think of the early stories as parables of *moral failure* since the later are tales of success resulting from helping others: riches are to be gained, not by being greedy (like Al Hafed and the others), but by being helpful.

Despite a tenuous connection to the rest of the speech then, the parables are picked for their *moralistic* quality; as more than stories of business failure, however, they must be forced to fit a *materialistic* mold—metaphorical diamonds must be reduced to literal riches, then transformed into products/services that make money by helping others. Given this materialistic/moralistic interpretation, the parables really do teach us that we "ought to be rich," since *business failure borders on moral failure* for Conwell.

¹⁷ The text of the speech is taken from Agnes Rush Burr, *Russell Conwell and His Work: One Man's Interpretation of Life* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1933).

Were the poetic desire for unfolding foremost, Conwell could not construe in his tales so materialistic a moral or confine his interpretation to accounts of business failure. Only a person or period materialistically disposed could overlook the extent to which a literal interpretation fails to actualize the stories' metaphorical potential. As a whole, Conwell's speech fails to satisfy the appetite his stories stimulate, the appetite to explicate the stories' implications. If a work possesses true poetic unity, its middle and end appear to develop from its beginning like a plant develops from a seed. "Acres of Diamonds" does not grow from the opening stories; rather the stories appear to be grafted on. *The organic quality that Burke requires of poetry is missing from the speech.*

Contrary to normal expectations then, interpretation of the opening stories is determined by the later, not the other way around. The beliefs that make sense of Conwell's interpretation are stated *after* rather than *before* the interpretations are made. The speech makes most sense when it is "read backwards" because in a sense it is "written backwards." Prior knowledge of "Acres of Diamonds" might have enabled an audience to "hear it backwards," to accept a constricted interpretation of the parables known to be consistent with the rest of the speech. Most probably, audiences failed to notice any problem, being disposed with Conwell and the culture toward a materialistic interpretation. Such disregard for a poetic break should have rhetorical significance. The immense popularity of Conwell's speech over so many decades would appear to be due to its rhetoric not its poetry, to the attitude of its audiences not the eloquence of its words. The speech then would call for a rhetorical rather than a poetic critique.

"Heart of Gold"

Having offered his materialistic interpretation, Conwell defends it from religious criticism embodied in a theology student.¹⁸ But why would the criticism immediately arise or Conwell feel compelled to reply, unless significant tension exists in his day between capitalism and Christianity? Conwell's defense proves to be the rhetorical heart of his speech, the moment in which a magical "transformation" is performed: *Christian duty* is identified with the *commercial spirit*.

The "religious prejudice" against money manifests itself in the theology student's mistaken belief that "money is the root of all evil." Conwell, himself a clergyman, points out that the Bible condemns "the love of money" not "money" itself. Certainly there are things higher, grander, more sublime than money, but all are "greatly enhanced" by its use. Money, he argues, empowers a man to make life better for his family, his friends, his city. So to say "I do not want money" is to say "I do not wish to do any good to my fellow men."

¹⁸ Conwell's defense "echoes" the irony of his stories, lending the speech a degree of structural unity. The Bible-toting theological student who criticizes him is as ignorant of what is in the Bible as Al Hafed and the others are of what is in their own backyards.

Since a Christian is obligated to help his fellow man, he is obligated to get rich "by honorable and Christian methods." Indeed, "these are the only methods" that sweep him quickly toward his goal. To say "I do not want money," then, is to say "I do not wish to do any good to my fellow men" in another sense. Money is good because it enables a man to help others; but a man acquires money by helping others in the first place. Therefore, a man ought to be rich. The more he helps, the wealthier he will be. Here is the heart of Conwell's message, an inversion of the standard interpretation:¹⁹ a man makes money out of altruistic not egoistic motives; he finds wealth in his own backyard by recognizing, then supplying a need. Apparently, then, Al Hafed and the other characters from the parables fail to find riches not simply because they are foolish but also because they are motivated more by the love of money than the desire to help others.

If money is not evil, Conwell continues, then neither are moneyed men. *The wealthier a man is, the more he has probably helped others.* Thus, a wealthy friend can be "one of the sweetest Christian men" Conwell has ever known. He is admiring of men like Rockefeller who have worked to earn their money but contemptuous of the rich and the poor who have not. Echoing the irony of his opening stories, he ridicules an idle rich man's son (who no more realizes the value of what he has than Al Hafed and is just as likely to lose it).

For Burke, "splitting off" the rich man's son would be significant, *an act of division for the sake of achieving eventual union.* If people are making money, some are making more and some are making less. But the division between rich and poor inherent in such a situation is overcome in opposition to the rich man's son who (like the greedy Al Hafed and the others) participates in a different and lesser order of motives, while the poor are united in the same endeavor with Rockefeller and the rich. The rich and the poor are identified (misidentified?) in terms of the motives they supposedly share: (a) making money, the principle on which the hierarchy is built, and (b) helping others, the principle by which the hierarchy is morally and religiously justified. Then the rich and the poor are identified in terms of their dialectical opposition to the rich man's son, the (immoral and irreligious) vessel containing all their sins, the scapegoat that must be driven from their midst if they are to be clean. This dialectical opposition loosely structures most of the remaining speech.

Working out the Dialectic

Conwell illustrates his message with stories of A. T. Stewart, John Jacob Astor, Christopher Columbus, and others. Along the way he digresses to reinforce the dialectic by attacking labor union orators who sow division by

¹⁹ See A. Cheree Carlson, "Narrative as the Philosopher's Stone: How Russell H. Conwell Changed Lead into Diamonds," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53 (Fall 1989) 349: "The Christian mandate is to earn wealth so that one has the means to do good works." Conwell's inversion would be, "The Christian mandate is to do good works to earn wealth (which is in turn the means for more good works)."

promoting hatred of the rich.²⁰ According to Conwell, they seek to “scale down” those who work and “level up” those who do not, tantamount in the context of his own speech to *punishing those who help their fellow men and rewarding those who do not*.

In contrast to labor union orators, Conwell seeks unity. Great men are identified with simple, common men. “Great inventors” are “the simple, plain, everyday people who see the need and set about to supply it,” men like those who brought us the better hat pin, rock maple crystal, the trout farm, and unpainted Hingham toys. These “inspiring” stories mirror the original four: these entrepreneurs *succeed* where the original characters *fail*, finding wealth the first four overlook in their own backyards. (But again, note the difference: the early stories are characterized by a desire for possessing things and the later by a desire for helping others.) Stories about the hat pin’s inventor and an Ohio factory owner also serve to emphasize the rightness of Conwell’s message and to enhance his own ethos, since their successes are attributable to his advice.

Conwell contrasts the great but simple men of the later stories with men who seek greatness through election to public office. Greatness, he claims, is achieved only through helping others, not through holding office. He concludes with the story of a self-important public official delivering an horrendous speech, ridiculing him for his ignorance of military procedure and at the same time exalting common soldiers in contrast to military officers.

This last story provides Conwell with the opportunity to tone down the harshness of earlier exaggerations (e.g., the man with “one hundred millions” and the man with “fifty cents” both have what they are “worth”—to others). Ulysses S. Grant, he says, was “personally a great man,” but his “tomb stands on the heights over the Hudson” because the general was representative of “two hundred thousand men who went down to death for their nation,” many of them as great as Grant himself. Both the Civil and the Spanish-American Wars taught that “however humble the station a man must occupy, if he does his full duty in his place, he is just as much entitled to the American people’s honor as is a king upon a throne.”

“Honor,” maybe; money, no. The contributions of some are rewarded with wealth and those of others with honor which the families of dead soldiers cannot spend. Honor is the reward for *sacrifice* that those in the lower echelons are ever called upon to offer, sacrifice that preserves the hierarchy and the privileges accorded to its rulers. Why some are called upon to die and others to live well is, of course, a *mystery* to all but God. Conwell’s quasi-religious rhetoric is *mystifying*, the means by which those who are killed and those who make a “killing”²¹ are *misidentified* in terms of a common motive.

And so, division is “healed.” Neither the poor (because they are poor) nor the rich (because they are rich) are excluded from the hierarchy. Both are

²⁰ This story is not included in all versions of the speech. Other versions mention railroads, banks, etc. Parts of the speech changed from year to year, audience to audience—a fact reinforcing the need for a rhetorical rather than poetic criticism.

²¹ A favorite observation of Burke’s.

ennobled. All are called upon to help their fellow men. Wealth is one measure and honor the other of the degree to which a man succeeds in doing so. Wealth and honor measure "greatness," and greatness "consists not in holding some office" but "in doing some great deed with little means, in the accomplishment of vast purposes from the private ranks of life."

From Conwell's story of Al Hafed, through his encounter with the mistaken theology student, to his experience with the public official, *the speech climbs dialectically* (though somewhat indirectly), *contrast by contrast, to its conclusion*, leaving behind Al Hafed and the other characters from the parables, the rich man's son, labor union orators, and the small town official, *scapegoats sacrificed for the sake of transcendent merger around a single hierarchical theme—(making money by) helping people*. But while Al Hafed and the others are purely symbolic scapegoats, while the rich man's son and the public official are actual, but comic scapegoats, labor union officers are actual, more tragic ones, true threats to the capitalistic order Conwell praises. By ending with ridicule of the small town mayor-farmer, the speech is more forgiving than it might otherwise be.

The final story serves other purposes. Because Conwell is the young officer that the mayor-farmer praises, he can appear humble as he criticizes the old man's foolish comments, further enhancing his own ethos. Also, the old man's speech, unlike Conwell's, fulfills no need; it is egoistic, not altruistic. Conwell quite unselfishly tells his audience how to get rich. The proof that he has altruistically supplied a need lies in the number of times he has delivered the speech and the money he has received for doing so—enough to establish and endow, altruistically, Temple College (University). *The speech exemplifies the very principle it proclaims*.

Conclusion

Conwell's spontaneous speech contrasts with the old man's over-written, over-rehearsed one, just as the spontaneous ideas of successful men contrast with the plodding studies of the original four failures. Throughout "Acres of Diamonds," those who fail have eyes but cannot see while those who succeed are visited by insights into people's needs that come in a flash, as if by revelation. The quasi-religious quality of those insights lends a quasi-religious sanction to the wealth they generate. Paradoxically, the rambling structure of "Acres of Diamonds" may reinforce its spontaneous and therefore "revelatory" nature.

This quasi-religious character best accounts for the speech's success. Conwell appears to reconcile capitalism with Christianity and render the world just. Economic differences are misidentified as moral ones; real differences in wealth are obscured by the concept of honor. God rewards the moral with wealth and/or honor and punishes the immoral (like Al Hafed) with misery and failure. Of course, Conwell's characterization of capitalism is as inaccurate as his characterization of Christianity; capitalism is less just and gentle, Christianity less legalistic than he claims (there are the small matters of "grace" and "redemptive suffering of the innocent"). The importance of the speech resides not in its accuracy but in its ability to persuade people that the economic structures of that time were religiously sanctioned. And its im-

mense success is indicative of exactly how overwhelming was the need for such sanction to resolve hierarchical tension.

For Burke, the contrast between the considerable repute Conwell's talk enjoyed in the nineteenth century and the disrepute into which it has fallen in the twentieth would evince its *rhetorical* as opposed to its *poetic* quality. "Acres of Diamonds" was better suited to another time than it is to ours. America may still be capitalistic and (nominally) Christian, but the problem of *religiously* legitimating socio-economic structures is not as pressing. "Acres of Diamonds" succeeded because it *addressed the problem of its time*. But it *failed to do so eloquently*. As Conwell himself confessed, the speech "often breaks all rules of oratory, departs from the precepts of rhetoric" (obviously in a different sense from Burke's). What poetic unity it possesses is loose; what unity it might have appeared to develop over the years would be due to an audience's prior acquaintance with its theme. The success of Conwell's lecture was too dependent upon its *audience*. The audience changed significantly; the speech could not. With few poetic qualities to sustain its life, it passed away with Conwell and his time.

ENTELECHY AND SELF-FULFILLMENT: "ACRES OF DIAMONDS" AS A VOCABULARY OF "PROGRESS"

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At the turn of the century, Russell Conwell evoked a vision of progress and self-fulfillment in thousands of people with his exhortation on "Acres of Diamonds." The power of our own economic and social potential, Conwell maintained, is located in the innovative and technological capacity of society writ large, and is within each of us if we but strive for achievement. One of the premier rhetorical efforts to instill a Christian ethic of capitalism and individual success, this speech, repeated thousands of times across the country, inscribed in many a profound sense of self and society propelled by economic and technological accomplishment.

Kenneth Burke, long concerned with economic and technological motivations, reacts at times vehemently to the ascendance of "technologism," and to the incorporation of economic "habits" into the American spirit. Alert to the destructive by-products of our technology, and wary of an accepting and unquestioning "promissory" stance toward the benefits of technology, Burke offers a symbolic perspective on the assertion of human control over our invented servants. Drawn to the ambiguous moments within language, where he locates the creativity of human symbolism, Burke is especially sensitive to the reversals and transformations operant in appeals to a larger fulfillment of individual potential. The advance of technology, which so creatively threatens to destroy our environment, and to functionally absorb our culture, can be critiqued and perhaps channeled through a closer analysis of symbolic efforts to glorify this "Counter-Nature."

As a premiere example of American attitudes toward the nature of human wellbeing and of the exultation of technological and economic components of such attitudes, Conwell's speech is a useful representative anecdote for understanding the ascension of our current industrial preoccupation. The critique of contemporary technological society and of current efforts to assert control over our invented machines can be enhanced by exploring the historical foundations of the "promissory" stance and by pursuing the ambiguities hidden within explicit appeals to the God-term of "progress." Examining Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds" speech¹ through this larger perspective on the symbolic transformations of technology and "progress," three items of interest become apparent: the ascendant cult of commodities, mystification and the preservation of hierarchy, and the inducement of human attitudes toward technology.

¹ There are many variations of Conwell's speech available for a critical reading. All references here will be to the copy of "Acres of Diamonds" reprinted in Agnes R. Burr, *Russell H. Conwell and His Work* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1926), 405-38.

The Cult of Commodities

Conwell, understanding some of the human frailties of greed and avarice, condemns the love of money, while at the same time arguing the necessity of acquiring money as a source of power (Burr 416). The worship of the means to get to an end (the acquisition of money as a good in itself) is what is evil for Conwell. Even as he issues this caveat, however, he embraces and advocates the worst of the human commercial spirit. For money is power, Conwell insists, since "money has powers; and for a man to say, 'I do not want money,' is to say 'I do not wish to do any good to my fellow-men'" (Burr 414). Conwell's message, amidst the inspirational recitation of readily available means of acquiring financial gains ("Acres of Diamonds"), is that human happiness, the realization of human potential, ultimately stems from such material sources.

Characterizing his view as "Marxoid" rather than "Marxist," Burke has long maintained that the motivations operant in the advance of technology form a special symbiosis with the financial or pecuniary drives of a capitalist society. Burke terms this special symbiosis the "cult of commodities" and attributes it to the multiplication, not of people, but of habits beyond acceptable physical constraints: "By the workings of the neo-Malthusian principle . . . the combination of capitalism and technology both permitted a proliferation of private-enterprise habits and demanded this proliferation" (*Attitudes* 419). Summing up the doctrine in the *Rhetoric of Motives* as "[i]ts culture if it's something you can buy," Burke identifies the cult of commodities as an "outgrowth of language-guided invention," (192) and thus a way of transcending nature. This corresponds with his views of "accountancy," which includes both the clerical work needed to sustain a system of technology and the "bureaucratization" of value systems under the guidance of the "trope" of efficiency.

The problem with the cult of commodities is the essential imbalance it builds into society. The problem is precisely that these forces become "cult-ish," and extreme. At an individual level, the monetary motive is an alienating one since it recasts individual worth and the attainment of goals in quantitative terms. Money and economic habits are "measurable," in the most direct way, and they therefore infuse thinking about social relations. A central element in Conwell's distinction between the rich man's son and the poor man's son is his characterization of the happiest hour that a man enjoys:

[W]hen a young man takes his bride over the threshold of the door, for the first time, of the house he himself has earned and built, when he turns to his bride and with an eloquence greater than any language of mine, he sayeth to his wife, "My loved one, I earned this home myself; I earned it all. It is all mine, and I divide it with thee." (Burr 419)

The rich man's son cannot know that joy, but the poor man's son can. In essence, Conwell's point is that the common man can proudly achieve ownership, can fervently participate in the commercial spirit. The earning of a home, or commodity, is the pinnacle of a man's life. The inspiration provided by Conwell, that we can all find our success, our fulfillment, if we but look around us, is grounded in a larger message about the material nature of our culture.

The principle of desire, embodied in the cult of commodities, is itself psychologically frustrating because it is never satisfied with the “getting” of more commodities. In the *Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke notes that the principle of wanting is never fully satisfied, since “by its very nature as a principle it transcends all mere material things, even while being encouraged to think that material things are what it wants” (234). This “blockage,” as a source of ongoing motivation, is the source of significant alienation in society.

It is not the specific consumer good that Conwell ultimately extolls, but the principle of wealth itself, the power of magnification that accompanies material gain. Conwell acknowledges that “there are some things more valuable than money,” but he insists, in accordance with the dictates of common sense, that “there is not any one of those things that is not greatly enhanced by the use of money” (Burr 414). Money, for Conwell, is power. His anecdotes of personal success are contextualized in the marketplace, and his stories are aimed, significantly, at personal attitudes toward achievement in the realm of economic “habits.”

Burke clarifies the frame of acceptance being constructed here when he focuses on the role of the storyteller in perpetuating the cult of commodities:

The simplest example of a circular order breeding itself is the “success story,” which gets a kind of catharsis by building up a day-dream of gratification. In the course of its imaginary attainments, it brings to the imagination the very ideals that make precisely its ideas of success seem so pressingly desirable. Thus, the “cure” but reinvigorates the “disease,” and readies the audience for another variant of the same success story the next time. (*Rhetoric of Religion* 234)

The principle of desire is thus reified in the message of “Acres of Diamonds;” the speech at once gratifies the desire symbolically and creates an appetite for more consumption. Conwell’s speech repetitively cultivates the quantitative accountancy of self-worth—example after example reinvigorates the habit of consumption. Nowhere in the message, in the validation of end over means, in the location of greatness in individual accomplishment, does the assertion of human value run counter to the accumulation of wealth and rank. Conwell insists that when “a man makes an idol of the money instead of the purposes for which it may be used” (Burr 416), then it is the root of all evil. But the larger purposes of human existence are ignored in his message—Conwell consistently casts human achievement within the framework of these “interim” goals, within the realization of individual wealth. The cult of commodities, the habit of consumption, explicitly denied in the text, is yet alive and well therein.

The Preservation of Hierarchy

Social hierarchy, even in Conwell’s effort to elevate the common man, is likewise underscored in the speech. Conwell reassures the common folk that public office does not necessarily make great men and that many rich men made their fortunes in the small towns of America (Burr 431–32, 421). And, in fact, the main point of the speech seems to be that all of the common folk can realize their dreams and aspirations if they look around them to find the “diamonds.” These gestures toward egalitarianism, however, are countered by the implicit messages being communicated.

Burke, of course, argues that man is "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy" (*Language* 15–16), not any one particular hierarchy, but the principle of order itself. His discussion of this characteristic focuses on mystery and the validation of one order over another, even on the validation of the hierarchical principle itself. He enjoins the rhetorical critic to be on the "lookout for expressions that both reveal and conceal such an aspect of 'consciousness,' as is the way with symbols . . ." (*Rhetoric of Motives* 123).

Burke is especially concerned with the assertion of hierarchy in the guise of neutrality and equality. The "neutrality" of scientific vocabularies has been instrumental, Burke argues, in the ascension of a "secular priesthood." The complexity of the scientific vocabulary, coupled with a "non-moral" suspension of judgment, fosters a hierarchy predicated on the attainment of purer forms of knowledge. Burke cautions us about the ascension of this new "priesthood," where "the 'truth' of the Christian terminology has found its materialistic counterpart in the terminologies of science" (*Rhetoric of Motives* 76). The revision of a system of meaning, or of human conceptions of "how the world is put together," that Burke identifies with piety (a reorientation of "what properly goes with what") is clearly discernible in the vocabularies of science and in the movement of Conwell's text.

Conwell explicitly denies the hierarchy, while at the same time he reifies the principle itself. Conwell emphasizes at one point that the man with one hundred million dollars and the man with fifty cents each *have just what they are worth* (Burr 417). Worth is equated with financial status, and an individual's place in the social hierarchy is likewise tied to economic success. While his speech proclaims the nobility of striving toward greatness by "doing some great deed with little means" (Burr 437) and argues that the teaching of history is incorrect because it neglects the common man, Conwell nonetheless establishes the principle of hierarchy with the direction and tone of his anecdotes. The biting satire of the rich man's son (dressed like a grasshopper and talking in "Hinglish"), along with the description of the ignorance of the stuttering and stumbling old "elocutioner" about the realities of war, impose a clear sense of order in the correctness of experience and understanding. This correctness in the order of things, articulated to empower the public to greatness, subtly entrenches the existent hierarchy. Making an analogous point about the stages of learning (read earning), Burke explains this reversal:

... [T]he "naturalness" of grades rhetorically reenforces the protection of privilege. Though in its essence purely developmental, the series is readily transformed into rigid social classifications, and these interfere with the very process of development that was its reason for being. (*Rhetoric of Motives* 141)

The naturalness of equating individual worth with economic success, and of inferring social correctness in the context of a larger "understanding" about reality, thereby perpetuates the principle of hierarchy Conwell castigates in his glorification of the common man.

Perhaps most telling in the speech, offered to clarify a public misperception of the order of things, is the illustration that the officers must move to the rear of the troops during battle. The concluding anecdote of the speech, aimed at reasserting the greatness of the common man, is thus an explicit

affirmation of hierarchy, a hierarchy imposed by the exigencies of war and yet also illustrative of the formative power of social and economic interaction.

This affirmation of an accepted order of things is further coupled with a mystification of the citizenry about the exploitive possibilities of the hierarchy. For the tales we are told about the excesses of the rich are all lies, Conwell claims, as are the negative reports on the capitalists. We've been hoodwinked into thinking that the capitalists are exploiting us, while in fact they may be the "sweetest [of] Christian men" (Burr 418). Any opposition to the implicit hierarchy is thus undercut by the assertion of kind and Christian motives on the part of those who are higher up.

Conwell not only asserts his own hierarchy, validating the order of his frames of acceptance and rejection, but he reorients what properly goes with what—he embeds the audience within a new orientation toward *how* we know. Framed within his anecdotes about success and failure, a new piety arises: the identification of self with wealth, and the identification of wealth with technological progress. Humans know themselves, they realize their potential with reference to wealth and technological advance. All levels of society, Conwell's attitude of attitudes maintains, benefit immeasurably from invention and exploitation. Those who don't benefit are simply not properly striving for achievement. This conceptual shift, while "uplifting" the poor and the deprived from the depression of their situation, reasserts the appropriateness of the economic hierarchy. Those who remain poor, or deprived, are too silly, too stupid, too greedy or too blind to see the acres of diamonds in front of them. As validations of status, the imputation of false motivation and the raising of hopes and aspirations operate in tandem, a strategic *tour-de-force* founding American attitudes toward economic achievement.

The Perfection of Counter-Nature

The central theme of the speech seems to be, given the large number of examples offered on this point, that our personal and societal salvation lies with invention and technology. Conwell cites example after example of common people who invented something—a hatpin, a trout farm, rock maple crystal—which made them rich. And such salvation, really the human capacity to control Nature, is readily available to the average person if only they can see it in front of them. In short, Conwell offers technological solutions to technological, economic and social problems.

The point might be made that the "Acres of Diamonds" theme is largely metaphorical in that it stresses not technology but the fulfillment of self with available resources. This misses the way in which Conwell's argument is framed, however, and ignores the powerful vocabulary of technological invention that encompasses his view of the better life. For Conwell, our economic and technological problems have readily available technological solutions, solutions which operate within the existing social and economic framework. Invention, and the concomitant exploitation of natural resources, is the lure of "Acres of Diamonds." The speech therefore operates in the preservation of order, an *entelechial* order, in the unquestioning acceptance and validation of technical ingenuity.

In his retrospective definition of man, Burke allows himself a wry codicil:

that man is "rotten with perfection" (*Language* 16). At the core of a motive view of language, Burke identifies the notion of "entelechy," a human striving for completion or perfection:

The principle of perfection is central to the nature of language as motive. The mere desire to name something by its "proper" name, or to speak a language in its distinctive ways is intrinsically "perfectionist." . . . There is a principle of perfection implicit in the nature of symbol systems; and in keeping with his nature as symbol-using animal, man is moved by this principle. (*Language* 16-17)

The clearest example of this entelechial principle is the "tracking down of implications" particular to a terminology. The tendency toward perfection is therefore implicit in the choice of vocabulary. Scientific vocabularies in particular, tracking down and splitting the atom or splicing the gene, offer us some stunning possibilities in the perfection of their "implications." In reference to Freud, Burke makes clear that from a psychological viewpoint, "the purely formal, entelechial principle is an important motivational ingredient in system-building types of insanity" (*Dramatism* 50). The grounds for a collective and language driven form of system-building insanity, implicit in the entelechial principle itself, come to flower in the industry of human endeavor.

In his satiric "amplification" on Helhaven, Burke observes that "money, mechanisms in general, and now the computer in particular represent culminating aspects of specifically human genius" ("Why Satire" 318). Technology is seen as an outcome of human rationality—the current Big Technology as a caricature of our rational tendencies. This "hypertechnologism," which includes both the promissory stance toward the wondrous benefits of technology and the compulsion to build the bigger mousetrap, is itself a characteristic of the drive for perfection. Conwell's speech embodies the "promissory stance" against which Burke mobilizes his system. The unreflecting obeisance at the machine altar is what "burns him up," Burke confesses, the "'positive' unction so often associated with the 'promissory' position. It makes things look too damned simple—and precisely at a time when they are becoming more and more complex" ("Progress" 324). Conwell wants us to better ourselves, but we do so by buying into the system, by not questioning the underlying order of things, by *perfecting* technology to match the demands of consumers and make our fortune. The speech itself, in asserting the equality of opportunity and the benefits of hard work, locates those opportunities in the wonders of human invention.

Which brings us straight to the central problem of entelechy—the drive for perfection. Conwell's speech, heard by tens of thousands of people in the expanding social and industrial framework of early twentieth century America, offers a powerful vocabulary of "progress." Naming the fulfillment of self in this way, Conwell evokes a sense of piety in the perfection of technique. Our striving for the better mousetrap, the more efficient machine, not only accrues the wealth and power we yearn for, it also fulfills our social obligation for the betterment of society. The better homes, schools and churches he lauds in his concluding exhortation are the capstones to the individualized entelechial motives he induces with his anecdotes of riches and other "diamonds." Even as he subtly validates the cult of com-

modities and the existent hierarchies, Conwell projects us toward the ascendance of human technique and control over Nature. His vocabulary asserts the "truth" of technological prowess, in essence it consummates personal fulfillment as industrial progress. His vision thereby embodies the entelechial motive, engraving the promissory stance in the American spirit.

Conwell's speech, as a touchstone of deep rooted attitudes toward "progress," and the human striving for technological perfection, is itself a "diamond" awaiting the discovery of its implications. The rewards of a thorough treatment of this speech, and other "invitations to participate" in an advancing technological society, may well include a clearer and firmer capacity for control over our invented servants.

Reaffirming Reflection

In his *Dramatism and Development*, Burke outlines the need for an anti-Technologicistic Humanism, a humanism that would be "animalistic" in not privileging human status and in recognizing the human place in the totality of the natural order (53-54). Burke's Dramatism, by focusing our attention on the reversals operant within the speech, allows us to reflect on the assumptions of the message and hopefully "keep the admonition alive" ("Why Satire" 321). Reflection and appreciation is one way, Burke claims, of making the entelechial motivations a consciously scrutinized aspect of language, for "the 'Unconscious' implications may not be 'made conscious' until one has methodically devoted oneself to the task of inquiring into the fulfillment of a given symbol system as such" (*Language* 70).

"Acres of Diamonds," as a vocabulary for human progress and self-fulfillment, is a study in the promissory attitude toward technology and the instillation of economic habits. Conwell lauds the economic achievements of the individual, even as he contextualizes these achievements in the existent social hierarchy and in the quickening pace of technological innovation. At a very basic level, the speech illustrates the twists and turns by which the best of the human spirit, the pinnacle of human existence, is associated with the bigger and better mousetrap. Social good, equated with better streets, homes, schools and churches, infuses individual striving for wealth through invention. The trick, Conwell insists, is to discover human needs and to meet them by producing whatever it is that people need (Burr, 425-27). This meets the needs of society (social good) even as it accrues wealth to the individual (individual good). This dual motivation both perpetuates the inequities of the social system (the gratification and catharsis of the success story), and ties the advance of industry to the greater common good, to the welfare of society.

Burke's understanding of human motivation and hierarchy is instructive here as an admonition about our current attitudes toward technology. The ultimate achievements of the cult of commodities, the subtle validation of the principle of hierarchy, and the driving entelechial motivation of Conwell's speech all draw close attention to the relationship between attitudes toward self, society, and technology. The "technologism" that Burke reacts to, the unquestioning acceptance of the value of the principle of technological advance, may well be the *bête noire* of the human race. Conwell's

speech, so formative in shaping American attitudes on the realization of human potential through invented responses to human "needs," is likewise formative in aligning those needs with an economic interpretation of self-worth. Framed in the materialist culture, Conwell's message about finding one's own potential in the ends of social benefits is lost in the emphasis on the power of the financial means by which such benefits are realized. Both the ends and the means of self-fulfillment, as inscribed by Conwell's speech, are constituted by an acquiescence to the imperatives of economic and technological progress. The validation of Counter-Nature, of controlling nature for human "needs," is epitomized by the reversals of Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds."

If a Burkian understanding of human motivation can offer insight into Conwell's frame of acceptance, it may well be the necessity of maintaining a vigilant and ongoing admonition against the reification of such "progress." "Acres of Diamonds," a powerful and representative illustration of the mobilization of human spirit in the service of technological and economic hierarchy, is likewise an unspoiled and purer version of many contemporary appeals for human participation in industrial society. The possibilities for a new sense of piety, an individual sense of place in the ecological web that recognizes the essentially dualistic nature of humankind (ever straddling the juncture between action and motion, between the symbolic and the biological), are enhanced by the current resurgence of environmental awareness. This new piety, however, is still a fragile set of attitudes, threatened in part by the very rhetorical reversals that characterize Conwell's effort.

The corporate "eco-pornography" of shallow environmental appeals mobilized in the interests of the cult of commodities that causes many of the problems of industrial excess is a rhetorical strategy that invites close scrutiny. Corporations desensitize the public through recurrent appeals to a "greener" corporate image and even invoke the God-term of "cleanliness" in a plea for consumer purchases of clean air, clean water and clean trash making the dividing line between corporate responsibility and deceptive marketing practices a difficult one to place. The "feel-good" era of environmentally conscious consumerism is rife with challenges to discriminate between the sane and in the inane. Burke's "anti-technologicistic Humanism," as a reassertion of a human sense of self or piety in an endangered ecology offers a reflective and frequently complex perspective on the interplay of human hierarchy, the striving for perfection, and the dominance of excessive economic habits. The implication of Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds" speech, as a cornerstone of American attitudes toward "progress" and as the theme for the 75th Speech Communication Association Convention, is that this interplay is frequently a subtle underlying thesis, masked in powerful validations of the greatest of human accomplishments, and deserving of careful close scrutiny as critics shape the understanding of the public.

The motivations that operate within our symbols, that call to us for completion, inhere in our very beings as Bodies That Learn Language (*Permanence* 296). The problematic nature of these motivations, the bigger and better mechanisms that are their culminations, and the human expressions that are their vehicles, pose no small challenge to the student of human symbolism. Burke broadly observes that

with the great flowering of technology, the problem of self control takes on a possibly fatal new dimension. Man must so control his invented servants that they cease to control him. Until man solves that problem, he has purpose a-plenty. ("Rhetoric, Poetics" 33)

Such purpose is worthy of the greatest, and the most meager of contributions. Sentenced to the sentence as we are, human symbolism seems an obvious focal point for such endeavors.

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THE MUSIC OF TRACY CHAPMAN: EXTENDING THE RHETORICAL VISION OF FOLK SINGER AS VOICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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"Don't you know they're talkin' 'bout a revolution.
It sounds like a whisper.
Poor people gonna rise up and get their share.
Poor people gonna rise up and take what's theirs."
—"Talkin' 'bout a Revolution" (Chapman, 1988)

It was in the Sixties that folk-rock music became the voice of many of the socially troubled youths in America. Their heroes—Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, and Tom Paxton, among others—sang of poverty, hunger, persecution, and war; drawing inspiration and credibility from their own youthful perceptions. Denisoff (1983) asserts that artists such as Pete Seeger and the Weavers were "'rediscovered' by socially conscious college students who employed folk material to nihilistically comment on contemporary events" (p. 111). Metcalf (1978) offers a similar view when he concludes that "Bob Dylan was, without a doubt, one of the most influential spokesmen of the young throughout the past decade and a half" (p. 163).

Embraced by their audience these folk-artists became not so much idols as symbols of the disillusioned segment of a younger generation. As Rosenstone (1969) contended, their music became the central medium in the so-called "youth movement," for as the young performers were given the opportunity to write their own music they began "to express their alienation from and disdain for American institutions" (p. 131). Consequently the music of Dylan, and others, became a channel for the social consciousness of *their* youth.

Yet even as the folk music of the peace generation succumbed to the disco beat of the Seventies' "me" generation and the materialistic cries of the 1980s, the rhetorical vision of the folk singer as social activist and consciousness-raiser has remained firmly entrenched in pop culture. In this essay I will argue that with her triumphant debut album, folk singer Tracy Chapman employs rhetorical strategies that enable her to extend this image generated by the folk-rock artists of the Sixties. To illustrate, I will apply Bormann's fantasy-theme criticism to identify the shared beliefs that are inherent in her music—and that help to "chain out" the rhetorical vision of Tracy Chapman as the Nineties' voice of social consciousness.

The Rhetorical Artifact

To most, Tracy Chapman is not a typical pop music star. Usually dressed only in casual attire and brandishing her acoustic guitar, Chapman seems to

epitomize the background and environment she fought to leave behind—rather than reflect the glitter of the industry she helps to support.

Chapman grew up in a poor, black, working-class neighborhood in Cleveland. Showing interest in music at an early age, she began taking clarinet lessons at school and playing the organ at home. "There was always lots of music in our house," Chapman says. "When I was growing up, I kind of took it for granted" (DeCurtis, 1988, p. 45). But the environment in which she grew up also taught her about more than music. "I was very aware of all the struggles my mother was going through, being a single parent and a black woman trying to raise two kids," she says. "I guess there's some people who can take all that in and not really look at the bigger picture, not see that there are all these forces in society making things more difficult than they ought to be" (p. 45).

While on scholarship at Wooster, a small, progressive private school in Danbury, Connecticut, Tracy Chapman began establishing herself on the local music front. She wrote songs that reflected her political views, and later at Boston's Tufts University, she became a part of the folk music scene around Boston and Cambridge, performing at local clubs and colleges as well as on the street in Harvard Square. This exposure led to a contract with Elektra Records late in 1987, and in the fall of 1988 she released her self-titled debut album.

The eleven songs on *Tracy Chapman* seem to reflect the feelings of the burgeoning lower class about who she sings. "Fast Car," arguably the album's most moving track, describes a couple who long for a life in the suburbs after living in a homeless shelter, while "Mountains O' Things" is about a lower class laborer who dreams of the good life. Indeed, author Anthony DeCurtis (1988) suggests that Chapman's political sentiments have led critics to view her "as a bridge between the Eighties' folk revival and the more socially conscious folk movement of the Sixties" (p. 45). Four Grammy awards (including Best Contemporary Folk Recording), and multi-platinum sales of the album, confirm the impact she has had.

For purposes of this essay, I have chosen the lyrics to five songs from the album *Tracy Chapman* for rhetorical analysis: "Talkin' 'bout a Revolution," "Fast Car," "Mountains O' Things," "Behind the Wall," and "Why." These five selections best reflect the social awareness her music evokes.

The Critical Method

Based on the symbolic-convergence theory, Bormann's fantasy-theme criticism suggests that shared beliefs or fantasies "chain out" among members of a group to create a rhetorical vision. By coding a rhetorical artifact for references to settings, characters, and actions, the critic can look for patterns in the fantasy themes and is able to construct the rhetorical vision (Bormann, 1972).

For each of the five selections by Tracy Chapman, references to actor, action, and setting within the lyrics were coded and analyzed for recurring themes. Four shared beliefs emerged: (1) Society's oppressed are unified as one group; (2) The actions of society's oppressed are restricted and futile; (3) Society must eventually answer to or pay for its actions against the oppressed; and (4) Tracy Chapman is a representative and voice of the oppressed

(each of the references coded within the lyrics can be found in Table 1, and are listed by group and corresponding fantasy theme).

(1) Society's oppressed are unified as one group. This theme suggests that the oppressed have a collective voice—representing equally: the unemployed, the homeless, the abused and battered, and the poverty stricken. Historically, both literature and the press have perpetuated this shared belief with their consistency in referring to impoverished groups as single entities. Tracy Chapman employs this fantasy dramatically. For example, in the song "Talkin' 'bout a Revolution" (Chapman 1988) her references to the underprivileged always suggest a single voice: *they're talkin', it sounds, take what's theirs*. Similarly, in the songs "Mountains O' Things" and "Why" (Chapman, 1988), she refers to the oppressed class as *those* who deserve the best in life, *those* whose sole misfortune, *some* who seek the truth, and *the speechless*.

In the Sixties, folk-artists made similar references to the youth they sang for and about. Terms such as *this generation*, *my friends*, and *our future* suggested a unification of ideals and causes among America's youth. In a sense, folk music was seen as the channel or voice of a movement involving an entire faction of a generation. For the folk singer, this rhetorical strategy lent credibility to his or her image as representative of a movement. In the Nineties, Chapman establishes her credibility in much the same way; opting to sing about the oppressed as an entire social class, rather than as individual victims.

(2) The actions of society's oppressed are restricted and futile. In the Sixties, youth protested their impotency in dealing with such world problems as hunger, war, poverty, and corruption—through song. Their music implied that some members of the younger generation were somehow shackled by the deeds of the older "establishment," who also successfully suppressed their revolt. One example is the protest song, "The Times They are a-Changin'" (Dylan, 1963), in which Bob Dylan appeals to a generation of parents to release the youth movement from their grasp:

Come mothers and fathers,
 Throughout the land
 And don't criticize
 What you can't understand.
 Your sons and your daughters
 Are beyond your command.
 Your old road is
 Rapidly agin'.
 Please get out of the new one
 If you can't lend your hand
 For the times they are a-changin'.

A parody of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is My Land" (Bosses' Songbook, 1959) offers a similar view:

As I was standing in a mile long breadline,
 My landlord gave me a one week deadline,
 The *Daily Worker*, it ran this headline,
 This land is not for you and me.

Table 1. Fantasy Theme by Category and Grouping: Analysis of the following songs: "Talkin' 'bout a Revolution," "Fast Car," "Behind the Wall," "Mountains O' Things," and "Why"

(1) Society's Oppressed are Unified as One Group	
"Talkin' 'bout a Revolution"	
Actor/action:	They're talkin' 'bout a revolution, it sounds like a whisper, they're standing, poor people gonna rise up, take what's theirs.
Setting:	Welfare lines, doorsteps of those armies of salvation, the unemployment lines, their share.
"Fast Car"	
Actor/action:	We can get somewhere, we can make a deal, starting from zero, got nothing to lose.
Setting:	Somewhere, starting from zero, nothing to lose.
"Behind the Wall"	
Actor/action:	The police always come late, if they come at all, they say they can't interfere, as they walk out the door.
"Mountains O' Things"	
Actor/action:	Everyone will look at me with envy and with greed, their attention, who we are, those who deserve the best in life, those whose sole misfortune, good people, all my enemies.
"Why"	
Actor/action:	So many of us, people still alone, babies starve, a woman, she's in her home, some who seek the truth, the speechless speak the truth.
Setting:	The world, home.
(2) Actions of the Oppressed are Restricted and Futile	
"Talkin' 'bout a Revolution"	
Actor/action:	It sounds like a whisper, revolution, crying at the doorsteps, wasting time, sitting around.
"Fast Car"	
Actor/action:	Fast car, I got nothing to prove, starting from zero, managed to save a little bit of money, my old man's got a problem, live with the bottle, mama went off and left him, she wanted more from life, somebody's got to take care of him, I quit school, we go cruising, you still ain't got a job, I work in a market, checkout girl, we'll move out of the shelter, you stay out drinking, I'd hoped for better, live and die this way.
Setting:	The convenience store, the border, the city, live with the bottle, body's too old, body's too young to live like this, life, school, live and die this way, market, the shelter, the bar, no plans.
"Behind the Wall"	
Actor/action:	I heard the screaming, tears well up in her eyes, it won't do no good to call.
Setting:	Police always come late, in her eyes.
"Mountains O' 'Things"	
Actor/action:	The life I've always wanted, I'll never have, I'll be working, I'll be dreaming of: mountains o' things, big expensive car, a maid, sweet lazy life, champagne, caviar, a grave that's deep and wide enough, I hope, those whose sole misfortune.
Setting:	Life I've always wanted, working for somebody else, my grave.

Table 1. Continued

<i>"Why"</i>	
Setting:	Woman still not safe, in her home, amidst all these questions and contradictions.
(3) Society Must Answer to, or Pay for its Actions Against, the Oppressed	
<i>"Talkin' 'bout a Revolution"</i>	
Actor/action:	Revolution, poor people gonna rise up, take what's theirs, don't you know, you better run, tables are starting to turn.
<i>"Mountains O' Things"</i>	
Actor/action:	I hope you'll come and find me, you know who we are, renounce all those material things you gained by exploiting other human beings, consume more than you need, make you pauper.
Setting:	There's still time, this is the dream, have it all prearranged.
<i>"Why"</i>	
Actor/action:	Somebody's gonna have to answer, the time is coming soon, when the blind remove their blinders.
Setting:	Time is coming, amidst all these questions and contradictions, when the blind.
(4) Tracy Chapman is a Representative and Voice of the Oppressed	
<i>"Talkin' 'bout a Revolution"</i>	
Actor/action:	Don't you know, they're talkin, take what's theirs, you better run.
<i>"Fast Car"</i>	
Actor/action:	I want, we make a deal, together we can get somewhere, we'll make something, me myself I got nothing to prove, I got a plan, I been working, we won't have to drive too far, you and I can both get jobs, my old man, my mama went off, I said somebody's got to take care of him, I quit school, that's what I did, we can fly away, we gotta make a decision, we leave tonight, I had a feeling I belonged, I could be someone, I work in a market, I know things will get better, I'll get promoted, we'll move out of the shelter, I'd always hoped for better, I ain't got no plans, I ain't goin' nowhere.
Setting:	The convenience store, the border, the city, live with the bottle, school, live and die this way, market, the shelter, no plans.
<i>"Behind the Wall"</i>	
Actor/action:	I heard the screaming, chilled my soul, I prayed, I was dreaming, I saw the ambulance.
<i>"Mountains O' Things"</i>	
Actor/action:	The life I've always wanted, I guess I'll never have, I'll be working, I'll be dreaming of a life of ease, I [dream of]: drag my furs on the ground, a maid that I can tell, to bring me anything, I hope you'll come and find me, mostly I feel lonely, I'll be dreaming.
Setting:	Life I've always wanted, working for somebody else, my grave.

This land is their land
This land is not our land
From the plush apartments
To the Cadillac car land.

From the Wall Street office
To the Hollywood star land
This land is not for you and me.

Tracy Chapman creates much the same scenario in her contemporary music. Though the actor is usually different (rather than represent just youth, her voice represents the collective impoverished—young and old), the actions are the same. The efforts of the oppressed are still restricted by a powerful society, and rendered futile.

Rhetorically, this is most evident in "Fast Car" (Chapman, 1988). Here she portrays the actor as a victim of circumstances beyond her control:

See my old man's got a problem.
He live with the bottle, that's the way it is.
He say his body's too old for workin'.
I say his body's too young to live like this.
Well, mama went off and left him.
She wanted more from life than he could give.
I said somebody's got to take care of him.
So I quit school, and that's what I did.

The actions (live with the bottle, mama went off and left him, somebody's got to take care of him, I quit school) suggest restriction. Here the actor's attempt to better herself with schooling is halted. This stock scenario is repeated, in different settings and with different actors, throughout her music. In "Behind the Wall" (Chapman, 1988), a young woman's attempts to report domestic violence are repeatedly ignored by those who have the power to prevent it:

Last night I heard the screaming.
Loud voices behind the wall.
Another sleepless night for me;
It won't do no good to call the police.
Always come late, if they come at all.

(3) Society must eventually pay for its actions against the oppressed. One study of popular music in American culture suggests that for an artform [song] to promise true revolution, positive values must be proposed as replacements for what is being rejected (Pielke, 1986, p. 18). Here, the audience is promised that the oppressor will somehow be forced to make restitution. This shared fantasy serves to diminish the futility of restricted actions by insisting that the oppressors will eventually be called to answer for their crimes. Rhetorically, this belief is perpetuated as a motivation for the impoverished to continue fighting.

Coded actions from Chapman's "Why" (1988) illustrate this: somebody's gonna have to answer, the time is coming soon, when the blind remove

their blinders. Here, each phrase promises revolution by suggesting that justice will eventually prevail, thus urging the audience to continue its struggle. This theme is also evident in coded actions from Chapman's "Talkin' 'bout a Revolution" (1988): revolution, poor people gonna rise up, take what's theirs, you better run, tables are starting to turn.

In Sixties' folk music, as in 1990, audience support is essential for the success of the rhetorical message. In his research, Jeffrey Mondak (1988) determines that to be effective vehicles for political persuasion, protest songs should induce sympathetic reactions from listeners (p. 25). Just as the radical youth of the Sixties had to believe that times would change, the underprivileged in Tracy Chapman's vision must be offered the same promise.

(4) Tracy Chapman is representative and voice of the oppressed. To be perceived as the voice of a particular movement, the folk singer must also be perceived as one of its members. In the Sixties, Dylan and others emphasized their membership in the very generation they represented. They also remained accessible to their audience by performing simplistically; sometimes with solo guitar or a capella in small cafes and open-air festivals. And they associated with the movement by becoming involved in protests, demonstrations, and campaigns.

Tracy Chapman perpetuates this shared belief using much the same strategy. Of a recent performance, Sheila Rogers (1988) wrote, "Armed with only her acoustic guitar and dressed in faded jeans and a sleeveless black turtle-neck, she played a solo set as unadorned as her attire" (p. 38). Chapman has also been an active member of the Amnesty International Tour—a group of politically-charged musicians who banded together early in 1988 for a series of fund-raising concerts.

Within her music, Chapman also employs rhetorical strategies to suggest that she too is (or has been) one of the oppressed she sings so desperately about. The haunting "Fast Car" (1988) is sung entirely in the first person, creating the image of self-suffering:

You got a fast car
And I got a plan to get us out of here.
I been working at the convenience store.
Managed to save just a little bit of money.
We won't have to drive too far
Just 'cross the border and into the city.
You and I can both get jobs
And finally see what it means to be living.

Similarly, in the song "Mountains O' Things" (Chapman, 1988), she laments (again, in the first person) all of the material possessions she'll never attain:

The life I've always wanted,
I guess I'll never have.
I'll be working for somebody else,
Until I'm in my grave.
I'll be dreaming of a life of ease,
And mountains,
Oh, mountains o' things.

Rhetorically, Chapman seeks to establish credibility as a spokesperson of the underprivileged by portraying herself as a member of that class. Although biographical information supports this assumption, for Tracy Chapman it is ultimately her music that solidifies the image.

Identifying and Assessing the Rhetorical Vision

One of the more prevalent themes in the music of the 1960s was its ability to define the views of a generation. Folk music became a metaphor for the frustrations and anxieties of the self-proclaimed restricted youth. Dylan and others drew from their own experiences to sing about youth as a unified entity; determined to rise up against their oppressors. Youth, in turn, found a voice. Though this rhetorical vision dissipated somewhat in the Seventies and early Eighties, the lack of social issues in popular music was noticeable. Yet as social consciousness attempts a comeback, the need for a return to the simpler, gentler anthems of the folk singer grows stronger.

The shared fantasies rooted in the music of Tracy Chapman work to extend this rhetorical vision—of the folk-artist as the voice of consciousness—into the Nineties. Indeed, the success of the early folk-rock musicians established certain criteria for future members of this genre: in order for an artist to be a successful representative, he or she must demonstrate unification of the rhetorical audience, establish membership within the group being represented, and ultimately determine that hope does exist in the face of futility. The rhetorical strategies employed by Tracy Chapman seek to answer these requirements by solidifying her image as one of the poor, working class who sings of their plight in the hope of stemming the tide.

Has Chapman found a rhetorical audience? Indeed, Bormann (1972) indicates that the critic's ultimate task in fantasy-theme criticism is to find evidence that group members have shared fantasies and a rhetorical vision. Foss (1989) elaborates:

If the critic is observing or listening to group members talk, the chaining out or sharing of fantasy themes is evident when a dramatizing message is picked up and elaborated on by others, who add new dramatizations to the original comment (p. 294).

Her critics are one indication that the answer is yes. Anthony DeCurtis (1988) proclaims that "in many ways, Chapman—whose songs focus on social issues such as the dehumanizing effects of inner-city life, the violence of racism and plight of battered women—is a classic folk singer" (p. 45). Gundersen (1989) adds "do we really want anything more than gripping vocals, evocative melodies and stinging truths from the neo-folk revival's outrider?" (p. 4D). Still another adds, "armed with only her voice, her guitar and her conscience, Tracy Chapman has helped make protest music fashionable again" (Stengel, 1990, p. 70).

Evidence of a shared rhetorical vision is also evident in her consumer audience. Her fans include black, white, affluent, and poor youth who embrace her message, longing for a change. Says one ardent admirer, "She says a lot of important things. Yeah, she's angry. But not in a violent way. So am I" (Beers, 1988, p. 26). Though sales of her album indicate open arms as well, it is Chapman's stage persona that seems to ultimately reach her audience.

"At an outdoor concert for the homeless in Washington [last] fall, she stood atop a six-story platform facing 40,000 people. When she played the first few bars of *Fast Car*, the fidgety audience grew quiet, as though she were singing a lullaby to a baby" (Stengel, 1990, p. 72). At another recent concert, Chapman prodded the audience, saying, "Even if you don't have the answers but you start asking questions and thinking about things, you get a little closer to finding solutions" (Rogers, 1988, p. 39).

The simplicity and honesty of her message transcends the vinyl recording to her on-stage personality, just as the rhetorical vision of the folk-rock artist is transcending the distance from the Sixties' youth movement to the Nineties' social movement.

Conclusion

Research in the area of pop music rhetoric is minimal, at best. Yet by neglecting this artform, researchers are ignoring a powerful rhetorical channel. Folk, rock, heavy metal, rap, and jazz styles spin the stories of youth—their anxieties, frustrations, fears, hopes, and loves. Within these lyrics lies the pulse of a changing, complex society, whose foundation is its youth. By analyzing the music of such artists as Madonna, Bon Jovi, Prince, Bob Seger, Run DMC, and Tracy Chapman, scholars may begin to unfurl the rhetoric of an up-and-coming generation; gaining a foothold on its meaning long before the rhetoric of youth becomes the rhetoric of the establishment.

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THE APPEAL OF THE TRAGIC RHYTHM: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AS A CASE STUDY

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Bruce Springsteen can be considered one of the most prominent and popular rock singers of the 1980s. He was voted "Artist of the Year" by the readers of *Rolling Stone* in 1984, 1985, and 1986 (DeCurtis, 1987). A similar poll placed five of his albums in the top 100 of the past 25 years (*Rolling Stone*, August 27, 1987). In addition, his single, "Dancing in the Dark," was awarded a grammy in 1984 for Best Pop Single. Certainly, Bruce Springsteen's music has received a good deal of positive recognition in recent years, and warrants analysis.

Part of Springsteen's appeal is that his music focuses on ordinary people and places. John Young (1986) suggests that people know what they're getting from Springsteen—"a believable guy singing rock'n'roll that could have been written about you and me" (p. 82). John Mendelssohn (1986) elaborates, "He made it ok to be utterly down to earth" (p. 8). Springsteen explains his realistic approach by saying:

The thing about a good song is its evocative power. What does it evoke in the listener? . . . I like the girls and cars idea . . . if you look beneath the immediate surface, it's usually right there . . . and you get the feel of life. Just some of the grit and some of the beauty (in *Flippo*, p. 56).

Springsteen's music has indeed focused on both the beauty and grit of life. Along with the many heart-warming love stories in his repertoire, Springsteen often sings about ordinary people who have been tragically overcome by the prevalent social problems in our culture. Despite his tendency to emphasize life's more tragic moments, Springsteen persisted as one of the most popular performers of the 1980s.

This study focuses on Springsteen's tragic message. Specifically, this study seeks to identify and analyze those aspects of Springsteen's tragic songs which make them appealing to his listeners. As a means of analysis, these authors have chosen to utilize Susanne Langer's theory of aesthetic symbolism. Specifically, her notion of the "tragic hero" will be described and applied to his music in an effort to determine how he successfully communicates these negative images of life. Further, upon determining the meaning in the lyrics based on this tragic hero theme, the musical score of these numbers will be analyzed by extending her theory based on the intensity and release notion of human living. In so doing, one will be able to determine whether the musical score enhances or contradicts the lyrical message in the songs, and what effect such agreement or contradiction has on the overall message.

No previous studies have focused on Springsteen's tragic music. Most of

the extensive works written about Springsteen and his music consist of either tributes to him (Marsh, 1979, 1987) or general reviews of his music and popularity (Lyons & Lewis, 1981). The applications of Susanne Langer's theory of aesthetic symbolism to rhetoric has been explored in two recent studies (Rod, 1986; Sellnow & Sellnow, in press). Her specific notion of the tragic hero, however, has not received notable attention.

Method

Langer's theory of aesthetic symbolism has been chosen for this analysis for a number of reasons. Initially, her theory mixes music and lyrics. Thus, her work is ideal for conducting a complete analysis of Springsteen's music and is superior to approaches based solely on rhetoric or music theory. Moreover, unlike a rhetorical critic or a music theorist, Langer is an aesthetic philosopher. She touches, then, on a different realm of human understanding, that of human feeling. Music is important, according to Langer, in that it is patterned sound which symbolizes human feeling. For Langer, music does more than stimulate feeling—it is an expression of feeling. As she purports:

The tonal structures we call "music" bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure, measured sound and silence. Music is the tonal analogue of human life (Langer, 1953, p. 27).

These authors have chosen Langer's theory of aesthetic symbolism, then, because she analyzes music as it is a representation of—a symbol system used for—understanding human feeling.

Drama

Langer (1982) characterizes humankind as symbol-making, -using, -responding beings who transform experience through symbols. She argues that human beings, by their very nature, need to symbolize in order to comprehend and understand various components of life. Drama serves to symbolize the struggle of people against society. Langer (1953) sees drama as a product of history and morality. She describes drama as an artist's attempt to communicate a semblance of history through a rhythmic structure. The moral content of this rhythmic structure is thematic. The two themes available to the artist are comedy and tragedy. Hence, a drama can be composed in either a comic rhythm or tragic rhythm (p. 326).

Comic Rhythm

Langer compares the comic rhythm to the biological drive of all living organisms to maintain a state of balance. This balance can be seen in our attempts to "maintain a particular temperature, to repeat particular functions, and to develop along particular lines" (p. 328). When this balance is

disturbed, the organism "struggles to retrieve its original dynamic form by overcoming and removing the obstacle, or if this proves impossible, it develops a slight variation of its typical form and activity and carries on life with a new balance of functions" (p. 328). Langer argues further that this impulse to survive may extend beyond defense and accommodation to include seizing opportunities to improve one's life.

The comic rhythm, as seen by Langer, is a symbolic representation of the endurance and persistence people display when meeting adversity. She summarizes the comic form by describing its inherent view of destiny:

Destiny in the guise of Fortune is the fabric of comedy; it is developed by comic action, which is the upset and recovery of the protagonist's equilibrium, his contest with the world and his triumph by wit, luck, personal power, or even humorous, or ironical, or philosophical acceptance of mischance (p. 331).

Langer succinctly captures the essence of the comic spirit when she labels it, "a brainy opportunism in face of an essentially dreadful universe" (p. 331).

Tragic Rhythm

Langer returns to her biological analogy to describe the tragic rhythm. Despite the drive of higher level organisms to sustain their existence, Langer describes all such organisms as engaged in a deathward advance. She states, "Youth, maturity, and age are not merely states in which a creature may happen to be, but are stages through which persons must pass. Life is a voyage, and at the end of it is death" (p. 332).

Langer claims that the acceptance of mortality motivates people to attain the maximum benefits of life. She argues that the pursuit of such an ideal existence leads people to view their lives as careers wrought with challenges as they fulfill their individual destinies. Langer notes, "This career of the individual is variously conceived as a 'calling,' the attainment of an ideal, the soul's pilgrimage, 'life's ordeal,' or self-realization" (p. 333). For Langer, the most important element of the career concept is self-realization. Self-realization, "contains the notion of a limited potential personality given at birth" (p. 333). Langer contrasts this view with the comic rhythm:

... tragic Destiny is what the man brings, and the world will demand of him. . . . What he brings is his potentiality: his mental, moral and physical powers, his powers to act and suffer. . . . His human nature is his fate. Destiny conceived as Fate is, therefore, not capricious, like Fortune, but is pre-determined. Outward events are the occasions for its realization (p. 352).

In the tragic rhythm, then, this self-realization fosters the view that destiny is predetermined fate.

The Pattern of the Tragic Hero. In a tragic drama, Langer claims the purpose of the protagonist and all characters is to display for the audience the fulfillment of the protagonist's fate. This fate possesses a mysterious predictability. As protagonists mature, they move toward their predetermined fates, unable to avoid ultimate defeat. Langer explains, "Tragic drama is so designed that the protagonist grows mentally, emotionally, or morally, by the demand of the action, which he himself initiated, to the complete exhaustion of his powers, the limit of his possible development" (p. 357). Fate is realized when

protagonists reach the limit of their mental and emotional development. At this point, Protagonists are overcome with a sense of "hopelessness that is the equivalent of death, 'death of the soul,' that ends the career" (p. 358).

The Appeal of the Tragic Hero. Langer claims that for tragic heroes to be appealing to their audiences, they must be imperfect, yet fundamentally good. She writes, "He [the tragic hero] must be imperfect to break the moral law, but fundamentally good (i.e., striving for perfection) in order to achieve his moral salvation in sacrifice, renunciation, death" (p. 358). The imperfection of tragic heroes represents the limitations of their powers. This limitation is not introduced as a moral lesson for the audience. Langer insists that drama is utterly different from life. She explains:

The moral failure in drama is not a normal incident, something to be lived down, presumably neither the doer's first transgression nor his last; the act that constitutes the protagonist's tragic error or guilt is the high-water mark of his life, and now the tide recedes. His 'imperfection' is an artistic element: that is why a single flaw will do (p. 361).

In short, if tragic heroes are to be appealing to audiences, they must strive for perfection, and endure their demise without forcing a blatant moral lesson on their audiences.

A final element of audience appeal associated with the tragic rhythm concerns what Langer terms the element of show. She describes the element of show as "a means of heightening the atmosphere, whether of gaiety or terror or woe" (p. 364). This element of show can be generated through dance, music, lighting or whatever means of staging are available. Langer claims that, in the performance of tragedy, this element of show takes on a specialized and essential function: "Tragedy, which expresses the consciousness of life and death, must make life seem worth while, rich, beautiful, to make death awesome. The splendid exaggerations of the stage serve tragic feeling by heightening the lure of the world" (p. 364).

The Element of Show Portrayed in the Musical Score. To analyze the musical score using Langer's theory, one must capitalize on her notion of intensity and release as they symbolize human feeling. According to Langer (1953), music is important in that its rhythmic and melodic patterns represent or symbolize the patterns of intensity and release which are embodied in the forms of human feeling. For purposes of this study, five musical elements (rhythm, harmony, tonality, instrumentation, and melodic line) will be reviewed. These particular elements have been chosen because they are the primary elements which encompass a musical work (Ottman, 1983; Levy, 1983). These elements will be addressed in terms of whether they agree with, and thus heighten, the tragic drama portrayed in the lyrics; or whether they contradict the lyrical message.

In terms of rhythm, a fast driving rhythm would contradict the tragic message whereas a slow rhythm would heighten it. Rhythm may be defined as: "The organized flow of musical time, with patterns consisting of the lengths of time that pitches are held" (Levy, 1983, p. 444). Further, it is significant in that, of all musical aspects, it is the one that most readily engages our attention and draws an emotional response (p. 444).

Harmony may be defined as the pattern of chords (two or more notes sounded simultaneously) and intervals (the distance between the notes) in a

musical composition (Ammer, 1972, p. 146). These chords may be built on any of the seven scale steps (i.e., I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, or vii). A primary tonic-based harmony (one which returns often to the I chord), would agree with the tragic message since the tonic is the note/chord of resolution in music. A musical work which returns often to the tonic would lack a sense of building intensity. Contrarily, a frequently modulating harmonic structure would heighten intensity of feeling and contradict the tragic, resolved message.

Tonality may be defined as the system of tones and their intervallic relationship to the central key of a musical work (Benward, 1977, p. 41). For purposes of this study, tonality will be determined as either major or minor. A piece focused in a minor tonality would reinforce tragedy since it creates a greater sense of resolve, whereas a piece built in a major key would heighten intensity and contradict the tragic rhythm.

Instrumentation may be defined as, "The assignment of specific instruments for playing the various parts of a musical composition" (Ammer, 1972, p. 161). A piece which uses many instruments in a variety of ways would heighten intensity and, thus, disagree with the tragic message. A musical composition which utilizes only a few instruments in a limited number of ways would strengthen Langer's notion of resolve and, therefore, complement the tragic theme.

Finally, melody may be defined as a succession of organized tones (Benward, 1977, p. 388). A conjunct melodic line (one which moves primarily by steps) would reinforce the tragic rhythm, whereas a disjunct melodic line (one which utilizes a great deal of skips over steps) would heighten intensity and contradict the tragic rhythm.

By extending Langer's theory to include these major musical elements, one can ascertain why and how Springsteen may have used the musical score to heighten his tragic message of self-realization, of Fate. According to Langer's theory of intensity and release, a tragic story would be heightened through the utilization of musical elements which stress resolution rather than intensity. By analyzing the musical score as it reinforces or contradicts the message in the lyrics, one can begin to speculate as to why Springsteen has been successful or unsuccessful in communicating his tragic messages.

Springsteen's Use of Tragic Rhythm

This study seeks to analyze those songs recorded in a studio and sold by Springsteen from 1980 to 1990 which possess a tragic rhythm. This time period was selected because it marks the beginning of Springsteen's greatest popularity. The tragic songs of each album are dissected according to Langer's criteria associated with the tragic pattern and the appeal of the tragic rhythm. The songs are also compared and contrasted with each other in an effort to identify consistent messages in Springsteen's use of the tragic rhythm.

Sample

Each of Springsteen's albums from the 1980s was reviewed to identify those songs with a tragic rhythm. In order to meet this criteria, a song had to communicate a complete sense of hopelessness for the protagonist. If the

Table 1. Springsteen Songs of the 1980s Using a Tragic Rhythm

Song Title	Album Title
"Cautious Man"	Tunnel of Love
"One Step Up"	Tunnel of Love
"Born in the USA"	Born in the USA
"Downbound Train"	Born in the USA
"Nebraska"	Nebraska
"Johnny 99"	Nebraska
"The River"	The River
"Point Blank"	The River
"Stolen Car"	The River

protagonist of the song communicated any sense of optimism or confidence in his/her future, the song was not considered to be tragic. As is indicated in Table 1, each of Springsteen's albums from the 1980s contained at least one tragic song.

The River

The River, released in 1981, was Springsteen's first album of the 1980s. *The River* marks the first of Springsteen's records to contain songs focused on marriage. Two of the three tragic songs on the album, "The River" and "Stolen Car," focus on troubled marriages. The third tragic song, "Point Blank," describes the downfall of a young woman who leaves her lover for a life of prostitution.

In "The River," Springsteen portrays a teen-age boy who frequents a local river with his lover. When his lover becomes pregnant, the two are married in a courthouse with, "no walk down the aisle, no flowers, no weddin' dress." The boy matures and works hard, but as he explains, "lately there ain't been much work on account of the economy." A troubled marriage and hopeless future leave the protagonist reflecting on his teen-age memories: "Now them memories come back to haunt me. They haunt me like a curse. Is a dream alive if it don't come true or is it somethin' worse that sends me down to the river . . . though I know the river is dry." Springsteen leaves his character at the close of the song having realized his ultimate fate. He is locked into a station in life from which he cannot escape. Musically, all of the elements agree with the tragic rhythm except tonality. Although the song does utilize a minor tonality, it tends to shift from major to minor and back again throughout the song.

In "Stolen Car," Springsteen portrays a man who has become disenchanted with his marriage. He explains, "We got married and swore we'd never part, but little by little, we drifted from each other's hearts." His wife shares his disillusionment when she tells him that reading the love letters he had written to her before their marriage had, "made her feel one hundred years old." In an ultimate gesture of self-realization, the man steals a car and drives through town, hoping to be arrested. The man says, "I ride by night and I travel in fear that in this darkness, I will disappear." Similar to "The River," all musical elements serve to heighten the tragic rhythm except tonality. The song is based in a major key.

"Point Blank" describes the decay of a young woman who leaves her home town lover for the lure of the city. The song features the jilted lover reflecting on her demise. The woman's weakness is in her vulnerability to men who deceive her and manipulate her. The narrator vividly describes her fall when he states, "You didn't have to live that life. And I was gonna be your Romeo, you were gonna be my Juliet. These days, you don't wait on Romeos, you wait on that welfare check." The closing lines of the song leave the listener with no hope that the character will return to a better life: "did you forget how to love? Girl, did you forget how to fight? They must have shot you in the head. Cause point blank, bang bang, baby, you're dead." The ultimate fate of the woman is realized when she is helpless to escape from her troubled life. In "Point Blank," every musical element analyzed supports the tragic rhythm of the lyrical message.

Nebraska

Nebraska, released in 1982, is Springsteen's first solo project. Although many of the songs focus on troubling issues, only two, "Nebraska" and "Johnny 99" are composed in a tragic rhythm. Both songs focus on the lives of convicted criminals.

"Nebraska" tells the story of a young man and woman who kill 10 people on a drive from Lincoln, Nebraska to the badlands of Wyoming. The man offers no explanation for his violence. His only explanation is, "I can't say that I'm sorry for the things that we done. At least for a little while sir, me and her we had us some fun." The man is sentenced to die by electrocution. His final words leave the listener contemplating what forces in society could foster such violence, "They declared me unfit to live; said into that great void my soul'd be hurled. They wanted to know why I did what I did. Well sir, I guess there's just a meanness in this world." Springsteen portrays the man as a victim of society. The man realizes his fate when he is unable to resist the temptation toward violence which is a part of our world. Musically, Springsteen leaves no doubt to the Fate of his message. All musical elements employed agree with the tragic rhythm indicated in the lyrics.

"Johnny 99" is the story of an unemployed auto worker who, in a drunken rage, kills a night clerk. The killer, Johnny, offers the following explanation for his violence:

"Now judge I got debts no honest man could pay. The bank was holdin' my mortgage and they was takin' my house away. Now I aint sayin' that makes me an innocent man, but it was more'n all this that put that gun in my hand."

After receiving a sentence of 99 years in prison, Johnny reaches a self-realization of complete hopelessness. The song ends with Johnny saying, "Well your honor, I do believe I would be better off dead. And if you can take a man's life for the thoughts that's in his head . . . let 'em shave off my hair and put me on that execution line." In the tragic tradition, Johnny is driven by irresistible forces to commit a crime which leaves him hopeless. Musically, all elements support the tragic rhythm except one. The driving rhythm employed in this song tends to contradict the tragic nature of the lyrical message.

Born in the USA

Springsteen's *Born in the USA* album, released in 1984, contains two tragic songs. In the two songs, "Born in the USA" and "Downbound Train," the protagonists reach similar fates for drastically different reasons.

"Born in the USA" features a Vietnam veteran who is frustrated with both his government's involvement in the war and its unwillingness to aid returning veterans. The veteran describes the indifferent attitude of society and government as he attempts to find a job, "Come back home to the refinery. Hiring man says 'son if it was up to me.' Went down to see my V. A. man. He said 'son don't you understand?'" The song closes with the hopeless message of the veteran: "Down by the shadows of the penitentiary, out by the gas fires of the refinery, I'm ten years burnin' down the road. Nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go. Born in the USA." In contrast to the aforementioned tragic songs, most of the musical elements used in this song tend to contradict the lyrical message. The song uses a driving rhythm, major tonality, broad instrumentation, and disjunct melodic line.

In "Downbound Train," Springsteen tells the story of a man whose world crumbles after losing his wife and his job. The man explains, "I had a job, I had a girl. I had something going Mister in this world. I got laid off down at the lumber yard. Our love went bad, times got hard." The man is unable to recover from the loss of his wife. His life is consumed by the pain of her loss. The song ends with the man in a hopeless state: "Now I swing a sledge hammer on a railroad gang, knockin down them cross ties; working in the rain. Now don't it feel like you're a rider on a downbound train." The end of his marriage has left the man powerless to continue a meaningful existence. The song tends to split in its use of musical elements. The minor tonality, conjunct melodic line and tonic-based harmony serve to reinforce the tragic message, however, the driving rhythm and broad instrumentation tend to disagree with the message.

Tunnel of Love

On the *Tunnel of Love* album, released in 1987, every song focuses on romantic relationships. Two songs, "Cautious Man" and "One Step Up," are tragic.

"Cautious Man," like "Stolen Car," focuses on a man who is troubled by the waning love he feels for his wife. The protagonist of "Cautious Man" is dedicated to his marriage. He is described as working "hard to fill their lives with happy days and loving nights." The man becomes exhausted with the efforts of maintaining his marital commitment. Springsteen describes the man's fear as being rooted in his own weakness: "Alone on his knees in the darkness for steadiness he'd pray. For he knew in a restless heart the seed of betrayal lay." As the song ends, the man has accepted that he cannot free himself from feelings that plague him: "Billy felt a coldness rise up inside him that he couldn't name. Just as the words tattooed 'cross his knuckles he knew would always remain." All musical elements tend to reinforce, and thus heighten, the tragic message except tonality. The piece uses a major key.

"One Step Up" describes a marriage which has reached the level of hope-

Table 2. Sources of Adversity Identified in Springsteen's Tragic Songs

Song Title	Sources of Adversity
"Cautious Man"	marriage
"One Step Up"	marriage
"Born in the USA"	unemployment, Vietnam War
"Downbound Train"	marriage, unemployment
"Nebraska"	social violence
"Johnny 99"	unemployment, social violence
"The River"	marriage, unemployment
"Point Blank"	prostitution
"Stolen Car"	marriage

lessness. The marriage continues despite ongoing conflict. The husband explains, "We've given each other some hard lessons lately, but we ain't learnin'." We're the same sad story, that's a fact." The man's self-realization of his fate reaches beyond marriage when he states, "When I look at myself I don't see the man I wanted to be. Somewhere along the line I slipped off track." The man has met his fate. His efforts to improve his life serve only to leave him more troubled than when he began. All musical elements tend to reinforce the tragic message of the lyrics. The rhythm, however, tends to be somewhat driving, and, thus, tends to disagree with the lyrical message.

Discussion

Springsteen is credited with being the voice of the common man. True to this description, his tragic songs focus on matters with which most Americans can identify. As can be seen in Table 2, the tragic patterns of his heroes are based upon such common themes as marital difficulty, prostitution, unemployment, and criminal violence.

Table 2 reveals that marriage is the most common element in Springsteen's tragic songs. In the five songs where marriage is emphasized, only the character from "One Step Up" displays infidelity. The other characters struggle to cope with the inadequacies of their marriage. No blame is assigned to either spouse in these songs. Instead, the characters appear to be helplessly advancing toward a predetermined and hopeless fate.

Unemployment is the second most common source of adversity in Springsteen's tragic songs. Each of the unemployed characters are dedicated workers who, through no fault of their own, have been unable to keep or regain their jobs. The stress of unemployment contributes to Springsteen's characters becoming involved with social violence, imprisonment, and troubled marriages. Unemployment becomes a prominent factor contributing to the exhaustion of the characters.

Three songs address social violence. "Nebraska" and "Johnny 99" feature characters who are driven to murder. Both killers blame the cruel nature of the world for their acts. "Point Blank" describes a woman who is helpless against the lure of villainous culprits. Each of these characters display a weakness which makes them unable to resist the forces of evil in our society.

As indicated in Table 2, "Born in the USA" identifies the Vietnam War as a source of adversity for its protagonist. In this case, Springsteen establishes

Table 3. Musical Elements as They Agree With or Contradict Tragic Message

Song Title	Agreement	Contradiction
"Cautious Man"	Slow Rhythm Tonic-Based Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	Major Tonality
"One Step Up"	Minor Tonality Tonic-Based Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	Driving Rhythm
"Born in the USA"	Tonic-Based	Major Tonality Driving Rhythm Broad Instrum. Disjunct Melody
"Downbound Train"	Minor Tonality Tonic-Based Conjunct Melody	Driving Rhythm Broad Instrum.
"Nebraska"	Slow Rhythm Tonic-Based Minor Tonality Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	
"Johnny 99"	Tonic-Based Minor Tonality Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	Driving Rhythm
"The River"	Slow Rhythm Tonic-Based Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	Major/Minor
"Point Blank"	Slow Rhythm Minor Tonality Tonic-Based Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	
"Stolen Car"	Tonic-Based Slow Rhythm Stark Instrum. Conjunct Melody	Major Tonality

the indifferent attitude of society toward veterans as the challenge against the protagonist. This indifference becomes a force the protagonist cannot overcome.

In terms of the musical score, as is indicated in Table 3, most of the songs' musical elements tend to agree with, and heighten, impact of the lyrical message. The slow rhythms, minor tonality, tonic-based harmony, stark instrumentation, and conjunct melodic lines serve to add support to the notion of self-realization and predetermined, hopeless fate. Only two songs agreed with the tragic rhythm in every musical category. However, of the remaining seven, five numbers strayed from the tragic idea with only one musical element. It seems that to contradict the message in one area does not disrupt or alter the message. The two songs from the *Born in the USA* album, however,

tended to disagree with the lyrical message in more than one musical category. As such, these songs could dissuade the listener from the intended interpretation of the song. In fact, "Born in the USA" was misconstrued by much of the public to be conveying an idea of "I'm proud to be an American." Certainly, upon analyzing the lyrical content, this was clearly not the intended message.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that Springsteen's tragic songs follow the pattern of tragic rhythm established by Langer. All of Springsteen's tragic heroes identified in this study meet with outward challenges which lead them to a self-realization of their predetermined fate. His characters meet with common social problems which, in the end, exhaust their ability or willingness to endure. The characters arrive at what Langer describes as a death of the soul. Despite the depressing nature of their lives, these characters remain appealing to listeners.

One appeal of Springsteen's character is that they reflect what Langer calls a semblance of history. All of the challenges Springsteen's characters face are rooted in contemporary social issues. Springsteen takes topics such as troubled relationships and unemployment and portrays them as ultimate challenges in the careers of his tragic heroes. His tragic songs become a commentary on society. Thus, part of his appeal is in the fact that he addresses social issues which are commonplace for many Americans.

Though the issues in Springsteen's song are real, the reactions of his characters to them are not. Springsteen's listeners are given distance from his characters by the exaggerated responses of the characters to the issues they face. Langer argues that this distance is necessary to maintain audience interest. Without this distance, tragic heroes can be seen as forcing a moral lesson upon their audiences. Springsteen offers no moral lessons in his tragic songs. His characters do not make poor choices. Rather, they are forced by outward events to meet with a predetermined fate. In short, any sense of realism in Springsteen's tragic songs is based, not upon the characters, but upon the issues they face.

The characters in Springsteen's songs are appealing. With the exception of one, the man in "Nebraska," all of his characters are seen as basically good. All of these characters display a desire to succeed. They are hard workers who seek to realize the American dream. Each of them is fraught with a single weakness which makes them vulnerable to the typical challenges of society. These characters are basically likeable. Their demise comes through a sense of helplessness to alter a predetermined fate.

Musically, we have determined that most of his tragic songs tend to agree with the tragic message revealed in the lyrics. As Table 3 indicates, at most, one of the five musical elements of a given number may disagree with the lyrical message. One can conclude that when one element contradicts the message, the meaning does not seem to be altered. However, when the majority of the musical elements employed are in contrast to the tragic rhythm of the message, the chances for audience misinterpretation are enhanced. It seems, then, that one should be careful to utilize a majority of

complimentary musical elements if s/he wants to be certain of an appropriate audience reaction.

Foremost, this study suggests that Langer's explanation of the tragic rhythm is helpful in identifying and explaining the appealing aspects of a work which, because of its disheartening message, may initially appear to be unappealing or even repellent. Langer offers a unique explanation of how drama and music mix to generate a feeling of attraction toward a tragic subject. Langer's concept of the tragic rhythm can serve as a means for analyzing musical sullen works from all genres.

Springsteen's tragic songs contributed to his tremendous popularity in the 1980s. By applying Langer's notion of the tragic rhythm to Springsteen's music, we are better able to understand why his tragic music has been so well-received. Other artists who wish to dramatize a social issue in the form of tragedy would do well to follow Springsteen's example.

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J. C. MELLENCAMP AND THE DILEMMA OF CONTEMPORARY PROTEST ROCK

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We talk so abstractly about poetry because all of us are usually bad poets.
—Nietzsche

For individuals born after Alan Freed and Elvis Presley, a paraphrasing of Nietzsche might read, “we talk so abstractly about rock music because all of us are usually bad electric guitar players.” Rock music has so much become a defining characteristic of Western youth culture, and it so stubbornly resists intellectualization, that the critic who also happens to be a fan of the music finds it difficult to attain the detachment necessary to offer true insight. That constraint appears not to have prevented academics from studying the effects of music (the number of studies are too many to mention here; see Lull, 1987, various issues of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, and Matlon’s *Index To Journals In Speech Communication* for summary articles and further references), yet students of rhetoric still tend to feel more at home in the world of political speaking, of social movements, and of the history of rhetoric.

In his *Modern Dogma And The Rhetoric Of Assent* (1974), Wayne Booth argues that Western academia’s persistent belief that art does not “argue” like other forms of communication has led to the practice of labeling art works as sheerly “emotional” and not designed to change minds. Booth’s personal experience with literary works mirrors the experience most people have had with music:

But if I consult my experience instead of modernist abstractions about what art should or should not do, I find myself with a problem: art works change me. Sometimes they seem to be trying to change me and they fail. Sometimes they appear indifferent to what happens to me, but produce great changes anyway. Sometimes, it is true, they produce no discernible change; the more I read, the fewer major changes are produced by any one book. But I can remember—and find that everyone I ask about it can remember—what seem in retrospect epochal transformations. . . . In short, by the age of twenty my opinions and emotions very largely a product—as I know they must still be—of the art I had encountered. And I suspect that most of you could say the same (165–166).

Addressing music, Booth further argues that although the words of a song may be “feeble,” when they “. . . come to us through the music, a new kind of evidence is added.” (174). Booth suggests that modern reluctance to accept the rhetorical force behind art works may result from a fear of censorship—but suggests also that this is all the more reason to educate people on how art *does* offer reasons that need to be heard so each individual can decide whether or not to assent to those reasons.

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Historically, protest music has been explicit in its attempt to change minds. When part of social movements, protest songs have been found to perform five general functions: transforming perceptions of history, transforming perceptions of society, prescribing courses of action, mobilization, and sustaining the movement (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1984: 140–156). Today a singer with a social conscience has exposure that Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and others could never have dreamed of in their early careers. Yet that exposure, paradoxically, may function to minimize the artist's capacity for changing minds. In the 1980s, rock protest was extraordinarily successful in raising money for various causes (e.g., U.S.A. for Africa, Live Aid, Farm Aid, Amnesty International Tours), but its impact on public consciousness is more difficult to discern.

This paper has several purposes. First, it will establish that the power of the protest rock star has historically rested on his or her "outsider" status. Second, John Cougar Mellencamp will be identified as a representative example of contemporary protest rock. It will be argued that the traditionalist nature of Mellencamp's lyrics, combined with the new emphasis on visual exposure over aural (i.e., music television vs. radio), effectively strips the protester of his or her "outsider" status. The paper will close with an assessment of the future of protest music in America.

Rock and Roll Artist as "Outsider"

While rock and roll artists certainly enter the public discourse (sometimes with more than their art; John Mellencamp has testified before the Congress on the issue of farm debt. He represents but one of numerous musicians who have gotten involved in a similar way), they do so in a way most unlike politicians, business leaders, or journalists. Some might argue that the discourse of the latter groups is truly rhetorical because it *responds* to situations and is expected to change minds. Rock musicians, on the other hand, do not respond to situations as much as they *intrude* on them. After the 1970 Kent State tragedy, the Nixon administration and the academic community had to respond. To ignore the situation may have resulted in more violence, increased protest against the Vietnam War, and stepped up hostility between youthful demonstrators and police. In that these results happened even after the response, one could argue Bitzerian fashion that based on the elements of the situation, the responses were inappropriate (Bitzer, 1968).

The rock group Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young (CSNY) chose also to address the Kent State affair in their song "Ohio":

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming
We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in Ohio

Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are cutting us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her and
found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know

Did CSNY have to address the tragedy? Not really, even though their appearance at Woodstock solidified their reputation as youth spokesmen. As artists, the rock and roll group has much greater freedom of expression than the speaker or essayist (Bloodworth, 1975). CSNY could have ignored the situation or attacked the responsible parties in a much more radical way. In Bitzerian terms, the exigence and constraints facing the rock group are much different than those facing the politician. One choosing to enter a rhetorical situation, as opposed to one required to face that same situation, faces a different set of constraints. Specifically, s/he must demonstrate that as an "outsider" to the situation, s/he is justified in addressing what goes on in the "inside."

For young people, the rock star's "outsider" status has always been a major source of his or her rhetorical power. An outsider is not contaminated by the evils "inside" society (Ong, 1962). What makes their outsider status even more powerful is that they often show how they were *once* on the inside, but have now escaped and can look in at the madness. The record companies, especially since Bob Dylan made the outsider a fixture in popular music, historically found the outsider to be a most commercially rewarding commodity. For the 15–30 year old age group, these artists were the antithesis of the stale, uptight environment of the home, the political system, and the business world. When the rock and roller intruded on a situation, it filled the youth with satisfaction because, like him or herself, the rocker had not been corrupted by the system. Although the youth knew that someday s/he will have to enter the system, s/he found solace in the fact that there was someone out there who, like him or herself, knew what was *really* going on. While the rock star could always be identified as an outsider solely through appearance (hair, clothing, tattoos, and so on), the *song lyrics* could also be counted on to express something rebellious and anti-establishment. A young rock and roll fan was a threat because she not only looked rebellious, but was getting "those ideas" from "that music." If nothing else, rock music was always there to challenge the status quo.

Rock and roll will never totally lose its irreverent status, but the late 1970s and the entire decade of the 80s have witnessed some interesting trends in which the "music of rebellion" has shown how it can just as powerfully be the "music of the status quo." At the height of its irreverence, in 1969 and the Woodstock Festival, rock music lyrically and visually urged a rejection of the system. The music, in general, urged a set of values that clashed with the status quo—questioning family attachment, urging free love and drug use for consciousness raising purposes, questioning educational procedures, and so on. The thought that Budweiser, or a political candidate, would use rock music as a jingle, in as great numbers as this is done today, would have been anathema at the height of rock's irreverence.

But to paraphrase Dylan, the times they have a-changed. Virtually gone now is the threat of censorship of political messages. Rock and roll is now troublesome primarily to lyric censor groups and fundamentalist Christians, who are concerned more with sex, satanism, and violence than political messages (Denisoff, 1986), and whose attention paradoxically helps rock regain its anti-establishment status. A fan of late sixties protest rock would like to think that the acceptance of rock music by politicians and big business

signifies some sort of breakthrough; that the power structure was ultimately reformed and can now accept the anti-establishment posture of rock music and even adopt some of its values. But the opposite conclusion is also possible: perhaps it was not the power structure that was reformed as much as were the musicians themselves. Perhaps contemporary protest rockers are *themselves* establishment. A young person whose exposure to a conscientious rock song is through music television or commercial radio is exposed almost immediately with a flood of advertisements from the same medium. It is difficult to be an "outsider" when the media that carry the outside message are themselves glorifications of the "inside." True, rock music has always been communicated primarily through commercial media, but the lyrics could always be counted on to express something anti-establishment. John Cougar Mellencamp, though *visually* as much a rebel as any rock star of the past or present, lyrically upholds a set of values that do not at all conflict with traditional Americana, in fact they promote and reinforce those values. Moreover, his visual image is quickly marginalized when broadcast over a medium (Music Television) that broadcasts thousands of images per day.

John Cougar Mellencamp: Social Critic

John Mellencamp was born on October 7, 1951, in Seymour, Indiana. In the 1970s, he took on the name "Cougar" as part of a record company stunt urged by his manager, who hoped to turn Mellencamp into the "David Bowie of the American midwest." His first four albums were traditional rock oriented efforts, with guitars, bass and drums accompanying lyrics about relationships, having fun, and other standard themes. The image was one of the young American brat who was "saved" by rock and roll, a popular image since Chuck Berry's immortalization of "Johnny B. Goode" in the 50s.

Since the 1960s, it has been common for rock musicians to develop, upon attaining popularity, a social consciousness that marks their recordings and changes their image in the process. The Beatles, after years of songs about holding hands and he loves her, she loves him, by the late 60s were singing about revolution, piggies, and peace. The same could be said for numerous artists over the last three decades. So accepted has the social protest role of the rock star become that we now witness bands and individual artists (e.g., The Clash, Tracy Chapman) who *begin* their careers as social consciousness raisers. Political music has a long history in the West, and especially in the United States (Dunaway, 1987), but it was usually part of a readily identifiably movement and sometimes subjected to censorship because of its protest themes. Thus, while Bob Dylan also began his career as a social consciousness raiser, he arrived at a time when the Civil Rights movement could quickly claim him as one of theirs, and establishment resistance to his music remained high.

Unlike Dylan, Mellencamp has evolved into his social critic stage. Four recent albums ("American Fool," "Uh-Huh," "Scarecrow," and "The Lonesome Jubilee") have been described as "grass roots social commentary" (White, 1987). His latest, "Big Daddy" is in the same grass roots category. "Scarecrow" and "The Lonesome Jubilee," the two that will be focused on here, deal with Mellencamp's perception of the general lowering of regard

for the average American in society. Mellencamp is concerned with the inability of decent families to attain the American Dream, with a system that locks them out of its rewards. These themes are developed in songs about the farm crisis ("Rain on the Scarecrow"), the climate of injustice ("The Face of the Nation," "Down and Out in Paradise," "We Are The People"), unemployment and its consequences ("Empty Hands," "Hard Times For an Honest Man," and apathy ("You've Got to Stand for Somethin'").

The attitude expressed by Mellencamp, in both his records and statements to the press, is one of supreme reverence for traditional American values, for the "civil religion" of Democracy, together with a high regard for family, the elder generation, and the small town way of living. In his 1986 *Rolling Stone* interview, Mellencamp points out the traditional roots of his political positions:

My politics are pretty much what they taught us in fifth grade history, the old values, the very nuggets of this society. When a guy comes on my TV and tells me he's going to do something for me if I vote for him, he better fucking do it. Because if he doesn't, he's a liar and a manipulator (32).

In a 1987 interview, Mellencamp explains the influence of family on his songwriting:

Let's face it, you are your parents, whether any of us like it or not. I believe the personal history I address on "Scarecrow" and "The Lonesome Jubilee" is the same. I think it's tragic when families don't grow up, when they don't get past adolescence (White 91).

The overriding theme in Mellencamp's last three albums is one of families struggling to attain the American Dream. He does not question the validity of such a thing as the American Dream, he is instead angry that not all Americans are able to attain it.

Mellencamp's value system and articulation of American problems that get in the way of everyone enjoying those values, is very reminiscent of the protest novels of the 1920s and 30s, especially Steinbeck's *Grapes Of Wrath*, in which good families are driven away from the American Dream. In his classic study of *The American Mind*, Commager's (1950) comments about *Grapes of Wrath* could easily be said about Mellencamp's last two albums:

Grapes Of Wrath painted a hideous picture of cruelty and want, but it preached faith, hope, and charity. It portrayed a society so confused that it placed the protection of property before the preservation of human values, but it unblushingly proclaimed the existence and asserted the priorities of those values, and implied that if men could only be brought to understand them, they would not only survive but triumph . . . In its sentimentalism, its moral fervor, its air of challenge and defiance, its undismayed confidence in the integrity of the human spirit, *Grapes Of Wrath* goes back to the morality of an earlier day (273).

And so does Mellencamp go back to the morality of another day. In "Rain on the Scarecrow," he laments the tragedy of the farm crisis in terms of its effects on family. The song is narrated by a father who must tell his son of the destruction of the family farm:

Scarecrow on a wooden cross/Blackbird in the barn
Four hundred empty acres that used to be my farm
I grew up like my daddy did/My grandpa cleared this land
When I was five I walked the fence while grandpa held my hand

Rain on the scarecrow/Blood on the plow
This land fed a nation/This land made me proud
And son I'm just sorry there's no legacy for you now
Rain on the scarecrow/Blood on the plow . . .

In "Minutes to Memories," Mellencamp highlights the importance of respecting and listening to the older generation. The song is told from the point of view of a young man confused about his direction in life, who calls on the memory of a bus-ride conversation he had with an old man:

On a Greyhound thirty miles beyond Jamestown
He saw the sun set on the Tennessee line
He looked at the young man who was riding beside him
He said I'm old kind of worn out inside
I worked my whole life in the steel mills of Gary
And my father before me I helped build this land
Now I'm seventy-seven and with God as my witness
I earned every dollar that passed through my hands
My family and friends are the best things I've known
Through the eye of the needle I'll carry them home
Days turn to minutes
And minutes to memories
Life sweeps away the dreams
That we have planned
You are young and you are the future
So suck it up and tough it out
And be the best you can
The old man had a vision but it was hard for me to follow
I do things my way and I pay a high price
When I think back on the old man and the bus ride
Now that I'm older I can see he was right

Similar tunes are developed throughout both albums. Though Mellencamp has publicly announced his disfavor with former President Reagan (the song "Country Gentleman" from "Big Daddy" is an obvious put-down of Reagan) his message is similar in a certain sense. What makes it "Reagan rhetoric" is its sentimental, cyclic nature, the idea that America need not *strive toward* something as much as it need to *return to* something else. In "The Face of the Nation," Mellencamp sings:

So many lonely people
Damn those broken dreams
Oh yes it could be better
You can say that about anything
Some got it worse than me
Some got it worse than you
You see the people starvin' underneath the tree
And you wonder what happened to the golden rule
And the face of the nation
Keeps changin' and changin'
The face of the nation
I don't recognize it no more
The face of the nation
. . .

Likewise, in "Justice and Independence '85," Mellencamp hopes for a day when "Nation," the song of "Justice" and "Independence Day," will come back home.

Part of former President Reagan's success with the American public was his articulation of an America that once did exist, that "shining city on a hill" which had been set back by years of neglect of the traditional American values. To anyone who had read a sufficient amount of realistic accounts of American history, Reagan's call for a return to traditional values always sounded contrived and a bit foolish. A rock star fares little better with a similar theme. Much sixties protest rock questioned the nature of these traditional values and, even when accepting them, argued that they need to be *established* in America. There is no return to a past state, and that past never was as good as adherents of a return would have us believe. It should be noted here that the Reagan re-election team recognized Mellencamp's nationalist themes, and were actively considering using his "Pink Houses" (with its refrain "Ain't that America/Home of the free, Ain't that America/Somethin' to see) as musical accompaniment to their political advertisements (White 1987).

The Visual Rebel

If Mellencamp's lyrics are not irreverent, his visual and instrumental image is. There is serious question whether audiences actually listen to rock lyrics (Denisoff, 1972), so the non-lyrical aspects of the music become important in assessing its impact. In Mellencamp's case, we see his non-lyrical image shifting from a midwestern, "garage band" brat to a serious, socially concerned citizen. The shift can be seen in five areas: (1) album covers, (2) album liner notes, (3) lyric composition technique, (4) instrumental style, and (5) personal behavior. The shifts will be listed below.

Album Covers

pre-Scarecrow

1. jeans & T-shirt
2. smirk expression
3. macho, party image
4. pictured alone

Scarecrow & Jubilee

1. the same
2. brooding look
3. familial, concerned look
4. pictured with other

Album Liner Notes

1. emphasize partying nature of music and recording process
2. pays homage to other rock bands

1. emphasize historical significance of area where music recorded
2. pays homage to family members and quotes *Bible* verses emphasizing album theme

Composition Technique

1. spontaneous, focus on simple theme and fit words to music; little re-write

1. observes behavior for song themes—acts like a "reporter"; types lyrics and actively re-writes

Instrumental Style

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. traditional rock (i.e., electric guitar, bass, drums, background vocals) | 1. more "folkish" (i.e., adds fiddle, hammered dulcimer, autoharp, accordion, banjo, mandolin and lap steel guitar) |
|---|---|

Personal Behavior

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. partying | 1. spend time with family and friends; talk about life and the world |
| 2. lack of political consciousness | 2. become active in "Farm Aid" and testify before the Congress |

Rock and roll lyrics are never meant to stand alone. Mellencamp's "rebel form" provides the additional "proof" necessary to grant him "rebel" status, even though the value system he is selling is not substantially different from the establishment values that rock music has attacked. The rebel form can be so powerful that the words become *secondary* to the visual and aural (the instrumentation) elements of the production.

Yet that visual image, shown primarily through music television, becomes lost in the "collage" of videos that is the nature of that network. Music Television, whose profits ran over 50 million in 1989, were the subject of a recent segment on WABC TV's *Prime Time Live*. The report stated that over 28 million people tune in at least once a week to the network, and they are treated to videos that are produced by the record companies, then selected by an MTV "committee" for airplay. One MTV executive claimed that if a video is "liked," then it will be played "five, six, or seven times a day with heavy promotion." The major criterion for selecting a video for airplay seems to be its "uniqueness." At no time in the report did lyric content of songs enter as a factor, and the reporter opened the segment by highlighting the "phrenetic, nonverbal, dazzlingly visual" nature of the network. Very rarely is a video reflected upon by the "video-jocks," and a John Cougar Mellencamp video about a suffering man ("Jackie Brown") will typically be followed by a dance number, a heavy metal rocker, or a commercial. That the video might be a "statement" is left for the viewer to determine, and the "Dial MTV" promotional gimmick to generate viewer input as to what videos will be played is not typically favorable to "consciousness raising" tunes. In fact, a John Cougar Mellencamp image comes across as somewhat of a "throwback to the 60s" on MTV, more akin to "Randee of the Redwoods," the networks satirical hippie, than to "grass roots commentary." MTV is clearly not as concerned with rocks' irreverence as much as its profit potential.

Thus the dilemma of the contemporary protest rocker: lyrics that converge with the establishment, and broadcast over a medium that favors flash and fury over message. As Denisoff has put it:

The rock of the 1980s had become more entertainment than participation. Star-studded 'No Nukes' concerts and 'Live-Aid' featured 'names' not messages. The Clash, Tom Robinson, and other socially active artists were yesterday's shooting stars. Joan Baez could not land a recording contract. Dylan,

the 'bard of a generation,' dismissed music video, the medium of the 1980s, with 'I'll watch it for you, you know, as long as my eyes can stay open.' (1986: 425).

Indeed, Dylan's recent "Political World" video, complete with John Cougar Mellencamp on hand playing guitar, did not get much video play before being cast aside like numerous others. It is difficult to get an "outsider" message across on a medium that is partial to "insiders."

Conclusion

Rock and roll artists can have a definite influence on the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior of Americans, especially young Americans. Rock's traditional irreverence toward societal norms has always been one of its elements that makes for a forceful rhetoric. This paper has shown that the music of John Cougar Mellencamp is characterized by an appeal to traditional American values more suited to a conservative American politician than to a youth searching for an outsider image. Moreover, the music is now expressed to listeners over a visual medium that is not conducive to words and pictures that go beyond more "entertainment."

Is there anything wrong with rock stars preaching establishment values? Must rock and roll always reject the American system? No, but when rock music doesn't fully separate itself from the establishment, it can easily become a tool of vile elements within that establishment, as when professional wrestlers enter the ring to the tune of Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A.," or when a Presidential election committee considers using "Pink Houses," or when corporations promote concert tours in return for unlimited advertising and promotion by the artist. There is probably nothing "wrong" with politicians and corporations using the music of the masses for some sort of identification with the public, but one is chillingly reminded of Hitler's use of Wagner for similar purposes.

What will be the future of protest rock in America? If it is to become anything other than a money raising device for various causes, than it must somehow regain its irreverent, "outsider" status. One way for this to happen might be if the 1980s obsession with "American" values is replaced with an appeal to international values in the 1990s. Artists like Lou Reed, "Living Colour" and "Ten Thousand Maniacs" are moving in this direction, and much political "rap" music has a similar appeal. Rappers like Public Enemy, Ice-T, and KRS-1 are very open about the injustices of American society in a way that suggests condemnation of "the system." Consider the following quote from rapper KRS-1, somewhat reminiscent of the earlier dissatisfaction of protest rockers:

The whole idea is that if they [the board of education] would teach students or kids from kindergarten, the idea that the original—the Egyptians and the Ethiopians were peace loving, creative, non-violent people, and then they became violent out of insanity, out of being spread all over their land, war: trying to protect their land. We never have a history of who we were before this great slavery issue, or period. We're told that Aristotle and Socrates and Plato, these people were the originators of philosophy, which is a blatant lie. . . . Why don't we try to be of who we really are? (*Like It Is* transcript, 1989: 9).

The rappers are out preaching these and similar messages on the streets. Consequently, the politics of the music video business does not marginalize their message like it does the rock stars.

In closing, it should be pointed out that it took near legal pressure for Music Television to play Neil Young's "This Note's For You," a true rejection of exploitation by big business in America. The music industry likes to go with what is "safe." In order to become relevant again, rock protest must become "unsafe" and urge rejection even of that which broadcasts it. Such would not be a "revival" of rock protest as much as a long awaited recognition of contemporary ills by those with a historically proven ability to change minds.

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