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Burke on Drugs

Abstract. This essay contributes to the growing body of historical research on Kenneth Burke by considering his work as a drug researcher for the Bureau of Social Hygiene in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The research he conducted under the watch of his conservative boss, Colonel Arthur Woods, reveals a resistant worker who effectively became hooked on the question of bodies and habits even as he at times explicitly rejected the aims and methods of his boss. Burke's rearticulations of efficiency and piety help show how the Bureau offered new vantages on the body, effectively broadening his critical compass.

When William Rueckert observed in 1994 that "there are as many Burkes as there are books and essays by him and probably more Burkes than there are books because there are often many Burkes in one book" (3), he likely had no idea that the number of Burkes would continue to proliferate over the next decade as Burkean criticism became a field in its own right. By now, Rueckert's point has become almost commonplace, the number of Burkes uncountable. Yet if we heed the corollary criticism issued by Cary Nelson—that rather than just identifying these multiple Burkes "we need to credit the rhetorical structures Burke has actually given us" (163), it would be incumbent upon Burke scholars to take seriously Burke's terms and turns and look into their conditions of emergence. In that case, historical work—a consideration of how Burke came to formulate and reformulate terms the way he did—becomes just as important as close readings of his published texts, readings often designed to uncover yet another Burke. Along with Rueckert, Frank Lentricchia, Paul Jay, and most notably Jack Selzer have done the most so far to introduce historical perspectives on Burke, and others such as Ann George and Ellen Quandahl have more recently produced probing historical studies. For the most part, such historical work has remained focused on the Burke's connections to "big hitters" well known in the humanities, those whom Selzer calls "shapers of modernism" (xvii), such as Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams (Selzer), Sigmund Freud (Quandahl), and numerous radicals on the Marxist left (Lentricchia; George and Selzer). Considering Burke's location in these social, political, and intellectual networks is a crucial task to be sure, and the very kind of work that, instead of closing the book on Burkean history, enables—indeed demands—more and deeper historical questions.

The question that motivates what follows, then, goes something like this: what effects were produced when Burke moved outside of his vibrant lefty, literary circles and into other realms less strictly configured as intellectual?
The answers, as it turns out, help to provide a fuller account of how Burke, as Selzer puts it, moved “fundamentally and finally away from narrowly aesthetic concerns” (xvii). That is, while Selzer’s *Kenneth Burke in Greenwich Village* details this critical shift in emphasis from the important standpoint of Burke’s movement among modernist bohemians in the 1920s, and while Lentricchia and more recently Ann George and Jack Selzer consider the political turns associated with Burke’s involvement with the radical First American Writer’s Congress in 1935, what follows will suggest that Burke’s movement in extra-literary, non-lefty realms during those very periods was equally—if not more—crucial for the widening of his critical compass.

As many Burke scholars know, Kenneth Burke completed a couple of stints as a full time researcher in the 1920s and 30s, first on criminology, funded by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Trust (June 1926-August 1927), and then at the Bureau of Social Hygiene in New York (from 1928 until the mid-1930s) (Selzer 134; Jay 152; KB to MC 10/15/28), where he was hired by Colonel Arthur Woods to research drugs and drug use. Not much is known about this period of Burke’s experience; those who do mention it figure the researching stints, as Selzer does, as a kind of transitory period, one among many strung-together jobs (134), or as work that proved useful later on when Burke wrote about Coleridge’s opium habit (Jay 152). In the interview “Counter-Gridlock,” Burke himself describes his drug researcher days somewhat sketchily:

> Ironically enough, all my notes on that stuff have disappeared. All that work I’d done just vanished. The stuff I used in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* was part of it. I wouldn’t have any of it but for the parts included there . . . Some of it turns up once in a while, but most of it’s vanished. Maybe it’s in the FBI files for all I know. That was such a crazy period. (8)

Yet if examined closely, all of Burke’s books following that period—not just *Philosophy of Literary Form*, but also *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History*—yield trace evidence of Burke’s work at the Bureau, and together these traces suggest that Burke’s drug researching job did much more than keep him employed or acquaint him with the details of Coleridge’s addiction. Burke’s work with Colonel Woods at the Bureau of Social Hygiene helped him more pointedly formulate his concepts of efficiency and piety, even as it offered him new and different vantages on the body and communication. In other words, far from vanishing, Burke’s work at the Bureau stayed with him—arguably more closely than even he could know. What follows will focus specifically on the ways the Bureau seems to have broadened Burke’s approach and helped solidify his method. Burke emerged from his years at the Bureau, that is, with a more heavily theorized method of study, a firmer
commitment to rhetoric, an affirmed yet altered take on the theories put forth in *Counter-Statement*, and a heightened interest in the body’s role in rhetoric and identity production. His work as a researcher, together with his resistant relation to his ultra-conservative boss, ultimately galvanized his interest in the body in ways that might not have been possible had Burke remained within literary and leftist confines.

EFFICIENCY REFIGURED

Burke’s work as a drug researcher affected his theoretical writings and his critical scope by at once confirming hunches developed in *Counter-Statement* and expanding them for *Attitudes Toward History*. A case in point is Burke’s thinking about the concept of “efficiency,” which undergoes subtle but revealing transformations during the years Burke worked for Col. Woods.

Burke’s initial consideration of efficiency in *Counter-Statement* appears in “Program,” an essay on the purpose and future of art that he wrote in late 1927, just after the end of his first stint with the Spelman foundation, and a year and a half before Col. Woods would hire him at the Bureau. In this essay, where Burke first ponders efficiency as a value, the stakes for Burke lie in the question of aesthetics. According to Burke, “efficiency” functions as the dominant historical value at the time he is writing, and, insofar as it is deemed by many as “practical” (111), it stands against the aesthetic. In Burke’s version, the value of efficiency aligns with science, prosperity, and “progress” (111), and is thus mechanistic, industrial, and self proliferating (107, 119). Burke responds by arguing that the artist must dialectically oppose these values—“the aesthetic must serve as anti-mechanization, the corrective of the practical” (111); or, as the book’s title suggests, art must offer a “counter-statement” to those who valorize efficiency and what Burke somewhat cynically terms its “health club offer” grouping of values—“prosperity, material acquisitions, increased consumption, ‘new needs,’ expansion . . .”. Such a counter-statement would instead offer, among other values, inefficiency, indolence, experimentalism, curiosity, risk, “dislike of certainty,” and innovation (111).

Yet this “counter-statement” is more than a dialectical assertion that counters by negation, however. Instead, Burke develops a method of resisting efficiency in *Counter-Statement* that might be characterized as “refusal through rearticulation.” That is, Burke suggests effecting a transformation of the system itself: “when inefficiency becomes a danger, we should so alter the system that inefficiency ceases to be a danger” (120). Such a rearticulation in this instance involves slyly swapping the terms efficiency and inefficiency, whereby what would be deemed “inefficient” in a Taylorized factory can be deemed, from the artist’s perspective, efficient. By conjuring an artistic “counter-efficiency,” Burke effectively names his own method: “an important aspect of the artist’s ‘efficiency’ resides not in an accumulation of products, but in a ceaseless
indwelling, a patient process of becoming expert in himself” (118). In other words, Burke’s model of artistic efficiency involves protracted engagement with material in order to know it thoroughly, intimately. As such, the slow, painstakingly careful version of artistic practice becomes a resistant counter-practice in the realm of machinic, output-focused, high-speed efficiency.

Such a method, Burke believes, will produce responsive, artistic “innovations,” innovations that, according to Burke, “must be, in some way, the humanistic or cultural counterpart of the external changes brought about by industrialism, or mechanization” (108). He clarifies: “By ‘innovations,’ incidentally, is not meant something new under the sun. By innovation is meant simply an emphasis to which the contemporary public is not accustomed” (110). The job of the artist, then, is to notice the habits and practices ushered in by an era, and to respond by adding an unfamiliar perspective into the mix.

In “Program,” then, Burke works through the problems with efficiency, and by doing so, articulates what would become his signature method: such a “ceaseless indwelling,” that is, an ever-complicated, multi-directional, extended, thorough consideration of the subject at hand, which produces “innovations,” unfamiliar, sometimes strange ways to formulate a situation. Such is the approach Burke takes when thinking and writing about language, life, and art on his own time, as much as it was when he was researching and writing about drugs on the Bureau’s time. Burke’s time at the Bureau, in fact, effectively expanded his critique of efficiency—taking him beyond the realm of art—even as it affirmed his conclusions in Counter-Statement. As I will suggest later, the “innovation” Burke himself would turn up is a renewed focus on the body. The body, that is, becomes Burke’s cultural counterpart to the efficient, bureaucratic, machine. Before detailing his innovation, however, I want to consider just how Burke’s notion of efficiency changed during the time he worked for the Bureau.

Efficiency reappears in newly expanded form most prominently in Attitudes Toward History, the book Burke completed just after his work for the Bureau ended. Here “efficiency” can be found in the “Dictionary of Pivotal Terms,” with 4.5 pages devoted to the entry. This time, Burke figures efficiency as that which “throws strong light upon something, and in the process cast other things into shadow” (248). While Burke’s discussion of efficiency in Counter-Statement takes place, for the most part, in the realm of art and work, in Attitudes Toward History, Burke sees efficiency everywhere—from breakfast food’s emphasis on palate-pleasing, to war’s “efficient” mobilization of a nation’s efforts, to caricaturists’ tendency of “stressing certain considerations and omitting others” (249). The result, Burke complains, is overspecialization, overemphasis, and inevitably, imbalance. In Burke’s words, “efficiency” becomes that which “endangers proper preservation of proportions” (248).4

Burke’s primary example of efficiency, however, turns out to be journalism, which has “developed out of an organized method for assembling
a literary product with maximum speed" (250). By figuring news as at once mass-produced and literary, and expanding the literary and the artistic to broader meanings (as he does in Permanence and Change) Burke is able to fold in the views on efficiency put forth in Counter-Statement. Yet at the same time, the broader conception of art enables a broadened perspective and more elaborate critique of efficiency. Guided by "headline thinking," journalism, according to Burke, is the "bureaucratization" of what was, in ancient times, an inefficient "imaginative procedure"—the transmission of news through bards, who "shaped their statement ... [by] saying only what could be sung" (250, Burke's emphasis). The entry then moves from the metaphor of song to the more contemporary metaphor of money:

'Efficiency,' to borrow a trope from the stock exchange, is excellent for those who approach social problems with the mentality of the 'in and out' trader. It is far less valuable for those interested in a 'long-pull investment.' Otherwise stated: It violates 'ecological balance,' stressing some one ingredient rather than maintaining all ingredients by the subtler requirements of 'symbiosis.' (250)

Here, Burke reiterates that the value of balance gets violated through efficiency, yet the trope of the stock market does more than advocate a diverse portfolio. By invoking the stock market—where Burke had actually invested the money from his 1929 Dial Award—Burke brings in the question of investment and, at the same time, reintroduces the issue of commitment inherent in Burke's programmatic Counter-Statement call for a "patient process of becoming expert." That is, Burke still favors—and arguably with more resolve—a kind of "long haul" mentality over and against the unreflective opportunism he sees at work in more efficient models driving the bureaucracies of journalism and advertising. The ancient bards who "inefficiently" "said only what could be sung" inhabit a special place for Burke, for theirs is a model of news distribution that emphasizes the very sort of purposeful "indwelling" he champions in Counter-Statement. As he puts it later on in Attitudes Toward History, "the future is really disclosed by finding out what people can sing about" (335, Burke's emphasis). Such singing necessarily entails immersion in a subject matter, a kind of inhabiting. That Burke privileged such committed work is evident when he mentions to Malcolm Cowley that he was not, at the moment, thrilled with John Dewey, who, as Burke puts it, "seems too external to his subject" (KB to MC March 30, 1934).6

The model of resistant, inhibitive, artistic efficiency presented in Counter-Statement thus reemerges in Attitudes Toward History as the commitment of the "long-pull investment." The dictionary entry ends with an illustrative "parable" that brings together the revised account with the earlier account, and
does so with direct reference to his work at the Bureau of Social Hygiene. The parable features an artist who, painting the same scene as other artists, chooses to emphasize a flea "with startling singleness," thus revealing the scene anew. But the flea receives so much attention that a "Flea School of Art" develops, with other artists clamoring to depict fleas, because fleas are, in a sense, of the moment. Burke's problem lies not with the first flea artist, who identified strongly with the flea, and whose incitement involved intimate, artistic commitment. The school of art, conversely, according to Burke, fetishizes the flea, overemphasizes and thus overdramatizes the flea, and as Burke puts it, "picks up the mannerism without the drive" (252). At this point, the "imaginative"—the moment of intimate connection with the flea—becomes, in Burke's words, "thoroughly bureaucratized" (252), devoid of poetic force. Efficiency, that is, averts commitment, intimacy, and drive, therefore precluding the sort of intense, reflective, protracted involvement with the subject Burke favors in Counter-Statement. Burke develops this critique with a lengthy footnote, wherein he wonders whether all journals "even our better journals, have done anything other than to 'bureaucratize'... and so on by bringing the communicative resources of the whole world to bear upon an isolated theme" (n. 251). Here Burke offers yet another justification for why he has broadened the scope of his work so significantly since Counter-Statement. Burke has decided, in short, that he must combine the artistic (counter) efficiency laid out so carefully in Counter-Statement with a counter-refusal of overspecialization. In other words, instead of worrying strictly about the category of the aesthetic, he will obsess intimately about countless categories. Burke accomplishes such a regrouping by rearticulating what counts as artistic, as evident when he admonishes readers to "distrust hypertrophy of art on paper. More of the artistic should be expressed in vital social relationships. Otherwise, it becomes 'efficient' in the compensatory, antithetical sense" (259). Here, Burke sees problems with the "counter-statement" logic and offers that an approach to aesthetics must be retooled as well—what he wrote in Counter-Statement, in hindsight, was itself a bit too efficient with its narrow parameters. What's more, such a hypertrophic focus risks leading to gross exaggerations, a telltale mark of efficient methods. An explanatory footnote goes on to explicitly invoke Col. Woods and the Bureau in relation to the narrow, overly dramatic approach Burke disparages:

We refer among other things to the ideal of horror, whereby the author "sells" his masterpiece in competition with his competitors, by contriving to make the issue even more calamitous than they do. We once did ghosting work on a drug book—and our employer soon taught us that the "best" preparation for a proposal to control drugs was a picture of the world being destroyed by drugs. Find the threat of drugs every-
where—and you have established the “crying need” for the proposed legislation. (251 n.)

Burke’s expanded sense of efficiency is owed, then, at least in part, to Burke’s boss at the Bureau, Colonel Arthur Woods, who, as I will discuss below, exemplified “hypertrophic” efficiency. To avoid such an imbalanced model of “efficiency,” to explore “vital social relationships,” and to keep subject matters open while engaging in patient, intimate study of diverse fields, would become Burke’s program, newly revised and expanded. In Dangerous Drugs, the book Burke ghosted for Woods, Burke’s patient “inefficient” methods stand out as markedly distinct from Woods’s hypertrophy. What results, I’ll demonstrate, is a provocatively incongruous book.

THE COLONEL

While only six years older than Burke, and perhaps even more well-connected, Colonel Arthur Woods was, in so many ways, a counter-Burke. Harvard educated, a Republican and Episcopalian, Woods was always in charge of something, from education (he was schoolmaster at a wealthy private school in Massachusetts at the turn of the twentieth century), to law enforcement (commissioner of the New York Police Department from 1914-1918), to the military (named Colonel, Aviation section in 1918). From there Colonel Woods became a key behind-the-scenes political figure: in 1918, Woods was appointed Associate Director of the Committee on Public Information for Foreign Propaganda, and in 1919 Roosevelt named him Assistant Secretary of War; in the 1920s, Woods became Chairman and Trustee of the Spelman Fund of New York, a fund started in the memory of John D. Rockefeller’s wife, Laura Spelman. Woods subsequently served as a Trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation from 1928-1935 (Fosdick 310). Woods later became an advisor to the League of Nations on drug and drug trafficking, and in 1930, he temporarily left his post at the Bureau when summoned by President Hoover to lead the Emergency Committee for Employment. Burke himself somewhat humorously invokes Woods as helmsman when he refers to him in a letter to Allen Tate as “the Captain my Captain” (KB to AT, 10/17/29).7

Woods also authored two books early on, Crime Prevention (1918), a manifesto for “law, protection, and order” (7), and Police and Public (1919), which is part guide to the profession of law enforcement, part public-relations document bespeaking the valor and courage of policework, and part handbook for producing ideal police workers. Col. Woods celebrates policemen in these books and looks askance at all others as potential criminals—with special attention, in Crime Prevention, to “mental defectives” (56); ex-cons (90-94) “emotional types” (94-96); the unemployed (40-48); alcoholics and drug users (71-81); and young boys (101-104). By identifying these risk categories,
Woods embodies his own ideal of the “preventive policeman,” whom he refers to as “the policeman of the future” (PP 123). The police activist author of these books is staunchly abolitionist, anti-drug, pro-military, and, above all, a man whose mission it is to detail and valorize the policeman’s job (CP 123; PP 13-15).

What’s more, the ideal police officer, for Woods, was an efficient worker with an efficiently trained body. Woods argues variously for the use of military drill (158), equating the sturdiness of courage with sturdiness of body: “the courage of the men will be made more sturdy and instinctive if they have confidence in their own powers, in their marksmanship, their ability to use their hands and bodies, and if they keep themselves in sound physical condition, hard and supple” (159). Woods’s desire to make courage more “instinctive” illustrates his militaristic need for an ultra-efficient operation. He therefore scorns the public’s view of policemen as “portly, slow moving, with their gait showing fallen arches” (163), offering instead his own depiction: “alert, active, intelligent,—flat-fronted, instead of flat-footed. As the arches of his feet are up, so should his aspect be, his eyes, his mien, his aim” (163). Woods, however, lamenting that very little work is “done as well as it might be,” in his quest for the most efficient law enforcement possible, enlists the public as surveillors of policework and ultimately argues that “the public is entitled to be furnished with complete and accurate police records”(169). As his logic goes: “inefficiency and negligence are hard to conceal if results have to be furnished” (172). Woods’ first two books are thus saturated with the value of efficiency, with a heavy emphasis on the centrality of juridical matters. An efficient police force, would, for Woods, produce a smooth-running, equally efficient society. This much is indicated in a line from Crime Prevention, which insists upon a direct correlation between law enforcement and society even as it forecasts the major premise of his later book, Dangerous Drugs, the book Burke would help Woods write: “the policeman has come to the conclusion that if the traffic in these deadly drugs could be stopped much crime would be stopped also” (74). The swift, causal connection between drug traffic and crime displays the very logic that Kenneth Burke complains about in Attitudes Toward History, and—as I will suggest—strongly resists while working for Woods. Moreover, the moralizing rhetoric of Colonel Woods in Dangerous Drugs makes it fairly easy to locate Burke’s contributions, and the passages that were most likely written by Burke reveal a developing preoccupation with how drug use produces dispositional changes. This general interest in bodily mannerisms and affect, I will argue, helped Burke shape his notion of “piety,” a concept that effectively unpacks efficiency in Permanence and Change.

A Ghost of Incongruity

As the full title hints, Dangerous Drugs: The World Fight Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics bears a hard-line political agenda. Focusing mostly
on opium, morphine, and heroin, the book details social ills caused by the trafficking of illegally manufactured drugs. The self-proclaimed purpose of Dangerous Drugs goes like this:

The writing of these chapters was undertaken for the purpose of clarifying and emphasizing certain measures which we believe must be enforced if this devastating narcotic drug traffic is to be controlled. There are medical, psychological, and educational aspects of the problem of combating drug addiction which we will not attempt to discuss thoroughly, for we are concerned with the subject from the standpoint of legal and police measures. (4)

This passage perfectly illustrates the sort of efficiency that made Burke grumble—right down to the very language with which it is written. The passage, that is, swiftly moves to the sole and narrow purpose of “clarifying and emphasizing certain measures,” skipping over all the complicated ways in which drugs hook up to bodies, minds, and education, in favor of the more narrowly focused “standpoint of legal and police measures.” It is clear from Woods’ publication and work history that the “standpoint” of legal and police measures is undoubtedly his own.

Yet a noticeably different standpoint inhabits the book, one that is far less concerned with the police-as-hero or the derelict drug user, but a standpoint that is more concerned with—indeed, fascinated by—historical attitudes toward and physiological effects of drugs. The book, in fact, bears ample evidence of clashing efficiencies, as Woods’s swift and sure proclamations stand starkly against Burke’s broadly historical, intimate, protracted consideration of drug use.

These divergent standpoints—that of the policy-minded law enforcer (Woods) and the philosophically-minded researcher-for-hire (Burke)—make Dangerous Drugs a weirdly incongruous book. Colonel Woods has an explicit purpose (“to deal with the primary evil, the matter of Drug Supply itself” [4].), and the book, as noted earlier, is funded by the Bureau of Social Hygiene, a Rockefeller-supported office whose professed mission was “the study, amelioration, and prevention of those social conditions, crimes, and diseases which adversely affect the well-being of society, with special reference to prostitution and the evils associated therewith.”8 The introduction frames the book Woods no doubt envisioned, repeating the word “evil” in sentences like these: “But we purpose to deal with the primary evil, the matter of the Drug Supply itself” (4) and “We should set promptly and efficiently about the business of freeing ourselves from those evils which are less ‘necessary’” (6). The introduction leaves no question about the book’s primary aim: “The Drug Menace should be one of the first to go, for not only is this a degrading burden with which
society need not be saddled, but there is a definite course of action by which it can be removed, as subsequent chapters will attempt to demonstrate" (6). In extending the mission laid out in his previous book Crime Prevention, Colonel Woods is also setting up the book’s somewhat dramatic, bureaucratic approach to drugs by offering, as Burke put it, “a picture of the world being destroyed by drugs.”

The second chapter, entitled “The Alkaloids,” however, departs radically from the tone, scope, and mission laid out in the first chapter. This departure, I contend, bears strong indications that Burke was the chapter’s ghostwriter. First, the chapter does anything but demonstrate “a definite course of action,” nor does it, as promised in the introduction, explain “as briefly as possible the nature of the drugs, the nature of the users, and the nature of the traffic” (4). As anyone who has read anything of Burke’s knows, succinct description was not exactly his forte, and as I have thus far suggested, his “counter-efficient” method disavowed mere surface engagement. He is known, instead, for giving his subjects a wide-ranging breadth of consideration, an approach that reflects Burke’s by now trademark multi-directional ruminations. Burke himself recognized this style of thinking late in his career when he offered the term “counter-gridlock” as a description of how he would “go every which way,” so that his thought process often resembled, to him at least, the reverse of a New York traffic jam (“Counter-Gridlock” 5).

In Attitudes Toward History, where such an approach most closely approximates a methodology, Burke writes that the job of the social critic is “patient study of the ‘Documents of Error.’” (258). He goes on to explain: “To avoid ‘cultural vandalism there must be constant exposure to the total archives accumulated by civilization (since nothing less can give us the admonitory evidence of the ways in which people’s exaltations malfunction as liabilities)” (259). Here, Burke describes with remarkable accuracy the approach he seems to have taken while working on Drugs. As a result, the writing in the book’s second chapter departs noticeably from the moralizing generalities found in the introduction, opting instead for a more scholarly, inquisitive tone that borders on fascination with drugs, their histories, and their physiological effects. In fact, the entire chapter, when placed next to the overblown rhetoric of the first chapter, seems rather humorously mismatched, if not dreadfully out of place. It begins, for example, in the “archives” of civilization: “The history of man’s acquaintanceship with opium leads us back among the vaguenesses of remote antiquity” (7). What follows is a seemingly exhaustive list of physicians who prescribed opium, took opium, and, for the most part—at least according to the writer—loved opium. The beginning of the chapter, that is, takes a leisurely stroll through the words of ancient physicians dating as far back as the second century CE Galen, a Greek who enumerated all the medical benefits of opium, up to the sixteenth century German Paracelsus, who referred to opium as “the
stone of immortality.” While Col. Woods might have called opium the stone of “immorality,” the writer of chapter two seems far more fascinated with the drug’s cultural history than perturbed by its popularity. The chapter goes on to cite Alpinus, another sixteenth century physician, who notes energy loss and deteriorating functions in the bodies of opium users (9) and then continues:

Platerus of Pasle, and the Belgian van Helmont used it with prodigality, the latter to such an extent that he became known as Doctor Opiatus. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch physician, Sylvius Franciscus de le Boe, said that he could not practice without it, and Sydenham, one of the foremost English physicians, stated that “among the remedies which it has pleased Almighty God to give to man to relieve his sufferings, none is so universal and so efficacious as opium.” Our tincture of opium of today was developed from Sydenham’s laudanum. Haller, the greatest among medical minds of the eighteenth century, wrote of the drug and, according to Lombroso, was himself addicted to enormous doses (9-10).

This passage hardly takes the morally outraged, “efficient” approach put forth in the initial chapter. Rather, the passage—and the entire chapter, for that matter—reveals the intensive, protracted research that must have gone into the writing, “the constant exposure to the total archives accumulated by civilization.” The chapter goes on to detail the invention of the hypodermic syringe and the effects of subcutaneous delivery, making a subtle but strong case that this invention led to more widespread use of opium and its alkaloid partners, morphine and heroin. Such an argument continues to undermine Woods’s aim by suggesting that the problem might not be so easily or efficiently “removed” as the introduction would have readers believe. The passage ends with a snappy (and not terribly moralizing) sentence: “by the time the danger of heroin became generally recognized, the underworld, in America at least, had been sniffing it for years” (13).

The chapter then proceeds to depart even more noticeably from the book’s aim, building a subtle case in favor of morphine by pointing out that it is the “perfect drug” for doctors to become addicted to, “through taking it at the end of a hard day’s work when some new responsibility turns up which means that they must be alert for several more hours” (15). The drug is “perfect,” the writer contends, because “it dulls the body’s complaints of weariness without producing any of the distortions of behavior or causing the inaccuracy in work which might have resulted from alcohol taken as a bracer under similar circumstances” (15). Again, the writer of chapter two portrays upstanding members of society as addicts—but addicts who are apparently nonetheless productive.
"The Alkaloids" is thus a long, rambly chapter that departs noticeably in style, tone, and argument from the other chapters and from the purported scope of the book. Its tone is more that of investigative history than that of swift denouncement. Rather than chiming in with the overblown, moralizing rhetoric of the introduction, the chapter reveals instead the work of a patient, meticulous researcher, subtly mounting a case against the book's very premises. What's more, the chapter that bears Burke's distinctive imprint also reveals an intense fascination with bodily processes, pointing to The Bureau of Social Hygiene as a place where Burke's interest in the body took hold.

An intimate knowledge of the body

To be sure, Burke came to the Bureau with an already-percolating interest in the body, as evidenced in Counter-Statement, where he invokes the body as "a generator of belief" in the context of artistic value (105). In a section on "the appeal of forms," Burke articulates something approaching a bodily affinity for poetic form:

> The appeal of form as exemplified in rhythm enjoys a special advantage in that rhythm is more closely allied with 'bodily' processes. Systole and diastole, alternation of the feet in walking, inhalation and exhalation, up and down, in and out, back and forth, such are the types of distinctly motor experiences 'tapped' by rhythm. (140)

While scholars like Kumiko Yoshioko (33) and Robert Wess (66) seem to want to treat these bodily moments in Counter-Statement as problematically essentialist, and while Burke himself in retrospect seems embarrassed by his "naturalistic" emphasis ("Preface to the Second Edition" xv), I offer that this passage is neither overly naturalistic nor essentialist at all. At first glance, the passage seems to posit a kind of "natural" bodily rhythm, but the point is about how the body's movements — what Burke calls "motor experiences" — have the capacity to fall into a discernible rhythm. The regular rhythms of pulse, of breathing, of walking, mark the body's movements as prone to rhythmic patterns, attuning the body to yet other kinds of rhythm, like those produced in music, or in poetic form, Burke's primary concern in Counter-Statement. The focus here, in other words, is on a meeting of rhythms, and the way in which the rhythms of the body can fall in sync with rhythms of prose. As Burke figures it, the body, as a generator of rhythm, is also attuned to rhythm in particular ways — as such, the body is figured as capable of a certain kind of belief in the "ideas" "imported" along with the rhythm. He goes on, "The rhythm of a page, in setting up a corresponding rhythm in the body, creates marked degrees of expectancy, or acquiescence."
Writing about the reader, Burke continues, “in becoming receptive to so much, he becomes receptive to still more” (141). Once bodily movements have been overtaken by the poem, there’s no turning back: “in all rhythmic experiences one’s ‘muscular imagination’ is touched” (141). As both Selzer and Wess have demonstrated, Counter-Statement is where Burke first articulates a rhetorical program. And it’s also worth noting that in doing so, he attributes rhetorical tendencies to the body, noticing its susceptibility to transformation, its affinity for rhythm—in short, its affective capacity for taking on new habits, new beliefs.

This initial inclination toward the body in Counter-Statement stretches through the 1930s for Burke, a period during which the body becomes one of Burke’s focal points. A focus on the body, in fact, became Burke’s “innovation,” his “cultural counterpart” to industrialized mechanization and its corollary “efficiencies.” Burke’s innovation is documented most amply in a long, spirited 1933 letter he sent to his friend the southern agrarian Allen Tate. Here, a rather distressed Burke issues an alphabet’s worth of axioms whereby he characterizes his current world, refuses to accept it as is, and rationalizes both his account and his refusal. Repeating and forecasting arguments about efficiency found in his 1930s books, Burke describes the inevitable rise of what he calls the “genius of machinery.” After professing his dislike for “machine-culture,” he writes frustratedly that there are limited ways to respond: “I do not believe in the antics of refusal, and yet find myself returning to them again and again.” In an “antic” that replicates his “counter-efficient” logic in Counter-Statement, Burke adds that “the only way of combatting [sic] this trend . . . is by the discovery and stressing of a point of reference outside the circle of values arising out of the machine.” He continues:

(t) the point of reference outside the system I hold to be the genius of the body itself; (u) I thus come to believe that one should “hold a minute ear to the body”; (v) in so doing, I begin to find that, at other points of human history, when other systems of ethics were coming into disrepute as our commercial ethic now is, people were given to a similar habit of seeking in the body-processes the undeniable point of reference outside the system whereby sturdier and more accurate moral exhortations could be built up. (KB to AT 8/19/1933; Burke’s emphasis)\textsuperscript{10}

This letter, written toward the end of his work with Woods, and while in the middle of writing Permanence and Change, suggests that Burke had, by this time, nearly completed his “innovative” turn to the body, and what’s more, he was ready to “sing” about it. A comparative look at the more body-centered passages in Dangerous Drugs and Permanence and Change will help follow this turn more closely.
Burke's curiosity about the body, like his work on efficiency, would be sustained and taken in new directions during his time at the Bureau. When viewed in terms of bodily rhythms and susceptibility, for example, drug users and readers of poetry bear striking similarities. Burke's description of the rhythmic reader—"in becoming receptive to so much, he becomes receptive to still more" (141)—might as easily be applied to a trembling coke addict. In fact, as Burke's syncretic work suggests, both drugs and poetry can be figured as transformative substances, both induce affective change, and both tap into bodily rhythms, creating and increasing receptivity.

The body also figures strongly in the alkaloids chapter of Dangerous Drugs, as the ghostwriter Burke keeps an eye on bodily processes, specifically the "tendency of the morphinist to increase his dosage" (19). The edging in of the habit through a steady increase of doses seems to captivate Burke's attention, as he describes how a user "finds himself taking several grains merely to establish the same physical and mental tone that formerly resulted from the fraction of a grain" (19). Burke also details physiological symptoms of withdrawal—muscular tremors, watery eyes, abdominal cramps—symptoms by which "the morphinist is usually revealed" (17). Then, in a telling moment, the writer turns from an exhaustive consideration of withdrawal's effect on the body to its effect on the mind:

Naturally, such acute physical exhaustion has a direct mental parallel. The addict becomes depressed, even to the point of delirium . . . His plight is pitiable, all the more so since there is but one quick remedy for all the suffering: another dose. This fact makes it almost impossible for an addict to rid himself of the drug habit unassisted. All during the period of his suffering, he knows that if at any moment an injection of the drug is given him, his troubles are over. In a flash Mr. Hyde becomes Dr. Jekyll. His composure returns, the body falls back into its accustomed ways. He is restored to the addict's equivalent of normality. (17)

Here, Burke describes a case in which bodily rhythms have been overtaken by drugs. If the body considered in Counter-Statement is receptive and susceptible, the body in Dangerous Drugs is that and more, insofar as the body comes to depend on its substance, and when the substance is present "the body falls back into its accustomed ways," its acquired set of habits and rhythms. Burke's work on drugs, then, drew his attention to the body even more, showing him that habits and beliefs created in the body through sustained repetition are tenacious, relentless, and, most of all, impervious to reason. That is, while the dramatic paragraph above sets itself up to discuss the "mental parallel" of bodily dependence, it can never turn completely away from the body, because the habit so clearly exists on a physiological plane. Thus the description, like
the drug habit, begins and ends with the body, but not without invoking what Burke calls in *Permanence and Change* "physical parallelisms of the mind" (see, e.g., 158). His account of cocaine traverses between body and mind in a similar fashion: "A small dose makes responses quicker, muscular strength greater. Repeated doses tend to develop extreme excitability, with mental and physical stimulation, and the addict can talk without ceasing . . . He is, in short, generally on edge, tingling with a false sense of vitality which may be either pleasant or disturbing, or even both simultaneously" (26-27). In these and other descriptions, physiological and mental conditions are intractably combined, as Burke the writer-researcher figures the cocaine user as a bundle of sensations, intensified with each hit.

The chapter Burke most surely ghostwrote pays special attention to affective change—how a habit like a drug habit dictates the body's "normality," how desire works on and through the body, and, moreover, how pain and addiction conjoin mind and body through sensation and movement. In yet another way, then, the chapter exceeds the brief historical "sketch" promised in the introduction and instead raises questions about the mind-body relationship, with specific attention to the relationship between habit and affect. "The Alkaloids" argues about the intense, physiological staying power of drugs rather than their inherent evil (the introductory chapter's favorite assertion), and in doing so, it treats the very "medical, psychological, and educational aspects of the problem of combating drug addiction" that the introduction places outside the book's purview. The focus, in short, is on the body rather than on the traffic of drugs. Moreover, both the rejection of Colonel Woods' moralizing tendencies discussed earlier and the focus on mind-body associations can be found in *Permanence and Change*, the book in which the body figures most forcibly for Burke, and not coincidentally, the book he was working on while he was working for Woods.

**Piety, the Body, and (Drug) Habit**

Both Woods and the drug user, as figures, come to inhabit *Permanence and Change* in relation to Burke's concept of piety. Woods, that is, seems to be a major force behind Burke's attempt to crack open piety and disentangle the word from its strictly religious associations whereby piety often comes with prepackaged notions of "good" and "evil." Instead, Burke describes piety as an act of creating linkages—"the sense of what properly goes with what" (74), and from these linkages different ethical models—different "altars"—emerge. Piety, as Burke puts it, "extends through all the texture of our lives" (75), and in this way "we may expect to find great areas of piety, even at a ball game" (76). As illustrations, Burke offers what he terms "pious" associations, such as an unhappy person's linking of distress with the sound of the doorbell (76), and the "pious" vulgarity shared by gashouse gang members—e.g., the "cor-
rect way of commenting upon passing women, the etiquette of spitting" (77).
Burke finds these instances of "what goes with what" compelling for their
seeming "deviance" from more typical, "pure" associations with the word piety. He continues:

> These considerations force us to reinterpret what jurists or social workers
> often look upon as decay, degeneracy, disintegration, and the like. If a
> man who is a criminal lets the criminal trait in him serve as the informing
> aspect of his character, piously taking unto him all other traits and habits
> that he feels should go with his criminality, the criminal deterioration
> which the moralist with another point of view might discover in him is
> the very opposite of deterioration as regards the tests of piety. (77)

It is difficult not to read Woods in this passage, for the perspective criticized
here is the very perspective offered by Woods in *Crime Prevention, Police
and Public*, and the introduction to *Dangerous Drugs*. Burke’s account of
the formation of criminal character suggests that Burke himself occupies the
position of "moralist with another point of view," one who sees the “crimi-
nal” as a conglomerate of focused habits bound together by the pious logic of
criminality. This view, of course, contradicts that held by Woods, for whom
criminality embodies decay and degeneracy. If the connection to Burke’s work
at the Bureau isn’t already apparent, then Burke turns to the morphine addict
as an exemplary figure:

> Similarly with the “drug fiend,” who can take his morphine in a hospital
> without the slightest disaster to his character, since it is called medicine
> there; but if he injects it at a party, where it has the stigma of dissipation
> upon it, he may gradually organize his character about this outstanding
> “altar” of his experience—and since the altar in this case is generally
> accepted as unclean, he will be disciplined enough to approach it with
> appropriately unclean hands, until he is a derelict. (77-78)

The scare quotes around “drug fiend” demarcate the voice of someone like
Woods, whose pious linkages draw on the hypertrophic, “efficient” language
Burke mentions in *Attitudes Toward History*, and who, as a result, sees der-
elict wherever he sees a drug addict. Burke’s reformulation of piety can thus
be read as a direct counter-response to Woods’s overly moralizing account of
drug users. Burke not only draws his examples from his experiences at the
Bureau, but he also devotes his critical energies to dispensing the very logic
of the Bureau itself. And just as Burke’s resistance in *Dangerous Drugs* led
him to focus on physiology and habit, the broadening of the concept of piety
enables him to consider the body’s role in ritualized, habituated practices. In
other words, practices lead to habits which lead to more associative practices; over time, the accumulation of associations produces a radically transformed yet finely-tuned piety. Thus the body, as Burke suggested to Allen Tate, is where something like morals are formed.

The moral foundations of the Bureau and Woods thus stand for all Burke tries to counter with his reformulation of piety. As he did with the concept of efficiency, Burke produces a "refusal through rearticulation" whereby he counters the moral "ground" of religious-toned piety by rearticulating the concept more generally, in reference to associative practices that lead to something like deep conviction. This rearticulation subsequently leads Burke to consider bodily practices and habits. His reformulation and new focus come together most notably when Burke develops the gashouse gang example, wherein he frames piety as both a visible bodily phenomenon and way of seeing—i.e., interpreting—the visible bodily aspects of others. He elaborates this notion by pointing out how humorously out of place someone of "high culture" and "refined" taste would seem when placed amidst a group of spitting, catcalling men. He writes, "If we can bring ourselves to imagine Matthew Arnold loafing on the corner with the gashouse gang, we promptly realize how undiscriminating he would prove himself. Everything about him would be inappropriate: both what he said and the ways in which he said it" (77). In other words, a long string of associative, bodily, and discursive practices have gone into making Matthew Arnold utterly incapable of blending in with the working class gashouse gang, and Arnold's carefully cultivated bodily demeanor would no doubt betray what Burke would label impiety in the gashouse context. Such formative practices, Burke explains, continue to press on and press out one's character. As Burke puts it, "There is, of course, a further factor involved here: the matter of interaction. Certain of one's choices become creative in themselves; they drive one into ruts, and these ruts in turn reinforce one's piety" (78). After a certain point, that is, Matthew Arnold may act no other way—unless, of course, he got hold of some heroin.

Recall that in Drugs Burke pays particular attention to the Jekyll-Hyde phenomenon of the drug user, and he does so throughout the chapter with sentences like these: "If the addict is denied his accustomed drug for as short as a time as twenty-four hours, his entire emotional and physical make-up may be altered" (16). It is worth noting here how, as with the gashouse example, the alteration happens at the level of affect. In Drugs, Burke spends a good deal of time detailing the difficult and time-consuming process of getting someone off drugs—the tenacity of habit, as I pointed out earlier, takes its own hold on Burke the researcher.

In this regard, Burke's research on opium and hypodermic syringes surfaces in his until recently unpublished tract "Auscultation, Creation, and Revision," written sometime between 1930 and 1934, while he was at work on
Permanence and Change. In explicating Bertrand Russell's work on cravings and physiological desire, Burke draws on the historical research he did for Drugs to dwell on the intensity and tenacity of a physiological craving:

It was noted that opium-eaters developed, besides their need for the drug, a distinct opium hunger, a craving for the taste of opium. Accordingly, when the hypodermic needle was invented, earnest practitioners who had no need of metaphysics in their daily rounds decided that the craving of the palate could be eliminated were they to administer opiates by injection, since the patients would thus never learn the taste of opium. Great was their exaltation on finding this subterfuge for removing an important lure to relapse—and they were some time in discovering that the morphinist, instead of a craving for the taste of opium on his tongue, now suffered a greedy fascination at the thought of a hypodermic needle puncturing his veins. (79-80)

That the locus of the desire for opium could transfer from the taste-buds to the subcutaneous regions of the limbs fascinated Burke, who counted drugs as one of many "pious linkages" one's body might establish and subsequently cling to.

Vascular craving appears more obliquely in Permanence and Change, where Burke likens a drug habit to a kind of poetics, as he describes the intensely addicted user as "hypnotically entangled in the texture of his poem" (78). The word "poem" here is not metaphoric, but rather refers to Burke's tendency (especially in Permanence and Change) to figure poetry generally as a creative act—that is, something everyone is capable of in some way, as with piety: "Indeed, all life has been likened to the writing of a poem, though some people write their poems on paper, and others carve theirs out of jugular veins" (76). In what might be an oblique reference to drug use, Burke effectively truncates the more extended point made in "Auscultation," this time demonstrating how the body can be "tapped" with poetic force. The drug addict's pious poem is comprised, then, of the habitual body-drug relation to which the addict is utterly devoted, or in Burke's formulation, "by the ruts which his experience itself has worn" (79).

Burke therefore uses a drug addict as the ultimate example of a more encompassing piety, one that focuses on the formation of "ruts" rather than their inherent good or evil. His figuring of piety can be read as a direct counter to Woods, whose "piety" would be in line with religious, moral associations set forth by institutions such as the Episcopalian Church or The Bureau of Social Hygiene. Burke's newly formulated account of piety, then, is to a large extent underwritten by his work for The Bureau and by Woods himself. And Burke's attention to what he calls "the range of piety" enables him to return to
what was percolating in *Counter-Statement* and became even more evident in
the case of the drug user: the rhythmically receptive body overtaken by new
“rhythms,” resulting in a new sense of “normality.”

As the religious aspects of piety remind us, belief is more often than not
accompanied by rituals—bodily practices like kneeling and closing the eyes,
and material artifacts such as altars and cups. When in the context of piety
Burke equates the “texture” of one’s “poem” with the “ruts of experience,” he
effectively extends the discussion of “the body as generator of belief” begun in
*Counter-Statement*. This time, however, Burke focuses on the body’s capacity
to be affected by so much more than poetic form or music—but by observing
rituals, by mimicking others, by “following” the ways of a criminal, gashouse
gang member, or drug addict. At stake in the examples are questions of bodily
learning and habit formation—i.e., the very means of creating and solidifying
“pious linkages.” All these identity practices, that is, happen by association,
and all become manifest on the bodily level and on the communicative level,
as Burke maintains in an explanatory footnote on “style” toward the end of
*Permanence and Change*:

Style is a constant meeting of obligations . . . a repeated doing of the
‘right’ thing. It molds our actions by contingencies, but these contingen-
cies go to the farthest reaches of the communicative. For style (custom)
is a complex schema of what-goes-with-what, carried through all the
subtleties of manner and attitudes. (n. 269)

Here, Burke opts for the term “style” to figure what he has thus far referred
to as “piety,” the “sense of what properly goes with what.” The footnote
shows how style and piety come to settle in the very bodily rhythms Burke
discussed in *Counter-Statement*. Note, for example, how repetition of actions
is conjoined with a “knowledge” of what is “right.” Bodily repetition and
knowledge of propriety are so reciprocal as to become almost identical. That
is, action is molded by repetition, whereby the body falls in sync with the
“contingencies”—whether a broad sense of “criminality,” how spitting rightly
accompanies catcalling, or how one must kneel in church when the priest makes
the requisite hand motion. All these linkages come to bear on “the subtleties
of manner and attitudes” in a way that, through repetition over time, equips a
body with the “right” mannerism and actions for the situation.

Such habit formation is akin, for Burke, to the way a child who appears
to have learned to walk, has really only learned “a certain kind of walking
that is adapted to floors and streets, for instance, but poorly adapted to rough
mountainsides,” or in his other example whereby “the skilled sailor, having
learned to walk by taking the roll of a ship into account, rolls when on firm
ground” (PC 105, Burke’s emphasis). The “ground” here thus approximates
the contingencies of which Burke writes in the style passage above—a bodily sense of how something is done in a particular context. The “farthest reaches of the communicative” in the above passage thus demarcates Kenneth Burke’s place for the body. Here, “communicative” might be read as deliberately adjectival, in the sense of a communicative disease, thus marking the transport or contagion of habituated mannerisms and actions—the “schema of what-goes-with-what, carried through all the subtleties of manner and attitudes.” The body in this way becomes, to return to Burke’s Counter-Statement verb, “tapped” by, and hooked on, certain styles/pieties.

Such full inhabitation of piety, however, can, like a drug habit, or like Wood’s juridical habit, become so engulfing as to become destructive, thus reintroducing the dangers of efficiency. In the rest of the lengthy footnote, Burke explains how style and piety, when taken to extremes in a social milieu, create a dangerous imbalance:

Style can have its own form of deterioration. For in societies greatly marked by class prerogatives, style itself tends to become a competitive implement, as a privileged group may cultivate style to advertise its privileges and perpetuate them. Style then ceases to be propitiatory. It becomes boastful . . . As style assumes this invidious function, there is a corresponding social movement from inducement toward dominance. Its congregational qualities are lessened, its segregational qualities are stressed. (n. 270).

The tenacity of bodily habits, and the ways in which these habits and manners are looped into identity, can, if unchecked and picked up by others, lead to imbalance and overemphasis, and most likely back to the very moralistic associations of piety that Burke so strenuously resists. It is therefore incumbent on the social critic—much as it was for Burke’s early conception of the artist—to attend to the hypertrophy of style or piety in order to “counter” the onset of ecological imbalance, or worse, divisiveness.

In this cyclical, recursive way, piety remains tethered to efficiency. In a retrospective interview conducted in 1980-81, the language of drug addiction can still be heard in Burke’s discussion of habituated styles of thinking: “I believe, absolutely, you do get hooked to a vocabulary. If you really do live with your terms, they turn up tricks of their own. You can’t get around them.” The interviewer, following Burke’s metaphoric lead, poses the follow-up question—“What dynamic is at work and responsible for such a fix?”—to which Burke responds:

They do run you by vocabulary . . . You’re picking the terms and they always have an angle beyond which you use them and then they use
you. There's no question about it. Sometimes a person writes a book and the book sells, and he writes another book . . . and it's wonderful. He's making money. Then it turns out that his way of writing gave him psychogenic cancer! That's a part of the anguish of your body when you were writing these books. Take someone like Sylvia Plath. Here's a woman who really lives with her work, means it, every damn thing she writes. She gets more and more efficient on suicidal themes. Then you're going in that groove . . . (10; emphasis in original)

The "groove" here aligns with the "ruts of experience" considered so extensively in Permanence and Change. In this conversation, Burke emphasizes the reciprocity of the "substance"—here language: just as with the cocaine addict and the addict's substance, a writer uses terms and the terms use the writer. The reciprocal movement produces a fusion of the substance and body, producing the "user" anew. The subsequent movement of Burke's answers from the language of addiction to the language of bodily transformation is therefore both easy and habitual for Burke. Burke figures styles of speaking and thinking as habits, and language itself as a drug, thus suggesting just how deeply ingrained—habituated, even—his work as a drug researcher had become.

Burke's years as a drug researcher were therefore formative in at least two ways. First, by placing him in direct relation to an "efficient" boss, the time at the Bureau helped Burke refine and reformulate the work he did in Counter-Statement. The result is a broader approach to social matters, yet one that nonetheless draws on and benefits from his early aesthetic criticism. Such an approach is altered through his developing method—the counter-efficient style of scholarship no doubt made more explicit to Burke through his oppositional relation to Colonel Woods. Perhaps more importantly, Burke's scope is also altered as he brings his patient methodology to bear on his assigned subject of study. The consideration of drugs and drug use in the context of "social hygiene," that is, opens for Burke all sorts of windows onto the bodily learning and habit formation, even as it equips him with a remarkably broad perspective on the socio-political implications of how such habituated bodies get formed and formulated. For Burke, critical-intellectual work would from that point always be figured as pious, habitual, and bodily.

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Notes
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sharp-eyed criticism. Thanks too, to Amy Wan and Nicole Walls, who offered valuable research assistance in the article’s late stages.

Rueckert’s point was, to be sure, hinted at earlier on by Wayne Booth in his essay “Kenneth Burke’s Way of Knowing” and dramatized even more in his recent “The Many Voices of Kenneth Burke, Theologian and Prophet, as Revealed in His Letters to Me.” which delineates no fewer than six different “voices” (and maybe more) of Burke in their decades of correspondence.

According to Selzer (241, n 2), letters to Josephson indicate Burke was at work on “Program” (formerly called “Manifesto”) in August and November 1927, which corresponded precisely with the end of Burke’s first stint with the Spelman Trust.

For a reading that offers multiple other ways Burke’s first book functions as a “counter-statement,” one that only briefly considers the countering of efficiency outlined in program, see Jack Selzer’s award-winning “Counter-Statement as Counter Statement” (first appearing in Rhetoric Society Quarterly and reprinted in Kenneth Burke in Greenwich Village).

In this way, efficiency is a more specific formulation of “perspective,” a key term in the partner book to ATH, Permanence and Change. Both of these terms together forecast “terministic screen,” the one that would ultimately stick.

Burke, in a futile attempt to save money to go to Europe, spun the Wall Street roulette wheel. In December 1929, he wrote to Allen Tate: “The Dial Award, you must know, is in the strong hands of Wall Street. After showing great faith, and jumping in when the market was going smash, I am rewarded for my vision and fearlessness by being exactly two dollars ahead on a two thousand dollar investment” (KB to AT 12/19/29).

From the Kenneth Burke Collection at the Penn State Library. Thanks to Sandra Stelts for her expert assistance with archival materials and to the Penn State Library for permission to quote from this letter.

This epithet concludes a series of letters to Allen Tate in which Burke indicates that Colonel Woods was talking of sending Burke to England. On March 15, 1929, he wrote to Allen Tate in France, “there is a faintest chance that I may get to London for the Colonel within a few weeks” (KB to AT 3/15/29). A month later he was still waiting for “fate and the Colonel [to] cast [Burke’s] die” (4/13/29). Then finally in October, he wrote, “No, Allen, I did not come to Europe. I changed my plans. I decided, instead, that I would not come. Also Colonel Woods, the Captain my Captain changed his plans” (10/27/29). Letters from the Allen Tate Papers; Box 13, Folder 61; Manuscript Division; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.


Here, Burke appears to be following the ancient Greeks—both Plato and Aristotle believed that music “moved in” to the body, and as such, the believed that the types of music should be carefully monitored. For a more thorough discussion of music and bodily rhythm as theorized by the ancients, see my “Bodily Pedagogies.”

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It is perhaps noteworthy that chapter two, “The Alkaloids,” is the only chapter in Dangerous Drugs that bears Burke’s imprint so strongly. My hunch is that Woods, in the spirit of efficiency, placed Burke’s co-ghostwriter, John D. Farnham (also, like
Woods, a military man), in charge of writing the other, more policy-based, legalistic chapters, while leaving Burke to spin out the historical overview.

In a recent article, Bryan Crable rightly claims that “Burke’s thought about embodiment reaches maturity in Permanence and Change.” Such a claim fits in nicely with other scholars, such as Wess and Richard Thames, who have worked extensively on the concept of Metabiology.

Thomas Rosteck and Michael Leff characterize Burke’s move as “an ironic and potent realignment of terms” (327), specifically, as a new alignment of piety with “propriety.”

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