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ELIZABETH BAYLEY SETON: WORDLING AND RHETOR

by Déirdre A. Carney

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Committee Approval

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As I write this, it is Lent, a beautiful season in the Church calendar. A graduate of St. Cassian School, which I attended from kindergarten through eighth grade, I am a product of the parochial education that Seton pioneered, a result of her efforts. If Seton is a mother of many daughters, as she once wrote, I am one of them.

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Elizabeth Bayley Seton:

Wordling and Rhetor

Dissertation Abstract—Idaho State University (2017)

This dissertation presents a rhetorical analysis of the notebook of advice that Elizabeth Bayley Seton wrote to her daughter, Kit, from approximately 1816 to Seton's death early in 1821. Seton's advice, situated in the tradition of American conduct literature, is analyzed through the lens of theorist and scholar Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad. The dissertation argues that in the advice book's emphasis on scene and agent, two terms of Burke's pentad, Seton undermines and forecloses Kit's ability to be an agent, or actor. Seton is almost a "double" agent, first in writing the advice and then through her suggestion, implicit in the advice, that Kit is unable to act without her mother's words to guide her.

Introduction

Who was Elizabeth Bayley Seton? Among the answers are wife, mother, convert to Catholicism, religious sister, educator, founder, and canonized saint in the Catholic Church. What may not readily come to mind for those knowledgeable about the historical figure Elizabeth Seton is that she was a practicing rhetor. Seton left behind school administrative records, letters, several journals, notebooks, original poetry, instructions, and marginalia. She also left behind an interesting handwritten notebook of her advice, comprising about 20 typed, single-spaced pages, evidently written as the mood struck or as time permitted.

In this dissertation, I examine Seton's book of advice, "Catherine Seton's Little Red Book," named for her daughter Catherine, or Kit, to whom Seton directed the advice. Seton's advice book has never been discussed as a contribution to rhetoric, and Seton has not been explicitly discussed as a rhetor. Seton's advice book is part of the conduct book tradition, a prescriptive genre under the umbrella of rhetoric. For today's readers, touchstones of conduct literature might be modern self-help books, old-fashioned etiquette manuals or courtesy books, or *Godey's Lady's Book* and magazines of that ilk. Seton's advice book also exemplifies rhetoric that inhabits the in-between places, such as letters, reflections, and journals/diaries, among other written products that may not readily be demarcated as rhetoric. Situating Seton as a practicing rhetor in the conduct tradition makes an original contribution to studies of Seton and to rhetorical and writing studies alike.

The advice of a religious sister from the early 1800s may sound like a research buzz kill to contemporary scholars of rhetoric: potentially dull material that concerns

outdated notions of propriety, stilted language, and too many Biblical references for the modern reader's tastes. However, as Carol Mattingly writes of rhetorical history and its rediscovered female voices: "We must continue to question the stories handed down to us, and even those we have helped to create" ("Telling" 102). Mattingly discusses historical women whose ideas may make for uncomfortable reading in a contemporary context due to "[o]ur own acculturation and prejudices." She argues that "in this secular age some [scholars] equate religiosity with conservatism, despite many nineteenth-century women's claim of learning rhetorical and organizational skills in their church work" (103). Seton's religious work offered her ongoing opportunities to develop as a rhetor, and the central research questions of this study are: What does Seton have to do with rhetoric? And, what are her contributions to rhetoric and writing?

To answer these questions, I employ rhetorical theorist Kenneth D. Burke's dramatisic pentad to examine Seton's advice book. Reading Seton's book through Burke's pentad helps the reader and critic look at the document (or event) through the pentad's five "fingers" of scene, act, agent, agency, and purpose. The pentad expands the critic's perspective and, in the case of Seton's advice book, affords readers the ability to see patterns in the text that are not apparent on the surface. My dissertation will show that agent and scene are of particular interest in Seton's advice book. Author-agent Elizabeth Seton manipulates scene in order to coax her daughter Kit to act as Seton desires. That is, through her handling of scene, Seton delimits or forecloses Kit's (future) ability to act.

Each chapter of this dissertation contextualizes and fleshes out Seton's contributions to rhetoric and writing. Chapter One, "Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Wordling and Rhetor," presents a biography of Elizabeth Bayley Seton. This biography covers

Seton's single and married life in New York before she converted to Catholicism and her life after her conversion, when she established the first native religious order for women in the United States and became a religious sister herself while raising her five children. This chapter also reviews the literature on Elizabeth Bayley Seton. Critics and historians tend to focus on Seton's spirituality, sainthood, and pioneering contributions to Catholic primary and secondary education in the United States. Because the dissertation focuses on Seton's advice book, a written product, I discuss relevant critiques and studies of Seton's writing. I situate Seton as a rhetor, practicing the conduct or advice tradition.

Chapter Two, "The Conduct Book Tradition," discusses the conduct or advice book tradition in what is now the United States from approximately 1620 through the mid-nineteenth century before the American Civil War. I briefly describe European precursors to the conduct tradition in order to contextualize the growth of the tradition. I also explain how such prescriptive literature is rhetorical in nature.

Chapter Three, "Kenneth Burke and Dramatism," describes the method by which I analyze Seton's advice book. Dramatism is a method of rhetorical criticism developed by the American philosopher, social critic, and rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke and outlined in his monograph *A Grammar of Motives*. In discussing the specialized terms and uses of his method, I provide critical responses to Burke's work as well as extensions of dramatism.

Chapter Four, "A Rhetorical Analysis of 'Catherine Seton's Little Red Book,'" applies Burke's dramatisitic pentad to the advice book or artifact. Agent and scene emerge as key terms. In addition, having read both the published, typeset transcript and the

manuscript advice notebook, I explore the significance and the challenges of archival research, and I describe the differences my archival research uncovered.

Chapter Five, “Alternative Rhetorics in the Composition Classroom,” proposes an undergraduate composition course with a focus on alternative rhetorics. In order to explain what alternative rhetorics are, I contrast them with the rhetorical tradition as it is often presented in the undergraduate writing classroom. The alternative rhetorics of authors like Seton are typically ignored in these classrooms. In response, I present an outline of a proposed course that will require students to read critically about alternative rhetorics, read examples of alternative rhetorics, and practice producing alternative rhetorics themselves through major and minor assignments and in-class activities.

Finally, the conclusion of this dissertation proposes areas of future research on Seton’s advice book. The subject of this dissertation is Elizabeth Bayley Seton’s advice book to her daughter, Kit, and dramatism is a critical tool that allows me to examine one new facet of Seton, that of practicing rhetor. However, my analysis presents a sliver of what Seton’s rich, complicated text can offer future readers, scholars, and critics.

Chapter 1

Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Wordling and Rhetor

This chapter introduces Elizabeth Bayley Seton in a new light, namely as a rhetor who wrote in a rhetorical genre, the conduct or advice book. Seton has been studied largely for her notable contributions to American Catholicism because, after all, she was canonized in 1975 as the first American-born saint (Barthel 214). She is credited with establishing the American parochial school system, symbolically if not literally, and founded the first home-grown religious order of women in the United States, the American Sisters of Charity. In the areas of American Catholicism and her own vibrant spirituality, Seton's biography and her body of writing, the letters, journals, meditations, instructions, and notebooks she left behind, are well-known. However, studying Seton, "one of the most influential Catholic women of the nineteenth century" (Farina 6), as a practicing rhetor is a new perspective from which to understand this American woman and her writing. Specifically, I study one rhetorical artifact, the advice book she wrote to her daughter Catherine Josephine, or Kit. I argue that this conduct book is Seton's as yet unacknowledged contribution to rhetorical and writing studies.

To begin, I provide a brief biography of Elizabeth Bayley Seton in order to introduce the woman known in American Catholic history as "Mother Seton" and to contextualize her writing. Next, I offer a review of literature on Seton. The last section of this chapter discusses Seton the writer and rhetor. Let us begin to examine how this nineteenth-century widow, mother of five, Catholic convert and religious sister, founder of the first native female religious order in the United States, and canonized saint can be re-read as a practicing rhetor.

Elizabeth Bayley Seton, a Brief Biography

Author Brian Doyle sums up Saint Elizabeth Bayley Seton's January 4th feast day, the date of her death from tuberculosis in 1821, as the "Feast of the Tough New York Lady Who Bore Five Children and Then Her Husband Died and Somehow She Managed to Bring Up the Children Alone and on the Side Founded Schools and Established a Religious Order as if She Didn't Have Enough to Do" (qtd. in McCormick 11). This tongue-in-cheek mini-biography encapsulates the life-changing occurrences and historical accomplishments in Seton's eventful life. Despite these rather extraordinary accomplishments, Seton is "fairly invisible in histories of women" (*Elizabeth* 6), according to Seton scholar Judith Metz, and absolutely invisible in histories of rhetoric.

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born in 1774 in New York, one of Great Britain's thirteen American colonies, but "by her second birthday, she was an American" (Bechtle, "An American" 1) living in a city occupied by the British (Barthel 22). She was the second of three daughters of Dr. Richard Bayley, a descendant of French Huguenots, and Catherine Charlton (15). Richard Bayley was a doctor and surgeon, taught anatomy at King's College (present-day Columbia University), and was eventually appointed Health Officer of the State of New York. Throughout Elizabeth's childhood and young adulthood, her father traveled overseas for additional medical training and study. Elizabeth's formal education was termed "genteel," and she received, in accordance with her era, "a distinctly feminine education, one that coincided in practically nothing with the training given a boy." In contrast to a boy's education, she learned "music, drawing, French, literature, sewing, dancing, housewifery, etc." although she also had access to her father's personal library and his encouragement to avail herself of it (Feeney 12). In this

way, Seton “was carefully tutored at home beyond the custom of her contemporaries” (Zauhar 337) due to her father’s efforts. Dr. Bayley “encouraged a vigorous reading program aimed at both sharpening Elizabeth’s mind and training her character” (Metz, *Elizabeth* 152).

Elizabeth’s early life was marked by tragedy. Her mother died when Elizabeth was just three, and her younger sister Kitty died about a year later (Barthel 21). After her father remarried, Elizabeth and her older sister Mary were frequently left with their father’s relatives outside of New York City rather than with their father and his new family with second wife Charlotte Barclay. Although Dr. Bayley’s unhappy second marriage evidently created family tension and led to his eventual separation from Charlotte, he and Elizabeth grew to have a close relationship by the time Elizabeth married and had children of her own. Indeed, Elizabeth may have developed her sense of mission from observing her father’s powerful example (Thorgren 242). Through Dr. Bayley’s efforts and foresight as Health Officer, a quarantine station was established on Staten Island to sequester and attend to sick immigrants recently arrived to the country in order to reduce the spread of yellow fever. From the safety of her father’s summer home, also on Staten Island, Elizabeth watched as new boats landed and disgorged sick and sometimes starving immigrants, adults, children, and babies (Cuzzolina 27). In 1801 Dr. Bayley contracted yellow fever and succumbed (Barthel 81). While her father, who was not religious, lay dying, Elizabeth held her baby Kit up as an offering or a bargain with God to take her child rather than let her father die without faith and thus be kept from Heaven (Cuzzolina 17). His death “cost Seton the individual who was perhaps her closest intellectual companion at that time” (Zauhar 339).

Elizabeth's other close companion was her husband, William Magee Seton, or Will, whom Elizabeth met at a ball when she was 16 (Barthel 31). They married four years later in 1794 (45). Will was the son of William, Sr., a successful New York banker, and his first wife, Rebecca Curson (32). The oldest son, Will seemed destined to follow his father's merchant career, having studied and practiced finance overseas (35). Will and Elizabeth eventually had five children: Anna Maria (Annina, or Anina), William, Richard, Catherine (Kit), and Rebecca (Bec). At first, the couple enjoyed a happy, somewhat glamorous life in New York City. Will was even one of four hosts of a ball honoring George Washington in 1797 (50).

Also in 1797 Elizabeth Seton became a founding member of the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children through which "women with resources would bring food, clothing and firewood to the homes of poor women, and give them advice and a chance to work" (Bechtle, *The Spirituality* 258). The organization found its impetus in Isabella Graham. After Graham was herself widowed with four children in 1773 at the age of 31 (Metz, "Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Extending" 29), she opened a school for girls in New York in 1789 (Barthel 58-59). Elizabeth's close friends Eliza Sadler, or Sad, and Catherine Dupleix, or Dué, were also members of the Society along with Will's sister Rebecca, or Beck (Metz, "Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Extending" 29). The women in the Society "maneuvered through political channels to gain the support they needed, learning in the process how to be savvy negotiators" (30). Elizabeth herself served as manager and treasurer (31). Managers "defied convention by traveling without male escort in sections of the city that were considered dangerous" (31). One morning in 1802, Elizabeth "solicit[ed] funds" by calling on twelve homes (32). While these

women's efforts were a generous and charitable use of their time, their philanthropy was a given for women of their class. This does not diminish their work, but it tempers suggestions of Seton's early and inevitable saintliness (Thie 254). That is, consider that "during the same years that she was attending to widows and children, Elizabeth was also living the life of a socialite, as a member of Trinity Episcopal Church, the church for New York's upper class, and a devotee of the theater, popular novels[,] and music" (Barkley par. 9). Incidentally, Elizabeth discusses such social activities, although with a negative cast, in her advice book to her daughter Kit decades later.

Tragedy struck when Elizabeth's father-in-law died in 1798 (Barthel 64), leaving his distraught son Will and Elizabeth to care for Will's six siblings, aged fourteen to seven (66). Elizabeth was just twenty-four years old (68). Then came the failure of Will's business, Seton, Maitland, and Company, and threats of Will's being thrown into debtors' prison. Making the threats all the more real, Will Seton's brother-in-law and business partner James Maitland was actually serving time in debtors' prison. Already financially strapped, Elizabeth and Will "supplied the [Maitland] family from their own storeroom" (Metz, "Extending" 25). Elizabeth "sat wearily writing business letters until one and two in the morning" (Dirvin 74) to help Will, and "[sold] off furniture from her own home to appease creditors even as she was heavily pregnant with her fifth child" (O'Donnell 9). Their home was inventoried, including the children's clothing (Hannefin 4), Will surrendered the keys to the business, and their large family moved to a smaller, less expensive home (Barthel 76). Now with five children of their own to care for, in addition to Will's siblings, and their financial problems mounting, Will's health declined as he became dangerously ill with tuberculosis.

In a desperate, even unwise, decision, Elizabeth, Will, and their oldest child, eight-year-old Anna Maria, sailed to Italy on October 3, 1803, in hopes that the warm climate would improve Will's fragile health. Elizabeth did not have the moral support of friends and family in her decision to travel to Italy (Barthel 84), and the planned trip actually "aroused much family opposition" (Sadlier 31). One scholar questions the decision, and the implied criticism seems fair: "Is her determination to go to Italy driven by a need to escape the hard realities at home?" (265), Marilyn Thie asks, for "their decision mean[t] that friends and family must care for their four youngest children and, in addition, assume responsibility for the second generation sired by William Senior and work out complicated financial strains" (264). In contrast to the problems the Setons faced in New York was the promise of Italy, where Will's two wealthy friends, and devoted Catholics, the brothers Antonio and Filippo Filicchi, lived. Will had worked with them in Italy in his early twenties before he married Elizabeth (Barthel 31). To use today's parlance, the Filicchi brothers were connected. Filippo knew Bishop John Carroll and George Washington, among other well-known Americans, and Washington had "named him the Consul-General of the United States at Leghorn" (Feeney 100).

However, the hope that the trip to Italy offered was almost immediately shattered. Upon the Setons' arrival in Livorno (Leghorn), the family was quarantined in a lazaretto. Italian health authorities mistook Will's tuberculosis for yellow fever, and the ship the Setons arrived on lacked a health certificate to prove otherwise. The lazaretto was like a prison, with barred windows, locks, and a guard with a rifle. Their room was drafty and damp from the sea pounding on the rocks outside, and inhospitable with its cold stone floors and benches to sleep on. Making the scene even more inhospitable, and downright

creepy and foreboding, were the papers glued above the door and the marks notched into the wall and the shutter indicating the length of stay of the lazaretto's previous inhabitants (Feeney 79-80), like the opposite of a countdown to freedom.

Elizabeth's *Leghorn Journal* is a detailed journal of the trip to Italy hand-written in real time for her sister-in-law Rebecca, save for one week in the lazaretto when Elizabeth did not write one word (Feeney 81). The family spent thirty days in quarantine (Barthel 53), and on December 19 they were finally released. Since he was too weak to walk, Will had to be carried out to a waiting carriage (68-69). Although it may have appeared that Will would rally, he died several days after Christmas, a little over a month after arriving in Italy. Even sadder, Elizabeth and two washerwomen prepared Will's body for burial in Italy, as it was feared he was contagious (E. Kelly, "Elizabeth Ann" 309). After Will's death, mother and daughter stayed in Italy for about three more months due in part to visiting with the Filicchi families and also because Annina and then Elizabeth came down with scarlet fever, delaying their journey home (Cuzzolina 78).

During their stay, Elizabeth was introduced to the Filicchis' ardent Catholicism. Elizabeth had always been a spiritual person (Metz, *Elizabeth* 175), and she faithfully attended Sunday services at Trinity Episcopal in New York. In the lazaretto she was comforted by reading the Bible to herself or aloud to Will. Filippo encouraged her to question and seek answers to her questions about the Catholic faith (Barthel 89). In addition, with the Filicchis in Italy, Seton experienced "a vibrant Catholic faith among her intellectual and social equals" (Bechtle, "An American" 2), a far cry from the Catholic scene in her native New York. Elizabeth was intrigued by the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation, which "offered Seton the immediate union with God" that she sought

(O'Donnell 11). Stated in rather simplistic terms, transubstantiation is the “change of the whole substance” of the bread and wine that occurs when, by consecration, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ (*Catechism* 384-85). In this way, not a symbol of Christ, but Christ Himself, is “wholly and entirely present” at the Mass (384).

It can only be imagined what lay in the private space of Elizabeth's thoughts as she sailed home not with her husband but as a widow. An active member of the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children, she surely knew from observation and her home visits the dismal future ahead of her, and was also likely “aware of the complex problems faced by poor widows trying to support themselves through needlework and laundering” (Boylan 501). If Elizabeth thought her family's financial situation would somehow be sorted out by the time she returned to New York, she was wrong. Things could not have been worse, for compounding her financial problems was her outrageous idea of converting to Catholicism. Additionally, her sister-in-law Rebecca, whom Elizabeth called her “soul's Sister” (Metz, *Elizabeth* 123), died of tuberculosis about six weeks after Elizabeth's return (Zauhar 340), with Elizabeth at her side (Metz, “The Key” 17). Seton biographer Joseph I. Dirvin¹ writes, “Head crammed with new ideas, heart reaching out to new beliefs, no funds, no livelihood—Elizabeth knew that her former life was over, but she had counted on Rebecca as the only one who would understand, *really* understand, to the point of joining Elizabeth in her stand” (*Mrs. Seton* 147). She probably did not count on returning home to nurse her close friend on her death-bed (Metz, *Elizabeth* 134).

¹ Dirvin suggests that Elizabeth knew she would convert before she returned to New York, but recent scholarship indicates a real internal struggle.

Antonio had accompanied Elizabeth and Annina on the ship back to America (Cuzzolina 81). The Filicchis encouraged her conversion; Elizabeth's family and friends generally did not. Recall that on Elizabeth's paternal side, her ancestors fled France, persecuted by the Catholic Church. To put the anti-Catholic sentiment in America into context, "until Elizabeth Seton was 10 years old, the Catholic Church in the fledgling country was outlawed, its priests subject to arrest" (Bechtle, "An American" 1). The Catholics in the New York City of Seton's time were lower class immigrants. By contrast, Elizabeth was Episcopalian, "born into, married into, and well settled into the religion of the social and political elite" (Barthel 7), so "[f]or someone of [her] class to consider becoming a Catholic was unthinkable" (18). Antonio Filicchi wrote to Bishop Cheverus in Boston, and in turn Cheverus sent a letter to Elizabeth. Evidently his letter helped to finalize the matter for her, and she "treasured his letter like 'gold'"—perhaps because the simple fact of Cheverus' writing it suggested that "Seton was truly wanted in the Catholic Church" (O'Donnell 16). Meanwhile, Filippo wrote a letter introducing Seton to Bishop Carroll (15). His brother Antonio witnessed her confirmation at St. Peter's Catholic Church in 1805 (Daughters 62), the year in which both she and her children converted (Gallagher 98).

The decision to convert to Catholicism angered and scandalized Seton's family, and she was cut out of both her godmother's will and her uncle's will for this reason (Dirvin, *Mrs. Seton* 194). Her former pastor, friend, and spiritual guide at Trinity Church, the Rev. Henry Hobart, whose "sewn-together booklet of sermons" Seton had brought with her to Italy for comfort (Barthel 7), spoke ill of a teaching project that Seton wished to pursue, and it was only through her female friends' intervention that he relented

(McNeil, “Historical” 288). After her plans to teach at two different schools in New York fell through, she “tried several other strategies in an effort to provide for her family. She sewed and mended, and took in boarders, to help cover her rent while continuing to try to find work as a teacher in New York” (O’Neill 10-11). New York continued to be a disagreeable environment for Elizabeth, who had to make a living and provide for her children. However, a fortuitous meeting with a visiting priest, William Dubourg, after Mass at St. Peter’s changed the trajectory of Seton’s life.

Dubourg was struck by Seton’s story and evident piety and thought she was suited to teach and attract like-minded women for a religious community that he eventually hoped to establish in Maryland (Burns 210-11), the so-called “cradle of Catholicism in the United States” (Sadlier 87). New York only numbered 1,500 Catholics to Maryland’s 16,000, “[a]nd these Catholics were the landed gentry, along with an educated, prosperous middle class” (Barthel 121). In an 1808 letter the Rev. John Cheverus of Boston wrote to Seton that “[s]uch an establishment would be a public benefit to religion, and, we hope, a real advantage to yourself and amiable family” (qtd. in R. Seton 15). The plan allowed her sons to attend free of charge a local Catholic school for boys, which Dubourg himself had founded. The boys’ school was attached to St. Mary’s Seminary, and Seton’s daughters could stay with her in a house near the Seminary (Hannefin 6). The family would be together. Thus, some three years after her conversion and confirmation in New York, Seton and her children moved to Baltimore, Maryland, and Seton started a Catholic school for girls in her own rented home (McNeil, “Historical” 291). This first effort was a one-room schoolhouse with few students (O’Neill 11), where Seton “taught the daughters of leading families and prepared children for their first communion”

(Melville, “Seton” 264). About a year later, on July 31, 1809, she founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, the first native order of American religious sisters (McNeil, “Historical” 285).

In 1809, having been donated a parcel of land in the countryside, Seton and her Sisters moved to rural Emmitsburg, Maryland (Metz, “Founding” 21). Their new school for girls, St. Joseph’s Academy, was run by Seton and the Sisters of Charity under “rudimentary” conditions (23). The early days of the community were not easy, as money and food were scarce. The Sisters lodged in a stone house before their new home was completed. Regina Bechtle recreates the scene: “In the Stone House of 1809, with 16 women and children crowded into [two] drafty rooms and a loft, the chapel had to serve as classroom, workroom and community room as well; a simple folding door screened the altar” (*The Spirituality* 184). The first winter in Emmitsburg was especially severe, and the Sisters often awoke in the morning “covered with snow” that blew in between the wooden boards nailed over the bare window frames (McCann 25). Because “[t]he price of tea and coffee barred their use,” the Sisters made a kind of coffee out of carrots and sweetened it with molasses (Sadlier 121). As school superintendent, Seton observed classes and trained teachers (Hannefin 19). St. Joseph’s boasted a rigorous curriculum, including catechism, English, writing, arithmetic, bookkeeping, ciphering, history, geography, and French (Crumlish 53), and students went on excursions in geography class (5). Student achievement was recognized in weekly “public reports” during assemblies and at the year-end “Distributions” when students received awards, called premiums (4). To put Seton’s school in context, almost four hundred female academies and seminaries were created “in the North and the South between 1790 and 1830.

Hundreds more opened in the three decades before the Civil War,” writes scholar Mary Kelley (407). In fact, “the percentage of women attending female academies and seminaries between 1790 and 1830 was larger than the percentage of men enrolled in male academies and colleges” (408). Seton was participating in an exciting and historic educational endeavor in the United States.

Elizabeth’s two sisters-in-law, Harriet and Cecilia, eventually followed her to Maryland from New York, but both succumbed to tuberculosis, as did many of the religious Sisters (Hannefin 11). Death of loved ones continued to haunt Elizabeth. Her daughter Annina died at 16 (17), and four years later young Bec died. Seton kept a journal “during the final days” of both of her daughters (E. Kelly, *Numerous* 194). With her two sons away but Kit close to her, Elizabeth Seton died on January 4, 1821. Richard died overseas two years later (Dirvin, *The Soul* 122); Will was away in the Navy (McCann 92). Kit was “the sole heir of her mother’s \$2500 funded family estate” and after years of travelling in Europe and the United States (Gallagher 101), she became a Sister of Mercy in New York City in 1846 (105) with a special vocation for prison ministry (107). She died at the age of ninety-one (97). Her mother, Elizabeth Seton, was beatified in 1963 (Hannefin 222) and canonized in 1975 (287).

Brian Doyle’s purposefully playful description of Seton’s feast day, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, is mostly accurate, and certainly captures the spirit of her eventful life. In reality, Elizabeth Seton was not alone in her efforts. Her success was not a one-woman show, and she made the most of opportunities offered to her. Historian Judith Metz explains that upon her return from Italy, Seton’s “life began intersecting with the Catholic community in the United States” (“Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Animator” 49).

She received financial help from her friends the Filicchi brothers in Italy. Their generosity enabled her to pursue her vocation while her children were educated and their physical needs cared for. Through the Filicchi brothers' connections, she was introduced to Bishop Carroll of Maryland and Bishop Cheverus of Boston, and earned their backing. She had the occasional monetary support and the unflagging moral support of her female friends in New York, whom she corresponded with until her death. Acknowledging this support is not to diminish Seton's achievements, but to clarify how an American woman could have accomplished so much "on her own" in antebellum America.

Of course, that she had the backing of so many is a clear testament to her gifts. Seton was devout, eloquent, charismatic, canny, warm, can-do, and pursued opportunities open for her, and, to be sure, she was pretty and charming, as she is frequently described. More to the point, her close friend and colleague, the priest Simon Bruté, "had a great respect for Seton's eloquence and wit, and he recognized her ability to influence those around her as a positive attribute to be nurtured, not a vice to be controlled" (Zauhar 343). Another priest-friend, John Dubois, remarked on Seton's "insinuating eloquence" (qtd. in Dirvin, *Mrs. Seton* 291). Writing half tongue in cheek, Jay P. Dolan comments, "for successfully putting up with the harassment of [her] male superiors she deserved canonization!" (121). We will look at Seton the eloquent rhetor after a review of the literature on Seton.

Review of the Literature: Elizabeth Bayley Seton

Seton scholar and historian Judith Metz outlines several patterns in the scholarship and criticism concerning Elizabeth Bayley Seton. Metz notes that

[w]ritings about her have emphasized her personal holiness and her courageous spirit at the time of her conversion to Catholicism and her life as a Sister of Charity. She has become the symbolic American saint whose picture and short biography regularly appear in any survey of American Catholic history. Her achievements are presented as meaningful primarily to Catholic sisters and to Catholic educators. Despite some efforts to portray her as a model for wives, mothers, widows, and converts, Seton stands more as a symbol than as a flesh and blood person for most.

(Elizabeth 3)

Metz observes that Seton's biography, spirituality and sainthood, and legacy of Catholic education are well documented. These broad categories often overlap. Critical studies on Seton have appeared in the *Vincentian Heritage Journal*, *American Catholic Studies*, and *U.S. Catholic Historian*. The three-volume collection of Seton's writings, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*, co-edited by Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz, brings together material previously accessible only through archival research. The two editors also co-authored the article "Elizabeth Bayley Seton Writings: Current State and Future Plans" that details "the next phase of the Seton Writings project" (25). This includes a search for letters addressed to Seton as well as those "among her family members and associates" (24). The authors hope that with such documentation, "Elizabeth Seton's experiences can be understood and appreciated in new ways when these additional viewpoints are accessible" (33). Finally, digitized materials are available through the Vincentian eBooks online.

Biography, Before and After Canonization

Much has been published, both scholarly and popular, about Elizabeth Bayley Seton's extraordinary story. Annabelle M. Melville's *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: 1774-1821* (1951), however, is the definitive biography on Elizabeth Seton. In addition, several older biographies record Seton's life, most with a hagiographical bent. Of the biographies published before Seton was canonized a saint, her grandson, the Archbishop Robert Seton, edited the two-volume *Memoir, Letters and Journal, of Elizabeth Seton, Convert to the Catholic Faith, and Sister of Charity* (1869) so that, in his words, "her example may be useful to many who perhaps should find themselves in positions not altogether different from her own" (1: v) and "to let Elizabeth Seton speak out her own mind and reveal her heart in letters and other writings" (1: vi). This compilation includes letters written to and by Elizabeth Seton with Robert Seton's commentary on the events in his grandmother's life. In her brief but thorough biographical essay on Elizabeth Seton in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950*, Melville writes that Robert Seton's work is "a not always accurate collection of memorabilia" (265). Frances Murphy Zauhar also wrote a thoughtful, complete biographical essay on Seton in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

Robert Seton's work, along with other work of his era and the early twentieth century, often supplements the historical material by attributing opportunities in Seton's life to Providence or Divine Will rather than to hard work, opportunity, serendipity, or chutzpah. Agnes Sadlier's *Elizabeth Seton: Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity; Her Life and Work* (1905) also refers to "the design of God" (47) in Seton's life and her membership in a "heretical" religion before converting to Catholicism (10). (Impolitic digs at Seton's former religion are also frequent in the older works about her.)

Interestingly, early on in the book Sadlier interrupts the narrative in order to emphasize with a charming earnestness “that every faltering of Elizabeth’s feet [...] should be faithfully recorded” (58). Other work in a similar vein includes Leonard Feeney’s *Mother Seton, An American Woman* (1947) and Joseph I. Dirvin’s *Mrs. Seton: Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity* (1962). An uncredited work, *The Soul of Elizabeth Ann Seton* (1936), is similar to Robert Seton’s in combining Elizabeth Seton’s words with those of an editor in an attempt to create a seamless “autobiography” of Seton’s life. The closest document to a genuine memoir or autobiography is Seton’s recollections of her childhood, called her *Dear Remembrances*. However, this brief piece was written for the sisters in her charge “at the request of her spiritual director” (Zauhar 343).

Mary Agnes McCann’s *History of Mother Seton’s Daughters* (1916) presents a history of the different branches of the American Sisters of Charity. In the book’s Preface, Peter Guilday notes that “there was hardly an ecclesiastic in the country during that period who did not have a keen appreciation of the very important place [Seton] was filling in American Catholic life and activity during the first quarter of the nineteenth century” (xiii). Daniel Hannefin (1989) also wrote a history of the Daughters of Charity of the United States, one branch of Seton’s Sisters of Charity. The first chapter of Hannefin’s monograph details the history and growth of the religious order while later chapters discuss Seton’s cause for canonization. Ellin M. Kelly’s *The Seton Years, 1774-1821* (1981) is the first of a two-volume work called *Numerous Choirs* that deliberately employs the form of “the old medieval chronicle” in order to “trac[e] the origins of a founder and a foundation and [to record] the convergence of individuals and influences” that led to “the growth and spread” of the Sisters of Charity (vii). Kelly conducted

extensive, meticulous archival research to produce a text that situates each year of Seton's life into American, American Catholic, and European history. For example, Kelly notes that in 1789 George Washington was inaugurated the first U.S. President and the Rev. John Carroll, who would later become Seton's friend, colleague, and ally, was elected the first bishop of the United States while Elizabeth was still a teenager (29). Kelly also composed a short article that examines Seton's commonplace book of poetry that she began when she was 15 years old, or from 1788 to 1801 ("Elizabeth Bayley" 36). More than just a curiosity, the notebook, which Seton explained that she added to periodically "for [her] Children's [sic] instruction and amusement" (qtd. in E. Kelly 36), "provide[s] an insight into [Seton] not found in her letters, religious writings, translations, post-conversion Bibles, or her correspondence after 1803" (37). Kelly's article is another example of how the scope of Seton studies might extend beyond the parameters of religion.

A brilliant special issue (1993) of the *Vincentian Heritage Journal* explores scholarship on Seton "in Dialogue with Her Times and Ours." Seton's life is also the focus of the dissertation of Judith Metz, the co-editor of Seton's *Collected Writings*. Metz describes her extensively researched dissertation project as "a contextual study of the early period of Elizabeth Bayley Seton's life, analyzing her experiences and writings in the light of current feminist scholarship and historiographical interpretation" (3). As such, Metz examines "how Elizabeth Bayley Seton was affected by the intellectual, cultural, and religious forces at work in late eighteenth century America" (4) and concludes that Seton's "early life served as a platform for her to continue in a different context what she

had already been doing: raising and educating children, reaching out to the poor and needy, and working with a network of women to achieve these things” (230).

A recent biography by Jean Barthel, *American Saint: The Life of Elizabeth Seton* (2014), portrays Seton as a woman *ahead* of her time, and allies Seton with contemporary feminism in the American Catholic Church. Poet-Activist Maya Angelou wrote the Foreword to Barthel’s engaging text, and feminist icon and activist Gloria Steinem contributed a back-cover blurb in which she remarks that “we’re still catching up with” Elizabeth Seton. In *History of American Catholic Women* (1990), James J. Kenneally references Seton in a chapter on religious sisters, whom he terms “nineteenth-century activists” (43). The author notes the adaptations of European rules necessitated by the unique American situation and the challenges these women religious faced in dealing with their authoritarian male religious superiors. Kenneally is not the only one to write about Seton’s struggles with her early champion, the Rev. William Dubourg, but Kenneally contextualizes such struggle across female religious orders in the United States.

Seton’s Spirituality and Spiritual Legacy

As a canonized saint, Seton is intended to be a model for Catholic Christians; the range of gifts she models is extraordinary. Notable are her prayer life, ministry for the dying, passion for education for girls and young women, and leadership skills. Seton’s caregiving, with a special ministry for the dying, is exemplified in the attentive care she gave her father, her husband, her sisters-in-law Rebecca, Harriet, and Cecilia, her daughters Annina and Rebecca (E. Kelly, *Numerous* 194), and even her estranged stepmother, Charlotte Barclay Bayley (Metz, “Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Extending” 26).

Vie Thorgren writes about Seton's model of relationship with others, and Wendy Wright of Seton's "capacity for loving intimacy" (249) and "relational genius" (251).

Joseph I. Dirvin's *The Soul of Elizabeth Seton: A Spiritual Portrait* (1990) is an "extended reflection on [her] spirituality" (7), elements of which are her focus on eternity, "her love of the Will of God" (35), her prayer life, and her devotions. Marie Celeste Cuzzolina's highly readable *Elizabeth Ann Seton: A Self-Portrait (1774-1821); A Study of Her Spirituality in Her Own Words* contains photographs, portraits, maps, and genealogy. Its aim is to "express accurately her inner life with Christ and her outer life with her friends, acquaintances, fellow workers and even enemies" (xix). *Mother Seton—Wife, Mother, Educator, Foundress, Saint: Profile by the Daughters of St. Paul* was published in 1975, the same year in which Seton was canonized. The short, illustrated biography is divided into two parts: Seton's life and her "spiritual gems," selected quotations by Seton on spirituality. The brief, engaging volume makes no attempt to be comprehensive or scholarly, but it is a fine cursory introduction to the character and work of the woman Elizabeth Seton.

Joseph I. Code's *Great American Foundresses* (1929) devotes a chapter to Seton and her Sisters of Charity. In Code's words, "God seems to have destined her not only to be the foundress of a great religious community but also to inaugurate practically every work of social welfare in America" (72). Her attraction to this particular religious order, according to Code, was that a Sister of Charity "must be active and never resting" (100). Along those lines, Code notes the move of the Sisters of Charity into nursing and mentions their work during the Civil War (113) as well as their many later establishments:

A college, academies, central and parochial high schools, graded [sic] schools attached to parishes and to the community's orphanages, homes for foundlings and for the aged, hospitals for the sick of body, for the sick of mind, and for incurables, day nurseries, settlement houses, foreign missions, schools for the negroes and catechetical classes for the mountain children. (115)

His effusive, gushing prose is also regrettably marked by casually prejudiced and insensitive language of his time. James Burns' *The Catholic School System in the United States* (1912) offers a chapter on early teaching communities, including Seton's. An earlier work than Code's, Burns provides data on establishments of the Sisters of Charity in the United States from 1809-1850 (221-23).

Judith Metz' "The Founding Circle of Elizabeth Seton's Sisters of Charity" explores how the order "[came] to stand at the center of the delivery of the social, educational and health services of the Catholic Church in the first half of the nineteenth century" (19). She describes the priests and clerics who were "familiar with [Seton's] nascent religious community" and actively recruited women (21). Regina M. Bechtle's *The Spirituality of St. Elizabeth Seton from an East-West Perspective* (2001), a compilation of Bechtle's conference lectures to Sisters in Korea, is a devotional work (in English with Korean translations) that examines facets of Seton's womanhood and spiritual life. Bechtle carefully contextualizes Seton within her historical milieu and creates a portrait of a multi-dimensional woman whom contemporary readers might identify with.

Leader in Education

Although Seton is popularly credited with creating the parochial school system in the United States, Betty Ann McNeil clarifies the difference between a parochial school, which is associated with a parish church, and a private Catholic school, which has no such affiliation. It is the latter that Seton established (285-86). St. Joseph's Academy and Free School in Emmitsburg, founded in 1810, "was the first free Catholic school for female education staffed by religious women in the country. The school was governed, financed, administered, and staffed by the Sisters of Charity" (286). A notable innovation of Seton, "[f]ive years before the state of Maryland required certificates for teachers," was the formation of "an early form of normal school to train teachers" (301). In addition, Alice Ann M. O'Neill writes, Seton "modeled a holistic approach to education through the organization and teaching style of St. Joseph's" (17).

Incredibly, Robert D. Cross' 1965 article on the "Origins of the Catholic Parochial Schools in America" fails to even mention Elizabeth Seton although the author credits "the growth of parochial schools [...] to the success of the bishops in recruiting religious orders to run the schools" (198). To be fair, Cross focuses on the late nineteenth century, which he calls "the decisive period in the development of the parochial schools in America" (209). Still, omitting Seton and her Sisters of Charity as even providing a scaffolding for the American parochial school system is unfortunate. John Mary Crumlish reviewed the *Annals of the Daughters of Charity*, among other primary documents, to produce a thorough master's thesis (1945) on the history of St. Joseph's Academy from 1809-1902. She describes its growth and development, such as the new buildings, courses of study, and staff and leadership, and includes anecdotes from former pupils. Carol Mattingly references St. Joseph's Academy in her examination of Catholic convent

academies, the study of which “adds to previous accounts of early women’s literacy practices in important ways” (176).

Writing

Seton left behind a large and varied corpus of writing that informs the work of her biographers and critics although “it is unclear whether she ever intended her writings to be read beyond her immediate circle of family, friends, and religious sisters” (Zauhar 337). In fact, in 1817, Seton “went over her papers and destroyed many of them” (Souvay 225). Nevertheless, a primary source for study of Seton is her own writing, such as copy books, memoirs, journals, and letters. Seton kept three commonplace books, one of which is dedicated to excerpts of poetry that have been examined to suggest the variety of her intellectual interests (E. Kelly, “Elizabeth Bayley” 36). Her correspondence has been studied to show how she nurtured long-distance friendships and advised others. Her spirituality has been examined through her meditations, poetry, prayers, and marginalia in her Bibles. The depth of study shown above on Seton’s life and works emphasizes what has yet to be explored, namely, her role as a rhetor.

My study of Seton includes research in the Archives in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This archival research was supported by a grant from the Vincentian Studies Institute. I met theologian and scholar Sr. Regina Bechtle and other Sisters of Charity of Mt. St. Vincent-on-Hudson in the Bronx, New York, where I viewed Seton memorabilia and relics in their museum as well as Seton’s hand-written *Leghorn Journal*. I visited two Seton sites in New York City: the Shrine of Elizabeth Ann Seton, which is her former home and now a church, and St. Peter’s, Seton’s parish after converting to Catholicism.

Seton, the Wordling and Rhetor

Kenneth Burke, whose method of rhetorical criticism is employed in a later chapter of this dissertation, coined the term “wordling” in an attempt to describe the ineffable characteristics of being human. Burke’s definition, as he formatted it, reads

Being bodies that learn language
thereby becoming wordlings
humans are
the symbol-making, symbol-using, symbol-misusing animal
inventor of the negative
separated from our natural condition
by instruments of our own making
goaded by the spirit of hierarchy
acquiring foreknowledge of death
and rotten with perfection (qtd. in Coe 40)

From a young age and until her death, Elizabeth Bayley Seton was a prolific writer and wordling. Her “writing pens were nothing but stumps,” one Sister at St. Joseph’s noted (qtd. in Dirvin, *Mrs. Seton* 342). A full “twelve volumes of Mother Seton’s writings were presented to Rome” in 1914 for her cause for canonization (Melville, Preface [1960] x). Seton’s writing is so personable that “[i]f expressions of endearment, love, and support tumbled as easily from her lips as they did from her pen, people would have been

attracted to her company for the affirmation and support she offered” (Metz, “The Key” 8). Seton’s writing style has been called homey, yet exhibiting “the whirls and flourishes of late eighteenth-century writing” (Zagano 71). Wendy Wright comments that Seton’s “letters and private papers are florid with exclamation points, bold-faced and capitalized phrases which make the reader privy to her breathless, impassioned way of being in the world. Indeed, the journals from her adult years, as those from her adolescence, are filled with uttered ohs! and ahs!” (251). Cuzzolina is blunt, describing Seton’s letters and diaries as following “the informal epistolary style of the romantic eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—effusive, arch, a bit too cute for twentieth century sophisticates” (Introduction xvii).

Seton’s writing is also considered of historical value, as she is “one of the few women of her period who left [behind] a substantial body of writings” (Metz, *Elizabeth* 4), including letters, journals, meditations, instructions, and poetry. Her letters chronicle her eventful life and create a capsule history of one segment of American society. Frances Murphy Zauhar comments that Seton’s letters “are filled not only with the quotidian events of her family life as a society matron, the hardships of her husband’s economic decline, the horrors of his final illness and death, and the day-to-day matters of running a lively household of students and young teachers, but also with detailed reflections on civic virtue and private spirituality” (338) while her writing evinces Seton’s “real skill as a reporter and commentator on early American life” (344).

In addition to writing numerous letters, Seton kept notebooks and journals for friends and family members. Robert Seton suggests that “[...] it was perhaps in trying to please [her father] that she acquired such a remarkable facility of writing” (1: 12).

Perhaps her most studied document is the *Leghorn Journal* that Seton wrote for her sister-in-law Rebecca in 1803. Judith Metz asserts that “there is no more intimate record of the workings of Elizabeth’s mind and heart than this journal” (“The Key” 17). The *Leghorn Journal* chronicles her journey to Italy and her experiences there: quarantine in the lazaretto, their eventual release, Will’s death, and her approximately three months spent in Italy after his death (Zauhar 340). The *Leghorn Journal* was published by Isaac Kollack as *Memoirs of Mrs. S.* while Seton still lived, although without Seton’s permission. How Kollack obtained a copy of the journal is not certain (Kelly and Melville 101).

Critical studies of the *Journal* offer intriguing insights into the woman Elizabeth Seton, so it is useful to consider it even briefly. Algerina Neri writes that “the journal reveals [Seton’s] contemplative and introspective nature[:] its language is intimate and sensual” (277). Once the family is quarantined in the lazaretto, “[t]he travel journal becomes a prison diary” (279) and the length, content, and frequency of journal entries change (279-80). Neri concludes that Seton’s “painful experience in the prison-like Lazaretto has made her self-confident and self-reliant” (280). The quarantine in the lazaretto as formative spiritual experience is, quite naturally, a theme in Seton studies. Jenny Franchot, for one, examines the *Leghorn Journal* in the context of “the complex interaction between captivity and conversion in American culture” (277). Franchot writes of the Setons’ initial journey to Italy that “like the English Puritans two centuries back, [Elizabeth] understood her transatlantic migration in scriptural terms” (286) and their later “quarantine, like Indian captivity for New England settlers, translated metaphoric

captivity and corruption into a reality at once terrifying and reassuring” (290). She continues:

The transformation of William’s physical collapse and disintegration into spiritual wholeness is thus allied with monastic retreat, the crisis of bankruptcy, tuberculosis, and quarantine providing an ironic leisure for a powerfully efficacious activity dependent on the hidden liberties of captivity, a ‘work’ of sublime import that supplants the frantic and futile work of New York days. (296)

Franchot is not alone in noting the resemblance between American captivity narratives and Seton’s *Leghorn Journal*. Zauhar also points out the *Journal*’s “remarkable similarity to the captivity narratives of early American Puritan women” (340).

In a unique take on Seton’s confinement, Christine Mazzoni examines references to food in the *Journal*, underscoring that in the lazaretto “food, though simple and scarce, is the only material consolation in a room of cold bricks and walls” (153). Reflecting on the relationship between food and memory for Seton, she writes, “In Italy, Elizabeth’s remembrance of foods past [...] heightens the pain of her present inability to feed her beloved in the satisfying and healing way that God once fed her. It is the absence, rather than, as in Proust, the presence, of past tastes and familiar foods that triggers culinary, and mystical, memory” (158). Mazzoni asserts that “many holy women writers” explain the soul’s happiness “in the vocabulary of cooking and eating, of food and drink” (158). Vie Thorgren notes Seton’s “acute sensitivity to physical barriers that separate” as evidenced in Seton’s *Leghorn Journal* as well as in her meditations and instructions (246-47).

John Farina seems to be warning Seton readers when he explains that “spirituality is not the sole domain of a refined stylist” (6). Seton biographer Annabelle M. Melville contends that Seton’s “repeated readings of both the Old and New Testaments left their mark in her own writing, where biblical vocabulary, phrasing, and metaphors were almost unconsciously woven into her thoughts, sometimes with endearing results” (Introduction 21). Likewise, Dirvin comments that “she could talk about the profoundly spiritual in the homeliest of terms, thus putting it in the reach of all” (*The Soul* 18). Such observations also remind us that Seton’s writing has been read primarily in a religious or spiritual context.

Of particular interest to my study of Seton’s contribution to rhetorical and writing studies, under the aegis of conduct or advice literature, is Seton’s lifelong habit of giving advice. For example, in a letter that Seton’s sister-in-law, Harriet, wrote to Elizabeth in 1808, she wishes to “ask [Seton’s] advice as it respects *conduct*” (qtd. in R. Seton 36). In another from the same year, Harriet references the counsel Seton gives: “For many years back I have been accustomed to receive from you some rules of conduct for the new year—some little affectionate letter of advice and comfort blended” (qtd. in R. Seton 37). When in 1815 her son Will set off to work for the Filicchi brothers in Italy, accompanied on the journey by family friend Simon Bruté, Elizabeth wrote Will a letter of advice that “captured her own philosophy of interpersonal relationships” (M. Kelly 333) and kept a journal for Bruté when he returned to Maryland. Ellin M. Kelly explains that “[t]o supplement her own instructions in their religious faith and social behavior, [Seton] prepared books for each [of her] child[ren], but only the one for Catherine survives” (“Elizabeth Ann” 310). Within her own home, Seton penned little notes to her children

“containing prayers, blessings, and exhortations to them to lead a good life” (Metz, *Elizabeth* 109). Elizabeth started this tradition when Annina was three and a half as a form of “encouragement and rewards to foster her development” (104). In one such note to Kit, Seton scolds her for quarreling with her sister Rebecca² (Dirvin, *Mrs. Seton* 274). This habitual letter-writing may have been a result of the letters Elizabeth and her father exchanged when she was growing up (Metz, *Elizabeth* 154), which was Dr. Bayley’s method of “coach[ing] her along the way of reason” (179).

Seton maintained correspondence with students and their parents; family; and friends. In letters to students’ parents, she noted the girls’ “progress as well as their shortcomings, and on occasion she offered advice on how to handle them” (Metz, “Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Animator” 56). Remarking on this, in a letter to one friend she wrote, “I will tell you in what I know American parents to be most difficult—in *hearing the faults of their children*” (qtd. in R. Seton 209). In another letter, Seton explained to her good friend and advisor, the priest Simon Bruté, that according to the Sisters in her charge, she is considered to be “*a torpedo* among them, for they tell the Superior I strike their very joints when I say a word” (qtd. in Dirvin, *Mrs. Seton* 339). It was Bruté who “assured that all Seton’s papers were preserved after her death” (Zauhar 343).

Seton’s rhetorical skills may have developed through her volunteer work as a so-called “Protestant Sister of Charity” for the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children (SRPW), which Seton and Isabella Marshall Graham co-founded in 1797. Through this benevolent society, “among the first to be founded and run by women[,] Graham and Seton were running meetings, raising money, and lobbying politicians” (Cott

² Seton’s sister-in-law was also named Rebecca Seton.

214). Critics contend that societies like this that cropped up in New York and Boston “might have prevented women from seeing their common subordination precisely because they did offer a sense of value and self-worth” (Boylan 498). However, these women got things done and exercised authority. Elizabeth herself served as the SRPW’s manager in 1802 and treasurer in 1803 (Metz, *Elizabeth* 221). Among the SRPW’s accomplishments, the Society “developed a system for districting the city so that members could systematically visit the widows receiving aid, opened a workshop to provide work during the winter months, and sponsored a school for the widows’ children” (Boylan 500). Similarly, “In establishing religious communities, women showed leadership, administrative skills, organizational ability, and determination” (Kenneally 52) in addition to actively practicing their faith. Seton’s leadership position as Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity demanded her negotiating “property dealings and arrang[ing] for legal incorporation as well as overseeing building projects and the opening of new works in faraway cities” (Metz, “Extending” 35).

In her other role as superintendent of St. Joseph’s Academy, Seton “visit[ed] the classes frequently, either in person or by deputy” (Burns 215). Seton wrote “voluminous correspondence, instructions, and translations” along with her “day-to-day community life” (McNeil, *Friendship* 11). Seton tailored letters to donors, being “very blunt and direct with her requests” to friends while adjusting her tone for others (M. Kelly 331). Seton also wrote letters to her priest-superiors, prepared conferences for the sisters in her charge, and advocated for them when, in one instance early in community life, she felt that their priest-superior, and an original advocate for Seton, the Rev. Dubourg, “was acting like a tyrant” (qtd. in Metz, “Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Animator” 52). This tension

between Sisters and their Superior(s) was not unique to Seton or the Sisters of Charity. Religious sisters often “struggle[d] with churchmen to preserve their independence and to adapt to rules designed for medieval European communities to an American Protestant society—often under frontier conditions” (Kenneally 44). Kenneally continues: “The very qualities that made women religious instrumental in the growth of the church (understanding, openness to society, intelligence, and self-assurance) created sisters who asserted the right to make decisions about their life-style [sic] and institutions” (45). Contrary to what twenty-first century readers may instinctively believe, becoming a Catholic religious sister could be an attractive lifestyle for women of Seton’s era, as

nuns in nineteenth century America enjoyed opportunities open to few other women of their time: involvement in meaningful work, access to administrative positions, freedom from the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, opportunities to live in sisterhood, and egalitarian friendships. Perhaps it was this freedom from the restrictive roles usually ascribed to women that enabled them to exert such a powerful influence on the American Church. (Ewens 107)

Indeed, their influence was extensive. Religious sisters “bore responsibility for administering large-scale operations such as schools and colleges, hospitals, asylums, and the like” (Thompson 275), and as a result their history may have something to teach “about how to work within male-dominated institutions and processes” (288).

Conclusion

Seton was a practicing rhetor—in her actions, spoken words, and writing, and in her roles as “mother, teacher, catechist, spiritual director, and counselor” (Metz, “Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Animator” 58). John Farina calls her “a woman of action, a practical person who wrote to accomplish specific functions—most often to offer advice, comfort, or encouragement to her friends, less often to instruct, and virtually never simply for the art of it” (6). This chapter has presented a brief biography of Elizabeth Bayley Seton, from young Protestant British citizen to first native-born canonized American saint. A review of the literature on Seton reveals three broad foci of research in Seton studies: biography, spirituality, and educational legacy. Finally, I have suggested considering Seton a practicing rhetor. The next chapter concerns American conduct literature. This context is where I situate one of Seton’s most interesting documents, her advice book to her daughter Kit.

Chapter 2

The Conduct Book Tradition

This chapter contextualizes Elizabeth Bayley Seton's advice book to her daughter Kit as a contribution to conduct literature, and as such, to rhetorical and writing studies. Conduct literature belongs to a broadly defined prescriptive tradition that "overtly commands and instructs" (Poole 70). The conduct, or courtesy, book reached colonial America by way of Renaissance Europe (Newton 139), a period called the "heyday" of conduct literature (Carré 1). In America, that heyday came much later. The literature of advice and conduct had an eager reading audience in colonial and revolutionary America. However, it was not until the mid-1800s that domestic fiction, a form of advice literature, along with the "conduct and advice literature of ladies' magazines such as *Godey's*³" (Eldred and Mortensen 99) became all the rage in the United States. Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen cite "ample evidence that *The New England Primer*, *The American Instructor*, and texts with similar aims—conduct guides, for example—circulated widely in the colonies" (17). Conduct literature exhibited generic patterns: "The early American conduct text (or English, often reprinted in America) contains a formalized description of appropriate behavior, usually gender oriented and always based on the Christian ethic, intended for the inexperienced young adult or other youthful reader" (Newton 143). By the early 1900s, conduct literature was often "dismissed as one of the more marginal by-products of the Renaissance and classical ages" (Carré 1).

³ As an interesting side note, *Godey's Lady's Book* was edited by Sarah Josepha Hale, who like Seton was a widow with five children (Kasson 49).

Noted historian Arthur M. Schlesinger writes that “the rise and progress of courtesy would, if for no other reason, merit interest as a sort of barometer of changing attitudes toward greater affairs, but it also deserves attention for its own sake as a functional trait of civilization” (vii). The historian John Kasson agrees that “the rituals of everyday behavior establish in important measure the structures by which individuals define one another and interact. In powerful ways they determine what people take their social identities, social relationships, [and] social ‘reality’ to be” (4). He explains that manners “illuminate [the] boundaries” of social classes within a culture and how “these categories are historically constituted, their hierarchies maintained and challenged” (4). Rather menacingly, too, “established codes of behavior have often served in unacknowledged ways as checks against a fully democratic order and in support of special interests, institutions of privilege, and structures of domination” (3). Examining the conduct literature that circulated in the American colonies and the later United States gives readers an intimate glimpse into American history.

To that end, this chapter describes touchstones in the history of the conduct tradition in the United States. While I do quite briefly present early origins of conduct literature, I focus more on its developments in the America in which Seton lived and died. C. Dallett Hemphill recognizes “three distinct periods in the history of manners in America before the mid-nineteenth century” (*Bowing* 9). I follow her lead. Hemphill separates these periods into Early Colonial (1620-1740), Revolutionary (1740-1820), and Antebellum (1820-1860) (9). In this chapter, I also argue that Seton’s advice book is her contribution to rhetorical and writing studies, as the conduct tradition is a *rhetorical*

tradition. This position will become clearer when I gloss, below, understandings of rhetoric, women's rhetoric, and the place of conduct literature in rhetorical studies.

The Tradition of Rhetoric and Questions of Who Belongs

One practical and pedagogically effective way of introducing rhetoric to undergraduate students is to ask, "What is rhetoric?" Students' responses can illuminate how confusing and elastic the word "rhetoric" can be—rhetoric the practice, the product, the field of study, and/or the hefty, expensive book of readings students are often required to purchase, among other definitions. The question of whether to pluralize rhetoric and/or the rhetorical tradition, and the fact that this is the subject of hearty debate in academic circles (Bizzell and Jarratt 19-20), may further puzzle students. What counts as rhetoric and who was permitted to practice rhetoric historically are questions with equally muddy answers, but asking the questions is important. James Berlin, using the plural, suggests that "[r]hetorics provide a set of rules about the dispositions of discourse at a particular moment" (qtd. in Donawerth, *Conversational* 52). Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson calls this "the received rhetorical tradition" (158). Unfortunately, the received rhetorical tradition, which some historians say originated with Corax and Tisias and others earlier (S. Miller, *Trust* 37), has limited the means by which women, and other historically marginalized groups, could practice rhetoric and has also limited the activities and events that count as rhetoric and thus are recorded, enriching the theory and practice of rhetoric.

The origins of rhetoric are significant, Susan Miller says, because "master texts" guide and shape the tradition and define what rhetoric "actually" is (35). For example, the origin story about Corax and Tisias "has come down as a leading metaphor for rhetoric—a conception of rhetoric as agonistic debate that turns on probabilities and ends with a

winner and a loser” (Wertheimer 3). Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford suggest the possibility of a different point of origin for the rhetorical tradition and ask the provocative question, “What if the story of rhetoric actually starts with” women, such as Enheduanna, Sappho, or Aspasia (4), as an alternative to the “patriarchal core” of Western rhetoric as it has been handed down (3)? This “patriarchal core” presents itself like a refrain in traditional Western rhetoric. According to Glenn and Lunsford, “until the late 1980s, rhetoric and women seemed to be mutually exclusive concepts” (2).

David L. Wallace critiques a “traditional” approach to rhetoric, an approach which “assumes that gaining control of dominant discourse practices and genres allows everyone to have the kind of agency usually enjoyed by straight, white, physically able-bodied, middle- to upper-class Christian men” (20). Practicing rhetoric should not demand forfeiting one’s identity or erasing one’s culture. Along the same lines, Kathleen E. Welch questions what she calls the “Heritage School” of rhetoric, which she believes misrepresents classical rhetoric as “a series of rules, dicta, and lists” (79) and “collapse[s] 700 years of rhetorical theory into one idea” (80). In a detailed analysis of a historical event, the mutilation of the herms, the statuary of Hermes in ancient Athens, James Fredal calls into question whether “traditional” rhetoric is actually more expansive than the way in which it is often taught. Fredal explains that “nonverbal rhetorical action—through the performing and visual arts and sculpture [...] was a well-understood and important genre of persuasive artistry in ancient Athens” and because the practice was “outside the venue of public oratory,” it was available to men and women (600). Concerning the historical role of women in the practice of rhetoric, James Oldham writes, “[I]t is clear that women’s voices have been deliberately stifled, that women have been

barred from the study of academic rhetoric, and that the ways in which women have practiced and promoted rhetoric have not obtained canonical status in the places where rhetoric is studied” (qtd. in Lunsford, “Afterword” 319).

In response to this regrettable reality of stifled rhetors, respected composition scholar Carol Mattingly is not alone when she proffers “rethinking what counts in rhetoric” in the interest of expanding what genres come under the purview of rhetoric (“Telling” 99). She argues that “traditional ways of assessing rhetoric cannot provide effective understandings or appreciations of women’s rhetoric. Women’s forms of rhetoric have been devalued, not only the shape their words have taken—in letters, diaries, protests, and other forms—but their physical forms as well” (107), such as in the dress and physical appearance female orators adopted in the nineteenth century (105). Andrea Lunsford, who edited the collection *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, explains that “the realm of rhetoric has almost exclusively been male not because women were not practicing rhetoric—the arts of language are after all at the source of human communication—but because the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by many women as ‘rhetorical’” (“On Reclaiming” 6). One form of rhetoric that women practiced, although it is by no means exclusive to women, is the conduct book. Jane Donawerth points out that “[t]he trends and categories advanced by the canonical histories of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British and American rhetoric do not adequately account for the genres and strategies emphasized in women’s rhetorical theory. Conduct book rhetoric grew out of and contributed to this culture of continuing education and women’s clubs” (*Conversational* 41). Before we look

at American conduct literature, the contested phrase “women’s rhetoric” deserves attention.

To the contributors of the edited collection *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, Andrea Lunsford poses the large question, “Is there a ‘woman’s’ or a ‘feminine’ rhetoric? What issues does such a question raise?” (“Afterword” 319). The substance and variety of scholarly responses are striking. Christine Mason Sutherland cites “the danger of seeing a feminine rhetoric as exclusive to women, or, of course, a masculine rhetoric as exclusive to men” (321). Cheryl Glenn believes that “the rhetoric of the disenfranchised and the disempowered is gendered feminine, which is different from ‘woman’s rhetoric’” (321). For C. Jan Swearingen, terms like women’s or feminine rhetoric “can be shaped as valid, valuable areas for inquiry” (323). The way I understand and employ “women’s rhetoric” does not suggest that women have innate, biological qualities that shape the rhetoric that they consume, practice, and/or produce nor that a monolithic “everywoman” even exists. I share concerns about “essentialized categories such as ‘women’s rhetoric’ or ‘Black rhetoric’” (Bizzell and Jarratt 23). However, rhetoric by women appeared in response to the roles proscribed for men and women within cultures, eras, and economies. Hildy Miller emphasizes that within the field of rhetoric and composition, “gender [has] emerged as an especially important marker of social difference among writers” (19). Likewise, in their research on women writers of the early United States, Eldred and Mortensen recognize that “women, though they might be highly fluent writers in some forms of discourse (letters, for example), rarely had the opportunity to practice the rhetorical conventions that would have given them access to the discourses of power” (38).

Kathleen J. Ryan studied recent anthologies of women's rhetorics and rhetors and observed in them two dominant directions in research—recovery and gender critique. Recovery work adds lost, silenced, or marginalized voices “to the storehouse of rhetorical knowledge” while gender critique aims to “radically revise received knowledge in rhetorical studies” (24) and “to rewrite rhetorical studies” (27). My dissertation claims a recovery effort for Seton's advice book. By recovering this one overlooked rhetorical voice, I, too, hope “to counter absence with presence, replace lack with abundance, and provide opportunities for further study” (Ryan 29). I also hope to contribute to Seton studies an intriguing new angle on Seton, whose rhetorical contributions as such have not been examined.

Recovery efforts, it seems, cannot help but “rewrite rhetorical studies,” just as gender critique does (Ryan 27). Perhaps these two methods need not be perceived as binaries. Nan Johnson, another noted voice in rhetorical scholarship, discusses the historical sites of women's discourse. She explains:

Historical remapping projects presume that when the contributions of women to rhetorical history are recovered, we gain a more accurate sense of the roles women have played in rhetorical enterprises of the past and also a greater insight into what actually constitutes the range of women's rhetorical activities in any given historical period. With the recovery of the women missing from the map also comes the recovery of a range of rhetorical practices in which women were involved but that have been historically devalued or erased. (*Gender* 9)

To be sure, the recovery effort is not without criticism. Michelle Ballif raises this objection: “Efforts to make women legitimate by situating them in patronymic narratives does nothing to enfranchise them—because it does nothing to the phallogocentric economy which disenfranchised them” (95). Ballif continues, “What is at stake, then, in re/dressing histories is the production of new narratives, new discourses, new idioms. The task *is not* to add women to the already existing history” (96).

Even the concept of gender is ripe for debate. Within the feminist movement, Celeste Condit discerns two primary models for understanding gender: gender dichotomy and gender diversity. In contrast to gender dichotomy, which categorizes individuals as male or female, the gender diversity perspective wants to “destabilize the assumption that human gender is inherently dimorphic” and “emphasizes the active construction of multiple, transient gender categories” that are “fragmentary and context-bound” (385). In short, “[w]omen cannot be oppressed as women if they are not recognized as such within traditional/dominant sex relations” (385). Both models support a different understanding of rhetoric (381). Condit explains that “[t]he effect of dichotomy feminist attacks on rhetoric is to replace rhetoric (understood as public persuasion) with communication studies focused on private, putatively non-persuasive discourses” (384). In contrast, “A gender diversity perspective treats rhetoric as the grounds of the construction of gender, rather than as the product of an already constructed essentialist gender” (390).

Some criticism on recovery efforts has been fraught, and has become unfortunately personalized, as evidenced in the much referenced exchange between Barbara Biesecker and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell in the journal *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. Biesecker notes that while Campbell’s work shows how “decidedly male experiences

have been made to stand in for the history of Rhetoric” (141), her presenting “cameo appearances by extraordinary women” does nothing to highlight the “collective rhetorical practices which [...] have been the most common form of women’s intervention in the public sphere” (144). Campbell’s work and similar “gestures toward inclusion,” Biesecker muses, are not “inherently revolutionary or *necessarily* disruptive of the status quo” (144). In reply, Campbell characterizes Biesecker’s piece as an “attack” (153)—she uses the word “attack” six more times on the first page alone—on Campbell’s attempt “to alter the rhetorical landscape” (154). Campbell also draws attention to the “self-contradictions and fallacies in Biesecker’s essay,” including “the striking spectacle of an individual attacking another individual in the cause of abolition of individualism in rhetoric” (158). She concludes that Biesecker “means what her essay attempts to say. She wants to do away with the individuals and the rhetorical art they created. *She wants to silence them*” (158).

The hot language occasioned by discussions of rhetoric is instructive. Research is not an intellectual exercise, but carries consequences that researchers must be alert to. Xin Liu Gale reminds us that despite the best intentions of researchers of all stripes, “postmodernism, antifoundationalism, and feminism, like any other master narrative, can be used to silence and exclude dissenting voices and shut down productive scholarly conversations among researchers and teachers” (459). While I favor the recovery efforts initiated by feminism, I must acknowledge Gale’s point and keep my eyes and ears open to criticisms and viewpoints that I may inadvertently be shutting down because of my own research biases.

The Literature of Conduct: A Rhetorical Tradition

One rediscovered rhetorical genre that that women wrote and read is the conduct book. In “Nineteenth-Century United States Conduct Book Rhetoric by Women,” Jane Donawerth presents conduct literature as a “tradition of nonacademic rhetoric for women” (5). Susan Miller claims the “coded propriety” of conduct literature as “belong[ing] to the domain of formal rhetoric” (*Assuming* 149) and believes its goal is to “regulate what can be thought in the limits recognized as it displays acceptable varieties of social and moral behavior” (150). The canon of delivery, Miller suggests, is “philosophized as the ‘dispositions’ in conduct literature” (151). Jane E. Rose contends that in antebellum American conduct books “domestic rhetoric was employed not only to teach women appropriate modes of conduct but also to persuade them of the importance of literacy and education in training them for marriage, motherhood, and domesticity” (42).

Conduct books were often (but not always) organized as manuals. They “preserve ‘fossil’ conduct,” which “allow[s] us to see into the avowed ideals and behavior of young people [that were] valued in early America and beyond” (Newton 140). The relationship between rhetoric and conduct is fundamental. From the point of view of rhetorical and writing studies, conduct literature reveals part of the story of the history of rhetoric. As such, conduct literature is “an important and neglected precursor for one strand of twentieth-century rhetoric and composition studies” (Donawerth, “Nineteenth-Century” 17). For example, Susan Miller explains that “[s]ome females, but not others, will be well received because they have mastered the fifth domain of rhetoric, ‘delivery’” (*Assuming* 151).

As an umbrella term, prescriptive literature, also called conduct, advice, courtesy, and etiquette literature, can be loosely separated into fiction and nonfiction. Critics mark their technical distinctions, which we look at now, but I will look at nonfiction prescriptive literature broadly. Conduct literature is “concerned with communication across social boundaries” (Holcomb 437), such as those of class and gender. Sarah Emily Newton explains of the nonfiction prescriptive tradition that “historically, ‘advice book’ [...] is used as a kind of generic term; and the terms ‘conduct’ and ‘courtesy’ are frequently interchanged.” Between the two, however, “conduct books [...] aim to promote behavioral and character formation almost exclusively. They are true *conduct-of-life* texts” (162). In Virgil B. Heltzel’s definition, conduct is folded into courtesy writing. Heltzel explains that courtesy writing is “any work, or significant part of a work, which sets forth for the gentleman (or gentlewoman) first, the qualities or criteria, inherent or acquired, which he must possess; second, his formation (including his various interests, exercises, recreations, and amusements) and his education; and, third, his conduct” (qtd. in Fritzer 3).

More recent research by Jane E. Rose, in contrast, stresses that “the conduct book promotes social goals for the progress of the Republic” while “the etiquette manual or courtesy book offers rules for appropriate manners and social decorum for polite society, with tips for fashion and beauty” (39). Sylvia Casey Marks offers a short, succinct explanation, and one that I will employ in the discussion of prescriptive nonfiction. Marks writes: “the underlying assumption in all conduct books is the formation of a good and virtuous person” (4). The many well-articulated definitions presented above, with fine, precise distinctions, in essence emphasize context, or the situation (historical,

cultural, economic, etc.) of advice. Let's start there. What is a "good" person or a "virtuous" person in context? What class or gender is this person? What nationality?

Conduct books "reveal the preoccupations and expectations of those who wrote and those who read them" (Hemphill, "Middle" 319). Likewise, scholars are correct to qualify that conduct books "might better represent what was desired than what was" (Eldred and Mortensen 64). Annelies Voet argues that the conduct book "presents an alternative idea of what society could be or should be" (58), and Barbara Zaczek explains that "conduct books attempt to solve the conflict between a real life and an ideal. The maxims, instructions, and moral lessons are designed to replace the existing set of values with a new one and turn the reality into the desired model, thereby obliterating the conflict" (29). The historian John F. Kasson, too, reminds us that although conduct books "obviously cannot be taken as a complete and accurate portrayal of American social practices, they offer a rich and largely neglected codification of standards that governed social interaction in the rapidly expanding and powerfully influential urban bourgeois culture" (5). The research of Jessica Nicole Mattson indicates that "strategic comparisons of certain manuals can reveal a more complex rhetorical relationship to the values of the time" (7), which emphasizes that all conduct literature was not in moral, behavioral, and social lockstep.

The conduct literature written, or adapted, and published during Elizabeth Bayley Seton's younger years may provide amusement for today's reader trying to envision a clumsy suitor tripping over his sword upon entering a room (Hemphill, "Middle" 324). Similarly, nowadays it is hard to imagine how "instructions on standing still" (327) or "advice to avoid eating with one's sword" (S. Miller, *Assuming* 151) could be anything

but common sense. However, the information conduct books provided could be useful for individuals who wanted to improve their social station without making a lasting impression for the wrong reasons, like the clumsy suitor. To provide some context, a hundred years from now readers might find fodder for jokes in our contemporary rules of “netiquette” or online dating, for example. Such “rules” obviously do not represent the behavior or characteristics of all Americans at a given time. Sylvia Kasey Marks states it well when she explains that conduct books “are the forerunners of today’s Ann Landers, Miss Manners, and all the other self-improvement books that swell the weekly bestseller list” (3-4).

Looking closely at a selection of conduct works, Margaret A. McDermott highlights the different approaches that primarily British authors employed to write conduct books for male and female audiences between 1650 and the early 1800s. Her research indicates that the conduct author’s tone varies with regard to the gender of the intended reader. McDermott observes that “men and young men both are spoken to as equals, rather than as errant children as are the ladies” (19). Women may have been addressed as children, but their moral burdens were heavy indeed, seeing as they were expected to shoulder “responsibility not only for [their] actions, but for [the] actions of [men] as well” (37). McDermott also explores the specific ways in which the messages conduct books send vary according to gender, concluding that “where the young man is reminded of his worth, the young woman is reminded only of her own ability to corrupt herself, and to pollute her own natural state” (42). For example, “a woman’s immodest behavior lets loose the uncivilized behavior in all that are around her,” and as a consequence, she “becomes responsible, through her modesty or lack thereof, for the

actions of those with whom she is spending time” (38). Through a woman’s behavior, conduct books suggest, she inadvertently wields a great deal of power. McDermott concludes that books composed for men appeal to pride while “guilt was cultivated as a rhetorical device aimed at women” (59). Finally, McDermott notes different advice depending on the gender of the writer. Female writers of conduct books “were not apt to spend as much time bemoaning the ruining of a life as they appeared to be spending time directing young ladies on how to avoid such things” (55).

Ironically, “courtesy manuals, at least initially, sought to suppress” social mobility, explains Christopher Holcomb, writing of the Elizabethan era (435-36). Aiming to keep people in their proper social spheres, “members of the elite composed handbooks on courtly conduct [...] to reinforce and fortify boundaries between ruling and subject classes” (436). The books had just the opposite effect, such that “once the modes of behavior and speech supposedly (and exclusively) characteristic of aristocratic identity had been made explicit and codified, they became available for imitation by gentry and baseborn alike.” The cat was out of the bag. Consequently, rather than “stifl[ing] the ambitions” of socially mobile readers, the books “unwittingly fueled such ambitions.” This, in turn, led to the frightening “possibilities and threats of different kinds of people occupying the same social space” (436). The notion of threat and danger appears repeatedly in conduct literature and has particular resonance for women, who are both the threatening, with their potentially corrupting (or edifying) influence on others, and the threatened, potential victims of unscrupulous men.

Conduct in Utero: The Mother’s Manual

“The writers of conduct books are fond of standing, in regard to their material and their audience, in loco parentis, of assuming the voices of mothers or fathers or at least mentors, fully initiated adults who have completed a successful passage themselves and who have gained the authority thereby to speak for the culture at large” (Newton 157). There may be historical reasons for this, namely that conduct literature may have begun as parenting *in absentia*. Kristen Poole suggests that the conduct book may have developed out of the tradition of the mother’s manual, in which “the authors/mothers provide their children with domestic, worldly, and spiritual counsel” (69). The mother’s manual has an imprecise history and “may have been invented by several different women, without knowledge of each other, over a period of several hundred years” (Wertheimer 9). One notable mother’s manual is that of a Frankish noblewoman named Dhuoda, whose “text stands as the lone woman author’s voice from the ninth century. Moreover, it is the first surviving mother’s manual,” preceding Christine de Pisan’s manual by “nearly five centuries” (Jaffe 177).

Mother’s manuals share salient characteristics, including presentation of “important beliefs, behaviors, and values” to be inculcated by the reader over time (190); “practical information” concerning “everyday living”; and appeals to authority (192). Karen Cherewatuk explains that the manual “imparts lessons in faith as does the moral guidebook compact enough to be carried in hand, and therefore called *manuale* or *manualis*. The Latin term is a translation of the Greek word *enchiridion*, the title Augustine chose for his handbook” (51). Dhuoda, and several centuries later Elizabeth Bayley Seton, employs *florilegia*, or “cullings,” a medieval rhetorical device which picks “through the Bible, the classics, and texts of the patristic fathers and other well-known

authors to weave together mosaics constructed of excerpts, paraphrases, verbal echoes, and direct copying” (Jaffe 186).

Dhuoda authored the first surviving mother’s manual. Another remarkable published mother’s manual from 1601 was “highly unusual in its mode of presentation,” as it was written by a man, Nicholas Breton (Poole 69). Breton, in “assum[ing] the voice” of a mother, may have inadvertently “paved the way for women to enter into the same discourse of advice which, ironically, had produced prolific manuals dictating feminine chastity, modesty, and silence” (70). That is, Breton’s published mother’s manual may have opened doors for women to make their writing public because “the very act of writing in support of conventional domesticity paradoxically takes these women beyond the traditional boundaries of the domestic sphere” (72), where conduct literature came to insist women belonged. The popularity of Breton’s text as well as that of his contemporary, the female author Dorothy Leigh, “suggest[s] that the Jacobean readership was ready to accept the female, maternal, literary voice” (70).

The Conduct Tradition in Colonial, Revolutionary, and Antebellum America

Early Colonial (1620-1740)

Let us leap now across centuries and the European continent to conduct literature in the United States. Historian Arthur Schlesinger lists five conditions that slowed the growth of manners in America. The first two relate to the present discussion. According to Schlesinger, “the colonies were settled in the main by persons who in the Old World had been cut off from the usages of the best society” coupled with “the absence of a native hereditary aristocracy” to model behavior for those who were not raised within an

aristocracy (viii). In the colonies, before the prolific publication and consumption of conduct books, acceptable behavior was sanctioned and enforced in other ways, specifically through government, the clergy, and, oddly enough, almanacs. This varied assortment bears examination.

Starting first with government and its relationship to conduct, laws were enacted for offenses such as “scandalmongering, cursing, lying, name-calling, even for flirting, jeering, ‘finger-sticking,’ and making ugly faces” (Schlesinger 1). Their attendant punishments were meant to “chasten the offender [and] dramatize for onlookers the consequences of gross breaches of decorum” (2). Rather than rely on models of good behavior for imitative purposes, the public could witness the unfortunate consequences of bad, unlawful behavior and avoid it. Punishments included being flogged or fined (Hemphill, *Bowing* 18) as well as being whipped, put in the stocks, or subject to peculiar punishments that fit the crime, such that “a gossip or scold might be exhibited with tongue pinched in a cleft stick” (Schlesinger 2). The conflation of morality and legality should be noted. Also of note, the “correctional system was designed mainly for the poor” as evidenced by the wording of the laws and their enforcement (2). Hemphill discerns the “social control function” of early colonial manners “to enforce inequality where it was undergoing challenge”; instilling proper behavior required “external coercion” (*Bowing* 215). Evidently proper behavior did not come naturally in the colonies.

In addition to laws that clarified and enforced proper behavior for those who had difficulty practicing it, another outlet to publicize right behavior was the clergy’s own bully pulpit: preaching. Whether they sought it or not, “the population at large got regular

doses of conduct advice in Sunday sermons, as well as less formally at other times, from the local minister” (Hemphill, *Bowing* 19). A hallmark of Puritan preaching was “[d]ecrying sexual transgression—as well as other public excess” (Ingebretsen 23). In their sermons, ministers “constantly reminded parents of their duty to instruct their children directly in manners” and “described exactly what parents were to teach” (Hemphill, *Bowing* 33). In addition to preaching from the pulpit, ministers “often distributed copies of [their] sermons during visits with their congregants” (19). These robust sermons could create unintended effects, just like conduct books of the Elizabethan era did. Ingebretsen explains that “[s]ex and accounts of crime [...] moralized in the form of dramatic sermons and crudely printed broadsides, were publicized in ways that heightened interest in the proscribed activities. Thus, the higher good of the community was reached by appealing to the lower appetites” (24).

Finally, almanacs offered “occasional signposts of deportment” (Schlesinger 3) for the colonial reader. The almanac was like an all-in-one “textbook, preacher, [and] guidebook” (Stowell ix), which “instructed the reader on how to behave, usually in pithy paragraphs on the calendar pages and in sundry short essays found elsewhere” (xvi). Almanacs published sayings and proverbs, and “the popularity of the almanac served to keep the sayings freshly in mind” (Loomis 172). The almanac also served as a complement to the Bible such that “[t]he Bible took care of the hereafter, but the almanac took care of the *here*” (Stowell x). For example, the *Pennsylvania Town and Country-Man’s Almanack* (1773) discussed earthly, and earthy, concerns, advising readers to “COUGH, belch, spit, sneeze, and yawn as little as thou canst in Sight of Company, and when inevitable, make as little sound as possible for Decency’s sake” (qtd. in Stowell

178) while “[t]he Vermont almanac for 1795 [...] included ‘Moral PRECEPTS and MAXIMS for the Conduct of Life’ from Plutarch” (224). For the sophisticated reader looking for advice concerning manners or anything remotely related, there was the conduct book.

“[T]heir library inventories tell us [...] that elite New Englanders were familiar with the Renaissance courtesy tradition” (Hemphill, *Bowing* 17). By contrast, “courtesy works were not generally intended for ordinary folk, and this society had a variety of mechanisms for reminding them of their place” (17), as discussed above. “The vast bulk of the colonists [came] from the peasant and working classes” (4), Schlesinger explains, and at least initially, the “most eager readers” of conduct books were “in the South, notably Virginia” and wanted to emulate “the English landed gentry” (6). Eventually merchants and tradesmen of the North also sought guidance “befitt[ing] their station” (8). Seemingly, with prosperity came a desire to acquire niceties of manner. Conduct books sought to inculcate different attributes in men and women. While gentlemen should be exemplars of “valor, probity, justice, piety[,] and courtesy,” gentlewomen should model “modesty, chastity, meekness, godliness[,] and compassion (6-7).

Concerning conduct guides, “for many years the most popular British manuals of deportment were translations, revisions or plagiarisms of French guides, with an occasional adaptation from the Italian; and these publications, sometimes in the original tongue, early found their way onto the shelves of well-to-do colonials” (Schlesinger 5). Some imported conduct handbooks for women include Lord Halifax’s *The Lady’s New Year’s Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter* (1688); the anonymous *Ladies Library* (1714); and Abbé d’Ancourt’s *The Lady’s Preceptor* (1743). Richard Allestree’s *The Whole Duty of*

Man, a seventeenth century English manual, was a popular book in the colonies, and for women, his manual *The Ladies Calling* (1673) (6).

One of “the most widely circulated” colonial conduct books and the first written by an American, rather than imported from Europe, was Eleazar Moody’s *School of Good Manners* (1715). Intended for an audience of young readers, it was “based on a French courtesy book of 1564. It [...] ran through at least thirty-three editions before the mid-nineteenth century” (Kasson 12). Historian Richard L. Bushman calls Moody’s book “a peculiar combination of the religious and the secular” (31). The book is divided into two parts. One part concerns “devout prayer, obedience to parents, pure thoughts, and seeking to know God” and the other part, manners (31). This part of the book on manners was “borrowed” from *A.B.C. or, the first schoole [sic] of good manners*, published in London in 1595. Thus, “by the time Moody printed his book, the contents were 150 years old and had passed from Paris to London to Boston” (32).

In other scholarship, Sarah Emily Newton calls Cotton Mather’s manual for women, *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion*⁴, from 1692, “a true native-born American conduct text” (163). Mather’s book “had at least fifty years of currency in the marketplace” although interestingly there were “no substantive differences” between the 1691-92 and 1741 editions despite the considerable gap of years (Scheick 27). In *Ornaments*, Mather, of Salem witch-trial notoriety, “struggles to find female exemplars” (31), and so he attempts to “empower women through Eve, the very figure of female disempowerment” (33). The book, “[i]n its clearest moments, [...] instructs women to

⁴ Cotton Mather’s book was actually advertised in John Tulley’s almanac in 1692 (Stowell 61).

accept, in utter obedience, their obligatory subjugation to the deity and his male minions on earth” (34). Attitudes toward women in conduct literature would undergo subtle changes in the Revolutionary era, examined next.

Revolutionary (1740-1820)

By the middle 1700s, “most of the printed conduct advice on early American bookshelves consisted of imported Renaissance courtesy works and their English imitations” written with an elite readership in mind (Hemphill, “Class” 33). Probably the best known example is Lord Chesterfield’s 1775 *Letters to His Son*, “a best-seller in America.” Hemphill calls it “a manual for strivers” (36) and “those on the rise, those whose class status hinged on their own efforts” (37). Despite its success, Chesterfield’s *Letters* was criticized for promoting self-interested behavior and for proffering salacious advice on the seduction of women (Schlesinger 11). Chesterfield’s “chief message to his son was that he should work to appear a certain way, regardless of his true character, natural endowments, or inner emotional state” (Hemphill, “Class” 36). Samuel F. Pickering, Jr. notes that because “conduct books seemed to stress accommodation with this world, even to celebrate it, religious critics were often uncomfortable with the genre,” especially as Chesterfield’s “letters were popular and furnished matter for many conduct books” (176). One can imagine the reaction Chesterfield’s book caused. During “the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” settlers and early Americans generally “equated morals with religion and commonly identified manners with morals” (Schlesinger 1). Even (future First Lady) Abigail Adams weighed in, criticizing the book’s “immoral, pernicious[,] and Libertine principals [sic]” although she also acknowledged the book’s helpful sections (qtd. in Schlesinger 12). *Letters* was redacted

into a less scandalous form as *Principles of Politeness* (12), and in 1827 it was reworked as *The American Chesterfield* (13). One final thought on Chesterfield: the year *Letters* was published is “often taken as the culminating point in studies of courtesy literature for men, [but] marks the beginning of an accelerated production of courtesy books for women” (Hemlow 732).

Evidence exists that future U.S. Presidents were interested in conduct, too. In 1747, at the age of fifteen, George Washington wrote “Rules of Civility,” a compilation of the sorts of advice dispensed in conduct literature rather than a wholly original work (Schlesinger 4). It contains 110 precepts (5). Richard L. Bushman traces Washington’s rules back to Francis Hawkins’ translation of *Youth’s Behavior, or Decency in Conversation among Men*. In fact, “Washington’s rules were nearly two hundred years old and had an Italian, French, and English ancestry” (32). In his diary, another future President, John Adams, “allows us to follow this man of middling origins as he painstakingly acquired gentility” and paid “minute attention to his own and others’ faces, posture, and demeanor” (Hemphill, “Class” 33). Adams’ social class is significant. Most published conduct literature “on early American bookshelves [...] [was] intended for and owned only by the elite” (33). The mid-eighteenth century, however, was a time of change. Sermons and tracts had been produced “for the middling and lower sort” (34), but now conduct works, too, were being written by and for the middling, not just the elite. Revolutionary-era conduct literature addressed the “chief concern[s]” of “pride, ‘easiness,’ modesty, reverence, awkwardness, bashfulness, mirth, gravity, familiarity, reserve, and self-possession” (35-36).

According to the exhaustive research of historian C. Dallett Hemphill, the study of American conduct books reveals specific adaptations of conduct literature from Europe to the situation in the colonies, including the “use of manners to wrestle with certain cultural problems” (“Middle” 318). Over two-thirds of revolutionary-era conduct works were written for middle-class readers (321) to whom authors tailored advice that was “extensive, direct, and specific” (327). This included “elaborate advice on body carriage and repeated denunciation of awkwardness in the presence of peers” (327). Presumably, middle-class readers needed such explicit instruction. In spite of “important nuances” in advice for men and for women (“Class” 43), women actually began to receive “advice similar to that dispensed to men” (36), and even received “many of the same instructions” (44) offered to men in the revolutionary era. Also, “revolutionary-era conduct writers began to address more works to women than to men, a dramatic reversal from the early colonial period” (41). In this way, “revolutionary-era conduct writers showed that they now regarded women as rightful players in the social world” (44).

Still, the social world in which women circulated was a man’s world, so a woman “had to watch out for herself. And her modesty, as expressed through her demeanor, face, and talk, was thought to be her best defense” (43). Such proactive behavior both served as self-protection from men and “preserve[d] capital in the marriage market” (41). By the lights of conduct books, “the burden of controlling men’s passions lay on women’s shoulders. They simply failed to give men any advice asking them to control themselves in this area” (42). For example, women were advised to “adopt a somewhat reserved demeanor with men” (41), and they were warned that “their facial expressions played an important role in determining men’s conduct” (42). Unfeigned blushing was encouraged

as an outward “sign of a woman’s modesty” (42), and “[i]n the context of women’s encounters with men, the emphasis was on modesty as an expression of sexual propriety” (44). Otherwise, conduct of the era “charged both sexes equally with the final challenge of making their demeanor in general society seem artless and unaffected” (43).

The young United States experienced unique circumstances in which the conduct tradition continued to develop. Notably, write Eldred and Mortensen, “the rising standard of literacy after the Revolution rendered an earlier generation of mothers unprepared to teach their children” (24). This meant that “books were figured as surrogate mothers. To this end, European conduct guides, letter-writing manuals, and language primers were all adapted for an American audience that lacked access to literate maternal wisdom. Not every book, though, could substitute for a good mother, for not all books were virtuous” (24). What women were and were not permitted to read became a theme in conduct literature, and in its fictionalized forms as well. Elizabeth Seton, too, was concerned with her daughter’s novel reading. More on this topic will be developed in the antebellum era, but Newton notes “the buying and reading of fiction by women had burgeoned during the late eighteenth century” (146). Conduct writers of this era criticized fiction for “its heightening of female sensibility, its celebration of romantic passion, and its apparent encouragement of women to revolt against the constraints of traditional roles” (146). In contrast, pedantic conduct books “can hardly be said to engage the passions” (143).

Conduct literature of the revolutionary era illuminates the struggles of the developing nation and its social culture. One example of such struggle was the woman problem: “Conduct writers, male and female, were wrestling with a new role for women. They had an older aristocratic construction to work with for men; but for the new social

woman they had to start from scratch” (Hemphill, “Class” 45). Looking specifically at the depiction of women in early American conduct literature, Sarah Emily Newton notes the irony that “the woman [is] praised for all the qualities that define her as female. Yet these qualities are also the very sources of the weaknesses and vices that conduct books lay out in vivid detail” (144). In essence, a woman’s positive qualities are “natural weaknesses that lay the woman open to danger,” and “weakness in even one female virtue opens a breach of which the unscrupulous male *will* take advantage” (145). Along these lines, Thomas Gisborne’s *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1789) is “one of many conduct books to offer a litany of those destabilizing traits to which women are particularly prone because, ironically enough, such traits are also female virtues” (Armstrong 99). For better or worse, “in comparison with the earlier period, many more girls and women had the means and ability to read conduct literature” (Hemphill, *Bowing* 106) and thus to educate themselves on how to behave properly in accordance with standards of the day.

Conduct titles for women from this era, along with inclusive dates of their first publication and reprintings, include William Kenrick’s *The Whole Duty of a Woman; or, a Guide to the Female Sex, from the Age of Sixteen to Sixty* (1761-1798); John Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* (1775-1798); Hester M. Chapone’s *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1783-1797); and John Bennet’s *Letters to a Young Lady* (1790s) (Schlesinger 9). Although “the habit of looking to England for social tutelage continued for a good half century after the severing of political bonds” (9), a French treatise, Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert’s *The Ladies’ Friend*, “ran through seven editions between 1782 and 1795” in the U.S. (13). Jane E. Rose emphasizes that the

American Revolution produced “arguments advocating mothers’ roles as moral exemplars” that were actually derived from Aristotle (43). That is, “eighteenth-century republican ideology planted the seeds for the glorification of motherhood during the antebellum period” (44), which we look at now.

Antebellum (1820-1860)

“A social code, like a garment on the human body, outlives its usefulness when it no longer fits the form for which it was designed,” Schlesinger writes. “[...] Such a challenge confronted American manners in the second quarter of the nineteenth century” (15). Hemphill notes that “[t]he roles of family and church as sources of manners instruction continued to decline after 1820 relative to the growing influence exercised by schools and, especially, books” (*Bowing* 132). In fact, beginning in the late 1820s, conduct “literature poured forth in a never-ending stream. An incomplete enumeration shows that, aside from the frequent revisions and new editions, twenty-eight different manuals appeared in the 1830’s, thirty-six in the 1840’s[,] and thirty-eight more in the 1850’s” (Schlesinger 18).

Generally, antebellum conduct reinforced “newly ritualized” gestures of polite society, such as “introductions, recognitions, and salutations” (Hemphill, *Bowing* 129). The result was that conduct actually “signaled class barriers” (130), and behaviors were “gatekeeping devices to serve the cause of social exclusivity” (131). Antebellum conduct exhibited a “new interest in bodily privacy” (143) and “specific instructions for sitting, standing, and walking” (145). It is important to stress that “the lower class could not have imitated middle-class behavior—even if they wanted to—because polite behavior did not come cheap. If the manual itself could be afforded, the elaborations in the instructions all

required further expenditure for various crucial accessories, whether ‘a stuffed arm chair,’ a piano, a dining room, or a servant” (157). Such were the props of middle-class conduct.

For antebellum conduct writers, “[t]he social world was an adult world” in which “children were not included” (*Bowing* 172). In addition, this all adult, “mixed sex” social environment was a space where the private and public spheres overlapped (181). For example, the drawing and dining rooms were considered public, which is to say “social,” spaces within the privacy of the home (182). This social space, whether in the home or in mixed settings outside the home, such as at concerts, museums, and shops (182), was “feminized—women were granted protection wrapped in privilege” (188). Hemphill explains: “On the surface, this privilege—what we might call the ethic of ‘ladies first’—served as token compensation for men’s clear preeminence in the crucial economic and political arenas” (194). In the mixed sex arena, “the ways in which men were to protect and assist women can be found in the [conduct books’] discussions of visits, dinners, parties, and dances” (197), and of course “a woman’s permission had to be obtained before a man could be introduced to her” (196). What Hemphill calls “male sexual continence,” or restraint, she writes, “was crucial in removing barriers to middle-class women’s full inclusion in the social world, for it made that world safe” (203). That is, “this new treatment of women entailed as much or more change in men’s behavior as in women’s” (210) because “the burden [was] on men to restrain themselves” (194).

According to Hemphill, in the antebellum era about three-quarters of conduct books were American in origin (132), and about one-third of advice was dispensed to women readers, one third to men, and one third to a mixed readership (131). While “early

colonial conduct writers had openly claimed that women were inferior to men,” writers in the antebellum era “claimed that women were men’s social superiors” (194). This is quite a turnaround. In content, antebellum conduct literature also reveals differences in what is considered proper behavior for women. For example, attitudes about dancing changed over time: “Whereas early colonial authors often condemned dancing, and revolutionary-era writers recommended it as beneficial to carriage but best performed in private companies, most antebellum-era authors heartily approved of it” (*Bowing* 145). Visiting, which “caused little comment in earlier periods,” was a prominent topic in antebellum works, suggests Hemphill, “because it served the crucial (but inadmissible) function of defining one’s acquaintance by class. Visiting was a ritual performed with social equals, and one’s visiting circle constituted a social set defined by class” (151).

The “ladies first” ethic did not give women a free pass to do as they wished, however. Female expression of certain unladylike emotions was out of bounds. In *Woman in Her Various Relations: Containing Practical Rules for American Females* (1851), author Mrs. L.G. Abell “implies that a woman as an embodiment of piety should be incapable of expressing any negative emotions,” like anger, “or she should express them only in acceptably feminine ways” (Rose 48). For example, conduct authors of this era write about the “benign influence” of a woman’s love, and they seem to “expect the qualities of female character to tame or counterbalance certain traits usually associated with the male—aggression and unrefined ruggedness” (49). This was one element of the “beau-ideal,” or female archetype, articulated through conduct literature. Conduct writers aimed “to persuade and encourage young women to strive for the authors’ purported versions of human perfection—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically—and to

teach them how to reach that goal” (45). One way *not* to reach that goal was by reading novels.

Women’s reading of novels was considered a real problem, “a primary object of concern [in] mid-century advice manuals and popular domestic fiction” (Ashworth 141). While women are certainly encouraged to read as befits “cultivating the mind and character” (Rose 52), “conduct experts are quick to advise women against reading works that might jeopardize the conduct experts’ teachings, incite certain unacceptable desires and ambitions, and thus threaten the social order” (53). Both conduct books and “domestic novels worried over the woman reader’s vulnerability to corrupting textual influences” (Ashworth 142). Female readers must walk a fine line. Consequently, the subject of women’s “reading figures prominently among the many behaviors which advice manuals and domestic novels sought to regulate,” including “how and what and for how long and with what objective a True Woman should read” (142). In this light, many authors recommended a sanctioned reading curriculum for women.

In *The Young Lady’s Friend* (1836), for example, Eliza Farrar suggests rhetoric titles for her women readers: “Blair, Kame, Campbell—the standard nineteenth-century texts for men’s college composition and rhetoric” (Donawerth, “Nineteenth-Century” 11). Farrar’s book “sketches the traditional humanist, rhetorical education that lasts a lifetime—but for women, so that they can properly influence their children” (10). Farrar also presents writing as an element of this “kind of continuing education for women,” and advises women to “take notes on sermons, lectures, conversations, and passages from books that might serve as topics for practice themes” and write down unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter (11). Other conduct books practically tell women to bone up

on their American history. For example, Lydia Sigourney's advice book, *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833), argues that "the republic needed women's agency and women needed understanding of the nation's need" while Louisa Tuthill, in the advice book *The Young Lady's Home* (1848), insists that women know the history, constitution, and form of government of their country (Baym 12-13).

By contrast to such salubrious conduct book reading was the unhealthy and even dangerous novel reading. Through laying out "reading methods, materials, and aims" (Ashworth 143), conduct "writers attempted to make reading a transparent act" (147) as a canny mode of "surveillance" of women readers (147). The "ideal woman reader," outlined in conduct books, "read solely to cultivate her moral and intellectual faculties" (144). The method proscribed was "to read within, to read at fixed intervals, to regularly refer to dictionaries and atlases, to underline important passages, and, above all, to read slowly, deliberately, and repeatedly" (146). Manuals also suggested reading aloud, which "pre-empts any privacy or autonomy the woman reader might claim" (153). Reading the novel, women were warned, was a "precursor to nervous disorders, paranoia, a fragile constitution, and fatal diseases" (146), and "conduct books threatened self-destruction for the women who practiced it" (145).

Jane E. Rose's research finds tension in the aims of antebellum conduct literature, as "it promotes both the literacy and education of women. At the same time, however, the rationale qualifies literacy by dictating reading material compatible to the model of ideal womanhood and also restricts the education of literate women to preparation for a domestic vocation" (38). (Rose notes that the "women" whom writers addressed actually indexed only "middle-class white women" [40].) In short, "the model of womanhood

promoted in the conduct books [...] reinforces the self-abnegation of women and perpetuates their powerlessness” (54). Rose suggests that conduct literature of this era “provide[s] an important textual site on which to explore social ideals for women’s roles,” and she concludes that such works “reinforced a doctrine of separate spheres” for American men and women (37). That is, “taken collectively, conduct books [...] plac[e] ideal women in the home and responsible, virtuous men in the public sector” (40).

Nina Baym questions the rigid, somewhat artificial distinction between public and private posited by historians, and counters with her own argument. From another angle, she explains, “home was where the most important national product—the citizen—was manufactured; the domestic sphere was therefore a work site fully participant in public life.” Thus, the home setting “formed the beings whose virtue or vice, civic patriotism or self-interest, would preserve or destroy the republic” (12). Furthermore, “home and its satellite social spaces” were “the fountainheads of civic morality and thus essentially public in their nature” (6). Jane Donawerth argues that American conduct literature by women for women served as a stealth rhetorical education for its readers. That is, women conduct writers “appropriate[d] the conduct book for women as a means of teaching each other how to speak and write” (“Nineteenth-Century” 16). Additionally, these women writers “use[d] [contemporary] ideology to claim a larger and larger portion of the arts of rhetoric and composition” (16).

Catharine Sedgwick was the lone wolf among conduct writers, “a lonely voice promulgating the view that women be allowed to choose and pursue their own professional goals” (Rose 53). She “recognize[d] the need for women to be educated so that they are able to support themselves, live independently, and avoid being forced into

marriage out of economic consideration” (54). Donawerth argues that in Lydia Sigourney’s *Letters*, referenced above, “the good conversationalist [is] very like the good speaker of traditional rhetoric, although she is female” (“Nineteenth-Century” 9). Like Quintilian’s good *man* speaking well, women’s conversation serves as “moral uplift” (8-9).

Donawerth ups the ante in her article “Poaching on Men’s Philosophies of Rhetoric: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Rhetorical Theory by Women,” arguing that women of this era “did write rhetorical theory. Moreover, they were aware that, in doing so, they ‘poached’ on men’s territory” (255). In this way women “reinvented, improvised, fragmented, and distorted the philosophies of rhetoric that they had received, and so insinuated into them places for women’s writing and speaking” (255). But they didn’t stop there. Through their poaching, they “moved the discipline of rhetoric into territory open to full public use” (256). Eliza Farrar, for example, “sets up feminine discipleship to great male rhetors as a model for appropriating rhetoric” (248) by “sentimentaliz[ing] and feminiz[ing] [the] rhetoric of letter writing” (250). The end result is that Farrar “democratize[s] rhetoric through the teaching of letter writing” (251) and her “modification[s] of the classical tradition” (249).

Hemphill observes that “some of the most popular revolutionary-era works, especially Chesterfield, continued to circulate throughout the antebellum period” (*Bowing* 142). Elizabeth Leslie, Catherine Sedgwick, and Eliza Farrar wrote advice books for women in this era “as a way to support their families” (183). Other antebellum conduct titles for women include A.J. Graves’ *Woman in America* (1843); William A. Alcott’s *The Young Woman’s Guide* (1836) (Schlesinger 19); Catharine Beecher’s *Treatise on*

Domestic Economy (1842) (Ashworth 157); Daniel Wise's *The Young Lady's Counsellor* (1855) (144); Harvey Newcomb's *Newcomb's Young Lady's Guide to the Harmonious Development of Christian Character* (1846, 7th ed.) (163); Margaret Coxe's *The Young Lady's Companion, and Token of Affection, in a Series of Letters* (1846) (162); Sigourney's *Letters to My Pupils* (1850) (Donawerth, "Nineteenth-Century" 7); and Eliza Farrar's *The Youth's Letter Writer; or The Epistolary Art* (1840) (9).

Conclusion

As the above research indicates, the study of conduct literature reveals much more than what is considered proper behavior and demeanor during a given time period. Through her extensive research on conduct in the United States across eras, Hemphill contends that "the evidence from conduct literature can tell us much about the relationship between contemporary rules for the expression of emotions and social change" as well as "the origins of middle-class culture, and the construction of modern gender roles" ("Class" 36). Armstrong and Tennenhouse maintain that across time "conduct books for women, in particular, strive to reproduce, if not always to revise, the culturally approved forms of desire" (1). Additionally, "the genre implies two distinct aspects of desire, a desired object, and a subject who desires that object" such that a woman is schooled to have what are considered desirable features and a man is schooled to desire a certain "kind of woman" (5). Furthermore, the co-authors argue, "the regulation of desire through representations of gender became the most efficacious form of social control, more so than the police, the military, the law courts, or even the schoolroom" (16). Sarah Emily Newton calls conduct literature "a rich source of cultural

data and a genre with significant influence on the formation of American literature” (140), not to mention American character.

Nancy Armstrong maintains that “[c]onduct books for women must be viewed as just one among many forgotten kinds of information that are similarly woven into the fabric of fiction” (258). That is, according to Armstrong’s compelling and heady argument, which reads much like an application of Kenneth Burke’s theories, eighteenth-century conduct literature presented a “figure of female subjectivity, a grammar really, [which] awaited the substance that the novel and its readers, as well as the countless individuals educated according to the model of the new woman, would eventually provide” (60). While the novel gave metaphoric flesh and bone to the woman that conduct literature merely sketched, explains Armstrong, “the rhetoric of the conduct books produced a subject who in fact had no material body at all. This rhetoric replaced the material body with a metaphysical body made largely of words, albeit words constituting a material form of power in their own right” (95). The next chapter continues the theme of words as power, but through the lens of Kenneth Burke and dramatism.

Chapter 3

Kenneth Burke and Dramatism

Kenneth D. Burke (1897-1993) is an American literary and social critic and rhetorical theorist. Burke wrote compellingly on a range of subjects that include “anthropology, linguistics, religion, oratory, fiction, history, economics, philosophy, and politics,” and his published works span criticism, translations, poetry, a novel, and theory (Simons 153). However, as William H. Rueckert writes, “If Burke is anything in a primary or exclusive sense, he is a language critic, a specialist in symbol-systems and symbolic action” (*Kenneth* 227). Burke is noted for reinvigorating the study of rhetoric and expanding rhetoric and symbol use to embrace more than argumentation (Herrick 224). This expansion, writes Coe, is “one of Burke’s major contributions to rhetoric, a contribution that virtually creates the New Rhetoric” (49). As far-reaching and interdisciplinary as Burke’s work is, rhetoricians continue to “extend,” or adapt, his theories. In this way, Burke “has served as the very model of critical freedom” (H. White viii). For the purposes of this dissertation, I employ Burke’s theory of dramatism, outlined in *A Grammar of Motives* (*GM*).

I begin the chapter with background on Kenneth Burke and his unique contributions to the field of rhetorical studies. Next, I explore Burke’s understanding of dramatism and the dramatistic pentad, which he laid out so thoroughly in *GM*. I pay particular attention to the pentad as a heuristic device. I also note Burke’s other contributions to rhetorical studies, including vocabulary pertinent to our discussion. Finally, I discuss critical responses to and extensions of dramatism. Let us begin to look

at this “major figure in American humanities in the twentieth century[:] Poet, scholar, critic, iconoclast, eccentric, and Yankee crank,” Kenneth Burke (Brummett xi).

Kenneth Burke: Background and Contributions to Rhetorical Studies

Among his many noteworthy contributions, Kenneth Burke is credited with renewing or reviving interest in the study of rhetoric in the twentieth century. The New Rhetoric, or epistemic rhetoric, marks this renewal, a renewal actually owed in equal parts to Burke and his contemporaries. James Berlin, a historian of composition and rhetoric, explains, “For the New Rhetoric, knowledge is not simply a static entity available for retrieval. Truth is dynamic and dialectical, the result of a process involving the interaction of opposing elements. It is a relation that is created, not pre-existent and waiting to be discovered” (774). This is a position that writing studies would also adopt, that writing is epistemic. Berlin continues, “For the New Rhetoric truth is impossible without language since it is language that embodies and generates truth” (774), and language is Burke’s game. That is, “if he has preached or promoted anything throughout all of his writing and teaching life, it has been the value of knowledge and thoroughness, especially about language and symbol-systems generally” (Rueckert, “Some” 9). With Burke’s passion for study of human symbol use and communication, he set out to write a trilogy that was meant to be “roughly parallel to Aristotle’s trilogy concerning logic, rhetoric, and poetics, but with his stress upon motives and symbolic action Burke proposed a ‘dramatized’ treatment of the topics” (Williams 4). Through this planned *Motivorum Trilogy*, never completed, Burke “hoped to foster analytic, critical, and ultimately philosophical appreciation of the resources and nature of language that, in Burke’s understanding, culminated too frequently in conflict, scapegoating, and war” (4).

Burke was so invested in this subject, “the relationship between rhetoric and war” (Enoch 272), that he proposed a “technique [that] would prompt students to disengage from moments of aggressive argumentation and, instead, reflect upon the ways language contributes to such conflicts” (273). Composition scholar Jessica Enoch explains that in his essay “Linguistic Approaches to the Problems of Education” (1955), published a decade after the *Grammar*, Burke “offers a theory and practice of language study” to reduce the competition and aggression “that could eventually lead to global conflict” (273). For Burke, a different kind of pre-emptive strike could start in the classroom through “a pedagogy of critical reflection” that actually makes “students become fearful of language use” (280). His teaching method asks students “to immerse themselves in the various sides of the debate to learn how each side is made and remade through linguistic choices” (282) and “calls [them] to observe language patiently, methodically, and critically” (289). Burke’s commitment to education is another hallmark of his long public career.

Janice Odom uses appropriately strong language to describe what may be Burke’s greatest contribution to a new understanding of rhetoric. When *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) was published, Burke “accomplished [...] what no one else had: he revised the master term of rhetoric from Aristotle’s *persuasion* to his own term, *identification*” (242-43). In Burke’s concept of identification, “speakers do not ‘persuade’ audiences: they *create identifications* that move audiences to an action or an attitude by crafting arguments that apparently join the interests of the speaker and the audience. In this way, audiences come to have an interest in acting together in common, for a common purpose” (243). Herbert W. Simons explains that identification is “understood broadly to include

appeals—both conscious and unconscious—to common ground and selective namings [sic] of a thing’s ostensible properties” (159). Simons also suggests that asking “the precise meaning” of Burke’s identification “is precisely the wrong question to ask,” underscoring a breadth of meaning built into the term (165). Identification, naturally, implies division because by identifying with the audience, writers “divide themselves from their opponents by choosing rhetorical tactics that highlight how they are *not* consubstantial with the ‘other side’” (Enoch 286-87). In Burke’s terminology, consubstantiality refers to “an unconscious desire to identify with others” (Blakesley 15).

Burke’s accomplishments are extraordinary considering that once he left college he never completed a degree. Yet he taught college courses, guest lectured, and was honored with the National Medal for Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Simons 153). He also earned enthusiastic and devoted followers. The Kenneth Burke Society was created in the mid-1980s (Rountree, “Burke” 2), and the *KB Journal*, “the first journal devoted exclusively to the study of Burke and his ideas,” was established in 2004 (3). Even among so-called Burkeians, scholars and critics have thought Burke’s writing to be “unsystematic, obscure, jargon-ridden, or incoherent” (Warnock 62). Blankenship et al. assert, “Most readers of Burke would agree that he is difficult to understand” (71). Critic Sidney Hook also notes, “The greatest difficulty that confronts the reader of Burke is finding out what he means. His individual sentences seem to be clear, but when put together they are obscure, sometimes opaque” (Hook 89-90). Burke often “connects his ideas by random association” (Brown 6), which can confuse readers, and “[h]is books are full of elaborate afterthoughts, in footnotes and appendixes” (15). As a result, “many writers have worked to clarify Burke as much as

possible so that others may approach him with some sort of grasp on his general principles” (J. White 3). The attempt has created discernable patterns in which Burke is approached, namely a “focus upon one term or theme” in his corpus; “systematiz[ing] his work”; and “plac[ing] Burke within a ‘school’” or with a major foundational figure in rhetoric (3). Herrick finds that “the effort to understand [Burke] is repaid with genuine insights into the nature of rhetorical discourse” (225).

The difficulty in reading Burke may stem from his Modernist writing sensibility, which is enthymematic in style (Warnock 63) and thus forces “the reader’s active participation” (66). However, critic Tilly Warnock maintains that Burke actually “school[s] his reader through his own readings of texts in how to make connections” (66). Another difficulty in reading Burke is his “insistence on thinking *both-and* rather than *either/or*, on thinking at once on several levels” (Coe 46). To understand Burke means “understanding his conception of what makes us human” (39), which is “our being symbol-making animals” (40). That is, “Our very perceptions—as well as our interpretations, attitudes, judgments, choices and the actions that follow—are all mediated by the symbols we make, use, abuse and are, in this sense, used by” (40). One of Burke’s methods for analyzing human symbol use is **dramatism**, a valuable tool for the rhetorical critic, and for the writer as well.

The “first, clear discussion of the relations among the key elements of Dramatism,” scholar Michael Feehan suggests, appears in Burke’s article “Twelve Propositions by Kenneth Burke on the Relation Between Economics and Psychology,” published in 1938. According to Feehan, this early article “concentrates ideas in a form leading directly to the claim that drama is not a metaphor for but rather a model of human

relations” (405), and as such is a “proto-dramatistic perspective” (408). Dramatism came into full flower in Burke’s *A Grammar of Motives*, the first of his projected *Motivorum Trilogy*. The *Grammar* purports to answer the question with which Burke opens his Introduction, “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (xv). We must remember that World War II “raged on during the years Burke wrote and rewrote what would become his theory of dramatism” (Weiser 286). In fact, Burke inscribed *GM*’s title page with “Ad bellum purificandum,” or towards the purification of war, which he calls the book’s “motto” (319). What this motto conveys for Burke is “the sense that war can be refined to the point where it would be much more peaceful than the conditions we would now call peace” (305). M. Elizabeth Weiser further contextualizes the *Grammar*:

Burke’s response to the “total war” surrounding him in the 1940s was to produce a methodology for effective action within the one arena that war strove hardest to eliminate: the parliamentary babel of diverse perspectives. Dramatism would lead toward the purification of war because it enabled a way to talk about differences as linguistic entities and consider together their essential points of unity. (300)

It may be hard for readers today to sense the urgency with which Burke wrote. What is now part of the historical record of WWII was Burke’s scene and would have been fresh in the minds of his readers.

A dense, complicated text with numerous asides, the *Grammar* is over 500 pages long and divided into three parts, plus the introduction and appendix. Critic Charles Morris writes that the *Grammar* “is experienced as a vast dialogue” in which the reader

“is challenged to find himself [sic] by taking the role of others” who represent a “multitude of attitudes” (164). This vast dialogue includes, just for a sampling, Freud, Aristotle, Jimmy Durante, Spinoza, Coleridge, Shakespeare, Richard Wright, and Webster’s dictionary. The “very complicated” (Lentricchia 135) Introduction to the *Grammar* lays out the pentad and dramatism briefly, and explains what a “grammar” of motives is. Burke calls it “a concern with the terms alone, without reference to the ways in which their potentialities have been or can be utilized in actual statements about motives” (xvi).

Part One of the *Grammar* thoroughly covers Burke’s key terms, including ratios, substance, motive, and the representative anecdote. Part Two discusses each term of the five terms of the pentad in detail, and Part Three concerns dialectic, which Burke explains as “the employment of the possibilities of linguistic transformation. Or [...] the study of such possibilities” (402). To paraphrase Burke, dialectics “is the use of symbol-systems to check on symbol-systems” (Rueckert, “Some” 9). Dialectic in “the most general sense,” according to Burke, has “three heads”: merger and division, of which classification systems are examples (417); the three pairs of action-passion, mind-body, and being-nothing; and transcendence (402). Burke explains that dialectical terms “require an opposite” to define them (qtd. in Lentricchia 133).

Part Three also discusses constitutions as representative anecdotes. Critic Kenneth D. Benne writes that the *Grammar*

may be read as a reaction against ‘scientistic’ attempts to ‘reduce’ the explanation of human conduct to the influence of various conditions and causes—physical, chemical, biological[,] or generally environmental.

These attempts Burke sees as, in effect, reducing action to movement determined by selected determinants from the ‘scene’ of human action.
(200)

The *Grammar* “is full-blown structuralism well in advance, of course, of the French structuralist movement” (Lentricchia 130). Let us plunge in.

Dramatism

Applications and Significance

As alluded to earlier, one of Burke’s major contributions to rhetoric is the theory of dramatism and the dramatistic pentad, which he adapted from the medieval hexameter⁵ (Anderson and Althouse 7). In *The Elements of Dramatism*, scholar David Blakesley describes dramatism as a rhetorical method that “analyzes language and thought as modes of action rather than as means [sic] of conveying information” (41). The pentad, a part of this rhetorical method, is “Burke’s constellation of key terms for understanding the attribution of human motive.” Those five key terms are act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose (198). Burke believes that “the essence of all linguistic action is to be found in ritual drama” (Rueckert, *Kenneth* 128). In other words, “drama [is] our fundamental sense-making frame and [... is] at the root of our capacity to act in the world” (King 35). In this way, the written word, a linguistic action, can be analyzed like a stage drama would, using terms and pairs of terms that Burke calls the pentad and ratios, respectively. Burke’s dramatistic pentad provides a method by which readers and critics can

⁵ *Quis* (who/agent), *quid* (what/act), *ubi* (where/“scene defined as place”), *quibus auxilium* (agency), *cur* (purpose), *quomodo* (manner, “attitude”), and *quando* (when/“scene defined temporally”) (Burke, “Dramatism” 335).

systematically study a text or event. Seton biographer Leonard Feeney inadvertently employs the language of dramatism in describing Elizabeth Bayley Seton as the “protagonist of the spiritual group in [the] siege of the Lazaretto” (78) that is depicted in Seton’s *Leghorn Journal*. Feeney is astute in noting that Seton’s “siege” story could be analyzed from different perspectives, and yield different insights, depending on whom the reader considers to be the protagonist of the drama (79).

Burke “implies that there is no ‘right’ way to use the framework” (Walker and Monin 277), and even scholarly disagreements “over the issue of the pentad’s status has rarely prevented fruitful analyses of rhetorical acts and artifacts” (Rountree, “Coming” 1). Dramatism, and the pentadic analysis associated with it, contribute to a nuanced, critical reading of any text or event, and have been applied to workaday situations. A few examples include dramatistic analysis of a corporate picnic (Walker and Monin); media coverage of Hurricane Katrina (Grano and Zagacki); and Senator Ted Kennedy’s 1969 Chappaquiddick incident address (Ling). Burke is also useful in the college classroom. Jeffrey Nelson writes that by studying and applying the pentad, students can gain “a clearer understanding of [themselves] and thus a keener grasp of the reasons for the rhetorical choices” they make in their lives (66). Hamlin and Nichols opine, “Obviously, knowledge of the effects of different verbal strategies would be of value to the practitioner as well as to the rhetorical critic” (97). Of Burke’s pedagogy, Jessica Enoch explains, “Instead of using language as a means to draw lines in the sand, Burke wants students to see it as a characteristic that unites all human beings” (287). Dramatism is flexible, attentive to and inclusive of multiple perspectives, and offers classroom and real-world applications. Dramatism also aptly suits analysis of the genre of conduct

literature that historian C. Dallett Hemphill describes as akin to both “stage directions” (*Bowing* 156) and “ritual” (157), just the kind of human symbol use that Burke encourages us to examine in detail.

Justification of Method

Kenneth Burke speaks to human symbol use, of which writing is one example, as dramatic and active. Although Burke can be heavy reading and may need a great deal of explanation for modern readers, I argue that Elizabeth Seton would not have difficulty understanding words, written or spoken, and human symbol use as action. For example, Seton attends Mass, understands Christ as Word, prays, and receives the Eucharist. Furthermore, she teaches and models these actions in both her life and the advice book that she writes to Kit. She would completely understand identification (with Christ) and Burke’s concept of consubstantiality, except in her case the desire to identify is not unconscious but recognized and intentional. This does not suggest that Seton is fluent in Burke’s method or that she was a theorist. Rather, symbol use is part and parcel of her faith. Burke’s method fits hand in glove with Seton’s world and world view.

Next, Burke’s motto for the *Grammar* is “towards the purification of war.” While it is true that Seton makes no overt statement about war in her advice book, she makes several statements about speaking, listening, and human behavior, and their relationship to truth. Like Burke, she understands and conveys to Kit the power of words and other symbolic means of action. She does not want Kit to wound herself or others with words in the full knowledge that words have power. Seton reveals her understanding of the power of words in many examples discussed in the next chapter.

Finally, as a practical matter, as a way *into* a difficult text, Burke's pentad allows deeper study of Seton's world view, which at least as presented in her advice book, tends toward all or nothing thinking. Whereas Seton's writing suggests either/or thinking, Burke, as stated earlier, explores both-and. Either/or thinking would seem *not* to leave many cracks for ambiguity, or rhetoric. Burke's pentad, however, wedges the reader-analyst into the in-between places and exposes where Seton displays her rhetorical savvy.

The Pentad

Robert Wess describes the pentad in simple terms, as "analogous to five people observing an accident and giving five different characterizations of what happened" (62). Dramatism does not "indicat[e] a concept or system of thought that ends all debate, representing *the only accurate way* of treating its subject" (Crabbe, "Defending" 325), nor does Burke intimate "that dramatism is as complete a representation of human reality as would ever be possible" (330-31). That is, dramatism provides one critical lens through which to analyze an event or artifact. The pentad is a tool to open, or unlock, a text, not lock it down.

The pentad, according to Burke, "affords a serviceably over-all structure for the analysis of both literary texts in particular and human relations in general" ("Questions" 334). Burke considers dramatism literal⁶, not metaphorical. He emphasizes, "I make a point of insisting that the Dramatistic perspective is *not* a metaphor. For years I myself accepted the Dramatistic perspective as a metaphor, but now I've gone up in my price. I

⁶ This is another angle from which critics extend and revise Burke, reading dramatism as strictly literal or metaphorical. Tompkins and Cheney are unequivocal in their criticism: "[W]e believe Burke erred in not clearly situating the Pentad exclusively in the symbolic domain. Some student papers and published criticism alike are fatally flawed by identifying, say, an agent or scene in the nonsymbolic realm and the remaining terms of the Pentad in the symbolic" (230).

claim that the propositions ‘things move, persons act,’ is *literal*” (“Dramatism” 331). In any case, “Burke notes, we treat other human beings *as if* they were acting rather than merely moving” (Rountree, “Revisiting” 2). The pentad consists of the five key terms mentioned earlier: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. These are the “loci of motives” of the event under study (“Dramatism” 345). Early in the *Grammar*, Burke explains that “all statements that assign motives can be shown to arise out of [the terms of the pentad] and to terminate in them” (xvi). Thus, the pentad is “a heuristic of motives” and “an answer to one of the pentadic questions will have implications for our interpretation of answers to all of the other pentadic questions” since they share the same substance (Rountree, “Coming” 2). Let us look at each element of the pentad in turn.

To begin, the **act** is the event or artifact being studied, such as the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests in Zuccotti Park (event) or Seton’s advice book to her daughter Kit (artifact). Burke writes that the act is “a terministic center from which many related considerations can be shown to ‘radiate’” (“Dramatism” 332). In the *Grammar*, Burke explains that “any verb, no matter how specific or how general, that has connotations of consciousness or purpose falls under [the] category” of act (14). An act is intentional, and should be distinguished from mere motion, such as accidentally walking into a street sign. That is, “If a man is pushed over a cliff, his descent is not an act; it is a natural event. But if, during his descent, he clutches at something to break his fall, this clutching for a purpose however futile is an act” (368). Burke cautions of “a paradoxical tendency to slight the term, *act*, in the very featuring of it,” which is to say that in using it as the “point of departure” in an analysis it may get “left behind” (65).

The **scene** encompasses the physical and temporal situation. As Burke details in the *Grammar*, “Terms for historical epochs, cultural movements, social institutions (such as ‘Elizabethan period,’ ‘romanticism,’ ‘capitalism’) are scenic” (12). Burke explains that by principle “the scene is a fit ‘container’ for the act, expressing in fixed properties the same quality that the action expresses in terms of development” (3), or as a ratio, “scene is to act as implicit is to explicit” (7). The circumference, or breadth, of the scene can be narrowed or widened as the critic sees fit, Burke informs (“Dramatism” 332). One might think of a camera lens, zooming in or out. The zooming in or out is not without effect, for “any change of the circumference in terms of which an act is viewed implies a corresponding change in the quality of the act’s motivation” (333). In the *Grammar*, Burke indicates that “a selection of circumference from among this range is in itself an act, an ‘act of faith,’ with the definition or interpretation of the act taking shape accordingly” (84). Thus, circumference “is particularly relevant as regards the sociology of motives” (91).

The **agent** (or agents) is the person (or persons) who performed the act. Turning again to the *Grammar*, Burke advises,

[W]e should be reminded that the term *agent* embraces not only all words general or specific for person, actor, character, individual, hero, villain, father, doctor, engineer, but also any words, moral or functional, for *patient*, and words for the motivational properties or agents, such as “drives,” “instincts,” “states of mind.” We may also have collective words for agent, such as nation, group, [and] the Freudian “super-ego” (20),

among other examples. The **agency** is the means by which the act is carried out, and the **purpose** describes the reason for the act. Dramatism itself “is an agency enabling critique of rhetorical action” (Kneupper 305). Burke does not use agency in the conventional way that it is used in the classroom to indicate a person’s ability or freedom to act on his or her own. For example, to say that the character Nora Helmer lacked agency means, in the Burkeian sense, that she did not possess means by which to act. William Rueckert explains that “[l]anguage, which is usually thought of as an agency, but is treated by Burke as an act, is also [...] always involved in the purpose of the act as well as *any* purposive human action, whether verbal or non-verbal” (*Kenneth* 134-35). In the *Grammar*, Burke notes that purpose can be a bit slippery, the term “most susceptible of dissolution” because it overlaps with the other terms. That is, “[i]mplicit in the concepts of act and agent there is the concept of purpose. It is likewise implicit in agency, since tools and methods are for a purpose” (289).

Of course, there are always exceptions. Along these lines, J. Clarke Rountree notes that while some terms “are ‘scenic’ (or ‘purposive’ or ‘agency-related,’ etc.) on their face,” we must recognize that sometimes terms may function in ways out of the ordinary. For example, one pentadic analysis examines former U.S. President Ronald Reagan as a scene rather than an agent, as might be expected (“Coming” 4). Every term of the pentad has “properties” associated with it, but how terms are treated can change how they function. In this way, “historical periods, cultural movements, and the like [can be] treated as ‘personalities’” (Burke, *Grammar* 171) such that a personality (Reagan) can be treated as a scene. As if all of this is not complicated enough, Burke throws another wrench into his method, advising that “when the pentadic functions are so

essentially ambiguous, there is always the possibility that one term may be doing service for another” (291).

In an Addendum to the *Grammar*, Burke writes, “I have found one modification useful for certain kinds of analysis. [...] I have sometimes added the term ‘attitude’” to the five terms of the pentad (443). Burke offers an example of attitude in use: “To build something with a hammer would involve an instrument, or ‘agency’; to build with diligence would involve an ‘attitude,’ a ‘how’” (443). I agree with Burkeian scholars who argue that attitude is *implied* in the pentad (Anderson and Althouse 5), so I do not employ the term separately.

Now that we have defined the five terms of the pentad, Burke explains that his “stress is less upon the terms themselves than [...] the ‘ratios’ among the terms” (“Questions” 332). These **ratios** result when each of the five terms of the pentad is arranged in a paired relationship with another term in the pentad (*Grammar* 15). Once each term of the pentad has been identified for a specific event or artifact, the next step in a pentadic analysis is to examine the ratios. Burke asserts that one term dominates or controls the other term in the ratio. In studying the ratios, then, the critic is looking for the controlling, or titular, term. For example, one ratio is act-scene. Using the act-scene ratio, the critic asks how (or if) the act controls the scene. Each of the ten ratios can then be reversed. This makes a total of 20 ratios representing 20 points of view from which to examine an artifact or event. The critic studies all 20 ratios in order to discover a controlling term that is useful in analyzing the rhetorical act and “imputing” motive (Burke, “Dramatism” 332). In this way, the “ratios help us multiply the perspectives from

which we view motives and thereby expose the resources of ambiguity people might exploit to interpret complex problems” (Blakesley 35).

The twenty ratios below reflect my reading of the advice book. Some of the ratios are muddy, difficult to answer, or ambiguous, and a different analyst might determine different ratios. For this reader, however, **scene** and **agent** present themselves as the titular terms in the advice book.

Scene [4]

Scene-act: Yes, the physical scene probably influences the act of writing; her two daughters and two sisters-in-law have died and are buried in the graveyard; maybe the circumstances do, too, as Seton is ill and Kit seems to be traveling; the security of isolated St. Joseph’s valley is far different from the cosmopolitan cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.

Scene-agent: Yes, the scene influences the agent, as Seton is used to guiding and giving advice to students and religious Sisters.

Scene-agency: Yes, it probably influences the choice to write. Seton writes instructions to the Sisters and teaches catechism; this would have been a quite natural form of communication. Conduct books were often in a “catechistic” form, or question and answer.

Scene-purpose: Yes, the immediate scene, St. Joseph’s, likely influences Seton’s writing advice to her daughter. Also, evidently writing notes was a habit in the family home.

Act [0]

Act-agent: No. The writing presumably influences Kit, but she isn’t directly the agent; Seton is.

Act-agency: No, but Seton’s writing might influence the genre of conduct literature.

Act-purpose: Ambiguous. I think the purpose came first. Seton was responding to communication with Kit, or to Kit's being away in big cities; Seton grew up in the city, but Kit was raised in a convent school.

Act-scene: No, I don't think the act influences the scene, unless it is meant to affect the scene that *Kit* finds herself in (cities, homes, social events). The act of writing may reinforce for Seton the benefits of the convent scene for Kit in contrast with the worldly scene Kit finds herself in, but I read that as a focus on agent.

Agent [4]

Agent-act: Yes, Seton is the writer so she influences and determines what is written and how; she's in control of the document and its contents (since she's not in control of Kit while Kit is away). On the other hand, she is partially answering what we assume are Kit's questions. Still, Seton is in control of whether to answer, or not.

Agent-agency: Yes, Seton opts for a little book of advice instead of dog-eared a Bible, for example, or listing essential readings.

Agent-purpose: Yes, both mother *and daughter* (future agent) influence the content of the book.

Agent-scene: Yes, Seton influences the scene at St. Joseph's generally, but via the advice book she may be a companion of sorts while Kit is traveling and affect those scenes that *Kit* is in. Mother Seton is steeped in a religious and educational scene and is an example, at least for the Sisters and students at St. Joseph's, of how to live out being a good Christian.

Agency [2]

Agency-act: Yes, the decision to write advice influences what is written (assuming Seton sat down and decided to write an advice notebook); however, the act of naming the book determines how we read it. In a sense, Seton is curating best practices for living as a Christian.

Agency-agent: No, but it does influence the future agent, Kit.

Agency-purpose: Ambiguous. Seton wouldn't write an advice book to provide recipes or handwriting instructions, but again, she didn't name the book. This is muddy. I think the purpose came first.

Agency-scene: Ambiguous. While the written advice may influence *Kit's perception of the scene* outside of St. Joseph's, the agency does that because of the strong *agent*, Seton.

Purpose [2]

Purpose-act: Yes. The purpose of writing the advice book for Kit influences what Seton writes, concerning behavior and consequences. It focuses and channels what she will write; Seton writes about the Eternal. It determines topics for Seton. Kit is perhaps perceived to "need" the advice.

Purpose-agent: Yes, same answer as above.

Purpose-agency: No and yes, because I believe it's embedded in the agency.

Purpose-scene: Yes and no. This is ambiguous, as Seton the agent is affecting the multiple scenes that she creates in the advice book.

Burke associates a philosophical school with each dominant term of the pentad (*Grammar* 127). In his reckoning, the featuring of scene corresponds with *materialism*; agent corresponds with *idealism*; agency with *pragmatism*; purpose with *mysticism*; and act with *realism* (128). Burke's system actually omits two schools, for which he offers this explanation: "*Nominalism* and *rationalism* increase the kinds of terminology to seven. But since we have used up all our terms, we must account for them indirectly" (129). Crable describes Burke's linkages as "less a textbook-style explication of each particular philosophical tradition than a *placement* of each tradition with the terms of dramatism" ("Burke's" 329). On its face, this systematizing of philosophical school and dominant term may not seem important, or even useful. However, Charles W. Kneupper explains that "insofar as terms from these categories are central to the arguments of these

various groups, they are pivotal terms from which each group interprets reality; each group therefore is most susceptible to argument centered in these terms” (307).

Therefore, if nothing else, the pentad “serve[s] a heuristic function in adapting discourse to particular audiences” (307). But Burke is concerned with the ratios in relation to motive, so what is motive?

Motive is a somewhat complicated term that requires close attention. Burke does not use motive in the same way as a police officer seeking the motive of a crime. For Burke, motive is “a ‘Rome’ term to which all roads lead” (*Grammar* 105), and it “is integrally related to [the] conception of substance” (337). “Burke’s observation that Motive ‘is not some fixed thing, like a table, which one can go and look at ...’ is an indication of the difficulty implicit in the term,” explain Blankenship, Murphy, and Rosenwasser (77). Continuing to discuss the challenges of motive, they write, “Since individuals have their own Orientations, Motives are subjective things. The Motive which we assign to any given situation derives its character from the entire framework of interpretation (Orientation) by which we judge it” (78). Motives are what “make human life and interaction strategic and intentional, that is, rhetorical” (Herrick 229).

To understand motive, it may be easier to turn to sources and scholars outside of Burke who can parse it for us. This exposes another complication, which is that experts do not agree on how to define motive. According to Blakesley, motives for Burke refer to “aspects of situations that may be externalized and represented by and through symbols. The terminologies that shape or define a situation may also carry with them motives of their own, outside of any individual agent” (198). One widely held reading of motive “takes [it] to be an internal, private, mental state that impels an actor to perform an act

(that guides and shapes the performance of an action)” (Benoit 67). This reading and others like it suggest that motive is “cognitive” and “exerts a directive effect on behavior” (68). Benoit, however, offers an alternative interpretation of motives, calling them *“utterances that usually occur after actions, intended to explain, justify, characterize, or interpret those actions”* (70). He reasons, “Surely if the motives were embedded within the situation and the agent, Burke would have written of identifying, rather than assigning, the motives” (73). Thus, Benoit understands motives as “accounts, linguistic devices that function to explain, justify, interpret, or rationalize actions” (70). This view directly counters Overington’s understanding that motives are not rationalizations or an “individual’s verbal justification or explanation of his own or another’s action” (134).

Critics Tompkins and Cheney point out that Burke’s stance on motive has changed over time, and this, too, may contribute to the confusion for readers and disagreement among scholars. They explain: “In later works he seems to locate [motives] in bodies that learn language as well as the language itself. Though not an insoluble problem, Burke’s own ambiguity about motives merits attention” (230). Andrew King asserts that Burke’s interest was “in generic, tribal, and group ideas. He wanted to discover the social motive, not the individual motive” (34). Discussing motive, never mind pinpointing, imputing, or assigning motive in an act, can seem like circling the wagons. Biesecker offers another way of understanding motive: “Despite the fact that, properly speaking, the motive is not the act and the act is not the motive, one can gain access to motive by way of a systematic analysis of the act for which motive has served as the context or generating ground” (31).

I have followed Biesecker's advice. The **motive** is the motor chugging inside a text, almost apart from what the writer-rhetor may have intended or even recognize. Of course, whoever is reading and analyzing a text inevitably ropes his or her own experiences onto it. Burke coined a few terms to explain this phenomenon. **Terministic screens** refer to the metaphoric lenses through which individuals view the world. They are essentially "a framing of experience by singling out or highlighting certain aspects for focused attention" and actually "enable our observations" (Blakesley 95). As frames, they "enable you to see and to do certain things and prevent you from seeing and doing others" (Rueckert, "Some" 10). In the same vein, **trained incapacity** and **occupational psychoses** are orientations that "develop because of uniform exigencies that are successfully met by the same response over and over again until that response becomes routine." In so doing, "they limit or incapacitate us because their channeling of our perceptions reduces the chance that we may see and embrace alternative perceptions and actions" (Wolin 103). That is, "as a frame prepares us to cope effectively with our environment, it conditions us to accept some things and reject others" (103). These in effect create unconscious intellectual blind spots.

In this way, with these blind spots acknowledged, after I analyzed Elizabeth Seton's advice book to her daughter Kit, the text suggested (to this analyst) that the motive, the driver of the text, is control. The *purpose* of the text is something different. So, for example, while Seton may have intended in good will to offer advice to her daughter so that Kit is better prepared to navigate a social world from which she has been largely separated, the path of action forward that Seton suggests to Kit is a way of

(pre)determining Kit's actions. It is a method of control. I point out the motive here, but the analysis of the advice book is detailed in the next chapter.

Concerning another key term in the *Grammar*, the **representative anecdote**, Burke opens his discussion with his frequently cited explanation: "Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality" (59). The representative anecdote is, in Burke's words, "itself so dramatistic a conception that we might call it the dramatistic approach to dramatism: an *introduction to* dramatism that is *deduced from* dramatism" (60). In layperson's terms, representative anecdotes are "representative bits of larger wholes" (Ramage viii). In casual conversation, we might say an event or action is "all of a piece." Along those lines, a representative anecdote "must have sufficient scope to be representative of a larger whole, yet be simple enough to allow one to contemplate it fully. [...] it is part of the whole through which one can come to a clear understanding of the workings of the whole. It's a microcosm of the macrocosm to which it belongs" (Ramage xiii). An anecdote offers the possibility of "generat[ing] more complex explanations of human motivation" (Blakesley 99). Burke writes in the *Grammar*: "[I]f we took war as an anecdote, then in obeying the genius of this anecdote and shaping an idiom accordingly, we should be proclaiming war as the essence of human relations" (329).

In Elizabeth Seton's advice book to Kit, I believe the representative anecdote is the story of John on the Isle of Patmos. This very brief section of the advice book begins with what appears to be a heading: "A little while and *Time* [sic] shall be no more"

(“Catherine” 507). I refer to *The New American Bible*, St. Joseph Edition. In the Book of Revelation, John is exiled on Patmos “because,” he explains, “I proclaimed God’s word and bore witness to Jesus” (Rev. 1:9). Actions and words, and their consequences, are a refrain in the advice book. In the closing chapter of Revelation, John claims, “I myself give witness to all who hear the prophetic words of this book” (Rev. 22:18). Likewise, advice to follow the example and testimony of others repeats itself in the advice book. There is no need to falter when there are examples to guide us, Seton seems to suggest.

Another key term for Burke is **substance**. Michael A. Overington explains, “When Burke is analyzing something, he is trying to come to an understanding of its *substance*, its essence, which is equal to the sum of its connotational attributes. Thus, the ratios are used as heuristics to locate the essences of concepts or (methodically) of action” (143). Burke himself emphasizes the “paradox” inherent in the term substance, for “the word is often used to designate what some thing or agent intrinsically *is*” (*Grammar* 21), fundamentally and inherently. However, “etymologically ‘substance’ is a scenic word. Literally, a person’s or a thing’s sub-stance would be something that stands beneath or supports the person or thing” (22) and is external. Burke continues, “That is, though used to designate something *within* the thing, *intrinsic* to it, the word etymologically refers to something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it,” or in other words, “a thing’s context, being outside or beyond the thing, would be something that the thing is *not*” (23). Substance, however, is significant because its “ambiguity,” according to Burke, is “a major resource of rhetoric” (51). Concerning substance, we must remember that “the terms of the pentad are interrelated because they share a common ground or substance” (Blakesley 174).

To illustrate substance, Burke spends almost one hundred pages in the *Grammar* discussing constitutions, explaining, “A constitution is a *substance*—and as such, it is a set of *motives*” (342) and “covers all five terms of our pentad” (341). Tompkins and Cheney call Burke’s “commentary” on substance “a brilliant revelation of the most fundamental paradox of language, naming”; they also call it visionary, as it “could be said to have anticipated the anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist claims of post-structuralist and post-modernist theorizing” (226). Elizabeth Seton’s substance, as revealed in the advice book, is religion, relationship with God, eternity. It is difficult to separate these terms as a theologian might do because Seton seems to use them interchangeably.

Substantiality, derived from substance, refers to “having an identity, standing for something, being oriented by a goal” (Morris 164). Consubstantiality, referred to earlier, is “an unconscious desire to identify with others” (Blakesley 15). David Blakesley explains how Burke’s terms fit together:

Identification, or an alignment of interests and motive, is the aim of rhetoric, with consubstantiality (shared substance) being its ideal.

Dramatism helps us understand the resources of ambiguity that make identification possible. It also helps us study identification’s counterpart, division, as a dialectic between competing and cooperating forces. (42)

For example, according to Burke a **scapegoat**, as a “vessel of vicarious atonement” (*Grammar* 407), is “profoundly consubstantial with those who [...] would ritualistically

cleanse themselves by loading the burden of their own iniquities upon it” (406). Burke posits that “all scapegoats are purposive” (301).

Critical Response and Extensions of Burke

In *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke uses the analogy of the **parlor** to explain “the drama of the writer’s situation at his or her moment in history” (Blakesley 51):

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (qtd. in Blakesley 52)

Blakesley also notes Burke’s word play: In this instance, interlocutors “put in [an] oar,” an “or” (52). What about Burke and his situation? What “or’s” do critics add to Burke’s criticism and methods?

It is essential to note that “one can borrow ideas from Burke, or one can become wholly immersed in him” (Brummett xi). Rueckert agrees, assuring that “one does not have to lock into the system to use some part of it, one of its concepts, or one of its methodologies” (“Some” 22). The pentad invites many uses, one of which is as a generative tool or invention strategy for writing (Blakesley 33), similar to Aristotle’s general topics (8). To be fair, however, Burke himself writes that in contradistinction to the topics, which are “telling the writer what to *say*,” the pentad “in effect is telling the writer what to *ask*” (“Questions” 332). Burke maintains, “My job was not to help a writer decide what he might say to produce a text. It was to help a critic perceive what was going on in a text that was already written.” That is, Burke “ask[s] of the work the explicit questions to which its structure had already implicitly supplied the answers” (332).

Extensions of Burke’s methods are numerous. James W. Chesebro suggests “view[ing] the Burkeian system as an ongoing product of a community of scholars, all of whom contribute to the system, extending and developing it as new circumstances emerge” (363), which Burke himself seemed to publicly advocate (364-65) and which incidentally sounds like Burke’s own discussion of the parlor. Andrew King acknowledges that Burke “believed in trying to manage change in a way that energizes rather than bursts the old creeds” and opines that Burke “would have been grateful” for critics’ “tweaking, reframing, or extending his stock of forms and ideas” (35). One such clever tweak, and “unique contribution to Burke’s pentad,” is Jerome Bruner’s concept of “trouble,” or “an imbalance between any of the five elements of the pentad” (qtd. in Anderson and Althouse 5).

However, as Clayton W. Lewis notes, applying Burke's own critical vocabulary, "Through the agencies of scholarship and academic discourse, as well as through the scene emphasis in the language and thought of our times, Burke has to an extent been unBurked" (369). That is, Burke's "emphasis on act has been lost" (369). Barbara A. Biesecker points out that "the history of Burkeian scholarship is marked by discontinuity and rupture, statements and counterstatement, proposition and negation. The history of Burkeian scholarship is, in short, riddled by an oftentimes hostile 'conflict of interpretations,'" as critics "claim" Burke for their own theoretical schools (9-10). A criticism of Burke is that his "corpus is usually seen to embrace *too* many perspectives. Some of the harshest critics have in fact charged that he flirts with relativism" (Tompkins and Cheney 228) and liken him to an "irresponsible sophist" (Brown 5).

Celeste Michelle Condit uses her essay, "Post-Burke: Transcending the Sub-Stance of Dramatism," not to lay claim to Burke but as an invitation "to extend the essence of an older program into new contexts in light of new understandings" (349). "Three contexts in particular," argues Condit, "require modifying extensions of Burke's dramatism: gender, culture, and class" (350). Condit's observations on gender and culture are especially edifying. Concerning gender, in the "scene" of Burke's composing the *Grammar*, "most public discourse indicated that there were basically two sexes of people—two kinds of human bodies" and indeed "male-gendered nouns and pronouns dominate" his writing (350). Concerning culture, Condit contends that Burke does not "work from multi-cultural materials in establishing [his] claim" of the universality of victimage. Rather, he offers an "ethnocentric version of Dramatism" (352) and "takes as his 'representative anecdote,' a western christianized [sic] tradition" (355). As a useful

alternative, Condit suggests “look[ing] for other universally available potentials in language and add[ing] them to the Dramatistic dictionary” (352).

Like Condit, co-authors Foss and Griffin note that while Burke’s theory “purports to be relevant to the rhetorical practices of both genders” (332), it fails. They underscore that Burke’s theory “describes the processes that characterize a rhetoric of domination—hierarchical, authoritarian systems that employ power-over [sic]” (343). As such Burke is representative of many “mainstream rhetorical theor[ies]” with “a patriarchal terministic screen, one that highlights the masculine communicative experience and encourages a treatment of it as universal” (345). Barbara Biesecker, too, notes “the deeply troubling issue of Burke’s use of the term *man* and his persistent not noticing of sexual difference” (*Addressing* 106). However, her larger focus is on a deconstructive reading of Burke’s texts and his concept of the negative. To this end, Biesecker sees a “double function” of the pentad. First, it “serves as a systematic method for interpreting texts,” and second, it “functions as a morphological grid upon which discourses can be grafted to reveal by proxy an internal necessity that inaugurates the production of human action and, thus, human being [sic] as such” (25).

Critic Max Black writes that “it does not take long to find out that ‘dramatism’ is an alias for neo-aristotelianism, and that materialists, pragmatists, positivists, and naturalists are going to take a beating for neglecting essential aspects of the mystic pentad” (168). Thomas W. Benson observes that “[t]he use of Burke and of other theorists to unseat neo-Aristotelian criticism did not always achieve the promised results” in that “it was possible to achieve equally mechanical results by applying the Burkean pentad” (6). Rueckert notes that the pentad’s five terms “are themselves a selection of

terms from a possible range of terms too vast to enumerate, and the nature of the terms themselves implies either the metaphor or the analogy of the theater and lays a heavy stress upon the primacy of act or action” (“Some” 10). In short, “What you cannot do with the [p]entad and the ratios is also instructive” (11). Likewise, dramatism did not emerge on its own, “complete, for every scheme is shaped by the individuals and circumstances which brought the method into existence” (Chesebro 363). Burke’s concepts of terministic screens and occupational psychoses suggest that he would agree with such an astute, fair criticism.

Isaac Rosenfeld’s book review, written shortly after the *Grammar* was published, treads a similar path. He explains, “However indispensable to the practice of criticism Mr. Burke may have found his five key terms to be, I do not see how he can maintain that they are logically necessary” (312), concluding that “the logical necessity of the pentad holds only within Mr. Burke’s language. That is to say, his terms are analytic, and their apparent necessity follows not from the nature of human motivation as such, but from motivation as defined within the dramatist [sic] perspective” (312-13). He adds, “Other terms may be chosen to do the work at present performed by our five; and the work which the new terms will do will reconstitute both the object of inquiry and the language in which it is carried on” (313). Concerning Burke’s purported stance of writing for the “purification of war,” Rosenfeld contends that “in its emphasis on the verbal aspects of conflict, [the *Grammar*] leads to the development of a perspective in which non-verbal causes are minimized, discounted[,] and forgotten” (316-17). James W. Chesebro also questions “Burke’s logocentric approach [that] is linked essentially to print and ultimately restricts human knowledge itself” (361). Merle E. Brown contends that

“Burke’s unifications are verbal and rhetorical, whereas the divisions are deeper and involve whole men, each with his own distinctive sense of the world and his place within it” (10).

In contrast to Rosenfeld, Tompkins and Cheney encourage deeper study of the *Grammar*. According to the authors, the volume “has often been ‘reduced’ by its users because of their own haste and superficial understanding. Our field would do well to ‘mine’ the *Grammar* more carefully and thoroughly, seeing in it an astonishingly insightful exposition of human values, the communication process, and discursive possibility” (229). Speaking of mining, Jeff White’s CCCC presentation, “Kenneth Burke in/and/around Composition: A Look at the Journals,” describes “the interest in Burke” shown by Composition (1) and lists essays that link and/or apply Burke’s body of work in writing studies.

Conclusion: An Overview of the Method

Before closing this chapter, let me detail how I use Burke’s method in the next. As explained earlier, many critics, writers, and, notably, teachers of English Composition, employ the pentad and ratios as an invention tool to generate ideas for writing. Using the terms of the pentad in this manner, as a heuristic, the critic or writer generates material and/or research questions. Sonja K. Foss, well-regarded in rhetorical studies, explains in her text on writing rhetorical criticism that applying the ratios “is work you do behind the scenes” and is not included within the formal analysis itself (389). (In fact, I have included the ratios in an earlier section of this chapter.) The pentad, then, can be an essential starting off point for the writer rather than a rigid structure or formal outline for an analysis. This is how I employ Burke’s pentad.

In the language of the pentad, the **act** I examine is a linguistic artifact, an advice book, and the **agent** is Elizabeth Bayley Seton. The **agency**, or means of performing the act, was through writing an advice book, and the **scene** of writing was St. Joseph's Academy in Maryland in the early 1800s. Ostensibly at least, Seton wrote for the **purpose** of preparing her daughter, Kit, for her life outside of St. Joseph's. Next, I analyze each of the terms and the ratios to posit a titular or controlling term. This "behind the scenes" work reveals the primacy of agent and scene, which becomes the launching point for my analysis of the advice book. The advice book raises questions that dramatism is well suited to address since it "deliberately and systematically encourages us to imagine alternative perspectives" (Blakesley 23).

Kit and her two sisters were raised by their widowed mother at St. Joseph's, an all-girls school in the countryside of Maryland, while her brothers boarded at an all-boys school. Because Maryland was predominantly Catholic, practicing Catholics were somewhat isolated from the sort of harsh censure and outright rejection Elizabeth Seton had experienced in New York after her conversion. Seton's local community at St. Joseph's is comprised of student boarders and day students, Sisters of Charity, and visiting priests. This is one scene: the scene of Seton's writing. Burke suggests widening and narrowing the circumference of the scene, which we recall is not without effect. Seton's room, where she may have composed the advice book in whole or part, overlooks the cemetery, where her daughters, sisters-in-law, and Sisters of the community are buried (Cuzzolina 249).

By writing the advice book, Seton is apparently preparing Kit for the scene of the social world that Kit will encounter when she sets out. This public scene is one from

which Seton and her daughter have been isolated. In fact, St. Joseph's Academy was founded on the principle that the students would go out as "leaven" in the larger community and throughout the country (Melville 227). Within the advice book, there is another scene, Eternity. How does this scene, among others embedded within the advice, affect or impede Kit's ability to act? What role does Seton, the author-agent, play in creating scene and teaching Kit how to understand scene? These questions guide my analysis of the advice book, the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

A Rhetorical Analysis of “Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book”

In this chapter, I examine Elizabeth Bayley Seton’s advice book to her daughter Catherine Josephine, or Kit, using Kenneth Burke’s pentad as a tool for rhetorical analysis. At their most basic, conduct books “reveal the preoccupations and expectations of those who wrote and those who read them” (Hemphill, “Middle” 319). In this vein, Seton writes on topics that she deems essential for her teenage daughter’s “proper conduct” (“Catherine” 489), which by Seton’s lights includes courting, attire, conversation, reading, dancing, and theater as well as a deep concern for the eternal. In giving Kit advice to make her way in the world, Seton seems to be confining her daughter and proscribing her actions, limning for Kit how to think and therefore act. The advice book reads less as suggestions or guidelines for future action than as a rigid role for Kit to fill. From the perspective of the rhetorical critic, Seton’s advice book is a curious, confounding document.

The content of Seton’s private notebook of advice to Kit was made public through its inclusion in volume 3a of the edited three-volume collection, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*. The collection’s editors, Seton scholars Regina Bechtle and Judith Metz, date the advice book as starting around 1816 (489). This timeframe is supported by Seton’s in-text reference to the death of Kit’s younger sister Bec, who died in that year (Hannefin 24). Also, in 1816, at the age of sixteen, Kit went on the first “of at least five lengthy excursions, (ranging from several weeks to more than three months at a time), arranged by her mother for health and social-cultural purposes. The trips took her to Baltimore, Annapolis, Philadelphia, New York City, and Carrollton Manor in present-day

Frederick County, Maryland” (Gallagher 99). Perhaps the recent death of her youngest child, Bec, Kit’s travel and physical separation, or the condition of Seton’s own delicate health prompts her to write down her advice. Seton biographer Joseph I. Dirvin explains that Seton was well aware of her children’s “far from normal upbringing amid school children and nuns” (*The Soul* 122). Perhaps this, too, moved her to write. In August of 1820, Kit returned from the last of these trips (Gallagher 100). Seton died a few months later, in January of 1821.

Scant scholarship exists on this most interesting artifact. Ellin M. Kelly sums up the notebook as “contain[ing] advice on good conduct, charitable speech, the dangers of the theatre, of dancing, of pleasures in general, acquiring virtue, avoiding sin, and of course, her favorite topics: death and eternity” (“Elizabeth Ann” 310). Annabelle Melville describes Seton’s notebook as containing “advice covering the full range of worldly problems as she knew them” (352). Marilyn Thie’s “The Woman Elizabeth Bayley Seton: 1793-1803” examines the advice book in the context of Seton in her early married years and as “a woman of her time” (229). Thie finds the stirring of passions to be a “central preoccupation” in the advice book and a behavior to be avoided (232). The editors of Seton’s *Collected Writings* remark that Kit “treasured this book the rest of her life” (489).

To begin my analysis, I provide relevant background on Seton’s advice book. This includes primary research at the Provincial Archives of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where the manuscript advice notebook is housed and can be examined and handled only with permission. Then, with a particular focus on the titular terms scene and agent, I share my findings from analyzing the advice book and explore

the significance and implications of my analysis. Finally, in the conclusion I suggest avenues for future research.

Please let me note here that Seton's advice book, per the published transcription, uses italics liberally. Since I have not added these italics, I did not insert "sic" after every instance, as I found this to be disruptive to the reading. I insert "sic" for Seton's British spellings or other nonstandard American written English language use.

Observations from the Archives

The artifact under study is an advice book written by Elizabeth Bayley Seton to her only surviving daughter, Catherine Josephine, nicknamed Kit. The manuscript advice book, a red leather notebook, is located in the Provincial Archives of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Through a grant from the Vincentian Studies Institute, I was able to read and examine the manuscript advice book for three days, from January 13-15, 2014.

Place as Archive

According to composition scholars Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan, the late twentieth century marked changes in "what 'counts' as archival material worthy of academic study" (3). It is not unusual now for archival researchers to consider "*place as archive*," and "visiting the geographical location where a historical subject lived and worked is another important, if undertheorized, research method" (5). Thus, the location of the Archives, at the site of the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and the former St. Joseph's Academy, where Seton lived and served, is not insignificant, for it is here that Seton wrote the advice book.

St. Joseph's Valley is in the Catoctin spur of the Blue Ridge Mountains (Barthel 137) and is crossed by Tom's Creek (Hannefin 7), where the Sisters used to wash clothing (9). On the grounds of the Shrine are the Stone House, one of the original buildings in which Seton and the Sisters of Charity lived, and the White House, where Seton died in 1821. Seton's daughters Annina and Bec and her sisters-in-law Harriet and Cecilia are buried side-by-side in the graveyard on the premises, their resting places marked by identical white headstones. Seton's original headstone is next to the four girls in the graveyard, but her body was later enshrined in a side altar in the Basilica on the grounds of the Shrine. Some of the land and buildings that formerly belonged to St. Joseph's Academy, later St. Joseph's College, are now the property of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On what is at present FEMA property is a stone structure referred to as Mother Seton's spring. Here, Seton "loved to sit" in the summer to "watch the children at play" (Sadlier 221).

The Seton Shrine Museum and Visitor Center exhibits many of Seton's personal belongings, notably her wedding band, her dancing slippers from her New York days, and the copy book that she wrote for her father when she was a teenager. Other objects of interest include Seton's chair, her writing desk and inkstand, a relic (a fragment of her bones), and four facsimiles of notes to Kit, written while they still lived in Baltimore in 1809. The notes commend Kit for "good lessons," "silence," and "good behavior." By visiting Seton's place, her physical, material scene, a researcher can creatively reimagine Seton's life as she described it. Visiting the site where Seton lived and composed may add texture, a living, tangible quality, to Seton's words on the page.

Manuscript Notebook



Fig. 1. Seton's manuscript notebook. Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise Archives, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Before examining Seton's words in the formal analysis, it is useful to consider how a manuscript differs from its typeset, published version. The published advice and the manuscript notebook are, in a sense, two different documents for different audiences. To begin, they even have different names. Neither Kit nor Seton titled the artifact, which is labeled "Josephine's Mother's Advices" at the Provincial Archives and "Catherine Seton's Little Red Book" in the *Collected Writings*. Both titles serve as terministic screens through which readers engage with the text.

The manuscript notebook at the Archives measures approximately four and one-half inches long, three and one-quarter inches wide, and three quarters of an inch thick⁷. The advice book fits in the hand, making it a *manual* in a literal sense. A flap in the back cover tucks into the front cover to close the book shut. The binding is embossed with flowers, harps, and horns; the cover also has gold embellishments. The paper on the

⁷ These are measurements I took at the Archives.

inside covers has a multicolored, marbled effect. The pages in the notebook are unlined.

The notebook was numbered in pencil by the archive at 128 pages, but this does not represent 128 continuous pages of writing. There are blank pages between where Seton's writing ends and starts up again while other blank pages are not numbered at all. Seton's writing lacks dates and headings, and because the notebook's contents are neither labeled nor dated, we do not know how long Seton was writing in it or when she paused in her writing. Furthermore, we can only infer pauses from the blank spaces and/or a fresh page of writing. Neither Seton's signature nor her initials are found in the document. Instead, her handwriting establishes her authorship. There are no mementos pressed into the book, no turned-down page corners, and no drawings or doodles. Seton does not footnote or document her frequent use of direct quotations and paraphrases of outside sources although she sometimes references a speaker or author by name.

Writing specifically about archived diaries, Heather Beattie offers astute observations about provenance that are worth considering in the context of Seton's advice book. As Beattie explains,

The custody that a diary passes through on its way to an archives and any other material that accompanies it or indeed that is *not* passed along form part of its provenance. This is because the record that arrives in the archives is not necessarily the same as the record that was originally created. The custodial history of records "may result in many reorderings, winnowings, and even doctorings of them." (94)

Concerning the provenance of the advice book, Kit did not donate it to the Provincial Archives; her niece Elizabeth Seton did. Affixed to the front inside cover of the notebook on a white sheet, the following is noted in ink: "Mother Seton to Josephine." Beneath this is written, "After the death of Sr. Catherine Seton this little volume became the property of her niece who in 1896 presented it to the community."

Given that the advice book belonged to Kit, but was composed in the main by her mother, the back of the inside front cover has a puzzling inscription: "**William Seton at the Mountain, Emmitsb** Thursday 181[7?] 13th February sailed the [illegible] for St. Joseph & Philadelphia." The writing is partially in pencil and partially pencil traced over in ink. (The boldface indicates the ink tracing.) Neither Assistant Archivist Carole Prietto nor I could determine whether the year was 1817 or 1819, although Ms. Prietto discerned a downward slope for a 9 in 1819. The book seems to have passed through several hands.

Beattie also considers "what the researcher would miss if he or she were provided only the copy and not the original" (95). In the case of Seton's advice book, much would be missed in reading only the published transcription. As one sad but obvious example, Seton's handwriting changes after page 100, becoming smaller and fainter. For the Seton scholar, it is a poignant reminder of her failing health in the years before her death. Additionally, a published transcription can hardly be expected to reproduce exactly Seton's original page breaks, indentations, spacing, blank space, and idiosyncratic markings, such as dashes, dots, and slashes, which in the manuscript suggest links as well as pauses in thought. Seton's writing does not uniformly take up entire pages of the notebook, and her use of blank space and skipped pages ("Josephine's" 80-81, 116, and 127) suggests breaks in thought and perhaps time.

The manuscript also has scratch outs, corrections, and information that was added, judging from different shades of ink, or smaller writing that is squeezed into the page (“Josephine’s” 38). Apparently for emphasis, Seton underlines, writes in capital letters, capitalizing words or using all caps seemingly at random, and makes squiggly lines and exclamations sometimes numerous under or after a word or words. Neither can the published transcription convey the variations in penmanship, as though Seton is writing in boldface or forming letters extra clearly for Kit, in print instead of cursive, again in a seemingly random way. On the other hand, the published transcription helpfully reveals what Seton has written as an X in the notebook is a symbol for the cross.

Cynthia A. Huff, who like Beattie speaks specifically about her experience of archival research on manuscript diaries, explains that researchers, herself included, need

to reconsider the practice and implications of our learned reading style.

We relearn to be patient, to view repetition as a positive circumscription which may unravel aspects of the diarist’s character, to consider textual gaps as frequently pointing toward significant events which require rereading of the text and further detective work. (511)

Again, these observations have direct applications for Seton’s advice book. Certainly, the original notebook in the archive complicates reading the published advice book. For example, in the published advice book, the editors quote what Kit inscribed in “the first two pages” of the notebook: “O may it be my daily study to follow the advice of the best of Mothers” (Bechtle and Metz 489). The editors did not include Kit’s other notes, of which only some are dated: “17th of April” 1849 (“Josephine’s” 91), “Retreat 1849” (92), “1st January, 1852” (95), “14th January 1825” and, oddly enough, “12th June 1823” (123),

and “3d April” of 1825 (124). In the page numbering in the manuscript, page 86 ends

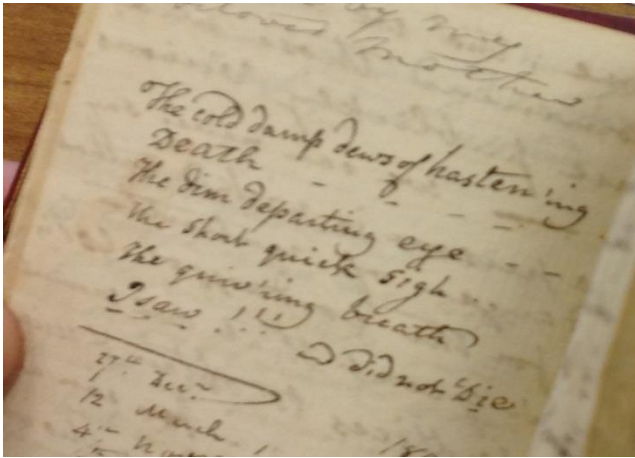


Fig. 2. Kit speaks back to her mother's text. Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise Archives, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Seton's advice, page 87 is blank, and page 88 begins Kit's notes; Seton's writing picks up again on page 100. If the text were like an asynchronous conversation, Kit speaks back in only one place. Just above a short poem in her mother's handwriting that Seton either composed herself or copied,

“The cold damp dews of hastening

Death / The dear [dim?] departing eye / the short quick sigh / the quivering breath / I saw !!! and did not Die,” Kit has commented, “written by my beloved mother” (“Josephine’s” 25). On the same page and below various dates, in what appears to be Kit's writing is the note, “We have but to bow the head / in silence when Heavens [sic] voice / calls back the things we love” (“Josephine’s” 25).

While this information on Kit's “dialogue” with the notebook is not earth-shattering, it reveals that the advice notebook was not a steady, pristine piece of writing dedicated only to Seton's words. Rather, Kit seems to have used it as a notebook and an agenda/diary at times, writing reminders to herself that are strikingly similar to her mother's advice. (See Appendix A.) Even Kit's niece adds commentary, albeit just a brief note on the notebook's authorship, written in pencil:

The preceding pages were written by Catherine Josephine Seton, Second [sic] daughter of Mother Seton who addressed to her the forgoing [sic] booklet of advice.

Catherine became a Sister of Mercy, the first person to join the order in New York: 1849. She died April 3d [sic] 1892.

It is signed “Eliz Seton” (“Josephine’s” 97). Kit actually died in 1891, not quite 91 years old (McCormick 11).

In addition to the material composed by Kit and her niece that is not included in the published advice book are the many mysteries in the manuscript, the “detective work” that Huff alludes to. For example are the manuscript’s two excisions. One page of text was removed with a sharp edge between pages 39 and 40, and between the blank page 87 and Kit’s writing on page 88, two pages were less carefully torn out. On what remains of the torn pages are loops in ink that suggest handwriting. We cannot know whose writing this was, nor who removed the pages and for what reason. Perhaps the pages were torn out and recopied, which is not as interesting as imagining other motives for tearing pages out. Also of note, Seton’s advice closes with a reflection on mystery (“Catherine” 509), which appears on the inside back cover of the original. Putting the passage in an unusual place suggests significance. It is not a part of the continuous advice although abundant pages are left on which Seton could have included this passage.

We need not keep all of the manuscript’s mysteries, curiosities, and specifics in mind as we now move to analyze Seton’s advice as presented in its published, public form. However, we ought to remember that the published text is a remarkably different

document from the manuscript, and it was printed with footnotes and editorial comments for a different audience. Knowing this, a nagging question for the researcher is whether the analysis of the manuscript would lead to conclusions entirely different from an analysis of the published version. While this is a valid concern, no objective answer exists. It is possible that some interpretations will be different from, and even contradict, other types of interpretations. Indeed, the manuscript may alternately clarify parts of the published advice book and muddy the waters, exposing conclusions as tentative. These multiple and even competing interpretations merely remind us that our readings are always subjective, qualified, and temporary.

Layered within the two versions of the advice, manuscript and published transcript, is the method of criticism, which is also subjective, however textual it labors to be. That is, while “‘act, agent, agency, scene[,] and purpose’ may seem to constitute a knowable, comprehensive chart of meaning within a situation or a text,” critic David S. Birdsell notes, “as a practical matter, the assignment of a term to one or another component of a text depends largely upon a critic’s sensibilities” (273). In this way, “deciding where the purview of one term ends and another begins is a critical question that cannot be answered from within the pentad itself, but must be determined by an exterior sensibility balancing the ratios between the terms” (273). I am the “exterior sensibility,” with all that implies. Researcher Janine Solberg teases apart the role of the “exterior sensibility,” or the researcher, calling out “the intellectual and emotional investments and orientations that drive a researcher’s choice of topic and affect the way she [sic] pursues those topics” (67). Solberg nods to Kenneth Burke in asserting that

these affective investments converge around the familiar idea that we “bring to the archive” certain values, interests, identifications, or experiences. Whether they come from what is close to our hearts or on our minds, these inclinations operate as terministic screens in our identification and selection of research topics. (67)

My analysis, filtered through terministic screens I am not fully cognizant of, is simply one more possible interpretation.

Analysis: Agent and Scene

Analysis of the individual terms of the pentad and their ratios uncovers a vigorous agent, and wily rhetor, Seton. Throughout the document Seton underscores Kit’s virtue and sharp mind. She paints a Kit who is an agent capable of making autonomous decisions, and urges Kit to use her mind and reason to that end. However, looking deeper, the advice, examples, and even meditations that Seton employs in her text in effect make her an agent for Kit. That is, essentially Seton is schooling Kit how to see and think, and ultimately how to act. The advice book becomes like stage directions, not advising, but controlling Kit’s actions. Seton is molding not an autonomous figure, but an obedient one. **Agent** Seton’s point of view saturates the document, as she reads different social scenes as potentially corrupting influences on Kit. In her advice, Seton points out corrupting **scenes** and then positions Kit in scenes that she is better equipped to handle. Thus, **agent** and **scene** reveal themselves to be the controlling terms of the pentad, almost entwined, exerting a directive force on the advice. They are the core of the text, the substance on which it is built.

Seton, the Agent: Her Advice

Seton's text suggests familiarity with the schooling, didactic function of conduct literature. This is evident first in her vocabulary. She references the "maxims" ("Catherine" 497), "principles," and "lessons" (498) on display at the theater, and the dangerous "conduct," "laws," and "lessons" that the theater teaches, passing them off as "sacred duties" (499). Seton also discusses the "lessons," "maxims," and "examples" projected in novels, which result in an increased "distaste for common duties and instructions" (500), as well as the "lessons" that St. Ignatius teaches Francis Xavier (501). She remarks that novels "inconsistently mix the lessons of Virtue, with the maxims of Vice," which confuses the mind, "mak[ing] it incapable of distinguishing between falsehood and TRUTH" (500). Scholar Jane E. Rose remarks that virtue is "a key word in American republican ideology" (46); virtue, and the adjective form virtuous, are also key words in Seton's advice book, appearing 13 times total, as a noun and adjective.

Second, Seton writes about death and about how Christians must prepare daily for life after death. This emphasis on death, and related gruesome images, seems macabre in a text addressed to a teenage girl "at [her] first set out" ("Catherine" 490). Writing about conduct literature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scholar Sylvia Casey Marks cites the "deathbed repentance" as one generic feature. Writers reminded their readers that because "the moment of death was unpredictable," they must be prepared (11). Jane E. Rose also notes that "the authors of conduct books often rely on exalted rhetoric [and] religious arguments" (41).

Seton's advice touches on other conventional advice, or conduct, topics, including courting, attire, conversation, reading, dancing, and theater, and she discusses the scenes

in which some of these potentially harmful actions play out. Considering that in Seton's younger days she enjoyed reading poetry and novels and frequented the theater (Cuzzolina 14), activities she is critical of in the advice book, a brief overview of Seton-the-mother's penned advice is in order. Concerning courting, Seton advises Kit to "resist" the "*first impressions*" she may have of a man ("Catherine" 489-90) and emphasizes, "do do mind your *first step* as if it was for your whole life" (490). Seton warns Kit to guard herself against "a strong first attraction" to a man, explaining that

passion will soon blind poor reason, and even a Mothers [sic] tears would have no power to save her darling, unless at the expence [sic] of her peace she would become a sad Victim to a parents [sic] desire by a sacrifice *I* indeed would never demand, for if once I saw you in the net my little beloved I would leave it to our God to draw you out. (490)

As for attire, she tells Kit to keep it "*neat neat* if ever so poor" and "be sure that simplicity should be your only rule" (491). Marilyn Thie, writing about the advice book, opines that Seton's tone "likely belies that extent to which she herself, at Catherine's age, was very much concerned with styles currently in vogue. The surviving engravings and miniatures leave no doubt that she dressed and coiffed her hair according to the dictates of contemporary fashion" (233).

Regarding conversation, Seton stresses Kit's "doing good by speaking" ("Catherine" 489) and advises her to recognize the "bound[s]" within which speaking is permitted (489). In the opening of the advice book, the very first words of the text, Seton tells Kit, "[Y]ou can never be bound my love to speak on any occasion, or on any subject" and in the same breath writes "altho' you are bound" to "*disapprove* [sic]"

“whenever a sacred subject is abused” (489). She advises Kit not to speak at all “unless you are sure of doing good” (489) and to “never on any account say a word against any one [sic] however public their ill conduct may be” (492), for “we can never say a person is wicked without danger of untruth” (493). Much later in the document, Seton states, “The first Rule of Christian charity—to believe no ill if we have not seen it; and to be silent, if we have seen it” (508)⁸. The word “bound,” used twice in the first paragraph of the advice book, sets the tone that restraint is desirable. Seton’s words indicate that she is reining in her daughter, tying her back, from the start of the advice book. This theme of being tied back and silenced will prove central to Seton’s advice and will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Seton harshly censures reading romance novels (499). Seton apparently references “the sentiment of Rousseau himself” in the belief that “[n]o chaste woman can read romances” and remain so because such books “tend to the corruption of the mind” (500). She reminds Kit, “your mind was formed to be enlightened,” but the novel “perverts and depraves the mind” (500). The novel also “misleads” the reader’s soul (500). As discussed in an earlier chapter, this is a classic move in advice literature. Seton suggests that there are “more solid readings” than novels, but she does not specify (500); that is, Seton does not make a strong point about what literature Kit should read, just what she should not read. While she does refer Kit to “St. F de Sales [sic] chapter” about dancing (492), this is in the context of dancing, not edifying reading *per se*, nor as part of a program of reading. Seton makes other references to books, but again in a general way.

⁸ This was taken from “Letter X [ten]” of Francis Fenelon, which reads: “The first rule of Christian charity is to believe no ill, if we have not seen it; and not to publish it, if we have seen it” (Kendall 202).

She writes that “sacred books proclaim [and] enlightened minds believe” that we will reach eternity, a paraphrase of an oration of St. Gregory⁹ (494). Seton writes about a different kind of performance and a different meaning of “word” when she writes that Christ, “[b]y heaven composed was published *on the CROSS*” (496). Seton may be speaking to or of angels, when she asks, in what turns out to be an uncredited paraphrase, “How long shall human nature be their book unread by thee / —What high contents!” (496)¹⁰.

Seton critiques the *scene* of one activity Kit wishes to participate in, dancing, although she does not condemn the *act* of dancing, recalling, “I don’t know much of the style of the present day, but when I was young I never found any effect from it but the most innocent cheerfulness both in public and private” (492). Seton says that she “cannot remember the least of indecency or pride in dress” (492), and she even calls dancing “good exercise,” much like “walking [and] riding” (492). St. Joseph’s Academy actually offered private dance lessons to those students willing to pay the extra fees (O’Neill 12), and Seton saved her dancing slippers, which are still extant (Thie 232). Concerning the “ball room [sic]” *scene*, however, Seton compares it unfavorably to a “Death bed,” the “joy” of which is to be preferred to the “horrible massacre of souls” and “Demons of every kind busy in poisoning the senses of both men and women” attendant at a ball (497). Here Seton, the agent, delineates between act and scene for Kit.

⁹ This was taken from the peroration of St. Gregory Nazianzen’s A.D. 368 funeral sermon for his brother Caesarius. Seton culled two whole paragraphs (Boyd 41-43). In one line, she replaces Caesarius’ name with the initials of her daughters, Annina and Rebecca (“Catherine” 494).

¹⁰ “How long shall human nature be their book, / Degen’rate mortal! and unread by thee? / The beam dim reason sheds shows wonders there; / What high contents!” (Young 67).

On attending theater, Seton is also stern, noting that it is “a place of danger for young and old” (491) due to what occurs there: “Sentiments which may even be correct in themselves, or on paper” are distorted when acted (499). Seton scholar Marilyn Thie observes that Seton’s discussion of theater is “clearly out of sync” with the times, reflecting a past generation’s perspective (234). In fact, Seton attended the theater as a young society woman, although, Seton qualifies, “I was never carried there by a delight in the amusement but only to see some favourite [sic] object I should not see any where [sic] else” (“Catherine” 491). She also claims that she did not know any better. She writes of her younger self in the distancing third person: “poor poor Betsy B[ayley] had no Mother” (491). This suggests that Seton might have made different choices in her young adulthood if she had been given a mother’s advice of the sort she is writing to Kit. Further, this suggests that Kit will know better, and act better, because she does have a mother’s advice to guide her. The controlling undercurrent of Seton’s *ethos* is clear and is examined next.

Seton, the Agent: Her Ethos

We have briefly looked at the broad categories of Seton’s advice. The advice book is the **agency**, or means, by which Seton acts. On the surface, the **act** and **purpose** of writing work together—Seton is giving advice. This is what parents do. It is a part of the unofficial job description, guiding children in their actions and laying a foundation to help the young make sensible decisions in the future. However, Seton the agent goes beyond guiding to controlling. Let us examine how the agent, Seton, asserts her *ethos* to give impetus to her advice, and finally, to control Kit.

Conduct writers want readers to follow their advice, so there needs to be a reason to trust them and the advice they provide. Seton's authority to write is rooted in the many roles she plays, as Kit's mother, Mother Superior, teacher, American Catholic, American woman, widow, and motherless daughter. Seton mentions herself by name three times, twice as unmarried "Betsy B" ("Catherine" 491) and once as the married "Betsy S" (491). In these three instances she not only refers to herself in the past, but as a former self or past identity. Furthermore, her use of the third person creates an impression that she is writing about someone else, not herself. That is, the first-person Elizabeth and the third-person Elizabeth are two different people. At least for the purpose of rhetorical or textual analysis, neither Elizabeth is "real" or exists outside the text.

As we know from her biography, Seton is a woman who has reinvented herself many times, by choice and by circumstance. In these third-person references, though, she shows regret for her actions and wishes she had "do[ne] what I knew to be right as quietly and calmly as the sun rides on the heavens and let the world go on at its pleasure" (491). This suggests that only now does she live on her own terms, quietly and calmly. With the advice that Seton offers, presumably Kit can avoid living with regret. In any case, Kit has no excuse for living with regret, for she has her mother's advice, in her mother's handwriting, to reference in the advice book. While it is true that "poor poor Betsy B had no Mother" (491), Kit does have a mother, who is speaking through the advice book.

Throughout the text, Seton trades on her own *agent*-ness to control Kit. Seton is, she reminds Kit, not just any old writer, but "your own Mother" (489). She is not unduly harsh, for "never will I abuse your love for me" (490). Employing affectionate terms like

“my love” (489), “my beloved” (489, 491, 496), “my little beloved” (490), “my darling” (490, 491), and “my dear one” (490) to address Kit, Seton emphasizes her maternal love. Seton displays an awareness of and sensitivity to reactions Kit might receive as she ventures into society. She understands “the shame of being laughed at” and “know[s] how difficult it is to behave to some persons” (490). Along with motherly affection and concern, Seton displays a sense of humor. On the subject of dancing, she tells Kit to “remember” St. Francis’ writing about the “*dance of Death*” and comments, “we laugh, but it is so true” (493).

Just like a face to face conversation wanders and returns, Seton addresses and sometimes returns to topics in the advice book. “I forgot love [sic] a little rule about conversations” (492), Seton writes a few pages after first bringing it up. However, the light, conversational tone is tempered by Seton’s choice of verbs. Frequently in the imperative, they mark concern, serious intent, and emphasis: “I beg you” (490), “resist” (490), “I intreat [sic] you” (490), “avoid” (490), “mind” (491), “you will mind” (489), and “do do mind” (490). Seton is also wise, she suggests, with her “40 years [sic] experience” (491). This notebook is the advice of an experienced woman who has lived “in the world” (492) and removed herself from it by choice.

Seton references conversations she and Kit have already had, perhaps to reinforce her advice or to refresh Kit’s memory. As one antebellum-era conduct writer wrote, “[Y]oung people are heedless, and cannot be told these things too often” (qtd. in Hemphill, *Bowing* 163). The phrases “to say again” (“Catherine” 489), “I repeat to you” (489), “I told you of” (489), “*you* know what I would say” (490), “I have told you before” (490), “I say nothing” (491), “you know” (500), and “You know the result” (501), as well

as the plural “we know” twice (498), suggest that Kit already knows where her mother stands. The written advice, then, cements what has already been said. Second, the knowing repetition conveys that Seton remembers having shared all of this with Kit. Although Kit may or may not recall what her mother has said in the past, Seton remembers, and now it is co-signed, so to speak, on paper.

The conversational tone and references to past conversations also underscore that Seton and Kit could have comfortably talked about these topics in person. The tone also lends an offhanded, perhaps disarming, ease to the advice. For example, on occasion Seton gives details to imaginatively put Kit in the room with her: “I take a new pen of our *Bec’s*” (489). She even writes as though Kit actually is in the room with her, about to interrupt and confident enough to do so: “Ah Mother you will say that is hard to practice” (491). Here Seton also assumes an intimate knowledge of what Kit thinks and feels, and therefore believes herself able to predict, and preempt, any protest on Kit’s part. Seton’s *ethos* includes her skills as an astute listener and observer. No doubt Kit feels heard as she reads the advice book.

Of course, in a document that the agent, Seton, is controlling, the “conversation” is an invention and Kit cannot interrupt. Kit’s interruptions are fictions that Seton has strategically written into the text, and Kit’s voice is filtered through Seton. This is not to suggest that Seton is malicious or arch, but the “real” Kit simply cannot speak in the advice book. Kit is being written into the scene of the advice book, authored by her mother. As such, Kit is being controlled and created via language. Throughout the advice book, Seton is in Kit’s head, writing confidently about knowing the “principles you [Kit] have cherished” (490), or that Kit “would not wish to see our God offended” (492). Seton

writes, “[H]appily you know the pleasures of instruction and amusement combined” (500), framing Kit’s behavior positively. Similarly, she says of Kit, “[O]ur God has gifted you with a reserved yet kind manner, *preserve it* my dear one you would not believe of [sic] how much consequence it will be to you through life” (490). Seton is not always flattering, though, in framing Kit’s decisions. She uses the word “pretext” twice, referring to a false attitude that Kit might adopt in dress (491) or to justify going to the theater (497). This is an extraordinary move by Seton. It may mean nothing more than Seton, having given birth to, raised, and educated Kit as a single parent, feels attuned to her daughter, as though she can read her very well. It may also be that Seton is claiming more than her *ethos*; she is claiming the right to control Kit, to think for her, to get into Kit’s head.

In that the advice book is written solely for Kit, almost like a letter, scholar Barbara Maria Zaczek’s assertion about the epistolary tradition may well apply to Seton’s text, too. Zaczek explains, “Unlike speech, writing leaves an indelible trace. It turns ephemeral words into a script whose permanence precludes any possibility of taking back or altering the message” (12). Whether Kit is 18 or 80, the message from her mother does not change. Times and mores may change and evolve, but the message does not. Also, let us note the word “script.” If an individual is following a script, it is hard to consider her an agent. This is transforming act-ing, Kit’s being an agent, into mere motion. For Kenneth Burke, recall, action and motion are fundamentally different. As author-agent, Seton controls the conversation, which sets out to help Kit in “persevering in a delicate and proper conduct” (“Catherine” 489), and Seton also controls what is not said. In a few places, Seton calls attention to her silences, writing, “as to amusements forbidden by

religion I say nothing” (491). In saying “nothing” she makes her stance perfectly clear. Likewise, when she writes that “it is impossible to tell you” (490) about the consequences of forming friendships too quickly or the “unspeakable sweetness and joy” associated with her relationship with God (502), her position is clear. For Seton, saying “nothing” conveys a great deal.

To help illustrate her advice, and perhaps bolster her *ethos*, Seton culls examples from the lives of male and female figures from the Bible and from Church history. As such, these models come with an undisputable cachet. Kit cannot go wrong with these models, Seton seems to be saying. Additionally, Seton’s models hew to a theme running through the advice book: Kit ought to relinquish her ability to be an agent and instead rely on the opinions, actions, and sanction of others in order to act. For example, should Kit need a role model on dancing, she can read a “chapter about it” (492) in St. Francis de Sales¹¹. According to Seton’s summary of de Sales’ work, St. Elizabeth of Hungary¹² “played and danced sometimes and was present at meetings of recreation, without any prejudice to her devotion which increased among the pomps and Vanities [sic] of her condition” (493). Dance, then, is permissible through the model of Elizabeth of Hungary, or de Sales’ sanction of Elizabeth of Hungary. Francis de Sales’ “life played an important part in [Seton’s] conversion” (Cuzzolina 112). Perhaps more to the point, St. Elizabeth of Hungary did not neglect her devotion.

Concerning the dangers of attending the theater, Seton offers two historical examples of the insidious manner in which the theater corrupts. Kit should remember the

¹¹ St. Francis de Sales lived from 1567-1622 (Swetnam 17).

¹² St. Elizabeth of Hungary lived from 1207-1231 (Craughwell 226).

story about St. Augustine¹³ and his friend Alipius¹⁴, whose passion for the theater he had overcome with Augustine's "influence and instruction" ("Catherine" 499). However, returning to the theater to test his resolve and once again faced with "the scene of his former delights," Alipius opens his eyes and relapses, "more passionately devoted *to it* than ever" (499). Even St. Augustine's help could not conquer his friend's addiction, Seton seems to suggest, and to make matters worse, the addiction increased. Seton also seems to be saying that we cannot trust ourselves, or our resolve. (Still, Alipius was canonized a saint.) In another example, Seton cites Abbé Clement¹⁵, who describes the reactions of Henrietta of France¹⁶ at the theater: "[T]he most melancholy reflections and deep sadness" enter her mind "when the scene opens" (498), knowing that the players "deliberately damn themselves to divert me" (498). The theater-goer's act contributes to the actors' damnation, which Henrietta treats as fact. No one escapes the theater spiritually unscathed although, of course, Seton herself has.

Seton does not mince words. The theater is a "scene of art and illusion" (499), it is "a scene you [Kit] would not dare read of in Romances" (497), and it is corrosive: "So weak is our Virtue [sic] when put in *contact* and *company* [sic] of pleasure" at the theater (499). Seton's strong stance is supported by sources whom she and Kit no doubt respect. Appealing to such sources as well as to logic, Seton writes that "the best and wisest men

¹³ St. Augustine lived from 354-430 (Swetnam 183).

¹⁴ St. Alipius lived from about 360 to about 429 (Poetzel 288). Seton misspells his name, writing "Allepius."

¹⁵ Abbé Clement is the French writer Denis-Xavier Clément. It seems that Seton has translated from his book *Maximes pour Se Conduire Chrétiennement dans Le Monde*. Clément quotes Henrietta as saying, "[Q]ue je vois premiers acteurs paroître sur la scène, je tombe tout-à-coup dans la plus tristesse" (196).

¹⁶ Henrietta is Princess Henriette-Anne of France, who lived from 1644-1670 (Whitaker xiii). Henrietta was the daughter of Charles I of England and Henrietta Maria of France and the wife of Philippe, Duc d'Orléans (270). A Catholic like her mother, Henrietta made it a "lifelong" effort to ensure "her brothers' conversions" to Catholicism (280).

who ever lived” have disdained the theater; thus, “why should you or I put our conduct and opinion in opposition to theirs” (491). Indeed, the advice book raises the question of why Kit should act or hold any opinion contrary to her mother. Seton does not let up. She controls Kit through her reading of scene, which we will look at now.

Scene: It's a Scary World Out There...

To review, Seton is advising Kit how to be an agent. However, she has instructed Kit to make decisions Seton's way. To this end, she has provided authorized models for Kit to follow, which is another form of control. Folded into the advice is Seton's reading of scene. Scenes, as we know from Seton's reading of theater and the ballroom, are hot spots for bad behavior and can negatively influence conduct. They index the potential for trouble. Thus, Seton coaches Kit how to read and act on her scene based on the way that Seton interprets it. In rewriting and controlling Kit's **scene**, author-agent Seton finds another clever way to control Kit.

One element of scene is appearance. We look about us and read the world. From Seton's point of view, which again, Kit is being schooled to adopt as her own, truth is not found judging solely from appearance. In fact, Seton hammers home the untrustworthiness of outward appearance, explaining specifically that activities, objects, and persons with pleasant appearances may not be all that they seem. Outward appearance is an illusion, like the fabled golden apples “of the Euphrates which when grasped turn to powder and dust” (490). Along these lines, Seton explains to Kit, “The great art of life my beloved is to see things on a large scale and to look behind the curtain” (496), for it is only by “looking behind the curtain” (497) that deception is exposed. Seton frames her advice about deception through scene.

Seton identifies two scenes for Kit and skillfully pits them against each other. One scene, the “uncertainty of life” (490) and “this troublesome world” (509), is contrasted with another scene, the “sure refuge and rest” of Eternity (501): Uncertainty vs. surety. Seton even claims, a bit hyperbolically, “To a virtuous man the sweetest pillow is that of Death” (494)¹⁷. Seton employs images of veils and curtains to emphasize scenes and actions that are covered over or disguised and as a result may trick Kit. Deceit and lying, Seton explains, “are the horrid Veil of a Corrupted heart” (506). Seton writes of the “unveiled lustre [sic] of truth” (494), and advises Kit to “look behind the curtain” (496) and look under the “veil” (497). Seton describes “the disguise thrown over the passions” (500) from reading. Then, at the theater, “a veil is thrown over the corruption of the heart” (498), as though masking something fundamentally bad. What is more, virtues are “ensnared by the false glare around them” (499), and “Virtue itself is put in a false point of view” (499). Even “correct sentiments” are distorted by the “poison gloss from the lips and attitudes of those who express them in [the] scene of art and illusion” (499) at the theater. This deception lurks within the corrupting and sinful world that Kit must learn to read accurately with her mother’s text and to navigate with her mother’s help.

God and the angels look down on “this mortal scene” from above (493), where is found “glory higher than the attainments of this world,” Seton quotes St. Ignatius¹⁸ as saying to his student, Xavier¹⁹ (501). Seton actually imitates St. Ignatius’ language and argument, explaining that Kit should “let [her] soul rise above those futile enjoyments”

¹⁷ From St. Gregory Nazianzen’s A.D. 374 funeral oration on his father: “Convince us by strength of reasoning, convince us by potency of example, that to a virtuous man the sweetest pillow is that of death. Cheerfully he approaches its proffered rest [...]” (qtd. in Boyd 49).

¹⁸ St. Ignatius of Loyola lived from 1491-1556 (Swetnam 159).

¹⁹ St. Francis Xavier lived from 1506-1552 (Craughwell 277).

(501). Later, she uses theater as a metaphor to emphasize the meager attractions of the world, when she writes: “Life’s little stage is a small eminence / Inch high above the grave the home [sic] of man” (504)²⁰. The social world that Kit is entering is essentially, or to use Kenneth Burke’s terminology—substantially, a “grave.” Seton effectively replaces Kit’s scene and authors and therefore authorizes a new one. As if to instill fear, she reminds Kit of the “sudden fate” of the deceased Myatilla, whom the co-editors footnote as perhaps referring to a Sister of Charity who died in 1816 (497).

Homing in on the deceptive, and ephemeral, nature of the worldly scene, Seton presents Kit with a corrective and notes the rather drastic consequences of not attaching to this support: “In Religion every thing [sic] is united and combined—The moment we quit our hold of the least truth, we plunge into a dark abyss” (509). Seton asserts that religion has always been her “solid joy and triumph” (489), so Kit should also “look well to RELIGION *through your life*” (489). Religion becomes the lens through which Kit should take in her scene, and in Burke’s terms is an **agency** for Seton.

Etymologically, “religion” derives from “Latin religion-, religio supernatural constraint, sanction, religious practice, perhaps from religare to restrain, tie back” (*Merriam-Webster*). Seton emphasizes looking “in views of FAITH,” “with the eyes of Faith,” and “see[ing] by Faith” (“Catherine” 497). She suggests that “[t]hose only who keep the medium (between enthusiasm and insensibility) can either see or judge rightly—” (508), an equipoise Kit must also achieve. Religion at once corrects Kit’s sight and reorients her mind: “Religion soul of happiness points us to groaning Calvary shows us our *ALL*”

²⁰ This was taken from Edward Young’s poem, *Night Thoughts*: “Life’s little stage is a small eminence, / Inch-high the grave above; that home of man” (26).

(496)²¹. Seton quotes Ignatius to his pupil, Francis Xavier. Ignatius criticizes “limiting your desires to this world” (501). Ignatius also advises Francis Xavier to turn away from “so low an aim” as the “world” and turn instead toward “the KINGDOM of heaven” (501).

According to Seton, religion allows Kit to see life as it really is behind the curtain. Kit may find relief in this. Surrounded by uncertainty and deception, she has certainty at her fingertips. As Seton outlines it, Kit’s scene is a tug of war between “the lovely ornaments and grace of Religion” (497) and actions “incompatible with Religion” (498) or in “opposition to Religion” (498). She must choose between the “thick polluted air, darkness and stench and dungeon horrors” (502) of this earth, where one “must suffer, labour [sic], and share the trials of life” (505), and being “transmitted to regions of light and glory” (497), “join[ing] the angelic choir” (493), and experiencing the “enjoyment of the blessings” of eternity (494). The alternative is presented in such dark and frightening terms that Kit’s choice is no choice at all. By pleasant contrast, in eternity, “*Time shall be no more*” (507), which Seton repeats twice more (508). In eternity, “all I know is there will be no more of such time as is now my own” and a “*vast, unbounded infinite uncertainty of thought*” (508). From Seton’s point of view, the path to eternity, the Christian path, is the preferred scene for Kit and the path that Kit should follow. Seton reminds Kit, “Our destination is heaven, and *there* every thought and design of our mind should be sent” (506). In other words, in order to be the agent Seton wants her to be, Kit should focus on the immortal scene.

²¹ This is taken from Edward Young’s poem, *Night Thoughts*: “Religion! thou the soul of happiness; / And, groaning Calvary, of thee!” (69).

Rather than engage with false, deceptive persons and pursue false, deceptive activities, Kit should build on “an immortal base” (504), and “should breathe and act but for [God’s] glory” (506). Seton claims, “If the eyes of our spirit were open we would see souls falling in Eternity like flakes of snow, or drops of rain—And an incomparably greater number to a miserable Eternity than to a happy one” (507). Dirvin writes that for Seton eternity “was the star she steered by. It motivated everything—love of God and neighbor, every action spiritual and temporal. It was the refrain of her teaching” (*The Soul* 33). It makes sense, then, that eternity is a scene embedded in the advice book. In eternity, as Seton explains it, her two deceased daughters will no longer be “shrouded in the tomb” (“Catherine” 494), and on the day of Judgement “all that is now hidden will be manifest” (507). Only eternity affords the ability to see without filters. In Burke’s terminology, but Seton’s instruction, eternity is the substance on which Kit should act. This is in contrast to the grave, the substance Kit is inadvertently relying on through her worldly pursuits.

According to Seton, “the free mind moves secure and finds Independence in its GOD” (495) rather than in the “stays and props” of earth (495). Seton directs Kit that “we should breathe and act but for his [God’s] glory” (506). Seton paraphrases Pope Clement²², uncited, when she writes, “Every thought and every action directed to the honour [sic] of God—the Sum of Religion” (508). Seton instructs Kit “not to do an action through habit and custom,” along with five other postures to avoid (506). Instead, intention must “extend to every action of our life” (505). In Seton’s softest stance on

²² Letter X [ten]: “Let every thought, and every action, be directed to the honour [sic] of God; for that is the sum of Religion [sic]” (*Letters* 35).

action, she advises that “who does the best his circumstance allows, / does well, angels could do no more” (504)²³, which is another uncredited paraphrase of Edward Young. Even this soft stance recognizes that scene, or circumstance, shapes action. Seton makes her position clear: “To think *justly* on human life, and to see things as *they are* should be our main object” (500). She urges Kit to “retain the empire of reason over your mind” (500).

Eternity reveals the truth and is the ultimate scene of freedom. As readers might come to expect, however, Seton’s idea of freedom is a bit complicated. Seton employs numerous images of barriers, bridles, and chains, which typically connote restraint or lack of freedom. In Seton’s use, the images suggest the fine line between restraint and freedom. Like a Möbius strip, restraint and freedom are inextricably and paradoxically linked, at least for Seton. Whether restraint is a kind of freedom or holds one captive depends on Seton’s context. For example, Kit must not allow “futile enjoyments [...] hold it [Kit’s soul] as it [sic] were captive” (501). One enjoyment, the theater, “ensnare[s] by [its] false glare” (499). Demons in the ballroom “forg[e] chains of passion and illusions by which they will hold them [men and women] for Eternity” (497). That is, the acts and scenes of the passions and pleasure can chain or snare Kit, making her like a slave to them. Seton’s scenic orientation, recall, is toward death and eternity. Thus, from Seton’s point of view, which she is always nudging Kit to adopt, death is not a “grinning specter” but “the kind friend who cuts the bonds of our misery, and opens the door of our prison” (497). Death releases us from chains and snares. On the other hand, Seton

²³ “Who does the best his circumstance allows, / Does well, acts nobly; angels could [sic] no more” (Young 18).

sometimes presents restraints as positive, when they rein in unacceptable behavior. For example, the theater “loosen[s] the bridle” (499), and romance novels “let loose the bridle of the senses” (500). In these two situations, restraint is to be preferred.

Should Kit decide to do her own thing and disregard her mother’s advice, there are consequences. Seton explains, “[W]e know certainly that a first barrier broken down easily makes way to the second and weakens our power of resistance” (498). So attending the theater just “once would be an act of opposition to Religion” (498). Rather than judge based on sketchy first impressions, Kit ought to “resist them until [she] can examine a little what may be their consequence [sic]” (489-490). Later, Seton reiterates that “Rash [sic] Judgment is our spiritual jaundice,” which the co-editors note is language from Francis de Sales (493). In order to preempt the consequences of rash judgment, Kit must weigh decisions against compliance and intention. Seton employs the word “compliance” to describe “a branch of charity which makes indifferent things good, and dangerous things tolerable, taking away the mischief from what in itself is a sort of evil” (492). Similar to compliance, “*pure* intention” makes an action “great and precious before God” (505). In order for intention to “sanctify our action,” it must “*please* God” and “must extend to every action of our life” (505). Seton employs what is apparently enthymematic logic to advise, “*OUR GOD OUR FATHER!* Know all the consequences of that dearest Truth” (489)²⁴. In the context of theater, there are even “dangers of a consequence you

²⁴ In an 1815 letter to her son Will, Seton numbers her advice in 10 points, two of which (5 and 9) are about economy (*Collected Writings*, vol. II 297). She also writes about virtue (298) and asks him to consider “the future consequences of your example to [your brother Richard]” (298). She closes with “—Our God—Our Eternity—the last and only word!—” (298), which is quite similar to the logic she employs with Kit.

cannot calculate” (498). Unknown, or unspoken, dangers are frightening enough, but Seton lays into known dangers, too.

Seton makes a strong case that few will reach Heaven, and she bolsters the point by providing specific numbers of people saved in the Bible, such as the eight during the flood, the four of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Joshua and Caleb who “alone entered the *land of promise* [sic]” (506). She quotes Saints Chrysostom and Nilus, who also lecture on the unlikelihood of being “saved” (507). This discussion of consequences concerns more than life or death choices on earth; it concerns eternal life or hell. Referring to God’s own words, surely an unerring authority in the minds of both women, Seton writes, “He assures us himself” of the broad path to death and that “[m]any are called but few *are chosen*” (506). Seton explains that “not one soul is lost but God would have saved, not one lost but by its own fault” (507). In one particularly scolding illustration, Seton argues that if Kit attends the theater, “[Y]ou *concur* in the evil that is done; become *an example* for others, and the more pure and edifying your example may be in other respects, the more *dangerous* it will be in this” (498). Seton advises Kit to “have [the] courage to act from principle” (491) instead of “going with the crowd” and “doing *as others do*” (491) even as “our proper reserve” may be taken “for pride and insult” (490).

In her emphasis on reason, intention, and consequences, Seton seems to be instilling independence and autonomy, reaching back to the idea of freedom. She tells Kit, “Oh do try to be quite independent in Virtue [sic]” (490), “*be kind to every body* [sic]” (491), and “plead every excuse consistent with truth and never judge any one [sic]” (493). Kit must not act “through habit and custom” (506). This advice calls for Kit to be active, aware, and exhibit presence of mind. Seton admits:

If I had life to go again with my 40 years [sic] experience I would avoid singularity in every thing [sic] but one, and that one is, *I would be kind to every body* [sic] but admit few *within* my heart, and I would have the *pride* to do what I knew to be right as quietly and calmly as the sun rides on the heavens and let the world go on at its pleasure. (491)

Seton also worries over Kit's relationship with God and with Christ. Her language is directive: "Two great objects require all our attention in this world—The glory of God, and the salvation of our soul. To these two ends all our views and plans and actions should tend" (505). As if both for emphasis and the sake of simplicity, Seton repeats that "our first great end [is] namely to *please God*" (506). Seton contends that "every action of our life should be done in union with [Christ]" (506). Views, plans, actions, and ends are integral parts of one's ability to be an agent, to act and make independent decisions for oneself. Seton is pointedly saying that they belong not to Kit, but to God and God's Son. She states in no uncertain terms that God's "right over me is as unchangeable as his own existence" (507). Seton intimates that there is no arguing this, nor will Seton let the point rest.

Initially, the advice book reads rather conventionally as Seton's first-person advice to Kit (489-93), that is, until the bottom of page 493, or about five pages in. Here, the advice is abruptly broken with a meditation and direct address to God, "thou" (493). Kit is, in a sense, overhearing a conversation as she reads and is immersed in her

mother's relationship with God. This meditation²⁵ is a paraphrase of St. Gregory Nazianzus' Oration 7. Seton inserts herself in the Oration, addresses God, and speaks of finally "behold[ing] my A[nnina] and R[ebecca] no longer shrouded in the tomb" (494). By using direct address to God, Seton models for Kit, intentionally or not, "communication with God [that] gives an unspeakable sweetness and joy to the heart," "good humour [sic] and cheerfulness," and the "happy turn of piety" (502). Later in the text, in another address to God, Seton writes, "[O]h my God I dare hope to find you even, at my last hour and Judgment what you have been to me through life" (502). Such personal communication would otherwise be private, between Seton and her God. However, Seton places Kit in a scene of prayer and even provides words. Author-agent Seton is an activist, an agent for Kit.

Actions and intentions lie with the agent, so any bad decisions and their inevitable negative consequences rest squarely on Kit. Seton refers to a saint to emphasize this point: "Alas! say St. Augustin [sic] why in the little while we have to live why do you lose such inestimable treasures—You have them in your own hands, and it depends only on yourself to *secure them*" (505). Such if/then logic may be hard for the teenage Kit to question. Seton's advice seems harmless, and helpful, enough: Think before you act. The advice seems to encourage Kit to be a thoughtful, responsible agent. However this advice may sound, Kit is being steered to act the way her mother wishes, which is in the way of pleasing God. This may be with good reason, but Seton is certainly advising Kit with a

²⁵ Somewhat confusingly, a "heading" on p. 494 entitled "St. Gregory, on his Brother Cesarius 368" refers to the material (two paragraphs) directly above it. A second oration, also from St. Gregory, appears right below a second heading, labeled "Oration on his Father."

heavy hand. In fact, agent and scene merge quite tightly in Seton's strategy to use fear to contain and control Kit, and frighten Kit into accountability.

Seton's Meditations: Walls of Words

I treat what I term Seton's meditations separately from the rest of the advice for several reasons. First, this advice has a distinctly different tone from the rest of the text. It moves away from Seton's first- and second-person address in a conversational tone to musings of both a cerebral and a deeply spiritual nature. Second, my research suggests that the musings are not original to her. That is, these meditations are uncited selections, each of which is to a greater or lesser degree paraphrased from James Hervey, John Newton, Vincent de Paul, and Edward Young (494-96), and later in the text, Pope Clement, François Fénelon, George Horne, and a source I cannot pinpoint to one person (508-509). The mash-up of voices and sources may help to explain the jarring, disjointed nature of these passages that are rather gracelessly inserted into Seton's text. In them, Seton floods Kit with images and verbiage, almost a verbal pile on to overwhelm Kit into obedience. They may also prove disorienting for contemporary readers because we cannot ask Seton to clarify what she means as Kit might have done. Still, scene and agent are as integral to this section as the rest of the advice book.

Seton has quoted and paraphrased most frequently from Edward Young's book-length poem *The Complaint; Or, Night Thoughts*²⁶. Although Young's poem indicates

²⁶ In the *Collected Writings* (vol. IIIa), Bechtle and Metz note Seton's excerpting portions of *Night Thoughts* in her copy book #31, which she started at age 15 (5). *Night Thoughts* was published serially from 1742-46 (Wicker 98). Composed in nine parts, representing nine dismal nights, it is "filled with wise maxims of moral conduct and religious faith" (Mitford xxxvii). Indeed, "for several generations it was a 'household book' to be found in nearly every 'parlor'" and "translated into a dozen foreign languages" (26), and "[u]pwards of forty editions of the *Night Thoughts*, separately or as part of the collected works, appeared in England before 1800" (Wicker 80).

that “there was no possibility, in spite of the well-nigh endless arguments [...], of any comfortable conviction of divine forgiveness or heavenly hope” (Wicker 8), it is Seton’s hope of eternal life that guides her advice. Young enjoyed writing “eloquent expositions of moral duty, and directions for the conduct of life, the government of the passions, and the regulation of the understanding” (Mitford xxxi), all of which are themes in Seton’s advice, too. Thus, Seton’s *ethos* and activism are continued through Young as well as her other uncited sources. For example, in one of these meditations excerpted from Young, Seton presents an anthropomorphized picture of religion: “Descending from the skies to wretched man, / Religion in her left holds out THIS WORLD, / and in her right *the next*” (“Catherine” 496). Once again Seton offers a sharp delineation between the two scenes. Religion, Seton continues, is “the solid rock [that] can support US” (496)²⁷. This is yet another iteration of Seton’s message from the opening of the advice book on the bounds of proper conduct for Kit. It also emphasizes Seton’s dominant scenic orientation and the substance on which the advice rests. The “solid rock” (496) counters the sand (504, 508, 509), the abyss (508, 509), and the void (508) that Kit may fall prey to.

The Rev. James Hervey, considered the “prose counterpart” of Young (Wicker 90), also makes an unacknowledged contribution to the advice book. Let us note that Seton appears to use her uncited sources enthymematically. The reader-researcher is left to make connections amongst the works that, at least to this reader, are not obvious. Cribbing from Hervey, Seton writes that the “door of liberty opens” (“Catherine” 495) for “the keen eyed eagle [that] soars above all the feathered race” (494). From earlier discussions of scene, we know that associations with the earth and worldly desires and

²⁷ “Descending from the skies / To wretched man, the goddess in her left / Holds out this world, and, in her right, the next” (Young 68-69); “here is solid rock! / This can support us” (69).

objects are bad. Because the eagle flies to heaven and leaves behind the superficial “tinsels” and “territories” of the world, “*immensity* is her range, *infinite* bliss her aim” (495). Freedom comes from breaking ties to the world. Like the metaphor of the soaring eagle, the human mind has to extract itself from earthly ties. The “eternal mind which is capable of contemplating its creators [sic] Glory, which is intended to enjoy the Vision of his countenance,” “this *Eternal* mind endued [sic] with such great capacities, and made for such exalted ends,” and the “eternal mind exposed to sublimity” will want to “break its chains” (495) that link it “to the earthly clod” (495).

Seton runs right into another passage, this time adapted and uncited from the Rev. John Newton’s *Peace for the Christian Mourner*. The passage claims that “a Ch[ristian] without trials would be like a mill without wind or water to show the contrivance and designs of the wheel” (“Catherine” 495). Trials test our mettle, exhibit our strengths, and lead us to “take a nobler aim” (495). Once again, Seton’s aim, or orientation, is away from earthly concerns. Similar to the keen-eyed eagle mentioned earlier, in facing life’s inevitable trials, a Christian “takes wing and soars” to reach “those regions of liberty where the free mind moves secure and finds Independence in its GOD” (495). Wedged in between this passage and more quotations from Young is a brief excerpt from *St. Vincent’s Manual*, which reads in full, with Seton’s italics, “*When God afflicts*, it is to instruct us—*when he strikes*, it is to *heal* us—unless we believe this we have the *bitterness of the cross* without its *sweetness*, its *weight* without its *fruit*” (495). Yet again Seton lays out clear causes and effects for Kit, like simple equations. And, yet again, in so doing Seton makes over the scene. Affliction becomes instruction and healing once she shows Kit how to interpret it.

Seton showers a torrent of words on Kit at the end of the advice book (508-509) concerning eternity and the end of time, and other disconnected thoughts that result in a dense, complicated closing of the advice book. With this seemingly random wall of words, it appears that Seton is simply cramming in content. Her numerous pithy paraphrases alternate between the authors Pope Clement XIV and François Fénelon. Seton explains, via Pope Clement, “We are but like grains of sand, with which the wind sporteth, if we do not attach ourselves immoveably [sic] to that *point of support*” because man is small “in relation to *his God*” (508). Clement writes about the power of Christianity to weather those people “who either by violence or fanaticism seemed to threaten [its] annihilation” (509). They are outmatched, however, and only make “the face of heaven more bright and serene” (509). Clement (1769-74) is an unusual choice to support Seton’s model of assertive, independent agent, given his reputation as a weak pope who caved in to pressure by “dissolv[ing] the Jesuit order” in 1773²⁸ (Duffy 245). Her paraphrases of François Fénelon both refer to charity²⁹, defining it as “[t]rue devotion” and delimiting its rules on observing and speaking about bad behavior in others (“Catherine” 508).

In another largely copied reflection, this time from the Rev. George Horne³⁰, Seton relates a story of “the Christian husbandman” who is asleep and dreaming, “*for he has nothing to do*” (509). Because the worker is not alert to “[t]he world, the flesh[,] and

²⁸ It was restored by Pope Pius VII in 1814 (Duffy 273).

²⁹ Fénelon writes in a letter from 1777, “True devotion is charity, and without it nothing we can do is of use to salvation” (Kendall 187).

³⁰ *The Discourses of the Right Reverend George Horne, D.D., Late Lord Bishop of Norwich*. Vol. 1. London: Rivington, 1812.

the devil [who] have united their forces” (509), his lack of vigilance may lead to being swept away by “temptation,” which “is at the gates” (509). Inattention has dire consequences, and yet, Seton segues right from the ominous scene of the oblivious Christian husbandman who is unaware of the dangers that lurk to a happy, hopeful scene. Seton puts her stark world view on display. In contrast to the scene of the inattentive husbandman, she writes that “[t]he man who lives under an habitual sense of the divine presence” experiences “perpetual cheerfulness of temper” and “the satisfaction of thinking himself in company with his dearest and best of friends” (509). This scene, not of Seton’s invention, is found in several sources, including a textbook compiled by Noah Webster³¹. The word “habitual” is not Seton’s, then, but it nonetheless speaks to the attitude of submission to God that her advice book proffers. As described in this story, Seton’s vision for Kit’s life is an attractive one of certainty and serenity; however, it entails Kit’s revoking her ability to be an agent in any way but Seton’s way.

³¹ Webster, Noah. *An American Selection, of Lessons in Reading and Speaking. Calculated to Improve the Minds and Refine the Taste of Youth. To Which Are Prefixed Rules in Elocution, and Directions for Expressing the Principal Passions of the Mind*. 6th ed. Utica, NY: Seward and Williams, 1813. This is quoted in Webster, but not attributed to him.

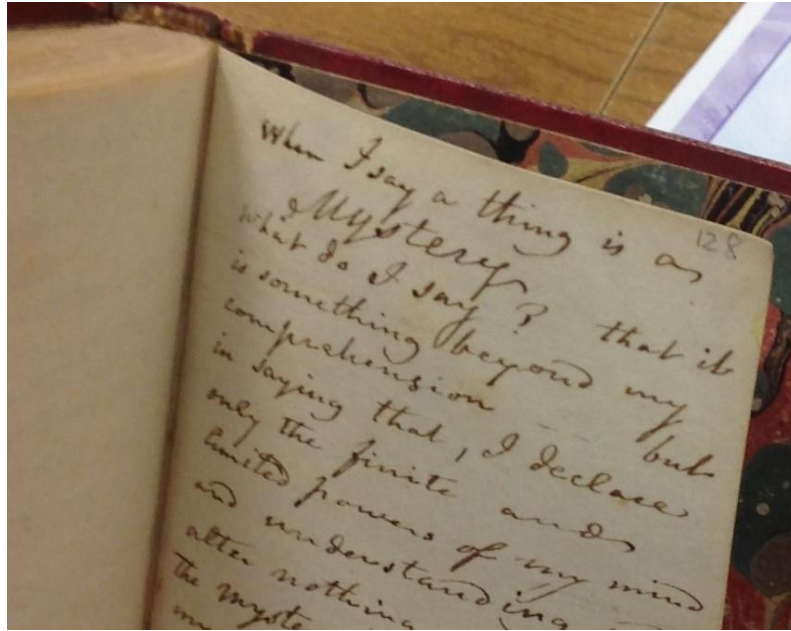


Fig. 3. Seton's closing meditation. Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise Archives, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Seton's closing meditation, we recall, is written on the inside endpaper of the manuscript advice notebook ("Josephine's" 128). This placement suggests an intent to make these words the literal last words of advice. Seton asks, "When I say a thing is a MYSTERY, what do I say?" She answers her own question, "[T]hat it is something beyond my comprehension," and immediately qualifies this answer. In full, the answer to Seton's own question reads: "that it is something beyond my comprehension—but in saying that, I declare only the finite and limited powers of my mind and understanding" ("Catherine" 509). Seton then wonders, "[I]f I refuse my assent to a truth will it be less a truth because my belief is wanting—" (509). This suggests that though a mystery may not be comprehensible to the human mind, it is still true.

To illustrate this apparent paradox, Seton poses a hypothetical situation compressed into the last sentence of her advice book: "I tell a man born blind of the brightness and splendour [sic] of the sun, and he will not believe me, is the sun less bright

and splendid because the man is blind” (509). The blind man who “will not believe” (509) how bright the sun is denies what is objectively true. Furthermore, he does not trust those who know better, that is, who have sight. Let us note that Seton’s example is not without its flaws. She has discussed at length in the advice book that outward appearance is generally false and not to be trusted. Presumably this example of the sun is indisputably true and serves to show the blind man’s stubborn disbelief, his refusal to believe. Kit must not behave like the blind man, stubbornly not recognizing what is real and true, and relying on her own perception.

With this story of the blind man, Seton’s advice to Kit ends on a strong, revealing note. What Kit believes or even senses hardly matters in the context of her future actions. Rather, Kit’s experience and point of view may merely evince “the finite and limited powers of [the] mind and understanding,” a “refus[al] [of] assent to a truth,” or a want of belief (509), such as the blind man exhibits. Through the example of the blind man, Seton intimates that she wholly discounts Kit’s perspective. She writes it away. This confirms what we already know about the timbre of Seton’s advice. To wit, Seton’s writing suggests that Kit is incapable of discerning between falsehood and truth, and therefore of acting on it, without her mother’s guidance.

Conclusion

Seton has accomplished quite a feat using her mighty rhetorical muscle. Taken as a whole, her advice suggests that words can bind and restrain as effectively as fetters can. Through the written word, she has transformed Kit’s scene by casting it in a new light (textually), and she has wrested from Kit her ability to be an agent for as long as Kit references the text. Within the text she trains Kit how to think and how to act, and these

written words remain unchanged on the page. That is, Seton's advice from circa 1816 on how to live remains unchanged for all of Kit's lifetime. (That Kit's interpretation of the words may change over time is a separate issue.) Author-agent Seton has created a world out of words and completely controls the scene by writing it, interpreting it, and training Kit how to respond to it.

We can draw several implications from this analysis. As critic David A. Ling explains, "The way in which a speaker describes a situation reflects his perception of reality and indicates what choices of action are available to him." In this way, "the pentad can be used as a means of examining how the persuader has attempted to achieve the restructuring of the audience's view of reality" (393). First, in Seton's perception of reality, with its scenic emphasis, Kit must be always on her guard against errors in judgment or inattention to behavior. The assertive author-agent Seton has made over scenes that Kit is likely to encounter into sites of trouble that become spiritual battlegrounds, with outcomes that reach into eternity. Seton controls the scene and the conversation about it with her pen. In the conversation, she transforms scene, such as the theater, into a source of temptation and doubt. Seton is rhetorically adept at raising doubt and fear. Seton makes the scene the antagonist, but blurs her own steady hand in constructing it that way.

Second, Seton's widening of circumference increases her power as it reduces Kit's power. Seton's advice, honed by religious conviction, is not just situated in the parlor, or the theater, but widens to encompass eternity. Seton's total control of scene reveals that she is a savvy writer and rhetor. She acknowledges that the theater exhibits "[s]entiments which may even be correct in themselves, or on paper" ("Catherine" 499).

We spoke earlier of Seton's referring Kit to "more solid readings" (500) and what "the sacred books proclaim" (494). She is certainly aware of the dangerous power of words in the context of theater, romances, and parlor conversation. She references numerous writers and their texts, the fabric (or agency) by which they are remembered: Abbé Clement, Rousseau, St. John Chrysostom, St. Nilus, St. Augustine, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Henrietta of France, St. Ignatius, St. Gregory Nazianzus, Pope Clement XIV, François Fénelon, St. Vincent, Edward Young, James Hervey, George Horne, and John Newton. In addition, Seton exhibits an understanding of the body as text and rhetoric as extending beyond the written word in reminding Kit that she is an example for others (498) and in referencing Jesus, vis a vis a paraphrase of the poet Edward Young, as a text³² "[b]y heaven composed" and "published *on the CROSS*" (496). Likewise, Seton's understanding of the didactic function of the word, spoken and written, is also clear through her references to teacher-student, speaker-interlocutor, and reader-writer relationships that texts create. Furthermore, the authors cited above and others written into the advice book, such as Kit's two deceased sisters, suggest the advice book as a scene. Seton even gets "meta," writing Kit's sisters Annina and Rebecca into the role of Caesarius in St. Gregory's oration. By writing her daughters into the scene, Seton writes herself in as well, "behold[ing] my A[nnina] and R[ebecca] no longer shrouded in the tomb" (494).

Seton's perception of reality involves dichotomous thinking, which is employed throughout the advice book. Seton writes of passion and reason (490), falsehood and truth (500), and enthusiasm and insensibility (508). They are opposites, they carry moral

³² "By heaven compos'd, was published on the cross" (Young 67).

weight, and they are choices, sanctioned and unsanctioned actions. Seton is a mother looking out for her daughter's well-being, and she is religious by constitution and vocation. Having professed her vows, Seton can hardly be expected to drop her religious beliefs for others. Such thinking represents her perception of reality. We know through Seton's discussion of consequences that if Kit finds herself at one of the points of conflict that Seton describes, she should be able to address it the way her mother desires, the way she has trained Kit to respond via the advice book. Thus, the advice book is something of a rehearsal space as well, a scene of its own. Seton has provided scaffolding for a future time when Kit is called to act. Let us recall Burke's description of the scene-act ratio. In the *Grammar*, Burke attributes two applications to the scene-act ratio. One is deterministic and one is hortatory. He explains that in the deterministic understanding, an action "has to" be taken given the circumstances (or scene). In the hortatory understanding, an action "should" be taken given the circumstances (13). Seton seems to favor the deterministic meaning. We have free will to choose what course of action to take, but like the blind man, we cannot ignore the truth. The truth demands (deterministic view) a certain response.

Burke's concepts of identification and consubstantiality may be helpful here, too. Scholar David Blakesley explains that for Burke identification, "the primary aim of rhetoric," is "an alignment of interests or motives" (15), and consubstantiality is "an unconscious desire to identify with others" (15). Seton's use of first-person plural, "we" and "our" suggests shared beliefs as well as Seton's deft merging of identities. A "we" suggests a "they" or "their," an other or others. Seton writes other agents into the advice book, and they, too, are part of the "we." Seton has created, or invoked, a community and

written Kit into this “company” whom she (Seton) calls the “dearest and best of friends” (“Catherine” 509). Seton’s advice to be “quite independent in Virtue” (490) is really to do as Seton says, as God says. In homier terms, it is easy to say, “Oh, Mom,” to unwarranted advice, and in places, we recall, Seton even writes in Kit’s protests. If one is a believer, however, it is futile to argue with God. Seton does not write in space for Kit to question. In fact, when Seton writes definitively of consequences and eternity, she immerses Kit in logic. Actions and decisions have consequences and effects on Kit, the reasoning goes, which she cannot undo, cannot simply erase or strike out, like words in the advice book.

Elizabeth Seton was considered a kind, patient woman by those who knew her. Even so, a writer can more easily perform virtue on the page, aligning the written word with right thought, than in the messiness of real life. Along those lines, it is both unfortunate and hard to deny the resemblance between conduct literature generally and English composition courses that attempt, however well intended, to make students over, whether that calls for developing genteel manners or control of commas. Kathleen A. Welsch points out that in the nineteenth-century United States, “models of appropriate behavior” and character found in popular literature were reproduced in the classroom and “influenced the way in which writing was taught” (2). That is, “[e]mbedded within seemingly neutral lessons on rhetorical principles and language drills [were] lessons on character and moral behavior operat[ing] as a subtext” and “establishing a double purpose in composition instruction,” students’ composing writing and composing themselves (3). In a contemporary take, Sharon O’Dair comments that composition courses contribute to the “embourgeoisement” of students, but leaves it to the reader to decide if this is good or

bad. O'Dair quotes Michael Zweig, who argues that higher education "mostly helps to stabilize [social] classes and reproduce them across generations" (qtd. in O'Dair 600). Likewise, "middle-class virtue is the conduct book's holy grail, and advice manuals hold out the possibility that regardless of economic realities, working-class readers can attain it" (Ashworth 151). Susan Miller, whose criticism of the field of composition can be as pointed as it is accurate and fair, says that in the field "we misrecognize ourselves as 'individuals' deploying pedagogic discourse that instead employs us, while appearing to arise only from 'personal' predispositions and training, not from a transformation of potent economic stratifications into disciplinary practice." This suggests questioning our assumptions and commonplaces about teaching. Along these lines, Miller adds, "We might [...] think of our teaching as a way to facilitate practices already underway, not as a vocation that must inevitably separate students from their culture, by virtue of its superior entree to vaguely 'better' worlds" ("Things" 106).

Kenneth Burke, whose method of dramatistic criticism informs my analysis of Seton's advice book, introduces the next chapter on writing pedagogy. Specifically, I design a first-year writing course with a focus on alternative rhetorics. Burke's concept of the parlor is a useful construct to understand alternative rhetorics, given that "[i]n Burke's 'parlor,' everyone is involved in the discussion" (Lu 143). Whereas conduct literature presents behavior as desirable or not desirable, Burke's dramatistic pentad permits study from five perspectives plus their pairs. The pentad opens, rather than closes, perspectives. Likewise, alternative rhetorics represents rhetoric in the in-between places. That is, if a flashlight trains its beam on traditional rhetoric, alternative rhetorics is outside that beam of light.

Chapter 5

Alternative Rhetorics in the Composition Classroom

Entering the parlor room of scholarly conversation in writing studies, one might hear Lynn Quitman Troyka discussing her successful use of classical rhetoric in a basic writing curriculum, or Jeff Todd on his application of Burkean invention strategies to teach technical writing. Nearby, but in a different circle, one might overhear Victor Vitanza proclaiming, “I do not believe in The History of Rhetorik [sic],” which he terms a “grand narrative” (“An After/word” 250), or Susan Miller reminding her audience that “rhetorical practices preexist the word *rhêtorikê*” (*Trust* 148). John Schilb might be nodding his head and offering suggestions about how to cure the disease of “canononia,” or “the impulse to boil rhetoric down to a particular set of cherished texts, an official heritage” (“Future” 131). Listening to Schilb, we learn that “[t]he main problem with a canon, of course, is that it threatens to exclude other works that challenge our conventional notions of rhetorical history. [...] [M]issing voices might alter our whole sense of rhetoric’s past. They also throw into question our impulse to canonize at all” (131). As an alternative, he suggests “the possibility of rhetoric’s serving as a storehouse of concepts for various groups to draw upon at various times for various purposes” (135). In other words, Schilb asks us to imagine rhetoric as a storehouse, and not a monolithic, capital-T Tradition.

With this aim in mind, I propose an undergraduate writing course that introduces students to alternative rhetorics³³, an area with rich possibilities for application within the

³³ I use the pluralized form, following the example of Gray-Rosendale and Gruber, “to emphasize multiplicity and fragmentation within and between different rhetorics and different traditions” (5).

college writing classroom and beyond. To briefly review, I have introduced Elizabeth Bayley Seton as a rhetor whose advice book is a contribution to rhetorical and writing studies, but a contribution too often overlooked because, as a personal document, it falls into an “alternative” discursive space that has traditionally not been regarded as rhetorical. I have described what the conduct or advice book is and how it “counts” as rhetoric. Using Kenneth Burke’s pentadic criticism, I have examined Seton’s advice book to her daughter Kit. The next task, detailed in this chapter, is to create a course in which writing can be studied in the context of alternative rhetorical practices such as Seton’s.

In this chapter, I describe the history and theory of alternative rhetorics. Next, I examine how alternative rhetorics might be profitably applied in a writing classroom. That is, I establish the value of a writing course with a focus on alternative rhetorics. Finally, I outline a course that will employ alternative rhetorics in the service of writing.

Alternative Rhetorics in Theory and Practice

“One of the oldest liberal arts, rhetoric has pragmatic roots—it originated as a means to help lay citizens participate in public discourse” (Gold 13). Also looking at origins, Vicki Tolar Collins quotes Young, Becker, and Pike, who assert that “the word *rhetoric* can be traced back ultimately to the simple assertion *I say* (*eiro* in Greek)” (547). Thomas W. Benson calls rhetoric the “body and lore of tradition available to [rhetors], a great intellectual grab-bag” (xi), a wonderfully prosaic and expansive definition. Alternative rhetorics are perhaps best explained in the context of the rhetorical tradition (or canon), to which they present additional, and sometimes resistant, points of view. As cited in an earlier chapter, Kathleen E. Welch critiques what she terms the “Heritage School” of rhetoric, which turns classical rhetoric into “a series of rules, dicta, and lists”

(79) and “collapse[s] 700 years of rhetorical theory into one idea” (80). Along those lines, Sharon Crowley explains that the compositionist can, for better or worse, list off practitioners in the standard Rhetorical Tradition practically by rote:

[S]ince I’ve never seen it admitted to in print, I want to write it down here: Tisias and Corax, Gorgias, Isocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hermagoras, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, a medieval scholiast or two, Ramus, Wilson, Vico, Campbell, Blair, Whately, a couple of current-traditional types like Bain or Hill, Richards, Burke, Weaver, Perelman, Toulmin, amen. (18)

The list is primarily gendered male, depending on who counts as a scholiast or current-traditional, and primarily prizes public, persuasive communication.

Hildy Miller explains, “Some genres come into fashion in certain eras of rhetoric’s history and become valued above others. Today, for instance, much of the writing that scholars do in professional journals, as well as the essays expected of undergraduates, is based on the method of argumentation laid out by Aristotle” (19). That is, The Rhetorical Tradition passed down in history and in education “constructed over hundreds and thousands of years, a story refined and honed by numerous theses and critical interpretations” (Mattingly 100) has excluded and marginalized the voices of women, African-Americans, Native Americans, non-Westerners, and countless others. In response to their being marginalized, Laura A. Field argues, “women and others who employ ‘alternative’ rhetorics seek to assert and valid[ate] new ways of speaking and writing. Classical rhetoric was developed in part to maintain or establish boundaries, something that women, people of color, and other underprivileged groups struggle to push, bend and break” (33). For example, concerning ethnic rhetorics, Jaime Armin

Mejía calls attention to “the rhetorical ways that have been damaging to [the] collective cultural identities” of student populations who already possess their own “ethnic rhetorical skills” before they ever enter a college classroom (153).

I cite Paul Kei Matsuda at length on this important topic. Writing specifically about “multilingual and multicultural scholars and writers” at work in higher education, he explains,

Since rhetorical situations that are new to monolingual English speakers may be similar to the situations that are familiar to users of other languages and discourses, other discourse practices can provide examples of how writers may deal with similar situations in English. In other words, learning from other rhetorical practices can enrich U.S. academic discourse by expanding the socially available repertoire for scholarly communication. (194)

“Scholars in rhetorical studies,” writes Wendy S. Hesford, “have had to contend with the legacy of omission.” To combat this, the resulting “recovery-and-recognition enterprise” is “expanding the rhetorical tradition to include women and minority-group members,” “mapping hierarchies of gender, class, race, sexuality, and ability,” and “expos[ing] the limits of analyzing the rhetorical in non-Western traditions primarily through the lens of Greek culture” (793).

This sentiment is repeated in David L. Wallace’s monograph *Compelled to Write: Alternative Rhetoric in Theory and Practice*, in which Wallace explains that “rhetoric becomes alternative when it engages the individual’s subjectivity rather than attempting

to erase it” (5). Wallace credits alternative rhetoric with the ability to “help us sort out both the ways members of some groups have been systematically marginalized by dominant discourse practices that pretend neutrality and the means those who have been so marginalized have used to challenge the discourses of power” (4). He continues, pointing out an “important tenet of alternative rhetoric is that not only are language, rhetoric, and discourse not neutral, but the dominant versions of these are systematically detrimental to some groups” (28). In short, alternative rhetorics expand the scope of the rhetorical tradition, or to use Carol Mattingly’s pithy explanation, help us in “rethinking what counts in rhetoric” (“Telling” 99). This is important for teachers and student rhetors alike because “the traditions, images, and culturally maintained ideas and beliefs we inherit also shape our future” (100). Will this future welcome the voices of those considered outsiders, and those on the margins?

Speaking practically and empathetically, as classrooms become more culturally diverse, teachers ought to “becom[e] knowledgeable of the rhetorics of ‘others’” (Mejía 146). Likewise, Elaine Richardson asserts, “The change in demographics in our classrooms should affect the ways we teach” (141). Steven Mailloux posits, “One direction of rhetorical flow is from the everyday to the academic: university disciplines are, most basically, the transfiguration of practical wisdom into accredited techniques, of non-academic, everyday *phronêsis* into academic, specialized *technê*” and, echoing Burke, this transfiguration “conditions the possibilities for thinking in our multiple communities” (62).

Let us consider two “outsider” perspectives by way of example. Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson examines “the received rhetorical tradition” through the alternative lens

of disabilities studies. She concludes that the received tradition “creates a barrier excluding the severely mentally disabled not only from rhetoricity but also from full citizenship, tied as traditional rhetoric is to the liberal ideology of the public forum, where good men (sic), speaking well, engage in civic debate” (158). James Fredal explores the bias in rhetorical history that favors “a traditional paradigm for proper rhetorical activity: the single, named public figure who composed (or is composed through) speeches and texts” (590-91). Fredal’s explanation is worth quoting at length, as he provides historical examples that challenge the received history.

Persuasive artistry in ancient Greece worked its effects through, for example, poetry, sculpture, architecture, city planning, dance, collaborative symbolic actions, and everyday practices, in addition to individually authored speeches. [...] It was initiated and carried out in private by noncitizens and women, as well as by political leaders and orators. (592)³⁴

Alternative rhetorics also includes rhetorical practices that may be unfamiliar, such as positioning Women’s Temperance Union public fountains as rhetorical acts that “speak for their builders long after their voices are silenced” (Mattingly, “Woman’s” 305) or reading needlework sampler-making as rhetorical practice (Goggin). Included in this purview is recontextualizing the seemingly ordinary, such as nineteenth-century American women’s letter writing or parlor speech, which in its time was an out-of-the-ordinary form of rhetoric, or a not-rhetoric. In a contemporary example, John Schilb

³⁴ Fredal goes on to discuss the historical event, “the mutilation of the herms,” the defacing of statues, evidently perpetrated by *women* in the summer of 415 in Athens (603).

studies the “rhetorical refusal,” which he describes as “denot[ing] an act of writing or speaking in which the rhetor pointedly refuses to do what the audience considers rhetorically normal” (*Rhetorical* 3). Think Ted Cruz at the 2016 RNC. According to Schilb, refusals are “a set of available moves” (15) that can “expand our students’ repertoires” (18).

In another present-day example of an alternative form of rhetoric, Cheryl Glenn looks at the rhetoric of silence. Silence can be employed “to keep others under control” or “to imply disapproval of a person’s behavior” (36). The rhetoric of silencing “traditionally subordinated people” (44) may be familiar to students through history and their own experiences. Thomas Deans also points out scholarship concerning “how silence functions rhetorically—as resistance, withdrawal, protection, disapproval, approval, renunciation” and in many other ways (419). Students exemplified this during a silent protest that occurred at UC Davis in 2011. Rather than engaging in a vocal protest of words, students sit cross legged on the sidewalks, in the dark, silently observing, looking up at the Chancellor as she looks down on them. The students’ silence is punctuated by the clicks of cameras and the University Chancellor’s shoes on the pavement. (The video is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmfluKelOt4>.) Clearly, alternative rhetorics is not an anti-intellectual free-for-all and has a great deal to offer students in the way of reading the rhetoric about them in their everyday world and participating in ways that are meaningful to them.

The work of bringing alternative rhetorics to light started with feminist reclamation and recovery projects that examined female writers and speakers and their

unique sites of rhetorical action. Buchanan and Ryan recall that “feminist researchers not only questioned established rhetorical categories, definitions, criteria, principles, and practices but also identified gender biases that slighted the full range and inventiveness of marginalized rhetors” (xvi). Reclaimed rhetorics include the voices of women rhetors of color, of differing socio-economic strata, and of varying sexual and gender orientations. For example, Jane Sutton recovers the work of Native American female rhetor Nanye’hi, in whose Cherokee tradition *women* are public speakers (138). Shirley Wilson Logan’s anthology of African-American women rhetors offers readers “unique rhetorical strategies from women wrestling with unique problems” (*With Pen* xv). Reclamation efforts also uncovered exciting sites of rhetoric, not just public sites, but private ones, like the church or women’s club. In sum, students must read beyond the established canon³⁵ because if lost or silenced voices are not recovered, reclaimed, and studied, students are at risk of a “distorted” (Russ 111) view of who can use rhetoric and to what ends. Perhaps most significantly, these voices belong to the students themselves and causes they believe in.

Of course, critics are cautious of such reclamation and recovery work. Susan Miller, for example, suggests a risk in adding, or inserting, rhetors willy-nilly into a canon. Miller terms the result “Sponge-Histories” and warns that such histories “absorb overlooked, marginal participants into dominant discourses they rightfully have had doubts about joining” (*Trust* 3). Taking the point even further, Victor Vitanza asserts, “While, to be sure, it *is* necessary that feminist rhetoricians reclaim all of the

³⁵ Russ is writing about the literary canon, but her point applies here as well, whether or not one believes that literature is rhetorical.

women/‘females’ who have been systematically excluded from *The History of Rhetoric*, this (my) discussion of gender and of writing histories of rhetoric wishes to move beyond ‘male/female’ altogether, or beyond separate histories of rhetorics” (“Threes” 209). The study of alternative rhetorics, however, is not an attempt to create a new canon, or to replace one with another. Rather, alternative rhetorics can offer students new tools, and new ways of using old, familiar tools. Laura Lai Long uses a different metaphor, cooking, to illustrate the restrictive thinking that alternative rhetorics may help to unlock. She reasons that “some chefs would agree that there were methods and recipes and all kinds of ingredients they learned [in order] to make them heads of their own kitchens. This is the discourse, the knowledge, the language, the dominant kind of cooking valued in society. Whatever the name, it exists as a gatekeeper, exists as a convention, Exists” (150).

In short, the traditional rhetorical canon has gravitated to public, persuasive sites for exemplary models of rhetorical activity. This emphasis, though, largely ignores the rhetorical practices of marginalized groups who did (do) not have access to such public sites, or if they did make room for themselves, courted controversy by speaking or writing in a public venue. Nan Johnson, writing about women and rhetorical space in the United States, explains that “the cultural power of rhetoric depends on its function as a discipline that ‘disciplines’ discursive possibilities.” Therefore,

pedagogies and histories of rhetoric are always simultaneously
empowering and disenfranchising. Only by stepping into the contradiction
between ‘discipline’ and ‘possibility’ [...] can we become more clear in
our own minds why even in the new millennium our day-to-day lives

remain corrupted by rhetorical theologies that value some voices more than others. (*Gender* 18)

Alternative rhetorics takes that step in.

Similarly, in *A Teaching Subject* Joseph Harris maintains that compositionists “need not to restrict but expand the forms in which we invite students to write” (125). Indeed, as Steven Lynn conveys so enthusiastically, “For those of us who work in Composition and Rhetoric, the adventure is showing students the richest possible repertoire to draw upon” (101). Johnson, Harris, and others in composition embrace rhetorical possibility and inclusion, the very bones of a course in alternative rhetorics. Like both Mejía and Richardson, cited earlier, Anne Beaufort takes a practical stance, observing that “in the age of hypertext, both the linearity of communications and the locus of control of the text (from writer to reader) shift, demanding that rhetorical theory expand, shift, and adapt” (236). This expanding, shifting, and adapting reflects the dynamic world in which we live and lends the study of rhetoric and writing an irrepressible energy. An expansive view of rhetoric provides students with more rhetorical possibilities and more language to capture the use of rhetoric that they experience in their wider world. What Herbert W. Simons calls the “globalization” of rhetoric³⁶ is an “intellectual movement, at the center of which is a proposed disciplinary reframing: from the study of rhetoric as a delimited object of study—as circumscribed by

³⁶ Simons attributes this reframing of rhetoric to the “cataclysmic events of the 1960s” and to the Wingspread and Pheasant Run conferences “on the future of rhetorical studies” (154).

the classical tradition—to rhetoric as a perspective or set of perspectives on virtually all human acts and artifacts” (154).

Before looking at the nuts and bolts of my proposed course, detailed in the next section, I want to emphasize that this course represents merely one approach to the study of rhetoric and writing. Karen Kopelson explains that “it has been widely accepted in composition studies for at least a decade that, of course, no rhetoric or corresponding pedagogy can ever be neutral, apolitical, nonideological, or disinterested”; any claims of neutrality actually “safeguard the privilege and univocal claims to truth of the dominating theories and practices they advance” (122). Likewise, I make no claims that this course is comprehensive, neutral, or “better” than any other approach, just different.

Alternative Rhetorics in the Composition Classroom

Having presented only a selection of the relevant theory behind alternative rhetorics, I now outline the course. I propose Alternative Rhetorics as a Special Topics undergraduate writing-intensive composition course. The catalogue description of ENGL 1101 reads: “Course in which students read, analyze and write expository essays for a variety of purposes consistent with expectations for college-level writing in standard edited English” (“Idaho”). The brick-and-mortar classroom course will meet three times a week, ideally, to allow concepts to both simmer and be stirred. Course competencies include rhetorical writing, listening, and reading; recognizing and evaluating evidence; practicing style; understanding audience and purpose; and displaying a strong command of the conventions of written edited English (Bruner and Hoeller 205). Students will practice using language purposefully and intentionally; experiment with style and genre; and gain control of conventions of edited, written English.

Teaching philosophy and teaching praxis are intimately related. David Smit, whose stance on providing composition courses in college is somewhat controversial, has a less controversial stance on how such courses might be taught. Through immersion, Smit maintains, students “increase their knowledge and skill by using writing in a wide variety of contexts, to achieve a wide variety of goals, and by tacitly acquiring a sense of how writing as a ‘tool’ can be used in different ways for different reasons” (182). He therefore advises creating such immersion or “acculturation by providing occasions for novice writers to work on particular tasks, by providing feedback and support, by providing analysis and critique, a meta-awareness, of the writing practices and social context in which the novice is writing” (182). Within the limits of a sixteen-week course, students will find themselves “immersed” in writing, whether that is spontaneously composing aloud, or meticulously line editing a formal assignment.

If my teaching praxis needs a label, process and even post-process fit the bill. Both imply that, like Smit’s understanding of immersion, “rather than lecturing to students *about* writing, we are going to encourage them to engage in the kinds of *activities* that writers typically engage in” (Olson 425). Writing students write, in the classroom and outside of it. Writing students also study writing, theirs and others’. This teaching method reflects “the thoroughly rhetorical—that is radically contextual—nature of writing and the teaching of writing” (427). A writing course with a focus on alternative rhetorics is suited to reflect diverse rhetorical experiences, the students’ own and those they read about.

Finally, a word on the freighted word “alternative.” Writing courses worry over words, as they should. The word “alternative” may suggest “less than” or “unsanctioned”

to students, as though there is a real rhetoric and then, if need be, an alternative for those who can't cut it. This very term, however, invites discussion. Gray-Rosendale and Gruber explain that "no rhetoric is fully 'alternative' but always both rewrites the tradition and inevitably becomes part of it" (4), if people are made aware of its influence. That is, alternative rhetorics are not alternative to those with whom the practices originated (Long 144). Students must understand that because a rhetoric is alternative does not mean that it is unworthy of study, or on the other hand, that it will not someday become mainstream. "Alternative" is not a dirty word.

Classroom Environment

Margaret J. Marshall likely speaks for many in writing studies who "understand the classroom as a site for knowledge making rather than for knowledge transmission" (154). I would revise this to read "and" instead of "rather than." So, *in addition to* knowledge transmission from primary and secondary readings, students will learn from or make knowledge from their own and other students' experiences. Along the same lines, Patricia Bizzell calls on teachers to recognize that students bring "resources that could address academic problems in ways not available to traditional academic discourse," making classroom learning "multidirectional" (178). Such multidirectional learning may be latent, unconscious, and only emerge later, well after the semester ends, and certain rhetorics and examples may "stick" with students more than others.

First, let us look at knowledge transmission through course readings. Nan Johnson writes of 1800s American parlor rhetoric that "popular rhetoricians left most women stranded in the parlor" ("Parlor" 125). Students must not be left stranded with interesting practices that they can neither use nor recognize in the world we circulate in outside of

school. In fact, Ronald and Ritchie maintain that it is incumbent on teachers to “make overt the connections between the readings [they] assign and the use students make of them” (213). Students will “capture” the connections they make in formal and informal writing activities (discussed in detail later). Students will not only read, analyze, and critique rhetors and their rhetorical practices but also create artifacts of their own as they “try on” different rhetorics. Kathleen J. Ryan suggests using “generative models” from which students glean rhetorical possibilities for their own writing (“Subjectivity” 45). In this way, students might read Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, or Malala Yousafzai as examples to follow in terms of rhetorical strategies and structure. Using a different tack, Glenn and Lunsford encourage writers to “extrapolat[e] theories from texts not usually thought of as rhetorical” (11). One example might be Twitter, examples of which we can easily study together in class. By design, Twitter demands concision. Students might create their own terse tweets and examine their efficacy.

Knowledge transmission does not imply being a pushover or blindly accepting what others have written or said. By way of example, students will complete an “Assertive Reading” (C. Gallagher 141-42), also called a resistant reading. (See Appendix B.) Such a reading “resists the traditional, dominant, single interpretation of canonical texts” (Gerald, McEvoy, and Whitfield 49) by explicitly asking students not to cooperate with the good faith expected of them as college readers and learners. A resistant reading is a rhetorical tool; students are experimenting with it, giving it a trial run to see what it yields. Gerald, McEvoy, and Whitfield explain that “[t]his remaking of the text,” through purposeful resistance, “is critical thinking, what most teachers try to foster, and when it happens in a student it can lead to a more informed, self-directed

educational experience” (50). Additionally, it “provides students with useful strategies for (re)reading their own lives, experiences, and words, all of which are subjects for their writing” (53). The authors explain, “What makes this approach critical, rather than manipulative, is that teachers should make their students aware that this approach *is an approach*, not *the approach*” (51).

An assertive reading has a related writing component. After reading “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>), students will “intervene in and in some way transform the text” (C. Gallagher 142). In small groups in class, students will discuss their responses as assertive readers. As a whole class, we will discuss where small groups came to consensus and where they did not, and why. Next, students will exchange their written textual transformations. Finally, students will discuss how or whether they found a resistant reading useful. As bell hooks explains, “[C]ritical interrogation is not the same as dismissal” (49).

Min-zhan Lu reveals that in her own education, “I separated the process of producing the tool from the process of using it. The tool was made by someone else and was then acquired and used by me. How the others made it before I acquired it determined and guaranteed what it produced when I used it” (144). Jay Dolmage uses the same metaphor when he invites students to be like Hephaestus and “forge their own rhetorical tools” (136). As students learn to create their own tools, or use tools like Twitter in new ways for their own rhetorical purposes, they will share their discoveries in small- and whole-class discussions and/or in weekly reflection assignments. Students will

test theories throughout the course, and share their results, always remembering that unanticipated results, and even “failures,” are still results worth sharing.

Now let us look at knowledge making. The classroom tone is set by the interaction amongst the students and teacher, but it is solely the teacher’s responsibility to establish a safe, welcoming environment for exploring and critiquing ideas. For noted scholar, educator, and social critic bell hooks, Paulo Freire’s liberatory pedagogy offers a viable and successful approach to creating an inclusive classroom. The teacher, hooks explains,

must insist that everyone’s presence is acknowledged. That insistence cannot be simply stated. It has to be demonstrated through pedagogical practices. To begin, the professor must genuinely *value* everyone’s presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources. (8)

One powerful way for students to become resources for one another, in the same way that alternative rhetorical practices become resources for student-rhetors, is through collaboration. This is a practice many of us writing teachers already regularly employ in the classroom because we know how effective it is in generating, testing, and developing ideas. Hephzibah Roskelly explains why collaboration is such a potent tool for writing, one that I feel is aligned with a course highlighting alternative rhetorics:

Collaboration, in writing and talk, insists that writers and speakers learn from—and use—the insights and experiences of partners, who bring a

variety of cultural, ethnic, and social contexts. Journal writing, dialogues, informal responses, and a host of other writing tasks can foster negotiation, challenging received ideas of all kinds, including privilege. (263)

As Roskelly indicates, group work claims the significance of students' experiences, which students can then apply in the classroom and in written assignments, as they wish. Collaboration provides rhetorical possibilities students and teachers alike may never have considered available for use.

In addition to Roskelly's examples, collaboration also occurs when students participate in class, whether through sharing writing or tentative ideas out loud, providing thoughtful feedback, or attentive listening (i.e. collaborating as cooperative audience members). I show students that their participation is valued and valuable by referring back to student comments in class, parlaying comments into new discussions, quoting students, jotting down notes, or simply thanking students for their contributions. Class discussion need not end in the physical classroom, of course. Just like in Burke's parlor, conversation continues in office hours, in comments on drafts and final papers, through e-mail, on Moodle discussion board or Google Hangouts, and elsewhere.

Student participation and collaboration begin on the first day of class, when students will address the question, "What is rhetoric?" At the end of that first class, I will distribute a list of various definitions of rhetoric. (See Appendix C.) This list, not meant to be exhaustive, is deliberately diverse. It reflects a variety of informed perspectives on rhetoric and force students to consider whether their own understanding(s) closely align with a particular theorist or theorists. For example, Krista Ratcliffe calls rhetoric "the

study of how we use language and how language uses us” (“Current” 4), and James Murphy defines it as “advice to others about future language use” (qtd. in Donawerth, “Nineteenth-Century” 17). Both plain-spoken definitions highlight language use while other definitions refer to symbol use more broadly. At least one definition references (non-human) animal symbol use (Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric”). In-class discussion will also include what making (creating, compiling, assessing) a tradition or canon entails, and what may be lost through its inclusions and exclusions. In discussing the Rhetorical Tradition, students can weigh the consequences of any canon, such as music, literature, or history.

Writing Activities and Assignments

Raúl Sánchez wisely cautions writing teachers, “If it mistakes ideological analysis for textual production, composition helps arm students with new ways of reading the world. But reading the world³⁷ is not the same as writing (in) it” (49). Although his point may seem obvious, I must remind myself that the critical reading skills students develop over a semester does not imply a parallel development in writing production. Christine Farris echoes Sánchez’ concern, explaining that “composition probably least involves rhetoric when we have students only practicing discourse that we tell them is coming some time in their academic and professional futures, rather than engaging them in language use as part of meaningful action in the present” (5). Shirley Wilson Logan argues that our courses should

³⁷ Incidentally, “reading the world” is a reference to Paulo Freire, who influences bell hooks’ teaching practice.

train ordinary people, people who will never serve in Congress or march on Washington [...] to engage in local discourse—to write letters to editors of printed publications, to television and movie producers, to their congressional representatives, to manufacturers of defective products, or to those reinforcing stereotypical beliefs, and to vocalize their concerns at PTA, community, and church meetings. (“To Get” 50)

Through alternative or conventional/traditional means, students will produce rhetorical artifacts, such as the examples Logan mentions and others that students themselves determine. However, students cannot write about everything they are learning. To bridge the gap, weekly reflections let students play with ideas that, for the time available in a one-semester course, will not be developed into longer writing projects.

Weekly reflections, submitted every Friday, will enable students to tease out ideas and concepts that interest or confuse them. In their one- to two-page reflections, students can ask questions or test ideas they may not have wanted to share in class. I treat reflections as similar to “showing the work” in a math class. This enables me to see where potential problems are and to address them, so students can receive individualized feedback. (Naturally, students’ questions also help me design future class sessions and future iterations of the course in addition to helping students plan potential writing projects.) Kathleen Ryan created a heuristic to guide her course on women’s rhetorics (“ENEX 485” 88). I will adapt these questions (credited to Ryan, of course) for students to consider when they encounter any example of rhetoric in the course. Students can also use these questions to guide their weekly reflections.

- What can we learn from reading and studying different voices from our own?

- What strategies have writers and speakers used to achieve their goals?
- What can alternative rhetorics teach us about our own writing practices?

Next, immersing themselves in a historically unprivileged rhetorical site and practice, students will keep a **journal (diary)** over the semester. The journal “offer[s] a private space for experimentation, revision, and resistance to prevailing notions of identity” (Nussbaum xxi). For example, Kimberly Harrison conducted archival research on Confederate women’s diaries composed during the American Civil War. Narrowing her focus, Harrison presents one diary as the writer’s rehearsal of *ethos*. In this way, the private diary was a practice site, a place to revise or critique public behavior (244). Digging even deeper, Harrison explains that the diary as rehearsal is an example of “self-rhetoric,” which “negates the need for an external audience” (245).

A journal writer can have many different reasons for keeping one (Cooper 97). As discussed in an earlier chapter, Elizabeth Bayley Seton’s *Leghorn Journal* served as an extended letter to her sister-in-law as well as a private space for reflection, observation, and grieving, which met Seton’s exigence in Italy. These are just two examples of the rhetorical uses of diaries/journals. For a personal example, every semester I keep a “teaching journal” to record class meetings that didn’t “work” or to document the rare behavior problem. Clearly, such a focus does not reflect the “only” reality of teaching, but one aspect of it, an incomplete picture. My experience illustrates “the power of the diarist to withhold information and thus shape [the] narrative” (Temple and Bunkers 200). Ken Autrey posits “a learned rhetoric of journal writing, a rhetoric which trades cohesiveness for density of ideas and images, which values tentativeness as highly as assertiveness, and which honors personal impulse over audience accommodation—but

not necessarily renouncing the relevance of audience altogether” (86). By keeping a journal, students become part of a tradition while potentially changing it at the same time.

This semester-long assignment will not proceed without ample scaffolding. Scholar Margo Culley argues that “textual analysis of books read in common, historical research in out-of-print or manuscript diaries,” and the students’ own journal writing “allow students to see ready connections between choices they are making as writers and those made by writers before them” (5). Students will, therefore, read a historical (published or manuscript) diary/journal of their choice. As a result of my interests, for example, I may read theologian Henri Nouwen’s *The Road to Daybreak* or teenager (Eleanor) Agnes Lee’s journal from the early 1850s. For students who may be stuck, I will provide a list of ideas, including Special Collections at Idaho State University’s Oboler Library (E. Ryan), but I will encourage students to select a journal that is meaningful to them.

Students will learn that although scholars study the diary as “a historical testimony, a literary form, or an autobiographical document” (Paperno 561) diaries can be problematic. They cannot “be treated as if they provide an unmediated access to either experience or facts” (565). Autrey suggests the many benefits of journal keeping for students. The journal can be a “creative stimulant, idea repository, experimental forum, and learning tool” and “offers an opportunity to make rhetorical history relevant” (74). It “represents [...] an opportunity to take control of their writing and to engage in independent inquiry” as well as offering a “valuable means of exploring the mix of public and private impulses found in all writing” (74-75). Finally, “[c]onfronting the history and

rhetoric of journal keeping [...] could heighten their appreciation of the political constraints and intertextual tensions underlying all genres and conventions” (88).

Keeping a daily journal (diary) is a course requirement, but the mode of the journal is up to the student. It may be shared online or kept privately, hand-written or typed, and have or not have a theme. The journal should meet students’ interests. This writing activity asks the questions, “What journal forms might students produce that are useful for them today?” and “What rhetorical choices have they made in their journals?” Near the close of the semester, students will analyze³⁸ their own artifacts—the journals—and share their experiences of journal keeping, in a written reflection and orally in class (Thomas 184).

In addition to submitting weekly reading reflections and keeping journals (diaries), students will complete three formal writing assignments. Compositionist Laura A. Field is honest and realistic when she contextualizes writing course outcomes: “Just as the right to vote or to an education was not won with one letter or one speech, neither will all the issues our students are writing about. And the point is not always the result with writing, but the practice of engaging in the process of trying to become a better reader or writer or speaker” (124). This spirit infuses the course. Students are expected to practice, not master, their attempts at becoming practicing rhetors, theorists, and writers. The three major writing assignments intend to help writing students experiment with and reflect on the expansiveness of what counts in and as rhetoric.

³⁸ Suzanne L. Bunkers offers several reflection questions writers can ask themselves about their journals (24).

The **Lecture Analysis** is a two-part assignment adapted from respected compositionist Kathleen Ryan. Students attend a (free) lecture of their choice on or off campus and analyze it through one alternative rhetorical lens (“ENEX 495” 101). In part two of the assignment, students locate an alternative rhetorical site and analyze that event through one traditional rhetorical lens. Through a written analysis and reflection, students explore what is gained and lost by employing a selected rhetorical method. The intended goals include discerning and articulating differences and similarities in rhetorical methods; applying rhetorical theory and vocabulary to current rhetorical events; and practicing rhetorical listening (reading, observation) outside of the classroom setting.

The second assignment is an **Imitation**, a traditional rhetorical form dating from at least the *progymnasmata*. As Thomas Deans explains so well, “we imitate models to practice toward fluency, to expand our rhetorical repertoire so that such moves are more spontaneously available when the context and *kairos* call for them” (422). This rhetorical performance allows students to utilize, that is imitate, an alternative rhetoric that, within the bounds of the law, is open to them. (Graffiti and rock throwing are alternative forms of rhetorical action, but not ones that I can encourage. Edward Said, a giant in literary studies, got into some trouble for throwing rocks.) For example, students could create a brochure, a visual or oral artifact, collaboration, form of protest, or even silence. One alternative rhetorical site for the American teenager Davion Only was the pulpit, where he gave an impassioned sermon asking to be adopted (Punnett and Rosenberg). Goals include practicing an alternative rhetoric in the service of a cause the student is passionate about; and evaluating the “success” of performing the alternative rhetoric through criteria that the student determines prior to executing the rhetorical event.

The final **capstone assignment** is adapted from a project developed by Jane Donawerth. Her graduate students actually recovered lost female rhetorical voices by being asked to answer one deceptively simple question: “Who was the first woman rhetorical theorist?” (*Rhetorical* ix). My undergraduate students will consider the questions, “How is X a rhetorical theorist?” and “How does X reflect rhetorical theory?” The students, of course, will supply the X quantity. As examples, Carol Mattingly has effectively analyzed the rhetoric of public monuments; Diana George and Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori, holy cards; and, as mentioned earlier, Maureen Daly Goggin, needlework samplers. Students have unlimited possibilities for examining the forms and uses of rhetoric around them. Goals include writing rhetorical theory; applying their knowledge of rhetoric to a document, text, or event of their choosing; and contributing to rhetorical and writing studies. This assignment also helps students assess their learning, as it comes full circle from early in the semester when students were asked, “What is rhetoric?”

Conclusion

This course grows out of recent and historical developments in reclamation efforts and examination of alternative rhetorics. The impetus behind the study and practice of alternative rhetorics is to claim formerly, or currently, marginalized voices so that these contributions to rhetoric-the-storehouse are not overlooked or lost. Thus, students will leave the course with a new appreciation of the power of rhetoric, having themselves developed into practicing rhetors and theorists.

Contemporary rhetor Paul Rusesabagina explains, writing from his own experience, “Words are the most effective weapons of death in man’s arsenal. But they can also be powerful tools of life. They may be the only ones” (xv). The study of

alternative rhetoric neither dismisses the rhetorical tradition, nor wedges marginalized voices into a canon. I share the optimism of Gray-Rosendale and Gruber that the rhetorical canon “is moving away from being traditional to being open and accepting of different and alternative presentations and representations of the study of rhetoric” (2-3). Perhaps idealistically, a course entitled “Alternative Rhetorics” may even have a short shelf life. That is, ten years from now, an English composition course with an explicit focus on rhetoric may not index *The Rhetorical Tradition*, but include rhetorical moves from any tradition.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Bayley Seton was a change agent, a woman of strong conviction and determination. Unbeknownst to her, she helped grow the parochial school system in the United States before it ever became a system. When challenged with raising and educating her five children as an impoverished widow, she accepted financial help from her friends the Filicchi, it is true, but she also worked various jobs in New York City to support her family. When it would have been convenient and simply easier in all respects to revoke her newfound Catholic faith, as her relatives wished, she did not. Instead, she doubled down. Within a short span of time she converted, moved herself and her children from New York to Maryland, where she founded the first order of religious sisters native to America and became a religious sister to boot. For a woman of her time Seton was highly literate, and she had a deep well of personal experience. Seton herself is a text packed with lived knowledge. A book of her advice would seem rich with insights into human character and full of poignant examples from her own difficulties, challenges, and successes.

By these measures, however, Seton's advice to her daughter Kit, published posthumously in her *Collected Works*, may be somewhat disappointing. The advice book reflects little of her story, such as her experiences in Italy, in quarantine or travelling, or back in New York after her husband's painful illness, death, and burial in Italy. In fact, her 40-odd years' experience is collapsed into one long sentence (which Seton actually does not end punctuate) of advice telling Kit to build boundaries:

I would avoid singularity in every thing [sic] but one, and that one is, *I would be kind to every body* [sic] but admit few *within* my heart, and I

would have the *pride* to do what I knew to be right as quietly and calmly
as the sun rides on the heavens and let the world go on at its pleasure.

(491)

This one line reflects the way Seton conducts her life and how she expects Kit to live hers, not the way Kit deems to be right, but what Seton *knows* to be right. There is a difference.

“Come in to My Parlor”: Rhetorical Implications of Agent and Scene

Why should anyone outside of a religious community care about Seton’s advice book? What difference does the advice book make to conduct literature, rhetoric, or writing studies? Actually, a great deal. It offers a compelling model of a rhetor in complete control and a writer who employs scene to foreclose another individual’s ability to act. Seton’s advice book serves student wordlings an example of agent controlling scene, dominating features that they might apply in their own writing.

Let us recall that Seton bolsters her *ethos* by borrowing material from numerous written sources and personages with a religious pedigree. Seton has invited them as guests into the scene of the advice book. As author-agent, she controls whom she invites in and *what she allows them to say*. In her parlor conversation, she trims and adjusts what her guests say and when they say it. Seton controls (con)text. On the one hand, this is a move that students practice all the time in academic or argumentative writing, marshalling sources and shaping the sources to fit into the logic and sentence structure of their document. However, Seton seems to go one step beyond by making the sources her own, making them over into her argument for how Kit must conduct her life, which it

must be repeated, Seton co-opts from Kit. A modern reader cannot speak to what Seton intended to do, but in culling and adapting material from outside sources, and even writing her daughters Annina and Rebecca into St. Gregory's oration so that they replace Caesarius³⁹, Seton places her advice on the same footing as her source material, herself on the same footing as her sources. This suggests Seton's confidence in her own advice. It also suggests that Seton places everyone in the text on the same footing. The model of the saints is not an unattainable goal. In fact, in the scene of the advice book Kit is in the parlor with the saints.

The advice book is also a good specimen to examine Seton's verbal mastery of Kit. Along with the other figures she works into the document, Seton has written Kit into the scene of the document. Kit cannot leave. Seton has given Kit words in the document. Kit cannot speak without her mother's writing it. Seton is controlling Kit bodily, at least on paper. That is a radical move. Seton accomplishes this through her manipulation of scene. But *how* does she do it? Kit is relocated several times in the advice book. Kit can hardly get her bearings when she is being whisked verbally from scene to scene. When Seton writes of "the calm of reason and peace" (501) found at the foot of the cross, or Heaven as "bright and serene" (509), she places Kit at one scene. Seton also puts her daughter into scenes of danger with eternal consequences, and inserts Kit into observing moments of peace and freedom. Seton lets Kit speak on occasion, and laugh. A brief comment on laughter since it is likewise only a brief reference in Seton's document: scholar Laura R. Micciche writes, extrapolating from feminist writer Helene Cixous, that

³⁹ "Then shall I behold Caesarius himself, no longer shrouded in the tomb" (Boyd 22) vs. "then Shall [sic] I behold my A[nnina] and R[ebecca] no longer shrouded in the tomb" ("Catherine" 494).

“laughter constitutes defiance, a refusal of obedience to the law of the father” (180). In the advice book Seton laughs, with Kit, yet obeys, yields to the truth that has been written: “we laugh, but it is so true—” (“Catherine” 493).

The body, too, is a scene in the text—the body dying, bound, free, choking, laughing, silent, dressed properly, dancing, walking, horseback riding, reading, crying, associating with the right kind of people, serving as an example for others. Student writers might be surprised to see the rhetorical function of the body in this document. For example, when Seton writes, “My *health, strength* and life, *only to be devoted to his SERVICE*” (507), she suggests a physical embodiment of the advice, making words become lived. Seton makes no bones about the fact that people exist and act in the sight of God. Remember, for one, her closing meditation on the blind man and the sun. Outside of the advice book, in real life, the sight of God positions people in a scene. God is observing, and we are being observed; God’s sight over us is, or should be, the reins that hold us in and make us act according to His will. As Seton writes to Kit, God’s “right over me” is “unchangeable” (507). The scenic orientation is evident as well in references to the abyss (508, 509), void (508), and sand (508, 509). When Seton writes of rock (496, 508), this is the substance on which she is building her argument, and Kit’s world as she confers it to Kit.

Paraphrasing St. Ignatius, Seton asks, “[H]ow can you think of limiting your desires to this world” (501), yet in composing an advice book and in the content of the advice she limits Kit’s ability to act. On the other hand, Seton seems to see her advice not as limiting, but freeing. Seton does not limit Kit to the home, or to being a wife or mother. Her goal for Kit is eternity.

Seton's advice books teaches student writers about genre and interpretive lenses. Just like the title of a work of art shapes how it is viewed, lenses shape how we read a document. If the document had been titled differently, "Catherine Seton's Little Red Rhetoric," or "Josephine's Mother's Sermons," we would likely have a different analysis. As stated in the analysis chapter, Seton's meditations stand out in the document as there are no transitions into them and no attempt to blend them in seamlessly with the rest of the work. A student might be taught that these are "dumped" quotations: bad. On the other hand, the meditations change the pace of the document precisely because they stand out. Readers may wonder what function the meditations serve as well as what point they make. Are they road blocks, detours, or directions that help us read the advice book? Pausing to reflect is not such a bad habit to force on one's readers. For writers, this is another strategy to have in one's toolbox, and it is a means of control. Another powerful tool that Seton employs is the power of silence. As discussed earlier, some topics are so terrible that they cannot be spoken of. Seton refuses to write such topics into being, another form of control and authority.

Directions for Future Research

My analysis of Seton's advice book only scratches the surface of the rich lode this document offers. In what follows, I suggest several directions for research in the fields of rhetoric, religious studies, and literacy. To be sure, the intersections of various fields make this document so rewarding for interdisciplinary study, analysis, theorizing, and imitation.

In opening the advice book, Seton tells Kit to remain silent. Seton might be describing the life of a religious sister, such as herself, who works uncomplainingly, with

the eyes of her soul set on Heaven. If the stakes are so high upon venturing into society that Kit must take her “first step as if it was for [her] whole life” (“Catherine” 490), she might be leery of leaving the Valley. Simply as a result of Seton’s writing it, Kit becomes part of the (often ambiguous) “we” that Seton employs⁴⁰ in the advice book. If the “we” includes the Sisters at St. Joseph, Kit could stay and wait for eternity with her mother and the other women religious. Thus, one direction for future research might be to compare the content of the advice book with the rules of Seton’s religious community or read it against the instructions Seton wrote for the Sisters. Vie Thorgren observes an “acute sensitivity to physical barriers that separate” in Seton’s instructions (246-47). Seton also helped to write sermons and instructions for her friend, the priest Gabriel Bruté. These appear “as indices of her soul” (Dirvin, *Mrs. Seton* 336). For the younger students, Seton wrote “little spiritual notes” while she “gave formal spiritual instructions” twice weekly for the older girls (327). How do the themes of her advice book measure against the themes of her advice to others?

Next, the advice book could be read against Francis de Sales’ *An Introduction to a Devout Life*, which co-editors Bechtle and Metz note Seton copies from in her advice to Kit. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile* is another text against which the advice book could be read. Recall that reading *Emile* had a powerful effect on young Elizabeth. Marilyn Thie also suggests using *Emile* as a starting point for future research, especially “exploration of Rousseau’s views as appropriate educational methods” (236). Noting Seton’s “fascination” with *Emile* (234), Thie quotes from an oft-referenced gushing letter

⁴⁰ Seton uses “we” on pages 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 502, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, and 509; “us” on pages 491, 492, 493, 496, 497, 498, 502, 503, 506, and 508; “our” on pages 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 505, 506, 507, and 508; and “ourselves” (491, 505, 508). Some words are used several times on the same page.

to a friend in which Seton writes, “Dear J.J. [Rousseau], I am yours” (qtd. in Thie 235). Thie believes that Rousseau’s “influence reappears in many of her [Seton’s] later opinions, from reading romances to rejecting time spent making fashionable clothes and attending balls” (236). The possible influence struck me as well when *Emile* was mentioned in several sources as a sort of advice book. Kenneth Burke even mentions Rousseau’s novel in the *Grammar* (152, 285, 303), suggesting that in *Emile* “nature” is an agent word rather than a scenic word (152).

Broadly, intertextuality is a potentially rich source of scholarship on the advice book. For example, we might read Seton’s advice against the writing of Fénelon and Rousseau to uncover, say, pedagogical influences. In his *Maximes*, “Fénelon presented forty-five articles or points, each of which was divided and discussed under headings of ‘true’ and ‘false’” (Davis 26). Seton herself exhibits this black and white thinking in the advice book. (See Appendix D). We have already recognized Seton’s “sampling” from other authors, including James Hervey, John Newton, and Edward Young. Surely Seton has also incorporated sources that I simply did not recognize, and that a Google search did not uncover. Fénelon, whose letters are quoted in the advice book, also wrote a treatise on the education of girls (Davis 42) that might make a useful comparison.

Another direction for research is on women’s literacy practices in the antebellum United States. Scholars Temple and Bunkers note that through keeping diaries, nineteenth-century women “could shape and control their experiences by means of mastering language” (198). In a similar way, Seton’s advice book and the practices Seton proscribed for her daughter might be studied in the context of literacy practices of women in the early 1800s.

Composition scholar Patricia Bizzell feels that “the rhetorical analysis of religious belief processes has languished.” This merits interest because “the believer learns to risk the mess of rhetoric” (“Religion” 41). Seton’s writing, as a believer, mother, teacher, and religious leader, might be an excellent place to start delving in.

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Appendix A

Catherine Seton's Notes

The following are Kit's notes contained in the manuscript notebook. Brackets indicate illegibility or a reference I did not understand.

particularly when I awake in the morning day my [may?] God give me grace to love and serve you this day

I will w/the grace of God go to confession every two weeks

I will offer the adorable sacrifice of the Mass every Wednesday for the souls in Purgatory every Thursday for my mother

[a page break symbol appears here, centered]

Active charity whenever it is in my power to please God (88)

Implicit, even cheerful, resignation to the will of God in the severest trials – –

Universal kindness to all never listening to or speaking a word against neighbors

Constantly refusing [?] curiosity and mortyfying [sic] the appetites

Doing all for God – Never saying a word in praise of self

to enjoy the pleasures of this world and those of the next

impossible (89)

Humility the Basis never by Word or insinuation to allow any virtue or good whatever to
be known – Fidelity to God in prayers & morning and evening to be said carefully and
devoutly to _____

The law of charity to be rigidly kept – forever listening or speaking a word of that may
tend to the disadvantage of my neighbor

One act at least of mortification each day

Meditation or spiritual reading every day—

Confession once a month (90)

Attaching vows purement et continua [?] cl [?] = lement [sic] a moi

3 prayers at my vows

perfect self

sacrifice

a pure heart

an upright & enlightened understanding

to serve God

in Peace

17th of April

1849

[marginalia] Jesus Christ & Him crucified – motto on ring (91)

Retreat 1849

1st after Profession

Resolution to try to make an enlightened sacrifice of my feelings in all things

—My opinion, my judgment, my too ardent desires to try to preserve recollection that I may have a more close guard over myself – in the evening choosing some part of my Saviors [sic] passion to think of going to bed in the night-time (92)

during the day until the spent Eve [sic]. My actions united to that part of his sufferings in gratitude in sorrow—

To try particularly to banish any thoughts of feeling unworthy of my vocation to remembering the 3 points of a sacrifice MARMF [?]

to beg every morning worthy communion & at the Holy Sacrifice that my oblation may be entire, strength (93)

light & sanctification for all my duties The Bell silence trying to do everything as perfect as I can only to please God – to try to overcome haste impatience – yielding to others [sic] opinions wishes every hour to review the 3 great intentions of action conformity to his will directed to his glory & purely to please Him Alone (94)

Removation [sic] of Jesus

1st January, 1852

To try my best to shake off the things of earth guarding my thoughts as much as possible from exterior things that I may have this clean heart to see my God

To study perfect obedience & self sacrifice & to make these resolutions the
subject of daily (95)

examination – to endeavor to make an act for the 5 wounds each day aiming at the Spirit
of Jesus Christ & Him Crucified!! [Crucified is underlined twice]

Retreat

Redemptor (96)

Thursday

14th January 1825

Death has snatched from you the generous Benefaction [sic] – & have not lost
Him

friendship in all that he did for your welfare.

Saturday night got

alone in the lower part

the chamber of death

the last farewell

look of my powerful

Friend and Protector

General Harper⁴¹

Elizabeth 12th June 1823

13th the funeral (123)

1825

3d April quarter before two in the morning

Mr. Carroll⁴² [sic]

Easter Sunday

shed many tears over

a kind & attentive friend (124)

31st March holy Thursday

8 oclock [sic] seated near

the dying bed – John

closed his eyes

His poor Mother

" I should raise my hand

⁴¹ Major General Robert Goodloe Harper had three daughters enrolled at St. Joseph's Academy (Barthel 163). After her mother's death, Kit lived in Baltimore with the Harper family for a time (214).

⁴² A cousin of John Carroll, Charles Carroll signed the Declaration of Independence (Barthel 122), the only Catholic to do so (Deignan).

" to God & thank him my

" son for taking you near

" him – But I am a poor

" lone woman —————

[the ditto marks are Kit's]

X

Such is life (125)

23d [sic] January – a few weak drops

25th Composers [?]

16th February – at the Plano [?] declaration

8th Decem [sic] – 1st acquaintance

Ash Wednesday 21st February

engagement

Friday first March the final

note

conversation evening before

Left Raleigh for Newben [?]

7th January –

Parting 4th March

Monday (126)

Appendix B

Assertive Reading Instructions (Gallagher 141-42)

A. Some Principles for Assertive Reading

A general maxim: Do not cooperate with every text you meet. Refuse to be simply (made over as) its ideal reader/viewer. In fact, where you have cause and/or occasion, be distinctly uncooperative or, more positively, assertive:

1. Figure out whose words and worldview are being represented in a text as it operates in a given context—and, therefore, whose words and worldviews are thereby being misrepresented, underrepresented, or simply not represented.
2. Figure out whose interests (economic, political, cultural, aesthetic) a text in a given context is serving—and then whose economic, political, cultural, and aesthetic interests it is **not** serving.
3. These words and worldviews featured in a text operating in a given context can be understood to express certain preferences, certain sets of values. Figure out what preferences those are, and then figure out what other preferences, what other values, are thereby being suppressed, oppressed, or repressed. And then determine this: do you support the preferences expressed in the text as it is, or do you prefer others?

B. Writing (toward) an Assertive Reading: Textual Intervention

1. Intervene in and in some way transform the text.

2. Consider what light these changes throw on the structures, meanings, values, and functions of the base text.
3. Try to arrive at a final act of explicit preference, however provisional.
4. Be ready to read more—and or more widely—and thereafter to alter the provisional preference expressed in B3.

Appendix C

Hand List: What is rhetoric?

Maureen Daly Goggin's "Selected Definitions of Rhetoric"

[<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG530rhetdef.html> accessed 7/18/15]

CLASSICAL RHETORIC (c. 5TH CENTURY BCE TO 5TH CENTURY CE)

Gorgias: "For that which is communicated is speech, but speech is not that which is perceived by the senses and actually exists; therefore the things that actually exist, which are observed, are not communicated but [only] speech" (Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 7. 84-86).

Isocrates: "...oratory is good only if it has the qualities of fitness for the occasion, propriety of style and originality of treatment" (48).

Plato: "Socrates: Is not rhetoric in its entire nature an art which leads the soul by means of words, not only in law courts and the various other public assemblages but in private companies as well? And is it not the same when concerned with small things as with great, and, properly speaking, no more to be esteemed in important than in trifling matters?" (132).

Aristotle: "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing [discovering] in any given case the available [appropriate] means of persuasion" (160).

Cicero: "...the subjects of other arts are derived as a rule from hidden and remote sources, while the whole art of oratory lies open to the view and is concerned in some measure with the common practice, custom, and speech of mankind, so that, whereas in all other

arts that is most excellent which is farthest removed from the understanding and mental capacity of the untrained, in oratory the very cardinal sin is to depart from the language of everyday life, and the usage approved by the sense of the community....But the truth is that this oratory is a greater thing, and has its sources in more arts and branches of study, than people suppose” (201, 202).

Quintilian: “[O]ratory is the power of judging and discoursing on civil matters that are put before it with certain persuasiveness, action of the body, and delivery”; it is “the art of speaking well” and the true orator is “the good man speaking well.”

MEDIEVAL RHETORIC (c. 5TH CENTURY TO 14TH CENTURY)

Augustine: “There are two things upon which every treatment of the Scriptures depends: the means of discovering what the thought may be, and the means of expressing what the thought is” (386).

Boethius: “By genius, rhetoric is a faculty; by species, it can be one of three: judicial, demonstrative, deliberative....These species of rhetoric depend upon the circumstances in which they are used” (425).

Anonymous, *The Principals of Letter Writing*: “A written composition is setting-forth of some matter in writing, proceeding in a suitable order. Or, a written composition is a suitable and fitting treatment of some matter, adapted to the matter itself. Or, a written composition is a suitable and fitting written statement about something, either memorized or declared by speech or in writing” (431).

Basevorn: “[T]he form of preaching...is the system and method of preaching on every subject, as logic is the system of syllogizing in every field of knowledge” (442).

RENAISSANCE RHETORIC (c. 15TH CENTURY TO 17TH CENTURY)

Erasmus: “Elegance depends partly on the use of words established in suitable authors, partly on their right application, partly on their right combination in phrases....style is to thought as clothes are to the body. Just as dress and outward appearance can enhance or disfigure the beauty and dignity of the body, so words can enhance or disfigure thought” (507,508).

Ramus: Ramus agrees with Quintilian that “rhetoric is the art of speaking well, not about this or that, but about all subjects” (573) but disagrees with him in arguing that “invention, arrangement, and memory belong to dialectic, and only style and delivery to rhetoric” (570).

Wilson: “Rhetorique is an art to set furthe by utteraunce of wordes, matter at large, or (as Cicero doeth saie) it is a learned, or rather an artificiall declaracion of the mynde, in the handelyng of any cause, called in contencion, that maie through reason largely be discussed” (589).

Bacon: “The duty and office of Rhetoric is to apply Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will” (629).

ENLIGHTENMENT RHETORIC (c. 17TH CENTURY TO 18TH CENTURY)

Locke: “The ends of language in our discourse with others being chiefly these three: First, to make known one man’s thoughts or ideas to another. Secondly, to do it with as much ease and quickness as possible; and, Thirdly, thereby to convey the knowledge of things: language is either abused or deficient, when it fails of any of these three....But yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides

order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats; and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided, and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them” (707-08, 710).

Vico: “What is eloquence, in effect, but wisdom, ornately and copiously delivered in words appropriate to the common opinion of mankind?” (726).

Campbell: “The word eloquence in its greatest latitude denotes, ‘That art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end’” (749). In his Preface, Campbell describes his goal: “to ascertain with greater precision, the radical principles of that art, whose object it is, by the use of language, to operate on the soul of the hearer, in the way of informing, convincing, pleasing, moving, or persuading” (xlii).

Blair: “For the best definition which, I think, can be given of eloquence, is the art of speaking in such a manner as to attain the end for which we speak....But, as the most important subject of discourse is action, or conduct, the power of eloquence chiefly appears when it is employed to influence conduct, and persuade to action. As it is principally with reference to this end, that it becomes the object of art, eloquence may, under this view, be defined, the Art of Persuasion” (818).

Whately: “in the present day...the province of Rhetoric, in its widest application that would be reckoned admissible, comprehends all ‘Composition in Prose’; in the narrowest

sense, it would be limited to 'Persuasive Speaking.' I propose in the present work to adopt a middle course between these two extreme points; and to treat of 'Argumentative Composition,' generally, and exclusively; considering Rhetoric (in conformity with the very just and philosophical view of Aristotle) as an offshoot from Logic" (832).

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY RHETORIC (19TH TO 20TH CENTURY)

Day: "Rhetoric has been correctly defined to be the Art of Discourse. This definition presents Rhetoric as an art, in distinction from a science....An art directly and immediately concerns itself with the faculty of discoursing as its proper subject....A science, on the other hand, regards rather the product of this faculty; and, keeping its view directly upon that, proceeds to unfold its nature and proper characteristics....the method of Art is synthetic, constructive; while that of Science is analytic and critical" (864).

Bain: "Rhetoric discusses the means whereby language spoken or written, may be rendered effective" (875).

Hill, D.: "As an art, Rhetoric communicates ideas according to these laws; as a science, it discovers and establishes these laws. Rhetoric is, therefore, the science of the laws of effective discourse" (880).

Hill, A. S.: "Rhetoric may be defined as the art of efficient communication by language....It is the art to the principles of which, consciously or unconsciously a good writer or speaker must conform. It is an art, not a science" (881).

Getty: “the art of Speaking in such a manner as to obtain the end for which we speak”
(Elements of Rhetoric, qtd. in Kitzhaber, Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900, 57-58).

Genung: “the art of adapting discourse, in harmony with its subject and occasion, to the requirements of a reader or hearer” (The Practical Elements of Rhetoric, 1).

Carpenter: “the art of telling some one else in words exactly what you mean to say”
(Exercises in Rhetoric and English Composition, 1).

Richards: Richards calls for “a persistent, systematic, detailed inquiry into how words work that will take the place of the discredited subject which goes by the name Rhetoric.... The result is that a revived Rhetoric, or study of verbal understanding and misunderstanding, must itself undertake its own inquiry into the modes of meaning—not only, as with the old Rhetoric, on a macroscopic scale, discussing the effects of different disposals of large parts of a discourse—but also on a microscopic scale by using theorems about the structure of the fundamental conjectural units of meaning and the conditions through which they, and their interconnections arise” (975). In short, for Richards rhetoric should be “a study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (The Philosophy of Rhetoric, 3).

Burke: Burke calls for “a ‘dramatistic’ approach to the nature of language,...[one] stressing language as an aspect of ‘action,’ that is, as ‘symbolic action’”
(1034). Elsewhere Burke defines rhetoric as a “symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (A Rhetoric of Motives, 43).

Weaver: “Rhetoric seen in the whole conspectus of its function is an art of emphasis embodying an order of desire. Rhetoric is advisory; it has the office of advising men with reference to an independent order of goods and with reference to their particular situation as it relates to these” (1048).

Perelman: “All language is the language of a community, be this a community bound by biological ties or by the practice of a common discipline or technique. The terms used, their meaning, their definition, can only be understood in the context of the habits, ways of thought, methods, external circumstances, and traditions known to the users of those terms” (1071).

Toulmin: “If the purpose of an argument is to establish conclusions about which we are not entirely confident by relating them back to other information about which we have greater assurance, it begins to be a little doubtful whether any genuine, practical argument could ever be properly analytic [i.e., formal logic]” (1122).

Bitzer: “a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action” (“The Rhetorical Situation,” 4).

Corbett: “the art of the discipline that deals with the use of discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or motivate an audience” (Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, 3).

Young, Becker, Pike: “is concerned primarily with a creative process that includes all of the choices a writer makes from his earliest tentative explorations of a problem . . . through choices in arrangement and strategy for a particular audience, to the final editing

of a final draft” (xii) “We have sought to develop a rhetoric that implies we are all citizens of an extraordinarily diverse and disturbed world, that the ‘truths’ we live by are tentative and subject to change; that we must be discoverers of new truths as well as preservers and transmitters of the old, and that enlightened cooperation is the preeminent ethical goal of communication” (Rhetoric: Discovery and Change 9).

Foucault: “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off the powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality....discourse is the power which is to be seized” (1155).

Bakhtin: “The actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psychophysiological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances” (939).

Derrida: “There is nothing outside of the text” (Of Grammatology, 158).

**Note: Unless otherwise indicated, quotations and page numbers are from: Bizzell, Patricia and Bruce Herzberg (Eds.). *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Boston: Bedford, 1990.

My additions to Goggin’s list:

Kennedy: “Rhetoric in the most general sense may perhaps be identified with the energy inherent in communication: the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message” (2). [1992]

Mailloux: “Rhetoric is often about ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys.’ Even more basically, it concerns who’s in and who’s out, what’s included and what’s excluded, who’s placed inside and who outside a cultural community, a political movement, a professional organization” (53). [2006]

Appendix D

Seton: Selected Vocabulary

Seton frequently employs vocabulary that suggests all or nothing thinking. I have compiled salient examples of such vocabulary below. I have attempted a tally, listing such vocabulary in alphabetical order and providing page numbers for reference.

Brackets indicate the number of times a word is repeated on the same page. I have not replicated italics or capitalization. Terms are in bold for ease of reading.

all (489 [2], 490, 493, 494, 496 [2], 498, 502 [2], 504 [3], 505 [3], 506, 507, 508, 509 [2]); **any** (489, 491, 493, 498); **each** (504); **every** (491, 498, 505, 506 [3], 508 [2]); **never** (489, 490 [2], 491, 492 [2], 493 [2], 500, 501, 505, 508, 509); **none** (490, 495); **nothing** (489, 494, 502, 505); **only** (491, 498, 507, 508, 509 [2]); **true** (493, 501 [2], 508, 509); **truth** (489, 492, 500, 506, 509 [3]) **synonyms:** **sure** (489), **right** (491), **certainly** (498, 507), **certain** (505); **virtue** (490, 499 [4], 500 [4], 501); **virtuous** (489, 490, 494); **whatever** (489); **whenever** (489 [2])

Appendix E

In a few instances I read Seton's penmanship in the original advice book differently from the published transcription in the *Collected Works*. I list them here for reference. The published transcription reads "visiting with purer eyes" ("Catherine" 494), which I read as "viewing with purer eyes" in the manuscript ("Josephine's" 28). I read "if flying" ("Catherine" 495) as "is flying" ("Josephine's" 28), and "Moments Silke" ("Catherine" 504) as "Moments seize" ("Josephine's" 86). The line corresponds with Edward Young's language in *Night Thoughts*: "Moments seize; / Heaven's on their wing" (24). Finally, I read "roll no more" ("Catherine" 508), as "toll no more" ("Josephine's" 112).