Perspectivism and Form in Drama: A Burkean Analysis of *Julius Caesar*

Gary M. Weier

This paper is a critical application of Kenneth Burke's notions of form and perspectivism. It argues for the potential of a complementary relationship between form and perspectivism in the appeal of rhetorical artifacts. Specifically, the essay claims that form is perspectival; it limits the possibilities for appropriate interpretations within a text. Perspectivism is formal; it cultivates a logic of anticipatory reasoning. This theoretical perspective is applied to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in the effort to illumine the rhetorical appeal of that work.

**KEY CONCEPTS:** Burkean criticism, poetics, psychology of form, perspectivism, Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, dramatistic argument

**GARY M. WEIER** (Ph.D. Candidate, Purdue University) is an Assistant Professor in the Speech Communication Department, Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC 29614. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 1994 Speech Communication Association convention, New Orleans, LA.

But men [women] may construe things after their fashion
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

I tell you that which you yourselves do know.  

*(Julius Caesar* I.iii.34-35)

*(Julius Caesar* II.ii.224)

Kenneth Burke's appreciation for the rhetorical appeal of literature permeates his writings. *Counter-Statement*, one of his earliest and most significant works, discredits (with some reluctance) the "Art for Art's Sake" argument and develops in its place an alternative rationale for the value of art. In that work, Burke maintains that the defining characteristic of art is not self-expression but the communicative relationship that an author cultivates with an audience. Reinforcing this point in a later essay, he reasons that "when an art object engages our attention, by the sheer nature of the case we are involved in at least as much of the communicative relationship as prevails between a pitchman and a prospective customer." Based upon this author-audience relationship, Burke sees little utility in drawing sharp distinctions between rhetoric and poetics. He argues that the traditional emphasis on the differences between the two is counter-productive to understanding a text's process of appeal:

I am much more interested in bringing the full resources of Poetics and *Rhetorica docens* to bear upon the study of a text than in trying to draw a strict line of demarcation between rhetoric and poetics, particularly in view of the fact that the full history of the subject has necessarily kept such a distinction forever on the move.
In two essays that analyze Shakespearean plays, Burke illustrates the advantages of his functional approach. His insights into these texts vividly demonstrate that one can appreciate the literary artifact "from the standpoint of a rhetorician, who is concerned with a work's process of appeal."

With this fundamental understanding in mind, this essay explores how Burke's contributions to rhetorical theory can illumine a text's process of appeal. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine how Burke's notions of form and perspectivism work together in a text to elevate its auditors from mere spectators to participants in a communicative encounter. Toward this end, the essay (1) discusses briefly the potential for a complementary relationship between form and pentadic ratios in a text; (2) demonstrates how perspectivism can serve as a type of formal appeal by analyzing Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*; and (3) considers the implications that this examination has on our understanding of the strategic features of rhetorical artifacts. The central argument I advance is that the main characters' roles or competing perspectives in *Julius Caesar* work together to create and fulfill desires for its audiences. These patterns of competing perspectives, in other words, invite the text's auditors to appropriate particular understandings of the action in the drama and thus help to elucidate the work's potential process of appeal.

**Form and Perspectivism**

Although it is reasonable to assume that individuals respond to texts in unique ways, it is unrealistic to conclude that authors make little or no effort to structure or limit a range of meanings for their potential audiences. Meaning may be negotiated among symbol users, but as Burke reminds us, "a dramatist is a professional gambler [who] prefers playing with loaded dice." His theory of form provides one means of uncovering the strategies by which rhetors attempt to manipulate the resources of symbols in order to "reduce the recalcitrant reader to acquiescence." Form in literature," writes Burke, "is an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence." As Burke illustrates with his analysis of the ghost scene from *Hamlet*, the appeal of form subordinates the intrinsic interest of plot details to an extrinsic function. The ultimate aim of formal appeals is to "awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in [auditors]." Form in this sense is neither stylistic ornamentation nor embellishment but a strategy that seeks to trigger self-persuasion. Through the appeal of form a rhetor entices auditors to surrender to a text's structuring of reality. Moreover, sophisticated formal devices convince audiences that they are reaching certain conclusions on their own. These devices induce auditors to "fill in the gaps" between the beginnings of an expectation or desire and its subsequent fulfillment.

One particular Burkan concept that has received little attention for its potential as a formal device is perspectivism. "Implicit in the idea of an act," Burke claims, "there is the idea of an agent; and for the agent to act there must be a scene." The relationships among these and the other pentadic terms for situation (agency and purpose) within a text provide frames of reference or a discursive circumference; they encourage readers to anticipate potential future actions as well as enable an author to shape the interpretations and meanings of such future actions. David Birdsell argues that a text's ability to focus on a featured term "can be viewed as a reductive tactic . . . designed to obscure the various resources of persuasion and meaning." By discouraging some potential interpretations and encouraging others, a discursive system that features certain terminological ratios fosters an "attitude of collaborative expectancy." The terminology functions "as a kind of photographic 'screen' which will 'let through' some perceptions and 'filter out' others." In sum, the framework for this study maintains that Burke's conceptions of form and perspectivism, though by no means identical, are interrelated. Form is perspectival; it limits the possibilities for appropriate interpretations. Perspectivism is formal; it fosters an anticipation of what fits within a terminological context.
Before considering *Julius Caesar* as an exemplary model of this type of appeal, it is important to review a few Burkean assumptions regarding the analysis of drama. First, Burke admonishes the critic to view characters not as isolated individuals who pursue their own goals throughout the drama but as individuals whose roles contribute to the overall action of the drama. Burke sees the acts of individual characters as contributions to the unraveling of a play's direction; their "acts must mesh with one another, in a dialectic of cooperative competition." Viewed in this way, no character is an individual by him- or herself. It takes cooperative competition among the characters to make the play. As Burke explains: "A character cannot 'be himself [herself] unless many others among the dramatis personae contribute to this end, so that the very essence of a character's nature is in a large measure defined, or determined, by the characters who variously assist or oppose him [her]." Thus, a strategy for cultivating a process of appeal involves developing characters as "role-players" or "character-recipes" who represent competing perspectives that shape the direction of the entire play. Second, Burke encourages the critic to "trace the development of the plot, stressing the ways in which the playwright builds up 'potentials.'" The goal of this critical endeavor is to analyze how the playwright manipulates formal devices in order to entice his or her auditors to surrender to the drama's ordering of reality. The examination undertaken in this essay centers on the work's potential for cultivating a logic of anticipatory reasoning.

The following analysis of *Julius Caesar* takes these recommendations literally. Practically speaking, then, this critical approach makes certain methodological commitments up front. The primary commitment is a search for the root term that grounds the key ratios (or perspectives) of the drama. In other words, the analysis assumes that one pentadic term dominates the others as the foundation for the dramatistic ratios of the text. Second, this critical method seeks to understand the particular perspective or role that each major character enacts through the lens of a pentadic ratio. Therefore, the following analysis defines the play's root term and then demonstrates how the various characters build from that term in a way that brings about collaboration between audience and author in the making of the drama.

**Perspectivism as Form in *Julius Caesar***

From beginning to end, *Julius Caesar* is a play about the destructive powers of unchecked ambition. It graphically depicts how the actions of one individual can influence the lives of many others. Michael Mooney argues that *Julius Caesar* "dramatizes the way individuals may be moved by others, 'fashioned' to conform to another's will.... [It] leads wise audience members to consider not only the power individuals have to 'move' public and private audiences but also the degree to which men [women] may also deceive themselves." Indeed, the play clearly demonstrates that no one is immune to the persuasive influence of his or her fellow symbol users. The central act in this drama of ambition is the murder of its title character, Julius Caesar. The arrows of the play point to this act for one simple reason: textual elements effectively present Caesar as the personification of unchecked ambition. As the synecdochic representation of the play's focus, Caesar permeates all parts of the drama. He serves as the background or scene for what transpires throughout the play. In Burkean terms, Caesar's role provides the play's circumference or frame of reference. Each main character, no matter in which direction his actions lead the play, departs from this root term of scene.

**Caesar's Role: Root Term of Scene**

Shakespeare primarily uses two means to depict Caesar as scene: dramatic devices and the words of other characters. The play opens with a scene that strategically introduces the part Caesar will enact throughout the drama. Though Caesar is not actually on stage during the scene, evidences of his presence permeate the stage. The ordinary Roman citizens fill the streets as they "make holiday to see Caesar, and to rejoice in his triumph" (I.i.30-31). Marullus, one of the potential conspirators, rebukes these commoners for celebrating the conquests of a tyrant like Caesar. He
reminds them of their short-sightedness—how they had at one time idolized Pompey whom Caesar himself has recently overthrown in a civil war. The citizens leave following this reprimand, and Marullus orders that no signs of Caesar's conquests should grace the streets: "[L]et no images / Be hung with Caesar's trophies" (I.1.68-69). With these few lines, Shakespeare not only establishes Caesar's role as backdrop for the play, but also he begins to cultivate an implicit desire for the removal of that backdrop. Essentially, the text functions to manipulate audience expectations by establishing the presence of its title character in a way that taints Caesar's image before he sets foot on stage.

Cassius continues this depiction of Caesar as scene when he solicits Brutus's service in the conspiracy against Caesar. To Cassius, Caesar and Rome are synonymous terms:

When went there by an age since the great flood  
But it was fam'd with more than with one man?  
When could they say, till now, that talk'd of Rome,  
That her wide walks encompass'd but one man?  
Now is it Rome indeed and room enough,  
When there is in it but one only man. (I.i.152-157)

Cassius thus gives to Caesar a dimension that is larger than life while he simultaneously reduces the scope of the Roman empire. In fact, the dimension attributed to Caesar is so immensely foreboding that it infringes on the liberties of other Roman citizens. Cassius's words, in turn, move Brutus—as Brutus himself admits—to characterize Caesar in much the same way: "Brutus had rather be a villager / Than to repute himself a son of Rome / Under these hard conditions as this time / Is like to lay upon us" (I.i.172-75). From Brutus's response one might think Cassius had been describing some type of inanimate yet pervasive oppression, such as a plague. However, since Cassius had only been talking of Caesar, the terminological pattern encourages the audience to translate the scenic terms of "these hard conditions" and "this time" into "Caesar." Consistent with the play's opening scene, this discursive strategy induces auditors to anticipate the removal of Caesar as the backdrop of the drama.

In the third scene of Act I, the text combines a dramatic device with the words of Cassius and Casca to depict Caesar in scenic terms. In the last line of the preceding scene, Cassius prophesies that the conspirators "will shake him [Caesar], or worse days endure" (I.i.322). It is no small coincidence that the first line of the next scene mentions Caesar by name and that the entire scene—as a violent storm—is a graphic picture of "worse days enduring." This orchestration of symbolic resources can be seen as an attempt to persuade auditors to accept the notion that as long as Caesar maintains his current status in the drama, conditions will only worsen. Casca begins equating the destructive force of the storm with the character of Caesar by naming the "world" as a possible cause for the torrents: "Either there is a civil strife in heaven, / Or else the world, too saucy with the gods, / Incenses them to send destruction" (I.iii.11-13). Here the "world" personifies everything that Caesar has embodied thus far in the play; consequently, the two terms are nearly synonymous. Cassius is much less subtle than Casca with his comparisons between the storm and Caesar:

Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol—  
A man no mightier than thyself, or me,  
In personal action, yet prodigious grown,  
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are. (I.iii.72-78)
Cassius, the shrewd rhetorician, does not name that person; he lets Casca do so, and then wryly responds, "let it be who it is" (I.iii.80). This masterful scene moves beyond simply reinforcing the idea of Caesar as backdrop for the play, as its ordering of reality heightens the audience's desire for the scene to change. Many of the lines in this scene refer to the horrifying nature of the storm. Consequently, the arrows that point toward the removal of Caesar from the play do not change direction; they intensify the desire for fulfillment of a promise. Indeed, this strategic depiction serves to transform a mere expectation into a foremost desire. Auditors who surrender to this pattern no doubt receive great satisfaction when Brutus declares near the beginning of the next scene: "It must be by his [Caesar's] death" (II.i.10). This statement confirms for auditors who have adopted the text's logic that their inferences are accurate. The declaration, in this sense, is as much the audience's as it is the author's.

Following the death of Caesar the text supplies even more evidence to support the claim that his character serves as background or scene for the entire play. Antony, for instance, makes full use of Caesar's body in his well-known funeral oration. But even before this sensational public spectacle unfolds, Antony speaks of Caesar in scenic terms. In his powerful soliloquy over Caesar's corpse, Antony addresses the remains as a "bleeding piece of earth" (III.i.254). He then compares the body to the destruction that comes upon a fallen city or civilization: "Thou art the ruins of the noblest man / That ever lived in the tide of times" (III.i.256-57). Finally, he prophesies that "Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge" (III.i.270) will figure as a key factor in the outcome of the play. Thus, in Antony's words, it is Caesar as an unbound spirit that will influence the play's end rather than Caesar as a confined human agent.

Brutus, like Antony, reinforces Caesar's presence in the play even following his death. At the camp near Sardis, Brutus sees the ghost of Caesar who warns of a future and decisive confrontation between the two at Philippi. Three scenes later when he is brought to the bodies of Cassius and his servant, Brutus acknowledges Caesar's hand in these two suicides: "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet! / Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords / In our own proper entrails" (V.iii.94-96). It is important to note that these lines do not point as much to Caesar's actions as they do to his presence. Without his presence or his "spirit [that] walks abroad" these consequences would not follow. The consistency of this device reinforces the formal pattern that the text has cultivated throughout the play: Shakespeare attributes death and destruction, two consequences of ambition, to the presence of his title character. It is not until Brutus's death that the playwright removes this presence and the ensuing consequences. Immediately preceding his act of suicide, Brutus proclaims, "Caesar, now be still" (V.v.50). These dying words function to reassure the text's auditors that the menacing element of the play is gone. No longer does the ambition of Caesar serve as the interpretive context for understanding what will transpire in the closing lines of the play.

To this point in the analysis we have seen Caesar's role in the drama as the context or backdrop for all the play's action. His character serves as the circumference within which nearly all of the play's activity is interpreted. It is now fitting to examine how the other three major characters (Cassius, Brutus, and Marc Antony) highlight different facets of this context or circumference. Like Caesar, each character enacts a particular role in the drama. The difference, however, is that each of these characters emphasizes a unique aspect of the scene and consequently condenses meaning in particular ways. In this analysis, then, the individual character's role is best defined by determining which pentadic term the character features in relationship to the drama's root term of scene. Again, the focus of this analysis is not as much on how these perspectives differ from one another as it is on how these unique perspectives work together to "reduce the recalcitrant reader to acquiescence."
Cassius's Role: Agent-Scene Ratio

As noted earlier, Cassius contributes significantly to the initial establishment of Caesar as the scene of the drama. What was not emphasized in that discussion is how this portrayal dehumanizes Caesar and elevates the role of agent. Consequently, the agent-scene ratio best explains Cassius's part in the play. Though Cassius attributes to Caesar characteristics that are larger than life, he does so in a way that mocks Caesar. He exploits Brutus's interpretation of the off stage crowd noise as "new honors that are heap'd on Caesar" (I.ii.134) by replying:

Why, man, he [Caesar] doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves. (I.ii.135-38)

In this depiction as well as in the ones discussed earlier, Cassius ascribes to Caesar monumental "qualities," but these "qualities" do not befit human agents. He speaks of Caesar in static terms. To Cassius, Caesar is better known for what he is rather than what he does. Even in the comparison of Caesar with the storm (a dynamic event), Cassius focuses on essence or being rather than on actions: "A man no mightier than thyself, or me, / In personal action, yet prodigious grown, / And fearful, as these strange eruptions are" (I.iii.76-78). Caesar's actions, in other words, do not define him; rather, his relatively unchanged, unnatural character (prodigious and fearful) defines him. His actions are no better than the common or ordinary person's. In fact, any actions that Cassius attributes to Caesar do not fit one with the elevated stature assigned to Caesar. He recounts to Brutus the time that he had to rescue Caesar "from the waves of Tiber" (I.ii.114) because he could not perform the very task in which he had dared Cassius to participate. He then presents an extremely incongruent picture of this "god":

He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake--'tis true, this god did shake. . . .
I did Hear him groan;
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, "Give me some drink, Titinius,"
As a sick girl. (I.ii.119-28)

Clearly, in Cassius's view Caesar's actions are anything but the conquests and heroic deeds that fit a god of such noble stature. The logic cultivated by this discursive pattern suggests to the audience that this man of unnatural qualities can be conquered.

Cassius's role in the play, therefore, serves not merely to "reduce" the stature of Caesar--presenting an incongruent portrait of Caesar defines only half his role. If the character of Cassius were to perform this task alone, he would be indistinguishable from so many other aspects of the play. Therefore, in addition to participating in this important function, Cassius's role develops a unique perspective of Caesar that invites a particular response to the title character. Cassius builds from "Caesar-as-scene" and steers audience expectations toward a remedy for correcting the situation. With each reduction of Caesar to a menacing scenic entity, Cassius cultivates a desire for an agent to step forward and change the scene. Herein lies Cassius's complete character-recipe as the agent-scene ratio.

By portraying Caesar as a menace large enough to necessitate his removal yet small enough to elicit mockery, Cassius's character develops anticipation for an agent as noble and honest as

Perspectivism and Form
Brutus to join with the conspirators. He does so in part by demonstrating that much of Caesar's stature stems from the absence of other "noble" agents willing to challenge him. After describing Caesar as a "Colossus" and those who walk under him as "petty men," Cassius places the blame for Caesar's prominence squarely on the shoulders of "petty people" rather than on fate or Caesar himself: "Men [women] at some time are masters of their fates; / The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings" (I.ii.139-41). This linguistic pattern shapes anticipation for someone to confront the unnatural beast of Caesar. Interestingly, in the storm scene Cassius demonstrates that brave agents can withstand forms of oppression that are worse than Caesar. Cassius, for instance, does not respond to the violent storm as do other "petty people." He brags to Casca of his courageous behavior:

For my part, I have walk'd about the streets,
Submitting me unto the perilous night;
And thus embraced, Casca, as you see,
Have bar'd my bosom to the thunder-stone;
And when the cross blue lightening seem'd to open
The breast of heaven, I did present myself
Even in the aim and very flash of it. (I.iii.46-52)

To Cassius, the way to deal with an unnatural element such as the storm or Caesar is not to cower or to hide, but to rise up in defiance to it.

Later in that very scene, when Casca speaks of the Roman senators' intention to crown Caesar as king, Cassius unveils a plan for managing the situation in a speech that is filled with irony:

I know where I will wear this dagger then;
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius....
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.
If I know this, know all the world besides,
That part of tyranny that I do bear
I can shake off at pleasure. (I.iii.89-99)

Though Cassius most likely refers to the removal of Caesar in this speech, he couches it in terms of his own suicide. The speech functions as reinforcement of the formal argument that a noble agent can challenge any oppression, even that of life itself. The agent always has power to control the outcome of the situation. The quality of the agent makes all the difference in changing the scene, according to Cassius's discourse. His words, much to the pleasure of acquiesced auditors, lead Casca and Cinna to request the aid of "noble Brutus" (I.iii.141) in their endeavor. As a result, Cassius's role is best seen not only in his diminishing of the character of Caesar, but also in his preparing the way for Brutus to join with the conspirators.

**Brutus's Role: Purpose-Scene Ratio**

The potential for Brutus to join the conspirators becomes an actualization in the first scene of Act II. He confirms his place among them by proclaiming: "It must be by his death" (II.i.10). It is important to emphasize that Brutus is the first character to state overtly that Caesar must die. Based upon the previous discussions, however, it should be apparent that Brutus could not make this statement on his own; nevertheless, he is the character most fitting (in terms of inducing audience acquiescence) to make this declaration. The cooperative roles of Caesar, Cassius, and Brutus lead to this outcome. The noble Brutus is troubled by the character of Caesar from the beginning of the
play; the strategic portrayal of Caesar's behaviors authenticates these suspicions; and the character of Cassius calls for a noble agent to confront Caesar's ambition. Hence, many arrows of the play point toward Brutus's making the definitive statement regarding the conspirators' plans to remove the menacing scene personified by the character of Caesar.

Brutus, like Cassius, treats Caesar in terms of scene, but he presents a different perspective that condenses meaning in a particular way. Brutus emphasizes the purpose for changing or removing the scene; therefore, the purpose-scene ratio best accounts for Brutus's role in the play. In his opening soliloquy of Act II, Brutus reasons that Caesar should die not for what he has done but for what he might become if he were to be crowned. To Brutus, the central question is how that act "might change his [Caesar's] nature" (II.i.13). He suggests that, as a serpent's egg, Caesar would "grow mischievous"; therefore, it would be best to "kill him in the shell" (II.i.33-34). Purpose thus is central to the character of Brutus for preventing Caesar's nature from becoming even more destructive. Brutus claims that the conspirators' purpose is so noble that swearing an oath would taint their mission. Furthermore, he warns that murdering Antony as well as Caesar would only remove focus from their purpose. With these discursive practices, Brutus crystallizes his place in the drama as the agent who can eradicate an unwelcome scene in heroic fashion by featuring purity of purpose:

Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
O that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
Caesar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds;
And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,
Stir up their servants to an act of rage,
And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make
Our purpose necessary, and not envious;
Which so appearing to the common eyes
We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers. (II.i.166-80)

Brutus emphasizes that the conspirators' quarrel is with the character of Caesar and not with any of his actions. He would rather destroy Caesar's character than butcher his body. As the speech concludes, Brutus discloses that this preference stems from his desire to keep the purpose pure. Through the character of Brutus, then, the text transforms a shrewdly plotted assassination into a necessary and appealing act.27

Brutus's emphasis on purpose is not unique to this scene in the drama. An initial response to Cassius's wooings at the beginning of the play introduces Brutus as a noble individual consumed with purity of motives:

What is it that you would impart to me?
If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honor in one eye and death i' th' other,
And I will look on both indifferently;
For let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honor more than I fear death. (I.ii.84-89)
In this sense, Brutus's preoccupation with the intent of the murder should come as little surprise to the audience, for he revealed this potential at the beginning of the play. Likewise, his defense of the act before the Roman mob with its focus on purpose—"Not that I lov'd Caesar less, but that I lov'd Rome more" (III.i.21-22)—should startle no one. Finally, Antony reminds the audience of this quality in his eulogy of Brutus: "This was the noblest Roman of them all: All the conspirators, save only he, Did that they did in envy of great Caesar; He, only in a general honest thought And common good to all, made one of them" (V.v.68-72). Indeed, through the perspective enacted by the discursive patterns associated with Brutus's role, a vicious act acquires the potential to be understood as a tragically heroic deed.

Marc Antony's Role: Act-Scene Ratio

Before the assassination of Caesar becomes solidified as an heroic act, however, the drama changes direction through the character of Marc Antony. The playwright prepares the audience for this change through the unfolding of the murder scene itself. Though the text carefully prepares the audience for this actualization, it does not prepare them for the way in which the murder unravels. Caesar's final words, "Et tu, Brute?" (III.i.77), allow the audience to identify with him as a person for the first time in the entire play. These are not the final words of an ambitious dictator. Instead, this simple question invites the auditors to see Caesar in a new light by suggesting that Caesar is a person being betrayed by a friend. Furthermore, the conspirators' act of bathing in the blood of Caesar following the murder manipulates the audience's understanding of what was at one time to be regarded as a noble act. The murder becomes a blood bath rather than a purging. This change in the direction of the play prepares the audience for Antony's forceful funeral oration, for without these unanticipated qualities in the murder scene, the play would reach its logical end with the death of Caesar. There would be no reason for the play to continue because the audience would have received precisely what it had been led to anticipate. However, because the murder does not go as promised, the play must continue, and Shakespeare turns audience expectations in a new direction through the character of Antony. In spite of what Brutus would have the audience believe, "ambition's debt is [not] paid" (III.i.83). With these new twists as well as Antony's role in the drama, the text begins to develop the potential for the destruction of the conspirators.

As discussed previously, Antony, like Cassius and Brutus, treats Caesar in terms of scene. However, he focuses on a unique perspective. His character condenses meaning by drawing attention to the quality of the act in light of the scene; therefore, the act-scene ratio best describes the role of Antony in the play. In his funeral oration in particular, Antony argues that the conspirators' act does not match the scene. Though Antony invites the mob to recall the life of Caesar through his eyes, he realizes that his primary weapon for winning them to his side is the body of Caesar itself. After witnessing the emotional reaction of Octavius's servant to the body of Caesar, Antony discloses the new perspective that he will add to the play. With Caesar's corpse for support, Antony proclaims that he will "try / In my oration, how the people take / The cruel issue of these bloody men" (III.i.292-94). The focus here is clearly on the act itself.

In his masterful speech before the mob, Antony turns the audience's attention to the incongruity between act and scene. He grants that if Caesar were indeed ambitious, "it was a grievous fault / And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it" (III.i.79-80). Antony suggests that if the conspirators were correct in their assessment of Caesar, then the act would fit the scene. However, he proceeds to portray Caesar as anything but ambitious. Both the Roman mob and the audience, therefore, are encouraged to believe that the grievous answer was not an appropriate response to this gentle life. Following a graphic depiction of the wounds inflicted by the chief conspirators, Antony transforms the purgers of the previous scene into traitors and their noble act into treason.

The anticipatory logic cultivated by the role of Antony invites the audience to expect the destruction that comes upon the conspirators in the second half of the play. However, Brutus, as a
tragic hero, must die well." Shakespeare once again uses other characters to complete the character of Brutus which enables him to die in a fitting way. Though the sympathies of the play are temporarily directed toward Antony because of his necessary role in the drama, Shakespeare quickly shows the audience another side of Antony that helps move sympathies back in Brutus's favor. At the beginning of Act IV, he portrays Antony as a shrewd conniver, an expedient political actor who orders the death of his own nephew and treats his equal no better than his horse. Following this characterization, Shakespeare presents Cassius and Brutus as two pitiful human beings through their spirited yet sincere quarrel scene. The two end their dispute as better friends than they previously had ever been, and then in the ensuing scene, Brutus reveals that these two friends will part company for the last time: "But this same day / Must end that work the ides of March begun. / And whether we shall meet again I know not" (V.i.112-14). Looking back on the events of the play, the audience should recognize how the drama has reached this conclusion. The murder did not go as promised; Antony prepared the way for Cassius and Brutus's destruction; and these most recent scenes prepared Brutus to die well. The pattern culminates for the auditors with Brutus's self-revelation, "I know my hour is come" (V.v.19), for this line merely serves as a confirmation of what they already should know.

Implications: Perspectivism, Form, and Dramatistic Argument

The purpose of this essay has been to illumine the discursive strategies embodied in a text that induce audience collaboration in a persuasive encounter. Toward this end, I have argued that the Burkean concepts of form and perspectivism work together in a rhetorical artifact as a way of inviting audience members to surrender to the text's ordering of reality. Using Shakespeare's Julius Caesar as a model for this type of appeal, I have suggested that the competing perspectives of the major characters are not only rooted in the same pentadic term but also cooperate to complete the overall action of the play. These patterns of competing perspectives help to create a logic of anticipatory reasoning and thus encourage auditors to make particular inferences as the play unfolds.

This reading of Julius Caesar suggests at least three implications for our understanding of the strategic features of rhetorical artifacts. First, this study demonstrates that an artwork's process of appeal and persuasive potential do not stem from its ability to mirror the actual experiences of its auditors. Burke reasons that "[e]xperience is less the aim of art than the subject of art; art is not experience, but something added to experience." Symbolic action is grounded in a world of motion, but works of art (as well as all species of symbolic action) transcend the situations that inspire them. Indeed, texts are "the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations." Discursive choices within a text organize or punctuate the complexities of life in strategic ways that offer auditors "equipment for living." The process of appeal that promotes Julius Caesar's symbolic medicine regarding unchecked ambition comes not from the dramatization of actual experience through ornate language, melodic verse, or intriguing characters; instead, the appeal comes from the competing perspectives of various characters that cultivate audience expectations and desires. A text's style or form, in this sense, serves not as mere embellishment of its plot or content but as an "urging upon its audiences of that work's particular formulation of experience." Put simply, form serves a persuasive function, because "to guide the reader's expectations is already to have some conquest over him [her]."

This rhetorical view of form—a view that blurs the distinctions between style and content as resources for persuasion—emphasizes the role that stylistic elements play in triggering audience collaboration in a persuasive encounter. Consequently, this critical orientation broadens the scope and significance of rhetorical analyses of poetic artifacts. Traditional rhetorical examinations of Julius Caesar, for instance, examine the persuasive potential of characters' discourse merely in terms of its ability to fit the situations and audiences within the play itself. These previous readings of this poetic text ignore the strategic, stylistic choices that serve persuasive functions for external
audiences. In contrast, this essay's focus on the persuasive potential of form releases enthymematic reasoning from its traditional, narrow confines of classical forms of reasoning (i.e., syllogisms). From this larger perspective, the arguments in the play that call for the destruction of Julius Caesar are powerful not for their rational soundness but for the process of appeal that sustains them. This understanding of form as an argumentative tactic resembles a process of reasoning that James Jasinski labels "inferencing":

Inferencing . . . implies only that there is some reconstructible pattern of anticipation and movement at work in rhetorical and argumentative practice. . . . [Moreover,] the force or power of rhetorical and argumentative discourse is predicated, at least in part, on the successful implementation of inferential form.

The application of this critical orientation to other texts promises to explain the persuasive force behind formal patterns embedded within these rhetorical artifacts as they attempt to structure particular experiences for their auditors.

Second, this examination of Julius Caesar illuminates a potential strategy by which individual rhetors might attempt to orchestrate meaning in situations that feature multiple perspectives competing for "interpretive dominance." The reconstruction of the characters' competing perspectives in Julius Caesar suggests that individual rhetors can exploit the persuasive force of form by cooperating with the terminological context within which their discourse occurs. For example, the perspective enacted by Cassius's character that calls for a noble agent to destroy Caesar acquires interpretive dominance by submitting to the underlying terminological context that treats Caesar as a scenic entity. Cassius promotes his unique perspective by building upon rather than destroying an established discursive foundation. This understanding of cooperative competition or "dramatistic argument" may help explain how a particular perspective or position comes to dominate competing positions in a variety of persuasive contexts such as public policy debates, issue campaigns, and political election campaigns. A political challenger, for instance, might exploit this process of appeal by joining the many voices that reduce an unpopular incumbent to a menacing scene that the challenger's assent to office would promise to change. In so doing, the challenger not only joins the popular conversation but also may encourage auditors to attribute to her a heroic status as agent that is only implicit in her discourse.

A final implication of this essay points to a paradox that seems inherent in symbol systems: People use symbols and symbols use them. While symbols empower individuals to act toward their surroundings in strategically creative ways, they also constrain the ways in which people see or understand the world. Perspectivism as a formal device developed in a text—particularly when that text grounds terminological relationships in one pentadic term—appears to function as a powerful way to condense meaning for those who surrender to the discourse's process of appeal.

NOTES

1Kenneth Burke, Counter-Statement (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968). See in particular pp. 51-52 for Burke's explanation of the appeal in Mark Twain's writings. In that discussion, Burke makes a distinction between an author's uttering a message and evoking a response.


3Although Burke is more interested in the similarities, he recognizes that differences do exist between the two: "Poetics deals with the exercising of symbolic action in and for itself, rhetoric involves the use of symbolic action to produce effects 'beyond' the act, as when exhorting the audience to favor this cause or that, this candidate rather than that, this commodity rather than that, or to mend its ways, etc." (Kenneth Burke, "The Party Line," Quarterly Journal of Speech 62 [1976]: 66). "In extreme cases, we can distinguish between the Poetic and the Rhetorical . . . when we think of 'Art for Art's Sake' in contrast with the deliberative and forensic oratory as discussed in Aristotle, or with the third office of the orator, as discussed in Cicero"

1Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action 28.


3Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form 330.

4Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form 336.

5Burke, Counter-Statement 176.

6Burke, Counter-Statement 124.


12Kenneth Burke, "Questions and Answers about the Pentad," College Composition and Communication (1978): 335. My use of Burke's pentad in this essay attempts to go beyond some of the more traditional applications of this critical tool. I do not employ these pentadic terms merely to illumine a text's internal logic or to uncover terminological evidence of an ideology embedded in a body of discourse. Instead, I use Burke's five terms as a way of understanding how competing pentadic patterns within a text serve an external function—namely, to induce audience collaboration in the persuasive act.

13See Jane Blankenship and Janette Kenner Muir, "On Imaging the Future: The Secular Search for Piety," Communication Quarterly 35 (1987): 1-12. These authors argue "that futurizing is a built-in feature of all symbolizing which necessarily includes notions of piety (of what goes with what)" (1).


15Burke, "On Form" 105.

16Burke, "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method" 108.

17Burke, Language as Symbolic Action 84.

18Burke uses this term to describe how Shakespeare creates the illusion of well-rounded characters in his plays. In fact, in his discussion of the characters Othello and Iago, Burke claims: "Shakespeare is making a play, not people. And as a dramatist he must know that the illusion of a well-rounded character is produced, not by piling on traits of character, until all the scruples of an academic scholar are taken care of, but by so building a character-recipe in accord with the demands of the action that every trait of the character does have is saliently expressed in action or through action." To Burke, a character's actions are more important than a character's essence since these actions not only move the play along but also define the character's unique role in the drama. See Burke, "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method" 176, 177.

19Burke, "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method" 179.

20I make this point because I do not mean to suggest that this approach is the only one appropriate in light of the previous discussions of this paper. Additionally, I do not mean to imply that all appealing drama would lend itself to this type of literal application. In the play under consideration, however, this application appears to illuminate the process of appeal in a more satisfactory way than any other possible approaches construed from Burke's notions of form and perspectivism.

21See Birdsell, "Ronald Reagan on Lebanon and Grenada" 273-278. Birdsell illustrates the critical insights that can be gleaned by isolating a text's root term and developing an analysis that traces the logic of the text's terminological relationships through the lens of its root term. This essay extends Birdsell's argument by focusing on the formal qualities of these terminological relationships.


23All references to the play are from The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974). Mooney points out the irony in this line in that the audience has come to see Julius Caesar (the play) as well. In this way, Shakespeare pulls the audience into the action of the play from the very beginning. See Mooney, "'Passion, I see, is catching" 32.

24There are other elements of the play while Caesar is yet alive but "off stage" that point to his presence "on stage." One of the most interesting of these is the shouting for Caesar in Act I Scene ii. When Cassius first attempts to persuade Brutus to join the conspirators, these off stage shouts (which are interpreted by Brutus as shouts in behalf of Caesar) remind the audience of Caesar's presence. Another example is the scene.
in which Casca recounts for Cassius and Brutus what had transpired off stage between Caesar and the Roman citizens. The humor and detail of Casca's lines bring the scene on stage as vividly as though it had occurred before the audience's eyes. The potential value of this device is that the playwright has more control in shaping the audience's interpretation of the event through description than he does through simply presenting the event on stage.

Burke, *Counter-Statement* 176.

This pattern is the opposite for Caesar than it is for most other characters in the play. There is much reference throughout the play to how the words and actions of one character influence or move others to do or say something new. Caesar, on the other hand, remains static. Perhaps even more compelling is the fact that Caesar himself confirms this pattern. When he returns with Antony following the contest, Caesar discloses, "I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd / Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar" (I.ii.211-212).

Additionally, Caesar's final extended speech is an ironic self-revelation of how different he is from the other characters:

I could be well mov'd, if I were as you;
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me;
But I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.
The skies are painted with unnumb'red sparks,
They are all fire, and every one doth shine;
But there's but one in all doth hold its place.
So in the world: 'tis furnish'd well with men,
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshak'd of motion; and that I am he,
Let me a little show it, even in this--
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,
And constant do remain to keep him so. (III.i.58-73)

This speech contains Caesar's incompatibility with the other characters and therefore serves as an appropriate "farewell" to them as well as to the audience.

Burke argues that this quality of a tragedy transforms its passion into an assertion. In this regard, the play must release the audience from its participation in its tragic events but at the same time provide instructions for future living. Burke claims that this process evolves essentially through the downfall of the tragic character: "[I]n a tragedy of sacrifice, the assertion need not be got through the rescuing of a character; more often it comes through the playwright's felicity in making sure that the character 'dies well' (within the conditions of the fiction)—or, as regards the 'separating out,' the character whom we would disclaim must in some ultimate sense be destroyed, threatened, or branded. But, all told, the rite is complete when one has become willing to abandon the figures who vicariously represent his own tension... . . . It is a requiem in which we participate at the ceremonious death of a portion of ourselves. And whatever discomforts we may have
experienced under the sway of this tension in life itself, as thus 'imitated' in art it permits us the great privilege of being present at our own funeral." See "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method" 166, 167.

29Burke, Counter-Statement 77.
30Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form 1.
31Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form 304.
33Burke, Counter-Statement 178.