

ARGUMENTATION & ADVOCACY

PUBLIC ARGUMENT ACTION RESEARCH AND THE LEARNING CURVE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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Some rhetoricians call for a redoubled emphasis on the public argument dimensions of scholarly inquiry, recommending an "activist turn" in criticism (Andersen, 1993). The various trajectories of such a path range from pursuit of "opportunities for dialogue with alternative audiences" (Hollihan, 1994, p. 233), to "taking our models and signifiers off the blackboard" (Farrell, 1993, p. 156), to "enter[ing] the fray outside the Ivory Tower" (Andersen, 1993, p. 249).

Eschewing the "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986) epistemological standpoint, these scholars advocate criticism that reaches beyond specialized academic audiences to engage publics and contribute to "broader social dialogues" (Hollihan, 1994, p. 234; see also Sholle, 1994; Shotter, 1995). An illuminating example of this mode of intellectual engagement is the work of media critic Kenneth McLeod. In addition to publishing au-

thoritative commentary on intellectual property law in scholarly outlets (McLeod, 2001, 2002, 2004b), McLeod is adept at fashioning parallel arguments for circulation in wider public spheres of deliberation. Two recent interventions by this University of Iowa professor of communication studies include his successful attempt to secure an official U.S. trademark of the phrase "freedom of expression" (McLeod, 2003a, 2003b) and his participation in "Grey Tuesday," an online "day of civil disobedience" organized to resist the "music industry's copyright cartel" (Werde, 2004). McLeod's *oeuvre* warrants further consideration, since this mode of scholarship sheds light on a persistent theoretical problem facing rhetorical study of social movements—the difficulty in locating essentially rhetorical features of movement activity.

David Zarefsky identifies "theoretical" work in social movement studies as scholarship where "the scholar seeks to make generalizable claims about patterns of persuasion characteristic of social movements as a class" (1980, p. 245; see also Riches & Sillars, 1980). This theoretical approach aims to establish characteristics of a distinctive rhetorical genre of social movement rhetoric (see Griffin, 1952; Cathcart, 1972; and Simons,

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Mechling & Scheier, 1984). According to Zarefsky (1980), many efforts fall short of establishing a unique genre of social movement rhetoric, because they fail to isolate essential rhetorical differences that distinguish social movements from other types of collective communicative action such as top-down government propaganda or institutional public relations campaigns (Warnick, 1977; Simons, 1991). This objection presents a serious challenge to those social movement scholars who view the issue of rhetorical uniqueness as a sort of litmus test that determines rhetoric's analytical utility (Cathcart, 1972). However, behind this "where is the rhetoric in social movements" litmus test, there lurks a different, and possibly timelier question of contemporary salience: where is the social movement in rhetorical criticism?

Traditionally, "historical" criticisms of social movements in the field of communication have largely deferred this question (see e.g. Andrews, 1973; Lucas, 1976). These efforts have sought to add depth to historical accounts of social change by illuminating retrospectively the rhetorical dimensions of past movement activity. As purely academic exercises, such work has played out on a plane removed from the level of social movement mobilization. In contrast, action research seeks to connect scholarship directly to ongoing struggles, opening up extra-academic channels for intervention into live arenas of public argument (Kemmis, 1993).

While this action research process can be enriched by appropriation of select theoretical terms and concepts developed previously in rhetorical work on social movements, it also stands to gain from studies in other fields that have already jumped the walls of the Ivory Tower. This essay uses such inter-field cross-fertilization to pursue a method for study of social movements that highlights reflexivity and engagement with actors beyond academic peer audiences. Part one discusses the importance of Robert

Cathcart's theory of "dialectical enjoinderment" and Richard Gregg's theory of the "ego-function" of protest rhetoric. Alain Touraine's "action sociology" is considered as a theoretical exemplar for rhetorical action research in part two. Part three's focus the pedagogical mechanisms of "new social movement" mobilization sets up the final section's closing reflections on how the similar learning curves of action research and new social movement mobilization mark promising routes of intellectual and political work.

DIALECTICAL ENJOINDERMENT, COUNTER-RHETORIC AND THE EGO-FUNCTION OF COLLECTIVE PROTEST

Social movement activists make arguments that call for change in the established order. Frequently, activists seek to publicize such arguments in order to expand the terrain of discourse. With movements trading on the currency of public argument in this fashion, it is illuminating to view social movement protest activity through the lens of public argument scholarship. This is not a new insight—the promise of a dialogically interactive approach to the study of social movements was a major theme voiced in early calls to establish this line of research in the field of communication.

When Griffin (1952) called for heightened attention to social movements as rhetorical phenomena, he expanded fruitfully the field of rhetorical criticism beyond its single text, public address orientation and sparked a host of new critical possibilities (Henry & Jensen, 1991). Some of these possibilities were realized in the work on social movements that immediately followed in Griffin's wake. But by the mid-1980s, skeptics contended that rhetorical study of social movements was bogged down in definitional questions, with the painstaking search for a unique genre of rhetoric called "social move-

ment protest" crowding out more useful theoretical work (see Zarefsky, 1980).

However, this skepticism should not obscure the fact that these early works contain valuable insight that does not deserve to be thrown out with the genre bathwater. For example, Cathcart's concepts of "dialectical enjoinderment" and "counter rhetoric" provide useful accounts of the symbolic dimension of social movement activity, and Gregg's explanation of the identity constitutive function of movement rhetoric and establishment counter-rhetoric give illuminating perspectives on the interplay between institutional politics and identity formation in social movement protest. By considering each of these concepts in more detail, it is possible to retrieve tools from early rhetorical theory that can productively inform contemporary efforts to study social movements using an action research method.

Cathcart suggests that it is not possible to evaluate effectively social movements outside the context of their "dialectical enjoinderment" with establishment interlocutors. The element that *makes* a social movement, according to Cathcart, is the establishment's "reciprocating act" in providing a response to the movement's symbolic challenge to the existing order. Through analysis of the abolition and women's suffrage movements, Cathcart (1972, pp. 87-88) illustrates how the dialectical interplay between movement and establishment is the rhetorical *sine qua non* of social movement activity. This approach highlights the fact that social movement discourse is not a unitary textual phenomenon, but is instead an inter-textual dynamic emerging out of confrontations similar to what G. Thomas Goodnight (1991) calls "public controversies." Goodnight's theory of controversy lends analytical depth to Cathcart's notion of dialectical enjoinderment. According to Goodnight (1991, p. 5), controversy develops when interlocutors engage in argumentation over "the taken for granted relationships between communica-

tion and reasoning. . . . When unspoken rules and tacit presumptions are put up for discussion through clashes among members of institutions, interest groups, fields, communities, and publics, there are new opportunities and obligations to learn, to decide, and to argue." The moments of controversy embedded in movement-establishment dialectical enjoinderments may indeed yield rich arrays of communicative phenomena for rhetorical critique.

Consider "Grey Tuesday," a day of "coordinated civil disobedience" organized in cyberspace. On 24 February 2004, over 150 Internet website hosts made available, for free downloading, copies of a music recording entitled *The Grey Album*. Artist DJ Danger Mouse created the *The Grey Album* by mixing together tracks from two original recordings—The Beatles' *The White Album* and Jay-Z's *The Black Album*. Critics lauded *The Grey Album* as "an ingenious hip-hop record that sounds oddly ahead of its time" (Gitlin, 2004) and the "most creatively captivating album of the year" (Graham, 2004). EMI executives disagreed. They sought to squelch distribution of *The Grey Album* on the grounds that such circulation infringed on their copyright ownership of the Beatles' rhythm tracks.

McLeod hosts (www.kembrew.com), one of the websites that participated in the Grey Tuesday protest. During that protest, thousands of Internet surfers downloaded electronic copies of *The Grey Album*. Shortly thereafter, EMI's lawyers served McLeod a letter demanding that he "cease and desist from the actual or intended distribution, reproduction, public performance or other exploitation of *The Grey Album*" (Jensen, 2004). Here was a concrete example of "dialectical enjoinderment."

McLeod joined a collective protest and used the establishment's reply to leverage his own public argument. His response to EMI's cease and desist order (McLeod, 2004a) illustrated how Cathcart's notion of dialectical

enjoinment and Goodnight's theory of public controversy illuminate the role of public argumentation in social movement protest. McLeod capitalized on the exchange to spur public debate about the "broken" copyright regime: "It is in the spirit of promoting conversation and debate about an illegal artwork (and a broken copyright regime) that I have engaged in this act of copyright civil disobedience" (McLeod, 2004b). EMI's dialectical enjoinment presented an opportunity for McLeod to issue a rebuttal that broadened the public argument. What began as an isolated dispute regarding distribution of a single music recording fanned out into a public controversy over the rules for public exchange of information codified in U.S. copyright law. McLeod parlayed the public attention stemming from EMI's cease and desist order into a public platform to amplify several lines of argument he had honed previously in scholarly research.

The enduring salience of early social movement scholarship is apparent in another context—the identity-constitutive dimension of protest activity. Efforts to persuade others of the rightness of a given viewpoint not only affect addressed audiences; such efforts also have important effects on speakers themselves. This is evident in collective political struggles, where rhetors form and express shared senses of identity through social movement mobilization. Gregg (1971) suggests that this "ego-function" of rhetoric is a particularly important aspect of social movement activity.

Working through examples of the Black power, student, and women's liberation movements, Gregg elucidates the process through which social movement actors develop distinctive notions of selfhood during acts of collective protest (see also Stewart, 1991; Loeb, 1999). In the case of the Black power movement, Gregg argues that the foil of a demonized "Whitey" served as a symbol of the negative aspects of Black identity that were aired through dissent. For the student

movement, sterile and bureaucratic idealizations of "the system" and "the power structure" served as constructs that grounded the students' own feelings as victims of oppression. Similarly, women's liberation activists built common notions of identification by challenging prevailing stereotypes of the "typical, domiciled woman" (Gregg, 1971, p. 80).

According to Gregg, these foils not only served as rallying points spurring movements to political success; they also provided important reference points for the development of shared notions of group identity: "By painting the enemy in dark hued imagery of vice, corruption, evil, and weakness, one may more easily convince himself [sic] of his [sic] own superior virtue and thereby gain the symbolic victory of ego-enhancement. The rhetoric of attack becomes at the same time rhetoric of ego-building, and the very act of assuming such a rhetorical stance becomes self-persuasive and confirmatory" (Gregg, 1971, p. 82).

Gregg's theory of the ego-function of protest rhetoric has notable limitations (see Campbell, 1973; Lake, 1983). With a nearly exclusive emphasis on the importance of demonization of the other as an identity formation mechanism in social movement rhetoric, Gregg glosses over the possibility that collective identity can be constituted through more positive and constructive ways such as aesthetic performance (e.g. the AIDS quilt project), collective sacrifice for the achievement of instrumental goals (e.g. Habitat for Humanity building construction), or experimentation with novel modes of public engagement (e.g. Rosa Eberly's "citizen critic" pedagogy). In the latter case, Eberly (2000, p. 170) shows how classroom assignments that invite students to engage local public spheres of deliberation are "possible means of getting students to begin to imagine themselves as participants in local public discourse." This identity-constitutive project aims to cultivate what Michael Warner (2002, p. 95) calls "reflexive circulation" of

public arguments: "I don't just speak to you; I speak to the public in a way that enters a cross-citational field of many other people speaking to the public."

Another limitation of Gregg's theory is that by attributing a monolithic and static collective identity to each of the movements he scrutinizes, Gregg overlooks the subtlety of hybridized social identities, as well as the possibility that some movement adherents may eschew their group's collective identity constructions (Butler, 1990; Wiley, 1994).

Despite these shortcomings, Gregg's theory serves a useful function in underscoring the thinness of accounts that explain social movement discourse purely in instrumental terms, where sole attention is paid to the question of how such discourse contributes to or detracts from the movement's institutional reform agenda (Lake, 1983).

The reconstruction of early social movement theory foregrounds some basic contours of a public argument-centered action research approach to movement study. This approach can be developed further by drawing on work in sociology that uses an action research method to both analyze and transform its object of analysis.

TOURAINE'S ACTION SOCIOLOGY

Most early rhetorical studies of social movements lacked reflexivity, in the sense that scholars did not turn the theoretical tools they used to explain collective protest activity back on themselves to illuminate the status of their own scholarship. For example, one might wonder about the ego-function of Gregg's own scholarly prose—how did the expression of his ideas through a journal article shape his own self-identity as a political actor? Or, in a similarly reflexive light, one might ponder the ways in which Cathcart's academic publications affected the character of dialectical enjoinders between social movements and establishment rhetors that were unfolding at the time his work

appeared in the journal *Western Speech*. The lurking question posed at the outset of this essay returns: Where is the social movement in this kind of criticism?

It may be easier to come to grips with this question after revisiting Michael McGee's (1980) distinction between social movement as "phenomenon" and social movement as "meaning." According to McGee, scholars study movements as phenomena when they explain collective protest activity by focusing on how movements operate as *things*. Such approaches elucidate for example, how activists recruit members, organize events, invent messages and plot strategy. In contrast, studies of social movement as "meaning" look to the ways in which a variety of communicative phenomena, including but not limited to collective protest activity, change—or "move"—prevailing social norms and key terms of public discourse through time.

McGee's framework provides a useful backdrop for pondering once more the question: Where is the social movement in rhetorical criticism of social movements? If critique remains confined to publication of articles in specialized academic journals, the answer to this question will often be that there is little significant social movement to be found. By deferring the issue of reflexivity, critics default to the position of detached interpreters of texts, situating themselves as purely academic actors who "must alienate him/herself from his/her own involvement in the act . . . The result has been a criticism that seems sterile" (Klump & Hollihan, 1989, p. 92). In a similar light, Peter Andersen notes, "It would be hard to write an ideological critique of Operation Desert Storm, the federal budget deficit, or the politics of logging, and not feel a need to do more than produce a scholarly article. If, armed with key insights into political doublespeak, establishment rhetoric, or movement brainwashing, we engage in such criticism only in scholarly outlets, we would

be accused correctly of hiding in the Ivory Tower" (Andersen, 1993, pp. 248–49; see also Eberly, 2000; Wander, 1983).

French sociologist Alain Touraine has developed a method for studying social movements that places this issue of reflexivity front and center. Touraine (1978/1981, pp. 141–42), originator of the phrase "post-industrial society," strives to "invent a method for the study of social movements by abandoning their representation of society as a body of functions and rules, techniques and responses to environmental demands, and by replacing it with the image of a society working upon itself."

Academic scholars occupy an important site in society, Touraine suggests, because they enjoy unique opportunities to act upon their own self-identities and to alter the tenor of social struggle and society. This is especially true for students: "Students can now play an important role because the sharp rise in their number and the increased duration of studies have resulted in the constitution of student collectivities within their own space, capable of opposing the resistance of their own culture and of their personal concerns to the space of a large organizations that seek to impose themselves even more directly upon them" (Touraine, 1984/1988, p. 120). Building on this reflexive awareness, Touraine (1978/1981, p. 142) prescribes an engaged method of research where the first move "is to enter into a relationship with the social movement itself. We cannot remain contented merely with studying actions or thoughts; we must come face-to-face with the social movement."

Once engaged in this manner, Touraine (1978/1981, p. 149) suggests that the "purpose of this research work is to *contribute to development of social movements*. . . . Our real objective is to enable society to live at the highest possible level of historical action instead of blindly passing through crises and conflicts." Achievement of this objective requires successful "conversion" of the status

of collective action from defensive "struggle" to "new social movement" (Touraine, 1984/1988, pp. 95–97). Whereas struggles are reactive measures undertaken by collectivities facing immediate deprivations of basic needs or threats to their well-being, new social movement activity entails collective "counter-offensive" efforts that seek to restructure fundamentally power relations, communicative norms and social practices in post-industrial society.

In the case of French anti-nuclear protest activity, citizens engaged in scattered and isolated attempts to block construction of nuclear power plants in their local communities in the mid-1970s. Motivated by fear of genetic damage and catastrophic pollution, these groups initiated defensive, reactive struggles to protect themselves. However, in Touraine's analysis, the circumscribed "not in my backyard" *telos* of these anti-nuclear struggles prevented the activists from elevating their protest activity to the level of new social movement resistance. Some pockets of resistance fought gamely, but then dissipated quickly after their show of solidarity convinced French government officials to withdraw plans for power plant construction in the communities where such struggles were based. Weaker protest groups that were overwhelmed by the nuclear industry's political momentum met a similar fate when they demobilized following defeat and commencement of plant construction in their neighborhoods.

Sensing that collective action of the anti-nuclear protestors carried the latent but untapped energy of a new social movement, Touraine and his colleagues intervened into the field of social action from 1976 to 1979. They sought to convert the scattered anti-nuclear struggles into a broader joint challenge to technocratic domination of French society, by clarifying the fundamental stakes involved in protest against nuclear power plant construction. In Touraine's view, these stakes included the character of national en-

ergy policy and the hegemonic concentration of power in the hands of a strictly hierarchical and centralized authority charged with administering the state nuclear power program (Touraine, 1980/1983, pp. 1–13). The anti-nuclear struggle “still sometimes calls for an uprising against the specific dangers of nuclear power, but, as we know, these campaigns in the name of danger and fear are dying out and the struggle is learning to name its real adversary: not nuclear energy or plutonium but the *nuclear policy* and the *technocratic power* which decides it” (Touraine, 1980/1983, p. 194, emphasis in original).

Touraine’s intervention was carried out by two distinct groups of sociologists who formed connections with anti-nuclear protest groups including RAT (Network of the Friends of the Earth), GSIEN (Grouping of Scientists for Information on Nuclear Energy), CFDT (a trade union), the *Gazette Nucleaire* (a leftist newspaper) and militant students from the Malville Committee in Grenoble (Touraine, 1980/1983, p. 11). The two camps of sociologists deliberately adopted different orientations toward this protest network. On the one hand, an “agitator” group moved into close, direct contact with the protestors and helped to “prepare the confrontations, conduct the [intervention] sessions, and above all help the group by ‘agitating’ it, i.e. by pressing it to define its positions clearly, by pushing it to the limit in its discussions, and by reintroducing certain of the group’s earlier statements or reactions” (Touraine, 1978/1981, pp. 192–93). On the other hand, an “analyst” group operated at a more abstract and removed level, seeking to “criticize the struggle,” using theoretical reflection to rethink and reformulate the cultural stakes in play and to develop appropriate strategies of conversion to be carried out by the agitator group (Touraine, 1978/1981, p. 193). One example of a strategy developed by the analyst group, and carried out by the agitator group, involved

the drafting and circulation of a national petition calling for public debate on the nuclear power question. This document provides a useful working illustration of Touraine’s strategy of naming the broader cultural and social stakes under contestation as a device to facilitate conversion from struggle to new social movement (see Touraine, 1980/1983, p. 168).

Touraine (1984/1988, pp. 140–53) argues that by entering into a heuristic, ongoing dialogue with collective actors already engaged in arenas of social action, academics have the capacity to contribute to the positive evolution of “programmed” postindustrial society. This contribution is made by following a method that involves “to-ing and fro-ing between analysis and action,” as agitator and analyst groups engage in a three-way conversation with activists (Touraine, 1978/1981, p. 155). Touraine has followed this method of “sociological intervention” in studying not only the French anti-nuclear protest, but also by intervening into the French student uprising in the late 1960s (Touraine, 1971/1979), as well as the Polish Solidarity movement in the early 1980s (Touraine, 1983/1984, 1996, 2000; see also Dubet & Wieviorka, 1996; Oommen, 1996). Striving to elevate each of these struggles to their “highest level of meaning,” Touraine aimed to energize the protestors’ identity as social actors, as well as to elucidate the broader historical stakes implicated in their struggles.

Commenting on the English translation of Touraine’s (1984/1988) book, *Return of the Actor*, Stanley Aronowitz suggests that wide circulation of Touraine’s method should be undertaken, given the present need for clear voices in the academy to enrich the simmering discussion about the political and social role of intellectuals and society: “The appearance in English of *Return of the Actor* can contribute to the revival of American social theory, since it comes at a time when the question of historical agency remains one of

the massive conundra of social sciences that have either denied its existence or desperately clung to older essentialist models" (Aronowitz, 1988, p. viii). Proposals for ideological and activist turns in the field of communication signal that the political status of criticism is both a live concern as well as a salient topic for theoretical discussion (see Brouwer & Squires, 2003; Cloud, 1998; and Wander & Jaehne, 2000). Touraine's action sociology method may lend rhetorical critics important insights about new ways to cultivate their own agency and position themselves vis-à-vis other social actors in a fashion that maximizes the transformative potential of their intellectual work.

HOW NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS LEARN

Early rhetorical study of social movements exhibited a preoccupation with issues of generic definition and classification. Today, a variant of this preoccupation has resurfaced in other fields, in the form of theoretical debates over the apparent evolution of new collective actors called "new social movements." Some suggest that the defining feature of "new social movements" is a dialectical "dual orientation," where the differentiated yet complementary tasks of local, grass roots consciousness raising and institutional political action are both included in the movement's agenda and operate hand-in-hand to spur progressive change in public and private spheres (Cohen, 1985; Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. 549–50; Felski, 1989, pp. 167–168; and Habermas, 1992/1996, p. 370). These "new" movements differ from "old" labor movements that pressed for incremental reforms through institutional channels and relied primarily on instrumental modes of communicative action such as collective bargaining (Eder, 1985; Melucci, 1985; Offe, 1985; and Touraine, 1985; but see Plotke, 1995; and Tilly, 1988).

The feminist movement is often cited as the prototypical new social movement, in which local efforts such as grass roots consciousness raising not only jibe with, but reinforce more traditional forms of collective action such as party politics: "The dual logic of feminist politics thus involves a communicative discursive politics of identity and influence that targets civil and political society and an organized, strategically rational politics of inclusion and reform that is aimed at political and economic institutions. Indeed almost all major analyses of the feminist movement (in the United States and Europe) have shown the existence and importance of dualistic politics" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 550).

Feminist activists seek material gains on institutional levels (e.g. equal political representation and legislative protections against employment discrimination), but also complement these strategies with more localized efforts to shape their identities through grass roots consciousness raising. The interplay between these two levels of movement activity typifies the new social movement approach. By making impressive appearances in the public realm, feminists build respect and gain confidence as they push for transformation of patriarchal institutions. The positive gains in collective identity emerging from these joint efforts are in turn put to use in localized contexts, where individuals challenge patriarchal attitudes that have been woven into the discursive fabric of the life-world. In the other direction, as public mobilization builds collective identity, grass roots identity politics lends momentum to public mobilization. In discussing the feminist movement's striking record of success in institutional politics during the 1970s, Cohen and Arato (1992, pp. 552–53) observe, "these political and legal successes had as their prerequisite and precondition success in the cultural sense—in the prior spread of feminist consciousness."

New social movements use the synergy of this "Janus faced politics" to push for social change at multiple levels of society (Habermas, 1992/1996, p. 370). Cohen and Arato account for this momentum by explaining the synergistic interaction between modes of movement engagement as a learning process, a kind of collective critical pedagogy. In contrast to the traditional "stage model" that charts social movement evolution in a linear path from grass roots consciousness raising to institutional lobbying (see e.g. Griffin, 1952), Cohen and Arato suggest that new social movements zigzag between these two foci, with the oscillation triggering collective learning processes that enable movements to maintain a diverse repertoire of strategies that can be deployed flexibly.

It is a virtue of the stage model to have called attention to the fact that social movements target both civil and political society. The model is misleading, however, to the extent that it presents these orientations in either/or terms and describes the normal trajectory of collective action as a linear movement from civil to political society. . . . [The model] works with an overly simple conception of learning. Collective actors are assumed to learn only along the cognitive-instrumental dimension. That is, their learning is defined as a gradual recognition that identity-oriented, symbolic politics cannot help them to achieve their goals, and the result of this learning is a shift to a disciplined, hierarchical organization and an instrumental-strategic model of action. This point of view implies the notion that social movements cannot simultaneously concentrate on strategic requirements and identity building. . . . In opposition to this view . . . [t]he newness of the new movements in this respect lies not so much in their dualism as in their more emphatic thematization of this dualism. (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 560)

Robert Michels' famous "Iron Law of Oligarchy" posits that all collective actors face the perennial dilemma that victories at the level of institutional politics necessarily take on a pyrrhic quality, as success leads to co-optation, bureaucratization, professionalization, and dilution of the original aims which motivated collective action in the first place (Michels, 1915/1959, pp. 388-92). This so-

called Michelsian dilemma (see Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 557) was presupposed in early rhetorical theories of social movements, which defined movement activity as *essentially* oppositional (e.g. Cathcart, 1972), so that the inclusion of movement adherents into institutional structures would, by definition, bring an end to the movement.

However Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 561) see a plausible way out of the Michelsian dilemma in the collective critical pedagogy of the new social movements. By shifting back and forth between the terrain of institutional politics and civil society, new social movements invent modes of action that can be tailored specifically to skirt the two horns of the dilemma—co-option, on one side, and political marginalization, on the other (see also Cohen, 1996, pp. 199-204).

This process bears a similarity to the "to-ing and fro-ing" between agitation and analysis in Touraine's action research method for the study of social movements. Just as the anchor of Touraine's approach is the dialectical interplay between differentiated camps of sociological researchers, the key driver of new social movements is the pedagogical synergy that emerges out of their "Janus faced politics," where distinct modes of collective action complement each other. New social movement actors (e.g. feminist and anti-nuclear activists) and academic action researchers (e.g. Andersen, Touraine) share a common learning curve.

FOLLOWING THE LEARNING CURVE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Where is the social movement in rhetorical criticism of social movements? The search for answers to this question parallels an ongoing quest for the quintessentially rhetorical features of social movement protest activity. For decades, scholars have attempted to define a unique genre of social movement rhetoric, and their efforts have met with mixed success. Perhaps a new gen-

eration of social movement scholars will continue this quest on reflexive level, attempting to locate and cultivate, in McGee's terminology, the "meaning" of their own rhetorical critiques in terms of the social movement they convey. Such idealizations may bring to mind fanciful notions of revolutionary academics linked together in common cause to smash the state. Yet, these notions not only strain credulity; they also miss the point of McGee's distinction between social movement as "phenomenon" and social movement as "meaning." One can "move" society many different ways, short of joining a militant group bent on revolution. A whole phalanx of students taught by activist-minded mentors such as Peter Andersen, Thomas Farrell, Thomas Hollihan and James Klumpp may share a common commitment to translate the fruits of their intellectual labor into forms of political action that transcend "Ivory Tower" academic discourse. However, since these same students express this commitment in a wide variety of political registers and value orientations, it would be erroneous to classify them collectively as a social movement "phenomenon" (McGee, 1980). In a sympathetic reading of McGee, Kevin DeLuca (1999a, p. 36) explains:

The point is not that groups do not exist, just that they are not the social movements themselves. Instead, groups, as well as individuals or institutions, through their rhetorical tactics and strategies create social movements, changes in public consciousness with regards to a key issue or issues, measurable through change's [sic] in the meanings of a cultures [sic] key terms in public discourse.

One of these key terms in American public discourse is "freedom of expression." The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects free speech by prohibiting government censorship. However, McLeod's (2001) book, *Owning Culture*, shows how these narrow First Amendment protections do little to counter surging corporate control of the "marketplace of ideas." This corporate

control is facilitated by an intellectual property law regime that favors private profits over public goods:

Growing in influence over the past quarter-century is an ideology that asserts that ownership rights should trounce everything else, including the right to free speech: a sort of property ownership *über alles*. There's a direct parallel between the way property laws and intellectual property laws are currently being used to erect fences around public space—both physical and cultural. (McLeod, 2003a)

These trends have created a world where restaurant servers now break the law if they sing "Happy Birthday to You" without first paying a licensing fee to Time-Warner (see Hayes, 1993), and where a shopper wearing a shirt bearing the message "Peace on Earth" can be arrested for trespassing after entering a mall, on the grounds that mall owners view such clothing as "disruptive" (see Chambers, 2003). As McLeod (2001, p. 263) notes: "It is this terrain that we will increasingly have to navigate in the coming years—a land of high fences, information 'stupor-highways' and expensive, exclusionary tollbooths."

The Grey Tuesday protest action was organized in part as a corrective to these alarming trends, and it provided an opportunity for McLeod to amplify the detailed findings of his book, *Owning Culture*, to wider spheres of public deliberation. In this case, McLeod broke the law to make a public argument. But in another intervention, McLeod deployed a different strategy of public amplification to make a similar point. In 1998, he filed an official application to secure a trademark on the phrase "freedom of expression." McLeod describes the result:

Apparently, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office did not find the idea of someone controlling this phrase morally, socially and politically unsettling, and it granted me ownership of the mark in 1998. If, for instance, the ACLU wanted to publish a magazine titled *Freedom of Expression*™, it would have to seek my permission and pay royalties—and if I was in a bad mood, or didn't agree with the ACLU's agenda, I could sue them for the unauthorized use of the phrase. (McLeod, 2003b, p. 44)

The notion that someone could actually own the phrase "freedom of expression" and use such a property claim to limit the free speech of others smacks of absurdity. Yet, the very fact that McLeod was able to do so exposes embarrassing excesses of the copyright system that approved his request. In contrast to his civil disobedience on Grey Tuesday, McLeod here executed a political strategy that Slavoj Žižek (2000, p. 147) calls "overconformity." This strategy is premised on the idea that activists can strike at the Achilles heel of flawed laws by taking obedience to the extreme. By paying the \$240 application fee and following the exact procedures for requesting a registered trademark, McLeod worked within the law to produce an absurd result that discredited the law.

But McLeod did not stop there. Next, he amplified his argument by serving a cease and desist letter to AT&T for using "his" phrase "freedom of expression" in a print advertisement for long-distance telephone service—without his permission!

The *New York Times* broke the story and others picked it up. These included the U.S. government's overseas broadcasting arm, *Voice of America*, enabling me to air my criticisms of intellectual-property law all the way to Afghanistan. Later in the year, my framed trademark certificate adorned the walls of the Artist's Gallery in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Yet the most surreal moment came when a group of German artists and academics flew me to Berlin to lecture about these high-jinks. All in all, the freedom of expression® media prank was succeeding for me, because I finally had found a way to broadcast to millions—including a few nutty Berliners—a critique of current intellectual-property law that wouldn't normally get national or international attention. People like me, like us, don't usually have much of a voice in today's massive media conglomerates; and this prank let me turn up the volume, briefly, for something that I care about. (McLeod, 2003a)

McLeod's project shows how action researchers can chart a transformative learning curve by negotiating productive interplay between the differentiated contexts of reflexive identity formation and direct engagement with audiences beyond the universe of

academic peers. His work is especially remarkable in light of recent scholarship that reconsiders the political utility of Žižek's overconformity strategy. Henry Krips (2004) makes a double gesture, affirming the basic assumptions of Žižek's strategy, while pointing out the political shortcomings inherent in Žižek's individualized conception of social action. To extend Žižek's project, Krips draws on the work of American community organizer Saul Alinsky (1971), whose "rules for radicals" provide practical guidance for activists. Specifically, Krips seizes on the Alinsky principle that carefully cultivated publicity can tap the social movement potential latent in acts of overconformity: "[P]ublicity provides the engine that multiplies the effects of individual acts to the point that they take on social effects" (Krips, 2004, p. 127). McLeod's "freedom of expression" gambit is an excellent example of how clever overconformity, magnified by publicity, can generate social movement in the McGee/DeLuca sense of the term.

McLeod returned safely from his "high-jinks" in Berlin, but this should not obscure the reality that pursuit of action research by scholars can entail considerable personal, professional, and political risks (Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). Critics undertaking social movement action research might consider following Touraine's strategy of bifurcating intellectual labor into agitator and analyst categories to calibrate such risk. With this approach, one emphasis would be on rhetorical invention and public performance, while another focus would highlight theoretical reflection set back from the arena of public argument. Dialogue between the agitation and analysis dimensions, "flexions" (Touraine, 1978/1981, pp. 168–172), could enable researchers to reflect upon and build their intellectual identities, negotiate appropriate goals of action, invent novel strategies for using rhetorical practice to transform the political and cultural terrain, as well as document such efforts in scholarly publications.

In the realm of what Touraine calls "agitation," interventions into fields of public argument have potential to catalyze "conversion" of defensive struggles into new social movements. This was Touraine's (1980/1983) approach in his encounter with the French anti-nuclear movement, where he worked to ratchet up the movement's protest *telos* to a higher level of confrontation with the established order. Another example of this ratcheting process is evident in the case of *damnificado* protest in Guadalajara, Mexico. This protest, which originally began as a defensive struggle sparked by a massive chemical plant accident, was converted into a social movement when activists recalibrated their *telos* to challenge the patronage system of the Mexican government, a key pillar in the centralized power of Mexico's one-party political system (see Shefner & Walton, 1993, pp. 611–22). Through such maneuvers, protest groups transform their *raison d'être* and build fresh momentum to address new social conflicts. Rhetorical interventions through action research have unique potential to catalyze such conversions (see Schnurer, 2002), especially in light of Touraine's observation that the "the highest level meaning" of many contemporary social conflicts is located in practices of communication:

These [new social] movements are opposed to the large organizations that have the capacity to produce, distribute, and impose languages, information, and representations bearing upon nature, social order, individual and collective life. . . . At a time when political life appears to be increasingly organized around the choice between economic policies, the new social movements deal with problems that are practically excluded from public life and that are taken to be private. They take positions on health, sexuality, information, and communication, and on the relation of life and death. (Touraine, 1984/1988, p. 150; see also DeLuca, 1999a, p. 26)

Touraine's insight should cue the attention of public argument scholars—here is a major sociologist saying that many of society's contemporary controversies boil down

to conflicts over control of language, information and communicative practices. For ages, the study of rhetoric has focused on the project of building up people's claim-making capacity. Touraine argues that in the present milieu, this is precisely the type of critical project needed for new social movements to operate at the "highest level of meaning," one where they are able to spot, target, and counter attempts to impose foisted interpretations of the public interest and undermine systematically the conditions necessary for communicative *praxis* in public spheres of deliberation. Here, social actors access public debate both as a medium of communication and as a *stasis* of controversy (see Farrell, 2002; Schiappa, 2002).

Activists operating in this mode engage in what Kathryn Olson and Thomas Goodnight (1994, p. 251) call "discursive oppositional argument in social controversy," which "deploys refutation of claims and moves further to dispute the implied norms of participation signaled by the communication." Over time, people tend to lose awareness of these norms as they stabilize, become transparent, and recede into the background of social reality, just as fish take for granted the water through which they swim. However, moments of controversy triggered by powerful critique can rupture the smooth veneer of *doxa* through "criticism's version of biology's 'Heisenberg effect'," where critical intervention undermines the "unquestioned framework of values" in society (Klumpp & Hollihan, 1989, p. 90).

One mark of rhetorical criticism's Heisenberg effect can be seen in the example of action research undertaken to explore animal rights movement protest activity. Carol J. Adams' (1990) theory of the "absent referent" explains how various symbolic objectifications of meat and human body parts work in interlocking ways to render invisible the routinized, structural violence against both animals and women. Maxwell Schnurer's (2002a) social movement action research

draws from Adams' theory to invent discursive oppositional arguments designed to transform public discussion about issues relating to animal rights and feminist politics. Schnurer's rhetorical interventions, in the form of guerrilla (and gorilla!)¹ street theater, popular publications, musical performances, and public speeches, aim to rupture prevailing *doxa* by restoring the symbolic "absent referents" that mask violence.

This project expresses vividly Touraine's concept of social movement "conversion" through conglomeration of disaggregated struggles, since Schnurer's action research provides a "big tent" for punk rockers, feminists, and animal rights activists to join in a common avenue of protest activity. Such rhetorical intervention stimulates "social movement spillover," a phenomenon where "the ideas, tactics, style, participants, and organizations of one movement often *spill over* its boundaries to affect other social movements" (Meyer & Whittier, 1994, p. 277). The phenomenon of movement spillover can redouble momentum behind progressive social change, as overlapping camps of activists pool symbolic and material resources. Promoting spillover is, at root, a *rhetorical* project, since it requires inventing appropriate means of persuasion and translating these means into various movement languages to create political "cross-fertilization" (Schnurer, 2002a, pp. 171-177).

Phaedra Pezzullo's (2003) rhetorical critique of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month illustrates additional possibilities for public argument action research. Blending counterpublic sphere theory with participatory research techniques, Pezzullo mounts an incisive challenge to mainstream public discourse on breast cancer. In addition to publishing her arguments in scholarly outlets, Pezzullo amplifies her ideas through

participation in street theater "image events" (see DeLuca, 1999b), performed by the Toxic Links Coalition (TLC), a San Francisco-based activist group dedicated to stimulating public reflection on the causes of breast cancer. Like Schnurer, she embraces reflexivity by making her own role as a social actor part of her analysis: "My fieldwork with TLC suggests that using participant observation techniques enables rhetorical critics to explore the messy complexities of public life and the power negotiations involving emergent discourses and counterpublics" (Pezzullo, 2003, p. 361).

CONCLUSION

Stanley Aronowitz (1988, p. viii) heralded the English translation of Touraine's (1984/1988) *Return of the Actor* by observing that the book "can contribute to the revival of American social theory." Sixteen years later, Aronowitz's forecast seems prescient. The theme of the American Sociological Association's (ASA) 2004 national convention is "public sociologies," and Touraine is scheduled to address the membership during a high-profile keynote panel on August 14.

University of California sociology professor Michael Burawoy started planning the 2004 San Francisco convention shortly after his election as ASA president in 2002, when he ran on a platform advocating "a sociology that transcends the academy" (see Hausknecht, 2002). Several of the professional organization's key initiatives since then have reflected the spirit of public engagement expressed in Touraine's program of "action sociology." According to Burawoy (2003), public sociologies are "enjoying a renaissance"—in recent years ASA has launched a public interest magazine, created an award honoring exemplary public engagement, and weighed in on public debates about affirmative action and racial profiling.

This uptick in institutional support for public sociologies has stimulated a good deal

¹ Schnurer (2002b) has analyzed mainstream media coverage of his appearance at protest demonstrations wearing a gorilla suit.

of reflexive debate in the field, including commentary by such luminaries as Amitai Etzioni (2003) and Herbert Gans (2002, 2003). Responding to concerns that pursuit of public sociologies might jeopardize the field's legitimacy and compromise "core" academic research, Etzioni (2003) reflected on his own career:

I have wondered if I would have delivered more if I had spent all of my time either sticking to my sociological knitting or to public work. In retrospect, I say to those who are inclined to follow a similar course that the price one pays for a double life is worth paying and that it brings some handsome dividends, albeit not necessarily the kind you can cash in at the bank.

Etzioni (2003) went on to explain how his "double life" of academic research and public activism fused together, producing a synergistic coupling that enriched both scholarship and public argument:

I did benefit from my social science training and lessons in social philosophy in my public endeavors. For instance, a strategy for psychological disarmament (tension reduction) that Charles Osgood and I developed is based on concepts and findings drawn from social psychology. And my recommendations to President Carter drew on studies in socio-economics. At the same time, my academic work (like that of many other public intellectuals) gained from my public involvement. My public role reminded the scholar in me what was of significance and what was esoteric.

Etzioni's comments echo the dualistic logic embraced by new social movements, with oscillation between differentiated modes of activism producing a cycling effect that stimulates learning and builds political efficacy. Grounding political activism to a rigorous program of scholarly research checks the dogmatic tendencies of activism. In turn, the drift toward academic provincialism in scholarly research is countered by engagement in public spheres of argument, with such engagement continuously putting the meaning and significance of academic work in "big picture" context. Touraine sees cultivation of this process as a political and

professional imperative in an age when reflexive awareness of the capacity for social action is waning steadily, with the very idea of a "public" anything placed at risk by a rising tide of political cynicism and apathy.

Public argument scholars who are familiar with the litany of contemporary analyses bemoaning the erosion of American spheres of public deliberation will identify with the part of the 2004 ASA Convention Theme Statement declaring that one of the key challenges facing public sociology is: "To defend the very idea of the public, increasingly threatened by privatization programs, multinational firms, mass media, unfettered commerce, and national security regimes" (Burawoy, 2004a; see also Burawoy, 2004b).

Notably, the ASA leadership views public debate as an essential tool for meeting this challenge: "Public debate stimulates the sociological imagination just as it is necessary for a vibrant democracy" (Burawoy, 2003). In the field of communication, young scholars such as Kembrew McLeod, Phaedra Pezzullo, and Maxwell Schnurer continue to spark the imagination of colleagues with a style of intellectual work that creatively blends rigorous academic research with bold public interventions that breathe life into democratic spheres of public deliberation. Their work is inspiring partly because it is so innovative and unpredictable, with similar lines of critique refracted dramatically through multiple vectors of public argument, including guerilla street theater, op-ed pieces, punk rock concerts, media pranks, and art shows, not to mention scholarly publications in leading academic journals and books.

Such work also sparks imagination by showing how the kinetic energy of academic labor can fuel social movements. For decades, rhetoricians and sociologists have struggled gamely to fashion theoretical systems of generic classification that stabilize "social movement" as a theoretical category. This essay has largely skirted such theoretic-

cal debates and instead explored the promises and pitfalls of a research program informed by the idea that social movement happens when the gears of public deliberation swing into motion and the meanings of key terms in public discourse shift in the course of argument.

This line of inquiry presents a fresh take on the shopworn issue of social movement rhetoric's generic classification. For years, a perennial question facing rhetorical critics has been: Where is the rhetoric in social movements? Inverting this question re-frames the research challenge: Where is the social movement in rhetorical criticism? This reflexive turn plays to the strengths of public argument scholars who are capable of both explaining processes of argumentation to scholarly audiences and amplifying their findings to wider spheres of public deliberation. Since this double gesture jibes with recent trends in sociology, where "public sociology" and "action research" methodologies are gaining cachet, the time seems ripe for inter-field collaboration. Cross-field theorizing may enable public argument scholars to ratchet up the social movement potential of their rhetorical critiques, for example, by drawing on Touraine's action research model to inform interventions. Likewise, sociological analyses of "new social movements" stand to gain from cross-fertilization with public argument scholarship. Numerous sociologists suggest that a defining feature of new social movements is their tendency to locate pivotal points of social struggle in contests over communicative practices. Such contests have been studied extensively in the field of rhetoric, so public argument scholars are theoretically equipped to shed light on the communicative dynamics of new social movement protest. This essay argues for an approach to study of new social movement protest that is premised on the notion that public argument action research and new social movements share a common learning curve. Both use the inter-

play of public engagement and critical introspection to enkindle political energy and prompt reflection about how such energy can be channeled best toward efforts to make a better world.

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