

8 The Shadow System: A Local Public that Defies Formal Institutions

In Cintron's *Angels' Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life and Rhetorics of the Everyday*, the local public is a shadow system where everyday people demand respect under conditions that yield little of it. The image of the shadow system organizes Cintron's analysis from the late 1980s to mid-1990s of Angelstown, Cintron's name for an industrial city just west of Chicago. Though the shadow system operated throughout the city's street life, it was particularly intense when street gangs such as the Almighty Latin Kings Nation (or Kings) went public with their demand for respect. This intensity set in relief the contours that distinguish the shadow system as a distinctive local public.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: MIMICS AND SHELTERS DIFFERENCE

In mimicking the mainstream culture, or system world, the shadow system protects the difference between itself and the system world, and claims this difference as its identity.

Mimics. The shadow system mocks the system world of the dominant culture. Cintron explains: “[. . . T]he system world is the ‘substance’ that casts the shadow, a shadow that has the shape but is not equivalent to the system itself” (*Angels' Town* 176). The shadow system flaunts its parody of the system world.

Shelters Difference. The shadow system protects its parody of mainstream culture as its identity, “sheltering and nourishing its guerrilla life against a[n exclusionary] public sphere” (Cintron, *Angels' Town* 176).

THE SHADOW SYSTEM IN CONTEXT: LOCATION AND CULTURAL IMAGINARY

Shadow systems emerge where a cultural imaginary is at play, characterized by *topoi*, fissures, and ruptures.

Location. Location instantiates the cultural imaginary, whereby giving ideology its “muscl[e]” (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 160). The cultural imaginary is the ideological landscape that links cultural forms and the political unconscious to specific material conditions. Above all, the cultural imaginary of Angelstown humiliated those without capital—even as it worked to ensure that their access to capital wouldn’t significantly change. To individuals, lack of capital meant “raggedness” (223)—a condition that is itself humiliating in a materialistic culture with a fetish for “the neat and clean” and the “classy and noble” (172–73). To the Latinos of Angelstown, lack of capital meant being shunted to Ward 2, an area of town with one of the lowest property values—a political jurisdiction with limited voice in the local government, little access to the city’s resources, and home to several rival street gangs.

Topoi. *Topoi* are the commonplaces through which ideology structures the interpretative landscape of a given location, creating “a very tight knot of emotion, reality, and ideological interpretation” (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 152). *Topoi* exist in the culture at large and thus precede any shadow system. They are the fund of cultural meanings from which a shadow system manufactures its own subterranean and esoteric meanings. The rhetorical power of a single *topos* is its capacity to invoke simultaneously both itself and its opposite. The *topoi* that dominated the cultural imaginary of both Angelstown’s system world and the Kings’s shadow system include:

- neat and clean vs. dirt, death and decay
- tame vs. wild
- nation (stability and power) vs. individual (aloneness and fear of chaos)
- inscription vs. erasure
- respect vs. disrespect
- rationality and order vs. madness and disorder

Topoi from the system world provide the basis on which the shadow system constructs its power. Gangs' names such as the Insane Deuce Nation, The Insane Gangster Satan's Disciples Nation, and The Maniac Latin Disciplines Nation played/preyed upon the system world's claims on rationality and the flipside, its terror of the unpredictable, the disorderly, the irrational.

Topoi exert their ideological force by creating a "common sense" interpretation of the way things are. Topoi operating in the Kings' shadow system reinforced a logic of violence, an interpretative scheme based on the topos of disorder and, by extension, the assumption that "life is tough; most people are not to be trusted; always be wary; and defend yourself or get beaten up" (Cintron, *Angels' Town* 154). This is the same logic—based on the same topoi—that the system world of Angelstown (the police, city council and newspaper editorial staff) used to justify the moral high ground from which they judged and punished gang members, as much for the ideological threat they embodied as for the criminal activities they perpetrated. As they operate within the logic of violence, topoi dispel ambiguity and provide a "guiding ethos, in short, a sensible way (in some cases, a guaranteed way) to handle particular problems" (152).

Fissures. Exposing the artifice of the dominant culture, a fissure is a fault line that breaks open when mainstream topoi "fail to inspire" members in the margins of the system world (Cintron, *Angels' Town* 179). For instance, as an "overarching nation," the United States (and the local government for that matter), failed to inspire dedication and sacrifice from the disenfranchised in Angelstown, despite its claims on law and order. In that Angelstown's system world humiliated the Kings, its inability to inspire disenfranchised residents exposed "the chaos that [the nation state's] veneer of continuity, cohesion, stability and power were meant to seal" (179).

Ruptures. Erupting in the cracks of the system world, these ruptures redeem the shadow system; these acts demand respect by defying the system world that humiliates the shadow system. Operating within a logic of violence, ruptures in Angelstown's shadow system redeemed the shadow system by conquering space, appropriating symbols, and demanding respect. For example, a gang ruptured the system world by holding a picnic in the city park for two thousand of its mem-

bers. “From the perspective of the lifeworld of the gang members, the [picnic] scene was ‘righteous’ insofar as it asserted a defiant and just empowerment of their nation over and against the system world’s more bankrupt authority” (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 180).

TENOR THE DISCOURSE: THREATENING AND HYPERBOLIC

The shadow system exploits the capacity of its discourse to sound different to different audiences. Its exaggerated bravado sounds “unpredictable, menacing and violent” to members of system world who populate “the public sphere,” as well as to rival gangs (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 181). The same discourse is the sound of “solidarity and status” to fellow gang members (181).

TACTICAL LITERACIES

Through “artful dodges” a shadow system asserts its presence—both to rival shadow systems and to the outside system world (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 176). The term *tactic* comes from de Certeau’s analysis of power: “a tactic is mobile; it makes use of the cracks that appear within the ‘surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. . . . It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse . . . an art of the weak’” (qtd. in Cintron 175).¹ The Kings relied on the following tactics:

- *Graffiti*: highly stylized, unlicensed writing through which gangs proclaim *heart*; “a potent street term that conveyed one’s courage and love, indeed, one’s identity with a particular street gang” (*Angels’ Town* 177).
- *Throwing (hand) signs*: the use of hand gestures to assert the presence of one’s gang and, conversely, to disrespect rival gangs. For instance, the Kings threw the sign of the crown (holding down the right finger with one’s thumb) to assert the gang’s central symbol: the crown, proclaiming the “rulership” of the Kings (173).
- *Referencing*: appropriating available cultural material—from colors, clothes, jewelry, tattoos—to signal one’s allegiance to a gang, reinforcing its presence and dominance in a given territory.

Of these tactics, graffiti best exploits the capacity to function both as a *tactic of action* and a *tactic of language*. As a tactic of action, graffiti is a transgressive act that seizes property through force and bravado. As a tactic of language, the graffiti asserts discourse into the larger “public sphere” that otherwise would stay contained within the shadow system (175). For instance, the topos of nationhood permeated the letters, speeches, and plans that leaders of the Kings circulated among its members. The Kings’s graffiti captured and condensed these “subaltern narratives” of nationhood (themselves manufactured from system world’s topos) and then broadcasted them to the larger public, as in a stretch of graffiti that included an elaborately painted crown and the letters *L* and *K* for Latin Kings (171). To borrow from Warner, tactics exploit the world-making capacity of style.

RHETORICAL INVENTION: CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Appropriation takes a symbol from the system world and ascribes to it a new meaning that reinforces the internal integrity of the shadow. The shadow system depends on the system world’s “cultural material” as its “fund” of meaning (Cintron, *Angels’ Town* 167). For instance, the grammar through which the Kings’ graffiti disrespected rival gangs was predicated on mainstream “negative morphemes” such as “non,’ ‘un,’ or ‘not’” (169). The act of appropriating a cultural symbol from the system world also renders the symbol incomprehensible to the system world. Consider, for instance, Angelstown’s gangs’ appropriation of athletic clothing, a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball hat, or a sport jacket from the Iowa Hawkeyes or from the L.A. Kings. Once the clothing had been appropriated from the system world, the emblems and colors no longer referred to corporate sports teams but to street gangs. For instance, five holes left open on a basketball shoe symbolized “five,” the ruling number among Kings whose symbolic crown has five points. Cintron observes: “The referencing could be enormously elaborate, the only limit being the inventiveness and willingness of the King” (166). To signal their gang affiliation, members of the Kings appropriated anything from the initials of a sports team to the colors of a jacket or insignia.

IMPLICATIONS

1. *To understand a defiant local public is to understand the potential complexity of its relationships to other publics.*

As a shadow system, the Kings appropriated the system world's symbols as much to insult, impress, and dominate rival gangs as to defy the system world. Cintron observes that young gang members asserted their nationalistic affiliations to a gang not on the basis of politically motivated resistance to the overarching nation state (that education often came later, in prison) but rather in relation to "the increasingly organizational status of rival gang nations" (*Angels' Town* 179). So the tensions among their own and other subaltern publics may be more salient to a shadow system's members than their oppositional relationship to the dominant culture.

This insight is important to community-literacy studies. The term *counterpublic* holds great sway in contemporary discussions of public life (Squires 457–63; Warner 65–124). The term signals the way some local publics shelter oppositional identities and circulate discourses about those identities and interests to other publics (Coogan "Counterpublics"; Flower "Intercultural Knowledge"; Higgins, Long, and Flower). However, Cintron emphasizes that to understand shadow systems in terms of the literature on counterpublics, it's important to attend to the possibly complex (rather than simply dichotomous) relationships among multiple publics, both subaltern and dominant (cf. Squires).

2. *To exclude participants from local public discourse is to limit inquiry into pressing social issues.*

In that gangs commit egregious acts of murder, one could reasonably argue that gang life violates the very premise of civil society, thereby disqualifying gang members from legitimate civil discourse. Cintron himself anticipates and responds to this objection, and he offers three reasons to include street gangs in public discourse:

- To exclude gang members from public discourse is to "demonize" them (*Angels' Town* 224), to cast them as so "barbarous and verminlike, so completely outside the fold of the human community that they deserve to be removed" (166).

- To exclude gang members from public discourse is to reinforce Habermas's ideal public sphere that certifies only an elite to speak. Such a restrictive ideal is not only exclusionary, but it also limits the quality of discourse that a public can generate. Cintron puts it this way: "Within a restricted public sphere, not even contesting parties represent the entire realm of contestation that cycles throughout a society. The breadth and depth of contestation does not become aired partly because not all the varied voices have been certified [. . .]" (175).
- To exclude gang members from public discourse is to ignore the ways in which the larger political and economic forces create the conditions that give rise to gangs and their tactics. In part, exclusion from a public sphere forces marginalized people to develop their own "guerrilla life" and "tactics" in the first place (176). Cintron frames this issue as a question: "How expansive can any participatory democracy be when, lying at the furthest limits of its embrace, there exists criminality that is, at least, partially determined by the same socioeconomic and power differences that give rise to subaltern counterpublics?" (186).

Such arguments were enacted at Pittsburgh's CLC in the 1990s. Among the many things that Mark, Pierre, and other young men at the CLC taught me is that—at least for young men in Pittsburgh at the time—gang membership was not necessarily clear cut. As teenagers, Mark "flirt[ed] with the possibility of joining a gang" (Peck, Flower, and Higgins 199), and Pierre knew first hand how a group of friends could turn to and into a gang "for power and control" (217). Yet because of the situated knowledge and rhetorical prowess that these young men brought to community problem-solving dialogues, their commentaries lifted local public deliberation on issues of risk and respect to a degree other contributors couldn't rival—particularly regarding schools' suspension policies, the police department's racial profiling practices, and the city's curfew policy.

Cintron's interpretative scheme of a shadow system is interesting in its own right. It also helps to illuminate implications that follow from other defiant local publics, such as those included in table 6:

Table 6. A comparison of three defiant local publics.

1. The Guiding Metaphor and Its Features	2. Context and Prominent <i>topoi</i>	3. Tenor of the Discourse	4. Literacies	5. Rhetorical Invention
Cintron's shadow system	mimics, shelters difference	transgressive / hyperbolic	tactical literacies: e.g., graffiti, throwing signs	cultural appropriation
Gilmore's theater	public, prominent	nasty / proud	doing steps: e.g., a mock instructional routine	organized competition
Rezzullo's theater	risky, mobile	offensive / persuasive	cultural performances: e.g., exposing mastectomy scar	a "circular pattern between the [...] social and the stage"

- the local public in Gilmore's 1991 study of literacy achievement in an inner-city public school, where on the playground girls confronted teachers' unsound judgments about them as learners; and
- the local public in Pezzullo's 2003 study of the Toxic Link Coalition (TLC). Parading throughout San Francisco's financial district, the TLC's toxic tour exposed corporations responsible for producing and profiting from cancer-causing chemicals and toxins.

Gilmore's Public Performance. The local public in Gilmore's "'Gimme Room': School Resistance, Attitude, and Access to Literacy" is a discursive site of "public and prominent [. . .] performance" (67). The performances were public in that they transformed a public-school playground into a public space where girls confronted "the school's undermining doubt in their ability" (69) and pleaded for their "right [. . .] as individuals [. . .] to instructional circumstances where pride and ownership are the central features of learning" (69–70). Their exuberance performances pervaded recess, "turn[ing] passersby into audiences" (59).

Teachers and administrators heard the tenor of girls' discourse as "[n]asty," associated with "black 'street'" culture, so they banned the discourse from the playground (Gilmore 65). To the girls, the discourse sounded something closer to collective pride: "[N]ot merely defiant; [. . .] not merely black[, . . . but also] face-saving, a way of maintaining dignity through collective autonomy" (69).

What literate practice could cause such controversy? The girls called it "doing steps," playsongs incorporating rhythmic chants with choreographed movement. The most controversial was "Mississippi," a "mock [. . .] instructional routine" in which a chorus of girls performed the role of "an aggressive and suspicious teacher" who challenges a student to spell the difficult word, *Mississippi* (Gilmore 69). One of the girls would then assume the role of student, "tak[ing] on the dare" with a "swagger" indicating "that the performance is fully within the range of her competencies" (69). What really got the teachers was the sexual undercurrent in the girls' movements. Shaping their bodies into the letters required to spell Mississippi, when steppers came to the letter S, they moved in ways that teachers said looked "'suggestive [. . .] like an orgasm'" (65). The "taboo breaking and sexual innuendo"

that Gilmore characterizes as “consistent with tradition in children’s folklore” (59) teachers read as evidence of the girls’ “sexual experience” (71). On the basis of the “bad attitude” the discourse embodied, girls who “did steps” were banned from the Academic Plus Program. Consequently, “a bright child who might be achieving academically, but whose behavior is characteristic of a ‘bad attitude,’ would not be admitted” (58).

3. *The gutsy willfulness to lift the veil on the system world’s hidden hypocrisies is part of what makes the rhetorical force of a counterpublic so compelling.*

We don’t have to venture into gang territory to find fault lines. A fissure is evident, too, in Gilmore’s “Gimme Room.” As a microcosm for the system world, the school upheld such topoi as:

- white vs. black
- cultured vs. street
- control vs. unruly
- polite vs. bad.

The fault line ruptured when these topoi ceased to inspire girls to suspend their “black street vernacular” in order to learn in school (Gilmore 70). For instance, the teachers’ descriptions of stepping exposed the *control-vs.-unruly* topoi that infiltrated the school grounds. In those situations when teachers didn’t read the performances as sexual, they said they found the steps incomprehensible, “like nothing I’ve ever seen before” and “like an epileptic fit,” another “disordered” and “unruly” force that mainstream practices are hard pressed to control (Gilmore 65). Cintron’s observation about Angelstown is apt here, as well: “Locate the anxiety of a public sphere, and one will have located the limit for engaging in rational discourse[. . . A] public sphere can not ‘think’ beyond what terrifies it” (*Angels’ Town* 194). In exposing a fissure in the *control vs. unruly* topoi, the girls exposed one of mainstream culture’s worst fears: that not just teachers but society at large will lose control of “threat[ening]” and “aggress[ive]” African American youth (Gilmore 71).

Seizing this fissure, the steppers’ shadow system exposed the hypocrisy that mistook decorum for intellectual aptitude and suitability for the Academic Plus Program. In the quote that follows, Cintron is talking about Angelstown’s civic response to newspaper coverage of

a street-side funeral for gang members, but he could just as well be describing teachers' responses to the girls' steps: "In gobbling up the images, the mainstream felt that it had the evidence that proved the legitimacy of its views" (167). The irony, of course, is that the alleged legitimacy of the teachers' judgment is itself based the logic of violence "in so far as the mainstream positioned itself atop a moral high ground from which to judge and punish" (Cintron, *Angels' Town* 167). Atop this moral high ground, the teachers in Gilmore's study judged and punished students by excluding them from academic enrichment. "Though a good attitude was seen as a means to an end (i.e., literacy achievement), the focus was so intense and exclusive that instructional interaction simply got stuck there" (Gilmore 69). By choosing to do steps on the school playground, the steppers exposed the hypocrisy in their teachers' judgments about them.

4. As rhetoricians we do well to think carefully about the legacies of vernacular literacies, their consequences, and the possibility of also designing and supporting inventive literacies suited to border crossing.

Incomprehensibility is the measure of effective appropriation. Steppers successfully appropriated the instructional routine they mocked. Not only were "the words and meaning [of the girls' stepping routines] virtually intelligible" to the teachers, but stepping also hid evidence of the very linguistic competencies the teachers said the students lacked (Gilmore 66). The irony, of course, is that in achieving this feat of appropriation, the children lost out, severed from the resources of a challenging if contrived academic enrichment program.

On the one hand, a reader might anticipate that Gilmore would defend stepping as a practice that kept children in touch with their ethnic heritage, for stepping and other playsongs have a rich tradition in African-America culture (Logan; Richardson; Smitherman). But a mother who read the draft of Gilmore's study rejected this interpretation. Sure, it was racist to associate "polite" with "white" and "black vernacular culture" with "bad" (71). But she emphasized that stepping, its counterpart stylized sulking, and for that matter Gilmore's study itself cast children in reductive roles reminiscent of racist portrayals of African Americans in American history (71).

The mother's insight makes me wonder, *What options did the teachers and administrators at the girls' public elementary school have, besides prohibiting the girls from expressing resistance in the schoolyard?* Fast for-

ward fifteen years, and consider an after-school-program that offers stepping as a formal group activity. To my mind, the program reveals a problematic aspect of appropriation: the system world can readily reappropriate cultural material to serve its own interests. Representing an urban neighborhood organization, a group of young steppers took a thirty-mile bus trip in the spring of 2006 to perform publicly at the college where I was then teaching. On the one hand, seeing so many kids exert so much of the same energy at the same time and in the same space was fun to watch. But performed on the stage of a college auditorium, stepping lost much of its rhetorical force. It was the pervasive groupthink that got me, kids chanting in unison a message that in light of Gilmore's essay could only sound ironic: "Take away all these wonderful teachers, and who will teach me?" and "Help me bloom into a beautiful flower" (*Fusion*). Possibly the community organization also sponsors programs where kids get to think and to speak for themselves. But promoted as the organization's flagship after-school program, only the steppers got to go public.²

My point isn't to criticize a specific program but rather to emphasize that as community educators we have options besides either banning or reappropriating a subaltern's tactics. Cintron allows himself a long paragraph to imagine some design literacies for creating a "public forum" in Angelstown that could have constituted a viable form of local social justice (*Angels' Town* 195). He sketches a forum where members of gangs and mainstream culture "document[. . .] the assumptions and beliefs of all parties so that they could be later deconstructed" (195). But for as much that Cintron ventures forth, he is also quick to add an important qualification. "In the Angelstown of 1990 and 1991 such an approach would have been outrageous" (196). Conceding that his "solution [. . .] lacks the necessary subtlety," he also defends it on the grounds that "rhetorical invention must begin somewhere" (196). By documenting the challenges and pitfalls inherent in this test case, Cintron identifies ways in which design literacies may serve as experiments in local social justice, inviting participants to think past us-them dichotomies and to expand literate repertoires "to cross publics" (Higgins and Brush 699).

Additional implications of the shadow system as a distinctive local public are evident in Pezzullo's study of a toxic tour that used obstructionist tactics to visit the doorsteps of corporations who produce or profit from carcinogenic chemicals.

Pezzullo's Risky Mobile Theater. The local public in Pezzullo's "'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances" is a "risky mobile theater" through which the TLC toured the financial district of San Francisco in October 3, 2001 (Pezzullo 355). The tour was mobile in that through its performances it "took TLC's grievances to the doorsteps of institutions that it believes are responsible for producing and enabling toxic pollution" (347). The tour called attention to companies that "pinkwash" breast cancer by sponsoring National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) in order to cast their companies as promoters of women's health, but obfuscate the fact that their companies profit from the sales of carcinogenic chemicals or the manufacture of cancer-causing toxins. Pezzullo points to AstraZenica, a company that not only sponsored NBCAM but also profited from the sales of pharmaceutical drugs that treat breast cancer (346). The TLC aimed at exposing such inconsistencies.

The toxic tour risked offending potentially sympathetic audience members. Not only did the tour defy pedestrians' and drivers' efforts to get to their destinations, but the tour also capitalized on and circulated ghoulish iconography, most prominent the pink breast-cancer-awareness ribbon inverted to represent a noose.

Though offensive, the tenor of the discourse also attempted persuasion. Striking a chord that was "difficult to ignore and perhaps even more difficult to forget," the discourse "shock[ed]" and "disgust[ed]" onlookers (Pezzullo 356). The same discourse also struck a "potentially persuasive" tenor (361) by rivaling the early-detection message of the NBCAM with an alternative: to "stop cancer where it starts" (354). Pezzullo explains: "By linking toxins and cancer, health and wealth, environmental justice and feminism, TLC has offered a potentially persuasive counterdiscourse to NBCAM's response to the U.S. breast cancer epidemic" (361). The toxic tour demonstrated "the limits of a dichotomous conceptualization of publics and counterpublics" (345). Pezzullo writes: "[W]hen public dialogues reflect a multi-faceted negotiation of power, it is particularly important to recognize the complexity of various public spheres without reducing conflicts to mere binaries" (349).

The tour featured "cultural performances" (Pezzullo 356). Some performances the TLC had planned, such as that of Queen and King

of Cancer who had “painted their faces white with large black circles around their eyes and dark lipstick” to “heighten their deadly looks” (355). Peeling from the King’s face was dead skin, “contributing to his aura of deterioration” (355). Other performances were more spontaneous. For instance, though not part of the scripted five-stop itinerary, a cancer-survivor named RavenLight drove up to the mobile theater and emerged from her car in order to “lend her body” to the protest (355). RavenLight “walked in front of the police line, unbuttoned her dress, pulled out her right arm, and exposed her mastectomy scar” (356). “As the tour crowd cheered,” RavenLight and her companion, donning a gas mask, “began posing for photographs” (356). Witnessing the performance, the police did nothing. Had RavenLight exposed a breast, she could have been arrested for indecent exposure. However, in revealing the scar, she denied the police the grounds to arrest her.

5. It may be that at its best, a shadow system opens up a discursive space that suspends the logic of violence and replaces it with an alternative that tolerates ambiguity.

Cintron explains that the logic of violence in Angelstown turned on a notion of moral high ground that was itself anchored in the same exploitation of power. Angelstown’s shadow system took this contradiction to its logical extreme. In stand-offs between the Kings and majoritarian society (and the Kings and its rival gangs), each group leapt to what it considered the moral high ground to justify annihilating the other. With its finger-pointing and blame-laying, the logic governing toxic tour in Pezzullo’s study makes a similar claim to the moral high ground; likewise, this moral high ground destabilizes the group’s rhetorical effect. To the extent that the leaders of the toxic tour wanted not only to expose hypocrisy but also to change practices, the TLC’s allegations against corporations may have been “right,” but its shame-blame game—with its strong moral underpinnings—would have likely undermined the activists’ ethos within the system world rather than convince corporations to change their ways.

Ultimately, Pezzullo credits the toxic tour not with persuading corporations to change their practices or even persuading onlookers to join their contempt for corporate deception, but with opening up an alternative space for human connection. In sum, the rhetorical power of a shadow system may lie not in its capacity to invoke the logic of violence with which to intimidate others through threatening hyperbole,

but rather in the capacity to create surprising moments that suspend this very logic—moments based on an alternative logic that is capable of tolerating ambiguity.³

Consider an encounter between a passerby and RavenLight. Here, RavenLight's act of defiance—obstructing law and order by turning an anti-obscenity law on its head—led serendipitously to a quiet moment of human connection. Pezzullo relays the encounter like this:

Continuing on the tour, we walked up a steep San Francisco street and RavenLight turned to the side to look for oncoming traffic. A woman who looked to be under 30—perhaps only because she wore pig-tails—stepped between RavenLight and me. When she saw RavenLight's chest, she gasped. We stopped. RavenLight glanced back in the woman's direction. The young woman then reached one hand out in the direction of RavenLight's exposed scar as she brought her other hand to her own chest, which was covered with a T-shirt that sank to her touch. Her eyes filled with tears and she said, "Sister—you are so brave." RavenLight smiled, and they hugged. (356)

In this moment, RavenLight's performance operated no longer within a logic of violence—invoking law and order by defying it—but something that could well fall under what Cintron has called "the logic of trust" (*Angels' Town* 146). "In that moment, [. . .] expos[ing] our physical, emotional, and political scars [. . .] all three of us, the woman in red who risked contact, the woman in pigtails who risked reaching out to communicate, and the observer who risked sharing that intimate exchange, felt present" (Pezzullo 356). For Cintron, the logic of trust depends not upon some gooey altruism but on an intellectually and emotionally rigorous way-of-being that engages ambiguity. Below, Cintron contrasts the logics of violence and trust, particularly the former's inability to entertain ambiguity:

The logic of violence represented a kind of brute cause and effect relationship [. . .] and I grudgingly admired its mythic, destructive clarity [. . .]. In contrast, the logic of trust deflected the momentum and inevitability of the logic of violence by calling some its premises into question. In a sense, the logic

of trust interrupted the relationship between cause and effect; it *destabilized* judgment and punishment and made both *less sure* [. . .]. (*Angels' Town* 151–52, emphasis added)

Like West's freedom fighter (*Race* 150) and Flower's rival-hypothesis stance, the logic of trust tolerates ambiguity. "[T]he logic of trust weakens [. . . violence's] scaffolding by *finding doubt* and heretofore *unimagined complexity*. It is not as swift, divisive, obvious, nor, of course, as divisive" (Cintron, *Angels' Town* 153, emphasis added). Cintron doubts that the people whom he observed in Angelstown would choose to suspend the logic of violence for the logic of trust. Rather than documenting it happening—even once—he capitalizes on the limits of public discourse (194–96). The promise of Pezzullo's study is the glimpse it provides of an alternative public discourse forged not in the certainty of defiant violence, but in the ambiguity of trust.

6. *Embodied rhetoric makes a place for the body politic, affect, and desire in local public discourse.*

While Cintron holds to the *rationality and order vs. madness and disorder* topoi for their explanatory power, Pezzullo's analysis of a defiant local public evokes then moves beyond these topoi. Tracking the *rationality and order vs. madness and disorder* topoi at play in Angelstown leads Cintron to two of his most significant insights: (1) a public can't think beyond the fear that terrorizes it, and (2) the topos of disorder is often evoked by "those who perceive that the management of society has failed them" (*Angels' Town* 184). These insights are relevant not only to Angelstown, but to the local publics in Gilmore's and Pezzullo's studies, as well. For instance, the steppers' apparent epileptic seizures and orgasms threatened the teachers' senses of rationality and control. Likewise, RavenLight threatened chaos by thwarting the police's claim on law and order. Yet Pezzullo's study not only relies upon the *rationality and order vs. madness and disorder* topoi but also moves beyond them.

Pezzullo positions the TLC's toxic tour in terms of one of the most radical arguments in contemporary public-spheres studies: that "the body, affect, and desire disrupt the normative discursive logics of publics" (Deem qtd. in Pezzullo 351).⁴ Debunking the privileged status not only of rationality, but also reasonableness, in public discourse, toxic tour activists "challenged and changed the meanings of the world not

through good reasons but through vulnerable bodies, not through rational arguments but through bodies at risk” (Deluca qtd. in Pezzullo 357).⁵ By exposing her scar, RavenLight made members of her audience confront the fears that terrorize it—challenging some in the audience to relate to her more fully because of her performance.

7. Public rhetoricians can make significant social contributions by interpreting embodied rhetoric for others.

Looking for meaningful work as an activist rhetorician? Pezzullo describes a position available to qualified practitioners. To a system world accustomed to point-driven reasoning, the meaning of embodied rhetoric can be hard to grasp, difficult to retain, and, thus, tempting to dismiss. In the same way that Cintron decodes the logic of violence operating in Angelstown, Pezzullo interprets the significance of RavenLight’s performance within the rhetoric of the toxic tour:

Her [RavenLight’s] body’s performance [. . .] *suggests* that if we wish to transform politics, *we need to expose* our physical, emotional, and political scars. *We need to wonder* why we feel compelled to look and/or to look away. In terms of TLC’s political campaign, *we need to consider* the costs of our production of toxins. *We need to examine* the reasons why a breast cannot be present in our body politic until it is absent. By extension, *we need to ask*, what is the place of women in our body politic? (emphasis added, 356)

Pezzullo calls for discourse ambassadors who can cross local publics to interpret body politics for audiences not yet literate in such rhetorics. Fluency with public literacies is likewise the goal of many college-level public-writing courses, the focus of the next chapter.