

























lyn takes this opportunity to solicit his views on the Rhetoric Culture Project, ethnomethodology and discourse analysis. By analysing the everyday conversations of the Mambila of Cameroon, Zeitlyn argues that it is possible to study how kinship emerges from people's rhetorical practices, which includes the endless ways in which people contest their own kinship relations. This is because, quoting Carsten, 'kinship is a process of becoming, not a fixed state ... it consists of the many small actions, exchanges, friendships and enmities that peoples themselves create in their everyday lives. For most people it is perhaps the heart of their creativity'.

Creating positive alternative social configurations is best exemplified in Felix Girke's chapter, 'Establishing Ethos: The Rhetorical Work of Bondfriendship'. Here Girke provides a compelling case for how institutionalized exchange relations, called *beltamo* (bondfriendship) in Kara (and Hamar) – and found throughout Southern Ethiopia under different names – 'have a value quite incommensurable with the material benefits accrued'. Without dismissing the economic advantages of such relations, especially risk reduction through livestock dispersion, he claims that one-sided regionalistic arguments have their own shortcomings. Drawing on broader comparisons with Melanesia, Girke acknowledges the performative and persuasive aspects of bondfriendship and builds his argument that such relations allow men 'to extend their agency beyond their local group, by persuading others to acknowledge the value of their activity'. Put differently, individuals come to be defined by their relationships with others and the complementary networks that emerge from bondfriendships. Cultivating such life-long bonds helps men to establish personal ethos, which is enhanced by convincing their respective communities to appreciate the material benefits and social value that such non-kin relations have to offer. As Girke so aptly puts it: 'the bond matters, the friends matter, and the –ship, the stabilization of practice, it matters as well and should interest us most'.

Whereas Kara men prove their qualities (or 'ethos') through the public act of cultivating bondfriendships, Shauna LaTosky's chapter, 'The Rhetorics of Purging among the Mun (Mursi) of Southern Ethiopia', offers a lively discussion of what it takes to prove one's quality as a good husband, age-mate, cousin, neighbour and so on. For the Mun, an important locus of rhetorical energy is the body. According to LaTosky, the public act of purging strengthens not only the body, but also social bonds between kin and non-kin. Those who can provide the means for others to purge are recognized and appreciated as generous, caring, compassionate, loyal, reliable, strong and/or loving, depending on the context. This is best illustrated through the collective and everyday practice of purging spicy coffee, which helps to create and maintain meaningful and lasting social relations. LaTosky's detailed ethnographic findings are useful for understanding how social actions operate rhetorically through both material

things (purgatives) and discourse (talk about purging). She also discusses a new kind of rhetoric (a specialized knowledge of biomedicine) that is outgrowing the ability of (purging) rhetoric to handle such modern issues (cf. Brummett 2014: 34).

Steffen Strohmenger's chapter provides a specific account of what it takes to 'prove one's quality as somebody worthy of being loved'. In 'The Art of Playing *Tuql*: How to "Make" Love in Egypt', the author looks at the art of love semantics in Egypt, called *tuql*. He argues that this rhetorical strategy is aimed at 'bringing a (potential) love relationship into existence'. The strategy of trying to win the love of another person involves questions of silence and resistance, but also dishonesty and deceit. An important issue raised is the gendered nature of *tuql*: 'That is to say, while the man *can* be "hard to get" to increase his chances of love, the woman faces the problem that she *must* be "hard to get" to have any chance of love at all'. Strohmenger's study shows how, and the extent to which, gendered rules of *tuql* still apply in contemporary Egypt. Although Strohmenger does not situate his study in a historical context, one will no doubt find interesting parallels between *tuql* and ancient Egyptian rules of rhetoric 'which specify that knowing when not to speak is essential, and very respected, rhetorical knowledge' (Hutto 2002: 213). The point of knowing when to use – or *not* to use – the appropriate language, whether to speak to a child, a husband, an elder or an age-mate, for example, is taken up in the final chapter of Part II.

As we have already mentioned, social relations are produced by culture-specific ways of teaching and learning how people should relate to one another. Ivo Strecker's exposition of 'enculturation as rhetorical practice' helps us, theoretically and empirically, to better grasp this important truth. His fine-grained analysis of Hamar thought and expressiveness on the matter is embedded in the presentation of two new developments relevant for rhetoric culture studies. The first is a reappraisal of the 'science' of education, which has recently begun to position education as a rhetorical practice (Rutten and Soetaert 2012), and the second is resonance theory (Maranda 2011), which explains transcultural understanding as semantic fields that reverberate against each other. Strecker's discourse analysis tries to bring out this 'reverberation' between the semantic fields of Hamar and those of his own. Before he presents and analyses several texts recorded in Hamar, he mentions a particular characteristic of empirical rhetoric culture studies: the prospective excitement experienced at the very moment of recording. 'But the relevance of any recording', Strecker remarks, 'cannot be anticipated in full, and as the researcher later embarks on analysis, many new surprises will be waiting for him'. The detailed textual analysis is preceded by the observation that 'education' is perceived similarly as a 'leading out' in Hamar and the West, but the metaphorical repertoires by which this is

expressed vary. Thus, in Hamar the ‘leading out’ is likened to herding goats. There is no room here to mention all the subtle rhetorical means of enculturation, which Strecker discovers in the texts he has chosen to analyse, but we would like to draw attention to at least the following example where Balambe (the ethnographer’s host and mentor) says the following: ‘Another child doesn’t know how to speak: “What’s stopping that child from speaking?” So, going down to the waters of Galeba or to the waters of Kara, water is poured into a white gourd: “Let the child drink water from the flowing rivers. Let him know how to speak.” Thus he is given water from the flowing river to drink.’ Strecker comments: ‘Could there be a more moving way to speak of the desire for fluent speech and how it might be realized?’ He then points to how for a long time already such metaphorical *cum* magical action has intrigued Western scholars, for example James Frazer, Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Kenneth Burke and Stanley Tambiah.

Part III of the collection continues to explore the struggles and the play of attraction and repulsion that goes on in social relations, which we have called contestation. Contestation underpins the challenges, obstacles, uncertainty and precarious nature of social relations. As will become clear in the contributions in Part III, the success or failure of individuals, communities and/or institutions to devise persuasive models of social relations, especially in times of changing circumstances, has to do with everything from understanding the appropriate context for using speech repertoires – from politeness speech to swear words – to identifying how relations of power make claims on our attention and confine the reach and impact of rhetoric as dialogic discourse (see especially Abbink and Peveri). The rhetoric of contestation develops in tandem with the rhetoric of bonding, reflecting the contradictions in social processes and the intense rivalries that can build up. The human need for ‘difference’, for identification with one group and not with others, is a given and generates rhetoric energy directed at ‘others.’ We see this in all five chapters in Part III.

In the first chapter of Part III, on ‘Contestation, Anke Reichenbach’s contribution, ‘Sweet Tongues: The Rhetoric of Politeness in Damascus’, exemplifies the rhetorical role of politeness speech in everyday social relations – but paying attention to tacit contestation. This compassionate and thorough investigation of ‘the preferred strategies of social face-care’ in Damascus draws on Brown and Levinson’s classic model of politeness theory and indigenous concepts and stylistic devices of (im)polite discourse. The discursive approach that she takes falls into three categories, commonly distinguished in the literature as ‘the first, second and third waves’ of politeness research (see Grainger 2011). Although Reichenbach herself does not refer to such distinctions, her critical and in-depth analysis of key politeness concepts reveals her awareness of them. The discerning role that local concepts play, particularly in terms of

making socially acceptable and moral judgements of others (cf. Mitchell and Haugh 2015), is applied to various social politeness encounters. The depth of her empirical analysis can be attributed to her intimate knowledge of Arabic, which helps her to understand the everyday contexts in which politeness terms are applied, but also the tensions created when politeness is used to veil impolite behaviour. While her findings show that positive forms of politeness (i.e. ‘sweet words’) are predominantly used in Damascus (e.g. compliments, greetings, etc.), they can also be – and are – used in negative ways (for instance to mark status difference or to dominate others). While her focus here is on the discursive aspects of politeness, her study nonetheless provokes a certain curiosity about the embodied actions of such performances when she writes: ‘Greeting a visitor in Bab Tuma was – at least in the eyes of a European observer – a loud and long-winded affair involving a lot of kissing, hugging and smiling.’

In his seminal book *Language and Social Relations*, Asif Agha has explained that ‘we cannot understand the variety of social relations enactable in social life without coming to grips with the range of reflexive relationships expressible through speech’ (2007: 17). The vital role of language for reinforcing or sharpening social relationships inspired du Mesnil – and several other authors in Part III – to explore the use of specific speech repertoires, and like the ancient Egyptian rules of rhetoric mentioned in reference to Strohmeier’s chapter, ‘knowledge of when not to use it’ (ibid.). As the first two chapters show, many context-specific registers exist that, like Agha’s understanding of slang (2015) mentioned above, ‘are definable only through relationships’ (cf. Agha 2015: 311). Susan du Mesnil notes that using a specific form of slang – swear words – can be interpreted as an act of social cohesion (cf. Jay 2000). The persuasive impact of swearing has sparked significant debate in sociolinguistics, psychology and other fields of research. Although du Mesnil initially wrote this perceptive text (a lecture) long before it became a popular topic, it has lost none of its originality. In her study of German business and engineering students, du Mesnil measured the use of English swear words in terms of taboo strength, and she provides numerous examples of how ‘taboo strength does not match cross-culturally’. That is, while swearing in a foreign language might be one way to gain social approval, there are also unintended social consequences, as the local connotations of foreign swear words in different (national) contexts can be widely disparate – and deeply embarrassing. The author goes on to infer ‘a relatedness of choice of language and political developments’, which means that ‘socio-political and wider “cultural” conditions have a clear impact on the rhetorics of swearing, and may be related to new, more individualist subjectivities in contemporary post-industrial European society’. Du Mesnil ends with a set of provocative images in order to ask

the question: Are visual symbols currently replacing the emotional strength of words or texts? Developments in contemporary cyberspace seem to bear this out.<sup>21</sup>

Valentina Peveri's chapter is an excellent example of the diverse ways in which rhetoric – in this case, 'the rhetoric of nutrition policies' – creates tension in social relations when it challenges 'traditional' local practices and national identities. After reading this chapter, the popular expression 'We are what we eat!' immediately comes to mind, along with its chiasmic equivalent, 'We eat what we are!' Within the context of Ethiopian nutrition policies and nation-building, of which schoolchildren and their parents are in part the subject, Hadiyya farmers, who already face, accept and combat conditions of environmental uncertainty by cultivating and storing ensete (a drought-resistant plant), must now live with the added uncertainty as to the meaning of new rhetoric related to national nutrition policies, school programmes and the long-term effects of such policies on their children and communities. Given the rhetorical value – and current devaluing – of ensete, food has become the rhetorical language through which a sense of belonging, ethnic identity and ethnic nationalism are expressed. As Valentina writes: 'we find a nationally constructed idea of what being a modern citizen should entail – that is, learning a structure of taste which revolves around *injera* as the common ground for the palate as well as for achieving a full sense of Ethiopianness'. More broadly, the testimonies that she includes ask: 'how could young people feel that they are part of the nation if the approved type of meal configuration does not capture the story of the *ensete* – its dignity, salience, resilience, and comforting taste – into the national [food] basket?' Using detailed ethnographic examples, Valentina positions current education on food and nutrition, especially in the school curriculum, as rhetorical practices of nation/identity-building. This case of ensete growers in Ethiopia 'offers an alternative narrative framework where ecosystems are densely interconnected with social relationships'.

Jon Abbink looks at Suri social life to show how power constrains rhetorical efficiency, showing that traditional means of rhetoric are not always enough to confront issues that are too vast to make sense of. The empirical examples he chooses help to illuminate different rhetorical perspectives found both within and outside of Suri (e.g. Suri rhetoric about the state vs. state rhetoric about the Suri). Under close scrutiny of the political and socio-economic changes taking place in Suri today, such perspectives emerge as highly political. According to Abbink, the rhetorical strength of the Suri to express their position has weakened and, as a result, many young Suri no longer act on the rhetoric used by elders, but are finding their own ways to make sense of modern development rhetoric in their area. As Abbink argues, there are realities that exist 'beyond their rhetorical construction'. Abbink's observations of how

effectively (or ineffectively) rhetoric is translated and its ability (or inability) to capture the imagination of the younger generation lead him to ask how we can ‘go beyond the presentation of rhetorical ingenuities and strategies in various social contexts.’ He suggests that an analysis of rhetoric as ideology (or, in a more analytic manner, ‘cognition’ in that specific society) would allow us to better connect to differing interests and inequalities that form the stuff of human social relations. This matter of defining what rhetoric is or can become (e.g. ideology) and what rhetoric actually does for social relations is further examined in the next – and final – chapter.

Michał Mokrzan provides a lucid account of the rhetorical strategies of coaching and the ways in which they ‘motivate individuals to become more efficient, be satisfied with their own achievements and feel greater responsibility’ in various areas of social relations. Based on extensive ethnographic research with coaches and coachees, Mokrzan shows that the rapid growth of coaching in Poland, and worldwide, goes hand in hand with the dissemination of neoliberal technologies/ideologies of ‘governmentality’ in the domain of social relations, especially work relations. The explicit use of rhetoric in coach-coachee relations is expressed using different persuasive tools, from inspiring attitudinal change (e.g. through metaphors) to building rapport (e.g. through mirroring), to bypass or neutralize disagreement or contestation in the case of ‘unwilling’ coachees. At the heart of this chapter is again rhetoric culture theory, which provides a useful theoretical backdrop for understanding the persuasive and performative language used by coaches to motivate positive change in their coachees (i.e. as neoliberal ‘subjects’) and to influence spheres of social relations beyond the self (cf. Farrell 1993: 3).

## BEGINNING WITH THE END, ENDING WITH THE BEGINNING

Although our treatment of rhetoric in social relations relates primarily to *how* people communicate, from the parts of speech they use, to the multiple and competing discourses/discursive strategies that shape and are shaped by social relations, we also acknowledge, as previous volumes in the *Studies in Rhetoric and Culture* series have done, the importance of chiasmic relationships (see Strecker and Tyler 2009a: 9; Tyler and Strecker 2009: 21; and especially Paul and Wiseman 2014: 1–2). This is the concern of Jamin Pelkey’s opening chapter on chiasmus that we briefly introduced above. In his recent review of the first *Studies in Rhetoric and Culture* series books, Pelkey (2016a) wrote that ‘chiasmus is ... something of a hermeneutic key or prism’ (Paul and Wiseman 2014: 7, 12), enabling us to identify, perform and better understand reversals in perspective or behaviour (see Bollig 2014: 172; Lewis 2014: 188, 199, 212;

Strecker 2014: 87) and better enabling us ‘to live in harmony’ (Paul 2014: 42) with people, ideas and other entities that are ‘at once diverse and in relationship’ (see Pelkey 2016a: 31). We take seriously Pelkey’s advice that insights from phenomenologically embodied cognition may be of use to the Rhetoric Culture Project. Chiasmus is one key element in this venture, as it is a remarkably widespread figure of human thought. As Pelkey further suggests (2016b: 32), ‘typologies of chiasmus are ... needed; and to this end, Paul’s (2014) thoughtful and richly illustrated proposal of four basic categories of chiasmus patterning (cross, mirror, circle, spiral)’ was adopted in his chapter for this volume. Pelkey’s innovative attempt to refine and ground Paul’s (2014) four chiasmus classifications is done using the phenomenon of chiasmus as of bodily movement and interaction in an upright X-posture (see also Pelkey 2016b, 2017). Such a detailed analysis of the dynamics of X-posed figures, which are found throughout our evolutionary past, provides intriguing evidence that the ubiquitous meanings of ‘spread-eagle logos’ found today ‘are rooted far more deeply in the phenomenology and body memory of kinesthesia than they are in the cultural discourses whose purposes they serve’ (Pelkey, this volume). Pelkey goes so far as to speculate that the upright X-posture is perhaps ‘one of the first meaningful, polysemous gestures’ to influence our social-participatory origins as humans (here referring to recent enactivist theory). For him, the question of how social relations are shaped by physical features as fundamentally human as an upright posture is intended to move us beyond ‘problems of solipsism and alienation ... to a space created through dialogue with another’. Turning to some of the latest research on human cognition and linguistic competence (e.g. Zlatev 2017 (inspired by Donald 2012), which argues that both are ‘formed on layered modes of “bodily mimesis” that could only have emerged via social relations’ (Zlatev 2017: 65), analysis of the phenomenology of full body movement through ‘the inverse relationships of arms and legs in motion’ also stimulates further interdisciplinary debate about the embodied origins of social relations and their relevance for understanding rhetoric in social relations today in a comparative, evolutionary sense. It is arguable whether chiasmus – although exceptionally powerful in discourse – is *the* master figure of a general semiotic of human behaviour and culture, including in the field of rhetorical studies. From a rhetorical point of view, chiasmus, next to being bodily anchored, can also be seen as an actively used discursive feature by speakers to indicate subversion, to uncover absurdities, or to argue a point more forcibly via dramatic inversion (cf. Dombek and Herndon 2004: 23). But Pelkey’s pertinent reflections go beyond the discursive and pragmatic aspects of rhetoric as a cultural phenomenon, and bring us back to the issue we alluded to in the early part of the Introduction – and which was repeatedly stressed in this and preceding volumes of the Rhetoric Culture Project: that

of interdisciplinary openness and intellectual collaboration across boundaries, also towards linking psycho-dynamics, embodiment, bodily mimesis (Zlatev 2008) and cognition processes. Relevant here perhaps is Bloch's earlier anthropological work on interpenetration, that is, the internal capacity of humans to 'read' the minds of others (Bloch [2013] 2017: 15). As he writes, 'all social relation[s] implies interpenetration, so the arbitrariness of boundaries within the social fabric applies not just to people who are related but also between all human beings who are in contact' (ibid.). Bloch in his 2012 book already noted (2012: 63) that 'the complexity of human social life is ... built on this continual imagination of the minds of others' ... 'In other words, the most basic predisposition for social relations depends on genetically inherited capacities and not on ones which we could learn' (ibid.). Such insights from the cognitive sciences – and what they omit – have the potential to illuminate some of the key innovations of the Rhetoric Culture Project, including Pelkey's work on chiasmus and embodied rhetoric as fundamental to the inherited capacities of imagining what goes on in the minds of others.

Our evolved human – and culturally varied – capacities to use rhetoric in ways that constitute – and are constituted by – social relations bring us closer to understanding that what we believe others believe and desire and what we believe others believe are our beliefs and desires (to use Bloch's chiasmus) is, indeed, influenced by figuration and persuasion (cf. Knappe 2012: 3).

This open approach, necessitating more cross-disciplinary research, promises an ever-richer, more holistic view of rhetoric and social relations in a cognitive-linguistic, evolutionary and cultural perspective (cf. Bloch [2013] 2017, ch. 7), and based on ethnographic examples across time and space. In this spirit, what the contributions in this volume hopefully do is demonstrate the dialectics of rhetoric in and of social relations – rhetoric as both produced by psycho-social and cultural conditions, and creating and shaping human selves and culture in the process.

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Routledge, 2013), a co-authored monograph, *Suri Orature*, on the Suri people (Köppe Verlag, 2014) and the edited volume *The Environmental Crunch in Africa* (Palgrave, 2018).

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## Notes

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1. As a feature of the 'new rhetoric'. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2006 (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/rhetoric/Scope-and-organization-of-argumentation>) (accessed 14 August 2020). See also Enos and Brown 1993, and Flower 1993: 171.
2. Trying to analyse expressive behaviour in terms of primordial (unconscious) rhetoric (Kull 2001: 693).
3. As in the definition in the 1971 book *Prospect of Rhetoric*, cited in Simonson (2014: 106): 'Rhetorical studies are properly concerned with the process by which symbols and systems of symbols have influence upon beliefs, values, attitudes, and actions, and they embrace all forms of human communication, not exclusively public address nor communication within any one class or cultural group'. In addition, to say that *only* rhetoric has the power to produce and reproduce culture and society is a truism (although perhaps not even true).
4. That is, within the social conditions it refers to, and (re)creates some of the accepted canons of social knowledge in that setting. It is 'a way of knowing' (Scott 1967: 17) but not to be equated with scientific knowledge. In that sense, 'epistemic' might have been a misnomer. Perhaps Scott's main flaw is not having properly defined the relationship of his argument of 'rhetoric as epistemic' to the canons/discourse of scientific knowl-

edge claims. Croasmun and Cherwitz (1982) had a good point when they said that Scott's thesis that 'rhetoric creates truth' is insufficient; rhetoric is rather a form of 'inquiry', not critically tested as in scientific argument, and creating 'social truths' (Izumi 2018: 1491). The too relativist epistemology in Barry Brummett's (1990) rejection of Scott's thesis did not bring a solution.

5. Also, the way that 'culture' – via French, coming from the Latin *colere*, meaning 'to tend to the earth and grow', or 'cultivate and nurture' – is impacted and shaped by rhetoric may need more theorizing. How does rhetoric 'sediment' into culture?
6. Compare Bailey in his important study of political rhetoric (1983: 15): 'one may think of culture as a set of rules for interpreting experience and shaping action' ... 'all culture grows out of social interaction, out of communication'.
7. Strecker and Tyler (2009b: 3) make the core point, describing rhetoric as 'the discipline that since antiquity has been concerned with the ubiquity of inward and outward persuasion, and with the hidden agenda of interlocutors'.
8. See <http://www.rhetoricculture.org/outline.htm> (accessed 6 August 2016).
9. This is not to deny that science, including the so-called hard sciences, *also* follows rhetorical conventions. See Weimer's excellent article of 1977.
10. At [www.britannica.com/topic/rhetoric/Rhetoric-in-philosophy-the-new-rhetoric](http://www.britannica.com/topic/rhetoric/Rhetoric-in-philosophy-the-new-rhetoric) (accessed 5 April 2018). White (1985: 687) has argued that rhetoric can also be seen as 'the art of establishing the probable by arguing from our sense of the probable', that is, within a specific rhetorical setting.
11. This was the main thrust of *Writing Culture*, the famous collection edited by James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) on the textual conventions and authorial 'strategies of authority' – a book that had such an (over-extended) influence in anthropology.
12. *Not* only scientific knowledge.
13. For an introduction to this fascinating body of work, see Girard et al. 2007; see also Neufeld Redekop and Ryba 2013. Girard's theory is tested and corroborated in recent work on human cognition (cf. Zlatev 2017). For a nice application of Girard's theory in rhetorical studies, see Vandenberg 2006.
14. Aristotle's concept of rhetoric was also about the issue of integrating reason and emotion!
15. We hereby also refer to the scientific discussions on 'Machiavellian intelligence' (cf. Byrne and Whitten 1988, Whitten and Byrne 1997). See also the fascinating case of 'tactical empathy' (Bubandt and Willerslev 2015), another rhetorical strategy in social life.
16. A prime example is Lévi-Strauss's brilliant study *Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui* (1962).
17. Sperber has continued work on rationality and reason, concluding that the 'basic functions of reason are social'. See his very interesting 2017 interview at: [https://www.edge.org/conversation/dan\\_sperber-the-function-of-reason](https://www.edge.org/conversation/dan_sperber-the-function-of-reason). Cf. also Mercier and Sperber 2017.
18. See <https://johnshaplin.blogspot.com/2017/05/rhetoric-and-constitution-of-social.html>, and his works (e.g. Herzfeld [1997] 2014). We are here reminded of the unique work of Erving Goffman, who in his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) in fact presented a rhetorical analysis of social interaction driven by individuals' persuasive self-presentation. See also his last work (1983).
19. The relevance of the hugely influential work of Jürgen Habermas should also be explored here. Cf. Rehg 2013.

20. Foreshadowed in Straus [1947] 1952, who said that expressions like ‘standing’ or ‘to be upright’ have a double connotation: one physical, the other psychological or moral. He said that to be upright means to rise, to stand on one’s own feet, as well as not to stoop to anything and to stand by one’s convictions [1947] 1952: 530.
21. One example is Huntington 2013.

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