> The world is but a perennial movement. All things in it are in constant motion—the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the pyramids of Egypt…. Stability itself is nothing but a more languid motion. … I do not portray being: I portray passing.
>
> Montaigne, 'Of repentence'

> Whatever comes together passes away.
>
> From the last words of the Buddha (*Mahaparinibbana Sutta*)

> Everything flows; nothing abides.
>
> Heraclitus, Fragments

Introduction

Michael Carrithers

This book is about human expectations, vicissitudes and the ruin of expectations, and our human remedies, such as they are, against such ruin. The net of vicissitudes is cast very widely, across different societies and different scales of adversity, including a mother's death, exile to a strange land, an unwanted sexual advance, a surprise rebuff of a rich man's plans, the aftermath of the Holocaust, the events of 9/11, and a great slaughter of animals. What these have in common is that, because they are unanticipated and beyond routine, they test the nature and limits of cultural resources, call up inventive answers, and, in so doing, demonstrate the very nature of both culture and the human imagination. If this book has only one lesson — and I believe it has many — it is that it will never be enough to understand human beings as culture-bearing animals unless we also understand that they are rhetorical animals who need constantly to persuade not just others but also themselves.

Let me first say something about expectation, which is the implicit ground before which the arguments set out here are the explicit and articulated figures. Unlike our cousins the other primates (so far as we know), we human beings routinely entertain conscious plans and dreams for a future, sometimes many years ahead. Expectation is in part a matter of conscious thought, but also of implicit assumption, being built into the collective acquired sensibilities of our various societies. A Navaho newborn girl is likely to be welcomed with celebration of her eventual maturity and fertility as the matrix of continuing Navajo life; many North Indian newborn girls, however, are greeted grimly, a leaden weight on their family's fortunes because of the crippling dowry payment which will have to be made at the girl's eventual marriage. So in that respect you could say that having certain expectations is a constituent part of understanding what it is to be Navaho or North Indian.

There are also even more generalized expectations, common across many societies: for example grief at someone dying in old age after a full life is frequently regarded as a lesser occasion for grief (or anger) than death at a younger age. So expectations may routinely stretch across the whole of a life, making judgments about what is an auspicious or inauspicious future, or a timely or an untimely death. And of course expectations may blend into a hope, or fear, which organizes the collective life of many: you may expect the revolution, independence, the saviour, or Armageddon to come, democracy finally to be established or the state to wither away, the magical cargo to arrive, or your creed to reign across the world.

The net of expectations works at finer scales as well, such that we may have routine hopes for the timely coming of Spring; for recovery from a common cold; or that traffic around the next corner will be running smoothly. Indeed many of the procedures and more or less scripted encounters that are the stuff of anthropological enquiry — a wedding ritual, the coronation of a monarch, an induction into a secret society, or, at finer scales, an exchange in a shop, an enquiry for information, a formula of greeting, of departure — have among their possible descriptions the management of expectation. These procedures are, so to speak, social and cultural machines which at once guide and consummate our anticipation of events and outcomes.

There is, however, a dark and inescapable corollary of this ubiquitous regime of expectations, namely that anticipation, hope, and preparation are no guarantee. Human beings — along with the rest of creation — are chronically vulnerable and exposed, despite their best attempts. From the small and passing (the bottle dropped and smashed in the street or the theft of a wallet) to the great and momentous (the collective catastrophes of war, famine, inflation and plague) we are faced constantly with emergencies and unaccounted situations. These are all vicissitudes, that is, 'difficulties or hardships erupting into a life, a career, a course of action or an ordered scene and usually beyond one's control.' (The definition of 'vicissitude' is my adaptation from the Merriam-Webster version.) If expectations and routines are a constant feature of human life, then so are emergencies and crises. And I will add, too, that though many vicissitudes may be *expectable* —and here I offer the example of the death of loved ones and oneself —that does not mean that they are necessarily *expected*, especially in the sense of being prepared for and under control. Some eventualities may fall relatively easily under a more or less automated response, but others, those we experience as vicissitudes, may leave us speechless and confused, without a ready interpretation of what has happened. Some eventualities may be routine to some participants, such as the undertaker, but not to others, the family of the deceased. The cases treated here certainly challenge those affected for an appropriate response. Such vicissitudes require a sustained, even strained, marshalling of resources, and particularly of moral, emotional and imaginative resources to understand and interpret the event. Moreover — and this is the devilish side of the matter — our very responses to a vicissitude may deepen the crisis, create more vicissitudes, and require yet further marshalling of ideas and interpretations.

So the topic of this volume is less the vicissitudes than the nature of the culture and rhetoric mobilized to deal with them. Put very briefly, we maintain that 'culture' (or any related notion such as 'discourse') exists as a set of potentials and possibilities. A fruitful analogy might be with a set of tools which, strictly in themselves, are inert and inactive, but which also offer an indefinite but broad set of potentials and possibilities in the hands of people addressing one task or another.   'Rhetoric', then, is the use of those tools in critical and unclear situations to achieve some desired understanding, some policy and orientation, and with that orientation a deflection of minds, hearts and events into a desired, or at least less disastrous, direction. Or to put it another way, we cannot understand culture as a human endowment (or a human fate) unless we understand culture's rhetorical edge, its pointed use. As I will argue in the rest of this introduction, this represents for social and human scientists a more methodically fruitful way of regarding the historicity, changeability, and the evident creativity of human cultures and societies; and from a rhetorician's perspective this represents a deeper and more widely applicable interpretation of 'the rhetorical situation' than has usually been the case.

Culture

Let me take each of our keywords, culture, rhetoric, and vicissitudes, in turn. I begin with culture because it is perhaps the most troubled of our three terms. Culture is what W.B. Gallie famously called an 'essentially contested concept', that is, a concept with no essential single meaning but rather a series of disputed meanings, like Democracy, Christianity or Sustainable Development. And indeed the concept is hardly mentioned by name in the essays in this volume. Nevertheless a concept of culture is implicit and necessary here, as in all the contributions to the Rhetoric Culture series.

Let me say first what people writing here do *not* assume: they do not assume that an explanation of 'culture', or for that matter 'social structure', or 'discourse', or any other sociological or anthropological master term can, in itself, suffice as a global explanation of people's behaviour or utterances. They are aware that no single system of explanation is adequate to clarify the raw materials from which the social sciences are made, namely the interweaving of 1) human actions, 2) reactions to those actions, and 3) accounts of those actions and reactions. They would probably assent to something like this, however: culture comprises a repertoire of things learned, including mental schemes and images, values and attitudes, dispositions, forms of speech and organisation, narratives, and commonplace knowledge. These things are doubtless a guide to people, a resource, and they certainly require our explanatory efforts. But they are not active in themselves, not the single source of what people do. As F.G. Bailey and James Fernandez point out in their essays here, any culture has plentiful alternative schemas, narratives, and values, so that no-one is able simply to read off the appropriate actions or statements from some table of right things to think, do, and say which they have learned. Indeed, as Ellen Basso describes here, conflicting demands within a culture can lead to an embarrassing and painful impasse.

This means that the world of pressingly real things which we need to account for must have in it not just the mental and dispositional things of culture, but also people, relationships, events and situations. These stand apart from, and are to a degree resistant to, patterning by cultural ideas and dispositions: as Louis Dumont was fond of pointing out, values would not be values if everybody acted according to them automatically. Any anthropologist or other social scientist might be justly proud to discern in some knotty flow of events the local cultural schemes playing beneath the surface. By displaying such discernment to the non-cognoscenti, the anthropologist could dispel much ignorance and confusion among onlookers from afar. Or, as Ralph Cintron does here when talking about the culture of hyperbole in the United States, one can lay bare a feature of society and events so plainly taken for granted that it sinks below awareness and even natives, in this case Americans themselves, might recognise it with surprise. But we cannot take such cultural accounts by scholars as the exhaustive truth about why people do what they do; they are rather a guide to the perplexed that might allow us to begin to find our way about among the actual people, relations, events and situations, as Cintron gives us a thread to follow in thinking about the Twin Towers.

So on one hand, culture is, in the general perspective taken here, a fund of mental materials and dispositions which are in themselves inert except as they are grasped and used in some particular situation. On the other, those mental materials and dispositions are current among some set of people. One might say: their use resonates among that set. I use the word 'set' advisedly, since it is as vague and general a word as I can think of to designate those among whom a cultural understanding may resonate. For example, in this volume Megan Biesele contrasts Americans with the Ju/'hoan San of the Kalahari Desert, and Ellen Basso contrasts the Japanese with the Kalapalo of the Amazonian rain forest. For most purposes the more embracing designations (Americans, Japanese) are not commensurable with the less embracing (Ju/'hoan, Kalapalo), and that for many reasons, including differences of scale, internal homogeneity or disparity, and character of social organization. But they are comparable, at least if rounded off at the edges, in that each set possesses a cultural repertoire which is mutually intelligible among its members.

I have adopted this peculiar language of 'set' and 'repertoire', rather than 'society' and 'culture', largely as a sign that here we make considerably more modest claims for the idea of culture in itself than have been made in the past. And now I want to make those claims even more modest by pointing out how relatively little is assumed by saying that a cultural repertoire is mutually intelligible among a set of people. The lead is given by Bailey's essay here, which shows a peasant talking to a wealthy citified gentleman: their talk is mutually understood, but hardly agreed. Similarly, Carrithers discusses a distinctively German term concerning the German past, but not all Germans, even though they understand its meaning, would assent to its import. Perhaps I can make the general point clearest with reference to an exercise I carry out with my students in the university here. I write the word 'whore' on the blackboard, and ask students to discuss what it means, to whom it applies, and whether, and how, they have used the word. The result is that all, in their capacity as native English speakers, understand the word. Some have reported that they have never used the word at all. Others have reported that they have never used it, and would never use it. Others have reported that they use it, but in the form 'ho', as an ironic and derogatory term for 'woman' or 'girl', derived probably from the word's pronunciation in American Black hip-hop music—speaking in quotation marks, if you will. And yet others, speaking apparently from an all-male boarding school setting, report that they have used it, in its spoken form as 'whore', or indeed 'man-whore', as a form of insult, again perhaps in quotation marks. And these are just some of the disparities issuing from that simple word among this more or less homogeneous group of educated middle-class English persons. So to say that 'whore' is intelligible as an item of culture, i.e. not just a word but also a set of associations, does not yet specify, and never could fully specify, the uses to which it will be put or the variety of responses to it.

Rhetoric

And that is where rhetoric, our second term, comes to the rescue. For rhetoric, in the broad sense meant here, is the moving force which connects that which is learned, culture, to that which happens. To use the concept of rhetoric in this way involves three initial steps. First, rhetoric cannot mean only 'mere rhetoric', i.e. words or displays which are hollow or deceptive…though those, too, are included under this more capacious understanding. Second, rhetoric is not associated solely with either the Classical world, or with the practice of politics alone. It is true that we derive our basic ideas of rhetoric from the ancient Greeks and then the Romans. In their practice of rhetoric, public political speaking and acting were central. But here our concern is with rhetoric in a more general usage, which in Cicero's terms is 'to move' (*movere*) or 'to bend' (*flectere*) the mind of the audience, with the aim of making them act or respond in line with the rhetoric. And third, rhetoric need not be limited to speech alone. Last spring I watched two young gardeners digging in a sullen desultory way in the herbaceous border outside my office. When they heard the boss's truck come up the driveway, though, they doubled their efforts and when the boss came around the corner he was treated to the sight of two hard-working labourers, no effort spared. So in that case, I would say, the culture lay in their ability to dig the border, but the rhetoric lay in their sudden display of horticultural dynamism.

This example also allows us to see why we may speak of rhetoric culture—or perhaps just as appropriately, *the rhetorical edge of culture*. On one hand, the skills of digging over a herbaceous border are learned and, considered in isolation, the use of such skills need not possess a rhetorical edge. Digging is allowed to be just digging.

However, the moment we begin to consider that such digging may be *addressed* to someone, then the rhetorical edge begins to show. In the incident I witnessed, the digging was (momentarily at least) addressed to the boss, and so it became rhetorical, aimed at moving the boss to think that the diggers were industrious. And there is another sort of address here as well, if we consider the role of the boss as head gardener. This digging is designed to 'make a display', in the terms my English parents-in-law might use to praise an attractive garden. So as far as the head gardener is concerned, this digging is most certainly addressed to someone, including his boss, his boss's boss, and the general public, all of whom may like a well-turned border and may be persuaded thereby that the university is a well-run concern. So even though we may let digging just be digging, the whole project in which it is involved may be rhetorical (among its other characteristics).

Bakhtin used the term 'addressivity' to capture this character of human expression, its nature as being necessarily oriented to some other person or persons. When we express ourselves—by speech, writing, song, dance, or especially fervent excavation—that expression is to be understood not only in relation to oneself, but also in relation to an audience. Addressivity is, so to speak, the articulate face of our pervasive human intersubjectivity, the deeply affecting and mutually constituting awareness that we have of one another as intensely social primates. And intersubjectivity involves incessant action, or better, *inter*action—the busy-ness of everyday life, the incessant exchange of words, things, glances, blows with each other. This constant activity means, too, that our situation is constantly changing in relation to others, and so constantly needing attention, constantly needing to be *addressed*, to be adjusted, or at least to be coordinated with others. And in fact this deep propensity to address is sunk so deep in us that we not only address other people, but ourselves as well: we discuss, cajole, and argue with ourselves to achieve clarity or at least some sense of purpose in what is sometimes a testing world, as Jean Nienkamp shows so well in her essay here.

Implicit in this understanding of everyday rhetoric is that it involves a charge of energy, a potential, as there is energy between the top of a waterfall and the bottom. In James Fernandez's pregnant phrase, rhetoric 'makes a movement and leads to a performance', that is, a rhetorical expression effects a change in the addressee's mind, leading to some form of action. Or that at least is the ideal. Just now my son is approaching a set of examinations, for example, and on occasion I ask him how the work is going. Sometimes this is just solidarity talk, but occasionally—as when he is going out the door into town when I suppose he should be studying—the question takes on rhetorical energy: it is meant to 'make a movement', i.e. remind him of the situation, and 'lead to a performance', make him come back soon and work. This example shows, too, that rhetoric does not automatically succeed, just as cultural learning does not automatically mean that people behave according to their acquired values. And indeed there would be no need for rhetoric if there were not constantly a difference between affairs as they are and as the rhetor (the speaker, or better, the 'addresser') wants them to be.

Rhetoric to Rhetoric Culture

So what is the effect of multiplying culture by rhetoric and producing rhetoric culture?

In the first place, rhetoric culture emphasizes the interactive character of life: through the glass of rhetoric we can see that, in any moment of interaction, some act to persuade, others are the targets of persuasion; some work, others are worked upon; some address, others are addressed. Or one could speak of both agents and patients, the latter to designate those who are the object, rather than the initiator, of action. This stress on the dyadic or plural character of social and rhetorical action—the fact that some do, while others are done to—is an important adjustment of the idea of 'agency' whose salience in social science writing has soared in the last decade or so. We would do better to speak of 'agency-cum-patiency'. And of course one may be an agent one moment, and a patient the next. It is the sort of thing that happens in a conversation, for example.

Moreover, by thus placing interaction at the heart of the interpretative enterprise, Rhetoric Culture challenges social scientists not only to fit things into recurring patterns, but to be sensitive to the possibility that things may fall out of a pattern, may erupt into the new and different…indeed to the possibility that out of old materials lying to hand new materials can be fashioned. Rhetoricians speak of 'the rhetorical situation' in general, i.e. any occasion when someone taking the role of rhetor intervenes, hoping to address an audience appropriately, in a timely manner, with energy and effect—whether before the United Nations or across the kitchen table. In that sense Rhetoric Culture is designed to address the historicity of things, the fact that human life is, in the longer run, mutable and metamorphic, constantly producing new forms of life, culture, and organisation in adaptation to new situations. And if Rhetoric Culture moves rhetoric into the kitchen, so to speak, then it also moves the study of culture into the sphere of the singular—the Gettysburg Address, the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the declaration of War on Iraq by the United States and Britain—where we find cultural materials fashioned to new ends in extraordinary situations.

The notion of Rhetoric Culture also invites us again to look closely again at the foundation of human beings' understanding of experience overall. Tropologists, studying figurative thought and language (including the ancient Greek Isokrates, the early modern Giambattista Vico, the twentieth century polymath Kenneth Burke, as well as contemporary psycholinguists such as George Lakoff, and those writing here) have shown how human thought is shot through with the use of poetical and rhetorical imagery and narrative. Such thought penetrates everyday talking and thinking to such an extent that we might best think of ourselves as speaking, not prose, but poetry. Here's an everyday example: a German colleague was recently much amused when she heard the English word for those receptacles we hang on the wall in the department to receive letters: pigeonholes. A routine word to Anglophones here, but the imagery translated into German invites wild speculation (she said, 'does that mean *Tauben? Löcher*? Pigeons? Holes?'). It makes no sense whatsoever…or rather, it makes only figurative sense, by bringing the housing of pigeons to explain the housing of the Royal Mail. A dead metaphor is still a metaphor, a familiar narrative is still a narrative.

Figurative thought extends to the horizons of human experience as well. The philosopher Hans Blumenberg devoted his life's work to understanding what he called 'absolute metaphors'. A non-absolute metaphor, so to speak, is one in which we know both legs of the comparison: 'the king is a lion' works because we know something of kings, and something of lions, and find it illuminating and mind-moving to connect them. An absolute metaphor, on the other hand, is one where the figurative side is known, but the other unknown or difficult to grasp. 'Death is an journey' is such an absolute metaphor — for who knows death? — but so is 'life is an journey', for how otherwise (as Virginia Woolf so comprehensively demonstrated) are we to understand so complex, comprehensive and varying an experience? Stories are pressed into service as absolute metaphors as well. Consider Adam, Eve, the snake and the apple as proposing a view of the difficult relation of the sexes, or the story of the Buddha's struggle toward enlightenment as a view on how to find an abiding sense of well-being in this often troubled life. These are all materials that have been applied, and will continue to be applied on one occasion or another, to orient people among the vicissitudes of life…to which I now turn.

Culture, Rhetoric and the Vicissitudes of Life

The argument of this book as a whole lies in the tension between rhetoric/culture on the one hand and the 'vicissitudes of life' on the other. Now the phrase 'vicissitudes of life' is a rich one which extends deep into European cultural history, but also rhymes with many other—indeed arguably, with *all* other—cultural traditions. Let me follow Jean Nienkamp in her chapter here, and adopt Kenneth Burke's term ‘terministic screen’, which describes from the viewpoint of language—he uses the word ‘terminology’—everything I have here called the rhetorical edge of culture. Burke writes that ‘if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must also be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality’ (Burke 1966:45). ‘Vicissitudes of life’, as a terministic screen, is indeed a selection of reality: it concentrates (in modern usage at any rate) on events that are breaks with the expected, the desired, and the comfortingly routine, and not (as would be justified by older usages of the word) on any event which represents change. So it both *reflects* reality, in that the unexpected and the unwanted will erupt into everyone’s life, and *selects* a part of reality for our attention.

It is also a *deflection* of reality in two senses: first, it collects under a single heading a series of occasions which we might otherwise regard in different lights. In this volume the writers consider a mother’s death, exile to a strange land, an unwanted sexual advance, a rebuff of a rich man’s plans, threatened arrest and torturous murder during the Holocaust, the events of 9/11, and a great slaughter of animals. (Other terministic screens would deflect reality in other directions: for example, there is now a strong current of opinion in both Israel and Germany that the Holocaust is in some sense incomparable, beyond history, the epitome of an evil which is nowhere else so purely manifest. So with that terministic screen the Holocaust would be quite misplaced in our list.)

Second, the very act of using the phrase ‘vicissitudes of life’, and so of categorising these and myriad other fractures and violations together, is to take a step toward seeing them *sub specie aeternitatis*¸ from afar, with at least some tranquillity and mended reflection, at a distance from the raw shock of events themselves. There is a rhetoric of generalisation which, by moving events from their immediate particularity to the general also moves them from the sphere of feeling (*pathos*, as Aristotle put it) toward the sphere of dispassionate thinking (*logos*). Similarly the apothegms from Montaigne, the Buddha ('whatever comes together passes away') , and Heraclitus ('everything flows; nothing abides') with which I began this introduction lift any particular unexpected event or trauma away from their actual circumstances and invite the listener / reader to regard the episode as but one of a countless number of similar occasions, rendering what was painfully specific into something general and more tranquil, a typical example of perennial wisdom. Yet it is important to recall again that it is not the vicissitude which has already been denatured by the operation of rhetoric that stands to the fore here, but the thing itself, the raw shock, the sting, the unbridged loss, the rip in the fabric of hope and expectation. So in the view taken here, human beings are constantly vulnerable to accident and the unforeseen, and wield rhetoric and culture against those accidents in order to render intelligible and operable what may at first seem incomprehensible and incomprehensibly disastrous. It is not that rhetoric culture could in itself provide the skills to re-build a house after a flood, assemble arms against another attack, or eradicate the mosquitoes which have brought the disease, but it can move oneself and others to a common understanding and a common policy, which may then lead to house building, arms assembling, or mosquito eradication.

From this point it is not difficult to move a step further, namely to see the opposition of rhetoric culture to the vicissitudes of life as a corollary of that basic trope of contemporary thought, the opposition between nature and culture (a trope so very similar to the ancient Greeks' opposition of human and natural law, *nomos* and *physis*). This basic trope is worked out in many ways, e.g. in the idea that the evolution of human intelligence has given human beings supposed mastery over nature, or in the inverse of this idea, that our manipulating materialism threatens both ourselves and the world we seek to manipulate. This opposition has been especially effective in setting the debate — or narrowing the mind — in the matter of 'nature vs. nurture', the supposedly contravening forces of genetic inheritance and cultural shaping as they affect human dispositions and behaviours.

The Argument(s) Carried On

My colleagues and I carry on the argument from here in the rest of the book, but let me here draw out these further lessons in brief. In the first place, these papers demonstrate the rhetorical edge of culture at all scales of human events. Jean Nienkamp, in the first chapter, makes a point which establishes one extreme of rhetoric's reach, in what she calls 'internal rhetoric', conversations and arguments that people have with themselves. The material she adduces in this case are diaries of women in precarious situations, women who are attempting to make sense of, and find a policy for, dangerous and unbalancing events. The larger point, however, is that the sense of addressivity, or of interaction, or of dialogue is not a matter just for audible or legible exchange between persons, but also for the inner argumentation through which people manage by themselves to understand their world and guide their actions. From one perspective, this stands to reason: if I can be moved or guided by others, why not by myself? But that other powerful trope of our culture, the spatial metaphor that 'private' means something happening *inside* your head, while 'public' is what happens *outside* it, makes it difficult for us to realize how pervasively interactive and dialogical we are as animals, such that conversation or debate is no respecter of the skin's boundary. This point has been powerfully prepared by Nienkamp herself (2001) and by the psychologist Michael Billig (1987).

The opposite end of rhetoric's reach, which might seem more its natural home, is the body politic, the public sphere, the realm of mediated speech, writing and performance, which is the contemporary equivalent of the public arena of the ancient world in which the explicit cultivation of rhetoric was born. The second paper concerns Germany, which, immediately after the Second World War, sought to forget or bowdlerize German deeds in the Hitler period. Carrithers shows that some Germans drew from the matrix of available stories and images a new and quite powerful narrative idea, that of an 'unmastered past', a disastrous recent history whose aftermath, if not brought fully to consciousness, would continue to infect the body politic. The idea then went on to become a keyword which oriented a broad range of investigative, juridical, and commemorative public acts, aimed at unearthing and displaying for all to see the Germans' responsibility for the enormities of the Hitler era. This essay illustrates, too, another facet of the Rhetoric Culture idea, namely that, in applying the raw materials given by culture to new situations, the rhetorician can create new cultural forms and a new language of imagery and story.

And it also typifies a point made in all three of the first papers, namely that the creation of a narrative across events and people is one of humanity's most powerful means for interpreting chaotic events, for giving them a sense and preparing a policy, or at least an attitude, for future occasions. Stevan Weine's paper concerns the experience, and the narrating of experience, among refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo in Chicago. He suggests from his clinical experience that the effect of traumas leading to exile is 'diffuse', to use a term from W.G. Sebald, permeating experience and awareness and not deriving from any single event or perpetrator. He argues, though, that the narrative solutions, the 'talking cures', which are routinely used by clinicians to ameliorate the effects of such traumas are not adequate, because they constrict the occasion of speaking and miss the diffuseness of both the source and the consequences. He suggests — and goes on to demonstrate — that a diffuse narrative may be just the therapeutic means to address such psychic repercussions. Taken together, these three papers display the pervasiveness of narrative as human endowment, and the effectiveness of narrative when it is applied rhetorically to orient and to move. And of course 'narrative' covers a whole genus, or perhaps better, a superfamily, of devices through which we project expectations or mend broken expectations.

Or, to put it another way, narrative is one of humanity's most common ways of linking and connecting things, in this case, linking past events to one another, to the present, and to an anticipated future. Another superfamily of connecting devices is metaphor, the linking of two different spheres of experience to throw light on one or the other, or both. The next two papers concentrate on metaphor, or perhaps better (as Robert Hariman has usefully suggested to me) metaphoric containment, the reaching into another sphere of experience to find a way of containing something threatening and out of control. Megan Biesele addresses the rhetoric of dying through comparing two rhetorical complexes around the healer. One is that of the Ju/’hoan San (“Bushmen”) hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari Desert of Southern Africa, where the healer is metaphorically identified through vulnerability, as a ‘little bird’ beside God, a child, but also as a trickster, one who uses cunning in the face of God’s compulsions, and in any case is throughout a support, and a fighter on the side of the patient, up to the last moment, up to death. In contrast the American biomedical system stands partly alienated from the patient; and the cancer specialist, the oncologist, has come recently to be identified as one who decides on the prediction of death and then prepares people for death, encouraging them toward a ‘good death’ as it is understood by them: he becomes metaphorically a sort of Charon, the boatman ferrying souls to Hades. Biesele argues that, at the very least, the American rhetoric, and with it the practice, places an increasingly difficult burden on both the oncologist and the patient. The oncologist is forced both to make the judgment of death, and to prepare the patient through rhetoric to abandon hope, while the patient is shorn of both agency and hope. So, by comparison with the Ju/’hoan complex, the American rhetorical demands makes the process of dying harder, not easier, despite the expressly ameliorative sense of the rhetoric now attached to the healer.

In Nerlich’s case, the threat faced by the rhetors was the foot and mouth disease epidemic which struck UK farm animals in 2001. The UK government hit upon the metaphor of *war*, with its rich links of stories and images, to describe their efforts to deal with the epidemic; they reinforced the aptness of this image by the large scale (and not really necessary) slaughter and immolation of all those animals which were, or could have been, infected; and the images of a holocaust, a vast burning of sacrificial victims, became the iconic representation of the *war* idea for the British public. But as the links and associations spread from the idea of war and the practice of slaughter, another feature of rhetoric came to the fore, namely, that once let loose, rhetoric may lead to consequences unforeseen by the rhetor. In this case, the public's general affection for animals, their sympathy with the farmers whose herds were slaughtered, and their alarm at the scenes and ideas released into the public domain led from a general support for the slaughter policy to general revulsion.

So the larger lesson from these two cases is this: what is first set out as effective rhetoric can become, with the turn of events or the materialising of further links in the chain of suggestion, a new vicissitude in itself, a disaster not of physical events but of words and images, and eventually of performance. In terms of the book as a whole, this is a turning point. For the initial image, that rhetoric and culture stand on one side, and the incursions of deleterious events which must be countered on the other, must now be modified. The stuff of culture in its rhetorical use may be a fine thing, but that rhetorical edge may come to cut against the rhetor as well as for her.

The next two essays reveal another twist in the tale. 'All rhetoric is palaestral', writes Bailey. "The metaphor of the wrestling-school is a vehicle for the rhetorical struggle to pin down another person and make him/her accept a definition of the situation.' The case set out concerns a rich man in an Italian village who makes an offer to buy a derelict shack from a poor peasant, but is rebuffed instantly with grace and consummate skill, such that no comeback is possible. This is certainly palaestral in character, a man to man struggle with a winner and a loser. But from this plain case two further corollaries of the rhetoric/culture perspective come to light.

First, there is what Bailey calls a ‘plurality of structures’ — and he is clear that these ‘structures’ are things of the imagination, mental materials, collective representations, fashioned of the airy matter of culture — that bear on the case. There is the ‘structure’, the rhetoric, of the marketplace in the offer of cash for goods, in this case ‘money for old rope’, as the English might say. A rhetoric of family and family obligations is part of the encounter as well. And then too a colouring of class conflict and differentiation passes over the event, as does gift-giving and its associated ideas. Each of these complexes of ideas, images, and story lines, and others as well, are available to the participants, and come into play, leaving the rich man without a leg to stand on. This is a vivid, detailed and explicit demonstration of what is implicit in the other cases so far, namely that the things of culture, the ideas, figures, stories, values and schemas, are in no case unified and consistent such that a single response is deducible in a situation. There are always alternatives to an utterance, a response, an expression, a gesture. So by designating rhetoric as that which finds in culture a cutting edge for a situation, we also recognize that rhetoric is a *necessary* art, an *inescapable* art, the ability to assemble of disparate materials a more or less fitting and timely utterance, even in the most everyday of occasions. And, being an art, rhetoric may be wielded well or badly. In this case the peasant showed himself to be a master.

The other corollary is that rhetoric, in this and the other cases adduced here, seems closely related to moral evaluation. Nienkamp’s diarists, the German rhetors facing the German past, the Bosnian refugees recounting their histories, Biesele’s oncologists, Nerlich’s government spokesmen, as well as Bailey’s peasant, are all trying to put themselves, or their case, *in the right*. It is not just that people are trying to make others (or themselves) ‘accept a definition of the situation’, as Bailey says, though that is true enough; they are also trying to make others accept an *evaluation* of the situation, so that the rhetoric is morally compelling.

Now rhetoric is not inevitably moral in tone, since there can be rhetorics, such as the rhetoric of the market, that use other criteria, in this case utilitarian good or profit. But that rhetoric so often involves moral evaluation is a consequence of the pervasiveness of moral judgment in human life. I remarked at the beginning that humans were unique as a species in their sense of expectation, anticipation, and planning. But we are unique for another reason as well, namely that we, unlike other animals, teach our offspring a *moral aesthetic* sense, that is, a sense of how to comport ourselves with others, and with it, a sense of how to judge others’ comportment (Premack 1991, Carrithers 1992). This moral pedagogy is pursued in different ways by different sets of people, but it is a universal trait of our species, affecting people from very early in their lives right through the whole life’s course.

Moreover there is an affinity between our capacity for expectation and for a moral aesthetic, since we come to expect certain morally constrained behaviors from others and ourselves, and find the breach of those moral expectations a problem, a vicissitude. In Ellen Basso’s essay, she shows in the first place how a rhetoric of civility, of shame, of self-constraint, of politeness —in other words, a moral aesthetic of comportment — is acquired with the acquisition of language, extending the earlier point that to learn language is to engage with rhetoric. Basso uses examples drawn from European, American, Japanese, and Kalapalo (South American Amerindian) societies, and shows how, despite radically different constructions of civility, shame, or moral constraint in these different societies, all these early acquired and omnipresent rhetorics of civility lead to what Basso calls ‘ordeals of language’. These are situations in which people find themselves disastrously at odds with the reigning moral aesthetic; or facing the consequences of a breach of the code; or perhaps even forced into self-inflicted silence or social exile by the internal contradictions of the moral aesthetic — since, just as with Bailey’s ‘structures’, there is no guarantee that a moral aesthetic is internally consistent, or that the rhetoric of moral comportment may not conflict with actual situations in social life. So here again rhetorics, so powerful in defining and orienting human life against vicissitudes, may become themselves a source of vicissitude. And we can see, too, that the addressivity of rhetoric can again be aimed at oneself as well as others, and that rhetoric — speech or expression to make a movement of mind — may reach into the most intimate corners of experience.

The last two essays address the omnipresence of the rhetoric/vicissitudes pair from an altitude, finding them not in the constant everyday interpersonal intimacies of life, but in larger but no less pervasive forms of the world. In writing of the World Trade Center and 9/11, Ralph Cintron carries on the theme of morality and rhetoric, but now with a markedly critical commentary, a moral assessment of the rhetorical and cultural currents leading to both the WTC itself, and to 9/11. He diagnoses a persistent feature, and malady, of modern life, distributed across the world but concentrated in the US, namely the hyperbole of modern culture, the constant straining for the newer, the larger, the better. Invention has become, he argues, a value in itself, an ideology. It is a *doxa* which governs public life but reaches into our homes and our dreams. The Twin Towers were spectacular evidence of a rhetorical achievement by the builders, who overcame resistance to their building by making the towers ever bigger and ever newer. But by becoming the visible testimony of our urge for the giant and for tomorrow's creations, they also became the target of those who, reading our modernity in their own way, recognized that their gigantic destruction of the towers, and of the lives in them, would address the world, and ourselves, just as effectively as the Twin Towers themselves, though with a very different message. Cintron notes, too, that the hyperbole of this hypermodernism hardly stopped with that destruction, but went on to the 'shock and awe' of the Iraq war, with its monumental rhetoric, its monumentally clever technology, and its monumental destruction in turn.

This brings us to a point close to Biesele's critical evaluation of a rhetoric, and suggests that we, the scholars and readers, are entangled as well in such rhetoric and its moral evaluation. In fact a keener eye would see that some moral stance has been involved in all the essays here. And I think the logic is this: just as Cintron's treatment of the Twin Towers and 9/11 would hardly be credible, or likely, or indeed possible, without some comment on the comportment of those who built them and those who destroyed them, so the same observation applies, if with less immediacy, to our other cases. And the underlying reason is, again, addressivity. As scholars and researchers of the human world, those we discuss here in print are still addressed by us, partly as one addresses an issue, i.e. turns one's attention to it, but also as one addresses a person, even though they appear here in the third person and not the second. For by writing of them we are comporting ourselves toward them, and any comportment between members of our species is, from the ground up, always already moral in its implications. None of this, either our subjects' ordeals or our own reflections, is pre-programmed or deducible, for no rhetoric which guides action is the only one possible. So it is appropriate, both as regards our third person subjects, ourselves, and our readers to speak of the *moral imagination*. Just as our subjects are forced, in the course of events, to find a rhetoric which fits from among those possibilities presented to their imaginations, we must likewise imagine any rhetoric, and any action, as existing among an array of other possibilities and other evaluations. We have no choice, for that is our situation.

So it is fitting to end with Fernandez's essay on the moral imagination, which looks across both our globe of moral rhetorical struggles, and our world of scholarship which seeks to interpret those struggles. 'Moral', he notes, derives from *mos*, 'a way of comporting oneself', and he goes on to speak of the 'complexities and contrarieties of comportment' which need to be '"figured out" (in the rhetorical sense of the word "figure" as in "figure of speech") as *aides pensee* and as actual guides to comportment.' So Fernandez begins his observation of the contradictions among the airy structures within each of our many cultures, and of the necessity of rhetoric to assemble, from among the possibilities available, some way of thinking, speaking, and acting in a timely and appropriate manner in the face of vicissitudes. On this basis he then surveys some of the ways in which scholars have recently addressed the moral rhetorical imagination, and suggests that these scholars' views themselves are entangled in challenges to the moral imagination, especially as they arise not in a vacuum, but in particular historical existential circumstances that press on them particular vicissitudes and exigencies. In this perspective the vicissitudes that crowd in on all of us may be far from evanescent, but may in fact irrupt into our worlds and our expectations with endurance and longevity, forcing us again and again to try to restore our moral expectations with timely and energetic rhetoric.

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