

Introduction

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Wonder and astonishment lie at the heart of scholarship, as René Descartes noted in *The Passions of the Soul*: “When the first encounter with some object surprises us, and we judge it to be new or very different from what we formerly knew, or from what we suppose it ought to be, that causes us to wonder and be surprised; and because that may happen before we in any way know whether this object is agreeable to us or is not so, it appears to me that wonder is the first of all the passions.” (1972: 358)

Similarly, Margaret Mead once said that anthropology demands an “open-mindedness with which one must look and listen, record in astonishment and wonder that which one would not have been able to guess” (1977: IX). Thus, wonder and astonishment are part and parcel of the encounter with the world in our own and in other cultures, and they produce mental and emotional energy, which leads artists and anthropologists alike to look and closely examine a particular phenomenon that has caught their attention.

Ethnographers and artists not only experience astonishment when in the field. They also relay it to others. As Clifford Geertz, in his genial fashion, has characterized these rhetorics: Anthropologists (and also artists, one might say) are “merchants of astonishment” who “hawk the anomalous, peddle the strange,” and who have “with no little success, sought to keep the world off balance; pulling out rugs, upsetting tea tables, setting off firecrackers” (2001: 64).

Yet, even though scholars of art and anthropology have been aware of astonishment as an intrinsic part of their experience, they have as yet not explored it in any depth. Only Tim Ingold and Richard Buxton have recently identified astonishment as a topic for research. Ingold has called for a renewal of “the sense of astonishment banished from official science” (2006: 9), and Buxton has demonstrated how ancient Greek myth and story telling may be best understood as an art aimed at creating various “forms of astonishment” (2009).

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Ingold's and Buxton's retrieval of astonishment as a scholarly concept goes well with the intentions of Stephen Tyler in whose honor the contributions to the present book were written. According to Tyler's theory—developed in *The Said and the Unsaid*—the use of language is precarious, full of risks and surprises and therefore prone to cause wonder and astonishment. Speaking, he writes, is “more like breathing than thinking” (1978: 25), and “the more we consciously attend to it, the less perfectly we do it” (1978: 24). There are “slips between the tongue and the lips,” and “our speaking often fails to convey what we had in mind” (1978: 137). Discourse typically contains “false starts, hesitations, and repeats”, which derive “from forgetting where we were going or from searching for a fugitive word or apt phrase, or merely from a desire to hold the floor, or because we want to create a dramatic effect, even to dissimulate ... One of the things we often sense in speaking is that we are not saying what we had in mind. The retrospective and prospective accommodation of phrases creates an order at variance with our original intention.” (1978: 134) The use of language is thoroughly rhetorical, for “the match between words and things ... is hardly complete or total; nor is it analytic, the combination of atomic elements into larger unities. It is instead indexical, analogical and inferential—a creative accommodation of words and things” (1978: 181).

The ramifications of these and other related thoughts have led Tyler to emphasize the role of evocation in ethnography. He says that “ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect. It is in a word, poetry—not in its textual form, but in its return to the original context and function of poetry, which, by means of its performative break with everyday speech, evoked memories of the *ethos* of the community and thereby provoked hearers to act ethically.” (1987: 202)

This attractive view of a liberated form of ethnography (and by implication the interpretation of art) can only hold up its promise as long as we are aware that the source of

evocation is astonishment, which however may also have its drawbacks. As Descartes observed, astonishment can cause “the whole body to remain as immobile as a statue”, and it can prevent one from “perceiving more of the object than the first face which is presented, or consequently of acquiring a more particular knowledge of it. That is what we commonly call being astonished, and astonishment is an excess of wonder which can never be otherwise than bad.” (1972: 364)

Furthermore, such an excess of wonder may become a habit—a “malady“ of blind curiosity”—which leads people to “seek out things that are rare solely to wonder at them, and not for the purpose of really knowing them: for little by little they become so given over to wonder, that things of no importance are no less capable of arresting their attention than those whose investigation is more useful.” (Descartes 1972: 366)

Yet, how is one to judge what deserves wonder and what not? Has the modern age not suffered less from an excess but rather from a lack of wonder, and is it not therefore the task of both ethnography and art to revive and cultivate the most important “passion of the soul”—that is wonder, astonishment, or, as James Joyce has called it, epiphany? Joyce’s hero Stephen Daedalus, pondering the meaning of a clock in one of Dublin’s streets, told his friend: “Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanized. It is just in this epiphany that I find the third, the supreme quality of beauty.” (Joyce 1944: 211)

The “spiritual eye” de-familiarizes the object and then focuses on it anew to achieve a heightened level of trance-like awareness—epiphany—which Stephen Daedalus explained, saying: “First we recognize that the object is *one* integral thing, then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure, a *thing* in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognize that it is *that* thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of

the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany.” (Joyce 1944: 213; Joyce’s emphases)

Overhearing a “fragment of colloquy” in the streets of Dublin, Stephen Daedalus thought of “collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments.” (Joyce 1944: 211)

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Here, in the fantasy of a “book of epiphanies,” it seems that we are entering the realm of art and anthropology, for one may well understand ethnography and art criticism as an attempt to recall the spell-binding moments, the epiphanies people have experienced in their encounters with works of art or another culture. Note that Joyce not only mentions objects, gestures and speech performance, but also thought itself. What he calls “memorable phase of the mind” resembles Tyler’s cooperatively evolved text, which “evokes in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality” (Tyler 1987: 202).

Epiphany and fantasy are both elusive and inaccessible to what Tyler calls “that inappropriate mode of scientific rhetoric” (1987: 207). The only appropriate response can be the art of evocation, which “makes available through absence what can be conceived but not presented” (1987: 199). This seemingly cryptic statement needs to be read against Tyler’s theory of tropes, especially metaphor. A full account is found in the paragraph on metaphor in *The Said and the Unsaid* of which we quote three passages that are most relevant here. The first introduces the topic and runs as follows:

Metaphor is perhaps the most fundamental process in language and thought, for it accounts not only for equivalence in a formal sense, it is the major means by which language changes and by which thought encompasses new ideas. A

measure of its importance is the fact that it was one of the first purely semantic relations to be subjected to analysis in early philosophy. (1978: 315-16)

The second outlines the role of metaphor in the extension of knowledge:

We often speak of something being ‘just metaphor,’ and this pejorative usage signifies a common attitude toward metaphor, that it is suitable only to poetic fancy and apt to be misleading in other contexts. How wrong this view is when we take into account the role of metaphor in extending our knowledge. Rather than an inferior means of reason properly restricted to the imagination at play or in its aesthetic moments, it assumes a rational function more fundamental than any yet described. As the principal means by which we establish equivalences, it must underlie all our classifications, for a classification is nothing more than a system of equivalences. (1978: 335)

The third draws attention to the fact that the use of metaphor has its cost, because metaphor both reveals and obscures:

Metaphor is fundamental and unavoidable in meaningful discourse. True enough, it has its other uses, which have long been noted, of lending style and color to a text, and there can be no doubt but that a good metaphor has a dual role in the imagination, for it both reveals and obscures. By emphasizing certain features in a comparison, for example, it draws our attention to just those features, pushing others into the background. When we see something as something else we see only the similarities and not the differences. A metaphor may mislead in exact proportion to the amount it reveals, but this is the price of any revelation. (1978: 335-36)

One cannot, therefore, escape metaphor (as well as other tropes) and the elusive meanings it entails. But Tyler is prepared to accept this as the price we have to pay for worthwhile ethnography. James Clifford held a similar view when he wrote that ethnographies are the work of rhetoric and that all ethnographic writing is “allegorical at the level both of its content

(what it says about cultures and their histories) and of its form (what is implied by its mode of textualization” (1986: 98).

However, allegory or, more generally, figuration is not only the means by which we “write culture,” it is also the means by which we create it. As Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim have pointed out, “cultures are produced, reproduced, and revised in dialogues among their members” (1995: 2) and, most important, “once culture is seen as arising from a dialogical ground, then ethnography itself is revealed as an emergent cultural (or intercultural) phenomenon, produced, reproduced, and revised in dialogues between field-workers and natives. The process of its production is of the same general kind as the process by which ethnic others produce the cultures that are the objects of ethnographic study.” (1995: 2)

To this we need to add that these dialogues abound with multivocal meanings and are saturated with tropes. Or, put differently, the dialogues make use of figures that despite or, as the present book argues, *because* of their elusiveness put us under their spell (Streck 2011), fire our imagination and lead us to jointly conjure those fantasies and their manifestations, which we call culture.

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Part I: Image

Chapter I, *Do pictures stare? Thoughts about six elements of attention* by Todd Oakley draws on the author’s long-term research in the fields of rhetoric, linguistics and cognitive science and is meant as a kind of *overture* to the present book, for attention—especially spellbinding attention—constitutes the precondition for astonishment and evocation. The chapter, short and written in a deceptively simple style, is in fact filled with deep thought, and is a “fruitful heuristic” not only for an investigation of attention, but also the study of astonishment and evocation. Attention may be understood as the mental and emotional energy without which neither astonishment nor evocation will occur. But what exactly is attention? How does it come about? How is it sustained, controlled, harmonized?

Oakley uses his experience of an art exhibition to provide answers to these questions. As it transpires, not only the individual items on display, but also the museum as a whole, may induce and celebrate astonishment and evocation. It is the Frick Gallery in New York where the author's *eureka* occurred: His attention "zeroed in" on two Holbein portraits—one of Thomas Cromwell and the other of Thomas More—which were so cleverly placed it seemed that the two archenemies were staring at each other. Oakley remarks, "Frick probably savored the irony of this hang." To fully understand the curiously evocative placement of the two paintings, one needs the "ability to construct on the fly mental simulations from disparate domains of knowledge, in this case, from the domains of artistic portraiture, curatorial practices, and political infighting."

Taking off from here, Oakley launches his ideas about six elements of attention. He calls the first *alerting*, and defines it as "a general readiness to process novel stimuli." The second he names *orienting*, the disposition "to attend to particular items over others." These two are the "pre-attentive elements necessary for initiating a sequence of higher order processes," which are the following:

Selecting "directs attention toward items and away from other items" and is especially interesting for a theory of evocation in that it may involve unconscious filtering, blockage and deprivation. The same applies to *sustaining* attention, which Oakley says needs time and effort: As the viewer perceives Cromwell eyeing More, evocations arise, "mental simulations" take place that are "anchored in the here-and-now of a museum visit but referencing the there-and-then of Tudor England."

Oakley calls this fifth element *controlling* attention, and points out that it is "vital for functioning in complex, social and technological environments." *Harmonizing* is the sixth and probably most relevant element in the context of the present book, because it involves the awareness of other people's cognitive horizons and an ever-elusive yet indispensable anticipation of their thoughts and feelings.

Chapter II, *Gazing at paintings and the evocation of life*, by Philippe-Joseph Salazar similarly shows how the museum can be understood as an institution where spellbinding attention, astonishment and evocation are cultivated. Like Oakley and Wiseman he recalls and reflects on what he experienced at particular exhibitions, but he does it in a very personal and dramatic way. Noting that visual experiences have often triggered an epiphany in the course of his life, he uses this term as a key concept in his “self-ethnography.”

An epiphany happens “when the unexpected jolts the mind into confronting that, which had remained out of sight”, and whenever he went to a museum, Salazar looked forward not only to particular works of art that he was going to see, but also to writing about such “unexpected jolts.” Gazing and writing became one, as it were, in his moments of epiphany. The essay quotes three entries from his diaries, which show how paintings may “take possession of one’s life” by evoking “moral lessons.” He also provides details of elements of attention (see Oakley above) that influenced his gaze.

The first entry is about Paul Cadmus’ *The Fleet’s In* (1934), which in Salazar’s mind “hails back” to the past, to the High Renaissance, to a “courtly theme.” The sailors, and the men and women of the Great Depression, who are portrayed in the painting, reminded him of the plenipotentiaries and courtiers depicted in a fresco at the Ambassador’s Staircase in Versailles. As he kept gazing, the individual figures in the painting captured his attention and he noticed what Wiseman would call their “immanent qualities.” With ever-increasing intensity he describes how these figures are depicted by the painter, and in an ever-widening realm of comparison, which includes other paintings and other contexts, Salazar lets us share his evocations. Finally, in an additional twist he conjures up what the figures in the painting may be facing, may themselves be thinking and feeling.

John Lavery’s *Tennis Party* (1885), and *Le Jeu de cartes* (1948-1950) by Balthus (Balthazar Klossowski de Rola) led to similar cascades of evocation. Salazar was obviously captivated by the many pictorial tropes—especially irony—that abound in all of the paintings, and his diary entries show how they fueled his feelings of epiphany. Again, we note his

attention to minute but telling details of form and function, and it can be said that both the painters who painted the pictures, and Salazar who gazed at them, are masters of attribution (see Strecker below). In addition they are masters of allegory. English tennis becomes a “game of adultery,” and the French *belote* becomes a “game of life.” Salazar supports this with an account of his internal rhetoric. Is the card game about cheating? No. Is it about a personal relationship? Yes. After attending to the most telling details he says, “This is the painterly lesson of *Le Jeu de cartes*: a life is lived fully if played at the edge of Life.”

Each of the three paintings does even more than evoke the mood and modalities of individual lives, it also summons the vision of an historical period: *Tennis Party* brings to mind the impending end of the British Empire: “lawn tennis played on summery afternoons will disappear as proverbial clouds will gather over Empire;” *The Fleet’s In* rouses memories of an exulted moment in America’s history, when “Roosevelt and his emissaries design the New Deal;” and *Le Jeu de cartes*, Salazar concludes, “is a trope of the Cold War. That’s how I see it.”

Chapter III, *Tangled up in blue. Symbolism and evocation*, by Boris Wiseman widens and deepens the topic of the present book by reminding us that the question of non-referential language is still one of the “supreme enigmas” of cultural studies. In a short introductory paragraph he recalls that the French Symbolists (among them Baudelaire and Mallarmé) and pioneers of abstract art (for example Kandisky) experimented with the spellbinding capacity of language and other media, showing that art is above all a matter of “sensuous evocation.” Anthropologists and linguists have analyzed some of the more important ways in which evocation may be generated and kept in motion, for example by using imaginative strings of homologies (Lévi-Strauss), analogies (Jakobson), and synaesthetic correlates (Whorf).

In a second step, Wiseman remembers how an exhibition—*Indigo*—first roused his interest and led him to explore empirically and in minute detail the evocative power and symbolic ramifications of this blue dye. Astonishment, he observes, is enshrined in the production of indigo because an “extraordinary transmutation of the natural world” takes

place whereby colorless plant fibers suddenly yield their “precious chromatic essence.”

Evocation is involved when it comes to the social use of the color: the almost magical transformation observed in the natural world is projected onto the social world where the use of indigo dye plays a prominent role in rites of passage and is symbolically connected with death and regeneration.

Drawing on his wide knowledge of both anthropology and art history, Wiseman goes on to provide examples from various cultural contexts that show how the symbolism of indigo weaves sensory experiences together and creates moods that derive from the immanent qualities of indigo. Then he returns to general theory, to Lévi-Strauss and the interpretation of Apollinaire’s *Les colchiques*. Once more we find ourselves “entangled in blue,” subject to astonishment and evocation, as Wiseman makes a refined analysis of the poetic language that entertains a comparison between the blue color of a flower (Meadow Saffron or Naked Lady) and the eyes of the enchanted poet’s mistress.

Finally, Wiseman examines not only the evocations of blue but also of red and black as they appear in the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Claudel, Rilke and Imbert. Particular colors relate to, and resonate with others. This is not only true for colors present in the same perceptual field, but also for those that are part of a person’s memory or even the imaginary product of the mind’s eye. Thus, a field of indirect evocation extends beyond the field of direct perception and may be cultivated and carried over from one work to another, so that one may speak of a culture’s history of evocation and perception.

Does this mean that all evocations associated with particular colors are culture-specific? Wiseman answers: “I see a close kinship between the figure of the dye-maker and that of the artist and by extension the museum or gallery visitor. They share the same fine gained attentiveness to the qualitative dimensions of things and the conviction that these signify.” In other words, because of indigo’s immanent qualities, we are all prone to fall under its spell. Regardless of our cultural background we get entangled in strings of evocation, and are captivated by indigo’s mysterious blue.

In Chapter IV, *Co-presence, astonishment and evocation in cinematography*, Ivo Strecker explores the “spellbinding” power of cinema. Like the museum, the cinema derives its *raison d'être* from the opportunity it provides visitors for astonishment and evocation. Literally as well as metaphorically, it is a site for ‘focusing,’ for intense viewing, for sustained attention, and for mental and emotional epiphany (see Oakley and Salazar above).

While working on his own films, or watching films made by others, Strecker often wondered about the evocative power of seemingly incidental phenomena, like when a dog appears and is kicked away just as a baby is being born, or a bird rises and circles above a dancer. Why are cinematographers eager to capture images where co-presence of seemingly unrelated phenomena becomes visible? Why are they delighted when, while editing their footage, such forms of co-presence are unexpectedly revealed?

In order to answer this and other questions related to the evocative dimensions of film, the author enlists the help of Stephen Tyler. The four basic meaning schemata of existence, attribution, function and comparison—elucidated in *The said and the unsaid*—which allow us to act meaningfully in the world, also assist the task of ethnographic filming. They “guide our attention and provide the lens through which we can focus and produce images that catch our and other people’s attention and have the power to surprise and generate evocation.”

Schemata of *existence* generally make ontological claims about the existence or non-existence of things. Here it is only necessary to note that in as far as they point to the presence of things they are intrinsic to the camera, which is designed to alert, select and sustain attention by means of framing, zooming, focusing and such like. Schemata of *attribution* are used to depict the specific qualities of things. As Wiseman’s chapter has shown, the immanent quality of a color may entrance people. The camera is able to capture and even enhance such wonderment. Conscious that they can only focus on what is visibly accessible, filmmakers often “*magically* evoke a totality by means of its attributes” (this compares with the use of attribution in the production and interpretation of paintings, as we saw in Salazar’s chapter).

The same applies to the schemata of *function*, which involve a relationship between cause and effect, purpose and form. The nail evokes the hammer, and the hammer evokes the nail. Thus, the schemata of *function* entail forms of *co-presence* that may be exploited by the cinematographer.

A further set of meaning schemata is found under the rubric of *comparison*. The schemata of *time and space* may be used in film not only to provide temporal and spatial orientation, but also to create a “higher order of awareness that allows for tension, drama and astonishment.” Schemata of *resemblance*—which are basic for the production of all forms of figuration—are even more important because they allow cinematographers to create a metaphorical and allegorical layering that increases the evocative power of their films.

Part II: Performance

Chapter V, *Captivated by ritual. Visceral visitations and the evocation of community*, by Klaus-Peter Köpping, begins with forms of astonishment arising in situations of first cultural contact. As a kind of prelude to his central theme—“visceral visitations”—Köpping reports how at first the New Guinea Highlanders held the Whites to be god-like, but “the empirical proof that they *shat* made them re-think and newly categorize the visitors as human like themselves.” He also draws attention to Stephen Greeblatt’s study of the miraculous, which has characterized astonishment as “gut-wrenching” experience.

Köpping describes his own feeling of astonishment as a form of shock and subsequent captivation (compare Oakley chapter two). He experienced it when he attended a festival in a remote region of Japan where dances were performed to celebrate *Yama-no-kami*, a Japanese mountain god. The paraphernalia and performance of the dances expressed emotions of rage and fury, which eventually transformed into gentleness and peacefulness. Such reversals are not only part of Japanese ritual but can also be observed in European romantic traditions in which the “elusive polarity of bliss and dread” is used to evoke the *Schaurig-Schöne* and the sublime.

After these reflections on the involving nature of performance and the need to participate to understand performance fully, Köpping moves from the ancient mountain god to a “living goddess,” Mrs. Sayo Kitamura, who claimed that her belly was a sanctuary of the whole Japanese nation and founded a successful cult on this extraordinary assertion. Noting that this cult used the metaphor of the belly in similar ways as the villagers in the mountains, Köpping began to wonder whether he had perhaps discovered a key metaphor of Japanese self-understanding and subsequently focused his research on this topic. In his essay he offers pertinent details of the results, and explains how the Japanese “evoke for each other the notions of ‘self’ and ‘society’ by means of body metaphors.”

There is a rich literature on the distinction between inner self and outer experience in Japanese culture, as well as on associated body metaphors, which Köpping mentions before he embarks on his main project, a comparison between the mountain village festival and the cult of Mrs. Kitamura. In both cases the belly is used as metaphorical “focus and locus of transgression, boundary crossing as well as finding the ‘inner self’ on a collective as well as individual plane.” The festival of the mountain god is characterized by raucous, hilarious, exuberant performance understood as an expression of the belly. However, as a local lay priest explains, this outrageous behavior also “restores peace to the community.” The cult of Mrs. Kitamura—the “Great Goddess”—is staged at her headquarter in Tabuse and involves performances such as healing, dancing and especially prophecy, in which the “visceral speaks” and a “new dawn of history” is “metaphorically expressed by the cleansed body of a woman who will be pregnant with a male-female divinity.”

The chapter ends with reflections on how both rituals have to do with “evacuating” the mind through dancing. However, while the New Religious Movement wants to free the mind from visceral visitations of the belly, the Mountain Festival emphasizes them and uses the powers of the belly—the true seat of human natural drives—to induce a sense of community among all who take part in the performance.

Chapter VI, *The spell of riddles among the Witoto*, by Jürg Gasché can be understood not only as an exploration of the spellbinding power of “fantastic” cultural inventions, but also as a kind of homage to the imaginative genius of the Witoto who live in a world full of natural diversity, and not yet completely transformed by literacy and industrialization. Their “otherness” still meets us in full force, and their ethnography generates a host of surprises. The riddle songs and their translation and explanation, which are the subject of the essay, lead us to the mountains, valleys and waters of the northern tributaries of the upper Amazon River, abounding with flora and fauna. This natural reservoir has imprinted itself on the Witoto and provides material for their analogical modes of thinking and figurative forms of expression that fire their riddle songs.

The composition of the chapter is itself reminiscent of a riddle in that the reader is drawn into puzzling about questions, the answers to which are provided only at the end. The Witoto and their neighbors do not cultivate the asking and answering of riddles, as we do among family and friends, in order to entertain each other. Nor do they engage in it solely to feel the thrills of astonishment and evocation. Rather, the posing of riddles is meant to challenge the mental alertness of a festival owner and is used for momentary social prestige in a competitive and egalitarian society. It gives rise to “provocations, attacks, complaints, criticism and mockery, but also to tributes and praise, to joy, laughter and courtship.”

Of particular interest is that the guest who poses his riddle to a festival owner also throws a spell over him. He sings a song that “conjures up bad luck, wishing that the heart or mind of the festival owner will not surmount the difficulties and will be left confused.” In other words, the posers of riddles try to block the paths that may lead to the right evocations. They aim at creating stupor, the negative effect of astonishment that Descartes has stressed, and we mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. Part of the mix of pleasure and pain involved in posing and answering riddles among the Witoto is that the singer of a riddle will also provide keys to the kinds of association that nudge his host into finding the answer.

After an outline of the general context, four riddle songs are presented, translated and explained by referring to gradually widening contexts and ever more complex details. In fact, at times the chapter becomes such an intricate net of details that these features assume a metaphorical dimension. The attention to seemingly far-fetched relations as well as to the minutest details seems to mirror the art of formulating and answering riddles, for riddles constitute a game of disguise and revelation in which the most improbable relationship as well as the smallest detail may be decisive.

Gasché's masterly ethnography shows how rhetorical figures such as metonymy, synecdoche and metaphor abound in Witoto riddle songs, which derive their mystery and drama to a large extent from a "humanizing" of the natural world or, seen the other way round, from a "naturalizing" of human thought.

Chapter VII, *The sound of the past. Music, history, and astonishment*, by Markus Verne traces situations in which musicians, historians, and anthropologists were astonished by the presence of an unexpected past that was evoked in them through aesthetic experience. This past dates back to the times before Arab sailors became the masters of the Indian Ocean and tells the story of a considerable Indonesian influence not just all over the Indian Ocean, but also in large parts of Africa, up to its Westernmost regions. Neither part of official records, nor of local traditions, this past is however still experienced by some, lying dormant in language, material culture, ritual practice and—most of all—in music.

The chapter begins with Hanitarivo Rasoanaivo, lead singer and head of the Malagasy music group Tarika, telling a story about being touched by the discovery of her own cultural traditions in Indonesian food, appearance, language, and music. This experience made her explore her country's Indonesian roots more deeply, and eventually led to the production of an album entitled "Soul Makassar," in which she sonically re-establishes the musical bond between Africa and Indonesia.

The author then switches from artistic to scientific explorations and tells about scholars who, like Hanitra, were struck by the unthought-of presence of a past relating Africa

to Indonesia. These scholars all witnessed musical performances in which they were able to “hear” this unknown history. As a result, they tried to make sense of their aesthetic experiences through historical research on instruments, scales, songs, tunings, and playing techniques. These studies continued throughout the Twentieth Century and led to quite similar reconstructions, even though the various approaches differed considerably from each other. Independently, von Hornbostel, Jones, Lomax and others revealed a striking Indonesian influence on African music, as well as on aspects of material culture.

Why then, Verne asks by way of conclusion, has this historical relation, suggested time and again by some of the most renowned scholars of ethnomusicology, not become part of our collective memory, if only as a possibility? Has this perhaps to do with the fact that the meanings of musical performance are to a large extent elusive? Has it to do with the nature of aesthetic experience?

Chapter VIII, *Reflections on our entangled emotions and their disambiguation*, by James Fernandez seems at first puzzling. Why does Fernandez not aim at elucidating questions of “interpretation” but of “disambiguation” in a volume concerned with the “spell of culture,” and why does he call disambiguation a very “Tylerian” problem while Tyler himself rejects the formalism typically associated with WSD (word sense disambiguation), a favorite child of computer linguistics and artificial intelligence?

The answer involves several twists: (1) Fernandez wants to move away from “interpretation” because the term evokes battling with the hermeneutical quandaries of written texts rather than live performance. Also, it puts, as he says, too much emphasis on the interpreter rather than the producer of meaning. (2) He proposes the use of disambiguation as a concept to address the “ever-present ambiguity of the human condition.” Mental and emotional uncertainty about the meanings of their ambiguous experiences may pose very real problems for people who therefore try to disambiguate them. (3) Fernandez also realizes that such disambiguation needs some “figuring out” and is largely done by means of tropes. Yet, rhetorical figures are themselves ambiguous and may lead to quite varied kinds of evocation.

In his previous publications, Fernandez has explained metaphor as a tool to overcome a "gnawing sense of uncertainty" or "the inchoate." Inchoateness is part of human experience, but "however inchoate our condition, we are bound to try and transcend it" (1986: xiii). Thus we use metaphor and other tropes to make the effable more concrete, more easily graspable.

Emotions are by their very nature in need of such figurative representation. Simultaneously, they are molded by the figures that help to express them. All tropes have their own mood, feeling and emotional charge, which people use in their performances as means for inward and outward persuasion. Rituals, Fernandez has argued in his ethnographical and theoretical work, are a case in point, and their performance can be analyzed as "a series of organizing images or metaphors put into operation by a series of superordinate and subordinate ceremonial scenes." (1986: 43).

Seen in this light, Fernandez' chapter can be read as thoughts about "figuring out" what particular forms of emotion may mean, as well as their artful employment in performance. The shedding of tears can be partly explained ethologically as a "function of the extended infancy and childhood of humans." Also, the woes of human existence are such that "even adults do not escape the power of tears." However, in terms of performance, weeping is more interesting when it has a "pronounced social rather than personal need function." Fernandez reflects on his earlier ethnography of religious movements among the Bwiti and examines weeping as part of their "imaginative arguments and ritual actions" intent on creating emotional movement.

Part III: Text

Chapter IX, *Stones, drumbeats, footprints and mysteries in the writing of the Other*, by Dennis Tedlock provides an extreme case of ethnographic investigation introducing us to the ironies and agonies of cross-cultural interlocution and the ever-present possibility of misunderstanding. It begins with the puzzles of Mayan epigraphy. For some time now,

epigraphers have realized that “phoneticism plays a major role in the Maya script” and have treated Maya texts “as if they were the products of a code that could be cracked by discovering the laws that governed it.” Important as this discovery may have been, it has also “silenced the strands of Maya poetics that produce metaphors and, on a subtler level, sound plays that are more than just keys to rebus readings.” Tedlock laments this “objectifying discourse” and says that in order to save the evocative dimensions of Maya epigraphs, one would have to shift one’s position “from that of a code-cracker to that of a hypothetical Maya reader,” a shift, which would require a dialogical mode of research that has sadly been missing in Mayan studies during the past. Or rather, it existed but in an alienated, even perverted form.

Maya ethnography goes back to the writings of Fray Francisco de Landa, a catholic missionary who arrived in Yucatán in 1549. Like many others, he excluded the dialogues with native interlocutors in his ethnography and wrote “in the voice of an omniscient observer ... leaving native terms as the last traces of the voices of the others.” Tedlock relates horrifying details of how Landa, the missionary and ethnographer, brought the inquisition to the Maya and “submitted them to questioning under torture.”

From here on, the chapter becomes a parable about the dark potential of ethnographic investigation: The relationship between ethnographer and informant may at times be like the “intimate relationship between torturer and victim,” which allows that the “interrogator asks leading questions that contain clues to his fantasies, while the witness tries to imagine answers that will fulfill and even exceed those fantasies.” Something similar may happen when more benign ethnographers pose questions that have no relevance for the cultural “Other.”

Tedlock argues that “the supreme irony of Landa’s suppression of dialogue is that epigraphers were able to make sense of his account of Maya writing only by putting his examples of hieroglyphic spellings back into the context of an interview. They started from the answers he wrote down and then reconstructed the questions he must have asked in order

to get them.” But how should we picture Landa framing his questions, and how did his Maya informant, Nachi Cocom, respond to them? As we are led to imagine in our mind’s eye (and ear) how Landa interrogated Cocom, and how the latter struggled to answer questions that in his mind were senseless, even idiotic, Tedlock’s account assumes a weird character reminiscent of some of Samuel Becket’s plays. In the end one wonders how it would be if the drama (tragedy or comedy?) of Landa and Cocom facing and misunderstanding each other, were to be re-enacted on stage, in film or radio.

Chapter X, *The translation of the said and the unsaid in Sikkamese ritual texts*, by Douglas Lewis continues the theme of “mysteries in the writings of the Other.” However, Lewis is not concerned with problems of misunderstanding but with perplexing states of non-understanding. Also, not the cultural “Other” gets tortured in his account, but the ethnographer who engages in some kind of self-torture trying and failing forever to achieve a satisfying translation of particular kinds of text.

Lewis begins by telling how his fieldwork in the Regency of Sikka of the island of Flores involved astonishing moments of which the most exciting was the discovery of a “large cache of old papers” that contained the writings of Dominicus Dionitius Pareira Kondi and Alexius Boer Pareira, who as lay historians had recorded the history and myths of their the people. The preservation, correction, interpretation and translation of these texts occupied Lewis for more than a dozen years and eventually led to the publishing of two books. Looking back on the work that he has completed, Lewis says: “Had I known when I began how difficult the translation ... would be ... I am not certain I would have persisted with what has become, to my mind, a task impossible to acquit fully.”

Why was the translation so difficult? Because it involved not only the said, but also what Stephen Tyler has called the “aureola of the unsaid.” Making full use of Stephen Tyler’s *The Said and the Unsaid* and also George Steiner’s *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Lewis weaves his own and other scholars’ thoughts together in order to explain why it is wrong to assume that all meaningful texts can be translated satisfactorily.

Translation must in many cases remain an unfulfilled promise, an opening-up, an invitation—an inducement to evocation. This holds particularly true for utterances, which are intentionally cryptic like those found in Sikka ritual language.

The “evocative genre of Sara Sikka ritual speech” involves complex forms of *poiesis* (pairing of word phrases, use of synonymy, antonymy, complementary opposition etc.) that Lewis found he could render reasonably well, but then he adds, “for the ethnographer, it is frequently the case that no amount of conversation with or interrogation of a speaker of ritual language can reliably elicit the meaning of a speech or its words. Meaning in ritual speech is always elusive; it is as if the meaning of the words is their articulation.” Lewis illustrates this with several examples of Sikka ritual practice and mythic narration, demonstrating empirically how difficult it can be to address the “meaningfulness of intransigent words.”

The chapter closes with reflections on *Credo ut intelligam*—I believe so that I may know. Tyler once inscribed these words for Lewis in his copy of *The Said and the Unsaid*. They are from St. Anselm’s *Proslogium* and part of a longer sentence: “For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand.” Lewis explains at length how fruitfully this chiasmus evokes thoughts about the complementary relationship between faith and reason, and implies that the chiasmus also asserts itself in the work of translation. In the end we are made to understand that the inscription is typical for Tyler’s teaching, which is based on the art of evocation, or—perhaps better—subtle modes of provocation.

Chapter XI, *Ethnographic evocations and evocative ethnographies* by Barbara Tedlock continues the chiasmic mood with which the preceding chapter ends, but while Lewis ponders about the complementarity of faith and reason, Tedlock wonders about the relationship between world and text. The evocative elements of both the physical and social world—including the cultural Other—astound us, captivate our attention, and make us want to share our experience with others in speech, in writing and additional forms of communication. This is the first part of the chiasmus, “ethnographic evocations.” The second part follows in response to the first and asks how “evocative ethnographies” can be created

that do not mute and destroy but give voice and life to the world as we, and others have experienced it. At the centre of the chiasmus lies a mental and emotional space in which the topic of discourse is negotiated: “the third space between self and other, interior and exterior, fact and fiction, thought and emotion, truth and illusion.”

The author’s personal roots of this ontological concern comes out most clearly at the end of the essay where she recalls how as a child she spent time with her Ojibwe grandmother who explained to her that rocks are alive, “since she herself had seen rocks move and heard them speak. In time, she said, I also might hear and speak with rocks.” Western, scientific taxonomies would insist that there are categorical differences between rocks and plants, but grandmother Nokomis admonished her daughter, “not to choose one path over the other but instead to walk in balance along the edges of these worlds.”

To find the right balance is all the more important, as it is part of a quest for global social and cultural justice. Backing up her first chiasmus with a second one, Tedlock argues, that under the imperial regime of natural science, anthropology has produced a hiatus between “reportable non-participatory observation and non-reportable total participation.” This is manifest in the history of ethnography, which has always discredited textual strategies that aimed at evocation and indirect communication of own and other people’s experience. Looking back on this alienated and alienating past, we realize that, “When we agreed to such a split, we cultivated rapport not friendship, compassion not sympathy, respect not belief, understanding not solidarity, and admiration not love.”

This is the critical perspective from which Tedlock has written her essay and from where it should be read. But she also offers a positive perspective, which she has derived from Stephen Tyler who has suggested that we use ethnography as “a meditative vehicle because we come to it neither as to a map of knowledge nor as a guide to action, nor even for entertainment. We come to it as the start of a different kind of journey.” Asking what such different anthropological journeys might entail, Tedlock introduces us to several “evocative ethnographies” as well as the life circumstances of their authors.

But before she comes to this, she plays out yet another chiasmus: “People today do not live in different worlds but live differently in the world.” This involves an often free-floating cultural identity of people, “cut loose from their moorings and meanings clash, creating dissociation, ending in a feeling of profound weirdness.” How does one respond to such changes ethnographically? Certainly not in plain style, for now is the time of an ethnography, “which features the author as the active part of the story,” and aims at “cultural co-participation, solidarity, and friendship.”

Tedlock distinguishes several kinds of “evocative ethnographies.” (1) Ethnographic fiction as exemplified by the work of Adolf Bandelier, Paul Hazoumé, Oliver LaFarge, José María Arguedas and Zora Neale Hurston, which may lead readers “to find themselves in solidarity with forgotten, maligned, or misunderstood peoples”; (2) multigenre texts (Hurston); (3) autoethnography (Hurston); (4) literary creole, a style that incorporates vernacular expressions into a dominant, national language (Arguedas). The essay culminates in an appraisal of Amitav Ghosh, whose “evocative documentary work seeks to balance clarity (*enargeia*) with excitement leading to astonishment (*ekplêxis*). His powerfully evocative writing engenders experiences in which things absent are presented to the reader’s imagination with such vividness that they seem to stand right before their eyes.”

Chapter XII, *Reading public culture: Reason and excess in the newspaper*, by Robert Hariman brings the book to a close by showing once again how astonishment and evocation are prone to arise when we are confronted with unexpected forms of collocation. As we have seen in preceding chapters, the media in which this happens may be visual, performative, or textual, and the collocations may be intentional or unintentional. The newspaper offers an amazing mix of texts where the banal and the sublime, the mad and the sane are placed side by side offering countless opportunities for cross-references, semantic associations, resonance and dissonance.

But how can he make sense of this “cacophony of discourses,” asks Hariman, of this “crazy-quilt compendium of violence, waste, cruelty, and loss” that constitute the news? His

answer is to read the newspapers in an attitude of wonder reminiscent of the therapeutic use of ethnography suggested by Stephen Tyler: “Instead of a mere instrumentality that is valuable only for a day or as an archival document,” he says, “the newspaper as a source of astonishment and evocation can call for renewed appreciation of how society, culture, and more specific human capacities are strange things being continuously recreated.” Furthermore, as he studies the newspapers with an ethnographic eye, Hariman begins to see, “how a culture continually reforms, almost kaleidoscopically and yet for better or worse, in its daily concatenation of many shards of meaning.” Newspapers may thus be likened to the “evocative ethnographies” explicated by Barbara Tedlock in the preceding chapter, for both reveal a similar heterogeneity of culture, the “mad” collocation of “reason and excess.”

Although the author does not make it explicit, his is yet another essay driven by an underlying chiasmus. The two parts are reason and excess, and it is at moments of their reversal that astonishment and the full power of evocation set in, i.e. at moments when the seemingly sane turns out to be mad, and the seemingly mad turns out to be sane. This is Tedlock’s “third space” of chiasmus (Chapter XI), which calls for a higher level of awareness and allows one to understand the paradox that “the odd, peculiar, outrageous, distorted, eccentric, and otherwise *excessive* character of the newspaper is as important to the constitution of modern public culture as is the commitment to public reason.”

With this observation Hariman comes close to Tedlock’s Ojibwe grandmother who told her daughter to abandon all rigid scientific classifications (which, after all, are man-made) and listen to rocks as well as to people. Hariman advocates a similarly open attitude and argues that this may help us better understand the chiasmus of reason and excess that pervades not only the newspaper but inheres in all culture. “If analytical explanation requires the relentless discrimination of either-or distinctions,” he writes in one of his most pertinent passages, “then the attitude of wonder is necessary to recognize how social reality remains beholden to logics of both-and. Both reason and excess, both mad and tame, both beauty and

horror. Good judgment requires no less: only by being able to marvel at the human world can one see exactly how it is both fallen and redeemed.”

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These, then, are the chapters of the book, with the various themes and strands of reasoning that run through them. As a form of closure, we now return to the beginning of this introduction where we outlined Stephen Tyler’s thoughts about evocation. In conversation, Tyler has repeatedly drawn attention to the religious and magical roots of evocation, the ancient practice of calling forth, conjuring up or summoning spirits, believed to reside in particular places (shrines), objects (crystal balls), or substances (incense). Tyler also likens evocation to the age-old art of divination that uses figures such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche etc. to detect meaning in the constellation of stars, the sound of birds, the entrails of sacrificial animals. Evocation in art and anthropology may, thus, be likened to a calling forth and a mantic imagining of complex and deep lying meanings. But in as much as this comparison highlights the creative aspect of evocation, it also brings out how the use of this epistemological concept may open the floodgate to imagination and lead the mind to never ending flights of fancy.

Yet, if we acknowledge the incomplete, provisional, and inferential nature of discourse in art and anthropology, we are necessarily obliged to include evocation (and similar notions) in our conceptual repertoire. As we do this, we enter the dangerous hermeneutical waters that are bordered on one side by the Scylla of excessively figurative and therefore obscure style, and on the other side by the Charybdis of inappropriate and therefore destructive literalness. Tyler thought it especially important to guard against the latter when he wrote:

“Literalness in all its forms is reprehensible, but it is most odious in conversation, for its effect is obstructionist and is usually so intended. There is a certain “looseness” about all of our conversational rules and our rules of social life generally, so that anyone who follows the rules literally, destroys the normative character of interaction and induces social paralysis.

To ask for mathematical exactitude in our everyday rules and use of rules is to ask for disaster, the very destruction of the form sought rather than its fulfilment.” (1978: 396)

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