

# INTRODUCTION



Occasionally one can witness how grand human schemes collapse and new ones materialize. The fate of modernism is a case in point: as a project of the Enlightenment with its maxims of rationality, univocal communication and logical sense making, it was adored by the natural sciences and the humanities alike – that is, until Robert Venturi came along and published *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), which exposed the sterility of modernity's doctrine of 'form follows function' and turned the slogan 'less is more' into 'less is bore'. This brilliant move – with its intoxicating call for 'complexity' and 'contradiction' – heralded the advent of postmodernism, which then spread like wildfire through all the arts and academic subjects.

One of the most productive moves of postmodernism was to reinstall rhetoric at the apex of the humanities. This newly found relevance of rhetoric was also recognized by German and American anthropologists who in 1993 launched the Rhetoric Culture Project and up to now have published their findings in the Berghahn Books *Studies in Rhetoric and Culture* series. I discovered the series, soon wrote about it, added an individual chapter to volume eight, and now have provided the tenth volume in this series, entitled *Culture Figures: A Rhetorical Reading of Anthropology*.

Well before the 'rhetorical turn', the transition from communism to capitalism in Poland initiated a transformation in thinking about the social and human sciences. Some Polish anthropologists born in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s wanted to go beyond the ethnological theory that prevailed in Poland before 1989, when the 'Iron Curtain' fell. They used global projects, collectively labelling them 'postmodern anthropology'. They explained in Polish and for Polish audiences some theories that were unknown and difficult to access in the country at the time (only those who travelled abroad had access to the original texts). An even younger generation of researchers (born in the late 1970s and early 1980s), to which I myself belong, acquired their knowledge about postmodernism from a corpus largely already 'translated' by Polish academic scholars, who introduced us to the then new theoretical and

methodological developments in the human sciences, which pertained above all to the ‘rhetorical turn’, as I will recall at length in Chapter 1 below.

My fascination with postmodernism and the rhetoric of anthropology was due in particular to Stephen Tyler’s essay ‘A Post-modern In-stance’. After I had read this ‘postmodern manifesto’, I wrote an article about it, which I sent to Tyler. One week later, I was over the moon when I read the following answer:

What a lovely Valentine’s present! Your argument has indeed . . . ‘brought me pleasure’. I wish I could read the longer work from which this piece has been excerpted. Is there, by any chance, a translation of the remaining parts? If so, I should very much like to read them. Judging from what I have read, I can see that you have a very thorough and profound understanding of the issues surrounding post-modernism. I am particularly impressed with the way you locate the discourse within the wider discourse of philosophy. I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of your paper to my colleague, Ivo Strecker. (Private correspondence with Stephen Tyler, 21 February 2013)

This is how my journey with the Rhetoric Culture Project began and how I was motivated to engage in extensive ‘rhetorical readings of anthropology’, leading me to publish my findings in the chapters presented below.

Following Kenneth Burke’s (1969a: 36) new rhetoric, I distinguish between rhetorical discourse (*rhetorica utens*) and rhetorical theory (*rhetorica docens*). Rhetorical discourse of anthropology that creates and expresses the understanding of culture, as well as the theoretical and methodological attitudes, is the proper object of the rhetorical analyses presented in this study. In particular, I am interested in discovering how the use of tropes (metaphor, synecdoche, hyperbole, etc.) and rhetorical figures such as chiasmus co-create anthropological knowledge. I also ask how rhetoric and rhetoricality might be keys to the discipline’s self-understanding. This involves the following questions: in which areas does rhetoric penetrate anthropological discourse? To what extent are the procedures of rhetoricians and anthropologists alike? How are persuasiveness and figurativeness expressed in anthropological texts? And last but not least: how is the relation between rhetoric and the process of anthropological understanding constituted?

The first part of the book’s title (*Culture Figures*) serves as a catalyst for the hermeneutic process, prompting readers to question whether ‘figures’ is a noun, a plural form of ‘figure’ or a verb that implies that ‘culture’ is some kind of agent. As readers reflect on both meanings, the title can unleash its full power. The book is devoted to two related aspects: on the one hand, cultural figures (i.e. anthropologists at work); and, on the other hand, the figures of culture themselves. It explores how anthropology, as a culture, creates the objects and subjects of its inquiry. Thus, *Culture Figures* reflects the central concept

of the book, which Stephen Tyler elaborates upon in his essay ‘Emergence, Agency, and the Middle Ground of Culture’. Tyler posits that the ‘anthropological object called culture is produced by the rhetoric called ethnography or more generally, anthropology, just as that rhetoric is reciprocally produced by the object called culture’ (Tyler 2011: 309).

The subtitle phrase of the book, ‘rhetorical reading’, refers to the theory and method of discourse analysis (*rhetorica docens*). In characterizing the analytical perspective of Paul de Man, Rodolphe Gasché argues that a rhetorical reading, oriented towards the rhetorical dimension of language, ‘claims to be faithful to the texts it reads: It pretends to an adequate understanding of the text itself’ (1989: 266). I follow Gasché’s explanation and treat the rhetorical reading as a theory and method of discourse analysis, in which tropological processes and modes of persuasion serve as the bases for the production of meanings or misunderstandings. The rhetorical reading of anthropological texts, proposed in this book, is the realization of some theories and methodological concepts developed within the rhetorical turn: rhetoric of inquiry, deconstruction, new rhetoric, writing culture debate and rhetoric culture theory. I also refer to the knowledge on tropes, rhetorical figures and argumentative techniques provided by the studies on ancient rhetoric, which constitute a compendium of the rhetorical reflections of Greek and Roman thinkers (Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero).

My ‘rhetorical reading’ applies to both descriptive and theoretical texts, and my analyses move from earlier ethnographic monographs to later ones, and very recent theoretical texts in anthropology representing various approaches: functionalism, structuralism, cognitive anthropology, interpretative anthropology, performative anthropology, rhetorical theory of symbolization, postmodernism, engaged anthropology and the so-called ‘objective’ model in anthropology.

Chapter 1, ‘The Chiasmus of Rhetoric and Anthropology’, serves as a broad canvas against which all the subsequent chapters can be viewed. The chapter highlights that the rhetorical turn is a substantial component of contemporary thinking in the social sciences and humanities. It also explores the theoretical and methodological aspects, along with the practical application, of two incarnations of the rhetorical turn in sociocultural anthropology. By examining the relationship between anthropology and rhetoric, it becomes apparent that the rhetorical turn centres on scrutinizing the persuasive and figurative dimensions of anthropological texts. Additionally, the rhetorical turn pertains to the anthropological research perspective that concentrates on interpreting society and culture, wherein the tools and concepts of rhetoric assume a crucial role.

In Chapter 2, ‘Root Metaphors for “Culture” and Social Life’, the analysis examines the root metaphors that constitute the theoretical conceptions of

culture and social life, as well as anthropological modes of analysis and interpretation. The understanding of culture and society through the root metaphor of the organism, as seen in functionalism and structural functionalism, entailed certain adaptations in the field of methodology. In the works of Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski and other functionalists, we deal with a synecdochic mode of cognition. In the essay 'Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali', Geertz also uses a metaphor of culture as a living organism, which is quite interesting. However, his perspective on culture differs from that of (structural) functionalists. Geertz emphasizes that each part of culture, represented by the tentacles of the octopus, moves independently of the other parts. This metaphor highlights the complexity and diversity of cultural practices and behaviours. In turn, the rhetorical reading of the core texts of interpretative and performative anthropology and structural anthropology shows that the sources of metaphors through which culture and social life are conceptualized are no longer domains of biology, but rather theatre (see Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Edward Bruner and Kirsten Hastrup) and mathematics, physics and linguistics (see Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach). Chapter 2 demonstrates that sociocultural anthropology is a parasitic discourse created by *bricoleurs*. Anthropologists derive notions from other domains and use them in their texts to formulate theories of culture and society and devise interpretative procedures.

In Chapter 3, 'Enargeia, Metonymy and Synecdoches: Videocentrism in Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*', I examine how the visual ideology of science, known as videocentrism, manifests itself in the book, which exemplifies ethnographic realism: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* by Bronislaw Malinowski. By analysing the rhetoric of Malinowski's narration, I conclude that anthropology is a genre in which authority is constituted by visual rhetoric, such as using photographs in the role of synecdoches and referring to the power of ethnographic imagination. Among other rhetorical means, one should also mention the techniques aiming to visualize the activities of Trobriand Argonauts, putting the reader in the role of co-observer and participant, and presenting events in a vivid, picturesque manner by applying the figure of *enargeia*. The realistic description of places and social actions in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* is constructed through a story based on metonymy. All of these rhetorical strategies help Malinowski convince the reader that he established close contact with the distant ways of life. Furthermore, it can be stated that through these techniques, the reader establishes this close contact themselves.

Chapter 4, 'Varieties of Rhetoric in Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska's *Spółeczność wiejska (Rural Community)*', aims to introduce a wider audience

to a book written in Polish by Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska, a noteworthy researcher in the development of Polish anthropology. *Rural Community* (*Społeczność wiejska*) is based on ethnographic research conducted before the Second World War and was considered very innovative in Poland. In Chapter 4 I demonstrate that Zawistowicz-Adamska's book, deals with various ways of manifesting rhetoric. On one level, the author uses persuasive means to convince readers that the descriptions of events presented in the book are true. On another level, rhetoric is understood as the art of achieving consensus, and is manifested in the efforts to reach an agreement between the researcher and the others – the villagers of Zaborów.

Chapter 5, 'Persuasive Engrams: The Work of Memory in Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*', provides a rhetorical reading of Claude Lévi-Strauss' famous work. Analysing *Tristes Tropiques*, I conclude that it comprises distinct genres that have not been blurred, as Geertz (1983, 1988) argued, but rather exist side by side. One of the identifiable genres in *Tristes Tropiques* is that of a memoir. This observation shifts the perspective of the rhetorical reading, as the book is structured as a memory process or a dream. The relationships linking the author's memories that emerge, often unconsciously, become significant. As a result, the information gathered by the ethnographer during fieldwork is stored not only in the fieldnotes but also in the form of so-called headnotes or, as I like to say, persuasive engrams.

Chapter 6, 'Coercive Script and Innocent Speech: Rethinking Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*', has two aims. The first is to re-think the results of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of those fragments in *Tristes Tropiques* in which Lévi-Strauss writes about the role of writing and speech, which were discussed in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1997). The second aim is to supplement Derrida's lecture on *Tristes Tropiques* with a hermeneutic perspective using a language of rhetorical theory. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida discusses rhetorical strategies in Lévi-Strauss' work using the terminology developed by rhetoric, though to a lesser extent than in *Margins of Philosophy*, where he analyses the status of metaphor in philosophical texts. Categories from the rhetorical vocabulary, such as enthymeme, parenthesis, and *praeteritio*, are inventions of my analysis of the rhetoric of *Tristes Tropiques* based on Derridian deconstruction.

The main body of Chapter 7, 'Artful Speakers and Wilful Listeners: The Quandaries of Irony', is devoted to a discussion of the theoretical and methodological considerations of two research proposals in sociocultural anthropology, namely the cognitive theory of symbolism by Dan Sperber (with Deirdre Wilson) and the rhetorical theory of symbolization by Ivo Strecker. Different ways of interpreting the following ironic statement 'Arthur buys The Parisian even though he doesn't need lavatory paper!' (Sperber 1975a: 123), reflect the

contradiction of cognitive and pragmatic approaches. However, the goal of this chapter is not only to discuss the dispute between cognitive and pragmatic models of interpretation of symbolism and/or symbolization, but also to consider the ‘ironic consequences and difficulties’ that occur during the attempt to reconcile the perspectives proposed by Sperber and Strecker.

Chapter 8, ‘Paronomasia and Complexity of Parody: A Rhetorical Reading of Stephen Tyler’s “A Post-modern In-stance”’, is dedicated to the postmodern manifesto. The analysis of Tyler’s essay necessitates adopting suitable reading and writing strategies. The essay’s structure induces this need, as its fundamental trope is parody and it speaks through the other words as well as the words of others. ‘A Post-modern In-stance’ is not a ready-made product, but raw material in the reader’s hands. Since it consists of repetitive odds and ends (i.e. the figure of paronomasia), it can be concluded that Tyler’s essay’s interpretation process is hypertextual. That is why, during the rhetorical reading of ‘A Post-modern In-stance’, I focus less on the meaning of the text and more on finding connections to other texts.

Chapter 9, ‘Accusation and Defence: The Rhetorics of “Moral” and “Objective” Anthropology’, offers an analysis of the rhetoric used in the dispute over the political and ethical engagement of sociocultural anthropology, as well as objectivism in anthropology. Based on a rhetorical reading of papers by adherents of the moral model (such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Monika Baer) and the objective model (such as Roy D’Andrade and Marcin Brocki) in anthropology, the chapter highlights the benefits of using rhetorical genre as well as persuasive and figural means to empower one’s status as the subject of scholarly discourse and disavow others. In light of Aristotle’s concept of *politikon zoon*, this dispute and the parties involved can be regarded as political.

In the Conclusion to the book, I provide a summary of the analyses of anthropological discourse presented within it. Additionally, I engage in contemplation regarding further rhetorical reading, highlighting noteworthy anthropological publications. Furthermore, I offer reflections on the importance of incorporating posthumanist rhetoric and new materialisms into future studies within the rhetoric of anthropology (as well as the anthropology of rhetoric).