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Epideictic Rhetoric

Editor’s Introduction

A brief look at the back issues of Communication Research Trends (cscc.scu.edu/trends) shows that this journal often addresses research topics drawn from media studies. However, communication goes far beyond media studies, despite the consistent attention researchers pay to issues such as the effects of the media on various groups. Without doubt, the most ancient (and probably the most geographically widespread) of communication studies disciplines focuses on the spoken word.

Rhetoric, the study of speaking or, better according to Aristotle, of finding the available means of persuasion, appears in one form or another in almost all communication disciplines. In language, rhetoric examines the kinds of speakers, the kinds of audiences, the kinds of speeches, and the kinds of speaking situations. Because it touches on such a characteristically human activity as speaking, people have attended to it from the times of earliest record keeping and in every culture. Contemporary students of rhetoric pay attention not only to today’s speaking or modes of expression, but to their ancient forbears as well.

In the West, rhetorical studies began with the ancient Greeks, with Plato, Isocrates, the Sophists, and others, though Aristotle holds the pride of place with his Rhetoric (sometimes called The Art of Rhetoric) written in the fourth century B.C.E. But this is not the only ancient approach. Gangal and Hosterman (1982) examine the rhetorical tradition of India, arguing that “many of these ideas pre-date Aristotle by as much as 500 years” (p. 277). Oliver (1961) first called attention to Chinese rhetoric, pointing the way for a subsequent generation of scholars. More recently, Lu (1998) comprehensively traces rhetoric in ancient China, from about the same period as Aristotle’s writings, and Wang (2004) has provided a forum for Asian rhetorical scholars to share ideas. Lipson and Binkley (2009) have provided a collection that draws together more recent studies. They collect essays that examine religious rhetoric in the ancient near east (Israel and Egypt), rhetoric in the ancient far east (China, Japan), rhetoric in India, and ancient western (non-Greek) rhetoric (Ireland).

Among so many possible approaches to rhetoric, current work on rhetoric considers contemporary theories of persuasion as well as the other traditions. Within these more general studies of rhetoric, one strand looks at what some had regarded as a loose end in Aristotle’s work. In Chapter 3 of Book I of the Rhetoric, Aristotle classifies rhetoric into three types: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. These genres, he says, correspond to the kinds of hearers a speaker might encounter. The first, deliberative, addresses the body politic and the decision-makers of the city or state. The second, forensic, addresses the courts. The third, epideictic, remains more flexible and can address any number of situations and audiences. And so, within epideictic rhetoric studies, subsequent generations of teachers and scholars have wrestled with exactly how to define and characterize this most general of categories.

In this review essay, Professor Ilon Lauer provides a look at the more recent scholarship on epideictic rhetoric. Some studies re-examine the classical origins of epideictic rhetoric; others ask what it might mean for a contemporary speaker or audience; finally, still others develop both the scope and the methods for a meaningful approach to epideictic rhetoric.

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References


Epideictic Rhetoric

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While it is difficult to give a global assessment of contemporary epideictic scholarship, it is reasonable to suggest that rhetorical scholars continue to value the important role epideictic plays in public culture. Epideictic genres continue to mutate, evolve, and disappear, but the need to ground social mores, political institutions, and communities through epideictic continues to endure. Aristotle’s millennia-old efforts to understand epideictic seem more relevant than ever. Epideictic rhetoric, understood both as a genre of and an approach to rhetoric, has always presented difficulty to scholars endeavoring to define and understand it. Its fundamental and primary unifying feature as a discourse of praise and blame poses little problems to understanding, but the ubiquitous presence of praise and blame in nearly every instance of rhetoric renders this single identifying feature of little assistance. On the other hand, the immanence of praise in a range of rhetorical exchanges and forms demands that its workings be understood and appreciated.

Epideictic scholarship in the field of communication is also complicated by the fact that epideictic rhetoric constitutes a tradition that extends well over 2,000 years and that its fundamental elements have been examined and discussed throughout this time. Epideictic scholarship is Janus-faced, simultaneously looking forward and backward as it generates insight into this rhetorical form.

Since antiquity, scholars have sought to identify and understand the unique features of epideictic, one of the primary genres of rhetoric. It has long been known that the language use, topical choices, purposes, and settings of epideictic were uniquely different from other forms of rhetoric, and these differences have provoked an enduring scholarly dialogue. This literature review will supply a brief survey of the fundamental features of ancient epideictic, attending to its theoretical origins, primary traditions, and earliest innovations. It will then demonstrate the extent to which many of these important themes continue to guide contemporary epideictic scholarship, scholarship characterized by its expanding scope and range of perspectives. Contemporary epideictic scholarship has elaborated the unique functions of epideictic discourse, its temporal distinctiveness, its paradoxic conservative and progressive functions, and its potential applications to a range of new and under-explored texts. As a collective body of scholarship, contemporary studies of epideictic demonstrate the enduring vitality of this longstanding rhetorical practice.

1. Epideictic’s Classical Origins

Studies of ancient epideictic rhetoric highlight its ever-changing form, the role ritual has in epideictic address, and the enduring link between power and control over epideictic events. Scholars have devoted a significant amount of work to individual texts and theoretical works, as well as to two comprehensive surveys of the fundamental texts and critical themes in epideictic in antiquity (Burgess, 1902; Pernot, 1993). Produced nearly 100 years ago, Theodore Burgess's handbook of epideictic literature remains the most comprehensive English language study, but it has been substantially updated and improved upon by Pernot’s two-volume masterpiece, which remains untranslated into English and less accessible.

Early Greek epideictic assumed three distinct forms: epitaphios, hymnos, and paradoxos. The different orientations these primary forms took fostered a range of epideictic purposes and uses. The epitaphios, or the funeral oration, was closely tied to the ideals of the state; the hymnos or festival speech containing reli-
gious associations developed into the later *panegyricos* or festival speech; and finally, the *paradoxos* was a sophistic exercise which evolved into a more formalized philosophical discourse. These three forms share an overlapping concern with praise and blame but their collective inclusion into the generic category of epideictic affected the way in which these speeches were theorized and contributed to conflicting perspectives regarding its scope and purpose.

Although scholars continue to invoke Aristotle as an authority on ancient epideictic theory, it is unclear the extent to which the perspective offered in his *Rhetoric* reflects the general conception of epideictic. Indeed, the importance assigned to Aristotle’s handbook may be due to the rhetorical perspectives it reflects as much as to its subsequent influence upon Greek rhetoric (Poster, 1997). Some scholars read the incorporation of epideictic into the tripartite categorization scheme of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic discourses as an attempt to subordinate sophistic rhetorical theory under a more pragmatic vision (Cole, 1991; Timmerman & Schiappa, 2010). Given the artificial and somewhat contrived circumstances surrounding this categorization, Aristotelian standards were inevitably poorly suited for evaluations of pre-Aristotelian texts.

Although scholars will continue to revise assessments of Aristotle’s contribution to epideictic theory, the *Rhetoric* in all likelihood will still initiate discussions of epideictic’s core features. Aristotle’s identification of the topic (praise/blame), temporal nature (present), and audience (observers) of an epideictic speech constitute the fundamental *topoi* for the genre. Aristotle conceptualized epideictic primarily as a written genre (3.12) delivered before an audience of spectators (1.3), which praises or blames a subject (1.3), relates this topic to the present time (1.9), and achieves its rhetorical force (*dynamis*) through ethos (1.9), amplification (3.17), and narrative (3.16). These sections, along with other passages relevant to the study of epideictic, have already received various levels of scrutiny and still guide contemporary theory (Chase, 1961; Hauser, 1999; Oravec, 1976).

Edward Schiappa’s elaboration of the relationship between Gorgias and Aristotle has rejected Aristotle’s position as the highest authority on classical rhetoric because Aristotle’s categorizations derived from his consultation of rhetorical handbooks and study of earlier oratory. Aristotle’s *Lectures on Rhetoric* preferred to take examples from epideictic texts to deliberative or forensic excerpts (Trevett, 1996; Graff, 2001; Burgess, 1902, p. 105)

The common thematic approaches of the epideictic and quasi-epideictic literature preceding Aristotle underscore the likely literary norms guiding texts before theorists recorded the rules governing rhetorical expression. The same early treatises that influenced the invention, production, or reception of later rhetorical periods (instances of which include the work of Aristotle and Anaximanes), were themselves reflections of a time-honored tradition of epideictic practice (Schiapa, 1999).

Few rhetorical traditions document epideictic’s contributions and connections to institutional power as well as the funeral oration. Surviving examples of these orations trace the development and adaptation of “conflicting ideologies . . . competing for social control” and illustrate how this form augmented institutional power (Poulakis, 1990, p. 181). Overall, they follow a similar textual pattern moving from praise to lament to consolation. The Athenian funeral oration elicited any topical tension between a contemporary discourse of democracy and aristocratic traditionalism by praising bellicose ambition as a virtue of yesteryear. By successfully invoking the citizenry as a collective body, the funeral orator consolidated support for Athenian policy. The funeral speech idealized a noble future through formulaic comparisons linking the present dead to the mythic deaths of the past. At the same time, it implicitly supported contemporary militarism by analogically structuring the praise for values to include ideals tying the violent present to a more idyllic past. An expansive definition of traditional values encompassing past and present behavior, glossed over differences in social status that might divide Athenians and concentrated on the sacrifices made for the good of Athens. In forgetting the questionable nobility of those who died, while celebrating their sacrifice, orators matched the deeds of the dead heroes to the present and suppressed their aristocratic sentiment so as to restructure political memory. By praising the heroic deeds and values of earlier Athenians, the event transformed these prior themes into present symbols of an Athenian imperial ideology. In sum, the funeral orations exhibit a genre-blending effect brought about by the need to serve various constituencies (Loraux, 1986).

A significant amount of inquiry into early epideictic has centered around the peculiar funeral oration found in Plato’s (c. 427–347 B.C.E.) *Menexenus*. George Kennedy called this text “one of the most inter-
est studies of funeral oratory” and sympathetically recognized its enigmatic features (Kennedy, 1963). Readings of the *Menexenus* exemplify the particular difficulties in evaluating funeral orations because they struggle to compare a recorded secondhand account of Thucydides with a potentially parodic version of the actual speech. The primary obstacle to ascertaining the thematic unities common to the funeral oration of the period is a textual record that includes the range of fictitious fragmented, parodic, and official texts. Sara Monoson interprets the *Menexenus* as an ironic rebuttal to Pericles’ speech, an anti-text that “critique[s] rhetoric in general and funeral oratory in particular . . . ridicule[ing] these forms of public speech for their reliance on manipulations of fact and outright untruths in order to inflate the citizens’ patriotic pride” (Monoson, 1998, p. 494). Ekaterina Haskins (2005) has observed the *Menexenus*’ similarities to Isocrates’ *Panegyricus*, arguing that both were elaborations of an epideictic convention that critiqued the democratic impulse in Athenian society. Michael Carter, whose study of the *Menexenus* traced three fundamental links between ritual and epideictic rhetoric, emphasized how these intrinsic bonds warranted consideration of ritual as the basis for evaluating epideictic (Carter, 1991).

Nicole Loraux has also dismissed the *Menexenus*’ claims to literality and ascertained its ironic message by comparing it to the corpus of extant funeral orations. Even as the *Menexenus* parodies the militaristic ideology inherent to the *epitaphios*, it reveals the essential quality unifying every Athenian funeral oration, its function as a *logos hegemonikos*, both an encomium to pan-Hellenic culture and a paean covertly justifying Athens’ imperial ambition. Behind the seemingly benign praise for the superiority of Greek culture lurked a “paradoxical continuity of Athenian foreign policy” (Loraux, 1986). Takis Poulakis emphasized this ideological dynamic too, arguing that the *epitaphioi* expressed the “ideological constructs of the newly formed state” (Poulakis, 1990).

The mutability of epideictic rhetoric is more clearly evident in the sophist texts. The mixed generic form of the earliest sophistic speeches suggests a vitality dependent upon the continued alteration of this genre’s presentation. Isocrates’ speech in praise of Evagoras blended hymns, ritual, and advice literature and exemplifies the hybrid nature of early epideictic texts. Poulakis’ reading of the connections among rhetoric, ethics, and poetics arose from observing its hybridized form and from his evaluation of the topical limitations that caused Isocrates to blend two literary conventions, the “poetic hymnos” and the “rhetorical epainos.” Poulakis’ study of the *Evagoras* has likewise demonstrated the productive potential of inquiry into the tension between Aristotelian theory and Pre-Aristotelian practice (Poulakis, 1987). For instance, in his *Encomium to Helen*, Gorgias (c. 483–376 B.C.E.) used entertaining language, but structured it in a manner resembling an instructional speech, perhaps without distinguishing between the two, and Schiappa has concluded that “Gorgias would not have felt any tension between writing a theoretical ‘versus’ an epideictic speech, because no one had yet felt a particular need to distinguish prose texts yet on the basis of instructional versus entertainment aspirations” (Schiappa, 1999).

Epideictic theory in the Hellenistic period concentrated on norms of appropriate language that limited the ways orators could express certain ideas. Two Hellenistic texts, Demetrius’ *On Style* and Philodemus’ handbook on rhetoric, show noteworthy changes in emphasis on appropriate delivery, topic choice, and language use (Pernot, 2005). The Hellenistic handbook *On Style*, attributed to an unknown author, Demetrius and most likely written in the second or third century (B.C.E.), advances a stylistic theory strongly indebted to the ideas circulated by the peripatetic school. Its approach to figurative language foreshadows the growing stylistic sophistication that flourished under the Roman Empire (Pernot, 2005). The work of Demetrius (c. 3rd century B.C.E.) on style continues the idea of epideictic as a third branch of rhetoric, and Kennedy suggests its substantially expanded range of possibilities is “the beginning of the movement to extend epideictic to include a greater variety of genres, even some not specifically oratorical” (Kennedy, 1963, p. 285). This broadening of epideictic expanded its associations with various philosophical and ceremonial activities and it can be seen in the developments occurring during the Hellenistic period.

Because Philodemus’ (110–35 B.C.E.) *On Rhetoric* appears to address the critique of epideictic advanced by the Epicurean school, it sheds light on the philosophical regard for epideictic during the Hellenistic period (Burgess, 1902, pp. 172, 223). Philodemus’ perspective critiqued certain portions of rhetorical activity but allocated a space for philosophers to influence public morals and avoid the ethically suspect practice of deliberating public policy or arguing court cases (Kennedy, 1963). Gaines also reads
Philodemus as an innovator who rejected the Epicurean critique of epideictic. As Gaines explains, the basic principles of the critique held that epideictic speech was more strongly associated with skill in demonstrations of praise or blame than with interest in the subject being of praised or blamed, and it denied a philosopher public influence because the speaker was either forced to comply with popular opinion or to assume the role of dangerous speech and take on the risks associated with presenting a truly epideictic speech (Gaines, 2003). But that admonishment, attributed to the writings of Epicurus, was not reproduced carte blanche in Philodemus, and thus we can see a shift toward tolerance of epideictic speaking by this follower of the Epicurian school. An understanding of the philosophical views prevalent in different Hellenistic schools is needed to appreciate the way rhetorical doctrines were insinuated into the major philosophical academies of the Mediterranean region and subsequently diffused into active principles for speaking and statecraft.

When Dionysus of Halicarnassus (fl. 60–7 B.C.E.), a Greek informant keenly attuned to the rhetoric of the Roman Republic and principate, averred that the laudatio funebris imitated the form of the Athenian funeral oration, he underestimated the depth of Rome’s own epideictic traditions. Attitudes similar to Dionysus’ have dampened appreciation for the uniqueness of Roman rhetoric and continue to guide historical narratives that portray Roman rhetors as imitators of a thoroughly Greek techne.

Many of Rome’s rhetorical practices followed normative standards before Greek rhetorical theory was introduced. While not an entirely insulated tradition, Roman epideictic texts address themes that could only have emerged out of the Latin culture. In addition to shaping the conceptual domain of Roman epideictic, Rome’s social, political, and religious traditions regulated the reception and assimilation of Greek rhetorical thought. The Greeks and Romans shared many conceptions of epideictic, but they differed in many respects as well.

The essential points of contrast between Roman and Greek epideictic result from the distinctness of their respective cultural traditions. Cicero’s theoretical writings, for all their ambivalence and occasionally even dismissive regard for epideictic as a pursuit unworthy of the noble orator, were attuned to the connection between Roman cultural values and Roman epideictic practice. The arguments advanced by Antonius in Cicero’s Dialogue on Oratory conveyed his recognition that Greek epideictic principles were inexact guides for understanding Rome’s epideictic traditions and practices (De Oratore, 2.11). Convinced that genuine aristocrats embodied the elaborate and “non-rhetorical” socio-political knowledge reflected in Roman ceremonial ritual, Antonius dismissed the study of epideictic rules as a redundant or useless task by proffering a disjunctive argument: if Roman virtue is understood, it does not need to be taught; and people who require virtue are unworthy of its lessons.

Cicero’s dialogue De Oratore was thematically consistent with Aristotle’s theory, signaling the continued authority of the Greek handbook tradition, but its open speculation concerning the Greek principles of epideictic reflected a potentially selective regard for these principles. Its prevailing arguments assimilated Greek views of rhetoric and epideictic into a distinctly Roman vision that emphasized cultural practices. Additionally, some passages within this dialogue demonstrate a high level of cultural ambivalence regarding epideictic (Dugan, 1985). Dugan has suggested that Cicero’s underdeveloped conception of epideictic, which generally “subordinate[d] the discussion of its genus to its use within forensic and deliberative speeches” was due to the fact that “Rome lacked a longstanding tradition of ceremonial oratory like Greece’s” (p. 38). Crassus and Antonius’ perspectives were not mutually exclusive, but they reflected distinct intellectual traditions that foster different modes of action and being. When aggregated, their attitudes defined the conceptual domain for Roman orators contemplated the Roman and Greek qualities of epideictic.

In addition to idealizing virtues which valorized aristocratic mores, Antonius’ comments acknowledged that other behaviors could also exemplify praiseworthy virtue. He coined the phrase “favors of fortune,” bona fortunae, a pairing of words denoting nobility of character (bona) and connoting the manifestation of virtue (fortunae). This pairing distinguished between innate character and revealed attributes, and clarified Antonius’ expanded range of laudatory topics suited for praise and the speech’s occasion. This offered the speaker a balanced approach; as a conservative principle, the phrase “favors of fortune” emphasized noble birth and upbringing. However, Antonius’ remarks regarding illustrations of virtue, by stressing the nobility manifested by deeds, allocated space for more “ordinary” heroes. The surprisingly complex phrase assimilated the external signs that customarily revealed virtuous attributes and praiseworthy activities that
prove the validity of these signs. The assumption that such signs were embodied in manner and gesture was based in the belief that deeds are external signs of internal virtue. More significantly, Antonius’ noteworthy argument gave some evidence of the recognition that Roman epideictic could become a flexible rhetorical form, capable of reorienting the basis of Roman values and supplying a new watermark to preserve the integrity of subsequent rhetorical transactions.

Advances in epideictic scholarship require an understanding of the pivotal role that the non-linguistic features of certain rhetorical events play in producing meaning. Rhetorical scholars studying epideictic texts share a theoretical interest in epideictic’s spatial, temporal, and ceremonial roles. In light of this interplay between rhetoric and its broader cultures, the pervasiveness of religious topics as a broad trend is particularly relevant to a study of epideictic literature because laudations of virtue often emphasize piety and divine favor, and an understanding of the religious symbolism underlying epideictic texts can generate readings more closely attuned to the religious activities influencing rhetorical practice.

In the Imperial period ceremonies communicated the terms and conditions of political rule, clarifying the power dynamics linking the religious and military leadership and unifying the specific religious, military, and family connections under a complex system of rule. The spatial, temporal, and ritualistic trends initiated early in the imperial period established a basic set of expectations subsequently inherited by later Roman and Byzantine rulers (Dagron, 2003). Accounts of the Byzantine and later Roman empire’s blending of ceremonial, ritual, and governmental functions have demonstrated the ways in which ceremonies preserved power and negotiated power relations. For instance, guidelines for appropriate conduct in ceremonies occurring in the later Roman and Byzantine periods, as reflected in Menander (c. 4th century C.E.) and other later Greek theorists, document the respect given to such events. Menander’s text signaled an awareness of epideictic’s significance among rhetors on the edge of empire and catalogued the appropriate rhetorical messages to coincide with visits by foreign dignitaries, festivals, and other similar events occasioning the presence of a heisiarch. These earlier Imperial events differ, to some extent, from the three primary ceremonies described in one recent study of the later Latin panegyrics, namely the adventus, the consecratio, and the accuscio. However, they operated in a similar manner, communicating and consolidating shifting power dynamics, conveying the new relationships of power and allowing for the symbolic negotiation of political power (MacCormack, 1981).

2. Contemporary Epideictic

Epideictic continues to be a vital rhetorical form, integral to the fabric of contemporary public culture. For instance, a substantial portion of the studies of George W. Bush’s presidential rhetoric have been devoted to his use of epideictic, and Medhurst (2010) holds that the most noteworthy rhetorical achievements of his presidency relied upon epideictic. Bostdorff’s study of Bush’s epideictic argued that a covenant renewal characterized Bush’s post 9/11 rhetoric. Bush’s calls for a covenant renewal, a rededication to the liberal democratic faith, vested him with the symbols and role of authority (Bostdorff, 2003). Due to the fact that display of leadership is generated and reinforced in a time of war, Bush’s displays of epideictic leadership characterize his administration’s broad rhetorical program. Seizing the opportunities arising from ceremonial occasions ranging from “commencement addresses and Memorial Day messages to speeches that commemorated the 60th anniversary of D-Day and celebrated the 4th of July” (p. 298), President Bush sought to use every available epideictic event as an opportunity to advocate U.S. action in the Iraq war. A continuing recognition of epideictic’s centrality to contemporary culture has prompted contemporary rhetorical theorists to understand the modes, uses, and implications of contemporary epideictic practices.

Epideictic scholarship in the last 50 years has drawn extensively from the ideals and theories of antiquity to present a richly nuanced set of concepts regarding epideictic’s role in contemporary life. In the United States, the emergence and modification of various epideictic traditions have provoked a desire to gain a deeper understanding of epideictic and appreci-
ation for its relation to political behavior. Even though the foundational principles of epideictic’s operation were systematically detailed long ago, the ongoing quest to understand epideictic discourse has added significant texture and depth to this conceptual frame.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, a conceptual broadening of epideictic’s scope moved beyond the more limited vision of the genre as a discourse of praise and blame and delved into the role of the epideictic occasion, audience, and language, as well as the relationship between praise and various social and cognitive processes. Perelman’s emphasis on epideictic’s educative function is typically listed as the initial expression of this broader conception (Perelman, 1969, pp. 52–53). Oravec (1976) expanded upon the significance of the epideictic audience, drawing from Aristotle’s explanation of the observational role played by the epideictic audience to explain the audience’s need to judge and evaluate instead of passively observing and perceiving (p. 163). Rosenfield (1980) elaborated the meaning produced by speaker and audience during shared epideictic encounters, demonstrating how epideictic occasions produce moments of truth and awe in which the audience shares essential knowledge about being. Drawing many of these observations together, Condit enunciated an essential triad of epideictic functions: Definition and Understanding; Shaping and Sharing community; and Display and Entertainment (Condit, 1985). Her typology has guided many studies produced over the past two decades, which often confine their analysis to elaborating the way that one or more of those particular functions operate in the rhetoric. Together, these expansions of scope laid the foundation for a flourishing of contemporary epideictic analyses, as noteworthy for their breadth as for their abundance.

Even though epideictic is a process of praise and blame, the scant attention to blame paid by rhetorical theorists beginning with Aristotle continues to this day. Rountree’s survey of Aristotle’s examples has demonstrated the near absence of examples drawn from psogos, or speeches of blame. Despite the inevitable pairing of praise and blame, the bulk of speeches studied and discussed are examples of praise (Rountree, 2001). More recently, Engels’ study of early American culture has demonstrated the important role that inductive, a discourse of blame, plays in constituting public culture (Engels, 2009).

Similarly, in Ramsey’s study of Ambrose Bierce’s satiric response to the 19th century lexicographers emphasized the way Bierce used the process of blame to resist Webster’s nationalist project: “This is another illustration of how Bierce uses a rhetoric of psogos to controvert and reply to Webster in lexicographical space, by pointing out that love of a anthropomorphic deity represents little more than narcissism” (Ramsey, 2013, p. 72).

Creative examination of epideictic discourse has enabled critics to discern additional rhetorical features operating in epideictic rhetoric. Studies focusing on epideictic reasoning modes, the relationship between epideictic and time, and epideictic’s function including its deliberative potential have been the primary areas of inquiry.

A. Epideictic reasoning

Examinations of the arrangement patterns in epideictic discourse can uncover both the strategic choices of an advocate and the modes of reasoning intrinsic to the epideictic process of praise and blame. For instance, Kahl and Leff (2006) studied prudential reasoning in President Bill Clinton’s four speeches commemorating the Invasion of Normandy. Instead of operating in the arguments, these reasoning processes are activated by the rhetor’s topical choices and emphasis. Clinton’s rhetoric broadened the public’s understanding of and appreciation for the D-Day mission, enabling a younger generation to show their respect for the generation that fought and lived through the Second World War. A similar type of epideictic reasoning is evident in Lincoln’s temperance rhetoric. Here, Lincoln constructed a binary between the old and new temperance movement, enabling him to critique the ideology and approaches of the traditional “Washingtonian” temperance advocates and simultaneously to marshal topoi of restraint that elevated actions and behavior more readily associated with a newer Whiggish vision of temperance. Zaeske (2010) observed a strategy of critique that operated to advocate and condemn specific temperance activities. Departing from many topics associated with the temperance movement, Lincoln praised “the Washingtonians not so much for what they did, but for what they did not do” (p. 408). He omitted perfunctory mention of Washington in the introduction, and refrained from attacks on the alcohol trade, any urging of sobriety, or even discussion of his own temperance. As Zaeske argues, Lincoln’s arrangement of praise and blame discounted the traditional Washingtonian approach to temperance and elevated a Whiggish vision of temperance.
In addition to influencing topical choices, epideictic’s unique temporal positioning can provoke innovative argumentation strategies. When a celebratory event emphasizes the immediate present it suspends temporality and creates space for potentially dissenting arguments. To defend protesters who were arrested after disrupting the 1991 Denver Columbus Day celebrations, the reasoning advanced in Ward Churchill’s legal brief undercut arguments casting genocide as a completed event, an event from the past, not present. Because the question of the court concerned whether the epideictic occasion of Columbus Day was disrupted, Churchill’s brief drew from historical examples to create a rupture in the standard narrative regarding Columbus day: “Ward Churchill’s rehearsal of history counted because of the epideictic moment and because of his means of retelling the story, a retelling that demanded accountability. Churchill recognized that Columbus Day celebrated an incomplete memory” (Palczewski, 2005, p. 132). Invoking the ever present epideictic moment, Churchill presented the Native American genocide as an ongoing process, not as a completed historical event.

Olson’s elaboration of the power epideictic has in assigning praise and blame in a variety of texts is summarized by the concept of an “epideictic dimension,” a term she coins to signal the way epideictic situates particular values in a range of discourses. Olson’s emphasis is upon epideictic’s conservative function. Her concern lies in the ways that the epideictic dimension of a text “coherently, elaborately, and powerfully promotes and justifies values, beliefs, and practices that maintain status quo power relationships, even when those are not its ostensible lessons” (Olson, 2013, p. 461). She points out that we can understand the way praise and blame operates in a variety of texts if we appreciate the notion of the epideictic dimension. These, she explains, are “constituted by textual layers that teach and maintain a community’s ‘common’ beliefs and values to guide members’ behavior beyond the immediate situation so that status quo practices and power distributions are justified and continue to operate smoothly” (Olson, 2013, p. 474).

Olson’s study of the Disney version of Beauty and the Beast alerts readers to the additions made to the film, the omissions from the classical versions of the story, and the way these modifications appear to children “as an educational initiation into how what their adult caregivers treat as praiseworthy romance operates” (p. 458). This initiation is particularly troubling because the violence in the text’s depiction shapes the way young viewers perceive violence. She argues that it shapes community values regarding romantic relationships in a negative way: “violence in Beauty and the Beast codes heroes and villains and creates a hierarchy of social acceptability for violence” (Olson, 2013, p. 459).

B. Functional pairs

Critics attuned to epideictic’s instrumental functions have elevated the functional pairs systematically categorized by Condit and have discovered additional functions. Ramsey’s discussion of the emergence of dictionaries in the 19th century harmonizes with Condit’s designation of education/definition as one of epideictic’s primary functions. A lexicographer’s tracing of a word’s definitional boundaries imposed a more standardized vision of the language, fixing meaning and giving words a more shared signification. Efforts to define and establish a permanent ordering for word meaning in dictionaries were augmented by the practices of professional journalists and writers: “Lexicographers aimed at framing the definitions of words and concepts regarding social institutions through the American apparatus of textual production, from the classroom to the newspaper office” (Ramsey, 2013, p. 66). In other words, the lexicographer’s project pursued a fixed national identity: “The epideictic discourse of Webster’s lexicon was an overt attempt to bind the American community together under a vast array of fixed lexical definitions” (p. 67).

Atchison analyzes Jefferson Davis’s pursuit of two of the functional pairs found in Condit’s tripartite scheme: reformulating community and accomplishing definition/understanding. In his resignation announcement, Davis presented messages normally associated with refutation and contestation, justifying the South’s secession without simultaneously engaging in a contentious debate. Davis relied upon a general respect for propriety to advocate the South’s justifications for Mississippi’s secession while framing any refutative response as indecorous (Atchison, 2012, p. 118). This approach framed the occasion as a time suitable for contemplating and understanding the nature of secession not for opposing it. Such emphasis on decorum and the propriety of the occasion inhibited rebuttal because it designated “a peaceful parting as the appropriate response,” not rejoinder (p. 118). Atchison demonstrates how strategic invocation of decorum norms can insulate a disputatious advocate from direct critical response.
Michael Hyde’s critique of Mitch Albom’s *Tuesday’s with Morrie* demonstrates the ways the epideictic process of acknowledgment contributes to social wellbeing. For Hyde, acknowledgment is a collective or public form of recognition, a pragmatic and “moral act” that supplies meaning to life; it facilitates social awareness and understanding to recognize and understand difference. More than an instance of “community sharing” Hyde sees acknowledgement as a necessary component to life that helps people manage the distresses of living and that “makes possible the moral development of recognition by enabling us to remain open to the world of people, places, and things even if, at times, matters become boring or troublesome” (Hyde, 2005a, p. 26).

While a desire to use epideictic moments to transform a community does not necessarily guarantee its transformation, deployment of epideictic topoi that establishes a creative connection to the ceremony’s participants can provoke a departure from the norms. Stob argues that William James demonstrates this masterfully in his address celebrating the dedication of the Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts 54th unit, one of the first black regiments in the Union Army. In addition to drawing from the expected themes and commonplaces of the genre associated with a commemorative oration (courage, patriotism, heroism, brotherhood, and sacrifice), James reconstituted his audience by challenging them to demonstrate a “lonely courage” to take a more active role in their own community: “Yet he concluded the speech by giving the people of Boston an active role in maintaining their community and society at the turn of the 20th century. James’s commemorative confrontation was, in the end, a way of reconstituting and reorienting his audience relative to the civic challenges of their time” (Stob, 2012, p. 258–59). In the last third of the speech, James offered his corrective, an appeal to individualism, virtuous civic engagement: “In the civic space of the Shaw memorial dedication, then, the idea of ‘lonely courage’ provided James with the perfect segue into the kind of individualist virtues he thought necessary for correcting the bigness of society” (p. 264). As Stob argues, “James directly challenged traditions associated with memorializing speech in a way that challenged his audience: noteworthy about James’ oration was the directness, explicitness, and riskiness of his confrontation in a ceremonial occasion” (p. 252).

C. New Aristotelian standards

Distinctly less doctrinaire than readings of Aristotle that followed the Neo-Aristotelian tradition, newer interpretations of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* have complicated the long accepted distinction between functional oratory (*pragmatikon*) and the oratory of display (*epideiktikon*). Such scholarship has increased understanding of epidectic’s pragmatic and active qualities. Ned O’Gorman’s (2005) discussion of the interaction between the written form and the process of showing gives measure to the force exerted by epidectic’s lexical elements. He detailed a matrix of visual signifiers, adjectives, and processes melding the reality of the spectators’ conception of the world to the speaker through linguistic constructions. An example of this melding process was observed by Petre (2007), whose study of U.S. political conventions found that “The epideictic function is particularly suited to have invitational rhetorical qualities because of its emphasis on creating community with the audience” (p. 21). She analyzes epideictic’s harmonious interaction with invitational rhetoric, a mode of rhetoric that “enabled the sharing of perspectives and of sight” and that “allowed the audience to enter their world and see it as they do” (p. 33).

Arguing that the mental conceptions arising from such visual productions establish the grounds for later deliberation, O’Gorman clarifies the concept of lexis found in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and *De Anima*: “The phantasmatic character of lexis may make rhetorical judgment, too, reliant on images, as images activated through lexis are brought before the mind’s eyes of auditors and form the basis for the mental deliberations that underlie rhetorical *krisis*” (O’Gorman, 2005, p. 26). The epideictic imprint directly influences deliberative themes with its vision of virtue and vice that actively displays “nobility at the level of praxis” (p. 15). For this reason, encomia which encourage the direction of action “provide concrete guidance on how to live in harmony with noble ideals” (p. 15).

Such construction of virtue and encouragement of exemplary civic behavior uniquely helps communities recognize and appreciate the conduct that sustains them. Hauser sees the epideictic speaker playing the essential role of a “teacher of civic virtue” whose discourse celebrates and memorializes “the deeds of exemplars who set the tone for civic community” (Hauser, 1999, p. 14). Recognition and absorption of epideictic’s disclosed truths offer a source of collective and often public
knowledge (Hyde, 2005a, p. 23). Epideictic topics reveal a topography of being, a conceptual map of the common concerns of human existence. Epideictic’s engagement with political action is summed up best in Aristotle’s maxim identifying right action as a standard for values and common values as the basis for determining appropriate actions: “if you desire to praise, look what you would suggest; if you desire to suggest, look what you would praise” (Aristotle, Rhetoric, I.ix.37). A similar linkage of values to action applies to individuals; the sense making and awareness arising from epidectic enables and facilitates self-creating. This is why Robert Danish (2008) has defined epideictic as a “history of the present” that catalyzes “the project of self-creation” by gaining respect and understanding for the ways “subjects are constituted in a given historical moment” (p. 293).

Vivian (2012) studies Booker T. Washington’s witnessing rhetoric, as a form of memorializing evidence rhetoric that he sees as “generically epideictic in nature” (p. 191). He looks at the topical shifts in Washington’s speech prompted by the need to forget; an active form of rhetorical agency which transforms society by forgetting the types of impediments that may block such a transformation: “Expressions of epideictic forgetting advocate radical transformations in the present scope and content of historical memory” (p. 193).

Epideictic’s conservative function catalyzes this transformation: the pursuit of epideictic’s traditional role, protecting “cultural truisms,” permits and occasionally even necessitates constructive interrogations of those truisms. As Lois Agnew (2008) has observed, the power epideictic gains from the interaction between the audience and rhetor produces doxa and holds the possibility for the creation of a new awareness: Epideictic observers participate in the process of knowing (p. 153). Rhetors and audiences willing to come together to extend the boundaries of its form add vitality to epideictic.

D. Epideictic occasions

Since epideictic is closely linked to the occasions often invoked and emphasized during its presentation, scholars have undertaken inquiry into these phenomenological connections. In contrast to the approach taken by Condit and others to categorize a typology of epideictic purposes, topics, and themes, this stream of scholarship prioritizes the immediate temporal circumstances of epideictic and the presence invoked in these circumstances.

Rollins (2005) argues epideictic meaning is not supplied through language alone, but depends upon the occasion marked by the language (p. 16). He discusses Derrida’s explorations of temporal displacement in his funeral orations to consider some of the unique features of the epideictic occasion. Derrida’s funeral oratory treats death as a signifier of radical otherness. Its insistent use of the future anterior tense, a conditional phrasing that denies presence a static position draws attention to the impossibility of speech reaching this radical other. In this tense, Derrida’s declarations of grief for those who “will have been his friend . . .” (p. 18) interrogate the expression of loss as much as the nature of the loss itself. From the moment of the epideictic occasion, Derrida’s relationships with the departed are defined negatively. The present is always a signifier of a temporal relationship with another time. The present then enables a temporal orientation: “In other words, though presence seems to be a static entity, Derrida’s funeral orations show that epideictic rhetoric’s presence is always in response” (p. 18).

But the epideictic response provokes another realization—that the present is removed from other temporalities. This removal is absolute and, in the case of mourning the dead, puts Derrida at a loss to explain the connections between his act of speaking and the absolute specter of death. Taking place in the immediate flux of time, epideictic moments enable “the rendering apparent of actions and deeds” (p. 10) and in Derrida’s case, reveal his own efforts to reconcile a philosophical dilemma: To remain silent in the face of death is just as troubling as to assume that the dead somehow remain. This dilemma, repeatedly introduced throughout Derrida’s various funeral orations, is presented as a rhetorical figure, aporia. Derrida’s consistent use of aporia initiate his epideictic reflections on the meaning of human experience.

E. Temporal explorations

Epideictic rhetoric carves out space for time within time and creates its own present anteriorities. Its temporal dynamism enables communities to anchor moral thought in the ever shifting present. The moral truths enunciated in epideictic texts disclose immediate needs, rendering it the most radically present form of discourse. Hyde affirms that the unfolding of “our temporal existence defines the most primordial form of epideictic speech and ‘public address’” (Hyde 2005b, p. 7). With an awareness that the future is always not yet present, epideictic responds to the demands that such uncertainty places upon one’s conscience. This
uncertainty provokes what Hyde refers to as “the call of conscience,” a collective recognition of shared social responsibilities understood as a coming “to terms with the related issues of right and wrong, the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, the truth and the untruth” (p. 7). Judgment overcomes the paralysis of uncertainty and inaction: “With the call of conscience comes a call for moral judgment and decisive action, a call that emanates from out of the ecstatic temporality of our existence—the way in which human being is always in the dynamic state of ‘standing outside and beyond itself’” (p. 7). Facing the tremendous difficulty, or even impossibility, of articulating the horrors of the attacks on September 11, the ceremonial discourse following these events enabled communities to cope with their troubles, failings, and peculiar predicaments. That is why Hyde argues, “the events of 9/11 defined a monumental occasion for would-be rhetorical heroes to display their talents as they sought to disclose the truth, make sense of the horror and chaos at hand, and thereby help in the treatment and guidance of an anxious and terrified American public” (p. 4).

Epideictic’s temporal orientation enables speakers and audiences to compare different states of being. In addition to Derrida’s comparison between the “is” and the “will have been” or the Aristotelian understanding of the “is” as an “ought to,” epideictic discourse can juxtapose the “is” and the “really is.” Just as Ward Churchill’s legal brief created a rupture that challenged a static conception of Columbus Day as a celebration of the past, the epideictic showing of what “really is” is a process of revelation. Danisch (2006) attributes this process of revelation to “[1] aesthetic practices of display that uncover what lies hidden, (2) a focus on outlining, on describing, and making present the common values of audiences, and (3) mechanisms for generating cohesion in a community” (p. 293), thus associating this revelatory form of epideictic practice with Foucault’s genealogical constructions, which reveal the hidden values and assumptions that make “various communities cohere” (p. 293).

Uncovering or revealing the various matrices through which power is asserted, ultimately enhances “the audience’s sense of agency” (p. 300). Closely related to the deliberative process, this revelatory discourse offers a new ways to conceptualize the half-truths of epideictic as “as-if” statements: “Deliberative decisions about the future of the self can be made only after an epideictic rhetoric demonstrates the quality of the present moment within which the self is embedded” (p. 293). Foucault’s discourse is primarily focused on the domain of potentiality, the subjunctive domain of possibility and compulsion to being: “It is too easy to read Foucault in the mode of ‘is’ rather than the mode of ‘as if’—the force of his project may come from the ‘is’ but it is always moving toward the ‘as if.’ Foucault’s disclosure of the subjunctive world, the world of possibility supplies a vision for change or, at least, resistance” (p. 298).

F. Epideictic deliberation

The broadening range of purposes associated with epideictic rhetoric has provoked considerable reconsideration of epideictic’s deliberative capacities. At times, epideictic can occasion deliberative contestation. For instance, in the eulogies given at the Worcester Firefighters Memorial Service, Smith and Trimbur (2003) discerned a whole range of competing deliberative messages. Overall, the different social, political, economic, and geographic standpoints represented by the various eulogists in the Worcester eulogies evoked deliberative themes relevant to their position. When viewed together, the unresolved contradictions of various deliberative disputes emerge “regarding union and state, citizens in need of protection and those whose job is to protect, industrial building sites and postindustrial economic conditions, technical skill and the expectation of sacrifice” (p. 22).

Even when not directly guiding deliberative arguments, epideictic discourse can reinforce deliberative themes and messages. This is evident in Harpine’s (2010) analysis of the strategy that leaders of different African American organizations relied upon to influence William McKinley’s prospective policies. Bishop W. W. Arnett, representing the African Methodist Episcopal Church’s delegation to McKinley, praised a shared Republican lineage and respect for justice (p. 49). Such praise for justice as a fundamental Republican value subtly encouraged McKinley to maintain consistency with this value as the president; Bishop Arnett affirmed racial justice as both a bedrock Republican principle and as a guide to political action. Yang’s study of the toasts Nixon offered throughout his historic trip to China has demonstrated the more direct influence epideictic can have upon deliberative goals. Even though the diplomatic exchanges between the two geopolitical rivals took place within an epideictic framework, Nixon’s toasts established both the “tone” and “the deliberative issues . . . addressed in the exchange” (Yang 2011, p. 5). Nixon’s care with craft-
lishing this competing moral framework: authorization as the three foundational stages in establishing this conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. To overcome the restraint imposed by Christian theology’s normative prohibition against killing, Bonhoeffer had to build conviction that assassinating Hitler was just. Sullivan identifies transgression, conviction, and authorization as the three foundational stages in establishing this competing moral framework:

(1) There must be sufficient reason to go beyond, or to transgress, one’s limited sphere of responsibility and to interfere in the sphere of others, even during a time when such action is not yet recognized by others as necessary. (2) There must be sufficient intensity of belief to motivate action. (3) There must be relative certainty that one is not acting out of one’s own enthusiasm but rather that one is truly authorized to take action. (Sullivan, 2003, p. 40)

As scholarship has demonstrated how epideictic can occasionally alter the conduct of deliberative discourse and potentially even overwhelm it, the potential consequences of this process has generated concern. Bradford Vivian’s (2006) critique of presentations of sacred texts in the United States in ritualized form underscores a more poignant critique of contemporary epideictic. Noting that the epideictic discourse coinciding with the first anniversary of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks largely consisted of the reading of canonical texts from the American rhetorical tradition, including the Gettysburg address, the preamble and introduction to the Declaration of Independence, the closing passages in FDR’s Four Freedoms speech, Vivian calls attention to the way this “celebration of presumably fundamental political principles in an ostensibly nonpolitical idiom [was] highly conducive to corporate media dissemination” (p. 4). Vivian explains how this type of discourse naturalizes neoliberal governing institutions: “Neoliberal epideictic invests an ironically apolitical vocabulary of democratic excellence with the authority of tradition, prosperity, and even sacred prophesy” (p. 4). Epideictic rhetoric is so strongly tied to its institutions of praise that Vivian sees their primary purpose as performances that preserve institutional order: “Even today, ritual performances of such epideictic forms are intended to symbolically preserve cultural tradition, collective memory, and political order—not to stand apart from or transcend them” (p. 5). Vivian’s cautionary treatment of neoliberal epideictic stems from its erasure of political difference and distinction. The replication of the nation’s sacred texts in a contemporary setting becomes little more than a public relations event that renders the discourse a platitudinous assertion of national power. Neoliberal epideictic naturalizes institutional power; it “praises as a public virtue the nominally apolitical decision to refrain from questioning inherited institutional wisdom. It solicits the polity’s faith in the continuity of its enabling political process without articulating conditions for their revitalization in light of immediate sociopolitical conflicts” (p. 19). Perhaps the most insidious threat posed by neoliberal epideictic is the way it “control[s] political speech by appearing not to do so” (p. 20). Neoliberal epideictic inhibits deliberation regarding the efficacy of our public vocabulary and discourages a progressive production and addition to this vocabulary.
The theoretical broadening of epideic rhetoric has emerged from a scholarly dialogue regarding epideic’s argumentative features, relationship to deliberative rhetoric, and its temporal conditions. This broadening has motivated educational theorists, ethicists, and scholars in other fields to pursue epideic scholarship. Rhetorical studies of comedy, ritual, advertising, bumper stickers, and music have revealed diverse manifestations of epideicitic in contemporary public culture.

A. Fields of epideictic study

Scholars in a few cognate disciplines have taken up epideictic inquiry. In applied linguistics, scholars have demonstrated how the tracing of epideictic themes offers a heuristic aid to discovering emergent genres of political discourse. Because epideictic occasions function as discursive events, scholars using corpus-based content analysis can establish the linguistic fields surrounding these events. McKenna and Waddell’s (2007) use of lexical analysis to catalog the epideictic themes within a sample of official statements following the July 2005 London bombing tracked the way discourse shaped emergent genres. This approach enabled them to locate the “particular characteristics of the mediated messages of world leaders, which condemned the action while calling for a shared resolve to maintain civic values” (p. 396).

Epideictic analysis of advertising themes demonstrated how praise for accepted cultural values can subtly endorse products. Blakely (2011) identifies the ways that epideictic celebrations of freedom thematically guide ads promoting technological or pharmaceutical goods. Themes promoting “enjoyment of Life with no Limits,” “Happy Carefree, a type of Freedom,” and “efficiency, Connectedness, Control and Speed” (p. 695) offered advertisers a way to overcome or escape the immediate advertising situation. Similar to Bostdorff and other’s conclusions regarding deliberation, Blakely argues that some “examples of epideictic rhetoric . . . encourage us to forget we are looking at advertising by presenting messages that accord with commonly accepted cultural values” (p. 685). Epideictic themes essentially masked the fact that advertisements were encouraging the sale of a product by promoting instead the type of lifestyle that accompanied the use of the product.

Epideictic facilitates community building, promoting an acceptance and even appreciation for pluralistic values and celebrating the difference that grounds community. Danisch (2008) stresses the need to appreciate contemporary expressions of epideictic as they emerge from the cultural spaces in which art is used for the display of values, the development of community identity, and education. To this end, he advocates Alain Locke’s vision of pluralistic epideictic, a celebration of diversity in values and commitments as a basis for the “productive dialogue” that contributes to the “health and maintenance of American democracy” (p. 315). Art, language, and other cultural practices can advance a cohesive pluralistic vision of society because they can display competing values, forge identities for larger communities, and mediate their different value systems.

Education theorist Jim Garrison (2003) advocates a similar integration of poetry and art into educational practice as a means to surpass the rigid categories of the present and “to explore tangible worlds of possibility, thought, feeling, action, and purpose beyond the customary epideictic rhetoric of the classroom, school, and community” (p. 235). Accessing the emancipatory potential of what Garrison refers to as a reflective epideictic depends upon “going beyond not only customary morality but customary ideas of scientific inquiry as well” (p. 232). He contrasts the stifling effects of customary epideictic discourse with the emancipatory potential of a revolutionary epideictic. Reflective epideictic is an intelligent and moral discourse emerging from the particular values of individual celebrants and arising from the open questioning and revising of moral determinations. This vision offers an alternative to epideictic which rigidly imposes moral themes upon its audience and subjects them to the impositions of a prefabricated cultural script, a highly limiting narrative of action. Institutional and pedagogical structures that externally designate the good or offer a static vision of human potential are vestiges of this destructive epideictic practice. Instead of the external imposition of moral valuation, Garrison advocates a pedagogy of prophet-
ic wisdom, an epideictic he refers to as “intelligent cognitive criticism” (p. 240).

Focusing on the ritualistic uses and effects of reported speech during the powwow, Roberts (2004) points out that reported speech enables the speaker to build authority and also to transform “objects, words, or ideas from the quotidian world into the ritual one” (p. 274). She refers to this value creation process as revalorization. Reported speech is a reprocess in which the epideictic speaker repeats or replicates the statements of others, adding symbolic value to specific behaviors, values, and ideals. She argues that this rhetorical process enables the “speaker not merely to animate the authority and value of a society, but to construct and manipulate them” (p. 266). Reported speech operates in the liminal transformative stage of the ritual process—it is here that the original words are transformed to give the community value. Reported speech in the powwow transforms actions into profound gestures, attaching equally profound weight to every gesture and enabling the ceremony to be seen as valuable to all (p. 281).

B. Objects of epideictic study

In addition to extending its theoretical components of epideictic speech into other scholarly fields, scholars have identified a host of novel textual examples of epideictic. Graff’s (2001) observation of the unique association epideictic had with the written word in antiquity has demonstrated that epideictic was never confined to discrete ceremonial occasions, but can serve as a means of expression (pp. 24–25). Casper (2007) has detected an epideictic focus in the Nobel lectures of scientists. He points out that there were stylistic differences in describing the knowledge produced as these scientists had to mediate the more forensic writing style of the report with the epideictic themes of the report. Studying stand-up comedy, Morris (2011) observed how the topical choices of praise and blame enable native American comedians to alter dominant norms, values and beliefs to invert the conceptions of native Americans and Euro-Americans: “Implicit in this resistance and criticism is praise for the living realities experienced by indigenous peoples” (p. 38).

Demonstrating the potential application of epideictic criticism to political stickers, Vigsø (2010) has examined the use of epideictic themes in the extremist stickers of the right and left to facilitate a “continuous building of brand image” (p. 43). Vigsø concludes that epideictic descriptions operate to “to encourage the activist engagement necessary to become visible in public space through the use of stickers” (p. 45). Harpine (2004) identifies songs as noteworthy places where epideictic themes are manifested and in studying the songs of the 1876 presidential campaign he points out that songs are a unique means to present themes of blame: “In a similar way, song may offer a socially acceptable way to deliver the rhetoric of blame” (p. 77).

4. Conclusion

Epideictic research is a dynamic field of scholarship that continues to draw insight from contemporary practice and classical theory. This literature review has sketched out the primary streams of inquiry that epideictic scholarship will follow. Briefly summarized, these topics of inquiry include a range of areas. First, it continues to elaborate epideictic’s conservative dimensions as a power and culture-preserving discourse as well as a progressive art capable of reconstituting communities. Second, epideictic relies upon its own unique form of reasons and arrangement of arguments. Third, the trends of epideictic scholarship reveal a continuing broadening of focus elaborating epideictic’s function. Fourth, the connection between epideictic and deliberative discourse has transformed and scholarly understanding has elaborated the deliberative reliance upon epideictic forms of judgment. Fifth, epideictic’s connection to time and its unique temporal dimensions in relationship to the past, present, and future have reinforced Aristotle’s observation that marks this discourse as a multi-temporal one. Finally epideictic inquiry has fostered insight into other disciplines and offers a useful approach to understand how praise and blame operate in a diverse assortment of practices and contexts.
References


**Book Reviews**

**Review Essay**

Gaming: Computer games, video games


Computer games form a new frontier for communication studies. As with anything new, some communication scholars have embraced them as a subset of new media while others have not grasped the connection between this area of human activity and the larger questions of communication. One could argue, as the writers and contributors of these two volumes do, that gaming—whether termed video games or computer games—forms its own area of communication studies, albeit with an interdisciplinary flavor. This area and the research that it has already generated provide some challenging ideas about human communication and our understanding of the virtual worlds that communication research has studied under the labels of film studies, parasocial interaction, and cultural studies.

Gaming and its study also touch upon the infrastructure of communication. Like all other mediated forms of communication, this kind also depends upon economic structures, corporate organization, and marketing and advertising, but also upon different kinds of labor and different technical platforms. More than with film or television, for example, the medium (Sony PlayStation, Microsoft Xbox, and so on) matters. More than with other media products, the rapidly changing technical capabilities of game engines make older games obsolete. While one could watch, for example, a silent movie from 1924 on a present-day DVD player, a person would be hard pressed to play a 1980’s era video game on today’s hardware.

How then, should communication scholars approach gaming? These two volumes offer complementary approaches.

Judd Ruggill and Ken McAllister, co-directors of the Learning Games Initiative and curators of “one of the largest computer games archives in the United States” (p. 1), offer their reflections and a bit of sense making about their area of study. They sketch out an interdisciplinary vision of games and gaming studies. They readily admit the difficulty of defining, much less categorizing, computer games, noting that the fast growing number of games, platforms, and kinds of play have puzzled even the most experienced scholars.

We contend that the computer game medium is an intractably irreconcilable one, that its dizzying breadth and diversity—from abstract puzzle games (*Qix*), to military-grade tactical trainers (*Full Spectrum Warrior*), to massively multiplayer online role-playing games (*Ultima Online*), to hard-core pornography (*Virtual Valerie*)—are a manifestation of both an internal and external discord. In other words, the computer game medium is not only difficult to reconcile with itself (How are *Rez, Swedish Erotica: Beat ’Em & Eat ’Em*, and *Riven: The Sequel to Myst* of a piece, for example?), but also difficult to align with other media despite persistent attempts by developers, players, pundits, and scholars. (p. 17)

Because games are so different, Ruggill and McAllister approach them under a variety of headings: these games are idiosyncratic; complex; inherently boring; built on tropes and techniques from the past; “dependent on rhetorics of truth despite being fundamentally determined by fictions, fantasies, and lies”; seen better as work; and enigmatic (p. 6). Each chapter, then, develops a theme or an approach to computer games and each chapter offers a way into understanding something of this complex world. Chapter 3 (“Aimlessness”) highlights the fact that a successful game must deflect the boredom of repetitive actions and predictable forms (“a state of low arousal,” p. 35) through aimless wandering, game design, puzzles, direct address, and so on. The point of this chapter, as well as of the others, comes clear with the analysis of how the games “work” by overcoming their basic limits (boredom, say). This communicative slight of hand accomplished by every successful game offers great insights into human communication in general. But overcoming aimlessness applies not only to game players or designers, but also to public opinion. Gaming finds support from massive advertising campaigns as well as lobbying to overcome a vague sense of “moral decay” (p. 45) associated with game playing.

Gaming lives both in time and out of time, the theme of Chapter 4. Like any game playing, even the simplest childhood games like hide and seek, playing a computer game takes time but simultaneously takes us...
out of time into the world of play, as Huizinga (1955) and Csikszentmihalyi (1979) point out. In another register, computer games also depend on time: modeled on previous games, historical epochs, films, television programs, and cultural events, games must appear relevant to the players—even a science fiction world needs grounding. And, in yet another measure of time, games require development time to accommodate the work of programmers, artists, designers, and directors. Few other communication products so explicitly call attention to the time-based nature of communication.

Ruggill and McAllister convincingly claim that computer games reveal a level of deception or duplicity present in all communication. As a little reflection will reveal, even a liar has to convince his or her hearer that s/he is telling the truth—the same characteristics that make language reliable also make it deceptive. “When considering computer game duplicity, then—or media duplicity in general, for that matter, as mass media of all types lie in all kinds of overt and covert ways beyond the make-believe of fiction—it is useful to think broadly” (p. 65). And so they do, by examining the duplicity in the technical design of games, in the industrial and interface design, in the game design, in the industry practices, and in the scholarship. This last point deserves the detail they offer:

It is hard not to lie when talking about computer games (indeed, we do so on a daily basis to help legitimate our object of study). For instance, the assumption that the medium is mainly about interactivity . . . is untrue, at least as far as commercial games are concerned. Making money is far more important than interactivity. . . .

Game scholarship shows its duplicitous connection to the computer game medium in ways other than the rather mundane reductio example above. For instance, the study of computer games comes in a wide variety of flavors, including game scholarship cum film or literary scholarship, game study as apologia, would-be game insider tell-all, trendy educational resource, and so on . . . . It is hard to think of an example of computer game scholarship that is free from ulterior motives and multiple desires. And yet many readers approach game scholarship as professionally uncomplicated, as if it were not true that most computer game scholars spend no small amount of time justifying their research to colleagues, advisers, reviewers, administrators, friends, and family members, a justificatory inclination made more difficult by the fact that no one really knows how the medium works, why it is bewitching in some instances and deadly dull in others. (pp. 78–79)

In reflecting on this, one cannot help but realize that game study has much to say about communication study in general.

Studying games also reveals that this play requires work, the theme of Chapter 6. First comes the work behind the play: the labor of game creators, designers, artists, writers, musicians, videographers, computer engineers, advertisers, sales associates, and so on. And then comes the work of the player, for a good player must hone skills, learn the intricacies of each game, collaborate with others, and do a lot of other things that very much resemble the working day that s/he leaves behind in order to play.

Finally, Ruggill and McAllister offer a concluding reflection on the alchemy of computer games. They argue “that the medium is at once transparent and opaque, or, as the ancient alchemists called such forms of knowledge, ‘exoteric’ and ‘esoteric’ . . . . It can be apprehended, but only tangentially, only liminally, and only for a moment because of the speed and complexity with which it changes” (p. 12). One could say much the same about communication in general.

Mark Wolf and Bernard Perron, as editors of a 60-chapter “companion” to the study of gaming (they opt to use “video games” where Ruggill and McAllister use “computer games”), organize their work around key themes in the literature. Though not intended, this approach does offer a nice complement to Ruggill and McAllister’s more general introduction. It also allows them to cover a great deal of material in a fairly efficient fashion. Each chapter runs eight to nine pages and typically follows the pattern of defining the area of study—often contested or at least confused—then identifying key problems and highlighting the work of scholars who address that area of study. Along the way, each chapter provides a helpful review of the relevant literature. Wolf and Perron, who both come from film studies backgrounds, draw on that background to identify approaches to games that some studies miss. They organize the Companion into seven overarching themes: technological aspects, formal aspects, playfulness aspects, generic aspects, cultural aspects, sociological aspects, and philosophical aspects.

Part 1 (technology) provides helpful background that communication scholars often overlook or take for granted in studying other kinds of communication. These include artifacts, artificial intelligence, con-
trollers, emulation, interfaces, platforms, and resolution. Olli Sotamaa notes that video games simultaneously occupy three levels: they are material artifacts, manufactured in particular ways by specific processes; they are software artifacts, dependent on procedural rules that affect the meaning-making by the players; and they are cultural artifacts, socially constructed in their use and understanding. Robin Johnson defines artificial intelligence (AI) “as components of software code responsible for executing intelligent behavior by game elements such as general opponents or opposing or cooperating non-playable characters . . . during game play” (p. 10). AI forms a subset of computer programming, but Johnson limits his discussion to the development of AI in games, identifying what it does, explaining how game developers make use of AI, and pointing out some innovative kinds of AI. If AI represents a software technology, then game controllers fall on the hardware side. Sheila Murphy offers a history of game controllers as well as a forecast for the future.

Simon Dor’s chapter brings to mind an aspect of gaming that most would not think about: emulation. “An emulator is an application that tries to mimic another system in order to run applications the way they were run on their original system. It is usually used by gamers interested in playing older games on news systems” (p. 25). Recognizing the relatively short lives of computer hardware (perhaps less than 10 years), Dor suggests emulators as the solution both for players and for scholars interested in older games. However, because emulation is not perfect, he also points out its limitations and the new layers of context that it inserts into the game. An interface is how a player interacts with a game—what the player sees, hears, clicks on, and so forth. Vincent Mauger places interfaces studies within the history of computing (anyone using a computer, for example, must have an interface of some kind) and then within the history of gaming. Designers must take into account the experience they wish the gamer to have as well as the goals of the game. Here, too, Mauger calls attention to aspects of communication that most communication scholars do not think about: how people cross the divide between their own consciousness and that of others. A larger technological level is the platform, “simply a standard or specification’ that makes it easier to build other things” (p. 41). Bobby Schweizer notes that we might regard even a deck of playing cards as a platform for playing a number of different games. The same holds true for video games, with platforms produced by sev-
tional perspective. Communication scholars should find this a helpful reminder that such variety exists in almost every communicative situation.

Mark Grimshaw presents a brief discussion of the formal aspects of sound (dialogue, sound effects, music, ambient sound) and the state of the research into sound. Wolf concludes this part of the Companion with a consideration of worlds—“the imaginary or fictional world in which game events take place, and where the game’s characters live and exist” (p. 125). He presents both definitions (drawing on film and television studies) and a brief history of the development of gaming worlds.

Part 3 addresses the playfulness aspects of gaming. Julia Reyes explores the idea of casualness “through historical, industrial, media effects, and ethnographic perspectives” (p. 135). She divides casual games, which have become much more prevalent in the recent past, into two types: mimetic games, games played, for example, with the Wii controller, and games that can be downloaded onto a portable device. This sense of the casual can challenge some of the received categories of communication research because it focuses on trivial or non-important behaviors or things done in a person’s spare time. The research into the casual only goes back to 2009 and typically draws a comparison to so-called hard-core gaming. The opposite of the casual, challenge in games, forms the basis for the next essay. Robert Furze give some examples of how games can challenge people by looking at particular games; he then discusses the appeal of the kind of challenge that video games can offer. Players typically need to find a level of difficulty suited to their particular skills so that the challenge does not make them stop playing the game. Game designers also must find different ways of adjusting the challenge level in the games. Furze mentions the fact that people find ways to work around challenge either through cheating or through codes they can put into the games or through learning how to play the game via tutorials. The idea of cheating is the subject of the chapter by Mia Consalvo. She traces the origins of cheating to practices of developers who often put code into the game in order to allow them to debug the game by jumping past certain levels quickly. Some of these remained in the game code and players discovered them; the players would share these kinds of secrets with each other. Consalvo also considers why players might want to cheat and the kinds of cheating that may become part of the game play itself.

Another way to consider the playful aspect of the game is through an examination of competition and cooperation. Emma Witkowski first looks at the idea of cooperation in games where players form alliances. The opposite kind of game play involves players competing against each other—only one player wins the game. Each of these options lends a different flavor to how a game is played and a different level of satisfaction to those individuals partaking in the games. Marko Siitonen focuses on one aspect of competition: conflict. He begins by pointing out the inherent nature of conflict in any game, a situation that one could describe in a number of ways. First, there is a conflict between the gamer and the game where the gamer plays specifically against the game. Second, there is an unintended level of conflict between the player and the game where the game’s difficulty leads the player to take actions outside of the rules. Third, some games design conflict into the game itself; here players play against another player or play against a team of players.

Each of these aspects of playfulness (cooperation, competition, conflict) hinge on the interactive nature of games. Lori Landay considers interactivity both as a kind of communication and as a way of controlling the action of the play of the game. Perhaps one could also conceptualize it as a conversation, that is as a kind of interaction or conversation among the different players within the game space. There are different degrees of interactivity within any game as well as with the narrative itself. Landay notes that much of the interactivity of games arises from the affordances of the computer hardware on which people play games; in so doing, she identifies an important area for communication study: what allows communication to occur in the ways in which it does?

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One could also consider playfulness from the perspective of playfulness itself. Espen Aarseth introduces ludology, the study of games. He provides a history of ludology and then outlines its approaches from the perspectives of criticism, methodological critique, and hermeneutics. Louis-Martin Guay turns to playfulness in terms of objectives. For example, who defines the objectives and the goals of a game? How would a person study those things? Guay also investigates the different kinds of objectives of a game: formal objectives, learning objectives, and experiential objectives. A key component of playfulness is the players themselves. Frédéric Clément asks what may seem obvious but becomes more complex the more closely one looks: how to differentiate the players and gamers from other kinds of people and activities. He begins with a history of the concept, sketching how earlier theorists might have considered play in the role of players. Clément then offers a typology of gamers including the distinction between a casual player and a hard-core player and a distinction between the cyber-athlete and those who study games.

As Ruggill and McAllister noted, play involves a great deal of doing the same thing over and over. Christopher Hanson looks at the different ways in which repetition can take place within games. Much game play in fact consists of simply repetitive actions, as we see in arcade games. Newer games offer other manners of repetition beyond performing the same action. One can replay a game either by giving the players a chance to watch a recording of the game or by introducing an instant replay feature into the game. A final aspect of playfulness distinguishes games according to the number of players: single-player games versus multiplayer games. Daniel Joseph and Lee Knuttila examine this difference in game play structure in terms of what players do, whether they play against the game or whether they play with or against groups of people.

As a kind of parallel to the formal aspects of games discussed in Part 2, Part 4 turns to the generic aspects of games. These include things like action-adventure, role-playing, skill, and other kinds of games. Dominic Arsenault examines action games. This particular genre covers many games; in fact, there are debates about what constitutes an action game versus a non-action game since every game involves at least some kind of action among the players. However, the concept itself seems fairly well recognized: among the types of game play people readily connect action to acting in a simulated world rather than moving game pieces. Clara Fernández-Vara considers a complement to action—adventure. Adventure games also describe a genre, one which includes a “story-driven nature; having a player character who carries out the commands of the player; their encouragement of exploration; game play focused on puzzle-solving; and interaction based mainly on object manipulation and spatial navigation” (p. 233). Another genre of games involves role-playing. Andrew Burn gives a history of role-playing games, looking at where they have come from and the various kinds of role-playing games. Some role playing involves mimicry through the use of avatars and protagonists. On a theoretical level Burn examines the semiotics of role-play, placing it within drama theory. A subset of action games or first-person shooter games is the genre of shooting itself. After an overview of shooting in games, Gerard Voorhees looks at the various questions raised by shooting, particularly the question of violence in the game. Seth Giddings turns to the genre of simulation games. He writes, “the closest simulation games have to a defining generic characteristic is their open-ended structure, a ‘sandbox’ format that gives players latitude in experimentation or in devising their own game tactics and goals” (p. 259). Giddings includes a discussion of well-known simulation games like SimCity and Populous and then tries to place these in the growing number of other simulation games available. Andrew Baerg categorizes another genre, sports games, as to whether these include management simulations (games in which the player manages teams), extreme simulations (where the player uses skills to play the sport in the guise of an athlete), or action simulations (where the player actually “plays” the sports). Various academic studies have examined sports games either by focusing on players or on the industry itself. Dor treats the strategy game, providing both a history of strategy games (looking at the war games and some of the war simulation games) and considering various ways strategy games have been studied. Dor suggests some links between how strategies might work and the history of strategies and how players can build on that kind of knowledge and even replay games to examine the strategies used.

Part 5 of the book looks to cultural aspects of gaming. These aspects go beyond the game itself and will appear more familiar to communication scholars. Robert Alan Brookey reflects on convergence. Scholars use the term, “convergence” either to talk about the kind of media by which people receive or play games or to look at the data within the games themselves. Scholarly approaches have split between these two particular
approaches to convergence. This shifting focus now examines the growing movement of games to mobile platforms. Frans Mäyrä examines the idea of culture in itself. Among the many meanings of culture, Mäyrä suggests a cultural anthropology of gaming. He looks at different approaches to culture as they apply to gaming—the Frankfurt school, the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the work of Edward Tylor, and the work of Erving Goffman. Another approach to the culture of gaming looks to the culture within gaming. Rune Klevjer presents a case study of the cut scene. Cut scenes are parts of games in which the programmers interrupt the game play with a set piece of video or computer generated content in order to advance the story. Cut scenes began as a way of filling in the narrative or framing the play of the game, adding a sense of cinematic space to make the game familiar to other visual experiences of players.

Unlike many other communication experiences, games explicitly deal with death. Karin Wenz explores this, indicating different approaches to death within games. On the one hand, in some games the characters in the narrative die (sometimes surprising the game players). On the other hand, the game player dies. This could be because the avatar suffers a loss or because the player has failed to accumulate enough points to continue playing. Wenz analyzes how games’ approaches to death challenge common understandings of death and even the seriousness of what play might be.

Other approaches in which games interact with the larger culture have to do with educational games, media ecology, and research. Richard Ferdig introduces educational games and the ways in which some games have been treated simply as a means to support learning. A growing body of research on educational games indicates the aspects that help people to learn the most from games. Kevin Schut draws from media ecology to place gaming within the culture. Schut offers a brief introduction to media ecology, suggests ways in which it can be a useful approach to gaming studies, and then looks at the media ecology of gaming. Stepping back from Schut’s chapter, one could argue that this whole volume functions as a kind of media ecology of gaming. By looking at all of the different factors and their interaction, it considers the ecosystem of the games themselves: these include the business of creating games, the work of programming games, the actor playing games, the study of games, the use of games, and all of the different formal and aesthetic aspects of games.

David Myers presents a more formal treatment of research into gaming. He offers a history of research into gaming, looks at some of the influences in that research, notes the gaps in the research, and spells out current trends in the research itself. In a different approach to research, Michael Thomasson offers a consideration of retro gaming. “Retro gaming, also commonly referred to as old school gaming, pertains to the use of retired hardware that is no longer being produced and no longer receives software support from the original manufacturer for gaming. Retro games encompass games initially played on vintage home gaming consoles, personal computers, or even coin-operated arcade games” (p. 339). The last chapter in this section of cultural approaches to gaming specifically addresses the idea of violence in games. Peter Krapp considers theories of violence and then the empirical study of violence. He also includes a brief overview on regulations and legislation in various countries about violence in gaming. He concludes with a consideration of the idea of empathy or the lack of empathy in game play.

In a complement to the cultural aspects of games, Part 6 addresses sociological aspects. These issues take in the fictional, the imagined, and the real. Jessica Aldred unpicks the complexity of characters in the games, creations which combine fiction with the involvement of the players, leading to a kind of “double-consciousness” (p. 355). Typically referred to as an avatar, the concept takes its origin from Sanskrit usage. Beyond this, characters appear as brands and as branded goods, whether in films or merchandise. Carly Kocurek addresses a more typical sociological question: that of community. Gaming creates various kinds of communities through networks of games and through social media and online forums. Other traditional sociological topics include femininity (Carrie Heeter), masculinity (Michael Newman and John Vanderhoef), and race (Anna Everett)—all of which apply to within-game representations and to players. Michael Nitsche offers a background on performance in games, connecting it to theater and role-playing, as well as to traditional sociological explorations. Finally, Andras Lukacs looks specifically at the sociology of games, its theoretical foundations and methodological approaches.

The last part of the Companion turns to philosophical aspects. Here, it draws closer to the reflections of Ruggill and McAllister in explorations of everything from cognition to ethics. Andreas Gregersen draws on cognitive science to ask what gaming can teach about the human mind. Approaching this from the opposite direction, Joris Dormans reviews emergence. “Emergence describes the phenomenon of systems that
existential game ontology. The first refers to something that takes place within the claims of an immersive world. Many games themselves depend on the story and the narrative in which the players take a role to advance the story. Aarseth turns to ontology. He introduces the idea of narratology. This study of narratives is a way of trying to understand what takes place within the claims of an immersive world. Many games themselves depend on the story structure and the narrative in which the players take a role to advance the story. Aarseth turns to ontology. He draws a distinction between formal game ontology and existential game ontology. The first refers to something drawn from computer science on the mapping of a particular world into a programming domain and thus refers to the design space of games. Existential ontology asks more general question of what games are and what kinds of experiences games provide. In the last chapter of the book. Hayes returns to ask questions about transcendence. He writes "the study of transcendence deserves a rightful place alongside the study of other psychological, educational, and literary theories at work in video games" (p. 493). He regards transcendence as something that goes beyond and notes that this is the experience of many game players as they immerse themselves into the game. He explores how transcendence resides at one of several intersections: at the intersection of religion and technology, at the intersection of religion and psychology, at the intersection of religion and education, at the intersection of religion and literature. Games can fall into any of these places.

The Companion covers a vast range of materials regarding video games. Some of its seven major perspectives open games to specific kinds of analysis where others are more general and suggest a different approach to video games.

These two books together form a very good introduction to video and computer games. They complement one another in asking questions about the nature of video games and proposing ways in which video games may be studied. Some methods will be quite familiar to communication researchers where others will demand some thought about how gaming creates new communicative situations. One benefit from studying gaming—computer games, video games, or however we label them—comes from the realization that this area of study can shed a great deal of light on communication in general and communication study along with it.

The Ruggill and McAllister book features a gameography, end notes, a reference list, and an index. The Wolf and Perron work has reference lists for each of its 60 chapters and an index. Given the careful organization of the chapters, this arrangement works well as a guide to the literature under each heading.

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References
This edited book considers Arab television audiences in a variety of localities and from a variety of viewpoints. It highlights the technology through which we now view “television”—television sets, satellite, computer, tablet, or mobile phone—and how it has had an effect on what we watch and where we watch it. During the last couple of decades the technology has changed not only how we watch television, but whether or not we watch it in a family situation.

Galal takes as his starting point a quotation from Stewart Hoover’s 2006 book Religion in the Media Age, in which Hoover discusses how the media have meant that culture can now work with an unprecedented autonomy, and that individuals take more responsibility in seeking the legitimacy of formal religions in their quest to gain religious insight. In his introductory chapter, Galal, based at the University of Copenhagen, makes three points:

1. That traditional and formal religious institutions are increasingly challenged by the media, which offer believers resources from which to make meaning of faith.
2. That, more than ever before, it is up to the “believer and media user” to navigate and negotiate what is on offer to them.
3. The “accessible mediated resources” no longer relate to just one religion or authority, as was often the case in the past, but are “embedded in different religions, different transnational, national and local contexts, but also in different genres” (p. 2).

As a consequence, Galal suggests it is important that we understand how these changes affect the relationships between audiences and mediated religion.

Due to increasing globalization and emigration/emigration, the Arab audience is no longer solely situated in what we think of as Arab countries. The Arab diaspora now watch television through satellite delivery and the rise of a multitude of Arabic channels, which can be seen in the country in which they live. This book offers six case studies, arising from the research interests and perspectives of scholars in different countries. Their offerings here are cross-disciplinary and qualitative, and their theoretical and analytical bases also differ.

Galal (p. 8) questions whether there has really been a “re-sacralization” or “return” of religion to the media, or whether religion has always been there, but in different ways. He says these “different ways” are what draw his attention, noting that most studies that offered the “return of religion” thesis have come from the secularism or post-secularism of Western countries. He adds that since the 1950s there have been a number of Arab states that have restricted religious programming to Qur’an recitation or Friday prayers, which he believes has been a way to legitimize their own authoritarian power (p. 8). Over time, however, Galal says religion has found new media spaces due to those technological changes mentioned above. Some programming comes from ordinary channels, but other programming is offered by numerous religious channels that have sprung up since the late 1990s. He adds that religious language and issues have also gained ground in non-religious programming (p. 9), highlighting that the islamization of society and public institutions has been cited as an explanation of this trend, but believes that while this is an important factor it cannot be separated from general social development, which has led to better educated, more individualized audiences, together with the new technologies that mean these same audiences are freed from traditional dominant discourse communities.

His first chapter offers three developments which he suggests have helped in this process: Satellite television allowed religious channels to emerge; religion has gained more interest in other popular media genres (e.g., drama series and cinema); and, thirdly, as a result of the two previous factors, the media have become “a battlefield for political and religious positioning vis-à-vis different antagonists” (p. 9). All of the chapters relate to these three factors.

Under the first heading, Galal gives an interesting overview of the rise of the satellite channels, which is useful to those who wish to move away from the solely Western in media. Under the second heading, he considers the presence of the religious within programming that we might not consider strictly religious: lifestyle programs, cartoons, drama, reality TV, and contests, while cinema is where religion has supported the national secular imagination (see, e.g., Abu-Lughod, 2005; Shafik, 2007). Galal notes that due to religious channels’ availability, religion has become a consumer good alongside other consumer goods (p. 14), constructing alternative spaces to those of the traditional religious institutions for religious
practices. Many, he suggests, “propagate a modern and individualized approach to being Muslim as something one needs to ‘achieve’ through practice” (p. 14). A further result is that there has been an “ever more vocal struggle over religious positions, places, and representations,” which has served to produce what he describes as an “Islamic counter public that is ethical rather than political [sic] defined.” Perhaps this phenomenon is better described as “Islamic counter publics,” since so many channels have emerged since September 11th (only Iqraa was available before September 11th, 2001), and after the 2006 Muhammed Cartoon Crisis. While Galal says it is difficult to prove a direct causal link between these events and the appearance of the television channels, he does opine that it seems clear that such channels work to correct a distorted picture of both the Prophet Mohammed and Islam (p. 14). He also notes that most Arab regimes actively censor media products, e.g., film and television, more than they do the print media. Here, I have mentioned only the Muslim viewpoint, but parts of the book deal also with the Arab Christian audience, so often forgotten by those in the West who conflate the words Muslim and Arab.

Galal notes the need to add to the little research on Arab audiences. The Arab audience needs to be taken seriously in both its heterogeneity and transnationality (p. 17). Chapters in the book come from Algeria, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Great Britain, Morocco, Tunisia, and the USA.

Galal’s second chapter is “Audience responses to Islamic TV: Between resistance and piety” (pp. 29–50). Television, despite more competition and audience fragmentation, is still a key knowledge disseminator. This fragmentation and competition is perhaps particularly noticeable in regard to Islamic television, as the many programs and scholars that convey religious knowledge have underlined this trend. However, such channels also offer (ostensibly) “authoritative interpretations of religious knowledge and belief” (p. 30). To answer the questions: “What do audiences do with religious truths given in Islamic programming?” and “How do audiences ascribe authority to the different religious scholars?” Galal has undertaken research with Arabic-speaking audiences in Copenhagen, London, and Cairo, using a media ethnographic approach.

Those who appear on religious television are not uniform; they are liberal or conservative, radical or moderate, Islamist or Salafi (Salafists are those who want to adopt a form of “Early Islam,” a Shar’ia mind-ed orthodoxy—see, e.g., http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/nuh/salafi.htm). Galal first attempted to divide his target audiences between those attending a specific mosque and those Muslims who believe but whose practice is mostly individual and personal. Galal notes that attending a specific mosque meant something different in the UK than it did in Egypt. He also attempted to cut across class and other factors in order to try to reach a “typical” audience. He adds that the Salafi trend is not just influential in the Middle East but also globally, even though it is not popular among the majority of Muslims in Egypt. Just as there is no single typical audience member, there was no lack of structure in the viewing of Islamic television by those audience members. Their choices were “deeply embedded” (p. 39) in their daily routines, whether these were work related, involved religious duties, or leisure; however, viewing also related to existing discourses (p. 39). How television was watched varied, from typical television viewing on a television, to watching clips on YouTube. He notes, e.g., (p. 42) that some viewers distrusted certain Islamic channels, perhaps due to their ownership, but often channels were watched to confirm the viewer’s own life views, their faith, and/or personal political position. Galal’s data seemed to show four clusters of encounter between Muslim television and audiences:

1. Resistance against others’ understanding of Islam;
2. Spiritually striving for piety;
3. Education and protection of traditions; and
4. Intellectually striving for new knowledge (p. 43)

Rinnawi (pp. 51–70) offers a chapter relating to the “Cyber-national community? The case of Arab community in Germany.” While globalization has changed the “rules of the game,” as Fiske (1987) suggested, since it facilitates basic communication and cultural exchange, this may also mean there is a form of cultural isolation among ethno-national minorities in different countries. Rinnawi investigates Berlin’s Arab community, asking how they consume media and the implications of this consumption across generations and in their relationships to both German society and their Arab homeland. This perhaps has echoes to earlier waves of emigration where, for instance, Europeans emigrated for economic reasons to other countries.

On page 55, Rinnawi offers us the term “McArabism,” suggesting that transnational media assists in the formation of an “imagined nation,” in part built on nostalgia for their homeland. There is, of course, no Arab homeland, but a group of countries...
that speak Arabic as a main language (albeit with dialects and other languages). Rinnawi thus theorizes that first generation immigrants have formulated an “Imagined Coherence,” while their children (perhaps German born) show a “schizophrenic situation” that differs from their parents’ experiences, which is shown in their media habits (p. 56). Language difficulties may arise when the second generation attempt to watch Arab television, mainly broadcast in formal, classical Arabic; it is sometimes difficult for children and young people to understand the programming and so to retain enough interest to watch it. They also do not have facility in reading or writing in Arabic. This lack of training in formal language structures meant the young had to ask parents or other family members for explanations. The research showed (p. 60) that there seemed to be a correlation between a need to relate to the Arab/Islamic heritage and the second generation’s transition into the workplace and away from a school situation. This, in turn, caused them to turn to Arab transnational television for answers. The availability of Al-Jazeera and of religious channels through satellite services has enabled the Arab diaspora to access media from throughout the Arab world. This availability of sources through the Internet and television may lead, as Alterman (1998) predicted, to governments and religious authorities being unable to control what people know and think. On the obverse, religious authorities have taken up digital possibilities and can now reach their followers worldwide. Rinnawi notes that it is particularly during Islamic holidays that religious programming comes into its own, since German television may make only scant mention of such events, while watching related programming gives, as one respondent said, a sense of their Islam.

Viewing these Arabic programs has caused what Rinnawi calls an “Imagined Coherence” amongst the first generation of immigrants to Germany. For the younger generation, this imagined coherence comes from a wish to be informed about culture and religion so as to feel that they belong at least somewhere. They also demonstrate a third culture, not just a sense of Arabness or Muslimness, but a form of transnational identity that is part of German society.

Ratiba Hadj-Moussa considers Maghrebi (Tunisian, Moroccan, and Algerian) audiences and attempts to map divisions between Arab sentiment, Islamic belonging, and political praxis. She looks at how satellite television in the Maghreb has led to new practices and identity affiliations and defines how people live together. Authorities, particularly in Algeria, attempted to limit the purchase of satellite dishes (first introduced in the 1980s), but in all cases this proved to be impossible. The various cases of unrest in the Arab/North African area caused Maghrebi people to watch satellite television from various sources—which they call “couloirs,” or corridors. These channels, including Al-Jazeera, have meant that the greater Islamic world has become visible to those in the Maghreb, and countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Bosnia, and Chechnya, have become part of this Arab world. The ability of these channels to give space to different types of Islam, has led to star preachers. There is also the phenomenon of young women beginning to wear the hijab, when their own mothers had never worn one and when parents are sometimes actively opposed to it being worn (see p. 89). It is not only overtly religious programming that is watched in the Maghreb but, as noted in a previous chapter, other genres that may have some form of religious content. This programming has reactivated a sense of regionality (p. 90) and reaffirms Maghrebis’ sense of belonging to their Arabic culture and roots. While she does not suggest that such television channels have completely changed their sense of identity from being Maghrebi to being Arab and Islamic, Hadj-Moussa points out that the parameters adopted may vary according to those involved.

Noha Mellor writes on the views of London’s Arab diaspora. In the UK, many Muslims have origins in the Indian sub-continent, and their attitudes, practices, and even beliefs may be radically different (p. 105), yet Muslims from different areas, or from different branches of Islam, tend to be lumped together in a way that, say Philippino and Polish Roman Catholics would not be (p. 98). Mellor notes that, in the 2011 census, 0.5% of the population of the UK is from an Arabic speaking country, although in London they form 1.5% of the population and there are larger pockets elsewhere. Many of these “Arabs” are in London for business reasons, but the integration of such communities varies greatly. Some seem to be assimilated into the mainstream culture in public, while keeping their “Arabness” in private; some are referred to as Arab multiculturalists (p. 99), who often came to the UK as refugees and tend to have a lower income bracket. This group is often noticeable as it is quite political. The third group is described as “young cosmopolitans”; they do not reject their identity as Arabs, but tend not to mix with
Arab networks, yet may still feel outside the mainstream, and seek to be citizens of the world with a home base in London (p. 99).

For this research, Mellor interviewed young Arab university students and discussed their media consumption. Again, some said they found the formal Arabic difficult to follow. Others felt that the overtly religious programming was irrelevant to their lives, since it seemed to be made for older viewers. They also noted the phenomenon of the “star preacher.” There is a sense of multiculturalism, while negotiating a Muslim and Arab identity, perhaps through dress or by connection with their ties to a homeland. Mellor concludes that Arab media may assist in reproducing a cultural identity in the second generation of London Arabs, but their differences should be noted as well as their similarities—the interviewees also became aware of the fissures between Arab groups through watching programming, as well as of their differences from their parents.

Vivian Ibrahim writes on the Egyptian diaspora and their sense of religion and national identity. I found this chapter particularly interesting as it looks not only at Muslims, but also at Coptic Christians, particularly with reference to a *musulsal*, or drama series, broadcast during Ramadan, 2010, some six months before the uprisings that we call the Arab Spring. Two small diasporan groups were interviewed just after the series was broadcast, and the case studies used consider whether the reasons for emigrating from Egypt, the time of that immigration, and religion have played a role in the way that people interpret such programs. In this case, *al-Gama’a* (The Group) focused on the Muslim Brotherhood in two time periods, 2006 and at the time of its founder Hassan al-Banna. In the UK, interviews were conducted with eight families (two Coptic Christian and six Muslim), 33 people in all. All identified themselves as émigrés, in Edward Said’s sense—having moved to the UK for economic, educational, or employment purposes. The older generation had been in the UK for 25 years or more. In the U.S., however, the Coptic group interviewed saw themselves as exiles, since they felt they were forced out of their homeland due to religious persecution. An exile may keep an idealized view of the home country, an idealized nation for which they maintain a longing (p. 123), even when they can no longer claim it as “home.”

The series offered a view of a nation where Jew, Muslim, and Christian lived together in harmony, because they were all Egyptians. This is not unconnected with the fight for freedom from the colonizer, in this case Britain. In the UK interviews, such images and interpretations were accepted readily and anecdotal evidence of such harmonious relationships was given (p. 125), although actual life experience varied according to the age of the interviewee.

Ibrahim suggests that reading *al-Gama’a* in the light of the January 2011 uprisings would be interesting, followed as it was by ongoing demonstrations that may have led to cancellation of a further series in 2011’s Ramadan. The U.S. group, who were all Copts, were more critical of the national unity image. However, she believes it is not possible to make any definitive statements about religion and reactions to the *musulsal*, yet all of the groups identified a “legitimate” Islam, rather than something that was unacceptable. The U.S. group picked out allusions to foreign interventions as being potential “terrorists.” For both groups, the *musulsal* acted as a benchmark against which their own identities, memories, and negotiations of self could be weighed (p. 129).

Lisa Paulsen Galal’s chapter looks at Egyptian cinema and two particular films, *Baheb e-Cima* (*I Love Cinema*) and *Hassan wa Murqus* (*Hassan and Marcus*). The first is based on *Cinema Paradiso*. The second on a book, a story about a Muslim, a Coptic Christian, and a Jew; in the film, the Jew was omitted. Many Copts did not welcome the first, but were happier with the second. The protests against the first film were considered part of what Mehrez (2010) has called “culture wars” in relation to Muslim-Copt relations in public. Paulsen Galal first offers a historical background to the mediation of Copts in Egyptian media, followed by “the analytical approach of regimes of representation.” The two films are discussed with analysis of the responses to them, which reveals how the films’ narratives of freedom are conflated with notions of the nation, the minority, and religion.

She draws the conclusion that the united Muslims and Christians at the end of *Hassan wa Murqus*, who are shown against the background of a country that is being fragmented, is quite similar to footage shown on Egyptian state television following the 2011 revolution. She believes that media will try to continue to demonstrate this unity between the two groups in the future. Copts killed in the revolution and other events have been treated as victims of the revolution, rather than as victims of the persecution of Christians. The two films demonstrate, she suggests, how the media’s liberalization and their detachment
from state institutions are leading to negotiations around the power of definition, the representation of minorities, and diversity in media use. Nevertheless, there is a clash in differences in religious narratives. A narrative about a pluralistic Egypt exists, but how it can be told and the extent of its telling, or of its silencing, are difficult if these are being considered as contesting a national narrative of unity and ontological religious narratives (p. 147).

This is a much needed book, which would interest those who study or research the Arabic speaking world, media, diasporas, identity, or religion. It thus has wide application.

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References


Though the title might strike some casual browsers as indicating a rather specialized work, Ibroscheva provides the reader with a remarkable and comprehensive look at the media in the post-socialist world of Eastern Europe. Using a lens of feminism more particularly and women more generally, she examines the role of the media, both before and after the fall of socialist governments. The change of government opens a window on the complex relationship of people, media, and society. She writes, “When the dystopia of communism ended, men and women alike were thrown back into a vortex of economic, social, and political uncertainties. More importantly, the collapse of the regimes in the East proved that the denial of freedom of choice, including the choice of expressing sexual desires and exercising one’s right to shop, was virtually unsustainable” (p. xiii). The book, then, addresses a complex world in transition and, though focusing on women in the media, addresses male audiences as well.

The book has two stated goals: “to explore the role of advertising and the consumption that it promotes across the Balkans . . . while changing cultural perceptions of sex and femininity” and to theorize “how the marketing of gender identities” has “affected the social, economic, and political positioning of women in the region” (p. xx). Ibroscheva draws on theories of gender, femininity, and masculinity, as well as Foucault on discourse and Fairclough on methodology as she combines specific data analysis with a more comprehensive look at the cultures involved.

The five chapters of the book each follow a similar pattern of presentation. Ibroscheva introduces the topic, then provides a review of the relevant theory, and then a review of published studies in the area. Usually she introduces the history of media practices before the change of government along with Marxist theory developed in Eastern Europe to explain the situation; next, she offers a look at the post-socialist experience of the region. She focuses on Bulgaria as the country in which she grew up; however the larger focus directs her to the Balkans (as a bridge between East and West) and to the entire post-socialist world from which she also draws examples.

The first chapter offers historical grounding with its examination of “the ideology of femininity, bodies, and sex during socialism” (p. 1). Drawing on content analysis of key publications from the 1950s and 1960s, Ibroscheva sketches the general awareness of feminine issues, particularly the “dual role of mother and worker,” central to so much socialist planning. Other magazine topics during the period included ideas of beauty, fashion, gender, and sexuality. In each case, Ibroscheva provides commentary from published research as well as her own examination of the (mostly magazine) texts.

Chapter 2 directly examines advertising. Advertising did exist in the socialist economy. The chapter begins with a brief history of Soviet advertising, as that influenced the practices of other Eastern bloc economies. The chapter then reviews studies of advertising in other socialist countries before specifically examining Bulgaria.
The third chapter, “Liberating Women,” begins the focus on the period of transition by examining “the role of media in defining femininity in the post-socialist transition” (p. 75). The shifting understanding of gender roles included a change in the thinking of men—a change documented in the women’s magazines of the period. The time of transition also saw changes in the ideal of beauty and a rise of what Ibroscheva terms “porn culture,” a framer appearance of erotica in the main magazines. Ibroscheva draws parallels between this cultural shift in print media and a similar shift in popular music and popular culture. All of this sets the stage for “commodification of beauty” in which women’s magazines associated beauty with advertising and with “a new aesthetic for the post-socialist femininity” (p. 102).

The very complex cultural change theorized and documented in Chapter 3 sets the stage for Chapter 4’s specific examination of “advertising and the objectification of women in Bulgaria” (p. 113). In the case studies presented here, Ibroscheva brings to life “the growing importance of beauty and style as markers of success for Eastern European women and the complex way in which these markers became connected to the market economy and its commercial engine, advertising” (p. 116). The rise of commercial (or even industrial) advertising agencies works to reshape traditional ideals of beauty while at the same time anchoring the new ideal in an appeal to the past. Occasionally the advertising campaigns became so overtly sexual that they offended large segments of the market.

The last substantive chapter turns to women in politics. Here, too, post-socialist women have difficulty escaping the gendered and patronizing narratives already so well known in Western discourse. Examining the literature in the area, Ibroscheva finds similar challenges in every area: reporting on politics, political limits imposed on women, photographs of female politicians, and even the ways in which female politicians felt compelled to sell themselves in sexual ways to a male electorate.

Ibroscheva concludes the book, “the post-communist transition has affected not only the way in which Eastern European men and women live, but also the way in which Eastern European men and women think about each other. In the atmosphere of confusion and political disarray characterizing the collapse of the socialist system, gender identities were caught in a limbo” (p. 151). Her book goes a long way to illustrate that limbo by providing a kind of “before and after” look at the role and portrayal of women. In a very real way, though, the book offers a mirror of both East and West and a sobering account of gendered advertising, sales, politics, and people.

Each chapter includes end notes; the book also features 10 pages of bibliography as well as an index.

—Paul A. Soukup, S.J.
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This brief document presents an overview of laws, rules, and policies that govern access to information in the Nordic countries. The very idea of “access” has different meanings:

- “openness” refers to public bodies and politicians “willing to enter into dialogue with the outside world,” for example by making “themselves available for interviews, attend public meetings, and take part in discussions” (p. 9).
- “transparency” refers to specific legal requirement for access as well as to a requirement that information be easy to understand.
- “access” in the Nordic countries “refers to the right to have access to authentic information about the activities of public bodies, their researches, and bases for decisions, etc., without the information being mediated or controlled by some authority or by politicians” (p. 9).

The report outlines the legal basis for access in Nordic rules, in the UN Conventions, in the Conventions of the Council of Europe, and in EU rules. While some remain general, others apply specifically in different countries in different ways. For example, countries define “authorities” differently, some including semi-public entities. Some governments have agencies charged with public information and others outsource the tasks. Environmental information often falls subject to specific requirements.

Jørgensen reviews requirements for a variety of document types and gives information on registers and search tools. He also discusses the difference between
public and confidential information, indicating which legal conventions cover each type (state security, foreign policy, personal information, corporate information, environmental information, etc.). He also gives a guide to the various governmental approaches to access in the Nordic countries—different decision-making bodies, such as governments, parliaments, local governments, and so forth, have different rules.

The overview ends with a discussion of the contrasts among the different Nordic countries and a look at international development.

The guide provides an important compilation, not only of policies and approaches to information access in the Nordic countries, but of the larger issue of citizen access throughout the EU and the rest of the world.

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Networks Without a Cause provides an analysis of the problems that surround today’s technology-driven society and what might result of this in the future. Lovink uses current examples of specific companies and technologies with each idea he discusses. He touches on topics of what technology does to our identities, expectations, education, and dependency.

The book begins with historical background on Web 2.0 and its characteristics: how it allows users to be social, to produce and publish information, and to use it with ease. Throughout the first section, Lovink expands on the idea that with the start of Web 2.0 came the end of communities. Isolated, individual use of the web grew. The world started to focus on web identities. Lovink points out that we have both public and private identities. These are different and require us to look at who we really are and who we want others to think we are. This situation contributed to our obsession with maintaining both identities at the same time.

The “loss of self” (p. 33) is one of the most fascinating topics that Lovink discusses. He explains the tug of war between the “real you” and the “virtual you,” or the need to be yourself versus the need to conform. He points out the idea that we are able to be ourselves anonymously more than publicly. If we disclose so much of our identity to the public through sites that we participate in, it is no wonder that a challenge arises with our being ourselves. The concept of self-disclosure is brought to the reader’s attention with examples of user privacy on a variety of technologies.

The Web 2.0 fosters a constant race and competition to be the first to know and be updated on information. With this comes a feeling of failure because one cannot function and keep up with the speed of technology. All the while, having this active use of technology in our lives is still seen as innovative, productive, and impressive. People have accepted the norm and expectation for everyone to participate in the technological world, which includes all forms of media. In addition to this idea, Lovink touches on the engagement of users that interact with media. The basis, he concludes, is that we want to leave our mark on the Internet, to make a contribution to it. There are various types of contributions users make, and it can be challenging to simply leave a comment or criticism on a webpage.

Lovink brings another question forward: What if we looked at other aspects of life like we look at our technology? Connecting technology to other forms of education such as art and culture has been a mission for many. There is a chapter dedicated to media studies—where we have been and are now in that field. The divide between new and old media is vast and confusing. He writes about different kinds of media, how they were built, and where they are going.

About half way through the book, Lovink shifts his thinking to specific kinds of media. The first piece of media he discusses is blogging. He covers the differences of blogging in Germany, France, and Iraq. Some regard blogging as an individual process, where people express personal ideas, whether they are consistent with the status quo or not. But people can also see blogging as a impersonation, a creation of a persona. Some see blogging as a thriving art, while others feel the opposite. Lovink explains another medium in depth as well, the radio. Radio has a rich history and has changed since it began. Having personal experience in this field, he describes everything from airwave control to going global. This transitions his discussion into other media, television and film.

Lovink highlights a problem: Technology users are always on a database. This discussion of databases stems from our television and film consumption. We rely on databases for our media and more—popularity, not accuracy drives databases and search engines. He explores how we reached an intense dependency on single search engines, such as Google, and its effects.
He concludes that a new way for the user to get contact with information could be very beneficial to easing the information overload.

Through the struggle that technology has brought us, we have fought back. Lovink discusses hacking and leaking, specifically the Wikileaks saga. He also converses about how technology has affected our minds politically. It is hard for people to grow if they are surrounded by media groups who think selectively, and the opposite, if they are overwhelmed with too many ideas. However, the cycle does not end. Technology users are dependent for information and expected to be an active participant in this online world.

One of my favorite ideas in this book was the urge to be technology free. I find myself feeling that unplugging from technology is a treat. “Will we soon get WiFi-Free lounges in the name of leisure lifestyle? How about ‘calm’ interfaces for hyperactive kids?” (p. 162). These are just some of the ideas Lovink writes about and wonders about the future.

Lovink attempts to show the reader the effects of the web on our everyday lives and brings out ideas that are not usually discussed. His analysis of technology is critical, but he also expresses that we should strive to think collectively about the problems that technology has caused and what to do about them now.

—Laura Pope
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If what people regard as “the media” has changed dramatically with the rise of a digital culture, digital tools, “digital natives,” social media, and new media companies, then what does (or should) what most university departments call “media studies” study and teach? William Merrin asks and answers that question in this book, which combines a history of where communication departments have come from and where they might go. Merrin, an associate professor at Swansea University, writes from the perspective of communication studies in the UK. His physical location and British preparation give him a particular social location within communication studies; that in turn gives him a particular perspective and a particular argument against the blindness of media lecturers.

New digital media combine communication and computing; therefore, those who would study them, teach them, and use them need a grounding in both (Ch. 1). Media Studies 2.0 takes this fact as its starting point. Merrin traces the trajectory of both, seeing their confluence as revolutionary—or rather as a series of revolutions. A material revolution leads the way: the change in communication media from physical forms (film, videotape, other media) to digital forms, what Nichols Negroponte (1995) termed the move from atoms to bits. Perhaps even more importantly, Merrin notes how we have also experienced an ecological revolution. Taking the media ecology perspective and expanding it, he argues that such an approach works better than “traditional media analysis” in six ways.

First, it explores the relationship of biological and technological life . . . . Second, it takes a holistic approach, considering the entire technical environment, rather than just that portion labeled “media.” Third, it rejects linearity and specialization, emphasizing instead a web of forces and agents and the study of the relationships within this ecosystem. . . . Fourth, this approach emphasizes multiple determinisms. . . . Fifth, this ecological model is a dynamic one. It recognizes that media forms adapt, evolve, and succeed in relation to other forms and elements . . . . Sixth, this is a systems approach. It sees lower-level systems as having their own modes of interaction, following these through to higher-level systems and their relationships. (pp. 48–49)

Building on these two revolutions is a cultural revolution, one which has overturned the traditional broadcast model in communication and in communication studies. Finally, all of these come together in a “me-dia” revolution, a change that Merrin compares in impact to the Reformation in Christianity (and one also led by changes in communication materials, communication ecologies, and communication cultures). And this defines today’s communication world:

By “me-dia” I mean the realm of mediated interpersonal communication in a digital age. It encompasses our mobile texts, videos and photos; emails, PMs, IMs; our contribution to chat rooms, forums, and mailing lists; our social networking and micro-blogging activity (posting, sharing, messaging, writing on walls, updating statuses, tweeting, linking); our contribution to social-sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr), fan sites and collaborative sites (wikis); our amateur porn videos and sexts; our blogs; our media productions (music, images, software), plus all our
These represent both an emphasis on the individual and a profound change in the organizational structure of the communication world. And this lies at the heart of Merrin’s argument. Media studies, as a university subject, cannot continue in a business-as-usual manner because the business no longer exists.

The next section of Media Studies 2.0 offers a stinging critique of how communication researchers and teachers conceptualize what they study and teach. Only then does Merrin offer his suggestions for a new approach to media—the 2.0 of the title. In his view those teaching media need to understand digital media and how they work; they need practical abilities with these newer means of expression; they need an appreciation for the digital ecology (p. 129). In addition, both teachers and students must go beyond a humanities or social science grounding in communication and take in the tools and mind set of computing. Just as in the past, media students had to learn the basics of cameras or sound recording, today they must learn programming, an insight Merrin quotes approvingly from Doug Rushkoff (2010).

The critique and suggestions go beyond the media studies classroom or major. Merrin also traces how the communication revolutions have and will affect university education as well as the daily lives of students. He cites the cautionary tales of students prosecuted not for copyright violation (so 20th century) but for the content of Facebook posts.

Though Merrin writes that his book isn’t “another textbook” (p. 6), but rather a manifesto or an extended argument against media studies, parts of it would actually work quite well as an undergraduate text. His early chapters provide an excellent introduction to communication technologies and to media ecology. The middle chapters offer key insights into why university courses approach media studies as they do. Each chapter gives a fairly detailed history of the relevant approaches to media studies, summarizing the work of key theorists and showing how we have come to where we find ourselves in the academic world of media studies. (Though the UK situation differs somewhat from communication study in the U.S., the similarities make Merrin’s work quite helpful.) Students, having grown up with Merrin’s “media” will not need to learn about what they instinctively know, but they will need to know why people think about media in outmoded ways. Just as the current generation of media teachers has largely forgotten or ignored the communication revolution of the 16th century, so today’s students have even more quickly forgotten (or never knew) the communication revolutions of the 20th century. This book will help them find their way.

Merrin’s work will also help university media studies faculty members to find their way. And perhaps, it will even help them to offer a cogent critique of some parts of Merrin’s argument—not of the main outlines of media studies 2.0, but of Merrin’s ideas of how to study this new world. Though one cannot ignore the blooming, buzzing confusion of social media, one can ask whether every blog, every YouTube video, every Facebook page is really a worthy subject matter for media study.

Media Studies 2.0 well repays a close reading and should be on the reading list of everyone teaching media. Merrin writes well and makes his points both seriously and entertainingly, a commendable combination.

The book closes with a bibliographic essay, a bibliography, and an index.

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References


New Wars, New Media and New War Journalism provides an exhaustively researched, detailed critique of current war journalism and the dangers created by this inadequate conflict coverage. The text considers how a new media landscape dominated by huge media corporations with smaller newsroom staffs makes war reporting increasingly difficult, particularly as ways to propagandize become easier through the use of social media, computer games, and the “military-entertainment” complex. Coverage is further complicated by new warfare strategies such as drones engaged in extra-judicial killings and journalists who are poorly equipped to sort out the complex legal
questions of such technologies. The result is that journalism audiences (also known as citizens) don’t fully understand or appreciate the costs and catastrophes caused by decades of war. Without a dramatic doubling down on war coverage, the authors argue, the “trend is a looming threat to citizens’ right to information in a democratic system, and the possibility of forming enlightened opinions about the conduct of their elected leaders in conflicts, politics, and warfare” (p. 11).

Authors Stig A. Nohrstedt, a professor at Uppsala University in Sweden, and Rune Ottosen, a professor at Oslo and Akershus University College in Norway, draw on 20 years of research into war journalism in their native countries. The authors discuss Swedish and Norwegian coverage of major conflicts, from the first Gulf War in 1990–1991 through the ongoing civil war in Syria, particularly the way in which limited military actions such as no-fly zones given initial approval—sometimes decades earlier—by the United Nations Security Council have been expanded and subverted into regime-change strategies justified by the United States’ and NATO’s incessant drumbeat for a “global war on terror.”

In the lengthy opening chapter, the authors lay groundwork for the comprehensive case they will present in the ensuing chapters. They begin with brief discussions of the various military actions that have erupted around the globe—particularly the Middle East—during the last two decades. Drawing attention to the war in Afghanistan, the authors argue that a certain “lack of legal competence” (p. 14) made it easy for journalists to be persuaded by the self-defense argument floated by the United States as the reason for its invasion of the country after 9/11. While Scandinavian political leaders focused public rhetoric on humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan (girls denied schooling, denied democracy), the mainstream press did little to “take up the role as the Fourth Estate by raising relevant questions about the legality and legitimacy of the wars” supported by their troops. These human rights arguments have extended to the UN, where since the first Gulf War, efforts to cloak military actions as humanitarian intervention have won the “hearts and minds” of the public. In turn, the press becomes hesitant to ask key critical questions. This reluctance, the authors argue, comes partly from the journalists’ attempts to “avoid censure for not being patriotic and loyal to ‘our young men and women’ in the armed forces who were risking their lives for a better future in Afghanistan (or elsewhere)” (p. 24).

The authors then address the effects of globalization on journalism, which instead of homogenizing coverage has splintered it. “Never have there been so many different media voices and views in the marketplace of ideas” (p. 28). This intense media coverage has led to a new type of warfare known as “risk-transfer war.”

The leading western countries’ warfare is carried out in ways designed to place the physical dangers—but also all political, economic, and moral hazards—on the enemy alone to bear. This assumes that the warfare of one’s own side is portrayed in the media as legal, legitimate, and in accordance with humanitarian principles. (p. 28) Risk transfer, the authors argue, makes it easier for leaders to avoid negative publicity about human costs. Soldiers attack the enemy from a safe distance while journalists are embedded with troops and banned from photographing body bags. As a result, the public is left with a sanitized view of war.

Lastly, the authors discuss in Chapter 1 how visual rhetoric, the “military-entertainment complex,” computer games, social media, and information warfare have become crucial to military success while simultaneously obscuring and even negating the effects of any significant efforts by legitimate war journalists. As entertainment and news merge, the audience has increasing difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction. In one of many telling anecdotes scattered throughout the text, the authors relate how the press center in Qatar was designed by Hollywood consultants in hopes of making more believable the “performance” of the military spokespeople (p. 32). Popular computer games highlight the heroism of troops, and soldiers use social media to tell tales of their everyday lives in the field. These stories offer “strong emotional appeal to the relatives at home” (p. 35).

In Chapter 2, “Targeting Journalists and the Media in the New World Order,” Nohrstedt and Ottosen discuss the paradox that allows Western leaders to argue for freedom of expression while glossing over U.S. and NATO military actions that have included the bombing of Al Jazzera’s offices in Kabul and Baghdad. The authors argue that the concept of humanitarian intervention helped publicly justify the pre-emptive strikes that led to these attacks, and in turn, caused little if any outrage, despite protections provided by the Geneva Convention that treat journalism outlets as civilians targets. In 2011, NATO
airstrikes took out the state-owned Al-Jamahiriya headquarters in Tripoli, Libya. “In a statement, NATO said that it carried out the air strikes in order to silence the regime’s terror broadcasts” (p. 64). When NATO employs these justifications, the authors argue, “it creates a dangerous precedent that can backfire on Norwegian and Swedish journalists in future conflicts” (p. 64).

In Chapter 3, “Peace Journalism as a Strategy in the Threat Society?” the authors discuss the threat society that develops when the populace has been steeped in an environment where the global war on terror and global warming dominate headlines. This chapter argues that this terror war is a new kind of war, “something of a much more severe magnitude: a global conflict between dominant, rich centers of power in the world and dominated, poor marginalized peoples and cultures (p. 65). A globalized world brings far-flung fears closer to home, and the media help perpetuate this culture of fear and threat. “The exploitation of threats and risks is fundamental to journalism as an institution” (p. 74). The authors call on journalists to be more reflective on their role as watchdogs instead of serving as lap dogs.

Rarely does one see journalists trying to dig beneath the surface of promoted risk and threat messages. The obvious example is the mobilization period before the Iraq war in 2003, when the U.S. media in general . . . failed in their watchdog function and fooled large parts of their audiences into believing the accusations that the Saddam Hussein regime possessed weapons of mass destruction and was involved in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. (p. 75)

The authors further call on journalists to explore the concept of peace journalism as suggested by Johann Galtung. This approach is people-focused, telling the stories of the victims, and helps contribute to peace-making and -keeping. Nohrstedt and Ottosen acknowledge that peace journalism may wilt in the shadow of the propaganda machine of the military-industrial complex.

Chapter 4, “Brothers in Arms or Peace?” uses discourse analysis to explore the closer military cooperation between the NATO-member Norway and non-aligned Sweden, while Chapter 5 moves into the ethical minefield that is WikiLeaks. “That this alternative information provider has offered a massive amount of relevant news material disseminated by acknowledged journalists and media is obvious. But can one say that just supplying information—however relevant from a democratic point of view—is journalism?” (p. 115). In 2010, WikiLeaks released more than 90,000 documents that led to hundreds of stories in the mainstream press about cover-ups and civilian casualties. While the authors talk about a variety of issues including ethics related to WikiLeaks and the documents revealed by Edward Snowden in 2013, they devote much of their attention to whether WikiLeaks substantially affected war coverage and public opinion. “WikiLeaks is not journalism—but obviously it is a tool for critical reporting” (p. 131).

Chapter 6, “Media and International Law,” focuses on the complex legal and political issues reported on by Swedish and Norwegian reporters during the Libyan War in 2011. The authors argue that the press neglected key issues needed for adequate public debate while instead reassuring readers that military actions were justifiable. Their research indicates that journalism educators should integrate international law and politics, as well as peace and conflict resolution, into their curriculums to help their students understand the vastly complicated warfare of today on into the future.

Nohrstedt and Ottosen discuss President Obama’s justification of the use of drones in targeted killing operations in Chapter 7, “Drones and the Extrajudicial Killings in the War on Terror.” They argue that Obama’s expanded use of drones has dashed all hope that the U.S. president would stay true to his message of change and restore respect for human rights and lawful conduct. While the legality—and particularly the ethics—of the use of drones are routinely debated, much of the media reports their use as “everyday routine” (p. 173). In fact, the authors state, “the framing of drones in the Western media is mainly seen from ‘our’ perspective. . . . Who could argue against preventing new terrorism attacks through preemptive attacks on these evildoers?” (p. 173).

In the final chapter, the authors consider the challenges faced by journalists and what might be done to improve war coverage. The two touch on several proposals, including the practice of peace journalism and an increased emphasis on educating journalism students on international politics and law. They also include a checklist aimed at improved global coverage of war and conflict, with questions such as “Is there a legal basis for military action? If so, what international law or norm is applicable?” “Are there peace suggestions and alternatives to military...
action promoted by peace groups, NGOs, and critical intellectuals? And have they been reported in a relevant way?” (p. 198). In conclusion, the authors argue that a “globalizing world demands journalism with a global outlook and the competence, in its reporting, to connect local and national events with global conditions and processes” (p. 203).

In this complex, comprehensive work, Nohrstedt and Ottosen make an impressive case for the need for not just better but deeper and more reflective journalism, one that questions past practices and stays true to its fundamental democratic mission. The text should be required reading for editors and reporters whose central job should be challenging war and conflict propaganda, not falling prey to it. Students in upper-division or graduate-level public affairs reporting classes also would benefit from the text’s meticulous research and reasoned proposals. While the book is certainly a demanding read, it is also an exceptionally worthwhile one.

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Communication as a field of study has a relatively brief history, but the study of its own history is even more recent. The *Handbook* editors represent four members of one U.S. university communication program (University of Colorado); their scope includes not only the broad fields of mass communication, journalism, interpersonal, and rhetorical studies but also representatives from the global community with their own cultural and professional histories. To say that the field is recent does not mean that there is no published history. The first two chapters, “Introduction” and “The History of Communication History,” alone contain almost 500 references. Plenty to base serious scholarship on.

The four editors and authors of the first chapter detail for the reader the rich history of both the scientific and the humanistic approaches to communication study, providing an especially challenging overview of communication study in the past 100 years. They admit that their review is limited to Euro-American research primarily, but their study is broad within these limitations. They trace briefly the separate U.S. rhetoric and speech path and the journalism path to communication studies of the 1950s, and they provide a common overview that is sorely lacking in both history and theory of our common field of communication. They also provide a representation of the European contributions with historical roots of cultural and critical studies from the UK and other European contributors. Their final contribution looks into the future and identifies *six trends* they feel are crucial to a more complete history of the field. First is a rising interest into the “materiality” of communication in not only the technology but in materiality of users themselves. Second, the “depth” of the historical study of communication speaks to the increasing methodological and analytical sophistication of research. Third is the *internationalization* of communication history as other regions of the globe also write their own histories, and, one might add, the West begins to pay attention beyond English language sources. Fourth, the historical research on *gender, race, class, and other social identities* needs to continue. Fifth, the current focus on *the digital* will entail a history of this phenomenon that is only beginning to develop. Finally, and perhaps the most crucial, is the necessity of all communication researchers to reflexively understand the history of their own research.

The two other chapters in Part 1, “The Field,” include one on “Media” and the other on “Communication Research.” Both chapters indicate the historical importance of the media in the history of the communication field even though the Handbook tries to balance the often media-centric view of communication with an understanding that communication has a human and not just a technological focus. The media chapter points to ancient writing systems and the introduction of printing as a key historical part of the current reality of digital communication. The chapter on communication research by Pooley and Park discusses a 1,600 item bibliography on the topic of history of communication research. Their focus is not to try to treat this vast knowledge bank as simply a summary of its content. Rather, the authors explain their methodology of cataloguing and, in turn, provide an important insight into the history of the field itself. They point out, for instance, that research is primarily a record of European and especially British and American works and is field-centric (journalism/mass communication and interpersonal, for example) and intellectual (the ideas and theories) rather than institutional (organizations that have pro-
moted research, funding etc.) and contextual (influences from outside the field). They also refer to the focus on individual researchers and indicate that the vast majority are from the U.S. and secondarily from the UK and Canada. But most revealing are the disparities indicated by these kinds of statistics: most of the non-English speaking world is left out, U.S. communication research dominates in a kind of intellectual imperialism, women and developing societies are minimized. They acknowledge these facts and argue for a better balance by contributions of the non-Western and non-traditional sources. The lack of someone in this work to collaborate who commands the scholarly literatures of Latin America, Asia, or Africa and who would have helped to round out a more complete international history of the field highlights a weakness of the work.

The remainder of the book is less synthetic and more diverse. Part 2, “Modes,” deals with Audiences, Rhetoric (cross-culturally), Conversation, Visual Communication, and Music, with some chapters more familiar to communication scholars than others. Part 3, “Media,” returns the reader to more familiar ground with chapters on Print Culture, Journalism (a very readable summary for anyone interested in the U.S. field), Telecommunications, Radio Broadcasting (reminding readers that this important early medium has not received sufficient independent attention because of the mid-century focus on television), Television, and New Media. Part 4, “Society,” returns to the emphasis that Pooley and Park made in Chapter 3 on the importance of context. Here we find chapters on The City, Science Communication (an important part of early communication research of 1950-1960), Politics (remaining important), Labor (key to much important work in political economy to this day), War, Gender and Media (a lack still in the general field), Race (ditto), and Organizing (organizational communication is a subfield with relatively little communication history but in need of it according to the two authors). Part 5, “The World,” pulls together authors representing various nations and cultures beyond the Euro-American hegemon. Chapters constitute an interesting summary about Rhetoric in Latin America (focusing largely on post-colonial analysis of early documents of the colonizers); Cultural Imperialism (better known by most readers than other aspect dealt with in this part); Communication in Colonial and Post-Colonial Southern Africa (useful especially because poorly known); Islam (religious and rhetorical analysis); Jewish Media (the importance in the 19th and 20th centuries of the Jewish press in Europe and the U.S.), East Asian Communication Studies (China, Japan, and Korea are highlighted showing how U.S. communication approaches impacted and may still influence these scholarly communities). An Epilogue gives a French political scientist an opportunity to critique our (digital) media saturated society with a grim analysis for the future.

This book is a unique collection of research on a critical part of the communication field. It suggests that unless we become more reflexive on what research we are doing, the field will continue to grow without direction. It is a sobering but challenging message. The book contains substantial bibliographies after each chapter and a detailed index. I recommend the book for all researchers in the field.

—Emile McAnany
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Briefly Noted


Athique notes that the mass media in India “represent one of the most complex fields of communication to be found anywhere in the world (p. 1). In this volume he examines those mass media in terms of technical infrastructure, commercial organization, and cultural formation. Given the rapid changes in India since the 1990s, the media in India offer a lab for studying what can happen with the development of new technologies, the shifting of finance and investment, population shifts, and different kinds of migrations. Athique refers to some of the thinking of Marshall McLuhan as a way to look at how media form and how media ecosystems work in India; this allows him to examine not just the media themselves but also the economic structures, the cultural structures, the audiences, and other aspects of the mass media.

After the introductory chapter, the book offers a brief history of mass media in India beginning with the press under the British colonial administration. It then considers the cinema, radio, and television—particularly
the state run television—before turning to current developments. Athique numbers globalization and media piracy as key events as he marks out the global aspects of Indian media. Even before this, however, India had achieved a global impact with one of its media: film. Bollywood films reached both expatriate audiences and non-Hindi-speaking audiences around the world. This example of soft power shows how Indian culture influenced people well beyond any government efforts to project a sense of “Indian-ness.”

Another important aspect of media in India comes with the advent of digital media. The role of software and cyberculture increased dramatically in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As in other countries, the development of these new technologies changed the balance of power throughout the country.

Later chapters in the book take a look at how the role of the media has shaped a new “leisure economy.” That economy, Athique points out, consists of new corporate players, new entertainment formats, new uses of time by individuals, and new possibilities for growth. He asks, finally, what this bodes for the future, especially for the role that India will play in Asia and throughout the world.

The book contains an extensive reference list as well as an index.


This collection, emerging from the MediaClimate network, “looks at how the global climate summits organized by the United Nations are mediated across the world” (p. 9). Convinced that climate change constitutes the main global challenge for the future, the editors (along with the members of the network) ask how journalists respond to this challenge. In the introduction they point out that the three aspects identified by the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change—scientific facts, mitigation, and adaptation—all place a demand on journalistic coverage, as all have triggered fierce debate around the world. At the same time, the global climate summits have themselves become a combination of governmental meetings and media events, adding another layer of complexity to an already complex topic.

The editors have arranged the volume in three parts: Global Discourses, Professional Issues, and Actor-relations/Representations. Part 1 examines specific questions about reporting: editorials on global climate change (Rito Kunelius); journalistic practices in Africa about climate change (Ibrahim Saleb), news flows (Hillel Nossek and Risto Kunelius), perspectives on reporting on the rain forest (Elisabeth Eide), and comparative journalistic coverage in Europe and Asia (Ville Kumpu and Mofizur Thaman).

Part 2 (professional issues) includes essays on issues like editorial autonomy, advocacy in journalism, covering science, covering business—especially those campaigning against climate policy—and digital media and news agendas.

Part 3 addresses a more diverse set of topics: visualizing global warming; climate justice; coverage in popular versus quality newspapers; ignored voices; coverage of indigenous peoples; and some notes on dependency, complexity, and contingency. The editors conclude with an epilogue that lists challenges for future journalism. These range from the difficulties in imagining the global in global climate change to really having a sense of the interconnectedness of the world. Other challenges have to do specifically with journalistic coverage: shifting climate change from a pattern of coverage tied to biennial global summits to a more typical daily news beat.

While appearing somewhat specialized, *Media Meets Climate* introduces issues that more and more affect all journalism: how to bridge the global and the local.


Communication research has long attended to the relationship of young people and media, often examining the impact of media on young people. This edited volume looks in the other direction: how young people themselves engage in media, creating media messages and expressing themselves audiovisually. “Broadly speaking, youth media includes projects and programs that engage young people as creators of media products, often within nonprofit contexts such as schools, government agencies, or a variety of community-based organizations and, sometimes, the commercial sector” (p. 2). The contributors to this volume cover a range of territory about youth media; these efforts fall into categories
such as social justice, political action, the arts, cross-generational communication, workforce development, academic support, youth development, recreation, and community development (p. 7). Some of these areas encourage young people to be active in their communities; in all of them young people benefit from skills that they have learned by becoming media producers.

Part 1 addresses regional analyses of youth media programs. The chapters go region by region and try to introduce what youth media activities exist in each region. In chapter 1 Kathleen Tyner examines organizations in the United States. Classifying them by organizational mission, she also groups them by their purposes in working with youth media. She also includes information on the demographics of the youth who participate in the programs. In Chapter 2 Sanjay Asthana reviews youth media in the Arab world. This chapter follows a different methodology: rather than a quantitative tallying of organizations and projects, it uses a narrative or discourse analysis. Asthana attempts to theoretically ground the understanding of approaches to youth media. Karina Kosicki Bellotti (Chapter 3) looks at how Christian youth groups in Brazil make use of media. This includes a comparison of Catholic and Protestant groups as well as a review of media used in worship services. Chapter 4 turns to Asia. Sun Sun Lim, Elmie Nekmat, and Shobha Vadrevu sketch what is happening in Singapore through state-led school initiatives. Much of this work takes place through digital media and the growing adoption of information technology. Chapter 5 focuses less on a region than on particular themes. Richard Chalfen and Michael Rich analyze children’s expressions about health. They look at the topics that children address in media productions, offering a number of examples of children’s media work. An analysis of the productions enables the researchers to gather significant data about the students and their understanding of disease and other health issues.

The second part of the volume presents case studies. These case studies range from identity to performance to voice. Michael Dezuanni considers the idea of skills acquisition and agency. By looking at video game production he offers some theories about this type of work within media literacy education. David Levin writes on films and how student films often function as alternative media. He looks at a number of cases where students use films for a variety of self-expression. Sometimes the films can work to negotiate the questions of identity particularly in students who live in intercultural situations. These films also create a kind of public sphere for the students. Ivana Espinet (with contributions from Katina Peron, Lisa Denerstein, and Sandra Htyte) focus on the teachers. Their chapter examines the work of the youth media fellowship “a professional development program for youth media educators developed by the youth media learning network” (p. 155). The chapter considers the structure of the group and the ways in which the group develops its own methodology for analyzing the data that they gain from working with the students. Daminaa Gibbons, Téa Drift, and Deanna Drift look at what they call crossing borders by studying Native American students who create media productions. These productions (usually in the form of video work) allow the researchers to understand how students’ voices become scholarly voices. By inviting the students to reflect on their work, the chapter allows the students to speak directly to the readers. The last chapter in this section considers “transnational childhoods,” that is, immigrant children’s visual narratives. Here Wendy Luttrell (with Jennifer Dorsey, Carla Shalaby, and Julia Hayden) reflect on their experience, having worked with children and child immigrants to United States from a number of different cultures. The children typically worked with photography, a process described by authors, who then provide a theoretical framework.

Part 3 features cross-cultural comparisons, examining youth media production in different countries. Fredrick Lindstrand, Lisbeth Frølunde, Øystein Gilje, and Lisa Ohman-Gullbert invite the reader to examine “the film medium through the eyes and lenses of young Scandinavian film makers” (p. 211). They argue that youth media from the Scandinavian perspective can be seen as a knowledge domain or as a field of practice. The authors asked 55 young film makers to submit a film and describe their work. Karen Orr Vered draws an explicit comparison between Sweden and Australia, examining case studies of the role of media in children’s leisure. She looks at how children use their media work for media play as a way to make sense of their worlds and as a way for them to describe their worlds. In Chapter 13 Elizabeth Soep turns to listening to youth radio. She describes her work with a youth radio station in these words: “If all the world’s an album, then all the youth are merely documentarians, entering and exiting but never really leaving public stages” (p. 249). Youth work with the station, which in this case addressed the killing of Oscar Grant by police at a San Francisco Bay area transit station, includes “online posts, audio
slideshow, videos, and interviews with key players" (p. 252). Amy Stornaiuolo, Glynda Hull, and Urvashi Sahni report on a social media network among children around the world: the children in India, South Africa, an American inner-city, and immigrant neighborhoods in Norway. The experience of online communication with such a diverse group leads to a kind of cosmopolitan habit of mind, what the authors explore as “everyday cosmopolitanism” (p. 267).

Part 4 consists of “proposals, recommendations, and suggestions for the future.” Here Peter Lemish reports on his work in narrative film making with youth film makers. Lemish presents evidence about the “practices that can be employed: first, by young film makers in engaging the challenge of understanding re-presenting social life . . . ; and second, in facilitating as well as assessing the fruits of their engagement as integrated in the film text” (p. 283). Film becomes a medium in which young people can deal with this kind of challenge, and Lemish presents a theoretical perspective as well as how he works with the students in these areas. Stuart Poyntz and Michael Hoeschsmann examine communication projects through four key questions “that school and community-based media educators should take into consideration when planning and implementing media production projects” (p. 301). The first question addresses technical skills development and vocational training; the second, creativity, expression, and the use of voice; the third, dialogic experiences in the making of public life; and the fourth, the problem of pleasure/play and critique. In Chapter 17 Antonio López asks how to make the youth media experience something sustainable. This means that media education needs to have an organic quality fitted into local cultures. He presents various models of how this might take place. Steven Goodman does a similar thing by looking at New York City transfer schools and how to build a culture for youth media within those schools. Transfer schools typically deal with teenage students who may not be ready to enter high school at the normal age, perhaps because the students are immigrants or the students come from families disadvantaged in one way or another. Lisa Tripp uses her experiences with youth media, especially in media arts and media literacy, to examine how professional development could take place.

The Afterword has David Buckingham offering some reflections on the various essays presented in the book. The book itself contains biographical sketches of the contributors as well as an index. Individual chapters have reference lists or reading lists.


Communication scholars will feel closest to this book in terms of its addressing conversational analysis, though the larger topic of the book lies in linguistics and language usage. The editors mention that they are using the term polyphony metaphorically in the sense “first proposed by Bakhtin in his study of Dostoyevsky’s novels . . . to refer to different types of language, which share the same discursive space and where there is no hierarchy: i.e., narrators and heroes’ discourses interact as equals” (p. 1). The volume itself deals with dialogue and uses of two or more languages and voices. The musical term polyphony works as a good metaphor for this because it would also have several musical voices heard independently of one another. In many ways this is how language functions.

Conversation always consists of more than one speaker, each speaker taking a particular role and together developing a common understanding. The contributions to this book look at the ways in which the other is defined in language, how the other is used in language, and how people learn this kind of multivoice discourse.

The editors write “the first part of the volume is dedicated to polyphonic phenomena in every day or casual conversation” (p. 3). Essays in Part 1 then look at how language is learned and how children create dialogue; other essays look at things like irony, using humor, and other linguistically learned behaviors that human beings acquire at early age. Part 2 continues to look at particular aspects in language learning: self words in pronominal reversals, the use of dialogue, understanding paradox using negative questions, and looking at various classroom phenomena including in a dual language classroom.

The third part of the volume contains essays looking at the “the play of voices in mass media and politics” (p. 115). Individual writers consider everything from polemics to parliamentary political debates. Others take a look at talk shows and the ways in which people position themselves in entertaining talk.

The fourth part of the book considers other ways of considering polyphony, not only in language but
even in cultural expressions such as textiles where symbolic patterns emerge just as they appear in language. Different chapters examine the multiple voices and linguistic markers of newspaper coverage or of the work of translation. This latter topic provides a transition to the final part of the volume, which expressly addresses literature and literary discourse. This section offers analyses of particular kinds of writing, whether comic writing or metadiscourse as well as poetry or interior monologues.

Given the subject matter, the overall volume appeals more to the specialists in linguistics or language use. Communication scholars may find it helpful in its presentation of some of the approaches to language and conversation. In many ways these would challenge some of their taken-for-granted understandings of language. Those who are familiar with Bakhtin’s work will see its application not only in specific language settings but in various media settings, whether entertainment, news, or any kind of show in which there is talk.


This volume, the fifth in a series published by NORDICOM, presents papers from the RIPE [Re-Visionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise] 2010 conference hosted by the Communication and Media Research Institute at the University of Westminster, London. Conference participants presented and discussed papers grouped around the theme of “Public Service Media after the Recession.”

In their introduction, the editors note the general threats to public service media around the world—many of which stem from cost cutting by governments. They then explain the direction of the conference, which welcomed over 60 experts on public service media and public policy from around the world. Each reflected on two questions: “Is the economic recession the cause of anything new in media policies and attitudes towards public service media, or rather an environmental circumstance that has strengthened already pre-existent trends? Related to this, do the trends we see in media policy affecting PSM [public service media] reflect changes that are likely to be permanent?” (p. 11). They go on to sketch out the current situation in public service media through a brief review of relevant literature as well as ideas on “gaining, regaining, and maintaining the initiative” (p. 15).

The collection groups papers in four categories. The first, “policy case-making in the heartland of PSB [public service broadcasting],” presents an overview and two case studies. Robert Picard examines how the nature of making the political case for PSM has changed in recent years, while Lard Nord looks at the debate over public service media in Scandinavia from 2000–2010. Peter Goodwin provides a similar case study of the BBC.


The third part groups essays that explore new initiatives in public service broadcasting, developed in countries or regions outside of the traditional heart of the PSB model. Sally Broughton Micova offers a look at public service broadcasters in South East Europe while Yik Chan Chin and Matthew D. Johnson do the same for “new paradigms of broadcasting polity and reform in the People’s Republic of China” (p. 149). Across the world, Julio Juárez-Gámiz and Gregory Ferrell Lowe examine the situation in Mexico. Finally, Naomi Sakr looks at various public service initiatives in the Arab world.

Part 4 has three essays that give a sense of “public service media in practice,” a practice that goes beyond traditional reliance on radio and television and today includes Internet-based communication. Steven Barnett reviews the challenges to broadcast journalism and asks about the possibility of impartiality in the digital age. James Bennett and Paul Kerr ponder how independent production might fit into the UK’s well established public service broadcast section. In the book’s final chapter, Piet Bakker turns to websites, their promise, and the “realities of participation” (p. 237).

Each chapter has its own notes and references. The volume concludes with an “about the authors” section. There is no index.

U.S.-based communication researchers will find this book a good introduction to media archaeology, an approach to communication rooted primarily in Europe and in some areas of German communication study. The book itself “sets out to elaborate the potentials of the media-archaeological method in digital culture research” (p. 2). Parikka asks:

Where do you start when you begin thinking media archaeologically? Do you start with past media, like a “proper” historian? Or from our own current world of media devices, software, platforms, networks, social media, plasma screens, and such, like a “proper” analyst of digital culture would? This proposition of this book is that you start in the middle—from the entanglement of past and present, and accept the complexity this decision brings with it to any analysis of modern media culture. (p. 5)

Media archaeology takes its origin from several different sources. First, it draws on the work of Michel Foucault whose use of the very term archaeology provides one point of origin. Here the interest lies in discovering relationships of power, particularly those that have become hidden in past practices and that influence the present. Parikka is interested in how these past practices influence contemporary culture. He writes, “media archaeology is introduced as a way to investigate the new media cultures through insights from past new media, often with an emphasis on the forgotten, the quirky, the non-obvious apparatuses, practices, and inventions” (p. 2).

In addition to this strand taking its lead from Foucault, media archaeology also looks literally at the history of communication technology and the ways in which various technologies have succeeded one another, examining how older technologies have shaped the use of, and our understanding of, new technologies. A source for this approach to media archaeology comes from the New Film History movement in the 1980s. According to Parikka, key themes that emerge from these theoretical approaches and that shape media archaeology are “(1) modernity, (2) cinema, (3) histories of the present, and (4) alternative histories” (p. 7). Parikka adds, “what this book develops are insights into how arts and technology can work in relation to cultural theory—and articulate history, practice, and theory in a fruitful mash-up” (p. 14).

Individual chapters develop various approaches to media archaeology. The second chapter begins looking at the senses in a method drawn from new film theory. This appears particularly in the study of how media technologies have shaped the human senses, with examples drawn from film technology, audio technology, and computer games. Parikka argues in this chapter that media archaeology provides “a good methodology for analysis of how our senses are always articulated in media contacts: modes of sensation themselves can be seen as historically structured” (p. 20).

The next chapter examines imaginary media: the kinds of media that people might have imagined or thought about, the science fiction ideas, the richness of artists’ imaginations, and so on. Some of these ideas eventually came to fruition but even those that did not may well have affected our understanding of media and media use. The chapter provides a number of examples drawn from artists but also from computer designers such as the 19th century work of Charles Babbage.

Media archaeology also includes consideration of materialism and the way in which the hardware shapes the software—or shapes how people understand cultural change in the media based on these hardware constructs. Such concepts can influence what people do with the media. Parikka examines everything from the objects that are used to create media products (radio sets, television cameras, etc.) to the various types of design. Each of these creates an archaeological condition of knowledge.

Another part of the method suggests that scholars look at how accidents or noise or other unintended things also become part of both the technical media and people’s experience of the media. Media archaeology can also consider archival materials as well as the more abstract questions of the very practices of what constitutes an archive and what gets stored in an archive.

Finally the book suggests ways in which researchers can actually practice media archaeology. Here it introduces a number of theorists who are active in doing this, both in developing the ideas and in pointing out a ways of carrying this material out. One key figure is Friedrich Kittler.

The book does a good job of introducing media archaeology. As a guide to further work it contains an extensive bibliography, and each chapter has end notes that point the way to particular theorists and researchers. Finally the book has a subject index.