Abstract

The present essay introduces the theories of internal rhetorics and rhetoric culture and shows how they find a telling exemplification in the imaginary figure of Cervantes Don Quixote de la Mancha. Arguing that ethnography is often “stranger than fiction”, the second part of the essay examines empirically how the Hamar of southern Ethiopia have talked -and still are talking- each other into the particular patterns of thought and expressive action that characterise their culture. Working back and forth between Hamar texts and symbolism, examples and applications of rhetoric culture theory are given, aiming to explore the relevance of the rhetorical point of view for a study of the figuration of social thought and action. The central theme of the essay may be summarized as the role of figuration in the production of the fantastic, the mysterious and the magical elements in culture.

Keywords

tacit collusion in conversation, collusion theory, displacement in culture, fantastic figurations, the magic of metaphor, rhetoric, symbolism, tropes