

Introduction to the GASC 2013 Issue

Ian Dennis & Stacey Meeker, Guest Editors

The 2013 Generative Anthropology Summer Conference, [“Putting the Human Back into the Humanities,”](#) was notable, by common observation, for the intensity and depth of its intellectual engagements. An almost relentless stream of strongly argued papers left participants both drained and exhilarated. It was clear to all, as we mingled for the final time on the balcony of Royce Hall and gazed out into the Los Angeles sunshine, that this had been an experience of extraordinary richness and promise. With GASC’s return to the very room in which the first GA conference, “Generative Anthropology: Representation and Origin,” was held in 1990, the vitality of GA and those who work with it have never looked better.

So many fine papers were presented that we will also devote the Spring 2014 issue of *Anthropoetics* to articles developed from them. The present issue offers our readers four remarkably diverse examples of the thinking on display at GASC VIII, plus one paper that certainly belonged there.

Professor Jean-Loup Amselle delivered our guest plenary, which we reproduce largely unaltered. [“Did Africa Invent Human Rights?”](#) is the work of an eminent anthropologist, tracing the paradoxical operation of what he acknowledges is “mimetic rivalry” in the context of the search for African national and cultural identity, and raising questions with obvious and profound originary implications.

These questions are taken up by **Richard van Oort** in a [“Response”](#) that highlights the commonalities and divergences between Amselle’s Foucauldian analysis and those, firstly of such figures as Ernst Gellner and John Rawls, and then that of Generative Anthropology itself.

Ian Dennis’ [“Student Resentment and Professorial Desire in Higher Education”](#) delves beneath the agonistic expressions of resentment between students and professors that are apt to surface in a de-ritualized world of higher education, which increasingly resembles the modern market where learning is commodified and distinctions blurred. Ian’s sharp originary analysis probes beyond a merely mimetic interpretation to uncover the fundamental anthropological mechanisms behind asymmetrical resentments and the cultural means of productively deferring these tensions. Ian proposes that escape from the sterile mimetic muddle of master and disciple is possible if the professor becomes a model for the student by re-enacting the acquisition of his or her cultural firstness, re-experiencing and modeling

originary vulnerability to the desire that culture-as-sign transcends. [SLM]

Martin Fashbaugh had the best of possible excuses for missing the UCLA conference—his wedding day! He was with us in spirit, however—our congratulations, Martin!—as his insightful probing of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s 1821 masterpiece “Epipsychidion” in [“Creating ‘An Infinite World All Its Own’: The Poetics of Resentment in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s Epipsychidion”](#) amply demonstrates. Even at the heart of this arch-Romantic’s desperate quest for an “atemporal originary scene” to be shared with his beloved, a quest whose failure he attributes to the nature of language itself, lurks another, more fundamental resentment.

Readers of this journal, who expect nothing less than ground-breaking work from **Adam Katz**, the originator of the GA’s “first amendment” (on “firstness” itself) will not be disappointed with his contribution to issue 19.1. [“Attentionality and Originary Ethics: Upclining”](#) is a dense and ambitious re-examination, in originary terms, of the formation of moral reciprocity through shared attention and those human tendencies of “distraction” and “fixation” that threaten to interrupt it. This leads, through a revisiting of various aspects of cognitive linguistics, the “Sapir-Whorf” hypothesis, “grammaticalization,” and “upclining,” to an insistence on the priority of GA’s constitutive concept of “attentionality” and a telling reflection on the pragmatics of maintaining ethical behaviour in the everyday life of a modern society.

Next year’s meeting returns to British Columbia, where the current GASC series was inaugurated in 2007. The Eighth Annual Generative Anthropology Summer conference in Victoria, organised by Richard van Oort, will include plenaries by both **Eric Gans** and the British polymath **Raymond Tallis**; it is probably the most eagerly anticipated yet. Stay tuned for the second installment of papers from the 2013 UCLA conference. We look forward to seeing you in Victoria!