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LAWRENCE N. BERLIN & ANITA FETZER (eds.) *Dialogue in politics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012. Pp. vi, 313. Hb. \$149.

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This volume suggests that politics is primarily constituted in language. Forms of political deliberation range from “politics as interaction”, where discussants can collaboratively work out a rational resolution of a difference of opinion to “politics as imposition”, where dialogue mainly proceeds along constrained Machiavellian paths in that arguers tend to “obfuscate coercion as cooperation” (Berlin & Fetzer, pp. 3–4) and violate the norms of cooperative argumentation.

The individual chapters highlight aspects of rhetorical argumentation persistent in everyday mediated political dialogue. For example, quotation can be used as a rhetorical manoeuvre to express argument from authority (*argumentum ad verecundiam*) (Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, p. 157). Similarly, in a political interview, the interviewer might resort to “third party attributions” (Peter Bull, p. 73) to indirectly express his own antagonistic position through the use of accusatory questions. Conversely, the interviewee can strategically redirect the interaction along self-serving lines that are more favourable for his position. Such a manoeuvring strategy of evasion might compromise the quality of mediated political discussion and renders political dialogue more adversarial and conflictive than cooperative and consensus-oriented.

Strategic positioning of self and opponent in political dialogue, however, is of crucial importance in mediated political debate. For example, in televised election debates, positive self-presentation and negative other-representation is a predominant manoeuvring tactic. In the 2008 US presidential election, John McCain questioned Barack Obama’s political persona (Verena Minow, p. 103) in an attempt to discredit Obama’s potential electability. In response to Hillary Clinton’s doubts about Obama’s patriotism, he refuted her claim by recounting his personal success story and its embodiment of the “American dream”. Likewise, Sarah Palin positioned Obama as a mere “constitutional law professor”, one of a “bunch of elites” and a “charismatic guy with a teleprompter” (Berlin, pp. 180–82). To boost her own personal likeability, she explicitly portrayed herself as an “American patriot” and a “true” American (pp. 171, 178).

Strategic manoeuvring in adversarial political discourse can also take the form of metaphorical reasoning. For example, sport/health metaphors can polarise debate,

arouse emotions, and influence decision-making (Vladimir Dosev, pp. 120–22). Constructing the (corrupt) Cameroonian president as a “father figure” perpetuates the myth that any attack on him is a “smear campaign to tarnish the image of Cameroon” (Eric A. Anchimbe, p. 139). Similarly, Obama’s promised change in the Middle East was mere “deceptive rhetoric” (Ibrahim El-Hussari, p. 209) because by declaring a standpoint (criticising Israel) taboo (“Israel’s legitimacy is not a matter for debate”, cited on p. 210), Obama violates the norms of rational argumentation. It is also through metaphor (“war is medicine”) that Israel’s state of perpetual war with its neighbours is normalised, sanitized, and depicted as a worthy act of bravery (Dalia Gavrieli-Nuri, pp. 225–32).

Finally, a growing tendency to commodify genres through the process of hybridisation is well-attested in everyday political communication. The media’s juxtaposition of written text and videos in online newspapers “hybridizes and transforms news genres and the journalistic stances” they express (Marjut Johansson, p. 62). Similarly, in commemoration discourse multimodality is a key factor to convey ceremonial reverence (Christoph Sauer, p. 246).

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Claudia Strauss has investigated a variety of the immigration and social welfare discourses that shape public opinion. As conventional discourses are “oft-repeated, shared schemas” (15) for people’s opinion statements, conventional discourse analysis has become a very useful method for social researchers interested in opinion statements from any source, written or spoken. Based on in-depth interviews with twenty-seven interviewees from North Carolina in 2000 and 2005, these case studies look into contemporary vernacular discourses in the US regarding key issues in immigration and government social programs. Each case study described includes the terms of the basic schema of the discourse in question, features of expression in the discourse, and examples from the interviews and national sources such as editorials, blogs, advocacy groups’ websites, and national surveys.