

University of Windsor

## Scholarship at UWindor

---

OSSA Conference Archive

OSSA 8

---

Jun 3rd, 9:00 AM - Jun 6th, 5:00 PM

### Playing with Oppositions. Verbal and visual antithesis in the media.

Hilde Van Belle

*hilde.vanbelle@lessius.eu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive>



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

Van Belle, Hilde, "Playing with Oppositions. Verbal and visual antithesis in the media." (2009). *OSSA Conference Archive*. 15.

<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive/OSSA8/papersandcommentaries/15>

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Conference Proceedings at Scholarship at UWindor. It has been accepted for inclusion in OSSA Conference Archive by an authorized conference organizer of Scholarship at UWindor. For more information, please contact [scholarship@uwindsor.ca](mailto:scholarship@uwindsor.ca).

# Playing with Oppositions. Verbal and visual antithesis in the media.

HILDE VAN BELLE

*Department of Applied Language Studies  
Lessius University College / Catholic University Leuven  
St.-Andriesstraat 2  
Antwerpen  
België  
hilde.vanbelle@lessius.eu*

**ABSTRACT:** The inventive, argumentative and stylistic possibilities generated by the figures in general and the figure antithesis in particular are explored by Jeanne Fahnestock in the field of science. These ideas on the possibilities of antithesis I will develop in the analysis of some cases of this figure in the media. I will try to describe, analyse and evaluate how textual and/or visual pairs that form an antithesis are pushed into more, less, or a different opposition.

**KEYWORDS:** figuration, verbal and visual antithesis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The inventive, argumentative and stylistic possibilities generated by the figures in general and the figure antithesis in particular are explored by Jeanne Fahnestock in the field of science. The only structure that has received much attention is metaphor, she claims, but far less work has been done on the conceptual and inventive power of other figures of speech. Especially antithesis deserves our attention, she claims, as Aristotle gives it an important prototypical role to play at the very outset of an embryonic theory of figuration.

Historical and actual debates that have sometimes been characterized as competition between different metaphors can also be described as competition between different kinds of antithesis. As rhetoricians, we can study how opposition is constructed in texts and how competing choices of oppositions are put to work, or how traditional oppositions are forced into new ones, or how false antitheses are constructed.

In this paper, I will outline Fahnestock's position on the importance of the antithesis figure within the general frame of functional figuration she finds in Aristotle's work. These ideas on the possibilities of antithesis I will develop in the analysis of some cases of this figure in the media. I will try to describe, analyse and evaluate how textual and visual pairs that form an antithesis are pushed into more, less, or a different opposition.

## 2. FIGURATION AND ANTITHESIS

According to Fahnestock, it should not remain unnoticed that Aristotle mentions antithesis as one of the three basic figures to form a polished prose style, the other two being metaphor and *energeia*. Together, they form the three sources of “*asteia*,” and as such they can serve as prototypes of the three well known categories of style figures: metaphor for the tropes, antithesis for the figures of diction, and *energeia* for the figures of thought. This classification corresponds with three important linguistic categories that form the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic level of speech, the first focusing on term selection, the second on phrasing, and the third on speaker intentions. The three sources of *asteia* concern effective form devices, Fahnestock claims. Aristotle does not develop this classification of the figures as such, but he definitely shows what they do, suggesting the mechanisms that make them work.

The idea of substitution is very much alive in later rhetorical theories, but Aristotle nowhere mentions it as a central principle of figuration, Fahnestock claims. The function of metaphor is to create a substitution from the literal to the figurative, Aristotle claims, but he does mention the well-known problem that metaphors often are the more common way of putting something. Also, metaphors should go unnoticed or perceived as truthful and right by the audience, as in rhetoric, the idea or the argument prevails. Rhetorical style should never attract attention to itself, and figures should function in the process of learning and rendering insight. Aristotle nowhere claims the figures to be emotional, ornamental, or epiphenomenal in any other way. “*Ornatus*,” the fourth style device, is nowhere introduced by him; (probably) his pupil Theophrastus first mentioned it. Aristotle actually “suggests that certain devices are compelling because they map function onto form or perfectly epitomize certain patterns of thought or argument” (Fahnestock 1999, p. 26). Thus, Fahnestock claims, Aristotle develops an implicit figuration theory that is not based on the problematic substitution principle but more interestingly on an iconic combination of form and function.

Fahnestock claims that most figuration theories struggle with the form/function aspect; the more formal features a figure is attributed to, the less functional elements, and vice versa. That is probably the reason why figures that combine form and function, like antithesis, are to be found in all kinds of different categories (Fahnestock 1999, p. 14).

This form/function discussion often is clouded by this other important paradigm in figuration theories: the idea of substitution. Value-added theories of the figures have dominated in the rhetorical tradition. Figures are considered to add emotion, charm, force, vivacity or elegance. This supposed difference between unmarked and marked language has pushed the figures to the exclusive field of markers of the literary text, and any possible other function got out of sight. But any idea of substitution immediately raises the question as to what the substitution is for. On the other hand, it also raises the question as to what this possibility of ornament might mean, as it suggests that some ornamental layer could be filtered out from normal or non-figurative language. Whenever the function of figures is exclusively reduced to the adding of charm, beauty, emotion, or whatever, they are reduced to epiphenomenal and superficial phenomena and they end up in a museum of curiosities. The only way to see figures in their full power is by restoring their link with reasoning and argumentation.

## PLAYING WITH OPPOSITIONS

A traditional lexicon for lines of argument disappeared together with the cognate notion of the figures as epitomes of those lines. This notion of the generic skills of rhetoric conflicts with our ideas of spontaneity of invention based on complicated cognitive processes, and with the confinement of procedures of method and argument to the specific disciplines or professions. But the popularity of the metaphor to generate analogical reasoning could be a starting point for the assumption that human reasoning can follow many more lines than analogy alone.

Fahnestock develops the argument that in Aristotelian stylistics, dialectic, and rhetoric, “antithesis is a consistent, and consistently important, concept, at once a verbal, analytical, and persuasive device” (Fahnestock 1999, p. 53). Aristotle’s antithesis is

a verbal structure that places contrasted or opposed terms in parallel or balanced cola or phrases. Parallel phrasing without opposed terms does not produce an antithesis, nor do opposed terms alone without strategic positioning in symmetrical phrasing. Instead, the figure antithesis, according to Aristotle, must meet both syntactic and semantic requirements. (Fahnestock 1999, pp. 46-47)

The semantic base of the figure can be formed by “natural” pairs, commonly used pairs of opposites, and as such easily conceivable by the public. The use of one in the first half of the figure creates the expectation of its verbal partner in the second half. This effect on the audience seems to be an important aspect of antithesis. In his examples, Aristotle shows how antitheses are typically built on *contraries* like good and evil, love and hatred, further divided by Aristotle in those that admit intermediates and those that don’t. Also *contradictions* are possible: pairs of words that form exhaustive *either/or* alternatives. And finally antitheses can be formed by *correlatives*, pairs that designate reciprocal or complementary relationships, like *cause/effect*, or *sell/buy* (Fahnestock 1999, p. 49).

The parallel syntax of antithesis supports the contrast not only in a visual but also in an aural way. This way, antithesis functions both to delight the ear and deliver an argument. Contradictions form antitheses easily because they invite repetition that brings about parallel phrases. The effect of the opposition is enhanced by the neutral background of the parallel syntax.

Fahnestock finds more evidence in Aristotle’s work that shows how the verbal form, the figure antithesis, can be recognized as the epitome of an underlying topical reasoning. Thus it becomes possible to use the figure itself as a stylistic prompt or frame for purely verbal invention (Fahnestock 1999, pp. 51-52). In his treatment of the 28 lines of argument in *Rhetoric* Book II, Aristotle explains how one topos of demonstrative enthymemes is that from opposites. The characterization of this topos is clearly antithetical. In *Topics*, Aristotle explains in nicely constructed antitheses how speakers can lean on existing opinions, and how contrasted lexis can be useful in building premise/conclusion pairs (Book I, chapter 10). In Book II, chapter 7, Aristotle shows how pairs of semantic opposites can be combined to create either single or double antitheses, and how arguers can use them to test a position. Double antitheses can serve to build an argument; single antitheses can be used to build a refutatio (Fahnestock 2000, p. 177):

Good to friends and bad to enemies. (double)  
Bad to friends and good to enemies. (double)  
Good to friends and bad to friends.

Good to enemies and bad to enemies.  
Good to friends and good to enemies.  
Bad to friends and bad to enemies.

The double nature of antithesis as the verbal phrasing of a topical device got lost over the centuries, and its syntactic and semantic components fell apart. It melted into other verbal devices that juxtapose semantic oppositions like the oxymoron, or it became a generalized descriptor for a compositional style of balanced phrases that form pairs with or without semantic contrast (Fahnestock 1999, p. 58). The Aristotelian concept that an argument can be invented through stylistic choices disappeared altogether.

Yet, the Aristotelian antithesis can be useful in the framing of arguments. Antithesis can be built with already accepted opposites in using the frame of the figure as a prompt to invent or construct arguments. But an arguer can also use the familiarity of accepted pairs and the parallel syntactic structure to create new contraries by pushing a new pair into opposition. Also the nature of an existing opposition can be changed by antitheses: an existing opposition is shifted to a new one, either with the terms pushed further apart so that they mutually exclude each other, or with the terms set as the two poles on a connecting continuum.

Fahnestock suggests some reasons why antithesis and metaphor grew apart over time. Metaphor was treated in Aristotle's more popular *Poetics*, while antithesis was to be found in the now neglected *Topics*. Also, metaphor traditionally is banned from argumentation situations, while antithesis is distrusted because of both its emotional strength and persuasive weakness, as it often sounds unnatural and too predictable. Work on metaphor is so popular because it allows scholars and researchers to believe they have a window on a fundamental, generative cognitive process, she claims. But the obsession with metaphor narrows down the much richer rhetorical tradition that provides for other possible conceptual and heuristic resources that are formally identifiable as well (Fahnestock 2000, pp. 181-183).

### 3. ANTITHESIS IN THE MEDIA

In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, in a society where citizens had to defend their own case in court, antithesis was one of the more popular style figures. The ethos of the speakers — common people — had to be truthful, so they had to stay away from all too subtle nuances or poetical abundance. Our own popular mass media abound with polarisation and oppositions, often shaping the world into simple and compelling contrasts, suggesting the kind of pathos that allows no subtlety. As media communication has become increasingly multimodal, and as the availability of photo or video material often determines the news value in the newsroom, it makes sense to include the (audio-) visual aspects in the analysis of media material.

The art of rhetoric found its origin in the oratory; it considered not only the inventing and writing of speeches, but also the delivery. This means that it is in no way exclusively restricted to the verbal. The attention for speech delivery brings into play elements of voice and body language, the audio-visual aspects of presentation. In fact, the oratory aspect of the Greek culture used to bring into play many senses of the auditorium: the showing of a scar or a bloody weapon was simply a part of a successful speech (Hobbs 2004, p. 58).

## PLAYING WITH OPPOSITIONS

Conflict and subversion are part of the history of verbal versus pictorial communication. Their overlap may be substantial; still they both do have a “wild zone” to themselves. But from its very beginning, the art of rhetoric did pay attention to vision and description. Translation of visual images into verbal text — and the other way around — has always been a part of writing and speaking instruction; like in the numerous ekphrasis advices on the composition of vivid descriptions, on “bringing before the eyes” (Hobbs 2004, p. 56). Quintilian saw visualisation as the most powerful means of arousing emotion, possibly the best way to convince an audience. Ekphrasis was very popular in the middle Ages, as well as the link between vision and memoria.

The popular Renaissance emblem books show how pictures and words are used next to each other in collections that served for entertainment, education, spiritual instruction and even memory aids. The link between image, imagination and rhetoric is very explicit in Bacon’s work, and the role of observation and imagination in its relation to knowledge and reason is discussed by most Enlightenment authors; most of them are also fascinated by the scientific aspects of vision and the constructed nature of human sight (Hobbs 2004, p. 61).

Rhetorical theory may have its roots in oral discourse, and may have focused upon verbal communication too easily, but it has in no way explicitly excluded visual aspects of communication. The difference between linguistic and visual discourse is not in the least constitutive for the discipline of rhetoric.

The increasing multimodality in our time consists mainly of the merging of the different modes into hybrid texts. This does include the reshuffling of historical and intellectual status cards. But themes like the differences between verbal or linguistic and visual communication, or the interdependence of physiological functions and thinking are beyond the scope of this paper. I will work in a tradition that does not put both fields in opposition, without denying the differences, in an attempt to find out how different angles can enrich analysis and interpretation. Starting from a rhetorical figure, I will see how it functions both in a verbal and visual context, in an attempt to reconceptualise this basic element of rhetoric (see Foss 2004a). I will try to describe the nature, function and evaluation of a few artefacts from the perspective of the antithesis figure. Inspired by the metaphor criticism Sonja Foss (2004, pp. 299-331) develops, I wonder whether a similar kind of antithesis criticism could be possible. An analysis that tries to reconstruct the dynamism and evolution of oppositions within one artefact can show how graphic and verbal lines of argument can work together, interfere, or contradict; how different messages can be conveyed simultaneously; how words can generate images and vice versa.

Figures are not to be reduced to some superficial ornament, and if we want to know how they work and what they do, we should study and evaluate them in their proper context and function. For metaphor, the role and power of both verbal and visual images and imagination have long been acknowledged. Rendering antithesis more weight and importance enhances the relation between lines of reasoning and style. Bringing back topical invention in the antithesis figure suggests how the more abstract human cognitive faculties like schemes of thought can be epitomized both visually and verbally. For antitheses in particular, both verbal and visual, we can determine whether they are single or double, what kinds of oppositions are at work, whether certain lines of

argument are epitomized, and whether we can reconstruct the testing of argument positions. Let's consider a classic example of verbal/visual antithesis.

FIGURE 5. Antithesis



*Juxtaposition of Macbeth, the loyal general, with Macbeth, the viciously evil king (Joseph McDonald).*

This Macbeth poster is a result of an experiment by Hanno H.J. Ehses in which the heuristic possibilities of ten style figures are tried out. Students in a design class were asked to find graphic encodings for a poster that announces this Shakespearian drama, using the construction principle of a specific rhetorical figure as a guideline. The signification process in visual design moves along two major lines, Ehses explains:

the formation of a visual concept concerns the creation of an idea, and the graphic encoding creates the visual translation. Here is where the rhetorical figures come in (Ehses 2004, p. 171).

Ehses stresses the heuristic possibilities of style figures; he sees them as abstract forms that are to be filled in, construction principles, exploration tools (Ehses 2004, p. 173). He selected ten figures and asked different groups of students to work with one of them. If we take this idea one step further, stressing the connection between form and function of the figures, the exercise could also include discussing the interpretative possibilities of the different figures. The visual figure then is not only the basis for an act of creativity, but also an act of interpretation of the play; an interpretation that can be discussed and evaluated.

The Macbeth poster uses shape and shade differences at either side of the vertical line to reveal two Macbeths, evoking two moments in the life of the main character in this Shakespearian tragedy. The two halves of the same face form the parallel construction, or the syntactical element the antithesis is based upon. The two sides of this poster show the younger loyal general and the older evil king he has become, introducing both a time element and the driving force of this character. The lines at the left side are in soft shades of grey, leaving one white element to stand out: the little white crescent in Macbeth's eyes, repeated at the right side, suggesting his fatal ambition to become king. The picture should be read from the left to the right, the right side representing the older king in sharply contrasting black and white lines, suggesting his cruelty. This is a single antithesis: the word Macbeth is yoked with two visual opposites. As explained by

## PLAYING WITH OPPOSITIONS

Aristotle, single antitheses are not suitable for building an argument, but they can serve as a refutatio. Indeed, this antithesis reveals the dramatic value of the play, and shows Macbeth as a tragic hero, driven to death by his ambition. The function of this poster is to give information about the play and to invite the reader to come and see it. The antithesis works nicely: by opposing the younger and the older Macbeth, it raises the general question: how could this happen?

Let's consider some more examples in a tentative analysis exercise where form and function and the distribution of the pairs over words and pictures are taken into account. One point comes up here: as a figure, antithesis does not show up very often in the media.

### SINGLE ANTITHESIS:

- Verbal:
  - a. *Balkenende*: “Man failed, not market” (NRC)
  - b. *Tom Boonen needs help, not punishment*
- Visual



- Mixed: see Macbeth example
- Conclusions
- Pairs: before/after, big/small, left/right, with/without, ...
- Mixed : often in the commercial range of ads / one word with a pair of contrasting pictures (cf. Macbeth)
- Effect: striking or funny; question, riddle or problem (cf. refutatio)
- Line of argument : not really
- My suggestion is that only mixed single antithesis might generate the possibility of a line of argument and come close to a functional antithesis: “if you drink Danone yoghurt, you’ll lose weight; if you don’t, ...”

### DOUBLE ANTITHESIS

- Verbal:

- *The world is doing badly, yet Dutch literature is thriving* (Gie Mortier / president jury Libris Literatuurprijs)

➤ Visual: [ ? ]

➤ Mixed:

a. *“Last year flowers, this year nothing.”* (Secretary’s day drama)

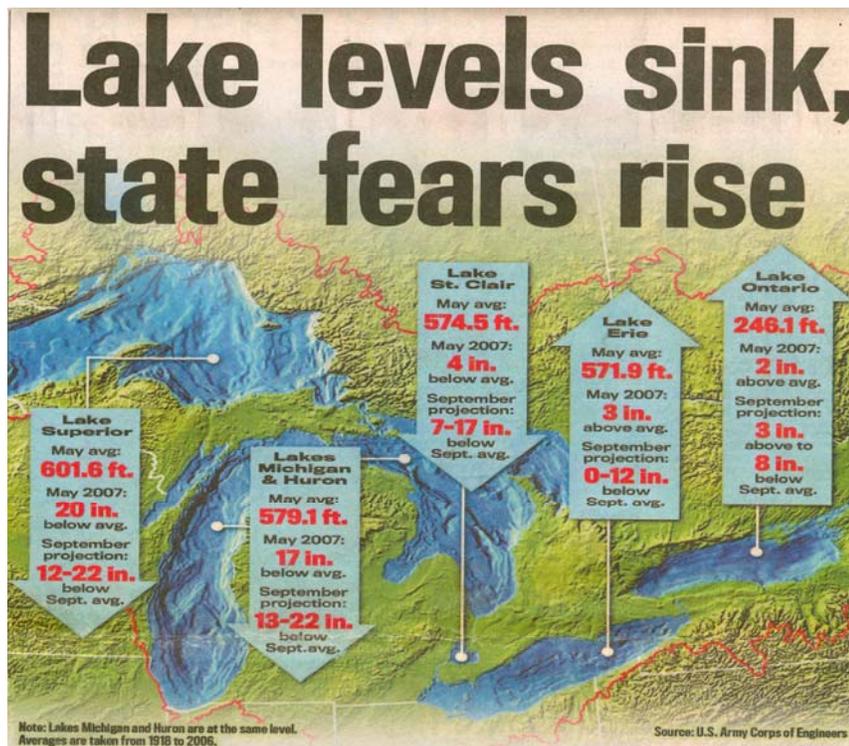
➤ Pairs: last year / this year (temporal); flowers / no flowers (contradiction)

➤ Role of picture (secretary looking sorry) : presenting the author of the words, no part of antithesis

➤ Effect: a problem is stated (raising empathy)

➤ [Line of argument]: suggesting an example of the effects of the economical crisis

b. *“Lake levels sink, state fears rise.”* (The Detroit News, June 12, 2007)



➤ Pairs: sink / rise (spatial correlation); lake level / state fears (?)

➤ Role of picture: complex (air view of region + up and down vectors + evolution of water level within each vector is excessive), vectors inspired by antithesis are not functional.

➤ Effect: a problem is stated ( raising empathy for state fears)

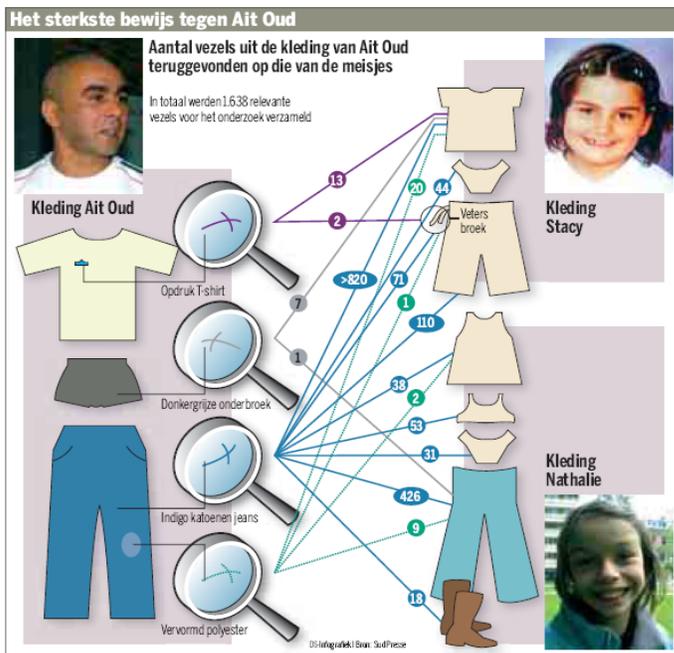
➤ [line of argument] : (?)



The antithesis is a catchy elliptic phrase heading this newspaper article: “*Vezels spreken, Ait Oud zwijgt*” (“Fibres talk, Ait Oud is silent”). It’s a short and attractive way to recapitulate the day’s happenings in court. The DNA-specialists were invited to present the overwhelming results of their analyses, hence the metaphorical speaking fibres, while the suspect murderer once more didn’t confess, hence the silent Ait Oud. The double pair the antithesis is built upon consists of the obvious speaking versus keeping silent contraries on the one hand, and the fibres versus their previous owner — Ait Oud wore the clothes — on the other hand.

The antithesis goes smoothly in the first colon, constructing a nice and poetical contrast between the regular repetitive [e: e] sounds ending in *female* syllables, and the hard and non-familiar sounds of the *male* syllables of the second colon.

The antithesis structure in the title is echoed by the general visual lay out in the paper: headline, article on the left, complex and abundant illustration on the right, and, interestingly, under the picture: a second article on the same subject, heading “*De expert kent er niets van*” (“the expert doesn’t know his job”).



The illustration shows a picture both of the (silent) AAO, and of his clothing, with the abundantly “talking” fibres. Some 20 vectors leave his garments and head for the clothes of the two raped and murdered children, at the right side of the picture. The visual effect is strong, as well as the title message “*The strongest evidence against Ait Oud.*” This picture clearly backs the overwhelming scientific evidence of the fibre examinations: the fibres speak. The left - right position and the little pictures showing the faces of the three parties add to the narrative aspect of the illustration, suggesting the cruel rape and murder act of the accused (left). The illustration creates a new pair: it is the opposition between the accused AAO (left side) and the two victims (right side). It

## PLAYING WITH OPPOSITIONS

easily can be considered a sub-argument for the first part of the antithesis: the fibres prove his guilt and the picture as a whole evokes his cruel deeds.

The lead of the main article presents the scientists as active and trustworthy people whose voices are important enough to convince the jury to plead guilty. “The scientists of the *National Institute for Criminalities and Criminology (NICC)* left the jury at the trial against AAO yesterday but little room for doubt.” The article goes on to recall the talks of the day, often quoting the scientists. Important arguments back their statements: 4000 hours of work (by 5 people), 14 years of experience. Although the water had erased many traces, 3712 fibres were recuperated, more than 1.600 fibres from AAO’s clothes were found on clothes of the victims. AAO’s suggestion that maybe he lifted the children onto the party podium that night, is not accepted by Gason: the contact must have been far more intense than that. Another refutation is formulated by the journalist himself saying that the lawyer had only one counterargument, namely that AAO is not the only one to wear such a pair of jeans. This he refutes, claiming that this doesn’t explain the fibres of his other clothes on the clothes of the children. The text ends with the testimony of a second scientist, a bio engineer, who stresses the importance of the wild oats that were found in AAO’s pockets, as this plant only grew where the victims were found, and not on any other place where AAO claims to have been. In short, the article adds many arguments and refutations all in favour of science and accusing AAO.

The second article “*The expert doesn’t know his job*” creates a third lay out element, clearly in contrast to the picture above it that promised “*the strongest evidence against AAO.*” The article starts with some comment by the author, saying that, as usual, Ait Oud is not impressed by the charges against him. Then we are once more confronted with a speaking Ait Oud, this time to doubt the credibility and competence of the expert. Ait Oud refers to an earlier talk between the two of them, where he had to explain the traces of heated polyester in his garments, since the expert apparently didn’t know that heating was part of the production process. Ait Oud further claims that the expert admitted he got his expertise from the internet. The author refrains from direct comment but lets the audience in the court speak clearly: scornful laughter is their reaction. Finally the reaction of the expert is quoted: “*Ait Oud is lying. Because his sister used to work in a textile factory, he boasts to know everything about it. But he’s wrong.*”

This second article adds some extra spice to the case, by playing down the ethos of both the scientists and accused. But Oud’s accusation of Gason is made to play in his own disadvantage, since the public sees through it, and since Gason gets to say the final words “*he’s wrong.*” Does this opposition add anything functional to the whole? In staging AAO as a grumbler, it gives a possible explanation of his “silence,” and one more argument for his guilt. But at the same time, such quarrelling does play down the ethos of the scientist as well, suggesting the possibility of mistakes or doubt.

In a second reading round, I want to take a closer look at the possible reasoning and heuristic possibilities the antithesis opened up. Following Aristotle’s topical reasoning exercise, we can test the strength of the first colon by formulating its opposition. The contradiction between speaking and not speaking is clear enough, but the opposition in the first pair is not that easy to disentangle. A more or less acceptable formulation goes approximately as such: according to the fibre analyses AAO is guilty, according to AAO himself, AAO is not guilty. But still, the opposition is not all that

evident: two sides are presented in a case with more parties involved. This opposition hides the other forms of evidence and testimonies.

The relationship between the first and second colon is not that clear at all. Also on a linguistic / argumentative level there is ambiguity at play. As a matter of fact, the inference can go in three directions: opposition, causality and co-ordination.

1. Although the fibres talk, A.O. keeps silent. (opposition) → (silence = denying guilt)
2. The fibres talk, hence A.O. keeps silent. (causal) → (silence = admitting guilt)
3. The fibres talk, and A.O. keeps silent. (co-ordination) → (keeping open interpretation — open question)

Strictly speaking, the second possibility corresponds best with the Aristotelian idea of testing a position. If the talking of the fibres were evident, then the silence of AAO admitting his guilt would be the case. But this is not the way the antithesis is to be understood. Both the first and the third interpretations are possible, the first stressing the clash between the first and the second colon, the third leaving the question open. This clash makes the antithesis look more like a paradox, the second colon not simply affirming the first one.

In a third round, I want to consider the dynamism between the antithesis and other striking style figures that circle around it or are involved in it. There is the personification of speaking fibres, and the speaking silence of AAO. The magnifying glasses (in the picture) function as metonymies for scientific analysis. Ait Oud actually does some talking; he is quoted several times both in the main text and in this second article. Clearly, the maintained silence of Ait Oud concerns his refusal to confess. And clearly, the words of the experts fill in what the speaking fibres have to say. The evidence provided by scientific proof apparently does not speak for itself. The speaking fibres versus the loud silence are not just a mannerist word play to empower the headline by suggesting a paradox. These style elements do function in the argument, since they are on the side of science. In a society where the position of exact science is evident and prominent, the frightful mystery of the accused stubbornly denying the murders is effectively expressed in an antithesis.

Evaluating this antithesis also includes examining whether possible intermediate positions within the pairs are formulated. Is there an intermediate position between the correlatives of speaking (proving guilt) and keeping silent (denying guilt)? As we've seen, the opposition between the second pair *fibres / Ait Oud* is not strong, and the clash between the two colons is evident, so the antithesis does not construct the kind of opposition that closes the case. Other parties, like the jury, are mentioned in the article; and the victims are presented in the illustration. The antithesis leaves room for the question one important party is confronted with: "*For the jury, little room for doubt is left.*" Doubt is the intermediate position between speaking and keeping silent, and that's indeed the position every jury has to take. It has to keep open the question as long as possible. The antithesis does what it has to do here: it creates an opposition, and it leaves open the question. In this case, the overwhelming scientific evidence is revealed, but without denying the boundaries of science in the act of judging people. This antithesis, within this context, is an example of a style choice that epitomizes an important question and stimulates public debate.

## PLAYING WITH OPPOSITIONS

### 4. CONCLUSION

One complaint that is shared by scholars of rhetoric and scholars of visual communication concerns the distrust their fields of study generate. Rhetoricians still feel the need to answer to Platonic appeals to truthful language and rational reasoning. And experts in visual communication react against the supremacy of written words in the western intellectual tradition, claiming that images do not deserve to be banned to categories of illiteracy, delusion, subjectivity, irrationality and emotion, but are at least as basic to human communication and intelligence as verbal language. Apparently, the cognitive power and persuasive aspect of both visual communication and verbal discourse are overwhelming, as they both serve to generate or illuminate thoughts, ideas and arguments, but at the same time can be used for manipulation and propaganda as well.

This analysis has shown how figures and illustrations do more — or rather: something else, than add superficial aspects like a layer of charm or a touch of pathos. The figure antithesis can function as a catchy title, but if all is well, it can be the very best expression of a line of thought. Careful evaluation of both the form and function within its context can bring this to light.

[Link to commentary](#)

### REFERENCES

- Aristoteles (2004), *Rhetorica* [transl. Marc Huys], Groningen: Historische uitgeverij.
- Ehse, H. H. J. (2004). Representing Macbeth: A case study in visual rhetoric. In: Carolyn Handa (Ed.), *Visual rhetoric in a digital world. A critical sourcebook* (pp. 164 — 176), Boston / New York: Bedford / St.Martin's.
- Fahnestock, J. (1999). *Rhetorical Figures in Science*. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fahnestock, J. (2000). Aristotle and theories of figuration. In: Gross, Alan G. and Walzer, Arthur E. (Eds.) *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric* (pp. 166—184, Ch.10), Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Foss, S. K. (2004a). Framing the study of visual rhetoric: toward a transformation of rhetorical theory. In: Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (pp. 303—313, Ch. 14), Mahwah, NJ / London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Foss, S. K. (2004b). *Rhetorical Criticism. Exploration & practice*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Govier, T. (2007). Two is a small number: false dichotomies revisited. In: H. V. Hansen, C. W. Tindale, J. A. Blair, R. H. Johnson and D. M. Godden (Eds.), *Dissensus and the Search for Common Ground*, CD-ROM, Windsor, ON: OSSA.
- Hobbs, C. L. (2004). Learning from the past: verbal and visual literacy in early Modern rhetoric and writing pedagogy. In: Carolyn Handa, *Visual rhetoric in a digital world. A critical sourcebook* (pp. 55-70), Boston / New York: Bedford / St. Martin's.
- Kress, G. and T. Van Leeuwen (2006). *Reading images. The grammar of visual design*. London / New York: Routledge.
- Olson, L. (2007). Intellectual and conceptual resources for visual rhetoric: A re-examination of scholarship since 1950. *Review of Communication*, 7, 1-20.