THEMED COLLECTION:
THE TURN TO LIFE, PART 2

Life and its inflections in Kilimanjaro

Becoming and being beyond the metaphoric

Knut Christian MYHRE, *University of Oslo*

This article explores a set of vernacular notions used by the Chagga-speaking people of Tanzania's Kilimanjaro Region to investigate how life—*moo*—is an effect of transfers and transformations of life-force or *horu* that occur among humans, houses, livestock, and crops. Exploring how they engage and involve a plethora of places, substances, conduits, beings, and processes that derive from the notion of *moo*, the article investigates how these processes afford and constitute the existence, capacity, health, and well-being of subjects and objects. Investigating how these notions concern efforts to allow different beings to emerge and exist, I argue that *moo* and *horu* are not metaphors, but concepts in their own right.

Keywords: Life, dwelling, metaphor, Africa, Tanzania

My recent monograph opens with an event that took place in late October 2008, when a dozen Chagga-speaking men from Rombo District of Kilimanjaro Region in northern Tanzania left their homesteads in the dead of night (Myhre 2018: x). The men are descendants of *mangi* Tengia, who was the last colonial “chief” of indirect rule for the area, and belong to an agnatic descent group that traces its origins to Horombo, who allegedly ruled large swathes of Kilimanjaro two centuries ago. I accompanied these men, as they first gathered at one particular homestead or *kaa*, where the officiating elder named Peter tossed curdled milk onto a bull-calf, so it could be untethered and removed from the house. We then set off down the eastern slopes of the mountain in the dark, and crossed the international border with Kenya shortly after sunrise. In a nearby settlement, we met a group of Kamba-speaking male elders, who brought along a large female goat with full udders that revealed how it recently had borne kids. The elders accompanied us to an uncultivated clearing, where we gathered to watch Peter pour banana beer on the ground, while making the following request:

With this beer, Horombo, we request something to eat, we request sufficient rain, not rain that kills. We request

rain that will bring us something to eat, so that your children will not come to an end. We are coming to an end, *mangi*. The cattle and even the goats have nothing to eat. Just look, Horombo Ukoni, the people are finished, we are finished. We are exhausted from the heat, we are completely exhausted. We request very much, you great one (*hai sha moombe*). It is indeed this we request, *mangi simba*. Do not give us rain that kills, but that brings us food. We request very much, you great one, the children are dying completely. We have dwelled for a long time (*dulekaa kasha*), but we have not forgotten you. The evangelicals said that we do no longer place foods on the ground, but this beer for remembering you, we are placing underneath your arm.

Peter refilled his drinking gourd and poured more beer, while saying:

Dwell here (*kaa haa*), *mangi*, you protect them, you bless them, those who have come to do this work here. When they climb back up, may the sun not bear down relentlessly on the place. Bring heat as normal and light rain as normal, so that we can get something to eat. We request very much, you great one, *hai*, my father, we request very much, Ukoni. At the homestead, we remember you. We remember you, *hai*, my father of the old days. Let us get rain.

Peter poured a final round of beer on the ground and stated:

I have returned life to you (*ngakuuriya moo*), Horombo Ukoni. We have reached the end. We have returned life to you. The banana trees have finished. We have nothing more to eat. We are exhausted, we are completely exhausted. We request very much, you great one, *hai*, Horombo Ukoni. I have returned life to you, *mangi*, I have returned life to you, great one, and to the owner of that banana garden. I have returned life to all of you, sit and drink well. It is your grandchildren giving you this, your great-grandchildren are remembering you.

When Peter was done, he gave his place to the senior Kamba-speaking elder, who poured their honey beer beside our banana beer, and made a strikingly similar request in their language. Asking Horombo to see how the children are getting finished and the cattle have nothing to eat, the elder implored him to drink so that we could get something in return, and queried where we should be and what he should eat, if we got no rain (Myhre 2018: xii).

These acts opened a two-day event that took place for the first time in eight years. It began in the plains and continued on the mountain, where we poured beer and milk on the ground multiple times, and butchered three animals so their blood was spilled and the meat shared. Acts like these have long formed part of a discourse on sacrifice that once occupied a central position in Africanist anthropology (see Evans-Pritchard 1956; Lienhardt 1961; de Heusch 1985). However, the utterances contrast with Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss's ([1899] 1964: 13) classic definition of sacrifice, as they do not suggest a religious act of consecration. Instead, they concern material transfers and transformations that Peter enunciated in terms of dwelling—*ikaa*—and life—*moo*. Thus, we poured and placed foodstuffs on the ground with the hope of receiving rain and something to eat for the children, cattle, and goats, who along with the banana trees and the rest of us were finished. By 2008, I had explored such acts as prestations of *horu*, which I translate as life-force or bodily power that the living make to the dead with requests to receive *horu* in other forms. I had also investigated how *horu* is constitutive of people's capacity, health, and well-being, and how it transfers and transforms through dwelling (Myhre 2006, 2007, 2014). However, the notion of *horu* did not

feature on this occasion. Instead, the concept of *moo*, or life, loomed large—a notion I had hardly encountered before, at least in that particular form.

The issue of life

Twenty years ago, Henrietta Moore (1999: 19) argued regarding eastern and southern Africa that, "All the societies of the region are concerned with the creative life-forces of the world and their manifestations through fertility and reproduction. Yet, anthropologists, with some exception, have found it difficult to understand the nature of these life-forces." In her view, anthropologists overlooked these forces due to a neglect of the practical and performative aspects of gender, and a disregard for the embodied character of agency and subjectivity. As I show in my book, her claim gains support from those who grapple with these notions. These include René Devisch (1993), who describes how "life-transmission processes" among the Yaka of southwestern Congo involve and concern combinations of "agnatic life-force" (*ngolu*) and "uterine vital flow" (*mooyi*). Similarly, Filip de Boeck (1994a: 271) details how "vital life-flow" (*mooy*) among the nearby Luunda "constitutes the essential source of life, longevity, health and well-being," and "is a relational force, with integrative and cohesive powers, connecting 'male' and 'female' processes of life-generation." Redolent of how Peter the descendant of a "chief" addressed *mangi* Horombo, they argue that these forces project metaphorically onto corporeal, social, and cosmological fields that conjoin in the chiefly person, who gains his position and power from a capacity to articulate, mediate, and embody opposing principles, and provide a relationship to the regenerative forces that ensure the fertility of persons and land (de Boeck 1994b; Devisch 1988).

Extending this in new directions, Todd Sanders (2008) explores how rainmaking is a matter of life and death among the Ihanzu of Central Tanzania, which like other fertile and productive efforts turns on the careful combination of masculine and feminine "forces" that include yet exceed human bodies and their reproductive relations. Relatedly, Wenzel Geissler and Ruth Prince (2010) consider how "growth" is occasioned among the Dhu-luo of western Kenya through the potent capacities of "touch," which make and remake persons and relations through mundane and material practices of gendered complementation. Finally, Malcolm Ruel (1997: 121) describes how the Kuria notion of *omooyo* means "life,"

“health,” and “well-being” in the abstract, yet concretely designates the gullet, windpipe, or alimentary canal. A cognate of Yaka *mooyi*, Luunda *mooy*, and Chagga *moo*, the Kuria notion of *omooyo* forms part of a wider eastern Bantu usage that in Ruel’s view is wrongly rendered as “spirit,” “soul,” and “heart.” By contrast, Ruel argues that *omooyo* concerns how life, health, and well-being—*obohoro*—are effects of passages and processes that afford movement and consumption of food, air, water, and speech. These transfers even extend beyond the person and the body to include the doorways and gateways of houses and homesteads through which *omohoro* also moves (Ruel 1997: 120). As such, *omooyo* involves a relational and ecological conception of person and life that departs and differs from the presuppositions of self-sufficiency and self-maintenance implied by its established translations. Rendered properly, it affords a view of how life, health, and well-being enter and emerge from part of persons and the environment, and thus project *through* beings of different kinds.

Ruel crucially clears away analytical assumptions and expectations to open the way for an alternative translation of a vernacular term and allow for the emergence of a different concept of life. Similarly, Devisch and de Boeck recombine ritual, reproduction, and politics, and conjoin the corporeal, social, and natural, to create a plane where *ngolu*, *mooyi*, and *mooy* may unfold. Together, these authors suggest that grasping the life-forces prevalent in the region is not a question of applying a theoretical approach or perspective, but an issue of providing a descriptive and analytical space for vernacular notions to unfurl. In my book, I similarly explore the Chagga notions of *horu*, *ikaa*, and *moo* by situating the event that took place in 2008 in relation to other notions and practices that include those of doorway and backbone, as well as life-force and dwelling that I describe elsewhere (Myhre 2006, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2016b, 2017). For this, I draw on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, on motivation from the fact that his philosophy emerged from an encounter with anthropology, which moreover occasioned a conception of language and meaning that speaks to current concerns for pragmatics and performativity, and a shift from representation to practice and materials in anthropology (Myhre 2018: 6ff). Wittgenstein furthermore invoked and engaged a notion of life, and developed descriptive modes and means that relate to and open for ethnographic enquiry. On this basis, I approach and treat the terms that

derive from *moo* as “family resemblance” notions that partake in a multitude of “language-games” that emerge from and sink back into a “form of life.” These tools allow for an exploration of how words entail, engage, and contain actions and objects, and an investigation of the similarities and differences that obtain between the multiple uses and effects of singular terms. As the description unfolds the language-games in which they take part, it provides both a vernacular conceptual order and an anthropological concept of life, which enunciate how *moo* and the world in which it occurs are equal effects of the transfers and transformations of *horu* that project through beings of different kinds and take place in the activity of dwelling.

In this article, I redeploy this ethnography and extend these arguments to deepen the conceptual character of these notions. In particular, I address how *horu* and *moo* concern the becoming and being of persons, livestock, crops, and houses through material transfers and transformations, and therefore do not involve metaphorical connections or analogical relations. In this way, I explore how the notions that derive from *moo* involve inflection points, where life-force gains new forms to actualize beings of particular kinds. I thus follow Sanders (2008) to focus on substantial and practical processes and potencies, at the expense of symbolism and metaphor. However, I do not consider these means for developing alternative conceptual tools, but concepts in their own right that regard and allow the form life has in Rombo.

Life and the left-hand side

Toward the end of his own life, the German missionary-ethnographer Bruno Gutmann (1966: 50) recalled how people in Kilimanjaro—with whom he served from 1902 until 1938—distinguished and designated the right-hand side as paternal and the left-hand side as maternal. The connection between the left and the maternal side was evidenced in the saying that “life comes from the left-hand side”—*moo ni ora lo kumoso fucheye*. I have never heard such a saying, but his claim gains support from one-time District Commissioner Charles Dundas (1924: 129), who argued in his ethnography from Kilimanjaro that, “The ancestry is further divided into two sets commonly called those of the right and those of the left. Those of the right hand are: father, brother, mother, sister

and their ascendants. Those of the left are: mother's father, mother's brother, mother's nephew and their ascendants."¹ Similarly, Gutmann's older colleague Johannes Raum (1911: 177ff) claimed that the "spirits" (*Geister*) were divided between those of the right-hand side and the left-hand side, which respectively were the paternal and maternal relatives from which a person descended. In line with this, a person's maternal relatives are called "those of the left-hand side"—*wa kumoosoni*—in ancestral invocations in Rombo (Myhre 2006: 320, 325), where a man moreover owes his mother's brother a particular piece of meat that is cut from the left-hand side of every animal he butchers (Myhre 2016b: 119). Called *uvaha*, this share is one of only two pieces cut from one side of the butchered animal. The other is the *ngari* that often includes the animal's right foreleg, as the claim of one's classificatory agnates (Myhre 2016b: 125). All other shares of meat span both sides of the animal, so the *uvaha* and *ngari* manifest and underscore that a person's paternal and maternal relatives are those of the right- and the left-hand side. These distinctions moreover enjoy a regional distribution, as others also describe how maternal relatives or the female side link with the left or the left-hand side, including from the areas where *mooyi* and *mooy* feature (Needham 1960: 25; 1967: 429; Beidelman 1961: 252; Rigby 1966: 3; Devisch 1988: 265; de Boeck 1994b: 462).

Even if it does not feature as a statement, the idea that life comes from the left-hand side emerges from the notion of "left" or "left-hand side" itself. Rendered by Gutmann as *kumoso*, it is in Rombo termed *kumoosoni*, which deploys both a locative prefix *ku-* and suffix *-ni* to frame, contain, and inflect the notion of *moo* that Peter used in his invocation above. Such constructions are common in Bantu languages, where prefixes, infixes, or suffixes expand or extend a root-form to create new, yet related notions and meanings. *Kumoosoni* is thus a compound concept that literally renders the left-hand side as "the place of life" or "the place from which life emanates." The notion concerns the enabling role affinal relations play for reproduction, as the capacity to create new life resides in and extracts from the bride's natal homestead, and transfers to her marital homestead. This

process that I describe in terms of detachment and attachment (Myhre 2018: 75ff) occurs by means of prestations that afford a man's claim to the children he fathers, which in their absence falls to the woman's eldest brother (Myhre 2014: 508). These prestations consist of foodstuffs high in *horu*, such as beer, meat, milk, and bananas that the groom and his agnates produce and present to the bride's father's homestead, where they are shared for consumption among its inhabitants and their agnates. Accordingly, the "right" or "right-hand side" that is termed *kulo* in present-day Rombo, and related as *kuljo* and *kulyo* by Gutmann (1926: 275) and Walther (1900: 40), combines the locative prefix *ku-* with a root-form from the verb "to eat"—*ilya*—to render this "the place for eating." This too is a regional feature, as Alice Werner ([1904] 1973: 428) reported from a range of Bantu languages that, "The *right* hand is frequently named from some action performed by it—usually that of eating." It is evident from the Swahili cognate *kulia* that renders "right" as "for eating" and that a leading dictionary links to the prevalent practice of eating with the right hand or "the eating hand"—*mkono wa kulia* (Johnson 1939: 238; see also Rigby 1966: 3). But while *ku-* is the infinitive marker in Swahili, it is a locative prefix in Rombo, where the right-hand side therefore is "the place for eating." The notion gathers how wife-takers enable wife-givers to eat, while the left-hand side as "the place of life" or "the place from which life emanates" concerns how the latter enable the former to reproduce.

The substance of life

When the bride relocates to the marital homestead, it is moreover said of the groom that "he has a hearth"—*nere riko*. The statement enunciates how the marital homestead comes into existence as a place of cooking and consumption, as an effect of the bridewealth prestations and the affinal relations between the left-hand side and the right-hand side, or "the place of life" and "the place for eating." In this regard, it is significant that Gutmann's and Walther's *kuljo* and *kulyo* appear to be locative constructions that derive from the prepositional form of the verb "to eat." As such, they may variously mean a "place of eating" and a "place for eating." In this sense, the notion extends beyond how the homestead of the right-hand side (*kulo*) is a "place for eating" for the wife-givers, as it also concerns how the

1. Major (later Sir) Charles Dundas describes in his memoirs how he arrived in Kilimanjaro as a soldier during World War 1, and served as District Commissioner from 1921 to 1924.

marital homestead becomes a “place of eating” as an effect of the relationship to “the place of life” (*kumoso-soni*). The point gains depth from considerations of the foodstuffs that feature in cooking and consumption, where another term derived from *moo* plays a central role.

The foodstuffs that are cooked and consumed in the homestead largely result from productive practices in and around the homestead—*kaa*. These practices have undergone considerable changes for over a century, due to population growth and coffee cash-cropping that occasioned or intensified land shortages (Moore 1986: 110; Setel 1999: 44). Affecting Rombo last, these changes effectuated a move from a mode of agro-pastoralism to an intensive form of horticulture, where livestock are stall-fed the leaves and stems of banana trees to provide manure that is used to fertilize the garden (Myhre 2007: 318; 2017: 170; 2018: 31ff).² The result is an imbrication of activities that yield the staple crop of bananas, as well as milk, meat, blood, butter, and assorted other crops and foodstuffs. Engaging in these activities expends *horu* and raises the heat (*mrike*) and depletes the blood (*samu*) of the person’s body, but affords foodstuffs that replenish life-force through cooking and consumption. Production is thus conceptualized as transfers and transformations of *horu* that occur between humans, animals, and crops, and that body forth foodstuffs and substances in different forms.

Animal digestion plays a pivotal role in these practices, as it converts fodder into manure that is spread in the garden to grow crops that feed both livestock and people. As an intermediate form between fodder and manure, chyme forms a hinge in this process, where food and fodder ensue from the growth of the banana garden. Peter invoked these transformations and imbrications, when he requested Horombo that people should receive something to eat, and pointed out that the livestock had no fodder and the banana trees were finished. He furthermore conjured the pivot on which they turn, when he tossed milk onto the bull-calf before we left for the plains:

We are exhausted from the heat. We remember you Horombo. We remember you, give us some manure (*kaboru*) and something to eat. The children are dying from hunger, *mangi*, they are dying of hunger. Look

for the person wherever he is, sit together and see what it is your children shall eat here at the homestead. We have made noise, we are exhausted, see how they make noise. May they remember you, like others remembered you in the past. We request very much, you great one (*hai sha moombe*). Whether he is by Murukuti, or wherever he is, we have provided this thing, we have provided this sacrifice, may he provide us with something to eat. Something to eat is what we seek, we seek nothing else.

As Peter first implored Horombo to give them some manure and then something to eat, he ordered his request to enunciate how foodstuffs emerge as transformations of chyme. This gained manifestation in the plains, where handfuls of chyme from the butchered bull-calf and female goat were combined, and pieces of roasted meat and blobs of coagulated blood placed on top. Beer and milk were also poured on the ground at its base, while further statements were made to Horombo that the cattle, children, and banana trees were finished and rain requested, so that they could dwell and provide similar foodstuffs in the future. In this way, beer, meat, milk, and blood emerged from the chyme to manifest how consumption and production nest as transformations of each other, and inflect and cascade as *horu* in different forms through these activities.

Correspondingly, the notion of chyme—*mooshe*—also derives from *moo* to be captured as a “substance of life” that converts and conveys *horu* between crops, livestock, and humans as different life-forms. Accordingly, Gutmann (1924: 124) claimed that people sensed a “unity of life” (*Lebenseinheit*) with livestock and crops, which he conjectured the “primordial human” (*Urmensch*) experienced as “cultic bonds and forces” that arose from the “enjoyment and exchange of life-sap, spit, milk, and blood” (Gutmann 1924: 145). Similarly, Ruel (1997: 98) claims that, “Kuria spoke of chyme as the ‘life’ or ‘well-being,’ *obohoro*, of the animal, and compared it to *ubukima* as the staple grain-derived food of themselves.” *Obohoro* is a cognate of *horu* and the same point emerges in Rombo, but from the notion of *mooshe*, and not from an articulated judgment. According to Ruel (1997: 101–2), the salience of chyme stems from the fact that life depends on the ingestion of natural resources from “outside” and their assimilation to the social domain at “home.” By contrast, *mooshe* concerns the role of bovine digestion as a site and process for the banana-farming and livestock stallfeeding that form

2. The mode of horticulture in present-day Rombo resembles that which Gutmann (1909: 110) described from western and central Kilimanjaro more than a century ago.

the core of the horticultural practices of the homestead. Here, chyme does not concern the appropriation and assimilation of natural resources for social purposes, but transfers and transformations of *horu* that occur within and around the *kaa*, and are constitutive of life, capacity, health, and well-being. Sally Falk Moore (1976: 363) touched on this, when she claimed that, “Manure had peaceful, cooling, fertility-causing, life-bringing in it.” Meanwhile, Gutmann (1909: 133) grasped its transformational character, when he argued that the capacity or power (*Wirkungskraft*) of fodder was potentiated (*potenziert*) in the chyme. Moreover, his account of how people rubbed their hands with chyme after burying a person and its role in conciliation and cooling ceremonies, recalls its use in the current efforts “to cool or cleanse the homestead”—*ihora kaa*—after someone’s burial. *Ihora kaa* allows the inhabitants to resume the activities that the death disrupted, which include banana-farming and livestock stallfeeding (Myhre 2015: 108; 2018: 213). The connection between the verb *ihora* and the noun *horu* reveals how *ihora kaa* resumes and redirects the transfers and transformations of life-force within and around the homestead that death disrupted, which include the provisions of fodder and manure. Chyme thus deploys to channel production and consumption, while the conceptual connections between *ihora* and *horu* underscore how these concern conversions and conveyances of life-force. It gains support from Ruel’s (1997: 100) account of how “The action of taking the chyme can then be seen as one of taking the life of the animal, to confer or transfer it elsewhere.” In line with *ihora kaa*, he describes such acts as “cleansing rites” with a wider regional distribution, as evident from the use of chyme for the Taita “cleansing and restorative compound” that sports the cognate term *kiora*. When Peter placed and poured powerful foodstuffs on and beside the chyme, he hence effectuated inflections and emergences of *horu* in particular forms, and thus returned life to Horombo with the hope of attracting rain to facilitate food and fodder. As he deployed *mooshe* to resume and redirect the transfers and transformations of which it forms part, he created the conditions on which life or *moo* depends (cf. Ruel 1997: 69).

The conduits of life

As the bridewealth prestations largely consist of beer, meat, milk, and bananas, they too emerge as transformations of chyme that result from the productive practices in and around the homestead. These foodstuffs high in

horu body forth the life-force of the groom and his agnates, and manifest the transformative capacities of their homesteads and their inhabitants. Shared and consumed by the bride’s father and his agnates, the bride-wealth prestations moreover contribute to their capacity, health, and well-being, and thus enable further transfers and transformations of *horu*, which include those between fodder, manure, and foodstuffs that turn on and emerge from chyme and animal digestion. As these prestations extend the conversions and conveyances of *horu* at the bride’s father’s homestead, it becomes and continues to be a “place of life,” as an effect of these provisions and the transformations of chyme that they afford and involve.

In this regard, it is significant that the term for the doorway—*moongo*—also derives from *moo*. As I describe elsewhere, the doorway enables the initial bride-wealth prestation of milk and bananas, which the groom’s intermediary or *mkara* leaves by the hearth of the bride’s father’s house without engaging any of its inhabitants (Myhre 2014: 513; 2018: 76). The mode of presentation entails that one house or homestead extracts and attracts *horu* from another, in a process where certain of its features play affording roles. It recalls Ruel’s (1997: 120) claim that the doorway and gateway are passages for life or *omohoro* that make houses and homesteads conduits of capacity, health, and well-being. Furthermore, Dundas (1924: 306) recounted vernacular claims that women and children belong and attach to the door, rather than the other way around. Combined with the mode of presentation, his claim suggests that it is the bride’s presence in the house that attracts the initial prestation, which in turn affords her eventual relocation to her marital homestead. The doorway is hence integral to the process of attachment and detachment, where women and foodstuffs move counter to each other.

However, the term *moongo* also means the back and backbone of any person or animal, and the share of meat a man owes his wife’s mother because she used her back in conceiving, birthing, and caring for his wife (Myhre 2014: 515). These acts also consist in transfers and transformations of *horu* that men and women convert and convey as semen, blood, and breastmilk through sex, menstruation, childbirth, and nursing. It recalls Gutmann’s (1924: 145) conjecture regarding the “bonds and forces” that arose from the “enjoyment and exchange of life-sap, spit, milk, and blood,” and Raum’s (1907: 292) claim that these were “vital substances” or “life-carriers”—*Träger des Lebens*. It also evokes Gutmann’s (1966: 63) claim

that, “The right and the left is the symbol of copulation, and that the person is a compound being.” Accordingly, the person’s constitutive elements combine through the back in sex and reproduction, and the *moongo* conjoins his or her left- and right-hand sides. Meat, moreover, is another powerful substance, so the *moongo* share compensates for the *horu*, heat, and blood that the bride’s parents expended in conceiving, birthing, and caring for their daughter. Their *horu* is constitutive of her capacity, health, and well-being, which transfer by means of the doorway to her marital homestead, where she employs her back in conceiving, birthing, and caring for children. The *moongo* meat is therefore simultaneously a compensation for the life-force that the bride’s parents expended by means of their backs, and a replacement for the back and *horu* that the groom extracted from their house. Accordingly, the *moongo* meat emerges from the doorway of the marital homestead, where people hold the animal inside or across the threshold while uttering an invocation before butchering it on the courtyard in front of the *moongo*. Similarly, the bull-calf we brought to the plains was untethered from the house only after Peter tossed curdled milk onto its head and along its back and rump. He thus employed *horu* in one form along one *moongo* to remove life-force in a different form through another *moongo*. Like *kumoosoni*, *moongo* thus also derives from *moo* to capture how doorways and backbones are openings and lines through and along which *horu* inflects, as it transfers and transforms between persons and places to afford life. As its uses and meanings concern and facilitate transfers and transformations of *horu* through persons, houses, and livestock, so *moongo* may render as “conduit of life.”

It follows from the account above that the *moongo* share is a conversion and extroversion of the animal’s chyme or *mooshe*, and that its *horu* is everted and conveyed when the *moongo* is carved and claimed based on the bride’s parents’ reproductive relationship and activities. In fact, the claims to and justifications for the different shares of meat reveal how the entire animal body is a transmutation of *mooshe* that is divided and distributed on the basis of different relationships, where *horu* converts and conveys in different forms (Myhre 2016b: 121). Some shares concern cutting fodder and sweeping manure, while others regard reproductive engagements and acts of care for humans and animals, including the act of butchering itself and the provision of its meat to the recipients. This too gained manifestation when the pieces of meat and globules of blood were placed on the

chyme, and the milk and beer poured around it in the plains. These pieces of meat are cut from all the shares that the animal is divided into, but only some are placed on the chyme, while the rest are consumed by those who take part in the event. Some pieces thus manifest how the animal and its different parts emerge from the chyme, while the bulk is eaten to effectuate how foodstuffs are conversions of *mooshe* that replenish the *horu* people expend through production and reproduction. At the same time, the blood and milk rendered how these bodily substances also emerge as effects of chyme by way of the foodstuffs it enables. As described above, blood and milk are *horu* in different forms that transform and transfer through sex, birthing, and childcare, and replenish by means of foodstuffs high in *horu*. The act of placing and pouring meat, milk, blood, and beer on and around the chyme thus underscored how *mooshe* is a transformational substance of life that converts and conveys *horu* between humans, livestock, and crops through production, reproduction, and consumption. It is indeed these imbricating activities that constitute the notion of *ikaa* or “dwelling” that Peter used in his invocation, and from which the homestead—*kaa*—derives its name. Production, reproduction, and consumption are correspondingly chiefly conducted in and around the *kaa*, where these activities transfer and transform life-force between humans, livestock, and crops to become constitutive of their life, capacity, health, and well-being. Accordingly, Peter pronounced that we had dwelled for a long time and implored Horombo to dwell, yet also evoked that the drought imperilled *ikaa*. While pouring the powerful beer, he activated a past of successful dwelling and projected an uncertain future to invoke a vulnerable present that was amenable to inflection by means of *horu* in different forms. By pouring and placing powerful foodstuffs around and on top of chyme, Peter hence endeavoured to effectuate transfer and transformations of *horu*, and thus create the conditions on which dwelling and life depend.

Beings of life

People butcher animals of both genders in the same way, but a female animal must have borne offspring, like the goat that the Kamba-speaking elders brought in 2008. Such an animal is called *mooma*, which is another compound notion, where *moo* conjoins with the suffix *-ma*. Used on its own, *ma* means “mother,” but

the term also features as a prefix in women's agnatic descent group names, where it means "mother of." The latter use relates to the naming practice, where the first-born son and daughter of a couple receive the names of their father's parents, and their second-born siblings receive those of their mother's parents. People justify this by arguing that the latter children "return to" (*iuya*) the mother's natal homestead (Myhre 2018: 124). Accordingly, they bear *rina la shia* or the "name of the pathway," which contrasts with *rina la kaa* or the "name of the homestead" carried by their first-born siblings. The second-born children hence return along the pathways that the groom's intermediary traversed to present the powerful foodstuffs to the bride's father's homestead. These children moreover maintain a closer connection to their mother's natal homestead, which they freely enter to engage its inhabitants, while their siblings can only do so once they make a particular prestation of meat called *kisango*. The significance of the naming practice resides in the fact that people thereby give birth to children, who reproduce those who gave birth to them. Tacked onto a woman's descent group name, the prefix *ma-* enunciates this reiteration, where a woman gives birth to her own father from whom she received her agnatic descent group name. Thus, my late adoptive mother MaSway was the daughter of a man from the Sway agnatic descent group, who became the "mother of Sway" by virtue of her second-born son, who is named after her father. In the case of animals, *moo* conjoins the suffix *-ma* to render *mooma* as "mother of life" or "life-mother," which articulates both how the female goat has borne at least one kid, and how the animal is a site for the process where chyme transforms and transfers *horu* between vegetative, animal, and human life.

In a related way, the notion of *moombe* that Peter used to address Horombo in his invocation combines *moo* with the term *mbe*, which ordinarily means "male elder." Above I translate *moombe* as "great one," in line with people's Swahili rendition of this notion as *mkumbwa*, but the notion best translates as "life-father" or "life-elder." Used in this way, *moombe* enunciates how Peter and his fellow agnatic descent group members owe their life to Horombo. *Moombe*, moreover, formed part of Peter's request for food and fodder that would afford their continued dwelling—*ikaa*. In this context, he requested first that people should receive something to eat, and then pointed out that the livestock had no fodder and the banana trees were finished. In this way, Peter conjured the imbrications between banana-farming and

livestock stallfeeding on which humans, animals, and crops depend. As already mentioned, he accordingly invoked animal digestion and chyme, when he tossed milk on the bull-calf and requested some manure and something to eat. Peter thus ordered his request to articulate how foodstuffs emerge as transformations of chyme, at the same time as he tossed and poured milk and beer to return the life they owe Horombo with the hope and anticipation that they will receive *horu* in other forms that will enable them to extend dwelling and life. Combining *moo* with the suffix meaning "mother of" and the term for "male elder," *mooma* and *moombe* capture how the female animal that has borne offspring and the apical ancestor of the agnatic descent group both are sites for the transfers and transformations of *horu* that enable the emergence and existence of other animals, persons, and crops. As such, *mooma* and *moombe* may render as "beings of life" that gather up multiple conversions and conveyances of *horu* that extend *moo* in different forms.

Life and its locations

The statement *nere riko* emphasizes that the groom obtains a hearth on the bride's relocation and that the marital homestead comes into existence as a place of cooking and consumption. However, the statement also implies that the bride takes part in the banana-farming and livestock stallfeeding, which afford the foodstuffs that deploy in cooking and consumption. Furthermore, the fact that her relocation most commonly is the result of bride-wealth prestations that facilitate the groom's claim to the children she bears entails that these processes also enable sex and reproduction. It follows from this that the bride's relocation not only constitutes the marital homestead as place of eating, but as a place of dwelling—*kaa*.

In present-day Rombo, the marital homestead commonly consists of a house that the groom has built on land that his father divided from his homestead (Myhre 2014: 514). In the past, however, the groom's mother conferred her homestead to her first-born son or "child in front"—*mwana wa mbele*—upon his marriage, while she relocated to a new *kaa* "above" (*fondoho*) or "behind" (*mma*) with her other children. She repeated this for all but her second-born son, until her last-born son married with whom she remained to be looked after by him and his wife. The effect of this practice was a chain or line of homesteads, where elder brothers lived in

front of (*mbele*) or below (*siinde*) their younger brothers, and the spatial extension of homesteads up-and-down the mountainside actualized, incorporated, and unfolded the temporal relationships of their establishment. Moreover, agnatic affiliation combined with polygyny to create more or less parallel lines that were inhabited by classificatory brothers, fathers, and sons, and resulted in a patchwork or lattice of homesteads and houses. Settlement patterns corroborate claims that this practice changed 50–60 years ago, when more durable houses and permanent crops made people averse to relinquishing their homesteads. While men began to provide their sons with land on which they were required to build their own houses, the tendency remains that the first-born son receives a plot below or in front of his father's homestead, and that the last-born son inherits the rest. The effect is therefore still a spatial and temporal sequence, where the child in front is located in front or below the last-born son who still cares for their parents.

While agnatic relations extend and manifest vertically, the bridewealth prestations transfer along the pathways that traverse the mountainside to connect homesteads. Prestations of foodstuffs and marriageable women hence move counter to each other along these pathways and through the doorways of houses. Accordingly, *kumoosoni* and *kulo* also enunciate how affinal relationships articulate on a horizontal plane, while those of agnatic affiliation relate in terms of below and above, or in front and behind. Right and left hence do not concern paternal and maternal descent, as Gutmann claimed, but locations between which women and foodstuffs high in *horu* circulate. Similarly, they do not pertain to “sets” of persons who trace lineal descent, as Dundas claimed, but places in a topography where life-force inflects and moves in different forms to afford life and extend dwelling. Raum (1911: 177, 181 emphasis added) touched on this, when he argued that, “Spirits of the right-hand side one designates those *from where* the person originates, namely *from where* one's father and grandfather come,” and “Spirits of the left-hand side one designates those *from where* the mother descends.” Nevertheless, Raum failed to evade the idea of descent and realize that the matter concerns how affinity articulates as horizontal relations, where *horu* conveys between homesteads to enable reproduction, which manifests as vertical lines of agnatic homesteads on the mountainside. It follows that left and right do not concern the relationship between the person and the group or individual and society, but transfers and transformations of *horu* where

persons, houses, and foodstuffs turn into and out of each other to enable dwelling and life that effectuate a particular spatial and temporal form.

Form of life

These considerations show that *kumoosoni*, *moongo*, *mooshe*, *mooma*, and *moombe* concern places, conduits, substances, and beings from, through, along, and by means of which *horu* transforms and transfers. In combination, the terms enunciate how life—*moo*—is an effect of conversions and conveyances of *horu* that occur between persons, houses, animals, and crops to afford the becoming and constitute the being of other persons, houses, animals, and crops. On top of this, Gutmann (1926: 667) argued that *moo* relates to the term for the hearth-fire, and means a “vitalizing glow” or “inner fire” that accords with the “glowing fire in the house.” Something similar is at stake in Rombo, where the hearth-fire—*motcho*—turns powerful substances into foods that convey *horu* to the person and raises the heat of the body. In fact, each of these notions involves different body parts that convert and convey *horu* in different forms and engage the world in different ways. As I argue elsewhere, they concern a vectorial person that directs *horu* in different forms through different anatomical features for different effects (Myhre 2019). Added to the ways *horu* enters and emerges from doorways and digestive organs, the concept reveals and accentuates how life, capacity, health, and well-being enter through and emerge from parts of persons, houses, and the environment, and thus project *through* beings of different kinds.

It is because these notions involve actions and engage objects that I approach them by means of Wittgenstein's notion of “language-game” in my book. Coined to grasp how language embeds in non-linguistic practices, Wittgenstein ([1953] 1968 §7) states: “I shall call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the ‘language-game.’” Wittgenstein's notion grasps how language is a practice, where the meaning of a word is its use, and not the object to which it refers. It, moreover, regards the diversity of uses words have, and the overlapping and criss-crossing “family resemblances” that obtain between their multifarious meanings. These ideas are particularly pertinent to the notion of *horu*, which enjoys a multitude of uses and enfolds an array of activities and objects. Moreover, *horu* does not exist in and of itself, but only occurs in the form of a particular

substance or entity, which contains or comprises life-force to a greater or lesser extent. *Horu* is therefore not *something*, but regards movements and interactions that manifest as beings of different kinds, which emerge and exist as transformations of each other. Conversely, the notions that derive from *moo* concern and specify these transfers and transformations of *horu*, and hence share a regard for how beings of different kinds enable each other. Thus, *mooshe* and *motcho* concern how foodstuffs and substances emerge from livestock, gardens, and hearths, while *kumoosoni* and *moongo* regard how persons present these foods and materials through doorways to forge relations that enable them to reproduce. Relatedly, *moongo* also concerns how children emerge through or by means of the backs of women, while *mooma* and *moombe* regard how animals and persons of reproductive merit afford others to become beings of life. All the notions pertain to transfers and transformations of *horu* in different forms, and their multifarious uses involve actions and engage objects of different kinds. Each notion concerns a particular inflection point, where *horu* gains a specific form to afford and actualize a being of a certain kind. Like *horu*, the notions that derive from *moo* are therefore family resemblance notions that entail and form part of multifarious language-games that concern the capacity of different beings to affect each other through the activities that constitute dwelling—*ikaa*—and enable life—*moo*.

The drought that occurred in 2008 impeded the growth of fodder, and thus imperilled the chyme and foodstuffs that people present, prepare, and consume to enable dwelling and life. The situation jeopardized the transfers and transformations of *horu* that take place between persons and homesteads of the left and the right, and that occur by means of doorways, backs, intestines, and hearth-fires. It therefore resulted in an event that set in motion and engaged the phenomena that derive their terms from *moo*. Thus, animals that included a female *mooma* goat had milk tossed onto their backs and were removed through doorways to be butchered. A hearth-fire prepared their meat, which we presented to Horombo the life-elder on top of chyme, while milk, beer, and blood were poured around and placed on top of it. In this way, the house yielded animals and their bodies everted chyme, which in turn rendered meat, milk, beer, and blood. In a cascade of inflections, the event effectuated how beings and substances that constitute *horu* of different kinds turn into and out of each other to become as different life-forms. At the same

time, the notions of *mooma*, *moongo*, *mooshe*, *moombe*, and *motcho* turned into and out of each other to enunciate how life becomes as the effects of their transfers and transformations. In a mutual and simultaneous process, *horu* and *moo* inflected through material and linguistic forms to afford the becoming and being of life and all it contains. Wielding *horu* in different forms, Peter engaged the life of which he spoke with the hope of receiving rain that would yield food and fodder. His statements not only show that rain forms part of these transfers and transformations, and thus constitutes *horu* in a further form. More importantly, the way he engaged and enunciated life to facilitate its flourishing entailed that his words, actions, and objects participated in that which they concerned. Accordingly, the event assigned no priority among these beings and notions, but allowed forms of *horu* to emerge from each other, and *moo* to contort and yield the notions that regard the means through or by which life occurs. In this way, the event captured and conveyed life *as* transfer and transformation, and thus revealed the *form* life has in this part of the world.

Kumoosoni, *mooshe*, *moongo*, *mooma*, *moombe*, and *motcho* arise or unfold from *moo* to grasp and specify transfers and transformations that afford and concern the emergence and existence of beings of different kinds. As prefixes and suffixes embellish or elaborate the root-form *moo*, they create notions that involve actions and engage objects in a multitude of language-games. Moreover, the event that occurred in 2008 reveals how only a single notion and language-game features at any time, and then is displaced by another to capture and convey how these notions and beings turn into and out of one another. The movement sheds light on Wittgenstein's notion of form of life, as a background from and against which language-games emerge as elaborations or constructions that determine particular aspects pertaining to it (Myhre 2018: 284; forthcoming). On this view, language-games are descriptive means that elicit similarities and differences between various situations of use, and unfold the activities and objects they involve and engage to allow concepts to emerge. Accordingly, the account above employs description to lay bare the transfers and transformations of *horu* that animate *moo* and that occur by means of the places, substances, conduits, beings, and processes that derive their terms from it. As these notions unfold from *moo* and their language-games arise from the form of life, they emerge and exit as multiples of "one," which eventually fold back into the form of life. The concepts and language-games are therefore

self-similar iterations that become and occur in the same way as persons, houses, livestock, and banana trees. As evidenced by their common root-form *moo*, each “one” contains and retains connections to the other “ones,” which constitute the background or life from which they emerge and return.

Beyond metaphor

The notions and language-games that emerge from and revert to life constitute fractals of the kind that Marilyn Strathern ([1991] 2004) explores to address scale and proportion in anthropological writing and comparison (Myhre forthcoming). Their mode of emergence and displacement moreover recalls Roy Wagner’s (1986: xi) idea of obviation, “which is manifested as a series of substitutive metaphors that constitute the plot of a myth (or the form of a ritual), in a dialectical movement that closes when it returns to its beginning point.” De Boeck (1994b: 468) takes issue with the enclosing character of Wagner’s dialectic, but retains the regard for metaphor, which in his view generates similarities between unrelated domains. Devisch (1993: 42) shares a concern for “ritual metaphor” that is grounded in bodily processes and “involves an innovative transposition or ‘transportation’ of meaningful elements from a given semantic field and into another with which it had no prior link.” Similarly, Ruel (1997: 7) claims that *omooyo* constitutes “a physiologically grounded metaphor for the life of the person,” and explores the “metaphorical interplay” of ritual, which “implies a ‘carrying over’ of what is being said or represented to the actions that are being made, thus firmly (‘indexically’) linking the two in the continuing life of the society” (Ruel 1997: 69). Their conceptions of metaphor instantiate the “analogism” that on Philippe Descola’s (2013: 201) view means, “a mode of identification that divides the whole collection of existing beings into a multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions.” According to Descola (2013: 202), analogy “becomes possible and thinkable only if the terms that it compares are initially distinct and if the ability to detect similarities between things and thereby partially to remove their isolation is applied to single items.” Analogism, in other words, concerns a world composed of a plurality of entities that are organized and rendered meaningful on the basis of their similarities.

By their emphasis on metaphor, de Boeck, Devisch, and Ruel undergird Descola’s claim that analogism reigns

supreme in African modes of thought. The assertion gains support from earlier explorations of the left and right in terms of dual symbolic classification, which concern phenomena related to those explored here (Needham 1960; 1967; 1976; Beidelman 1961; Rigby 1966; Beattie 1968, 1976, 1978). However, *moo* and its derivative forms involve neither metaphors nor analogies, but language-games that concern processes that constitute life and all it contains. As the ethnography shows, the notions pertain to how persons, houses, livestock, and crops come into being as the effects of anatomical and architectural features that convey *horu* in specific ways. Like the Lunda notion of *mooy*, they regard and reveal *horu* as a relational force that exists between, acts upon, and refracts through beings of different kinds. They, moreover, concern how *horu* assumes particular forms based on the openings and lines through and along which it inflects to effectuate different life-forms. As such, it recalls Günter Wagner’s (1949: 161) claim that the vernacular terms he translates as “shadow” actually mean a physical energy or actuating force that affords bodily functions. However, the terms that derive from *moo* extend beyond the human body, as they pertain to how a multitude of beings emerge and exist through inflections of *horu* that also occur among houses, livestock, and crops. Accordingly, Raum (1909: 105) claimed that the verb “to be”—*ikeri*—derives from *ikaa*, and thus articulated how dwelling affords beings of different kinds as effects of *horu*. Gutmann (1935: 8) also grappled with this in his only English-language publication, when he claimed that “all the ingredients of community life grow out of undivided protoplasm. But without the stimulus of activity they wither away.” Although he did not employ vernacular terms, it seems he hinted at *horu* as a uniform life-force that brings that which is into existence. It gains support from Gutmann’s (1935: 3) claim that this constitutes life, when directed through particular relations: “The family, however, itself requires for the sustenance of its own life direct and uninterrupted access to the stream of life which flows through the tribal society so long as the social strata which are its channels are preserved.” The claim gets at the transformations and recursivity, where *horu* converts and conveys to facilitate further transfers and transmutations, and *moo* inflects and contorts to enunciate how persons, houses, livestock, and crops come into being and exist through life. As such, it underscores how *horu* is not something, but pertains to movements or interactions that afford beings of different kinds by virtue of its direction and magnitude. *Horu*

is hence a life-force that actuates life and that which is, depending on the places, substances, conduits, beings, and processes from, through, along, and by means of which it inflects. In turn, these phenomena derive their terms from *moo*, and hence concern and enunciate a plethora of life-relations.

It follows from this that *moo* and its derivative terms do not involve metaphors or create analogies between a plurality of independently existing beings. By contrast, they are conceptual resources that concern and enunciate the becoming and being of a multitude of beings as the inflections and effects of *horu*. As concepts, *horu* and those that derive from *moo* entail a continuity of being, where persons, houses, livestock, and crops emerge and exist as transformations that inflect through parts of each other. Instead of analogism, the situation resembles the perspectivism Descola (2013: 9) describes, where “Most of the entities that people the world are interconnected in a vast continuum inspired by unitary principles and governed by an identical regime of sociability.” It gains support from the fact that *mri* is used to mean both veins of persons and animals, and the roots of trees and crops (Myhre 2018: 85). It is underscored by the use of kinship terms to talk about the relationships between banana trees, whose cultivation, moreover, replicates the spatial and temporal figuration of homesteads (Myhre 2018: 129). Nevertheless, the situation differs from perspectivism by the fact that these beings do not share a “soul,” but a vital principle conceptualized as *horu*. Although anthropologists have rendered cognates of *moo* as “soul” or “spirit,” they in fact concern inflection points where *horu* gains different forms to actualize beings of different kinds. Unlike the perspectivist soul, *horu* and *moo* therefore do not confer a “reflexive awareness and intentionality” (Descola 2013: 5), but concern a vital and transformative capacity to affect and effectuate others in and through life. If “Amerindian thought envisages the entire cosmos as being animated by a single cultural regime” (Descola 2013: 11), then *horu* and *moo* entail a life and world enlivened by a single vital principle.

Language nevertheless forms part of these transfers and transformations, as speech moves along with *horu* to affect and be affected by it, and thus constitutes life-force in a further form (Myhre 2015, 2016b, 2018). Accordingly, Peter’s statements accompanied the beer he poured on the ground, as he requested Horombo for rain and something to eat. In this way, his speech channelled its *horu* in specific ways in order to elicit rain and enable continued dwelling and life. Conversely,

the pouring beer elicited the concept of *moo*, which I had barely encountered before, at least in that particular form. The concept of *moo* hence also emerged as an effect of the transfers and transformations of *horu*. One can add to this the fact that statements attended Peter’s act of tossing milk onto the bull-calf’s back before it was removed from the house, and the way that both Chagga and Kamba enunciations accompanied the placement of meat and blood on the chyme and the pouring of beer and milk around it (Myhre 2018: 238). In combination, they reveal and underscore how language and life-force entwine in different forms, and how they engage and emerge from different phenomena that derive their terms from *moo* for the purpose of extending dwelling and life. The complex relationships between language and life-force exceed the singular perspectivist capacity to impose categories on the world, and instead involve manifold dispositions to engage life and the world in a multitude of ways (Myhre forthcoming). Accordingly, *moo* forms the root of multiple terms that concern transfers and transformations of *horu* that involve parts of persons, houses, livestock, and the environment at large. Conversely, the concept of *moo* formed part of the event that set in motion all the phenomena that derive their terms from it, and thus emerged from these multiple engagements with life and the world. As such, it involves a different move, where the concept neither applies to nor extracts from life, but emerges from the transfers and transformations that constitute it. Paraphrasing Alfred Kroeber (1917), the concept of *moo* is superorganic in the sense that it unfolds from the material conversions and conveyances that constitute the life of which it forms part. In turn, the notions of *kumoo-soni*, *moongo*, *mooshe*, *mooma*, *moombe*, and *motcho* unfold from *moo* to enunciate and specify how different beings emerge and exist as inflections and effects of *horu*, while my concept of the vectorial person unfolds from the ethnographic description of these terms and their uses. These movements do not involve the imposition of a social form on an organic substance, but the gradual emergence and inflection of conceptual forms from practical engagements with life, and its material transfers and transformations.

These movements moreover modify Ruel’s (1997: 117) contention that *omooyo* and its cognates have both an abstract meaning and a physiological reference. His claim appears to build on Charles Ogden and Ivor Richards’ (1923: 11) triangle of reference, which divides and mediates between symbols, thoughts, and referents. The

contention gains support from John Russo's (1989: 116) point that Ogden and Richards built their triangle on Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic relations between signs, objects, and interpretants, and Ruel's (1997: 60) adoption and adaptation of "Peirce's trichotomy of signs as icons, indexes and symbols, into a set of concepts that can be used in the processual, contextual analysis of ritual." These notions entail that meaning projects onto material objects, and thus share affinities with the perspectivist view that concepts apply to entities in the material world, as well as the concept of metaphor where meanings transport between phenomena and contexts. By contrast, *moo* and its related concepts emerge from practical engagements with life, and partake in the transfers and transformations that constitute *moo*. They entail a different relationship between concepts and life, where the former acquire the character of animate being or events in the latter (cf. Badiou 2005: 75). Wittgenstein ([1953] 1968 §23) similarly recast the relationship between language and life, when he claimed that, "Here the term language-game is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of a language is part of an activity, or a form of life." For ethnography, the challenge then is not to domesticate *moo* and its derivative forms by means of exogenous concepts, nor to develop them into anthropological analytics. As prefigured by Ruel, Devisch, and de Boeck, the challenge is rather to afford a descriptive space where vernacular notions may inflect and unfold to reveal their own conceptual character.

Conclusion

Decades ago, James Fernandez (1974: 119) pointed out that the concept of metaphor was gaining attention even if its central role for anthropological enquiry dated back to the discipline's inception. Since then, the notion of metaphor has continued to hold if not attain attraction for a variety of reasons. As a literary device, metaphor speaks to a concern for ethnography as a form of writing, and draws our attention to the constructed character of ethnographic texts and the fictional nature of our analytical resources (cf. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1988; Strathern 1988). Metaphor, moreover, implies a mode of comparison, as it apprehends one phenomenon in terms of another. Hence, Marilyn Strathern (1988) deploys the distinction between gift and commodity as a "metaphorical base" for comprehending and comparing a host of other differences,

and thus reconceives comparison as involving analogies or relations between relations (Myhre 2019: 12). Literally, something carried across or between, metaphor relatedly speaks to how analytical constructs move between contexts to describe life in recognizable terms, and how vernacular practices may enrich anthropological reflections (see Myhre 2016a). Ethnographic description thus recalls Richards' (1936) definition of metaphor as a "transaction between contexts," where a "tenor" and "vehicle" interact on a shared "ground" (Russo 1989: 251ff). It echoes in Fernandez's (1974: 123) claim that, "A metaphor is a predication upon a subject of an object from a domain to which the subject belongs only by a stretch of the imagination," and in Moore's (2004: 73) notion of "concept-metaphors" as "a kind of conceptual short-hand, both for anthropologists and for others . . . that orient us towards areas of shared exchange."

By contrast, I have shown how *moo* forms the root of multiple terms that concern places, conduits, substances, beings, and processes from, through, along, and by means of which *horu* converts and conveys to afford the becoming and constitute the being of persons, houses, livestock, and crops. These notions do not involve the predication of an object on an inchoate subject, but inflections that effectuate the emergence and existence of subjects and objects as the effects of a uniform life-force. They resemble Fernandez's metaphor in that they regard affective movements, but contrast as they concern concrete subjects and objects in material time and space, and not only pronouns in quality space. The notions rather constitute what Veena Das (2018: 10) calls singular concepts, "whose mode of generality is different from that of comparison between different objects or cases," as they in this case pertain to how beings emerge and exist as inflections in and of life.

The event that occurred in 2008 engaged these phenomena to effectuate how beings and notions turn into and out of each other, and enunciate how life becomes as the effect of their transfers and transformations. However, these conversions and conveyances engage and deploy *horu* in different forms, and therefore do not involve metaphorical transfers or translations between different yet analogous objects, actions, or domains. Rather than metaphors, these transfers and transformations constitute life, and the event therefore allowed life to reveal itself *as itself*. Accordingly, the derivative terms fold into and out of both *moo* and each other, and thereby do not transpose between objects or contexts. The different terms that derive from *moo* enunciate how *horu* projects

and inflects through beings of different kinds, while their shared root articulates how life transcends their particular modes of being. The different terms articulate how these beings emerge and exist as relational composites, while their common concern enunciates how this occurs in and of life.

The notion of metaphor finally validates and invokes a notion and practice of interpretation that accord with what Renato Rosaldo (1989: 2) calls “anthropology’s classic norms, which prefer to explicate culture through the gradual thickening of symbolic webs of meaning.” Accordingly, metaphor conjures a particular human figure that assumes the form of an articulate being, who is willing and able to expound on things. The figure holds attraction to anthropologists, who as practitioners of a descriptive discipline rely on language to render life, and are therefore dependent on and prejudiced for speaking subjects and their statements. Thus, Devisch (1993: 35) commends Victor Turner that, “He is innovative in re-enacting the speaking subject—a phenomenological dimension of his approach that builds up an ethnography from what participants say about what they do in the ritual, why, and what this all represents to them.” Perspectivism propagates such subjects beyond the human, as it redistributes communicative and reflexive capabilities, and multiplies interlocutors who may exchange and expound information. Rosaldo points out that such regards occlude the *force* of particular phenomena, such as emotions and experiences of certain kinds. I would add that it also applies to *horu* as a life-force that does not exist in and of itself, but only assumes particular forms as it inflects through and becomes beings of specific kinds. It is also detrimental to *moo*, which rarely features in spoken language, yet constitutes the ground from which other notions and language-games rise. The speaking subject contrasts with Peter’s point when he tossed milk onto the bull that they had made noise over the lack of rain, which implies that its arrival would shut them up. Similarly, Devisch (1988) and de Boeck (1994b: 458) suggest that discourse and debate come to rest in persons like the chief from whom language and argument both spring and return. It underscores how language and life-force inflect, affect, and effectuate each other, and how they partake in and constitute life. *Moo* exceeds and subtends that which is and in which it is spoken, and is therefore hard to grasp if we only depend on and valorize articulated judgment. Its conception and conceptual character require instead a descriptive space, where language and life-force may

inflect and unfold, so they in turn can modulate our analytics.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge financial support from the University of Oxford, Research Council of Norway, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Nordic Africa Institute, and University of Oslo, and receipt of research permits from the Tanzanian Commission for Science and Technology. I am also grateful for the invitation to take part in this special issue, and thank HAU’s editors and reviewers for their comments and suggestions. My greatest debt is due to Peter Mnduwamangi Augusti Urio and the other descendants of *mangi* Tengia for their assistance and cooperation, and for allowing me to participate in the events that occurred in 2008.

References

- Badiou, Alain. 2005. “The adventure of French philosophy.” *New Left Review* 35: 67–77.
- Beattie, John H. M. 1968. “Aspects of Nyoro symbolism.” *Africa* 38: 413–42.
- . 1976. “Right, left, and the Banyoro.” *Africa* 48: 217–35.
- . 1978. “Nyoro symbolism and Nyoro ethnography: A rejoinder.” *Africa* 48: 278–95.
- Beidelman, Thomas O. 1961. “Right and left hand among the Kaguru: A note on symbolic classification.” *Africa* 31: 250–57.
- Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus. 1986. *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Das, Veena. 2018. “Analysis: Between the empirical and the conceptual.” *Social Analysis* 62: 9–11.
- de Boeck, Filip. 1994a. “‘When hunger goes around the land’: Hunger and food among the Aluund of Zaire.” *Man* 29: 257–82.
- . 1994b. “Of trees and kings: Politics and metaphor among the Aluund of Southwestern Zaire.” *American Ethnologist* 21: 451–73.
- de Heusch, Luc. 1985. *Sacrifice in Africa: A structuralist approach*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Descola, Philippe. 2013. *Beyond nature and culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Devisch, René. 1988. "From equal to better: Investing the chief among the northern Yaka of Zaïre." *Africa* 58: 261–90.
- . 1993. *Weaving the threads of life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dundas, Charles. 1924. *Kilimanjaro and its people: A history of the WaChagga, their laws, customs and legends, together with some account of the highest mountain in Africa*. London: H. F. & G. Witherby.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward. E. 1956. *Nuer religion*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Fernandez, James. 1974. "The mission of metaphor in expressive culture." *Current Anthropology* 15: 119–45.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Geissler, Paul W., and Ruth J. Prince. 2010. *The land is dying: Contingency, creativity and conflict in Western Kenya*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Gutmann, Bruno. 1909. *Dichten und Denken der Dschagganeger. Beiträge zur ostafrikanischen Volkskunde*. Leipzig: Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Mission.
- . 1924. "Die Ehrerbietung der Dschagganeger gegen ihre Nutzpflanzen und Haustiere." *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 48: 123–46.
- . 1926. *Das Recht der Dschagga. Arbeiten zur Entwicklungspsychologie*. München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- . 1935. "The African standpoint." *Africa* 8: 1–17.
- . 1966. *Afrikaner-Europäer in nächstenschaftlicher Entsprechung*. Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk.
- Hubert, Henri, and Marcel Mauss. (1899) 1964. *Sacrifice: Its nature and function*. London: Cohen & West.
- Johnson, Frederick. 1939. *A standard Swahili–English dictionary*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Kroeber, Alfred L. 1917. "The superorganic." *American Anthropologist* 19: 163–213.
- Lienhardt, Godfrey. 1961. *Divinity and experience: The religion of the Dinka*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 1999. "Gender, symbolism and praxis: Theoretical approaches." In *Those who play with fire: Gender, fertility and transformation in East and Central Africa*, edited by Henrietta L. Moore, Todd Sanders and Bwire Kaare, 3–37. London: Athlone Press.
- . 2004. "Global anxieties: The concept-metaphors and pre-theoretical commitments in anthropology." *Anthropological Theory* 4: 71–88.
- Moore, Sally Falk. 1976. "The secret of the men: A fiction of Chagga initiation and its relation to the logic of Chagga symbolism." *Africa* 46: 357–70.
- . 1986. *Social facts and fabrications: "Customary" law on Kilimanjaro, 1880–1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Myhre, Knut Christian. 2006. "Divination and experience: Explorations of a Chagga epistemology." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12: 313–30.
- . 2007. "Family resemblances, practical interrelations and material extensions: Understanding sexual prohibitions, production and consumption in Kilimanjaro." *Africa* 77: 307–30.
- . 2014. "The multiple meanings of *moongo*: On the conceptual character of doorways and backbones in Kilimanjaro." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20: 505–25.
- . 2015. "What the beer shows: Exploring ritual and ontology in Kilimanjaro." *American Ethnologist* 42: 97–115.
- . 2016a. "Introduction. Cutting and connecting: 'Afrinesian' perspectives on networks, exchange, and relationality." In *Cutting and connecting: 'Afrinesian' perspectives on networks, exchange, and relationality*, edited by Knut Christian Myhre, 1–24. Oxford: Berghahn.
- . 2016b. "Membering and dismembering: The poetry and relationality of animal bodies in Kilimanjaro." In *Cutting and connecting: 'Afrinesian' perspectives on networks, exchange, and relationality*, edited by Knut Christian Myhre, 114–31. Oxford: Berghahn.
- . 2017. "The power of a severed arm: Life, witchcraft, Christianity in Kilimanjaro." In *Pentecostalism and witchcraft: Spiritual warfare in Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Knut Rio, Michelle MacCarthy and Ruy Blanes, 163–87. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2018. *Returning life: Language, life force and history in Kilimanjaro*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- . 2019. "Tales of a stitched anus: Fictions, analytics, and personhood in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25: 9–28.
- . Forthcoming. "Deep pragmatism." In *The mythology in our language: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, edited by Stephan Palmié and Giovanni da Col, 97–115. Chicago, IL: HAU Books.
- Needham, Rodney. 1960. "The left hand of the Mugwe: An analytical note on the structure of Meru symbolism." *Africa* 30: 20–33.

- . 1967. "Right and left in Nyoro symbolic classification." *Africa* 37: 425–52.
- . 1976. "Nyoro symbolism: The ethnographic record." *Africa* 46: 236–46.
- Ogden, Charles K., and Ivor A. Richards. 1923. *The meaning of meaning: A study of the influence of language upon thought and of the science of symbolism*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
- Raum, Johannes. 1907. "Blut- und Speichelbünde bei den Wadschagga." *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 10: 269–94.
- . 1909. *Versuch einer Grammatik der Dschaggasprache (Moschi-Dialekt)*. Berlin: Georg Reimer.
- . 1911. "Die Religion der Landschaft Moschi am Kilimandjaro. Originalaufzeichnungen von Eingeborenen." *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 14: 159–211.
- Richards, Ivor A. 1936. *The philosophy of rhetoric*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Rigby, Peter. 1966. "Dual symbolic classification among the Gogo of Central Tanzania." *Africa* 36: 1–17.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and truth: The remaking of social analysis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Ruel, Malcolm. 1997. *Belief, ritual and the securing of life: Reflexive essays on a Bantu religion*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Russo, John P. 1989. *I. A. Richards: His life and work*. London: Routledge.
- Sanders, Todd. 2008. *Beyond bodies: Rainmaking and sense-making in Tanzania*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Setel, Philip. 1999. *A plague of paradoxes: AIDS, culture, and demography in Northern Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The gender of the gift: Problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . (1991) 2004. *Partial connections*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Wagner, Günter. 1949. *The Bantu of North Kavirondo, vol. 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wagner, Roy. 1986. *Symbols that stand for themselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Walther, K. 1900. "Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Moschi-dialekts des Ki-Chagga (Kilimanjaro, Deutsch-Ostafrika)." *Zeitschrift für Afrikanische und Oceanische Sprachen* 5: 33–43.
- Werner, Alice. (1904) 1973. "Note on the terms used for 'right hand' and 'left hand' in the Bantu languages." In *Right and left: Essays on dual symbolic classification*, edited by Rodney Needham, 427–30. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (1953) 1968. *Philosophical investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.

Knut Christian MYHRE is a Senior Researcher in the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo. He trained in philosophy and social anthropology, receiving a DPhil degree from the University of Oxford. Myhre is the editor of *Cutting and connecting: 'Afrinesian' perspectives on networks, exchange and relationality* (Berghahn 2016) and the author of *Returning life: Language, life force and history in Kilimanjaro* (Berghahn 2018), as well as of articles appearing in *Africa*, *American Ethnologist*, *Anthropological Theory*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, and *Social Analysis*. Myhre received the Curl Essay Prize for 2017 from the Royal Anthropological Institute, and currently leads a research project entitled "Forms of ethics, shapes of finance: Ethnographic explorations of the limits of contemporary capital."

Knut Christian Myhre
Museum of Cultural History
P.O. Box 6762
St. Olavs plass
N-0130 Oslo
Norway
k.c.myhre@khm.uio.no