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***Metaphors as a means of generating creativity in politics***

The goals/ ends of (election) advertising are “to be publicly circulated and experienced by others” (Biocca, 1991: 22-23). And yet, one should consider the fact that election advertising has two more interrelated goals/ ends: the final one, to be voted, and the intermediate one, to create a powerful identity, that will be experienced by voters through image schemata (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980). A politician’s identity is actually a crafted manipulation of some objects of value that form the source-domain of the metaforms (Danesi, 2002 – see endnote 3) within the theory on metaphors and which become the signs used in order “to suggest legitimacy, to mobilize voters around the sign and to alter the meaning of the opponent” (Biocca, 1991: 23) explicitly or implicitly.

**I. Metaphors – a creative means of (re)shaping reality**

The etymology<sup>1</sup> (Gr. *metaphora*, derived from *metapherein*, formed of *meta* – “over, across, beyond” and *pherein* “to carry, bear”) of the term *metaphor* bears in its name the possibility of a transfer that, automatically, implies the existence of two entities. The question that might arise is whether this implied process of *carrying beyond* has a one-way nature, or, on the contrary, a reciprocal or even a complex one. And another question that is, partially related to the former one, refers to whether *a metaphor* is a matter of figurative language (a trope) or a matter of cognition (based on the conceptual system underlying any language).

Having as its final result a positive or negative image of at least one of the entities, *a metaphor* becomes, actually, an argument that establishes the structure of reality (Chaim & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1993), thus, an instance of (re)shaping one’s identity, which might be interpreted in terms of M.A.K. Halliday’s functional grammar, as a relational process of classifying and identifying, by linking one fragment of experience to another. If we label the two entities with a *carrier* and an *attribute*, then, this functional representation seems to, partially, remind us of Aristotle’s comparison theory on verbal

metaphor, built on implicature (A *implies* B, or A is B) and having a stylistic effect. The qualifying function of *an attribute* is derived from some entities that belong to a different semantic field than the one of *the carrier*. This apparent clash between the two semantic fields was called by Noam Chomsky (1964) *deviation* from some semantic rules, by Groupe  $\mu$  (1977) *allotopy* (the deviation from a norm/isotopy and the combination between different units) or by E.F. McQuarrie & D.G. Mick<sup>2</sup> as a rhetorical operation of *destabilization* which “selects an expression such that the initial context renders its meaning indeterminate. By ‘indeterminate’, we mean that multiple co-existing meanings are more available. In a trope of destabilization one means more than is said, and relies on the recipient to develop the implications”.

McQuarrie & D.G. Mick’s definition of destabilization and Groupe  $\mu$ ’s concept of *allotopy* are the arguments in favour of considering this ornamental function as one of the third levels within a *metaphor*. Thus, we could provide an answer to the above question: the two approaches (stylistics and cognitivism) on metaphor are not in a relation of disjunction, but are, rather, dominated by inclusion. The surface structure where the (non)verbal metaphor is uttered, rests on a deep structure where some image schemata (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980) or some psychological source of metaforms (Danesi, 2002: 10) are activated and which will drive towards a third level, the layer beyond, depending on the context and through its stylistic connotation, generating an instance of creativity which, finally, is wanted to be acknowledged as having a persuasive function.

This intermingling between levels/ layers within the process of metaphorization reminds us of Lakoff and Johnson’s *conceptual metaphor theory* underlined by a process of *mapping* from a *source domain* of experience to a *target domain* of experience, thus establishing an experientialist theory of truth, namely “a theory of what it means to understand a statement as true or false in a certain situation” (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980: 180-181). And yet, Marcel Danesi (2002: 2) considers that this *conceptual metaphor theory* seems to lack “a synthetic framework for interpreting the diverse, multiform manifestations of the many *layers* of metaphor in human symbolic and communicative behavior”. Linking the concept of *layering* to Ch.S. Peirce’s *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness*, Danesi takes rather into consideration three “cognitive flow”

gouverned layers<sup>3</sup> of metaphorical reasoning: metaforms, meta-metaforms and metasymbols.

Having as empirical data two election posters which render pictorial metaphors (Forceville, Klinkenberg), I will adopt M. Danesi's theory because of its implied relation to Peirce's typology of signs (icon, index, symbol), which can be (de)coded only through ontological and epistemic correspondences (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

## **II. Beyond two Romanian pictorial political metaphors**

The 2000 and 2004 election campaign in Romania, achieved by the Democratic Party, brought a change in the shaping of the Romanian politicians' identity.

The mere display of some male busts was replaced by a more complex *mise en scène* where apparently contrary elements belonging to different domains of experience were put together and new metaforms were created through a process of highlighting certain features while suppressing others. The two metaforms mentioned in this paper are actually pictorial representations based on the following iconic thinking:

- [Ion Iliescu is a wolf; a granny; Little Red Riding Hood]. In the 2000 Romanian election campaign, Ion Iliescu's moral portrait was altered by being depicted as the embodiment of the three characters.

- [Traian Băsescu is a red hot pepper]. In the 2004 Romanian election campaign, Traian Băsescu chose a well-known spice as the source domain within the process of moulding his identity.

Every Romanian citizen still remembers the way in which Ion Iliescu's qualities were downplayed. He was pictorially depicted as the target domain in the metaphor *in absentia conjoint* (FIG.1) where some ontological correspondences of the three characters involved in the image scheme provided by Brothers Grimm's famous folktale (a cultural model), were combined in order to provide, through epistemic correspondences/ the layer of meta-metaform, some typical feature of Iliescu's personality, namely old age, slyness and gullibility. The memorability of this new created image of the former president was achieved through the fact that it was under-coded.

This lack of closure is a subtle invitation for the reader to reinterpret the two domains through experiential abduction that will bring to surface associate connections stored in the memory. The pictorial metaphor/ metaform (FIG.2) [Bănescu is a red hot pepper] is constructed on the same process of reshaping the cognitive incompleteness through some cultural-specific connotations. Whereas the knowledge about the source domain [characters in a fairy tale] within the former metaform, that has Ion Iliescu as its target domain, is related to fictitious characters that shape some axiological values universally acknowledged, the latter source domain [red hot pepper] has a synesthetic effect, based on the cultural dimension of the Romanian traditional cuisine: a red hot pepper is used on the side, especially with one type of dish, called “bors”, a Central Eastern European local culinary heritage. This macro-semiotic level of the signifier /hot red pepper/ sends to “a ritual of eating where some etiquette codes are activated” (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *apud* Ashley et al, 2004: 30). The mental image of the representation of a plate of borsch and a red pepper on the side of the plate stirs a certain topical calculus (Adam, Bonhomme, 2004: 282-284) in the mind of a Romanian: **a.** The atmosphere of an informal table setting seems to set in; **b.** Any difference of social strata seems to be ignored: the subjects/ social actors may be considered friends, enjoying their meal.

The micro-semiotic level of the same signifier turns this [food] source domain into a pictorial metaphor where the minimal units, colour, form and texture, send towards the secondness dimension of metaphorical layering, namely meta-metaform. On the one hand, there is an instance of a *praesentia conjoint* metaphor (the elongated form of the red pepper and Bănescu’s lock of hair), on the other hand, the hot pungent sense of taste and the visual perception of the red colour are indexes of nimbleness and agility, traits that are transferred unto the target domain [Traian Bănescu].

The two conceptual implications of the informal setting of an eating ritual and the lack of a difference between social strata, mentioned above, also apply to Traian Bănescu. A former oil tanker captain, he is known to have an unpolished form of charisma, ready to adapt himself to any social context: to counter-attack his opponents using informal language or to dance with belly-dancers.

The two types of objects of value (fairy-tale characters and some spice) become the source domains within the pictorial metaphors/

metaforms that influenced the Romanians' way of perceiving the two political leaders. Being related to some universal or specific cultural models, the three characters and the red hot pepper become signs of creativity and imagination, revealing new axiological values that could not have been rendered through a mere bust.



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

## Endnotes

1

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=metaphor&searchmode=none>

2 McQuarrie, E.F. & Mick, D.G.: "Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language", <http://lsb.scu.edu/~emcquarrie/rhetjcr.htm>

3 Marcel Danesi (1993, 2002) offers the following definition for metaforms, meta-metaforms and metasymbols. Metaforms are results of an experiential abduction, from an *association-by-inference* process. Meta-metaforms are connectors between already-existing metaforms to abstractions and they should be understood in culture-specific ways, implying indexicality in reference. Metasymbols are traces to a culture's historical past, being governed by conventions.

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