Why and how study metaphor, metonymy, and other tropes in multimodal discourse?

Forceville, C.

Comunicação, Cognição e Media

VOLUME 1

Organização de

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Nota prévia

A presente obra, em dois volumes, reúne grande parte das conferências e comunicações apresentadas em "Comunicação, Cognição e Media: Congresso Internacional de Ciências da Comunicação", promovido e organizado pelo Centro de Estudos Filosóficos e Humanísticos da Faculdade de Filosofia da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, em Braga, e realizado na mesma Faculdade, nos dias 23 a 25 de Setembro de 2009. O Congresso reuniu em Braga investigadores de cerca de trinta países e conceituados especialistas em Ciências da Comunicação e Ciências Cognitivas.

Os 121 estudos apresentados, distribuídos por onze secções temáticas, representam vários domínios de investigação em Ciências da Comunicação e estudos dos Media e procuram, num profícuo diálogo interdisciplinar entre as Ciências da Comunicação e as Ciências Cognitivas, explorar as relações entre comunicação, cognição e media. A parte inicial do primeiro volume reúne as conferências plenárias dos académicos convidados.

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Why and how study metaphor, metonymy, and other tropes in multimodal discourse?

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Abstract

A fast-growing branch of cognitive linguistics focuses on multimodal metaphor, metonymy, and other tropes. This budding work is important for at least three reasons: (1) metaphor theorists' claims about the embodied nature of human thinking can only be properly assessed if and when conceptual metaphor can be shown to occur in non-verbal and multimodal no less than in purely verbal discourse; (2) investigating multimodal tropes aids the development of tools for analyzing multimodal discourse in general; and (3) studying multimodal tropes can help multimodal discourse designers in their creative decisions. This paper elaborates on these three issues by discussing various examples, with as primary aim to achieve greater precision in analyzing non-verbal tropes and in distinguishing between them.

Keywords: genre, metaphor, metonymy, multimodality

1. The importance of studying multimodal tropes

There are at least three good reasons for researching tropes – characterized by Wales as "figures of speech [...] involving [...] lexical or semantic deviation of some kind" (Wales 2001: 398) – in visual and multimodal discourse. Let me briefly discuss each of them.

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1. The key note lecture I gave at the *Communication, Cognition and Media* conference (faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Braga, Portugal, 23-25 September 2009) drew on research projects that I already reported about in various publications. The present paper is based on a keynote lecture I gave at the Researching and Applying Metaphor Workshop 2009, 4-5 June, Media Studies department, University of Amsterdam. It will be simultaneously published in the proceedings of the AESLA conference (University of Ciudad Real, Spain, 26-28 March 2009).

1.1. *Investigating only verbal manifestations of tropes can never suffice to make the claim for embodied cognition, that is, the view that human beings' capacity for abstract thinking fundamentally depends on the affordances and limitations of the human body*

If, as Lakoff and Johnson famously claim, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of things in terms of another" (1980: 5), it is inevitable that scholars investigate other modes/modalities than language alone. Lakoff and Johnson are generally seen as the founding fathers of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which is by now robustly entrenched in linguistics as well as in some social science research (see Gibbs 2006, 2008 for surveys of the state of the art in the field). Briefly, CMT claims that we do not just use language metaphorically in a systematic way (as was impressively demonstrated by Lakoff & Johnson 1980), but that we actually *think* metaphorically, and do so in a manner largely determined by the way our bodies look and function, that is, by motor skills, sensory abilities, outward appearance, physical needs to survive, etc. However, "embodied cognition" – even when admittedly complemented by what could be called "accultured cognition" (e.g., Emanatian 1995; Gibbs & Steen 1999; Kövecses 2005) – is by no means generally accepted (for dissenting voices see Murphy 1994, 1996; Haser 2005). One thorny problem is that it is difficult but necessary to think of ways to falsify its central tenet (Gibbs & Perlman 2006; Geeraerts 2006). CMT advocates might counter: "if Lakoff and Johnson are right in their claims that thinking is thoroughly embodied, there is simply no way around it. It is a biological law that willy-nilly all of us obey". However, this would mean that embodied cognition is to be accepted axiomatically, and this is definitely not going to convince the skeptics. Part of the problem is that, as Gibbs & Colston (1995) and Cienki (1998) have rightly emphasized, there lurks a dangerous circularity in ping-ponging between conceptual metaphors and their supposed verbal manifestations. Are they not, after all, both matters of language? How can we be sure that there is not just systematicity in the way people use metaphors, but that they actually *live* by those metaphors? To break free from this language-cognition loop, it is imperative to research not just verbal, but also non-verbal and multimodal tropes (called "figures of depiction" by Tversky 2001). It is to be emphasized that this is an enterprise that potentially has substantial repercussions for our view of large-scale processes in the real world. The notion of embodied cognition points the way toward universal, culture-independent aspects of human understanding, and thus to strategies for conflict-resolution between groups that, in other respects, may have insurmountably different ideas. The stakes are high, therefore, and it is worth investing scholarly time, hope, and energy in researching multimodal tropes. If the outcome should support embodied cognition, that would be great; if it contradicts it, that would be a huge disappointment, but a sobering one of the kind that serious scholarship should never shun.

1.2. *Research into non-verbal metaphors and tropes can make a robust contribution to the budding field of visual and multimodal discourse*

In contemporary society, discourse of a purely verbal kind increasingly gives way to discourse in which language is combined with, or even superseded by, visuals, music, sound, gesture, and other modalities.[2] However, as usual, practice is far ahead of theory. Although "multimodality" has become a buzzword in book and paper titles as well as conference panels and expert meetings, there is still relatively little useful theory in this area. A discipline that has consistently addressed multimodality is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), inspired by Hallidayan grammar (see e.g., Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996-2006, 2001; Royce & Bowcher 2007), but the approach is in many respects heavily biased by its roots in linguistics (see for critical reviews Forceville 1999, 2007, 2009). A central question in the analysis of multimodal discourse is what information (including perspectives, emotions, and moods) is provided by which modality, and how the overall effect is more than the sum of the parts. Analyzing multimodal metaphor and metonymy is a productive way to gain insight into multimodal discourse, since in its prototypical manifestations target and source occur in different modalities. Such work can help pave the way for theorizing other tropes multimodally, and by extension, for a better understanding of how multimodal discourse in general works. This, in turn, is highly pertinent for educational purposes: being able to understand and assess the import of multimodal discourse is a competence that, no less than proper language-use, needs to be taught in primary and secondary education.

1.3. *Research into multimodal tropes may benefit producers of multimodal discourse*

Just as studying sonnets' or limericks' structure and conventions can help someone who wants to write them, studying multimodal discourse can aid someone who has a (professional) interest in creating it in one form or other. We can here think of advertisers, illustrators, and designers of consumer products, films, schoolbooks, manuals, advertisements, buildings, newspaper lay-outs, routing in public buildings, etc. To take another perspective: teaching a difficult concept often relies on analogical thinking, or metaphor (see Gentner & Markman 1997; Gentner & Bowdle 2008), and this can be done multimodally.

2. The term "modality" is notoriously difficult to define (for discussion, see Forceville 2006a; Bateman 2008). For practical purposes, in this paper the following modalities will be distinguished: spoken language; written language; visuals; music; non-verbal sound.

It is to be acknowledged, however, that the various stakeholders do not have the same interests. For CMT scholars, the focus will have to be on the question if, and if so how, a metaphorical (or another "tropic") concept is or can be presented systematically in multimodal form. Adhering to, and developing, precise terminology is imperative both to investigate whether a given trope can or cannot occur in other modalities as the verbal one: it only makes sense to call a certain visual, or musical, or tactile phenomenon a metaphor, or a metonymy, or a hyperbole, if it shares sufficient essential features with its verbal ancestor. This issue does not change if a trope involves two or more modalities and thereby deserves the adjective "multimodal".

Theorizing multimodal tropes includes a discussion of the applicability of such terms as "target", "source", "unidirectionality", "embodied versus accultured feature transfer" and others. After all, only by precise definitions, and precise procedures for identifying a certain trope across different modalities it is possible to decide which tropes can occur in which modalities (see Bretones Callejas & Cortés de los Ríos 2008). Moreover, it is important that the theorization of non-verbal metaphor is related to other central CMT tenets, such as prototype theory and schema theory (Lakoff 1987).

For multimodal discourse scholars, the whole matter of multimodal tropology is simply one instrument to gain insight into how media drawing on more than one modality can convey certain (types of) information to an audience (for instance, books and comics can recruit written language and visuals; films typically use spoken language, written language, moving images, non-verbal sound, and music). Other instruments are for instance spatial organization (Martin & Stenglin 2007) and layout of elements (Engelhardt 2002), the choice of letter fonts (Van Leeuwen 2006), and rhythmic patterns. Precise terminology is still important, but the aim here is not so much the testing and expanding of a model (CMT) as the development of tools for analyzing and theorizing media and genres (see e.g., Caballero 2006, 2009; Kukkonen 2009).

Scholars interested in *applications* of multimodal tropology, by contrast, may not be particularly interested in precise categorizations and terminology; they may use work in this area primarily as a source of ideas, to be translated in concrete recommendations for industrial designers and other producers (e.g., Ludden 2008; Van Rompay 2005; Westendorp 2002). The goal among practitioners is not so much to contribute to CMT, or to multimodal discourse theory, as to *use* it freely, even imprecisely, in their own creative work.

2. Considerations for a healthy development of multimodal tropes

Within CMT, an increasing number of scholars investigate non-verbal and multimodal metaphor. Roughly speaking, one line of research concentrates on gesture, usually as it co-occurs with spoken language (e.g., McNeill 1992, 2005; Müller 2008;

Mittelberg & Waugh 2009; Müller & Cienki 2009). Another focuses on music, often as it interacts with lyrics (e.g., Thorau 2003; Zbikowski 2009; see also Cook 1998). A third approach addresses visuals of various kinds, often as these co-occur with language, but also (as in film) with sound and music. All three research lines are important for the further understanding of both creative metaphor (Black 1979) and conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999). In the remainder of this paper, I will focus on this third line of research, and provide suggestions for its further development.

2.1. Pictorial and multimodal metaphor in advertising

In order to retain its power as a descriptive instrument, it is crucial to formulate with optimal precision how metaphor is distinct both from literal usage and from other tropes, as well as how it relates to them. This also involves specifying its place in Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) Blending Theory. (The short version of my view is that CMT and BT approaches are compatible if we accept that all metaphors are blends but that not all blends are metaphors; that is, we should speak about "metaphorical blends" – as opposed to other types of blends, for instance blends based on puns or on Counterfactuality.) My first exhoration is: "Characterize tropes verbally, but modality-independently." Adequate characterization and definition require specifying criteria, and this surely is best done in the verbal modality; no other modality is capable of the precision required here. But since my claim is that metaphor and at least some other tropes need not be verbal, or else combine verbal and non-verbal modalities, this definition must be broad enough to go beyond the verbal. These are the criteria I would now use to tackle the question "When is something (to be construed as) a metaphor?" I propose the following criteria (expanded from Forceville 1996):

1) An identity relation is created between two phenomena that, in the given context, belong to different categories;

2) The phenomena are to be understood as target and source respectively, which are not, in the context, reversible;

3) At least one feature/characteristic/connotation associated with the source domain is to be mapped (projected) onto the target domain; often an aligned structure of features is to be so mapped.

Figure 1 is an example of a pictorial metaphor (more precisely: a monomodal metaphor of the pictorial variety; see Forceville 2006a, 2008 for more discussion) in an advertisement. The metaphor that can be rendered is NECKLACE IS BULL'S RED CLOTH. Note that in order to construe the metaphor as such (indeed: in order to

construe a metaphor in the first place), the addressee must, on the basis of the brand name, the small print in the text, recognition of the golden object held by the woman as a necklace, and a matador's typical posture, be able to slot the two phenomena as target and source respectively. Since they are understood as, typically, belonging to different semantic domains/categories, the relationship between the necklace and the red cloth deserves to be called metaphorical. The feature to be mapped is, presumably, "attracting a bull", which is then adapted in the target domain to "attracting a man" (or attracting a partner). The mapped feature is to be inferred; it is not verbally specified. This means that pictorial metaphors – and indeed this holds to a degree for all non-verbal discourse – allow for a relatively high degree of freedom of interpretation that is, however, constrained by the generic advertising convention that the addressee is to map *positive* features from source to target (Forceville 1996: 104).
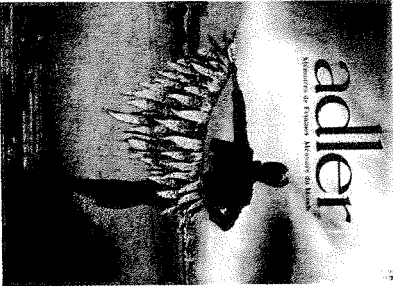
Figure 1. Text underneath woman: "Torrea: cascading tiers of white diamonds and orange sapphires set fire to a flamboyant necklace in white gold. Adler. Jewellers since 1886"
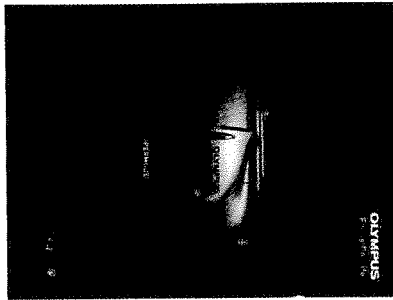
Figure 2. Body text: "Beauty and elegance combine with technological brilliance. [etc.]"

Figure 2 is a multimodal metaphor involving visuals and language (*apud* Forceville 1996 I called this a verbo-pictorial metaphor). It can be rendered as OLYM-PUS CAMERA IS SUPERMODEL. To understand this as a metaphor, "supermodel" is to be seen not as a literal description of the camera, but as invoking the realm of (female) super models of the Naomi Campbell, Claudia Schiffer, Doutzen Kroes, Karen Mulder etc. variety. Such an interpretation is triggered by the wide media exposure of

such professionals, as well as by TV programmes such as "America's next topmodel" and its various national spinoffs. Mappable features include beauty and glamour – and whatever other positive features the domain of supermodels may evoke in a viewer.
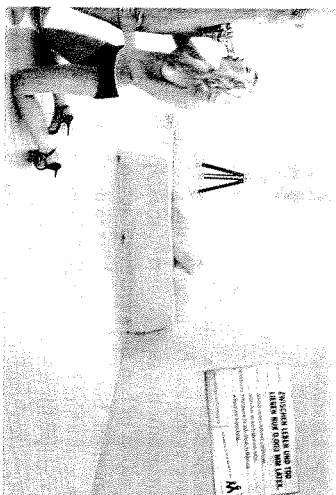
Figure 3. Text "Between life and death lie only 0,003 mm latex"
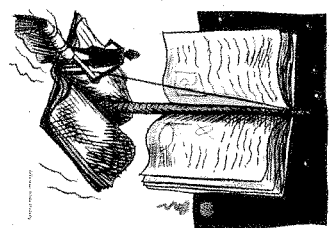
Figure 4. Illustration by Milan Hulsing. *De Academische Boeken-gids*, 73, NL (March 2009)

The metaphor in Figure 3 can be captured as MALE ORGAN IS GUN, and it would be a contextual metaphor (Forceville 2006a; earlier I called this subtype an MP1). It is a pictorial metaphor, since both target and source are identifiable from visual information alone – no verbal anchoring or relaying is necessary for this, although full interpretation may require the textual information. The latter makes clear that this is a warning against having unprotected sex to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. Clearly, the mapped feature is "lethally dangerous." Figure 4 is an illustration accompanying an article about the need for a standard language. Here the metaphor, again, of the contextual type, can be verbalized as BOOK IS SAIL (and BOOK IS RUDDER, BOOK IS HULL). The mapped feature can be phrased as INDISPENSABLE FOR MAKING PROGRESS – which itself depends on a more deeply entrenched LONG-TERM PURPOSESFUL ACTIVITY IS A JOURNEY metaphor (Johnson 1993: 167; Forceville 2006b, Forceville & Jeulink 2007; see also Kraljevic & Hidalgo 2009).

My own practice is to always verbalize a phenomenon I deem metaphorical in an A is B format. While this as such is not yet a guarantee that the phenomenon is a metaphor (it could be a riddle, or plain nonsense), it helps eliminate phenomena that, while possibly tropic, should not be labelled metaphors. That is, if it is not possible to apply the A is B formula, construe a target and source from different categories, and come up with at least one mappable feature, metaphorical construal appears to be, if

not impossible, at least unproductive. I also counsel to add as few words beyond the CONCRETE NOUN A IS CONCRETE NOUN B (or: VERB A IS VERB B) formula as necessary, since adjectives and other elaborations already tend to betray choices for mappable features, and thus already pertain to the interpretation stage. For instance, in Figure 3 I prefer MALE ORGAN IS GUN to MALE ORGAN IS DANGER and in Figure 4 BOOK IS SAIL to BOOK IS PROGRESS, since "gun" and "sail" are visually suggested, while "danger" and "progress" label the features that are mapped from gun and sail, respectively.

Here is another *caveat*: a multimodal text, or a fragment of multimodal discourse, almost always has more going on than the metaphor alone – even if the metaphor is the central issue, as in the above examples. For instance, the glittering necklace in Figure 1 emphatically stands out against the sepia colours of the original photograph, and this is surely an important aspect of how the advertisement attempts to communicate certain assumptions or emotions, but this has nothing to do with the metaphor as such. Similarly, the dominance of white in Figure 3 may to some viewers connote "death" – and if so, this fits in nicely with the metaphor, but it is not, strictly speaking, part of it. And in almost any advertisement there are issues of lay-out, logos, and font choices that may enhance the meaning of the product or idea promoted without pertaining to the metaphor itself. It is therefore wrong to say "This picture *is* a metaphor." My suggestion is to say something like, "This picture *contains* a metaphor" or "This picture contains clues that force/invite a viewer to construe a metaphor."

2.2. *Pictorial and multimodal metaphor in other media and genres*

Advertising is the genre that has hitherto attracted most attention from scholars theorizing pictorial and multimodal metaphor. However, it is important that research is extended to other genres; otherwise there is a serious risk that patterns and regularities claimed to hold for pictorial and multimodal metaphors in general in fact pertain to manifestations occurring in one particular genre only. Another genre that is currently being discussed by metaphor scholars is the political cartoon. El Refaie (2003, 2009) is one of the first to have investigated this genre. Other papers focusing on the cartoon are Yus (2009; see Figure 5), Schilperoord & Maes (2009), Teng (2009; see Figure 6) and Bounegru & Forceville (in prep). Given their satirical nature, political cartoons typically exemplify critical perspectives on high-profile people and states of affairs in the world. It is often these latter that take on the role of the metaphorical "target". Thus, while the genre conventions of advertising steer the addressee toward finding positive features in the source domain (unless the advertisement disparages the product of a competitor), those of political cartooning guide addressees toward identifying negative ones. The respective genres therefore play an essential role in the analysis of the metaphors.

Paintings constitute another type of standalone pictures that, in principle, can manifest a metaphor. Probably they will be more rare there than in advertising and cartoons, since metaphor's predicative, often persuasive, force may not sit comfortably with most art. Presumably, metaphors (unlike symbols or allegories) in painting will be primarily found in its propagandistic varieties. That being said, Rothenberg (2008) mounts an intriguing proposal for a recurring metaphor in Rembrandt's paintings. "In his self-portraits, Rembrandt repeated the shape of the prominent lines of the depicted hats, a distinctive feature of each of the costumes, with each depicted shape of the self-portrait mouths, thereby structurally relating costume contents and his own face" (Rothenberg 2008: 119; see Figures 7 and 8).
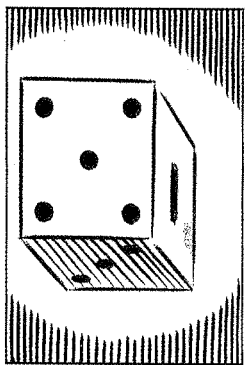

Figure 5. El Roto, BALLOT BOX IS DICE (from: Yus 2009)

Figure 6. Clay Bennett, AMERICAN NEWS IS LIKE HORROR NOVEL (from: Teng 2009)

Figure 7. REMBRANDT IS APOSTLE (Rothenberg 2008)

Figure 8. REMBRANDT IS KING (Rothenberg 2008)

Inasmuch as these headdresses were typical of specific professions or roles, Rothenberg's argument runs, they metonymically cue a source domain vis-à-vis the mouths' target domains. The formal resemblance between mouth and headdress thus gives rise to metaphors that can be verbalized as REMBRANDT IS APOSTLE and REMBRANDT IS KING. Note that even if it were somehow demonstrable that Rembrandt never intended to create these metaphors, they would still work as long as there is a community of art-lovers that perceives them (and Rothenberg did some modest experimental work to support his metaphorical construals). And at the very least, Rothenberg's daring proposal makes clear how (the perception of) very subtle similarities in form *can* cue the construal of a metaphor.

For those who may find Rothenberg's examples too far-fetched, here are two considerably more explicit examples of artistic phenomena that invite metaphorical construal (I owe both examples to Josephine Rieveld). Figure 9 shows a dangling hand that is blood-stained with blood due to the fact that the "bracelet" it sports is made of thorny twigs. The title, "Omahyra's thorns" refers to the androgynous model of that name and reinforces the prickliness of the bracelet – its visual appearance strongly reminiscent of Christ's crown of thorns. In the absence of further context, it is intriguing to speculate what features are to be mapped in this metaphor, which can be verbalized as BRACELET IS THORNY OBJECT. Because of the crucified Christ's crown, the "thorny object" strongly connotes suffering and humiliation (as the thorny crown was a parody on the real one). Since a bracelet is a piece of jewellery normally carefully chosen by the person wearing it in order to look more beautiful, or perhaps
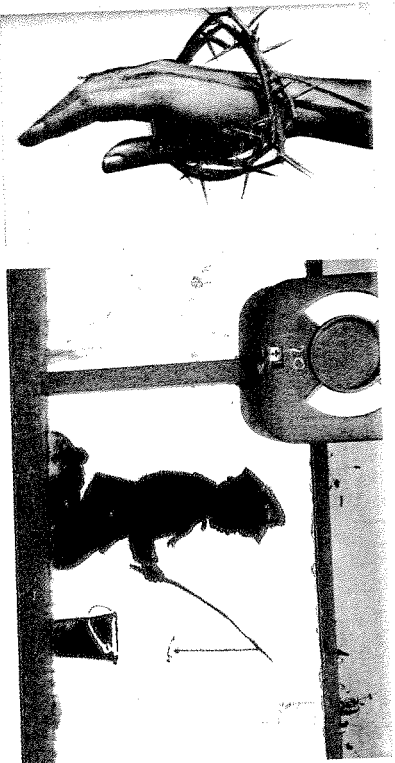
Figure 9. "Omahyra's thorns" (Artist and provenance unknown)
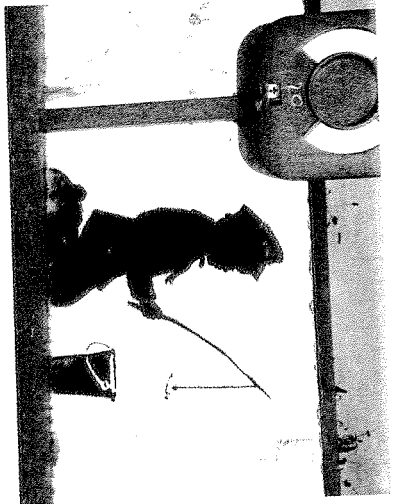
Figure 10. Banksy. Source: http://supertouchart.com.s3/439.gridserver.com/ category/banksy/page/4/ (last accessed 8 October 2009)

to impress, we appear to be invited to interpret the metaphor as something like "Omahyra exhibits beauty as a form of suffering" or "Omahyra suffers beauty." But doubtlessly there are other interpretations – particularly for those who have more detailed knowledge of Omahyra's persona.

Figure 10, a painting (on a bridge?) allegedly made by the elusive street artist Banksy, shows an innocent-looking boy angling a drugs (?) needle from a bucket. The artistic context allows for different construals. One interpretation is a literal one: junkies throw their needles into the river, so a boy could well angle up a drugs needle instead of a fish. But a metaphorical construal FISH IS NEEDLE is also possible: the feature mapped from "needle" to "fish" could well be its poisonous nature.

2.3. *Other tropes*

While metaphor perhaps may lay claim to being the queen of tropes, there are of course many others, some of which have been discussed within the CMT framework (see e.g., Gibbs 1993, Barcelona 2000, Dirven & Pöring 2002), and at least a number of these can have pictorial and multimodal manifestations. Kennedy (1982) lists some two dozen tropes from classical rhetoric that he claims can be expressed pictorially; but unfortunately he does not distinguish them clearly from each other, which makes his proposals suggestive but not very applicable (for discussion, see Forceville 1996: 53-56). More recently, some scholars with CMT affiliations have ventured into this field. Unsurprisingly, given the growing awareness within the cognitivist linguistic community of the importance of metonymy, this trope is beginning to attract attention, both in discourses involving visuals (*e.g.*, Urios-Aparisi 2009, see Figure 11; Forceville 2009c; see Figure 12) and in gesture studies (*e.g.*, Mittelberg & Waugh 2009). Let me make a few brief observations about metonymy. The main difference between metaphor and metonymy is that in the former, target and source belong to different domains or categories, and in the latter to a single one. But this distinction appears more straightforward than it actually is. The description, in fact, holds for *conventional* categories. That is, if the target and the source belong to domains that one would consider to be distinct *outside of context*, in a default situation, the trope in question verges toward metaphor, while a target and a source that belong to the same category *outside of context*, the trope is more likely to be a metonym. The "pars pro toto" ("all *hands* on deck") is a clear example of this. But whether or not the target and source belong to the same domain cannot always be assessed without taking into account the specific context in which they appear. The context is also often necessary to assess the precise identity of the "B" that the "A" metonymically stands for. Thus, in another context, the baby bootie in Figure 9 could have been a metonymic reference

to "knitting" or to "baby outfit." Similarly, the reference to "Church's authority" in Figure 12 can only be derived from the narrative context of the film. This last example also suggest that metonyms, just as metaphors, can be original and creative, and are not necessarily just convenient but clichéd shorthands.
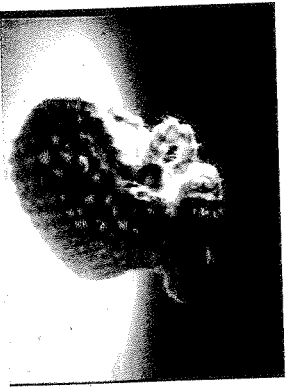
Figure 11. BABY BOOTIE STANDS FOR BABY, a still in a televised message against abortion (Urios-Aparisi 2009)

Figure 12. MOUTH STANDS FOR CHURCH'S AUTHORITY in a still in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Carl Dreyer, France © 1928 Gaumont (Forceville 2009c)

Norman Teng has made proposals for expanding the scope of pictorial and multimodal tropes to oxymoron (Teng & Sun 2002) and pictorial grouping (Teng & Sun 2002; Teng 2009). Thus, the (in)famous Benetton campaign of the 1990s, Teng and Sun demonstrate, featured many incongruities that deserve the label "oxymoron" (see Figure 13). The central idea is not necessarily that two conjoined elements are each other's opposite, but that they are fundamentally incompatible with each other in one sense or another. Again, such a decision may be dependent both on the text-immanent and the socio-cultural context. Figure 14 provides a more uncontroversial example of oxymoron.

Other tropes await in-depth analysis. Undoubtedly, a good case can be made for pictorial hyperbole, for instance, if we take the key of hyperbole to be gross exaggeration. Advertising is full of it. A more difficult trope is irony – if only because there are different accounts of verbal irony. Sperber and Wilson's "echoic mention" perspective on irony specifies that deriving the intended interpretation of an ironical utterance depends, "first, on a recognition of the utterance as echoic; second, on an identification of the source of the opinion echoed; and third, on a recognition that the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed is one of rejection or dissociation" (1995: 240). On the basis of this characterization, the four *détournements* of the logos in Figure 15 might well be considered ironical: the representation is to be understood as "echoing"
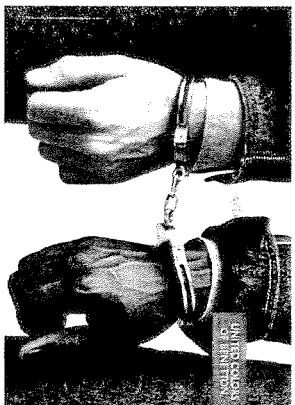
Figure 13. Oxymoron in Benetton campaign: apparent opposites are conjoined (from Teng and Sun 2002)
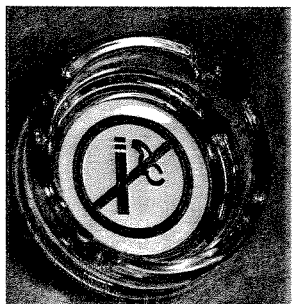
Figure 14. Oxymoron "Smoke" and "Don't smoke" (I owe the example to Nijhof 2009)

the logos of the original brands, and as a critical distanciation from the consumer messages these brands promote, achieved both by verbal and visual means (cf. a Lagerwerf 2007). Irony thus is a standard technique of critical consumer groups su as Adbusters (see https://www.adbusters.org/, last accessed 6 December 2009).
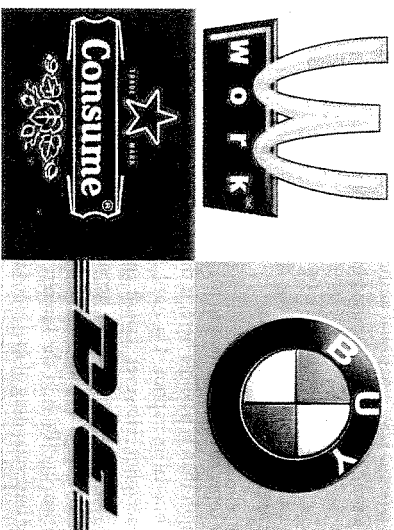
Figure 15. Free "boomerang" card distributed in the Netherlands 2007

Irrespective of the kind of trope to be analyzed, the following *caveats* are to heeded: (1) tropes can be monomodal as well as multimodal; (2) there is no guaran that every verbal trope has a pictorial or multimodal equivalent, nor that there may r

be pictorial or multimodal phenomena that deserve the label "trope" without having a verbal equivalent. Perhaps "metamorphosis", ubiquitous in animation film (see Wells 1999: 69–76), qualifies; (3) distinguishing and labelling non-verbal and multimodal tropes should not disintegrate into a pedantic scholastic exercise: discovering tenable distinctions between tropes should eventually help discover pertinent similarities and differences between phenomena in multimodal discourse.

Due to constrains of space as well as of medium (i.e., paper), I have only discussed two modalities: the pictorial and the (written version of the) verbal modality. However, metaphors and other tropes can also draw on other modalities, such as non-verbal sound and music. For examples and analyses of musical and sonic dimensions of metaphor, see Forceville (2007, 2008; Lecture 4 and 5 at http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/cyber/cforcevilleout.pdf). Ludden (2008) investigates how sound, smell, and touch can provide surprising attributes to familiar objects, e.g., boots with the smell of roses, a "heavy" sound accompanying a cute little juicer, and a metallic-looking cup made of rubber. Here, however, we are in the realm of product design. The theorist may suggest that these are, technically, closer to oxymora (see below) or multimodal jokes than to metaphor – BOOTS ARE ROSES (?); CUTE JUICER IS HEAVY MACHINE (?); METAL IS RUBBER (?) – but for the designer this is presumably not an issue at all. Let it suffice here to state that if and when a sound or a tune unequivocally evokes a referent (e.g., a national anthem evoking the nation, and a train whistle a train), such a sound or tune can be used in the service of, at least, metaphoricity and metonymy.

2.4. Creative versus structural metaphor

Another topic that is pertinent to present purposes, but needs to be discussed at far greater length than is possible here, is the relation of creative and structural pictorial and multimodal metaphor. Up until here I have only discussed fairly creative examples of metaphor. However, Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors We Live By (1980) was so daring and innovative precisely because it did not focus on creative metaphors, but on metaphors that are, as they claim, deeply entrenched in human thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Both in the interest of furthering CMT and in the interest of deepening our understanding of multimodal communication, it is desirable to investigate any structural relations between targets and sources in multimodal discourse. Two promising areas are the EMOTIONS ARE FORCES metaphor (Kövecses 1986, 2000) in the comics domain (Forceville 2005, 2009b; Van Eunen 2007; Eerden 2009; Shinohara & Matsunaka 2009) and the X IS A JOURNEY metaphor (Johnson 1987; Turner 1996; Ritchie 2008; Katz & Taylor 2008) in the domain of film (Forceville 2006b; Forceville & Jeulink 2007; Niño Zambrano 2008; Yu 2009).

3. Conclusion

Research into multimodal manifestations of metaphor and other tropes is useful in relation to a wide range of activities. Inasmuch as it leads to a greater insight into the structure and rhetoric of multimodal discourse, it can contribute substantially to theorizing narrativity, aesthetics, design, and persuasive communication. Such theorizing should in turn lead to the formulation of hypotheses – which are then to be tested in experiments designed by partnerships between humanities scholars and social scientists. Multimodal tropology can also be seen as a conceptual "crowbar" into the study of multimodal discourse in general, that is, partaking in the kind of projects also launched within the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework inspired by Hallidayan grammar. Any substantial findings in the area of multimodal discourse of course should feed into education, under such headings as (audio)visual literacy and critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, it is hoped that cognition studies will benefit from the systematic analysis and precise characterization of multimodal tropes. Finally, studying, and practicing multimodal tropes can aid in stimulating creative thinking (Boden 1990).

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What we know and what the media tell us: A sociologist's view of media, knowledge and ignorance

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Abstract

This paper questions the presumption that the media provide the necessary information for people actively to engage as citizens. It draws attention (mainly using data from the UK) to the limited availability of relevant information, the decline of audiences for news, the limits to the role of digital media in supplanting older disappearing sources, the fragmentation of audiences, and the systemic weaknesses in the way many areas of public and social affairs are reported. The paper reviews this material to question the notion of a 'knowledge society' in the face of debate about the rise of 'unreason' and the relationship of 'audiences' to 'citizens'.

Keywords: democracy, digital divide, ignorance, information, mass media, political communications

1. Introduction

No-one likes to be the spectre at the feast. However this is often the lot of the sociologist. At scientific and medical conferences the pleasurable sense of progress being made, new and wondrous technologies making life ever more attractive, or cures rendering the diseases of yesteryear increasingly controllable or curable, provide a happy gloss that the sociologist so often dearily peels way. Such a progressive and positive tone is not the spiritual core of this chapter.

In many ways the concern of this chapter is perhaps a perverse topic for an academic, but the question of 'ignorance' is at the heart of what we study as scholars, especially those of us interested in the role of the media. The media are, and have been for much of the last two centuries, the main source of ideas, values, symbols and images, that people use to construct their understanding of the world around them, especially those institutions and places remote from direct experience. Thus what the media provide, how they provide it, and what they do NOT provide, are essential points of attention if we are to understand how the world of cognition, and more broadly of social intercourse, functions.