Dorothea Horst 2018: Meaning-making and Political Campaign
Advertising. A Cognitive Linguistic and Film-analytical Perspective
on Audiovisual Figurativity. (Cinepoetics – English Edition 2.).
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A humanities scholar interacting with the general public is bound to face
one challenge. Often entirely well-intentioned, the question "what is this
analysis *for*" or "what does this *do*" is as natural for the interested public to
ask, as it is for the author to dread. And with good reason. Humanities have
always battled the assumption that for a research inquiry to be valuable, it
also needs to somehow be *useful*. It does not. Nevertheless, Dorothea Horst's
book *Meaning-making and Political Campaign Advertising* tackles this challenge
admirably, in a book that is both insightful and practical. Horst lays down
the principles of a transdisciplinary approach to audio-visual and verbal
figurativity, inviting the reader to follow her as she deconstructs four dis-
tinct political campaigns, including Germany's Angela Merkel, and Poland's
Donald Tusk. Hence, *Meaning-making and Political Campaign Advertising* be-
comes a contribution to the fields of cognitive linguistics and film analysis,
a resource for media analysts in search of a theoretical framework, and a
handbook for students of cognitive linguistics, as well as public relations
professionals. Clear and comprehensive, the layout of the book is a definite
advantage for anyone looking to answer a specific question. The book spans

246 pages and is divided into nine parts. The first five chapters introduce the theoretical and methodological frameworks, while the remaining four focus on their practical implications.

Horst's book follows the embodied affective approach originally proposed by Müller (2008), which assumes that all modalities shape, rather than merely co-express, meaning. Meaning-making is not only embodied, but also dynamic and emergent; figurative meaning is not statically *grasped* by the viewer but rather dynamically *unfolds* in front of them. Here, the book draws a distinction between more traditional ways of understanding meaning-making that rely on the notions of coding and decoding, and the relatively recent approaches which prefer to see meaning as created by the viewer, and in a constant state of dynamic evolution. Horst's book casts what she calls the "cognitive approaches" to figurativity (e.g. Grady 1997, Kövecses 2000, Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Lakoff and Turner 1989) aside, in a movement to reject language as a template for understanding film. This goes in line with Turner's earlier work (e.g. 1996) on blending that sees meaning as dynamic and encourages researchers to look beyond the sentence. More recently, Cienki (2017) has pointed out the inadequacy of using tools developed for analyzing writing to the analysis of speech. At the same time, while it is definitely possible to draw a contrast between static and dynamic approaches, it may be a line drawn in the sand. The growing popularity of gesture studies among linguists implies that contemporary cognitive linguistics already assumes at least some degree of multimodality; even Lakoff's more recent work awards no primacy to linguistic over, say, gestural or visual metaphors, simply stating that "metaphor is primarily conceptual, and secondarily linguistic, gestural or visual" (Lakoff 2014: 1). Similarly, Dancygier (2011: 195) believes that "meaning emerges in the reader's mind." On the other hand, some recent work on cinematic metaphor does subscribe to a more static view of metaphor, understanding it as a "cognitive state" (e.g. Coëgnarts 2017) rather than a process. Perhaps the question is how to best understand this division between approaches: through the tools they use, or through their assumptions about the nature of meaning.

In Horst's hands, the embodied affective approach (Müller 2008, Kappelhof and Müller 2011) to figurative meaning effectively becomes an analytical tool for cracking open the figurativity of campaign commercials. Although the phenomena we find inside them are simply called "metaphor" and "metonymy" in the book, it is important to note that these are not necessarily understood as Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphors in their original sense, but rather "they are dynamically emerging multimodal metaphors" (Kappelhof and Müller 2011: 150). Through Horst's analysis of the four campaigns we find that meaning in film can be constructed from a variety of blueprints, with the linguistic and audio-visual layers either battling for

primacy or working in concert. Metaphor and metonymy are hence not a product expertly handed over to the viewer, but rather a dynamic outcome of the viewer's "experience-driven understanding."

The embodied affective approach was originally applied to face-to-face communication (Müller and Tag 2010). Here, however, it builds toward the study of Empirical Media Aesthetics, a research effort that asks how audiovisual forms affect viewers. This movement relies on the rather bold assumption that "experiences are inherently affective, with immediate sensory qualities and an affective stance (...) as such, they ground the emergence and activation of metaphors" and that "cinematic expressive movements trigger the same kind of felt experience in the spectator as a bodily expressive movement that comes along with speech" (Kappelhof and Müller 2011: 121). Horst's book uses the tools at hand to assemble a model of meaning-making in campaign ads: how figurative meaning emerges in an encounter of the campaign commercial and the viewer.

By focusing on the dynamic aspect of figurativity, the book is firmly grounded in the view that metaphor (as well as metonymy) is a movement – not an interpretation (Carver and Pikalo 2008: 23, as cited in Horst, *Meaning-making*, p. 18). Horst's approach draws on Müller's work on metaphor, or, more precisely, on the observation that metaphor activation and consequently salience is gradable. A *sleeping metaphor* is a metaphor with metaphoric potential; as the metaphor is expressed either in communication between conversation partners or otherwise, it begins to wake up, causing that potential to be activated in an empirically observable manner.

Horst puts forward that both activation (Müller 2008) and foregrounding of metaphoricity (Müller and Tag 2010) are also applicable to metonymy, pointing toward the way for a more widespread recognition of metonymy's role in the production of meaning. Interestingly, she views metaphor and metonymy as equal co-constructors of figurative meaning. The presented analysis of the cinematic, audio-visual and verbal choices made by the political candidates' teams also appears to recognize this. Angela Merkel's campaign builds the chancellor's image of stability and authority using an interplay of affect and cinematic movement that relies on metaphor, while at the same time basing her relatability on metonymy that activates the verbal in the audio-visual. Donald Tusk's campaign commercial shows Tusk as a leader asking for the prolongation of a deadline, an image rooted in the metaphoric interplay of the verbal with audio-visual, in particular the metonymic interpretation of frame length and rapid shifts of focus.

Political campaigns attach a face to an idea. Within the dynamic approach to their analysis, Horst demonstrates how the structure and timing of Tusk's campaign commercials build an understanding of him as a politician constrained by a single term in office, ultimately forming a metaphor of a

tired leader asking for understanding. The meaning sculpted by the viewer in the process of viewing is ultimately not a static image, but rather a dynamic story: the story of a stable, yet accessible leader (Merkel) or a well-meaning but overburdened one (Tusk). Echoes of this view can be traced at least as far back as Turner's *Literary Mind* (1996: 68), which simply states: "meaning is not a deposit in a concept-container. It is alive and active, dynamic and distributed, constructed for local purposes of knowing and acting. Meanings are not mental objects bounded in conceptual places."

Throughout the book, Horst emphasizes that audio-visual figurativity is not secondary to language, nor should it be seen as supplementary to it. She delivers on this promise, as all the analyses presented in the book are illustrated with graphic representations of figurative scenarios, as well as timelines of unfolding figurative meanings, grounding the insight we receive in the images we see.

Ultimately, the book goes beyond a series of analyses of politicians' PR efforts; it shows a transdisciplinary approach in which metaphor and metonymy become a modality-independent axis for cognitive linguistics, social and political science. The toolbox developed by researchers on Empirical Media Aesthetics regarding bodily, and later cinematic, expressive movements honed in Horst's book is promising. Whether we track the emergence of figurative meaning through a single ad, or in the course of an entire political campaign, this approach is equally applicable in the macro- and micro perspectives.

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