Université de Lausanne
Travaux de Science Politique
Political Science Working Paper Series

Meaning, Identity, Power : Metaphors and Discourse Analysis

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N° 30 (2007)

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Metaphors and Discourse Analysis

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Résumé

Ce texte propose l'intégration de l'analyse des métaphores dans les analyses politiques. L'argument central du texte est que l'analyse sociale et politique des métaphores nécessite une théorie de l'interprétation, du rôle des institutions, et des rapports de pouvoir. Alors que l'herméneutique et la '*relevance theory*' empruntée à la linguistique nous offrent une théorie de l'interprétation, les deux perspectives tendent à négliger les institutions et les rapports de pouvoir. De plus, la version de Lakoff de la 'relevance theory' souffre d'une vision par trop essentialiste des constructions de sens. Les versions foucaldiennes de l'analyse du discours partagent avec la 'relevance theory' une prise de distance fructueuse par rapport à la valorisation interprétative des intentions du sujet, mais souffre d'un manque de théorisation sophistiquée de l'interprétation. Cependant, ces perspectives offrent une prise en compte des rapports de pouvoir, qui nous permet de lier l'analyse des métaphores aux analyses de sens, d'identités, et d'institutions. Le texte propose ainsi d'intégrer le concept de métaphore dans le cadre de l'analyse foucaldienne de discours, tout en empruntant également certaines contributions de l'herméneutique et de la 'relevance theory'.

Mots-clefs **:** metaphores, linguistique, analyse de discours

Abstract

This text examines the ways in which the analysis of metaphor fits in with political analysis. It is argued that the social and political analysis of metaphor requires a theory of interpretation as well as an account of institutions and power. While we can draw upon hermeneutics and relevance theory to provide us with a theory of interpretation, both perspectives tend to neglect the role of institutions and power. Also, in Lakoff's version, relevance theory relies too heavily on essentialist constructions of meaning. Foucauldian discourse theory shares with relevance theory a useful move away from earlier interpretative emphasis on speaker intentions, but lacks a sophisticated theory of interpretation. However, it offers an account of power which allows us to link the analysis of metaphors to issues of meaning, identity and institutions. The text thus pursues a strategy of incorporation of the concept of metaphor within the discourse-analytical framework, while also drawing on insights from hermeneutics and relevance theory.

Keywords : metaphors, linguistics, discourse analysis

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Contents

Introduction

'What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations which, poetically and rhetorically intensified, become transposed and embellished, and which after long usage by people seem fixed, canonical, and binding on them. Truths are illusions which one has forgotten are illusions.' Nietzsche, 'Über Wahrheit und Lüge in aussermoralischen Sinne' (1873).

Much contemporary work on metaphor focuses on its semantic dimension, analysing the type of metaphors used and the meanings that they produce. While not wishing to deny the usefulness of such studies, my aim in this text is to ask whether the analysis of metaphors can go further. More precisely, I wish to locate the notion of metaphor more firmly within an analytical framework that centres on the relations between meaning, identity and power, thereby making it a particularly suitable subject for social and political analysis. Drawing on discourse and narrative theory, I consequently propose a number of theoretical moves which link semantics with pragmatics, and meaning with action. The present text thus attempts to formulate an analytic strategy which links the analysis of metaphors with that of power. In doing so, I shall pursue a strategy of incorporation of the notion of metaphor in discourse theory, rather than a strategy of substitution of the concept of discourse with that of metaphor.

From semantics to pragmatics

The earliest systematic analyses of metaphors are provided by the Ancients, most prominently by Aristotle and the later Rhetorical Schools which included orators such as Cicero, Plutarch and Quintilian. The Ancients defined metaphors as explicit descriptions of something in terms of something else. Derived from the Greek verb meta-pherein, which means to transfer or to translate (the latin word for metaphor being 'translatio'), the term metaphor thus referred primarily to aesthetic and stylistic aspects of meaning production. Metaphors were seen to have an ornamental function, serving as 'verbal cosmetics', as Boys-Stones (2003, 4) puts it.

Aristotle considered metaphor as a special version of poetic language, pointing out that it constitutes a non-standard or 'deviant' usage of language (since metaphors work by describing something using a word that is not commonly used in this case). As he famously put it in *Poetics*: 'Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy'. In his later text *Rhetoric*, he elaborated on this, stating that 'it is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air', thereby elevating and embellishing language, 'for men admire what is remote, and that

which excites admiration is pleasant'. It is important to remember that Aristotle's notion of metaphor in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* was wider than its modern understanding, since he subsumed tropes in general (including metonymy) under the category of metaphor (Silk 2003, 117). Tropes are 'embellishments' of language, and are usually taken to include metaphor (using an unusual term to describe a usual term, for example, 'axis of evil'), metonymy (describing the whole in terms of a part or of something connected to it, for example, 'the White House' for the U.S. government), synecdoche (a version of metonymy, involving semantic sliding from a class to a member or vice versa, in other words, whole for part or part for whole; for example, 'I have a new set of wheels') and irony. Aristotle's surviving texts were highly influential in establishing a canonical understanding of metaphor which focused on its substitutive role. Its usefulness for social and political analysis appears limited, however, due to Aristotle's primary concern with aesthetic aspects, especially in *Poetics*.

Two theoretical developments were particularly instrumental in moving forward from the Aristotelian understanding of metaphor in modern times. First, the structural linguist Roman Jakobson (1960) shifted the focus from a concern with the properties of poetry to those of discourse in general, arguing that poetic features permeate language as a whole. Introducing a distinction between metaphor, centred on analogy/similarity, and metonymy, centred on association/contiguity, Jakobson points out that these polarities do not just structure poetry or literature, but constitute two fundamental modes of discourse in general. Admittedly, Aristotle himself had already, in *Rhetoric*, moved away from the *Poetics*' specific focus on poetic language to point out the ubiquity of metaphor in everyday conversation (Mahon 1999, 73). His writings on metaphor have in fact been criticised by prominent commentators such as Silk (2003, 144) for their 'inconsistency' in not systematically focusing on poetic language alone. Though perhaps less applicable to *Poetics* this characterisation is certainly valid for *Rhetoric*; that being said, it might be judged that such criticism is to some extent unfair since Silk fails to acknowledge that Aristotle's main interest was not poetic language as such. Rather, Aristotle's interest in poetics was located within his wider project of a philosophy of the nature of cultural, scientific and political objects, including prose, science, and political institutions. Silk thus criticises Aristotle for not fully achieving an aim which he had not set out to pursue in the first place. Silk (2003, 144) expresses similar reservations about Jakobson's failure to theorise metaphors with consistent reference to poetry; however, I would like to argue in contrast that it is precisely Jakobson's (and less systematically, Aristotle's) widening of the theorisation of metaphor to discourse in general which opens up avenues for thinking about how the analysis of metaphor fits in with wider social and political analysis.

Second, in contrast to the classical substitutional theory of metaphor, Max Black proposed, in his influential book *Models and Metaphors* (1962), a more complex theory involving a cognitive dimension. According to Black's interactional model, metaphor is not just an aesthetic embellishment of language, but organises and transforms our perception of the original term. Decoupling the Aristotelian association of metaphor and substitution, this introduction of a cognitive dimension was picked up and further fleshed out by numerous other authors, in particular by linguists and philosophers of language. For example, in their oft-quoted book, *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that 'our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally

metaphorical in nature' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 3). Metaphor is thus seen as not just central to language, but also to thought and action.

The shift from metaphor as meaning-production to a concern with the ways in which meaning-producing metaphors structure the ways in which people make sense of the world necessitates a concurrent concern not just with the semantic content of metaphors, but also with their effects, and therefore ultimately with issues of cognition and subjectivity. In short, it requires a theory of interpretation.

Formulating a theory of interpretation that would take into account the audience's cognitive processes was a project undertaken by cognitive linguists such as Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Sweetser (1990). Building on Grice's pragmatics, their goal was to provide an account of interpretation that was based on the effects of language. For example, relevance theory suggests that metaphors are effective because they can be interpreted in a number of ways; there are numerous possible interpretations and associations (termed 'weak implicatures'). For example, when eugenic campaigners in pre-War Switzerland, Sweden or Germany argued for limiting reproduction by 'inferior', 'degenerate' categories of the population, they would speak of the necessity to eradicate the bad 'weeds' from the national 'garden'. In this context, 'weeds' would be interpreted as diverse, obnoxious, weak, you want to pull them out of your garden, etc. The impact of description on the reader is stronger if it is made in an indirect way - an argument which the Ancients also made: metaphors work through making the listener see a familiar object in an unusual way, through what modern authors would call 'defamiliarisation'.

Whereas Gricean pragmatics was originally a philosophy of language, these linguists gave it a cognitive twist by attempting to flesh out the ways in which audiences perceive meanings by making inferences about the context of the communicative interaction. As Grice had argued, speakers and hearers rely on shared background knowledge in their communicative interactions. For example, the exchange 'what time is it?', followed by the reply 'the news has just started', relies on the tacit assumption on the part of the person responding, that the person who asked the question knows that the news always starts at 6 pm. Thus, interpretations rely upon inferences made from careful consideration of context. As Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory argues, hearers try to interpret meanings through maximising those elements that are relevant to the context. The implication for the interpretation of metaphor is that the choice of a particular metaphor will be assumed to be based upon whatever is 'relevant to the wider text'. In other words, there will be an underlying cognitive assumption at work on the part of the interpreters that the text as a whole is coherent, that it makes sense. Although it needs to be acknowledged that some metaphors or texts may 'work' despite, or even because of internal contradictions (a point which is not explicitly treated by Sperber and Wilson), coherence is in this case supplied by the reader, who will try to make a coherent narrative out of a possibly incoherent text, reflecting a more general social-psychological need for coherence on the part of human beings.

This cognitive dynamic is based on what Grice has termed the 'cooperational principle'; this is the assumption that the participants in any given

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communicative interaction will 'cooperate', in the sense that they will follow the same implicit rules in the interaction. This is a similar concept, I would argue, to that behind the 'fundamental reciprocity of perspectives' (i.e. the implicit assumption in our everyday lives that other people will follow the same tacit rules governing routine interactions as we do) which ethnomethodologists such as Garfinkel (1984) claim structures everyday life. Grice's cooperational principle similarly reflects an inherently moral understanding of everyday life as being, fundamentally, based on implicit trust.

Relevance theory was, initially, received with great excitement and high hopes. Its theory of interpretation was seen as a way out of the dead-end of literary criticism's understanding of interpretation as the reconstruction of original authorial intention. Relevance theory, it was thought, would also allow readers to avoid some of the perceived excesses of deconstruction and post-structuralism, especially the claim that one can find *any* meaning in the text, by trying to establish some boundaries to interpretation. The 1990s thus saw a lot of handwaving in programmatic articles about the radiant future that cognitive linguistics would bring. In truth, not much progress has been made in terms of practical applications of the theory. It is not my purpose here to exhaustively address the reasons for this failure. Rather, I will concentrate more specifically on those aspects of cognitive linguistics that make the application of these perspectives particularly problematic for the analysis of social and political issues.

From this angle, I believe that three aspects of cognitive theories of meaning and interpretation are particularly problematic: first, their theorisation of subjectivity; second, their understanding of context; and third, their unit of analysis.

Concerning the first point, cognitive linguists tend to argue that cognitive processes are linked to bodily experience. For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphorical understanding is grounded in non-metaphorical preconceptual structures arising from everyday bodily experiences, which explain, for example, that 'up' tends to be perceived as 'good' while being 'down' is generally a bad thing. This is a seductive view, not least because, although we have diligently learned from Saussure that signs are arbitrary, many metaphors do not actually appear to be so. The problem is, however, with how the body is theorised. Cognitive linguists tend to treat the body as a physical 'given', thereby failing to take into account the cultural situatedness of bodily experience. Subjectivity operates from the materiality of a body, which is located in time and space, following Merleau-Ponty's influential notion of the *corps propre* developed in *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (1945). However, it is important to recognise that the way in which the body moves in time and space and the ways in which perception operates from the body is neither 'natural' nor 'given'. Embodied experience is the outcome of a learning process, of 'work', and therefore ultimately a product of culture as authors such as Mauss, Foucault, Douglas or Butler would also point out. Whereas the taken-for-grantedness of the body is central to, but largely left implicit in Lakoff and Johnson's 'experiential' theory of metaphorical understanding, current cognitive linguistics tends to move in an even more problematic direction. Indeed, explicitly Chomskian genetic and naturalising arguments which relate cognitive processes to brain make-up have become highly fashionable, downplaying both the

historical contingency of meaning processes and the ways in which these are structured by relations of power.

The second and third weaknesses of cognitive linguistics for the wider social and political analysis of metaphors, its understanding of context and its restricted unit of analysis, are related. Relevance theory offers useful ways of thinking about the ways in which subjects interpret metaphors from their background knowledge to make the relevant inferences based on interactional context. Given this understanding of context in terms of background knowledge and the contextual features which characterise a specific communicative interaction, cognitive linguists share with hermeneutic theories of meaning and interpretation an emphasisis on the embeddedness of meaning production and interpretive processes in their wider historical and cultural 'horizon of meaning', to borrow Gadamer's terminology. However, they also share with hermeneutics a neglect of the role of institutions and power in that wider context. By defining the notion of context primarily in relation to interactional context, cognitive linguistic analysis, as represented in the work of Sperber and Wilson, thus leaves aside issues that are particularly relevant to social and political contexts understood in a broader sense, including the wider power relations or political events that set the stage for and structure a particular communicative local interaction.

Moreover, as is the case for linguists in general, the unit of analysis of cognitive linguists is utterances, which is problematic for social and political scientists who will be interested in the role of metaphors in wider discourses and not just in isolated statements. As the hermeneutic 'principle of global understanding', developed primarily by Schleiermacher, points out, the insertion of a text in its particular historical horizon of meaning indicates the necessity of having a global, contextual understanding of a discourse (though hermeneutic thinkers would use the term 'text' here). Following this principle, the interpretation of a component of a discourse, such as a specific metaphor, needs to take into account the whole to which this element refers. At the same time, the meaning of the whole can only be understood from its details. The parts only acquire meaning in relation to the whole, and vice versa. Metaphoric meaning is thus always relative both to the discourse as a whole (as Saussure's notion of linguistic value as relative would also argue, albeit in a different way), and to its wider historical horizon of meaning as Gadamerian hermeneutics would emphasise. However, though we can usefully draw upon both hermeneutics and relevance theory to emphasise the importance of context for metaphorical meaning production and interpretation, they fail to address the power relations and institutions that structure that context. Furthermore, both perspectives leave aside the analysis of the actual *effects* of the use of metaphors, including the ways in which metaphors strengthen, reproduce or subvert relations of power.

To take an example, let us consider the recent emergence in social and political discourse in post-genocide Rwanda of the use of the metaphor 'sopeka' to describe female survivors of the 1994 genocide. Literally, the term 'sopeka' is the name of locally popular gasoline service stations - the equivalent of Western 'Shell' or 'Esso' service stations. In the post-genocide Rwandan context, when used as an identity label for female genocide survivors, the metaphor 'sopeka' has come to suggest that these women were able to survive the genocide *because* they had been providing sexual services to the Hutu Power death

squads. In so doing this metaphor echoes anecdotal evidence from survivors that a number of women were kept alive by the death squads to be raped and subsequently murdered, but effects a semantic shift from labelling such women as rape victims to designating them as sexual collaborators. At level one of the sopeka metaphor, the image of the victim builds on the sexual metaphor of filling up the car tank and inserting petrol pumps into a number of different car petrol tanks. The second level, or in relevance theory terms 'weaker implicature' is that the petrol pumps benefit from the transaction, flourish and thrive, etc. Note that the metaphor also involves an interesting gender switch, since the pump should be 'male' and the petrol tank 'female', but the female has taken on the association of the petrol station, not the car being filled up.

When looking at a specific communicative exchange in which the metaphor 'sopeka' is used, a cognitive linguist would lift these metaphors out of the wider social and political context, and be primarily interested in analysing the meaning construction in the statements included in this specific interaction, and the way in which this metaphor structures the participants' perception of the women thus described. The implicit assumptions about events and participants' identities would be examples of contextual elements taken into account. In contrast, social and political analysts would, depending on their research interests, more likely want to take their analysis a step further by adding to that the exploration of the ways in which the use of the term 'sopeka' reproduces or transforms the relations of power around ethnicity, gender and sexuality in the Rwandan context, for example. This is not to say that the second analysis is inherently 'better', but rather, that the reduction of context to that of a specific communicative interaction and the focus on the analysis of isolated statements as central to cognitive linguistics is problematic. Whereas cognitive linguistics usefully recognises context as crucial to the analysis of metaphorical meaning-construction, its narrow understanding of context as referring to the basic features of the context of utterance, such as participants' identity and assumptions about taken-for-granted knowledge of other participants makes it of limited use for social and political analysis.

In other words and to summarise my argument so far, for the purpose of studying metaphors within social and political analysis, we need a theory of interpretation based on a more satisfying account of situated, incorporated subjectivity. We need a more systematic account of context which defines it more broadly as the wider cultural horizon of meaning and the institutions and power relations that structure it, thereby allowing us to locate the analysis of metaphor in relation to wider issues of social and political action and transformation. By extension we need to broaden our analytical scope to locate metaphors within their wider discursive and narrative context, shifting the unit of analysis from statements to discourse. Whereas we can usefully draw upon relevance theory and hermeneutics to provide us with a more sophisticated theory of interpretation and meaning-production, their failure to link meaning to power and to reflect upon the political 'work' that metaphors perform is problematic, especially for our purposes of locating the analysis of metaphors within a wider framework of social and political analysis. Therefore I will turn in the next section to Foucauldian discourse theory to fuse hermeneutic and discourse analytical insights into metaphorical meaning production. Though Foucauldian discourse theory notoriously lacks a theory of interpretation, I argue that it has the benefit of offering an account of power which allows us to link the analysis of metaphors to issues of meaning, identity and power.

Meaning, identity, power

Turning from cognitive approaches to a discourse-analytical framework involves a move from an emphasis on the cognitive to the productive aspects of metaphors. Indeed, Foucauldian perspectives would argue that metaphors (as discourse in general) are constitutive of the social and political world (instead of considering them as ways of cognitively grasping a 'given' world). Differences between the two approaches are perhaps at times ritualistically overstated in the sense that discourse analysts would certainly acknowledge the importance of discourse in structuring perceptions of reality and therefore see the cognitive and productive aspects of language as inextricably intertwined. This is the case for instance when a discourse analyst like Howarth defines this approach as the analysis of 'the way systems of meaning or 'discourses' shape the way people understand their roles in society and influence their political activity' (Howarth, 1995). However, relevance theory is primarily a theory of interpretation of metaphors, whereas, with discourse theory, we shift the main analytical focus away from interpretive processes to the political work that metaphors perform. As such, we return to preoccupations that were already present in Aristotle's writings on metaphors. Indeed, whereas the *Poetics* centered mostly on meanings and therefore on semantic issues, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* started to explore questions such as the conditions of efficiency of metaphors, although the conditions that he identified were mostly to do with aesthetic features, such as stylistic 'appropriateness' and 'sound' of metaphorical expressions.

Foucauldian strands of discourse theory which I draw upon here use the term 'discourses' to refer to the 'macro-level' of structural orders of discourse (Foucault 1971). This involves broad historical systems of meaning including meaningful political practices (referred to as discursive practices), which are relatively stable over considerable periods of time. However, following the genealogical method developed in Foucault's later writings, it is important to emphasise that identity is not only constructed in the context of relations of meaning, but also within institutionalised relations of power. Discourses around national identity, sexuality, gender or race, for example, are not autonomous systems but operate in the context of the institutional supports and practices that they rely upon (see also Mottier, 2000). Consequently, the main aim of Foucauldian discourse analysis is not to reveal how specific discursive constructions result from the mere play of free-floating signifiers (in contrast to post-modern approaches, especially Derridian deconstruction), or from unconscious desires (in contrast to psychoanalytic approaches). Instead, it seeks to explore how specific discourses reproduce or transform relations of power as well as relations of meaning.

Foucauldian understandings of discourse refer to two interrelated aspects of discursive practices: first, what I have termed elsewhere a set of *language games*: statements or constructions of meaning; second, to a set of *strategic games*, exploring the ways in which these constructions of meaning produce, reproduce, sustain or subvert relations of social and political power (Mottier 2005). Whereas the concept of language games when applied to metaphors refers to their semantic aspects such as the constructions of meanings and identities that they produce, the concept of strategic games explores the pragmatic aspects of metaphors, such as the action that they perform. As Austinian speech act theorists are well aware, these two aspects are usually

intertwined. For example, when metaphors engage in political labelling and naming, such as when immigrants are described in terms of 'flood' or 'epidemic' metaphors, these metaphors both produce stigmatised identities and have an effect on the public who may feel indignant or scared by the metaphor, thereby performing an action. More generally, not all metaphors are speech acts. For instance, the statement 'I am pregnant with ideas' contains a metaphor but is not a speech act. Metaphors in political discourse, however, are generally likely to be speech acts.

In focusing on speech rather than on the system of language, but also in considering discourse in terms of strategies, Foucauldian discourse analysis demonstrates affinities to theorists such as Wittgenstein, Strawson, Austin and Searle, with whose work Foucault was familiar. There is an important difference though in the way in which speech act theory as developed by Searle and Austin relates the 'success' of speech acts to speaker intentions, something which Foucauldian discourse theory emphatically rejects. Indeed, for Austin (1962), for a speech act to be 'felicitous' (successful), a person has to have a 'serious' intention (in other words, the statement cannot be meant as a joke). However, we may well incorporate speech act theory's focus on the effects of speech within discourse theory while decoupling it from the link to intentions, via the notion of unintended consequences. For example, when a person tells a racist joke which was meant ironically but is not perceived by an audience as a joke (as happens, when the audience accepts a racist epithet at face value, not realising its ironic intention), there may still be a performative effect to the speech act, which in this case runs counter to that which the speaker intended. A perfect illustration of this is offered by the recent movie 'Borat', in which the actor Sacha Baron-Cohen makes anti-Semitic comments in the character of Borat, which are taken at one level by the immediate audience, but in a different way by the viewing public who know that Sacha Baron-Cohen is in fact jewish himself.

In other words, I would argue that there is no intrinsic incompatibility between discourse theory and speech act theory on condition of de-linking speech act theory from speaker intention and expanding its unit of analysis beyond isolated statements. In fact, this was recognised by Foucault, who drew upon speech act theory to show (as Austin did) that language has force and power, in addition to its semantic aspects. Foucault took issue with speech act theory, however, for concentrating on a restricted range of isolated language games around 'a cup of tea in an Oxford drawing room', disconnected from real historic context and from practices whose social and political relevancy are less restricted.

The analysis of language and strategic games is linked to what Foucault terms an *analytics of power*. In contrast to Marxist accounts of power, Foucauldian discourse theory develops a relational understanding of power as a more diffuse network which cannot be reduced to the state alone, but pervades all areas of social life, and sees politics as involving struggles over meanings and identities. Secondly, in contrast to the Marxian concept of ideology which focuses on the study of ideological 'distortions' of reality and truth, the Foucauldian notion of discourse centers on the study of discursive strategies without assuming an essential pre-existing truth. Instead, each society is thought to have its own 'truth regime', its own contingent rules defining what is considered 'true' or 'false' at a certain moment in history. The implication for our current purposes is

that truth is considered as 'a mobile army of metaphors' to use Nietzsche's apt description, and that analytically, the aim is not to demask the 'untruth' of political metaphors, but rather to ask what political truths specific metaphors construct and what social and political consequences result from these.

Identity and narration

As regards identity construction, Foucauldian discourse theory would similarly treat identity as the outcome of metaphorical constructions of meaning, which might include processes of naming and labelling. However, I believe that there is also something more specific about metaphors from the point of view of identity construction. Indeed, metaphors construct identities by telling a story in a very concentrated or condensed format. In that sense, metaphors function as what I propose to term *mini-narratives* which are not fully explicated - the spelling out of the full story is done by the audience which draws upon their tacit knowledge of the historical, social or political context to do so; as the example of the metaphor 'sopeka' demonstrates (which only 'works' with an audience that is aware of the pre-existing cultural meanings attached to this term). Within narrative theory, narratives are variously defined as 'a story with a beginning, middle and end that reveals someone's experiences' (Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1998); 'an original state of affairs, an action, or an event, and the consequent state of events' (Czarniawska, 1998); or much more broadly as 'any form of communication' (Barthes, 1974) or 'the main mode of human knowledge' (Bruner, 1986). Whereas some uses of the term narrative, such as Barthes' or Bruner's, make no distinction between narrative and discourse, I use the term narrative here in a more specific sense as referring to stories and storytelling. As such, narratives are possible forms of discourse, while discourses include, but are not reduced to, narratives (Mottier 2000). Narratives are (possible) building-blocks of discourse, while metaphors are (possible) building-blocks of both narratives and discourse. Specific tools of story-telling, such as metaphors, are important narrative forms that contribute to broader discursive constructions of identity.

Identity formation involves the formulation of specific forms of narrative which constitute commonalities and differences between self and others (Yuval-Davis 1997, 43). As Plummer (1995, 19) puts it: 'stories mark out identities; identities mark out differences; differences define 'the other'; and 'the other' helps structure the moral life of culture, group, and individual'. Consequently, of central importance to processes of identity formation through metaphors are what I have elsewhere proposed to term discursive mechanisms of *boundary-drawing*, *boundary-maintenance*, *ordering* and *othering* (Mottier 2005). Metaphorical mini-narratives contribute to the discursive mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from the political community.

Conclusion

To draw the different strands of my argument so far together, I would argue that locating the analysis of metaphors within a discourse-analytical framework which takes into account their narrative features and links semantic issues of

construction of meanings and identities with pragmatic concerns about context and power would involve an analytical framework focusing on the following three aspects of metaphor. First, its *poetic* function: how metaphors construct meanings and thereby contribute to what Carver and Hyvärinen (1997, 6), in a pioneering work on interpretive methodologies in political science, described as the 'potential for creativity in politics'. Second, the constitution of identity: how metaphors work as mini-narratives which construct identities and identity boundaries, involving naming and labelling processes. Third, the effects of metaphors, in particular, the ways in which metaphors reproduce, challenge or transform relations of power. On this last point, it is important to recognise that the claim that metaphorical identity constructions connect to relations of power does not imply that metaphor *is* power. For example, when individuals are described as 'weeds' to be eliminated from the national community, the effects of the categorisations are based upon the metaphors, but not reduced to the categorisation. Also, different agents may subvert the pejorative way in which the metaphor usage was originally intended, as happens for example when current gay rights campaigners describe themselves as 'queer'. While metaphors classify and order reality, social and political classifications and orderings are not power itself, but rather the vehicle through which power operates.

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