Powerful Metaphors in Performative Literature of the 15th and 16th Centuries: Exploring Ways of Studying Early Modern European Media Societies

Méthaphores phares dans la littérature performatif des XV\textsuperscript{e} et XVI\textsuperscript{e} siècles: explorer les moyens d’étudier les sociétés médiatiques européennes naissantes


Exposé

The phase of the later 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries was in many respects a time of upheaval and change in Europe. Power politics (Habsburg-Valois conflict) and religious quarrels (Reformation) led to armed conflicts (Italian Wars, German Peasants’ War, Wars of Kappel, French Wars of Religion) and dynamized social structures. At the same time, the invention of printing fostered a media revolution that coincided with developments towards better access to education and increasing literacy among the growing bourgeoisie. This brought about a dynamization of literary forms and genres and of the producers and recipients involved. New forms of public space appeared\textsuperscript{1} and with them new media societies which, due to the changed conditions, did not only have local dimensions but can be described as European and even global, considering European territorial expansion. Nevertheless, studies on motifs, narratives and communication strategies are mostly limited to one language and/or region and often focus on one genre or text type. Rarely are the results compared with those from other linguistic or geographical spaces.

This workshop sets out to get a better grasp of the dynamics of the emerging media societies in early modern Europe by exploring central themes, narratives, or communicative strategies in a selection of texts. In order to achieve this, we want to bring into conversation experts of different genres and text types that blossomed or emerged in the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries. This approach follows the fundamental belief that we can only understand the interconnected media societies of early modern Europe if we relate various local phenomena to each other (micro level) in order to make overarching trends and tendencies visible (macro level). Our workshop does a first step towards this European dimension by discussing texts in German and French. We have chosen metaphors to be our tertium comparationis. The leading question is: Are there metaphors or metaphor systems that dominate or strongly mark the discourses present in our sources (e. g. doctor or medicine as a metaphor or metaphor system[s] from the medical field)? What discursive knowledge do the metaphors link to and how do they perpetuate/nuance/transform it? Which target and source domains\textsuperscript{2} are involved, and can they tell us something about the socio-historical embedding of the texts as well as about cognitive frames that shaped people’s thinking? Do metaphors or metaphor systems cross linguistic boundaries and if so, can we interpret this as a transfer of cognitive frames or mentalities? We examine metaphors in a broad understanding that encompasses literary, rhetorical and cognitivist approaches. Following conceptual metaphor theory (CMT, cf. Lakoff/Johnson 1980), we can understand metaphor as a cognitive category: our thinking is fundamentally metaphorical in structure, because we conceptualise abstract and complex issues and activities

\textsuperscript{1} Contrary to Jürgen Habermas’ dichotomous approach, which limits public space to the modern era, researchers have proposed alternative concepts of public spaces (in plural!) for the late medieval and early modern periods. Examples are ‘occasional public spaces’ (Thum 1980 and 1990), ‘public places’ (lieux publics, Boucheron 2011), the ‘rumour mill’ as public space (Bauer 1981, Judde de Larivière 2011), ‘community of presence’ (Schlögl 2008) or ‘public opinion’ (Rospocher 2019). Another angle that has been explored is the question of political consent and of the right of saying “no” to the ruler, underlined by Morsel (Morsel 2011).

\textsuperscript{2} For example, in the metaphorical use of the expressions ‘service’ (dienst) and ‘pay’ (lôn, salaire) in the medieval love poetry of the troubadour and Minnesang traditions, the target domain is love while the source domain is the feudal system.

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(target domain) with the help of concrete, material phenomena (source domain). Metaphors are thus more than linguistic ornaments in speeches or literary texts and, moreover, not limited to linguistic manifestations. Images, body movements, music and sounds can also be used metaphorically— in combination with each other or with language (multimodal metaphors, cf. Forceville 2009). To investigate the discursive embeddedness of metaphors and their productivity, literary/rhetorical approaches that explore *topoi*/*loci communes*/*tropes* are very well suited (e.g. Curtius 1965, Goyet 1996, Minet-Mahy 2009…). Historical rhetorical concepts (e.g. *energeia*) can also help us to better understand the functions of metaphors. Participants are invited to explore the functions of metaphors in this broad understanding drawing from their respective disciplinary backgrounds (literary studies, philology, theology, theatre studies, media studies, rhetoric).

**Workshop Organization**

The aim of the workshop is to discuss how we can explore early modern media societies in their European dimension. Our attempt consists of an inductive approach: Participants working on different genres and text types in German or French will present a text or a small selection of texts from their field of study. The focus in each case is on the metaphor or metaphors that seem to be of particular importance in the text material. The short presentations of 10–15 min should include the following parts:

1. Presentation of the text(s): content, genre/text type, transmission, historical context
2. Presentation of the theoretical/methodological approach (*loci communes*/CMT/stylistics/rhetoric/media studies/…)
3. Dominant metaphor(s): brief explanation of the structure (e.g. target and source domains) and the thematic context in which the metaphor is used

The presentations will give us insights into various textual traditions of the period from about 1450 to 1600 and will enable us to unfold a panorama of metaphors starting from case studies. After the presentations, we will have plenty of time to discuss common traits and differences in the use of metaphors in the presented texts and whether there are transfer processes between genres/text types and languages.

The workshop will consist of a short introduction followed by four panels. The introduction will serve to present the participants and briefly explain the two projects involved (F03: *Religious Discourse* and SNSF-financed project *Médialittérature*). The first three panels will be devoted to the presentation of texts and subsequent discussions. They are divided according to the different genres and text types to be discussed in the workshop and will run 90 min each.

**Welcome and Introduction**

*general introduction*: Carlotta Posth

*presentation F03 ‘Religious Discourse’*: Klaus Ridder

*presentation ‘Médialittérature’*: Estelle Doudet

**Panel 1: French and German Theater: Do Metaphors Travel?**

*chair*: Carlotta Posth

*speakers*: Natalia Wawrzyniak, Heidy Greco

**Panel 2: Metaphors in Generic and Medial Contexts I: Sermons and Occasional Poetry**

*chair*: Michael Lebzelter

*speakers*: Carlotta Posth, Lucien Dugaz
Panel 3: Metaphors in Generic and Medial Contexts II: Theatre and Chronicles
chair: Estelle Doudet
speakers: Benedetta Salvati, Michael Lebzelter

Panel 4: Perspectives for Studying the Media Societies of Early Modern Europe
chair: Carlotta Posth
speaker: Anne Ulrich

The last panel, “Panel 4: Perspectives for Studying the Media Society of Early Modern Europe,” will serve to highlight key findings from the comparison of the case studies and to relate them to fundamental questions about genre, medium and communication. A short presentation of no more than 10 min on selected concepts of communication and an exemplary analysis of functions of metaphors in modern media from the perspective of media studies (Medienwissenschaft) will initiate the reflection on theory and methods. On this basis, we will discuss the understanding of communication our respective work is built on, whether we can treat different genres, historical and modern media with the same methodology, and if the comparison of metaphors has proven to be a useful approach. What alternatives or additions might there be and (where) do we see potential for future cooperation? Panel 4 will run 60 min.

The languages of the workshop will be English, French and German. To guarantee that all participants can follow in the best possible way, we kindly ask that presentations are given in English. During the discussions, everyone is free to use the language that suits him or her best. All participants are invited to help out with ad hoc translations if needed.

Bibliography


