

through the fabric of grammar; certain discourse connectors (*well, always, etc.*) are the traces of someone else's implicit discourse.

b) *Autonymy*, a characteristic whereby discourse has the ability to *show itself*, to present its own case.

In these two situations, we shall retain the principle (for targeteers in translation) of *discursive modulation, polysemic unbundling* working on the hermeneutic resources of the target language.

Textual semantics with its consequences for a translational approach based on discourse analysis is far from being the only possible basis for the teaching of Translation Studies. Alongside the theory of semantic forms by Cadiot and Visetti (2001), we have in semiotics, the theory of instances of enunciation by Jean-Claude Coquet (2007), who creates a continuum between language, world and being; or following the cognitivist approach, the theory of cognemes" by Didier Bottineau (2012), who highlights the role the signifier plays in the emergence of representations. All of these theories allow principles for translation to be constructed and express the great limitations of an approach based both on the fragmentation of the text into isolated units and an excessive attachment to one ontological layer of meaning. The absence of such theories in the teaching of Translation Studies could well lead back to fetishizing the source text through a series of words-concepts.

Galileo might disapprove.

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## ON HUMAN AMBITION

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### ***The Living Image: Biographical Narratives in Presidential Campaigns***

***Anna Romagnuolo***  
*Università della Tuscia, Viterbo*

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The purpose of this study is to highlight recurrent features in US presidential advertising campaigns, with a particular focus on TV electoral commercials and autobiographical films used at national conventions to extol the nominee's virtues and boost his popularity. The typical generic structure of presidential candidates' campaign stories, greatly exploiting family-life narratives and national myths, will be examined both in TV adverts and political films for their relevance to individual and collective self-representation.

“In essence you don't run for president directly; you ask the media to run you for president, or, if you have the money, you pay the media for exposure” (Ralph Nader)<sup>1</sup>.

Television commercials are an extremely important component of modern presidential campaigns which last much longer than the general election. This is not only because most (unknown) candidates begin campaigning months or even years before the race and because first-term incumbents start quite soon seeking a second term, but also because, as Kernel observed (1985: 138), new elects have to deal with “shaky coalitions and unstable party structures. They must try to govern through permanent campaigns”. The enormous amount of money candidates invest in television spots is a clear indication of the significance of this form of political communication. In 1988, Michael Dukakis and George Bush spent \$65 million altogether from the RNC and DNC. In the 1992 Bush-Clinton race, 48.8 and 35 million dollars were spent respectively by the two contestants on commercials (Kaid and Johnston 2001:7). In 2004, by the time the Democratic convention was held, at the end of July, Kerry had already spent more than \$80 million on TV adverts; by the end of August, when the Republican convention was held, Bush had spent more than \$120 million on TV ads. Despite the extensive use of digital technologies, the latest presidential campaign still relied on huge investments in mainstream media communication. The amount of money used to purchase televised political advertising during the 2012 election race skyrocketed to 404 million for the Obama campaign and to 492 million for the Romney campaign<sup>2</sup>, resulting in unprecedented volumes of aired ads - more than 1 million with an increase of 39.1% over 2008 and of 41% over 2004 airings.

The advantages of TV advertising are manifold: TV ads offer each candidate the opportunity to communicate his/her message directly and simultaneously to millions of viewers with no worries of being interrupted or of making irreparable mistakes by stuttering or gesturing awkwardly; spot content and format are controlled by the candidate and his media specialists; finally, as proved by considerable research, televised political ads can affect viewers (Benoit and Wells 1996; Joslyn 1981; Kern 1989; Palda 1973, Medvic 2011), voters' choice (Wanat 1974; McClure and Patterson 1974) and political participation (Ansolabehere and Iyenga 1995; Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton, and Cole 1990).

Due to its relevance, studies on presidential campaign communication have focused not only on TV advertisement efficacy and effects, but also on the strictly connected elements of its content and format. Most studies tend to divide commercials into two categories: negative versus positive spots, and issue versus image ads; they also tend to classify commercials by the candidates' party affiliation and distinguish between spots promoting incumbent presidents who are seeking re-election and challengers.<sup>3</sup> These studies have highlighted how, with few exceptions, political ads take both positive and negative approaches and have reported a heavier emphasis on issues than on image in early TV commercials. On the contrary, more recent campaigns seem to increasingly rely

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Nader, qtd. in Smith (2010: 13), is a political activist and six-time candidate for President.

<sup>2</sup> These figures, illustrated in the article "Mad Money: TV ads in the 2012 presidential campaign" available at The Washington Post site <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/track-presidential-campaign-ads-2012/>>, are an estimate of the spending on national broadcast and TV political advertising between April 11, 2012 and the end of the presidential race, and do not include the costs of local cable ads nor the money spent on online ads which, according to the non-partisan Centre for Responsive Politics, reached \$52 million for Obama and \$26 million for Romney. Figures are slightly lower in the CNN report "The 2012 presidential race: Ads, money and travel", available at <<http://edition.cnn.com/election/2012/campaign-tracker/>>. However, according to the Wesleyan Media Project, a research established in 2010 to track advertising in federal and state elections, the Obama and Romney campaigns have shattered spending records with an estimated advertising cost of \$ 950,436,980 and an increase of almost 300,000 spots over the 2008 race. (Cf. Franklin Fowler and Ridout 2012).

<sup>3</sup> For an extensive review see Benoit, 1999.

on image rather than on issues to persuade voters. According to Waterman et al. (1999), the erosion of party powers caused by direct primaries, a reduction in party loyalty among voters, and a steady decline in citizens' participation in presidential races have made a candidate's image rather than his/her policy considerations fundamental in presidential elections. (Televised) political messages are often reduced to platitudes which are hard to contest, to catchy phrases and memorable sound bites that can be easily associated with the candidate's projected image. Historically, however, the presidency has always been identified with a president's image, and "image politics" is not limited to present day multimedia campaign communication, as proved by the early promotion of archetypal candidates' images in campaign posters, pamphlets, biographies, and first "documentary" movies.

The earliest known campaign spot was commissioned by the Democratic National Committee on behalf of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. This silent film, entitled *The New Way and the Old Way*, was produced by the Universal Films MFG Co and distributed by Film Classic Exchange, one of the first Hollywood distributors. It is also the earliest example of use of motion picture for negative advertising: it portrayed Republican William Howard Taft as a defender of special interest groups and Woodrow Wilson as the spokesperson of the working class.

An equally famous example of early negative campaign movies was produced for F.D. Roosevelt's race for re-election in 1944. The short animated film, entitled *Hell Bent for Election*, sponsored by a labor union and produced by Charles Jones, who would later become a well-known Warner Bros.' animator, created a portrait of the "good" president Roosevelt by using the visual metaphor of an "election express" train representing progress, whose speed far exceeded the "evil" and outdated train of Republican ideas. The film already used many present day devices for vilifying the opponent, including the film version of morphing (cf. Kaid and Johnston 2001: 3).

The first television spot to be used in a Presidential campaign was produced for the Republican candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952. Although the most famous commercial of Eisenhower's campaign was the animated jingle "I like Ike", created by the Walt Disney animators, Eisenhower's series of 20-second TV spots entitled *Eisenhower answers America* deserve attention for several reasons. The spots were new in many ways. In each spot, a citizen would ask a question or make a comment on issues that were and would be major campaign topics: inflation and high taxation ("food prices, clothing prices, income taxes, won't they ever go down?"); welfare ("I can't live on my social security. Nobody can"), government inadequacy ("What's wrong down in Washington? Graft, scandal, headlines?"), military readiness ("We won't spend hundreds of billions and still not have enough tanks and planes for Korea"); the candidate would reply looking straight into the camera, creating a sense of intimacy with the viewer and conveying honesty and serious commitment to the country. This strategy was emulated in following campaigns. The 1952 campaign was unique for another reason: Eisenhower was the first to use a longer commercial which outlined a short biography of the candidate. Its title, *The Man from Abilene*, would resound 40 years later in Clinton's Democratic National Convention campaign film *The Man from Hope*.

Presidential biographical campaign films are longer and more comprehensive than political TV spots. They do not focus on opponents, nor on challengers; therefore, they hardly contain the negative messages that can be found in primaries and general campaign commercials. They tell the story of a candidate's childhood, his/her upbringing and life accomplishments, mixing the tale with images symbolizing American values and beliefs. They represent a hybrid genre (Morreale 1993: 3) of political discourse that combines the format and purposes of a documentary film with those of a product advertisement, more apparent in a televised political ad: they recapitulate the life and the

political vision of a candidate in a way that aims at impressing the viewer and winning votes by combining information, entertainment and marketing emotional appeal.

If the most common formats for presidential TV spots are 30 and 60 seconds, campaign bio films can last up to 30 minutes and are modern media transformations of the partisan print biographies of presidential candidates that first appeared in the 1820s. Andrew Jackson's campaign biography was the prototype for the printed form: it was the first to be published to chronicle the exploits of a living candidate. Started in 1816 by Jackson's aide-de-camp, John Reid, and completed by a twenty-six-year-old lawyer, John Eaton, whom the president later rewarded with an appointment to the senate, the biography was published in 1817 with the title *The Life of Andrew Jackson* and then revised and reprinted in 1824 for the presidential race. The pivotal anecdote, which would become a typical element of the genre, was an episode of courage Jackson showed during his captivity in the American Revolution war. He had refused to clean the boots of a British officer who hit him so badly with a sword that he bore the scars all his life. In other words, by refusing to kneel before a tyrant, Jackson had proved to possess the courage and strength to run the country. He lacked education and political experience, but was made the ideal candidate since, being the son of a poor Scottish immigrant who had died before his birth, he represented the "self-made man", an expression that was indeed coined during his Presidency (Lepore 2008:3). Davy Crockett's 1834 biography of Martin Van Buren praised the candidate's humble origins, just as William Henry Harrison's biographer insisted that Harrison, whose father was a wealthy Virginia slave owner, was *The People's Presidential Candidate*, a man who "had never been rich" and lived quietly in his farm in Ohio (Lepore 2008: 4). Harrison became the 1840 "Log Cabin Candidate", and the log cabin, the first "personalized" American political symbol (with its metaphorical variants) lived long. In 1848, Zachary Taylor maintained that his only qualification for the office was having slept "forty years in the woods"; James K. Polk was the "Young Hickory" (after Jackson's "Old Hickory" sobriquet); Abraham Lincoln, who was a successful attorney, lived in "the rude cabin of the settler" and split timber for rails; Garfield was also born in a log cabin, whose measurements were provided by his biographers (*From the Farm to Presidential Chair*, a campaign Biography, 1880); McKinley was born in a tent (*From Tent to White House*, claimed his writer) and Hoover was a farm boy orphaned at nine (cf. Lepore 2008:6-7, Waterman et al. 1999: 24-31).

Since the Jacksonian times, no Presidential election has been carried out without a campaign biography, whether in traditional print or in more recent video formats. Early biographies favorable to the candidate would be written and distributed throughout the nation for the purpose of getting a candidate elected as much as today's candidates' approved and paid political ads are aired by national broadcasters in prime time. John Locke Scripps' thirty-two page biography, which cost nearly two cents and sold approximately 200,000 copies (Schelsinger in Watermann et al. 1999: 26), carefully crafted the image of Lincoln as the "common man" and the "Honest Abe". And, as if it were not enough, that image was complemented by Lincoln's supporters with a more mythical and dynamic one: a "Rail Splitter", a backwoodsman, again, the self-made man.

From Eaton's book on Jackson's life to Barack Obama's bio film *A Mother's Promise*, which premiered at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, biographies have always followed the same script sketching out a candidate's ability to overcome difficulties (physical impairments, such as FDR's disease, or psychological trauma as with G.W. Bush's brother's death), humble origins (as in Nixon's, Carter's, and Clinton's case) and family problems (Clinton's alcoholic stepfather, Obama's divorced and distant parents) by showing tenacity, strength of character and leadership qualities (in Eisenhower's, Reagan's and the Bushes' case). Obviously, the story of their success at building their life alludes to their potential success at (re)building the nation. What Morreale (1991: 6) states about presidential campaign films - [they] "offer insight into the

processes whereby American myth, or ideology, is created and maintained. [...]; [they] promote mythic images of candidates and the country within constructed socio-historical contexts” - applies to any form of presidential campaign communication, from Presidential Campaign booklets to TV spots, to public speeches and (auto)biographical material.

The visual version of campaign biographies appeared along with the birth of film itself. The first “actuality” one-minute film about a candidate was produced by The Lumiere Brothers in 1896 and dedicated to *William McKinley at Home*; the first presidential “biographical” campaign film was *The Life of Calvin Coolidge*, produced in 1923 (Morreale 1991: 4). In their classical period, from 1948-1972, these documentary films were mostly expository accounts that aimed to inform and motivate the party faithful, and were screened at informal meetings of party leaders and gatherings of supporters. In some cases, they were also aired on television.

Early campaign films consisted of short vignettes often containing authentic photographs, archival film footage and endorsements from family members, friends and colleagues, testimonials that remain constant in later campaigns. The candidate would speak looking at the camera or, more frequently, an off-screen omniscient narrator would tell his story. With time, the presidential campaign biographical film has changed and increasingly replaced the informative narration with a more poetic, evocative and introspective tone resulting both from verbal and non verbal elements, which reveal the contributions of political marketers, pollsters, and computer experts.

The first definitive shift from documentary to hybrid forms came in Gerard Ford's untitled film and Jimmy Carter's 1976 *Jimmy who?*: both films combined direct address and authentic archival footage with fantasy images, musical spectacle and special effects typical of soft-selling advertising. Shots of American landscapes intermingled symbolic images of the country and its celebrations (the Statue of Liberty, the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, skyscrapers, prairies, parades and Fourth of July Tall Ships) with the narration of the candidate's life. These movies were geared to mass TV audiences: they were cut into TV spots and re-edited in post-convention films (cf. Morreale 1991:114).

This new hybrid presidential campaign film finds its first complete expression in Ronald Reagan's *A New Beginning*. Reagan's first bibliography was written in 1967 by Lee Edwards and published before the politician started to campaign for the presidential nomination; then, the book was revised and reprinted for Reagan's 1980 election. Given that his bio was already on the market, only a short biographical campaign movie, *The Reagan Record*, was aired at the National Convention before his first nomination acceptance speech and then re-edited in a five minute spot, repeatedly broadcast in the final weeks of the campaign. The film depicted Reagan both as a hero who had “saved” the state of California during his tenure as governor, and as a strong administrator who would be the much needed leader of the country. The video ended on an optimistic tone, showing images of the candidate delivering campaign speeches during the presidential race, whose outcome is used as an ideal link to the second term campaign film. The 1984 movie opens in darkness with a black frame of the date of the Inauguration day (January 20, 1981), soon followed by poetic images of a sunrise, while the sound of hands clapping and the voice of Ronald Reagan and the Chief of Justice pronouncing the oath of office provide a voice-over narration marking the “new beginning”. Then, rather than recapitulating the life of the president, the movie went on to celebrate his accomplishments and his vision of a prosperous and hard-working America. Images of people raising flags, going to work, attending picnics, getting married, moving house, portrayed a unified, consistent vision of Americans which is not different from George Bush's nor Clinton's positive images of America. Invariably, these images can be found in Obama's and his opponents' campaign spots and films.

From biographical books to TV spots and campaign films, the candidates' personal characteristics and backgrounds are remarkably similar and remain constant throughout American Presidential history: they are religious, honest, sincere, and courageous; sometimes they have from humble origins and have worked their way up with the support of a loving, hardworking family who have a deeply rooted sense of civic duty and moral principles. The candidates conform to the American dream myth embodied by the rags-to-riches stories of Horatio Alger's books<sup>4</sup>. They envision an ever-improving country of virtuous citizens who long for innovation and renewal rather than continuity. Not surprisingly "change" is the most frequent word used both by challengers and incumbents. The latest presidential campaigns confirm the results of an analysis conducted by Kaid and Johnston in 2001 on the presence of Steele and Redding's 1962 list of American cultural values in presidential commercial ads broadcast from 1952 to 1996. Over half (55%) of all presidential spots mentioned the value of "change and progress" followed by the value of "material comfort" (30%), "effort and optimism" (21%) and "patriotism" (20%). All of which make a "true" American citizen.

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<sup>4</sup> Horatio Alger is a late 19th century American writer, well known for his numerous novels about young boys who manage to escape poverty through hard work, bravery and honesty. It may suffice to mention a few titles : *Struggling Upward*; or *Luke Larkin's Luck* (1868); *Ragged Dick*; or, *Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks* (1868); *Fame and Fortune*; or, *The Progress of Richard Hunter* (1868); *Brave and Bold*; or, *The Fortunes of Robert Rushton* (1874); *Risen from the Ranks*; or, *Harry Walton's Success* (1874); *Ben's Nugget*; or, *A Boy's Search for Fortune* (1882). He also wrote a Lincoln's biography emphasizing his striving for success: *Abraham Lincoln: the Backwoods Boy*; or, *How A Young Rail-Splitter Became President* (1883).

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## INTERVIEW

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### ***Nothing is Important because it Happened to You*** **An Interview with Philip O Ceallaigh**

**Cristina Chevereșan**  
*University of the West, Timișoara*

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Winner of the 2006 Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, short-story writer Philip O Ceallaigh has been living in Romania since the beginning of the 2000s. After having travelled extensively through and worked in a number of countries (among which Egypt, Georgia, Kosovo, Russia, Spain, the U.S.A.), he decided to pursue a career as a writer. Nominated for the Glen Dimplex New Writers' Award, his debut volume, *Notes from a Turkish Whorehouse* (2006) was followed by a second collection, *The Pleasant Light of Day* (2009), shortlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. His first novel, *Și te trezești râzând* ['And you wake up laughing'], was published in Romanian by the Polirom Publishing House in 2012. A special guest at Timișoara's first International Literary Festival, he talked about his work, ideas, methods, projects in a generous interview.

**Cristina Chevereșan:** Dear Philip, if you were to introduce yourself, as a writer, to somebody who has never read anything by you, what would you want him/ her to know?

**Philip O Ceallaigh:** I'm primarily a short story writer. It's the form I am comfortable in, I've always been attracted to, and somehow cannot get out of. I'm always looking for brevity and clarity, the kind of beauty you get with a short story: it's nearly like a little object, something that can be seen from all sides at once, not a labyrinth that you get lost in. It is consistent with how I see the world and life: not as something that I understand or can portray comprehensively. I am not looking to give a general statement or describe society. I am trying to hold on from moment to moment and construct a little bit of meaning. That is something I've always felt very strongly about: writing should be simple, not based upon abstractions.

**C.C.:** Did you ever think that you would be able to make a living out of writing?

**P.O.C.:** I thought it might be something that would happen when I had hair growing out of my ears. It happened a little sooner. I still don't make a secure enough living from it for my head to get swollen. I am aware that most people don't read or care about what I write. It's a very equivocal sort of success. Critical success has been very good; sales of books are not. That reminds one of one's place as a writer and of the place of writing these days, as opposed to the visual media, for example.

**C.C.:** Why Romania? What made you settle here?

**P.O.C.:** I think it was mostly an accident. I'd been moving around and when I decided to stop, that was where I was. I was wasting a lot of energy living the kind of life I had been living, moving from place to place and city to city, every six months or year. In order to write, I felt the need to settle, so I did. By the time I'd reached my thirties, the only stability in my life was the fact that I wrote. I realized I had to make a commitment to that; I'd be always frustrated unless I tried to take it as far as I could.

**C.C.:** Your short stories are placed in different locations around the world. Does place, space in general, influence your writing?

**P.O.C.:** I can't really know; I haven't had another kind of life. When you're in a new place, your eyes are wide open in a way they are not when you're stable. There's an element of