

# FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USAGE IN ADVERTISING

Leech 181-185; Cook 108-11; 161-3; 87

# Rhetoric in advertising

## Rhetorical figures

- artful deviation from the norm. It occurs when an expression deviates from expectation.
- The two elements or domains are linked and the nature of such link determines the type of rhetorical figure.

By linking the two elements (or domains), the characteristics of one are transferred to the other.

# Advantages of rhetoric in advertising

- Attracts attention; getting noticed
  - Complex rhetoric: involves comprehension, cognitive processing and interpretation
- Provides pleasure, self-contentment: pleasant feelings
- Provides longer retention
- (McQuarrie & Mick 2003) Visual and verbal rhetorical tropes may sometimes create meaning incongruity => consumers use more cognitive effort to interpret the advertisement.
- If the effort is rewarded with relevant meanings, consumers will appreciate the advertisement more.

# Advantages of rhetoric in advertising



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# Advantages of rhetoric in advertising



# Ad as persuasive language

- Persuasive language uses **rhetorical tropes** or **figures** to reach its purposes of persuading people to buy or use the advertised product/object/service
- “A rhetorical figure occurs when an expression deviates from expectation, the expression is not rejected as nonsensical or faulty.....”  
(McQuarrie / Mick 1996)

# TROPES

There are four kinds of tropes mainly used in adverts:

- Metaphor (& simile)
- Metonymy (& synecdoche)
- Synaesthesia
- Irony (& nonsense)



# METAPHOR (1)

- Two seemingly unrelated subjects are put in relationship (for ex., YOU ARE A ROSE).



- -- when something *is* something else: *the ladder of success* (i.e., **success is a ladder**).

**"Carthage was a beehive of buzzing workers." Or, "This is your brain on drugs."**

- The first object is described as being a second object.
- In this way, the first object can be economically described because implicit and explicit attributes from the second object can be used to fill in the description of the first.

# METAPHOR (2)

- A metaphor consists of THREE parts:
  - ▣ the *tenor*, that is the subject to which attributes are ascribed;
  - ▣ the *vehicle*, that is the subject from which the attributes are derived;
  - ▣ the *ground*, that is the part(s) of semantic field from which the attributes are selected to create the relationship between the tenor and the vehicle

(Halliday 1985)

# METAPHOR (3)

□ Example :

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players  
They have their exits and their entrances;*

William Shakespeare,  
*As you like it 2/7*

THE WORLD (TENOR)

THE STAGE (VEHICLE)

THE GROUND (SEMANTIC FIELD/ATTRIBUTES)

# METAPHOR (7)

## VISUAL METAPHOR



## VERBAL METAPHOR





# ERUPTING

WITH INTENSE FLAVOUR



**BERTOLLI**  
NEW STIR THROUGH SAUCE  
*LIVE BETTER*

(Cook 1992: 108-109)



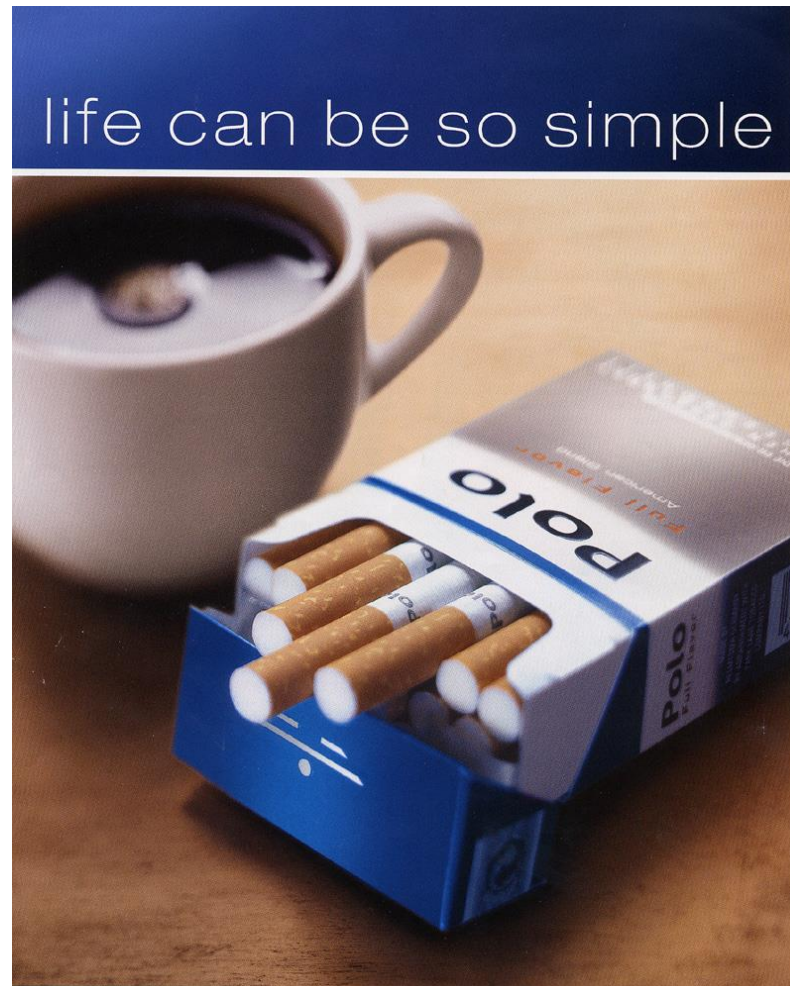
[http://c.uglym.com/cms/show\\_article/333003.html](http://c.uglym.com/cms/show_article/333003.html)

# SIMILE

- A **simile** is a figure of speech in which the subject is compared to another subject.
- Similes are marked by use of the words *like* or *as* (for example, “He was as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs”).

# SIMILE (2) - EXAMPLE

Visual simile: Life can be so simple (like having a cup of coffee and a cigarette)





# SIMILE (2) - EXAMPLE

Visual simile: Comparing two things or ideas, usually by saying “like” or “as.” In this case, Fiber-Castell is suggesting that the colors of its pencils are as natural as the color of a purple eggplant.



# METONYMY

- **Metonymy** is an association created between meanings which are contiguous rather than similar.
- A rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it.
- -- using a vaguely suggestive, physical object to embody a more general idea: CROWN for royalty; the PEN is mightier than the SWORD.
- We use metonymy in everyday speech when we refer to the entire movie-making industry as a mere suburb of L.A., "Hollywood".


# Metonymy (2)


In metonymy, **associations are contiguous** because we indicate:


1. *effect for cause* ('Don't get hot under the collar!' for 'Don't get angry!');
2. *object for user* ('the stage' for the theatre and 'the press' for journalists);
3. *substance for form* ('plastic' for 'credit card', 'lead' for 'bullet');
4. *place for:*
  - *event*: ('Chernobyl changed attitudes to nuclear power');
  - *person* ('No. 10' for the British prime minister);
  - *institution* ('Whitehall isn't saying anything');
5. *institution for people* ('The government is not backing down').


# METONYMY - Example

Arrange the following in order of importance.

a) 


b) 

c) 

d) 

Now imagine you're 60 and repeat.

If the last thing you're thinking about is that should I ever get it? ... just ring our shared direct helpline: 0800 21 00 21 for a free copy of the latest National video, Changing Today! It's an entertaining way of finding a few minutes that won't get anything else passing your mind's eye. The habit of a lifetime.

 **ABBNEY NATIONAL**

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An ad for pensions in a women's magazine asked the reader to arrange four images in order of importance: each image was metonymic, standing for related activities (such as shopping bags for material goods).



# Metonymy



## ANOTHER SATISFIED MEGA BASS CUSTOMER.

WANT TO GIVE YOUR MUSIC A LIFE-  
IMPACT? NO PROBLEM. JUST FIND THE  
STURDY DOORWAY, THEN PUNCH THE  
BASS® BUTTON ON YOUR SONY

OR DISCMAN® PORTABLE  
PLAYER. YOU WON'T BE  
DISAPPOINTED. WE  
INVENTED THE  
BASS SOUND.

VERY NOBLE PUR-

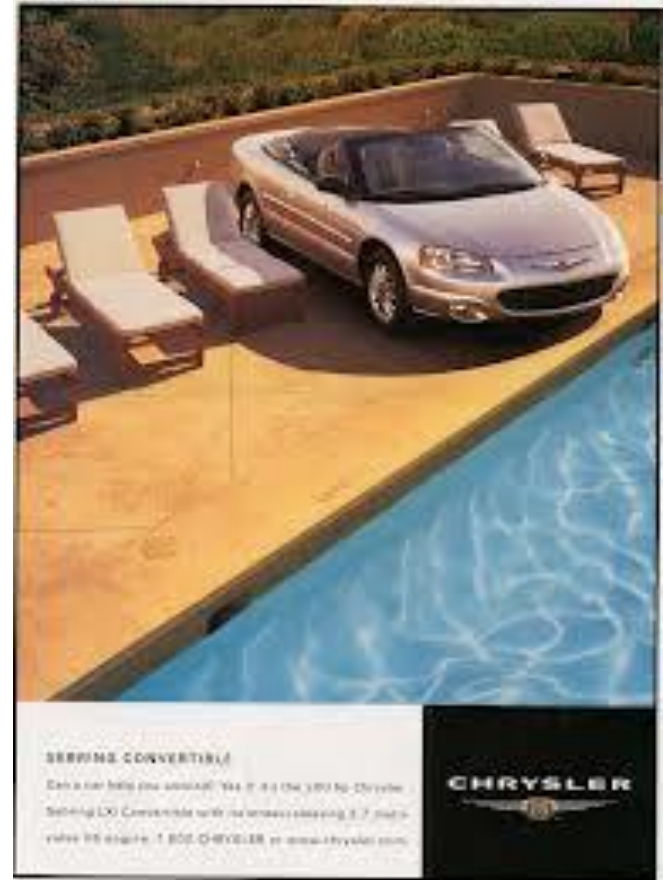
MAKE EVEN YOUR MOST WIMPY CD OR  
SOUND LIKE AN ALL-OUT BRAIN-RATTING  
PERFORMANCE. AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE  
JECT OF LIVE PERFORMANCES, WHEN YOU  
SELECTED SONY BOOMBOX OR DISCMAN  
GET A COUPON FOR AN EXCLUSIVE DO  
SET\* CRAMMED WITH LIVE PERFORMANCES  
THE BEST ALTERNATIVE BANDS. IT'S THE  
MUSIC YOU'VE HEARD ON MODERN  
LIVE\*\* AND YOU CAN'T GET IT ANYWHERE  
WHICH IS ONLY RIGHT, SINCE IT WILL  
SOUND MORE AMAZING THAN IT  
THROUGH MEGA BASS.  
SO, ARE YOU READY TO FIND OUT HOW  
YOUR HOUSE IS BUILT?



SONY



# Metonymy



A photograph of a silver Chrysler Sebring convertible parked on a pool deck next to a swimming pool. The car is the central focus, with lounge chairs and pool water visible in the background.

**SEBRING CONVERTIBLE**  
Can a car help you unwind? Yes it is the 300 hp Chrysler Sebring LXI Convertible with no stress sleeping 3.7 liter v6 engine. 1 800 CHRYSLER or [www.chrysler.com](http://www.chrysler.com)

**CHRYSLER**

# Metonymy



# Metonymy



Look to the side without looking to the side.  
Blind Spot Assist from Mercedes-Benz.



This Mercedes-Benz ad is of both a frontal and side view of a man's face merged. The text reads "*Look to the side without looking to the side*", which fits the merging of the faces. The image is a metaphor for the text, and a metonymy for the technology that is being advertised.



# Metonymy



Neckties shaped like sushi is a great advertising example. Tokyo is in Japan, where sushi is well known. The relationship between image and text is solid. The image and text compliment each other completely. **Metaphor and metonymy play a role in this advertisement because of the connection between the image and text.**

The ties shaped like sushi are a metaphor for Tokyo , sushi is a metonymy for Tokyo.

# SYNECDOCHE

□ **Synecdoche** is like metonymy but more 'specific'.

□ **Part to Represent Whole**

For example:

□ The word "bread" can be used to represent food in general or money (e.g. he is the breadwinner; music is my bread and butter).

□ The word "sails" is often used to refer to a whole ship.

□ The phrase "hired hands" can be used to refer to workmen.

□ The word "wheels" refers to a vehicle.

# SYNECDOCHE

Using the **whole to refer to a part** is also a common practice in speech today. For example:

- At the Olympics, you will hear that the United States won a gold medal in an event. That actually means a *team* from the United States, not the country as a whole.
- If “the world” is not treating you well, that would not be the entire world but just a part of it that you've encountered.

# SYNECDOCHE (2)

Synecdoche is used when (Lanham 1969: 97):

- A part of something is used for the whole (“hands” to refer to workers);
- The whole is used for a part (“the police” for a handful of officers);
- The species is used for the genus (“bread” for food, “kleenex” for facial tissue)



# SYNECDOCHE (3)



## **Visual Synecdoche:**

Referring to a whole by its part or a part by its whole. In this case, Heinz uses the pieces of a tomato to imply what the tomato, with all its other components, will become: ketchup.

The slogan instead introduces a simile

# SYNECDOCHE (3)

In photographic and filmic media a close-up is a simple **synecdoche** - a part representing the whole. Indeed, the formal frame of any visual image functions as a synecdoche in that it suggests that what is being offered is a 'slice-of-life', and that the world outside the frame is carrying on in the same manner as the world depicted within it.

Synecdoche invites or expects the viewer to 'fill in the gaps' and advertisements frequently employ this trope.

Any attempt to represent reality can be seen as involving synecdoche, since it can only involve selection (and yet such selections serve to guide us in envisaging larger frameworks).

## SYNECDOCHE (3)



The Nissan ad shown here was part of a campaign targetting a new model of car primarily at women drivers (the Micra). The ad is *synecdochic* in several ways:

- it is a close-up and we can mentally expand the frame;
- it is a 'cover-up' and the magazine's readers can use their imaginations;
- it is also a frozen moment and we can infer the preceding events.

# IRONY

- In **IRONY**, the signifier of the ironic sign seems to signify one thing but it actually signifies something very different.
- Where it means the *opposite* of what it says (as it usually does) it is based on binary opposition.



# IRONY

- Irony reflects the **opposite** of:
  - ▣ the thoughts or feelings of the speaker or writer
    - 'I love it' = I hate it
  - ▣ the truth about external reality
    - 'There's a crowd here' = it's deserted



# IRONY

- Substitution can be based on *dissimilarity* (as in understatement) or *disjunction* (as in exaggeration)

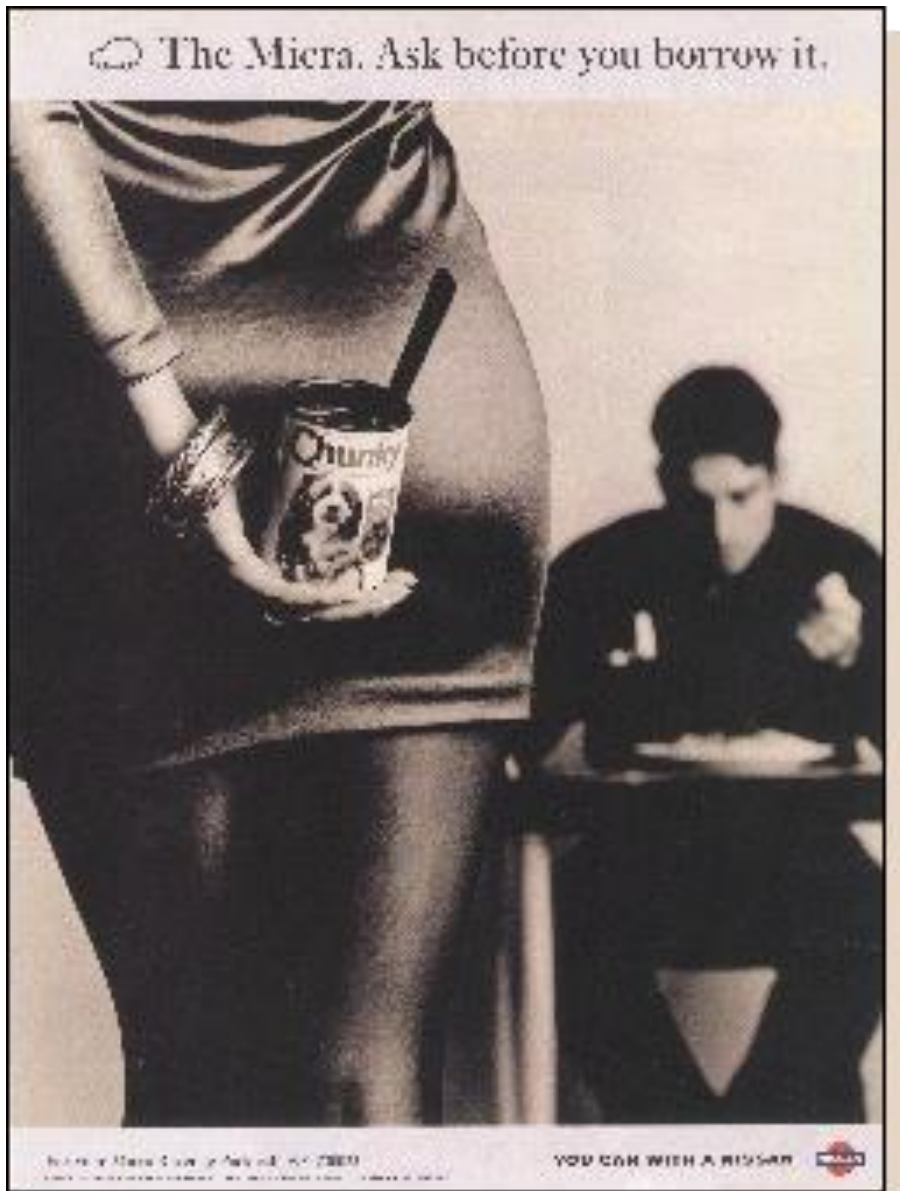
*dissimilarity*



*disjunction*



# IRONY (2)



This ad from the same Nissan campaign illustrated earlier makes effective use of irony. We notice two people: in soft focus we see a man absorbed in eating his food at a table; in sharp focus close-up we see a woman facing him, hiding behind her back an open can. As we read the label we realize that she has fed him dog-food (because he didn't ask before borrowing her car).

# SYNAESTHESIA

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- It is a peculiar form of metaphor
- In linguistics, it is the production from a sense-impression of one kind of an associated mental image of a sense-impression of another kind

# SYNAESTHESIA (2)

- Synaesthesia is amply used by copywriters because it represents the hedonistic invitation to enjoy all the senses
  - ▣ Lips that scream with colour (Rimmel)
  - ▣ For colour at its softest (l'Oreal)





# Synaesthesia



# Other tropes

- **Hyperbole** (= exaggeration; sometimes = irony)
  - ▣ An interior fit for an emperor (Peugeot)
  - ▣ To the moon and back four times a day (United Airlines)
  - ▣ Discover colours so pure it blushes with you. Introducing Blushing Micronised Cheek Colour (Estée Lauder)

# Other tropes

## Antonomasia

- Any single entity appearing in the advert text becomes the representative of its category
  - The Make-Up of Make-Up Artists (Max Factor)
  - Nespresso. What else? (Nescafé)
  - Carte Noir. French for Coffee
  - Audemars Piguet. The master watchmaker



# Other tropes

## Tautology

- Self referential quality of advertising discourse
- It can be merely visual: the whole advert text consists of the photo of the product simply accompanied by the brand name as if the product did not require any introduction
  - It's a Volvo. It's a Volvo (we printed it twice in case you didn't believe the first time) (Volvo)
  - NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, NEW, AND NEW  
New Bodyform Invisible – with 12 improvements

# Other tropes

## Anaphora

- It is the repetition of one or more words within a sentence.
- It creates an effect of expectation, emphasis and symmetry
  - ▣ it's where moths dance. it's where laughter comes easily. it's where time meander. it's where i'm always religthing the candles. it's where our friends come to Sunday lunch. it's where other don't leave until Monday morning. It's where we live. it's our habitat (Habitat)