

Tanulmány

Fee-Alexandra Haase

The Linguistic Representation of Economic Breakdowns in the Mass Media Language as Inverted Rhetoric of Vivity

Abstract

This article examines the description of economic crisis in *The New York Times* with examples of articles that appeared in the years 2008 and 2009. There are three dimensions the crisis as an event is described; one of them is the description of crisis as a movement or a development of international and global extension (spatial dimension). The second is the metaphorical one actually describing the crisis as a natural force. The third one is the description of the crisis as a more or less globally appearing crisis. Our question is “How is the crisis as medial event described, if there is no concrete reference object to refer to, but just a, semantically expressed, concept denoting a non-material and non-perceptible entity described as crises?” Taking the examples from *The New York Times* we will demonstrate that such a lack of a concrete object does not alter the language of journalism, except that a (for the news language uncommon) metaphoric production takes part. The activity of the object represented by the noun is the agent of activities, even though the processes are highly abstract. On a meta-level, the language in the news becomes an allegorical network with the metaphorsized object crisis as the agent of movement in an intertextual setting of texts using the expression.

Keywords: Mass Media, Communication, Rhetoric

1 Introduction: The Question “What is a Crisis in the Language of the Mass Media?”

Rhetoricity is the quality of a person or an object to have rhetorical attributes. This writing is interested in qualities of rhetoric the mass media possess using the crisis as a topic of journalistic narratives. The mass media are said to perform an agenda-setting role determining what a matter for public debate is and determining the order of importance of such matters (Underwood 2009: online). So it is interesting to see how events in the media are presented, since they influence how we perceive events. The term *mass media* refers to those media that are “designed to be consumed by large audiences through the agencies of technology” (Boles 2008: online). The material we selected are classical news and opinion writings of *The New York Times* and Op-Ed writings as well as letters of private persons directed and published in the journal. Approaching the use of the word from the perspective of lexical semantics, we ask what the expression means based upon the basic expressions it contains and the constituted composite meaning. This meaning is in two approaches examined looking at the

processes how the expression refers to entities and how words are used in the appropriate contexts (pragmatic).

What is a crisis? The connoted meanings of the word have multiple shades. According to Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon*, *krisis* is a noun in the ancient Greek language for the activity of separating or distinguishing. *Krisis* was first used for a decision or judgment by the sophist Parmenides. Herodotus used it for a dispute (5,5 and 7,26). *Krisis* means *separating, distinguishing, decision, judgement, choice, election, interpretation of dreams or portents* (Liddell, Scott 2009: online). The word *krisis* in the *Bible* is translated as 'judgment'. English 'crisis' means 'a turning point for better or worse' in the progress of an affair or a series of events. *The New York Times* uses the word crisis in a strict economical sense, which can be traced back to economical theories of the 19th century. The contributions of *The New York Times* are hard news, soft news and opinion writing. Hard news are descriptive covering the basic elements of the event (the W-questions), soft news are narrative, and opinion writing is an argumentative text type. Rhetorical figures are in literature and linguistics all language figurations deviating from the normal linguistic usage. With the tropes the text deviates from the direct sense of the word. *Elocutio* is the range for the placement of things (*res*) according to words (*verba*). Categories that can be considered for style qualities (*virtutes dicendi*) are language correctness (*puritas*), clarity (*perspicuitas*) of the language, their suitability (*aptum*) and shortness of the expression (*brevitas*). They have direct attention on the statement by the decoration and elegance of the speech (*ornatus*). In the mass media language the language is basically not rhetorical, since it shall refer directly to the events reported. This is especially mandatory, when hard news are reported.

Chandler in *Semiotics for Beginners* wrote: "Language is not a neutral medium. In common usage we refer dismissively to 'heated rhetoric', 'empty rhetoric' and 'mere rhetoric'. [...] 'Facts' do not 'speak for themselves'" (Chandler 2009: online). The semiotic perspective here mentioned reminds us to the situation of the recipients, the readers that get the news of a *crisis* presented in a continuous stream of developments of local events that are all considered a part of a whole event. The term itself is no longer covered by meanings we showed above as the original meanings of the word *krisis* in ancient Greek language. On the other hand the term used in *The New York Times* is an abstractum and as such it is a semiotic signifier. This signifier signifies events related to it or refers to itself. News language does not give any definitions. The global crisis as a movement of negative worldly effects interpreted as an allegory stands in the tradition of allegories of the world like the medieval *Frau Welt* (Lady World) who from the front appears as a beautiful woman, but from the back shows its physical decline and ugliness. While the Greek word has no positive or negative connotations, the economic language and political language use the word crisis for a negative state. At this point it is necessary to discuss the perspective of the medium that presents the news. At the time the news were published also the mass media in the U.S. experienced a crisis and economic decline. The popularity of the medium internet has a serious effect of decrease of traditional print mass media, e.g. a loss of popularity of print journalism at the beginning of the 21st century. According to Boles, media literacy is "the process of understanding and using the mass media in an assertive and non-passive way. This includes an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques" (Boles 2008: online). When examining the use of the words *crisis* and *crises* in a media outlet like *The New York Times*, we face a language that refers to events that are on a meta-level described with the mentioned terms that originated from the language of

economics, contemporary politics, and public life. The meta-language terms are here taken for granted and not subject to any investigation. The terms are on meta-level descriptors for events that are described in the journalistic writings in hard news, soft news, and opinion and feature writing.

Close to serving as a cliché, the terms stand as semantic units in mass media writings for a semiotic concept of breakdowns that occur on economic levels with a language beyond the level of proper words employing a highly rhetorical style and a metaphorical level, which forms an allegorical evidential language. But the point is that this evidence is only a highly rhetorically depicted vivity, when the metaphorical words describe the phenomenon of a crisis, while the event itself and the facts referring to it are less important. Rhetoricity is the quality of a person or an object of having rhetorical attributes. This analysis is interested in qualities of rhetoric the mass media language possess. We will focus on major qualities of mass media language we can describe with traditional categories of rhetoric and the contrasts of rhetoric in mass media and the speech as the classical medium of rhetoric delivered to a present audience. The use of terms like *crisis* refers to the intertextuality of the language of the mass media. Easily recognizable like a cliché, the terms are nodes of a semiotic description in the narratives of the news referring to a classification and attributed meaning of the reported events. In other words: The language of the news employs here rhetorical and specific terminological expressions of a meta-language, which connects events of different texts with each other. The writers of the news employ this terminology and consider themselves in the position of the contributor of a continuous narrative. When Marx in his *Capital* described as the source of a crisis the discrepancy between the accrued capital and the poverty and restrictions of consumption of the masses, the main attributes of a crisis in the articles of *The New York Times* refer to lack of money and the transfer of money to the U.S.A. and other countries unable to pay it back. The descriptive setting is reduced to national political leaders and national economic situations vs. global events occurring in different parts of the world. Compared to Marx, here the description of the poverty of the masses and any individual person or group of persons lacks.

2 The Crisis in *The New York Times*

2.1 Crisis Narrated in a Metaphorical Construction

Let's take at the rhetorical descriptions of the crisis in *The New York Times*. Here the crisis is described metaphorically as an animal in the following article of *The New York Times*: "To Glascock County residents, it now seems as if the crisis has extended a tentacle from Atlanta to their quiet community of farms and sawmills [...]" was written by Dewan in *A Small Town Loses a Pillar: Its Only Bank* (27th of March 2009). As natural power the crisis is described in the following statements: On 10th of January 2009 was written that "the global financial crisis has hammered confidence in South Korea's once-booming economy [...]" (Dewan 2009: online).

Under the headline *The Mother of all Currency Crises* in the *Paul Krugman Blog* (26th of October 2008) of *The New York Times* was written in a metaphorical expression of a natural catastrophe that "so far, the US financial sector has been the epicenter of the global crisis" (Krugman 2008: online). The expression *bubbles* is used in the following two articles: On 20th of March 2009 was written that "finance officials from leading nations like the United States

have devised a plan to stop market bubbles from growing out of control”. The reader and author of an opinion letter regarding Paul Krugman’s mentioning in *The New York Times* (8th of March 2009) that “Asia caused the current global crisis by oversaving” answered:

But the numbers don’t add up. The Asian developing countries ran a combined current account surplus (net lending to the rest of the world) of \$38.3 billion in 2000, while the United States ran a whopping current account deficit of \$417.4 billion. By 2004, the United States’ deficit had swelled to \$625 billion, against a surplus of developing Asia of \$82.5 billion. In fact, the Federal Reserve created two bubbles, the dot-com bubble (1998-2001) and the subprime bubble (2002-7), and these substantially raised American borrowing from the rest of the world. Now the whole world pays the price. Nobody else made us do it, least of all the developing countries of Asia (Krugman 2008: online).

Under the headline *The U.S. Financial Crisis: The Global Dimension with Implications* from *The New York Times* of the 12th of February 2009 the metaphor of the bubble was used: “What began as a bursting of the U.S. housing market bubble and a rise in foreclosures has ballooned into a global financial crisis” (Anonymus 2009: online). In the *Group of 20 News - The New York Times Global Response to a Global Crisis* (30th of March 2009) Hugo Dixon wrote that ‘finance officials from leading nations like the United States have devised a plan to stop market bubbles’ (Dixon 2009: online). Reactions of the crisis from other countries are mentioned in the following articles: Carter Dougherty in “Philanthropy Amid a Global Crisis” (30 of January 2009) wrote that “the financial and economic crisis has put advocates for the world’s poorest nations on high alert [...]” (Dougherty 2009: online). The headline of 13th of February 2009 was that *Global Economy Top Threat to U.S., Spy Chief Says*. Mazzetti used the metaphoric of fire:

The new director of national intelligence told Congress on Thursday that global economic turmoil and the instability it could ignite had outpaced terrorism as the most urgent threat facing the United States (Mazetti 2009: online).

2.2 Crisis Narrated as a Global Movement

The reports and news about crisis are categorized according to national and international effects. An Op-Ed Columnist in *America the Tarnished* on 30th of March 2009 wrote: “After all, in 1999 the United States was the unquestioned leader of the global crisis response” (Anonymus 2009: online). Under the headline *Asian Banks Losing Immunity to Global Financial Crisis* in *The New York Times* of 19th of November 2008 was written that “HSBC announced that it would cut 500 jobs in Asia. And Citigroup’s roughly 50000 employees were faced with the reality that some of job cuts”. Under the headline *Global Financial Troubles Reaching Into Gulf States* of the 27th of Oct 2008 was written that “the global financial crisis extended its reach into the Persian Gulf states on Sunday [...]” (Jolly 2008: online).

The global financial crisis extended its reach into the Persian Gulf states on Sunday, as Kuwait suspended trading in shares of a major bank and the Saudi authorities announced a plan to help citizens receive credit. The Central Bank of Kuwait halted trading in Gulf Bank, one of the country’s largest lenders, after a customer defaulted on a derivatives contract. The central bank said it would “strongly support the bank’s financial position” and protect depositors, to assure the public that Gulf Bank’s business would not be affected (Anonymus 2009: online).

Under the headline *Innovating Our Way to Financial Crisis* on 3rd of December 2007 the crisis was described as personification: “The financial crisis that began late last summer, then took a brief vacation in September and October, is back with a vengeance” (Anonymus 2009: online). Already in *Redrawing The Free Market* (14th of November 1998) was written that “the global financial crisis has thrown 20 million Asians back into poverty over the last year, made 40 percent of the Russian population poorer than ever [...]” (Cohen 2009: online). Under the headline *The U.S. Financial Crisis Is Spreading to Europe* on 1st of October 2008 was written that “as the White House scrambles to retool its rescue plan for the financial system, the global creep of the crisis has reached Europe” (Landler 2009: online).

A Drought in Australia, a Global Shortage of Rice in *The New York Times* was a headline of 17th of April 2008 in an article stating that “the global agricultural crisis is threatening to become political [...]” (Bradsher 2009: online). *Financial Crisis Spreads to Emerging Nations* was the headline of 24th of October 2008 corresponding from Seoul that “as the global financial crisis has unfolded, many South Koreans feel they are reliving a nightmare [...]” (Fackler 2009: online). The expression enters the news through quotations of politicians and other decision makers and leaders. In *Brown Urges Action to Work Through Crisis* is mentioned that “British Prime Minister Gordon Brown warned Saturday that unease about the global financial crisis was no reason to retreat into protectionism and fear” (Facjler 2009: online). In *Sarkozy Stresses Global Financial Overhaul* (26th of September 2008) the president of France was quoted saying that “while the global financial crisis will have serious consequences for the French economy, [...] bank deposits will be guaranteed [...]” (Erlanger 2009: online). In *News Analysis - Europe’s Leadership in Carbon Control at Risk* (21st of October 2008) was written that “Europe’s role as a global leader in combating climate change risks becoming the next victim of the global financial crisis” (Anonymus 2009: online). In *Financial Crisis Dims Hopes for Giant Cross-Border Banks in Europe* (30th of January 2009) was written that “in the global financial crisis, with the health of many banks dependent on the good will of their home governments, the choice is not hard” (Anonymus 2009: online). In *How Will the Credit Crisis Affect Latin America?* of the *Economix Blog* (14th of October 2008) was mentioned that “as a recent article in *The Economist* points out, Latin America as a whole is better prepared for a global financial crisis [...]” (Anonymus 2009: online).

2.3 The Descriptive Globality of the Crisis

In the representation of the crisis in *The New York Times* the main quality of crisis is its global appearance. The globality of the crisis is a very common connotation that results from the promotion of the idea of globality in the 21st century in the mass media. Globality actually does not refer to the local events, but to the perspective from which a person is able to interpret an event and connect it with other events. An Op-Ed Columnist, Paul Krugman, in *A Continent Adrift* on 16th of March 2009 wrote: “Big welfare states aren’t the cause of Europe’s current crisis” (Krugman 2009: online). An *Op-Ed Columnist* in *Perverse Cosmic Myopia* wrote in *The New York Times* that “this is a global crisis, and a core lesson of the Great Depression is that a global crisis calls for a global response” (Brooks 2009: online). *World Bank Expects Global Economy to Shrink* was the headline of 9th of March 2009 in an article with the statement “This global crisis needs a global solution [...]” (Anonymus 2009: online). In the article *Financial Crisis Spreads to Emerging Nations* (24th of October 2008) was written that “large emerging nations have come under pressure in the global financial

crisis as foreign investors withdraw their money” (Anonymus 2009: online). In *Fear of Deflation Lurks as Global Demand Drops* (1st of November 2008) was written that “the global economic crisis is threatening the country’s factory jobs” and that “the financial crisis has gone global [...] like a virus” (Goodman 2008: online).

The description of the crisis as a global phenomenon is obviously linguistically realized using crisis for any economically negative condition. So in the article *Global Fears of a Recession Grow* (7th of October 2008) was written that “the global nature of the crisis and its growing collateral damage ought to galvanize countries to work together” (Landler 2008: online). In *World Financial Crisis Has Passed, I.M.F. Chief Says of The Lede* (15th of May 2008) was mentioned that a “current global financial crisis was a result of greed by large investment & financial institutions, CEOs and individual investors” (Anonymus 2009: online). In *Fear of Deflation Lurks as Global Demand Drops* (1th of November 2008) was stated that “the financial crisis has gone global, like a virus mutating in the face of every experimental cure” (Anonymus 2009: online). But also other events are described as global phenomena; in *Global Warming and the Minefield of Unintended Consequences* (13th of February 2008) was written that “a worldwide movement to cut emissions and halt what a growing number of scientists call a massive global crisis” (Anonymus 2009: online). In the *Group of 20 News - The New York Times* (1st of April 2009) was mentioned that “as the global financial system is collapsing, leaders are unable to focus on the immediate crisis. Instead, they take refuge in projects” (Anonymus 2009: online). In *A Crisis of Faith* (15th of February) was mentioned that “a decade ago, during the last global financial crisis, the word on everyone’s lips was “contagion” (Anonymus 2009: online). An *Op-Ed Columnist* in *Taking a Depression Seriously* (10th of March 2009) wrote “power will inevitably slide over to those who believe this crisis is a repudiation of global capitalism as a whole” (Anonymus 2009: online).

2.4 The Connection Between Crisis and Crises

Also such psychological phenomena like the *midlife crises* were described with qualities of the global crises in the article *The Midlife Crisis Goes Global* in the *Well Blog* of *The New York Times* of 30th of January 2008 writing the headline *The Midlife Crisis Goes Global* and defining the midlife crisis as a “time of self-doubt and turmoil familiar to many in their 40s and 50s” (Parker-Pope 2009: online). On 21st of October 2008 the headline *U.N. Climate Change Chief Discusses Global Financial Crisis* was published. The lead starts:

Can there be any upside for green industries in this financial crisis? Investment is drying up, the prices of fossil fuels are falling and governments are backing away from their emissions and renewable energy targets to spend billions of dollars propping up the financial system. Policies aimed at improving sustainability and the environment usually are put on the back burner at times of financial hardship – and this time, despite the unprecedented global attention on the dangers of climate change, is beginning to look no different (Kanter 2008: online).

An article with the headline *Global Food Crisis: Menus and Meaning* of the *The Lede Blog* was published by Nizza in *The New York Times* of 8th of July 2008. As Sheryl Gay Stolberg reported today in *The New York Times*, world leaders attending the G-8 summit declared today that they were “deeply concerned that the steep rise in food prices” could push “millions more back into poverty” (Stolberg 2009: online). But the concern was undermined in Britain, where newspaper readers woke up to different twists on a predictable yet “hard to

swallow” irony. Here’s *The Daily Mail*’s version, one of many from today: “World leaders enjoy 18-course banquet as they discuss how to solve global food crisis” (Anonymus 2009: online).

3 *Déjà vu* - A Comparative Studies: Marx on Economic Crisis and its Interpretation in *The New York Tribune*

The interpretation of economical crises was already done by Friedrich Marx and Karl Engels in the 19th century. Under the headline *As Crisis Spreads, Global Approach Weighed* of 10th of October 2008 was written by a reader of *The New York Times*:

What they are struggling with is the value of the securities that these banks hold, i.e., how to value them so as to reinflate the banks portfolio. The only way I know to value those securities is to look at the underlying material product, or products, that they represent, for instance houses, and determine what the actual cost of production was, i.e., the actual cost of the labor that went into their production. The problem with that is that the actual labor value of those securities, as opposed to their fictitious value expressed as money commodities, being much lower would bankrupt the entire system. The market has grown and expanded on the fictitious value based on low interest rather than the actual cost of production of commodities, what you actually pay the workers who produce commodities and are therefore the only source of real value. Having falsely stimulated and inflated the market with cheap money, market that otherwise was overloaded with commodities, the market must now pay the price of the Piper. The Piper, or Pipers, of course are the working class who produces commodities, hence value, and who will refuse to be forced to pay, out of their living conditions, the cost of crashing a market based on false and inflated values. Did someone say ‘Communism is dead?’ j. Jack Jersawitz, Atlanta, Georgia (Jersawitz 2008: online).

What lacks among the descriptions in *The New York Times* is the metaphorical concept of the crisis as a state of health, a very common concept behind the use of the metaphor we find exemplified in the writings of Marx about economic crises and revolutions in the world. The activity of Marx during the time as a correspondent for *The New York Tribune* is a result from the historical interpretations and political activity of its writer. Marx was actually just a correspondent from London, but the topics of his writings go beyond the borders of England. His activity as a correspondent also goes far beyond the activity of news reporting. It is close to ‘historical writing’ about recent events from a contemporary perspective, obviously a perspective *The New York Tribune* accepted as a view towards the ‘old world’ and its headquarter, London. Marx as a correspondent of *The New York Tribune* described crises in the world and from a Marxist perspective interpreted movements in the society as ‘revolution’:

The attention of our readers has often been called to the unparalleled growth of British manufactures since 1850. Amid the most surprising prosperity, it has not been difficult to point out the clear symptoms of an approaching industrial crisis. Notwithstanding California and Australia, notwithstanding the immense and unprecedented emigration, there must ever, without any particular accident, in due time arrive a moment when the extension of the markets is unable to keep pace with the extension of British manufactures, and this disproportion must bring about a new crisis with the same certainty as it has done in the past. But, if one of the great markets suddenly becomes contracted, the arrival of the crisis is necessarily accelerated thereby. Now, the Chinese rebellion must, for the time being, have precisely this effect upon England (Marx 2009: online).

In *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) Engels described the movement of a crisis taking the example of the English economy:

Such a crisis usually recurs once in five years after a brief period of activity and general prosperity; the home market, like all foreign ones, is glutted with English goods, which it can only slowly absorb, the industrial movement comes to a standstill in almost every branch, the small manufacturers and merchants who cannot survive a prolonged inactivity of their invested capital fail, the larger ones suspend business during the worst season, close their mills or work short time, perhaps half the day; wages fall by reason of the competition of the unemployed, the diminution of working-time and the lack of profitable sales (Engels 2009: online).

Marx described as the source of a crisis the discrepancy between the accrued capital and the poverty and lack of consumption of the masses:

The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit (Marx 2009: online).

At another place of the *Capital* Marx writes that contradictions cause a crisis:

These different influences may at one time operate predominantly side by side in space, and at another succeed each other in time. From time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crises. The crises are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the disturbed equilibrium (Marx 2009: online).

Crisis is an example of a recent semantic change used since the 19th century for economic processes. Here even the news written in *The New York Times* stand linguistically in the same line like Marx, when describing economic crises in the 19th century. The meaning in the newspaper language has been narrowed to the phenomenon of economic break-downs. It is quite obvious that Marx in his writings describes processes that developed and the single events he describes are classified as crisis. Here we have an interpretative and reflective way describing a movement. On the contrary, in the news of *The New York Times* the crisis is presented as an event and given fact. Statements of politicians about the crisis that are quoted in the news and the economical breakdown the newspaper reports about as crisis are considered as parts of one economical movement that occurs at several places of the world. The reports lack any investigation about the relation between the different events. The concept of globalization is the background for the narrative description of local events that are presented as parts of one event.

4 Intertextuality of Mass Media: ‘Crisis’ as Internationalized Rhetorical Umbrella Term

At this place we discuss, if the use of such terms like crisis in the mass media affect a journalistic writing that presents given events under an umbrella term open to various discursive and narrative forms. Intertextuality is the assumed quality that any text depends on prior conventions, codes, and other texts. The term is sometimes used to refer to the “unavoidable multiplicity of references in any text” (Underwood 2009: online). Also inter-mediality is a term expressing the reliance of media on other media. News about the crisis circulate around a set of representation of crisis we can distinguish as follows:

Crisis as International Development
Crisis as Metaphorical Object
Crisis as 'Global Crisis'
Crisis as Collectivum for Crises

We selected writings of pragmatic text types, news writings, and commentaries that are representative for the use of the expression in the mass media. The ambiguity of the umbrella term is obvious seeing the phenomenon that the expression 'crisis' has more than one meaning. But this awareness depends on the knowledge of the lexical and etymological tradition of the word. The expression 'crisis' varies its semantic structure according to the context it is used in. So we have a metaphorical semantic meaning, when crisis is not described as an economic movement, but with words from other field. When the word crisis is used in the context of economy, the expression stands for an economic decline. It is actually uncommon in the language of journalism to use metaphorical expressions, since it is assumed that metaphorical and rhetorical language is contrary to the objective and plain style of writing in the news media. Exceptions here are feature writings. Besides the use of the crisis as a single phenomenon, an economic crisis, at the same time multiple other crises are occurring in other areas. Crisis is used as a dead metaphor, where the sense of the transferred image is not present. We have no concrete descriptions or definitions of the crisis and its meaning is actually reduced to a movement across borders and a global phenomenon. If we would interpret the use of the word 'crisis' as a metaphor with a meaning, we could interpret it with another meaning of the classical Greek word crisis as judgment. Media contain contents, information, and experiences created for an audience. The actual presence of the contents can take any form of sensual phenomena and phenomena received via cognition. The integration of rhetorical figures, commonly considers a 'don't' in journalistic practice, is actually not untypical in journalistic writing from the perspective of rhetoric assuming the ubiquity of rhetoric. Also the integration of speech into the journalistic writing is a rhetorical aspect of journalism. The commonly occurring view is that the 'rhetoric' expressed in journalistic documents is a talking in 'hollow phrases' or inclined statements that is mediated from the interviewed person to the medial outlet that passively publishes and distributes it. The rhetoricity of the journalistic media includes the general features of rhetoric as established by rhetorical theory and their application. The rhetorical system gives a comprehensive grounding theory for the practice of journalism comprising the selection of material suitable for mass media presentation in the area of memory, the area of the development of the material, the examination of the actual event by division into different basic groups, and the selective genres of writing that are parts of the variety of the journalistic presentation of mass media based upon the mimetic relation between nature and art. White in his thesis *Telling Media Tales: The News Story as Rhetoric* explored the rhetorical properties of the modern news report presenting the argument that

[...] linear, syntagmatic models of text structure of the type developed previously for analysis of, for example, the narrative are unable to account for the functionality of these news reports. An alternative 'orbital' model of textuality is presented by which relationships of specification are seen to operate between a central textual nucleus and dependent satellites (White 2008: online).

Aristotle warns regarding the use of metaphors (*Rhetoric* 3, 3, 4):

Metaphors like other things may be inappropriate. Some are so because they are ridiculous, they are indeed used by comic as well as tragic poets. Others are too grand and theatrical, and these, if they are far-fetched, may also be obscure. For instance, Gorgias talks of ‘events that are green and full of sap’, and says ‘foul was the deed you sowed and evil the harvest you reaped’. That is too much like poetry. Alcidamas, again, called philosophy ‘a fortress that threatens the power of law’, and the Odyssey ‘a goodly looking-glass of human life’, talked about ‘offering no such toy to poetry’: all these expressions fail, for the reasons given, to carry the hearer with them (Aristotle 2009: online).

Quintilian writes in the *Institutio Oratoria* (8, 2, 1) on perspicuity (*perspicuitas*) that the perspicuity in words arises from a certain propriety; but propriety itself is not accepted in a simple way; for the first intellect is the naming of anything, which we shall not always use, for we shall avoid the obscene, offensive, or mean:

Perspicuitas in verbis praecipuam habet proprietatem, sed proprietas ipsa non simpliciter accipitur. Primus enim intellectus est sua cuiusque rei appellatio, qua non semper utemur. Nam et obscena vitabimus et sordida et humilia (Quintilian 2009: online).

Balkin wrote: “Without mass media, openness and accountability are impossible in contemporary democracies. Nevertheless, mass media can hinder political transparency as well as help it.” Balkin also wrote on transparency:

Today political transparency is virtually impossible without some form of mass media coverage. However, mass media can frustrate the values of political transparency even while appearing to serve those values. When politicians and political operatives attempt to simulate transparency and appropriate the rhetoric of openness and accountability, the mass media does not always counteract the simulation. Indeed, it may actually tend to proliferate it (Balkin 2009:online).

The mass media use a language, with is vague and intends to signify events with abstract classifications like *global* and *crisis*. But this is an intertextual phenomenon of a medium that receives news and relies on a language and expressions created outside the medium. The descriptions of the crisis as a movement in *The New York Times* use the expression *crisis* as a term to cover developments of national and international importance. Both the metaphorical use of words to describe the crisis and the Proper words for the description refer to a movement. The actual definition and concrete analysis of the movement is missing. The use of the word *crisis* actually fits with the classical definitions of a change of a state, but actually it does not implement the option of a change to a better or worse state. *Crisis* here is in general a negatively connoted word. The semantic field in the examined examples of *The New York Times* circulates around a set of meanings that are, generally speaking, nor identical with the original meanings of the word *crisis* in Greek language. Even compared to the use of the expression *crisis* in the terminology of Marx we find the difference that this crisis is described as a phenomenon that is connected to other crises. While Marx employed a human metaphorical language for crisis, now the crisis is semantically described as a worldwide phenomenon comparably to natural catastrophes. The crisis is mentioned in the news as an event; its ambivalence and ambiguity is included in the use of the word, since different phenomena as described as crisis from the perspective of a global event. The readers of news get the impression that here one phenomenon occurs all over the world and the news report about it. The distribution of news in such way contributes to the global effect of crisis presented in the mass media, since the presentation lacks any differentiated background

information. The semiotic field of crisis, globalism, and national economics is present in all articles. In hard news the term *crisis* serves as a sign classifying the event of the news, while in soft news and opinion writings the meaning of the term is analyzed according to a special event.

Bibliography

- Anonymus (2009): Krisis. *TDNT. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Study Light. 7. June 2007. <http://www.studylight.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=2920> (23 September 2009).
- Anonymus (2009): Group of 20 News – The New York Times Topics. 1. April 2009. *The New York Times Online*. http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/c/credit_crisis/index.html (2 April 2009).
- Anonymus (2009): Brown Urges Action to Work Through Crisis. 31 January 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.dealbook.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/31/brown-urges-action-to-work-through-crisis/?pagemode=print> (23 September 2009).
- Anonymus (2009): Financial Crisis Dims Hopes for Giant Cross-Border Banks in Europe. 30 January 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/business/worldbusiness/30eurobanks.html> (23 September 2009).
- Anonymus (2009): Global Warming and the Minefield of Unintended Consequences. Freakonomics. 13 February 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.freakonomics.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/global-warming-and-the-minefield-of-unintended-consequences/> (23 September 2009).
- Anonymus (2008): How Will the Credit Crisis Affect Latin America? Economix Blog. 14 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/14/how-will-the-credit-crisis-affect-latin-america/> (23 September 2009).
- Anonymus (2008): World Financial Crisis Has Passed, I.M.F. Chief Says. *The Lede*. 15 May 2008. *The New York Times Online*. 2 April 2009. <http://www.thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/15/world-financial-crisis-has-passed-imf-chief-says/> (23 September 2009).
- Aristotle (2009): *Rhetoric*. Tr. W. Rhys Roberts. MIT Classics. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html> (23 September 2009).
- Andrews, E.L. (2009): World Bank Expects Global Economy to Shrink. 9 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/business/09bank.html> (23 September 2009).
- Balkin, J.M. (2009): *How Mass Media Simulate Political Transparency*. Yale University. <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/jbalkin/articles/media01.htm> (23 September 2009).
- Boles, D. (2008): *Language of Media Literacy: A Glossary of Terms*. Center for Media Literacy. http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article565.html (23 September 2009).
- Bradsher, K. (2009): A Drought in Australia, a Global Shortage of Rice. 17 April 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/business/worldbusiness/17warm.html> (23 September 2009).

- Brooks, D. (2009): Perverse Cosmic Myopia. 19 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/opinion/20brooks.html> (23 September 2009).
- Brooks, D. (2009): Taking a Depression Seriously. Op-Ed Column. 10 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/10/opinion/10brooks.html> (23 September 2009).
- Chandler, D. (2009): *Semiotics for Beginners*. Aberystwyth University. <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem07.html> (23 September 2009).
- Cohen, R. (2009): Redrawing The Free Market; Amid a Global Financial Crisis, Calls for Regulation Spread. 14 November 1998. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/14/arts/redrawing-free-market-amid-global-financial-crisis-calls-for-regulation-spread.html> (23 September 2009).
- Dewan, S. (2009): A Small Town Loses a Pillar: Its Only Bank. Gibson Journal. 27 March 2009. *New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/28/us/28failure.html> (23 September 2009).
- Dixon, H. (2009): Global Response to a Global Crisis. 20 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/business/20views.html?ref=business> (23 September 2009).
- Dixon, H. (2009): Group of 20 News – The New York Times Global Response to a Global Crisis. 30 March 30 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/business/20views.html> (23 September 2009).
- Dougherty, C. (2009): Philanthropy Amid a Global Crisis. 30 January 2009. *The New York Times Online*. 2 April 2009. <http://dealbook.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/philanthropy-amid-a-global-crisis/> (23 September 2009).
- Engels, F. (2009): *Condition of the Working Class in England*. Marxist Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/condition-working-class/ch05.htm> (23 September 2009).
- Erlanger, S. (2009): Sarkozy Stresses Global Financial Overhaul. 26 September 26 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/26/business/worldbusiness/26france.html> (23 September 2009).
- Facjler, M. (2009): Global Financial Crisis Upends the Plans of Many South Koreans to Study Abroad. 9 January 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/10/world/asia/10students.html> (23 September 2009).
- Fackler, M. (2009): Financial Crisis Spreads to Emerging Nations. 24 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/business/worldbusiness/24won.html> (23 September 2009).
- Fackler, M. (2009): Financial Crisis Spreads to Emerging Nations. 24 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/business/worldbusiness/24won.html?scp=9&sq=Emerging%20markets&st=cse> (23 September 2009).
- Goodman, P.S. (2008): Fear of Deflation Lurks as Global Demand Drops. 1 November 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/01/business/economy/01deflation.html?em=&pagewanted=all> (23 September 2009).

- Jersawitz, J. (2008): As Crisis Spreads, Global Approach Weighed. Reader Comment. 10 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/10/business/worldbusiness/10global.html?fta=y> (23 September 2009).
- Jolly, D. (2009): Global Financial Troubles Reaching Into Gulf States. 27 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/27/business/economy/27gulf.html?pagewanted=all> (23 September 2009).
- Jolly, D. (2008): Global Financial Troubles Reaching Into Gulf States. 20 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/27/business/economy/27gulf.html?fta=y> (23 September 2009).
- Kanter, J. (2009): News Analysis – Europe’s Leadership in Carbon Control at Risk. 21 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/21/business/worldbusiness/21climate.html> (23 September 2009).
- Kanter, J. (2009): U.N. Climate Change Chief Discusses Global Financial Crisis. 21 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/21/un-climate-change-chief-discusses-global-financial-crisis/> (23 September 2009).
- Krugman, P. (2009): A Continent Adrift. 16 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/16/opinion/16krugman.html> (23 September 2009).
- Krugman, P. (2009): America the Tarnished. 29 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/30/opinion/30krugman.html> (23 September 2009).
- Krugman, P. (2007): Innovating Our Way to Financial Crisis. 3 December 2007. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/03/opinion/03krugman.html?n=Top/Opinion/Editorials%20and%20Op-Ed/Op-Ed/Columnists/> (23 September 2009).
- Krugman, P. (2008): The Mother of all Currency Crises. 26 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/26/the-mother-of-all-currency-crises/> (23 September 2009).
- Krugman, P. (2008): A Crisis of Faith. 15 February 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/15/opinion/15krugman.html> (23 September 2009).
- Landler, M. (2008): Global Fears of a Recession Grow. 7 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/07/business/worldbusiness/07global.html?hp> (23 September 2009).
- Landler, M. (2008): The U.S. Financial Crisis Is Spreading to Europe. 1 October 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/01/business/worldbusiness/01global.html> (23 September 2009).
- Liddell, H.G. & Scott R. (2009): *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940. Perseus Project. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3D%2360035> (23 September 2009).
- Marx, F. (2009): *The Capital*. Vol. III Part III. The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall. Chapter 15. Exposition of the Internal Contradictions of the Law. Marxist Internet Archive. <http://www.marxfaq.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch15.htm> (23 March 2009).

- Marx, F. (2009): *The Capital*. Vol. III Part V. Division of Profit into Interest and Profit of Enterprise. Interest-Bearing Capital. Chapter 30. Money-Capital and Real Capital. Marxist Online Archive. <http://marx.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch30.htm> (23 March 2009).
- Marx, K. (2009): Revolution in China and In Europe. *The New York Daily Tribune*. June 14, 1853. Marxist Internet Archive. <http://www.marx.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/14.htm> (23 March 2009).
- Mazzetti, M. (2009): Global Economy Top Threat to U.S., Spy Chief Says. 12 February 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/13/washington/13intel.html?partner=rss&emc=rss> (2 September 2009).
- New York Times (2009): The U.S. Financial Crisis: The Global Dimension with Implications for U.S. Policy. 12 February 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.topics.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/the-us-financial-crisis-the-global-dimension-with-implications-for-us-policy/> (2 September 2009).
- Nizza, M. (2009): Global Food Crisis: Menus and Meaning. The Lede Blog. 8 July 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/08/global-food-crisis-menus-and-meaning/> (2 September 2009).
- Parker-Pope, T. (2008): The Midlife Crisis Goes Global. Well Blog. 30 January 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/30/the-midlife-crisis-goes-global/> (2 September 2009).
- Sachs, J.D. (2009): Blame for the Global Crisis. 8 March 2009. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/opinion/08krugman.html?ref=opinion> (2 September 2009).
- Quintilian, M.F. (2009): *Institutio Oratoria*. Forum Romanum. <http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/institutio8.html> (2 September 2009).
- Underwood, M. (2009): *Effects Research: Glossary*. *Cultsock*. <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/media/efterms.html> (2 September 2009).
- Wassener, B. (2008): Asian Banks, Once Thought Safe From Crisis, Are Now Hurting. 18 November 2008. *The New York Times Online*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/business/worldbusiness/19asiajobs.html> (2 September 2009).
- White, P.R. (2008): *Telling Media Tales: The News Story as Rhetoric*. PhD Thesis May 1998. Department of Linguistics. University of Sydney. Grammatics. http://www.grammatics.com/appraisal/1_preface_telling-media-tales.doc (2 September 2009).

Prof. Dr. Fee-Alexandra Haase
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
University of Balamand
Deir El-Balamand, El-Koura
North Lebanon
Lebanon