

The “Mouseland” Metaphor: How Rhetoric and Affect can Mobilize Structural Political  
Change

by

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### **Abstract**

Audiences use their own methods of verbal and emotional persuasion, which has created a gap of understanding between them and diminishes the ability for a consensus and removes opportunities for widespread political mobilization to occur. This paper analyzes Tommy Douglas's 1944 performance of "Mouseland", a metaphorical speech representing the Canadian Parliamentary system that has succeeded in removing the communication gap between members of different domains, or audiences. The speech's impact continues today, with references to Douglas's performance recurring in a variety of contexts. "Mouseland" is written as an affective metaphor whose purpose is to persuade an audience through affect. Douglas, the speaker, uses a comical metaphor to accomplish this affective response in his audience, which provides an example for how a speech can act beyond the confines of language into the emotional realm for the purposes of persuasion and mobilization. Persuasion and mobilization are two key aspects of political decision-making, and are crucial in creating structural political change.

## **The “Mouseland” Metaphor: How Rhetoric and Affect can Mobilize Political Change**

Rhetoric is a crucial aspect within the realm of politics, as politicians and their policies cannot move forward without adequate public support. Rhetoric includes the components of a successful persuasive argument beyond language, with a strong focus on the emotional and affective response of its audience. In order to elicit such responses from the public, the discourse of persuasion must be understandable and applicable to the unique individuals that make up the audience. However, there is not one known discourse of persuasion that is applicable across all audience domains, such as politicians, advocates, the general public, and scientists, rather multiple audiences use their own methods of communicating and achieving verbal and emotional persuasion. As Throgmorton explains: “In shorthand terms, one might say that scientists talk about 'explaining phenomena in a theoretically coherent way,' politicians about 'putting the right spin on things,' and [...] advocates about 'demanding one's rights'” (1991, p. 156). The varying methods of persuasion used by each domain causes a gap of understanding between audiences that causes frustration when trying to influence decision-makers of another domain. For example, the non-scientific public is often branded as ignorant and emotional by scientists who rely on the “exclusionary rhetoric” of “rationality” and scientific proof, and believe that “public policy decisions should be left to these experts” (Throgmorton, 1991, p. 159). The general public and scientists are often at odds in their methods of information sharing. The traditional methods of communication used by each audience have created a common communication error that negatively impacts the ability for a political decision to be agreed upon by several different audiences, and prevents political decision-making from being successful and meaningful. Michael Reddy’s research project, “The Conduit Metaphor”, shares this viewpoint: “The problems of society, government, and culture depend ultimately on something like the daily box score of such successes or failures to communicate” (1987, p. 284). I will argue for the efficacy of emotion within a political

decision-making context, such as a policy analysis, as well as for the importance of studying affect through rhetoric in order to diminish communication barriers between audiences.

A large component of my argument is dependent on proving that rhetoric and affect are relevant to policy analysis. Discourse—rhetoric embodied—is essentially “a social construction constituted by the consensus of worldviews and values of individuals collectively creating a group” (Bourk & Worthington, 2000). Affect, the physiological emotional response within an audience, is a similar social construct that “is also intertwined with the social and political” (Landau & Keely-Jonker, 2018, p. 169). I argue that affect can be invoked towards a political issue or cause through the discourses of social groups, which is why political leaders, or other public figures, should use or at least consider the impact of affect in their speeches. As Landau and Keely-Jonker describe, “[o]ne way in which presidents operate is affectively, foreclosing political possibilities and/or prying them open to mobilize for social change” (2018, p. 169). While not focused on a presidential statement, my argument will focus on rhetoric’s importance for political change through policy analysis. The speech, given by a hopeful provincial Premier, succeeded in creating motivation for political changes. I will be unpacking and critiquing Throgmorton’s idea that “policy analysis is an inherently rhetorical project that cannot be fully understood apart from the audiences to which it is directed and the styles in which it is communicated” (1991, p. 153). The metaphor’s influence on the affective response created by Douglas’s statement, and the shared impacts of the two on political institutions or structures through broad audience outreach, will be the focus of this paper.

As a primary example of how rhetoric has been harnessed to connect across domains, or audiences, I will be analyzing Tommy Douglas’s speech “Mouseland”, first told by CCF MP Clarence Gillis, but made famous by Douglas’s performance in 1944 during the Saskatchewan provincial election. This speech is a political allegory discussing the Canadian electoral system through the creation of a place called Mouseland that is run by black cats, and

then by white cats, but never any actual mice. Douglas's method of delivery provides a strong argument in support of a shared affective-emotional rhetoric; that is, the metaphor. I read Douglas's use of metaphor and cross-domain mapping in "Mouseland" as creating a shared, basic form of understanding that continues this speech's relevance in current discussions of the Canadian parliamentary system and electoral reform in Canada. More broadly, I suggest this speech continues to have an influence on creating structural political change through the use of affect and rhetoric.

### ***Problem Statement and Purpose of Study in Relation to Sustainability***

My problem statement is related to the ideas of Throgmorton's "The rhetoric of policy analysis" (2018), in that there is a gap of understanding between different audiences (politicians, advocates, scientists, and the public), which blocks potential political changes from occurring. The purpose of this study is to examine the potential impact that affect and the metaphor could have on the specific audience of the general public in relation to political issues. The conclusions of this project could aid politicians and activists to better engage their audiences, no matter their domain. For example, the results could be applied to see how environmental activists could reach beyond the audience of their typical domain of advocates with the use of a more accessible tool beyond language, that is the metaphor. Political decision-making and policy analysis is one of the most direct ways of enabling an audience to engage with an issue affecting social, economic, or environmental change. Politicians and policies that do not ensure understanding of their citizens are ineffective at mobilizing sustainable and structural political change, and the focus of this thesis is to examine methods at bridging these gaps of understanding.

### ***Definition of Terms***

Aristotle first described rhetoric in 850 BCE as the art of persuasion.<sup>1</sup> The definition of rhetoric I will be using, from Nelson, Megill and McCloskey (1987), however, is much more complex: it is “a persuasive discourse within a community [that is] directed at an audience; it is the quality of speaking and writing, the interplay of media and messages, the judgement of evidence and arguments” (Throgmorton, 1996, p. 39). A key component of rhetoric’s tactics—stemming again from Aristotle—is logos, pathos, and ethos.<sup>2</sup> These are the components of a successful persuasive argument, which is one goal of the “Mouseland” speech: to win the audience’s support as to Douglas’s point-of-view. For the purpose of this paper, pathos and ethos will be the primary aspects of rhetoric that will be discussed, as per their relevance to “Mouseland” and Douglas himself. As I will go on to demonstrate, the aim of political rhetoric is to create an emotional connection in its audiences through affect: a person’s response “to the detection of personal significance” (Marcus et al., 2007, p. 9). In order to create personal significance to an argument, it must be understandable to an individual and their life experiences. One method of creating this connection and understanding between audiences is through the use of rhetorical devices.

A rhetorical device uses language in a specific way to persuade; for example, the metaphor is a “poetic linguistic expression where one or more words for a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a similar concept” (Lakoff, 1992, p. 1). While based in the use of words and language, the concept of the metaphor is not solely literary, but a key pillar of everyday thought outside of the confines of language. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (1992) attempts to explain how the metaphor succeeds at motivating thought through cross-domain mapping, which is the reflection of “one conceptual domain to another conceptual domain” that occurs through an individual subject:

<sup>1</sup> A recent analysis of Aristotle’s view of persuasion can be found in Marcus, 2002, on page 10.

<sup>2</sup> Logos represents the logic or reason component of the argument. Ethos represents the credibility or trust of the speaker giving the argument. Pathos represents the emotional appeal of the argument.

the vehicle of the metaphor reflects the tenor of the metaphor.<sup>3</sup> Cross-domain mappings occur within thought, through which they are “the very engine that drives the construction of concepts [...] and therefore, the very principle underlying our conception of the world” (Bundgaard, 2019, p. 1). Unpacking Lakoff’s idea of the metaphor as cross-domain mapping will be a large portion of my argument, as he writes: “the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another” (1992, p. 1). Rather than focus on the psychoanalytic concept of cross-domain mapping in one’s brain, I will be focussing on how rhetoric, through the use of metaphor and its cross-domain mapping, can – and has – been yielded by politicians to create affective resonance across audiences.

### ***Research Questions***

The overarching research question I am proposing is:

1. How can rhetoric bridge the gap of understanding between different audiences (politicians, advocates, scientists, and the public) that prohibits political change?

Underneath this question are the research questions that will make up components of the argument in response to this larger research question. They will be examined in the following order:

1. How can emotion be used to fortify a rhetorical device’s ability to persuade?
2. How are Affect Theory and rhetoric relevant to the social and political?
3. How can the metaphor be harnessed as a rhetorical device in a political decision-making context?

### ***Scope and Limitations***

The largest limitation I have found so far in my project has been to find a quality within a speech that is measurable, in order to provide strong proof of my arguments. To remedy this,

<sup>3</sup> For more information on vehicle and tenor, see Chapter 4: *The Everyday Metaphor*, page 26.



I have picked out the emotion words within the speech and included a case study of another speech to compare with “Mouseland” (Al Gore’s 1994 White House Conference on Climate Change). I have also addressed this issue through including statistics on the usage of Douglas’ “Mouseland” speech on an international scale, across a large period of time.<sup>4</sup>

Originally, I was aiming to provide specific policy recommendations on a political policy affected by the speech, such as on the democratic Canadian Parliamentary system. However, because the scope has narrowed in my project, I instead provide recommendations that can be applied to any policy announcement through my results stemming from my research question. The coherence of the paper has been improved through this decision, and has allowed me to make firmer, more relevant recommendations at the paper’s conclusion.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this literature review, I will be analyzing scholarly, theoretically-driven texts that discuss how rhetoric can bridge the gap of understanding between different audiences through use of the metaphor. The authors of the works I am reviewing come from a variety of backgrounds: policy analysts, linguists, literary scholars, political researchers, among others. As explained further in my Methods section, the interdisciplinary nature of this topic requires a varied scope of the project. The texts mentioned here primarily come from academic journal articles and books, but span across many disciplines such as English, political science, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. This unique and interdisciplinary perspective is what I believe makes the topic so relevant to issues of social, economic, and environmental sustainability, and hopefully the results will be useful to better understanding communication barriers between audiences on relevant political issues.

I will be structuring this literature review in terms of my three sub-research questions, as included in my introduction: the role of emotion in rhetorical devices, a theoretical study of

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 4: *Continued Relevance* for this quantitative analysis.

Affect Theory and rhetoric in the political sphere, and the use of metaphor in political decision-making contexts, such as speeches and policy analysis. The first two sections will be for the purpose of creating a theoretical framework to focus on and contextualize my topic, while the last section will be a review on existing literature used to guide my metaphor analysis, discourse analysis, and contextual policy analysis. The culmination of these sub-research questions will allow me to formulate an argument in support of my thesis: how metaphor can act as a rhetorical tool to bridge the gap of understanding between different audiences and better foster meaningful political change.

### ***The Role of Emotion***

The texts I began to look at were about how emotion can be used to fortify a rhetorical device's ability to persuade, therefore I started by analyzing the role of emotion in the public sphere – where politics lie. Many of the sources I have read so far begin with discussions around Aristotle's founding thoughts on rhetoric. In *Rhetorics*, Aristotle discusses the importance of pathos, or emotion, in persuasion, and defines emotion as “a sensation together with a meaningful commentary” (as cited in Marcus, 2002, p. 10). Aristotle's *Rhetorics* started the field of rhetorical studies, but over time the emphasis on the emotional aspect of rhetoric has been overshadowed by logos, the logic of the argument. Marcus' book, *The Sentimental Citizen*, discusses the histories and controversies surrounding emotion in public life, including the pros and cons of the age-old debate of emotion versus reason, which will be central to my arguments. While emotion is widely accepted in private life, such as its importance within interpersonal relationships, it has been more controversial to suggest that emotion, alongside or rather than reason or rationality, should be centralized in discussions of public life, such as politics. Marcus' explanation of these histories is crucial to the background and motivation for this topic. They write: “The power of emotion to overwhelm sound judgment, as well as its mysterious origins, has commanded the attention of almost every serious thinker [...] who tried

to find ways to escape the grip of emotion, to the Romantic poets of the eighteenth century, who embraced emotion's power (Nussbaum 1994). They agree that reason is the distinct, if weaker, normative basis for democratic politics" (2002, p. 11-12). This article allows for the argument to be made that reason is the accepted "language" of politicians – one of the audiences I discuss in my research question – and provides historical background for the status quo of diminishing the importance of emotion in public life. The role of emotion is especially important in Douglas's speech, as we study how he was effective in creating an affective response in his audience.

The debate of emotion versus reason in public, and political, life is discussed by many scholars who study emotion's role in politics and/or rhetoric. Crawford tackles this debate through an international politics point-of-view. In 2000, the year of Crawford's "The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships", most research on international relations neglected analyses of emotion (2000, p. 116). The focus of this article is on three different aspects of emotions in an international politics context, the most relevant to my topic being how including analyses of emotions in politics can help progressive changes to occur through specifics such as "processes and analysis of diplomacy, confidence building, and postconflict peacebuilding" (p. 119). By offering examples of emotion in politics through a theoretical lens, Crawford's article helps to contextualize the potential large-scale impact discussions of this nature could have on world politics. Mercer's article, "Emotional Beliefs" (2000), furthers Crawford's, Marcus's and Nussbaum's claims of how emotion in politics can strengthen positive beliefs within a nation's citizens, such as justice. These articles similarly discuss how an emotional politic can bring forth positive and negative forces to a persuading party, both of which follow my argument that emotion can strengthen the ability to persuade an audience.

By using a specific example of fear in political rhetoric, I will offer further proof that emotional language can persuade audiences from different domains, similar to what Douglas has done with positive emotions in “Mouseland”. Nussbaum’s book *Political Emotions: How Love Matters for Justice* (2013) and Berlant’s “Cruel Optimism” are two texts that first sparked my interest in the subject of love and emotion in politics. Nussbaum’s book contains a multitude of theories and case studies to support the inclusion of an emotional nation-state. She explains that if a nation’s government requires reason alone, but does not require “the sort of daily emotion, the sympathy, tears, and laughter, that we require of ourselves as parents, lovers, and friends [...] If that’s what nations are like, one might well want to live elsewhere” (2013, p. 397). Similarly, but with a more local context, Warren & Ronis’ article argues that love can be a political tool through a Canadian case study of the 1995 Montreal Unity Rally. This case study provided an example of a paper that consisted of a similar form to mine, and within a Canadian context, that would also become inspiration for choosing Douglas’s famous Canadian political speech. Warren, Ronis, and Nussbaum’s texts will also provide an introduction to the next section on applying Affect Theory to love, emotion, and political rhetoric.

### ***Applying Affect Theory***

In order to explain the connections of Affect Theory to my paper, I will be focussing on how affect and rhetoric are relevant to the social and political. The primary source for this section is *The Affect Effect* (2007) edited by Marcus, Neuman, and McKeun, which is a collection of works by political analysts and cognitive psychologists on how affect works within politics. This text acts as a large resource for issues surrounding affect in politics, from a variety of perspectives such as philosophical and psychological. The authors represented in this text are all supporting a different aspect of the same argument: that reason is not, nor should it be, the only facet involved in politics, and that emotion deserves recognition as the foundation of values and beliefs seemingly present in reason. It is in this section that I will discuss the

emotion of fear and the political actions fear evokes. Brader & Valentino's article, titled "Identities, Interests, and Emotions: Symbolic versus Material Wellsprings of Fear, Anger, and Enthusiasm", included in *The Affect Effect* (Marcus, Neuman & McKeun, 2007, p. 180) will provide theory for the political event that will act as a small case study to prove affect's impact on the public's engagement, whether positive or negative. This case study of a political event will take similar form to Landau & Keely-Jonker's (2018) "Conductor of public feelings: An affective-emotional rhetorical analysis of Obama's national eulogy in Tucson" and Warren & Ronis's (2011) "The Politics of Love: The 1995 Montreal Unity Rally and Canadian Affection". Both of these texts offer unique perspectives on affect in politics, and represent individual events that caused an affective response in their audiences. Landau & Keely-Jonker's (2018) analysis of Obama's "affective tone" and discussions of "emotion words" will be referenced as I apply similar theories to "Mouseland" (p. 168). While these works are less theory-driven and act more as case studies, they are examples of what I am trying to analyze within "Mouseland" and of Douglas's impact on an audience himself.

### ***Metaphor as a Rhetorical Tool in Political Decision-making***

While the bulk of this section will be a discourse and metaphor analysis of Tommy Douglas' "Mouseland" speech, the final analysis section will require a large amount of secondary sources, where I will explain how the metaphor can be harnessed as a rhetorical device in a political decision-making context. The three themes of this section are the metaphor, communication, and policy analysis. Firstly, I will discuss Lakoff & Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory to place the purpose of the metaphor in everyday language, as critiqued by Bundgaard (2019). The importance of this everyday language is also discussed in Marcus's *The Sentimental Citizen* in relation to emotion: "The language of emotion is part of the language of everyday life" (2002, p. 10). The primary text of this section will be Throgmorton's "The Rhetorics of Policy Analysis" (1991), where I will build upon several of the arguments

first touched upon in the first section of this paper. Throgmorton's work is in-depth on the subject of rhetoric and its relation to policy analysis, and acts as the basis of my final argument: that rhetoric is crucial to policy analysis. Throgmorton (1991) says that "[r]hetoric is, therefore, much more than mere ornament, and attention to it can be part of a fundamental reconceptualization of policy analysis" (p. 155), which acts as a perfect segue into my final section of relating the metaphor to political policy. Nelson, Megill & McCloskey (1987) also allow for a direct analysis of rhetoric to public affairs, while Bourk & Worthington (2000) add research relating to discourse and policy analysis. These final two texts are not cited as much as others, but they provide valuable definitions to key terms used throughout my paper such as rhetoric and discourse, respectively.

I will then explain cross-domain mappings to specifically address the connection of the metaphor to communication, which is best supported by Lakoff's "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor" (1992) and Reddy's "The Conduit Metaphor" (1993). The gap of understanding between audiences caused by miscommunication between domains is echoed by both Lakoff and Reddy in their respective texts. Reddy explains that "[t]he problems of society, government, and culture depend ultimately on something like the daily box score of such successes or failures to communicate" (p. 284). Lakoff (1992) also connects the metaphor to its everyday usage, and stresses its importance in relation to my argument; that it is wrong to believe that all concepts can be understood literally, without the use of metaphor (p. 2). The everyday metaphor will be explained in connection with the emotion versus reason debate, as the literal, more formal and academic language is traditionally the language used by scientists and politicians, but can be easily misunderstood by other audiences like the public.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

### ***Genre of Paper***

This project is a qualitative, interpretive, and theory-driven rhetorical study. Because of the intersectional nature of the topic, I write from an interdisciplinary perspective and include academic sources from political science, English, linguistics, sustainability, and psychology texts. These texts are primarily from academic journals and books. My topic contains a large disciplinary gap: English literary theory, as with performance theory, is based in political science and sociology, and to place these to a text (or speech) is bridging these disciplinary gaps. Researchers of rhetoric do not solely analyze a text from an individually linguistic point-of-view, but also use analytic strategies from other disciplines such as sociology and politics (Eisenhart & Johnstone, 2008, p. 4). Crawford's (2000) article, "The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships", uses a similar framework of analyzing "several theories of emotion held in other disciplines" (p. 119). Due to the interdisciplinary and literary focus of this paper, I will be using my background in literary studies as it traditionally uses primary texts to navigate social, cultural, and political realities. The methods explained in this chapter apply to the analysis of the speech itself, and explain how I aim to prove my hypothesis; through a close reading of the speech and its metaphor, a discourse analysis of the language used, and a theory-based comparison of similar case studies.

### ***Close Reading***

In this section, I will be close reading the metaphor of "Mouseland" and the message it is portraying through explaining its relation to events happening at the time of the speech. I will argue that this metaphor was used, successful, and the reason for its continued relevance is that its cross-domain mapping allows a variety of different audiences to understand and have a stronger emotional connection and affective response to the speech and its content. . This close reading is highly related to a rhetorical analysis, as I will be analyzing traditional

rhetorical devices used alongside Aristotle's pathos and ethos. Metaphors have been discussed in several of my sources, most notably in George Marcus' *The Sentimental Citizen* (2002), as a method of explaining theories surrounding emotion in a more universal language. The linguistic theories that George Lakoff (1992) writes about in "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor" will be a key reference for this section, as will Michael Reddy's (1993) "The Conduit Metaphor". By analyzing the metaphor in contexts other than traditional literature, I will be supporting my argument with case studies of how the metaphor allows for a concept to be more universally understood beyond the use of language. This close reading will accompany my discourse analysis in further breaking down how Douglas uses the metaphor and cross-domain mapping to create a language more accessible to a variety of audiences.

### ***Discourse Analysis***

Alongside the close reading, the discourse analysis will center on the literary components of the metaphor and the speech itself, while also using relevant scholarship on rhetoric, emotion, and affect to contextualize the affective feelings evoked by the metaphor and the emotion words used. Because of the close proximity of this discourse analysis to the purposes of Affect Theory and the analysis of results within my close reading of the speech's rhetorical components, this section could alternatively be called an affective-emotional rhetorical analysis. I will use this affective-emotional rhetorical analysis to connect words and performances to the evocation of emotions in order to "create social relations and experiential worlds in talk and writing", as described by Eisenhart and Johnstone (2018, p. 4). Specifically connecting the results of my close reading to their uses in discourse is central to my argument of connecting rhetorical tools to political speech. The speech, as well as my hypothesis, both include a strong focus on varying discourses among social groups, audiences, and domains, that will be unpacked within the reasoning as to why certain affective responses were evoked within the studio audience at the time of the recording. The discourse analysis will take similar



form to Landau and Keely-Jonker's "Conductor of public feelings: An affective- emotional rhetorical analysis of Obama's national eulogy in Tucson" (2018), as their similarities of a live performance by a prominent politician both aim at connecting with audiences on a strong, emotional level. Landau and Keely-Jonker focus a portion of their analysis on the type of words used by political leaders, which I will also be doing in this section to look for "emotion talk", as also described by Marcus (2002, p. 9). Discourse analyses are an extremely timely method for a research paper in today's political climate. As Chaderopa explains:

Discourse analysis shows how language can be deployed to legitimise action as well shape the parameters of debating conservation-development policy interventions. Discourse analysis therefore presents opportunities to interpret conservation-development policy in a theoretically informed and insightful way (2013, p. 1).

While this citation stems from a specific environmental policy analysis, it helps to show how a discourse analysis can provide reasoning for a tangible outcome of inspiring action, such as the post-speech win by Douglas in the 1944 Saskatchewan provincial election.

### *Case Study*

Using theory, I will be attempting to prove my hypothesis that the use of metaphor in "Mouseland" has remained relevant to a variety of political events and contexts on an international scale through its easily-applicable and general messaging beyond the confines of one language and one country's political system. To do so, I will begin with researching the speech's references on LexusNexus, a database of media publications, in order to showcase how this metaphor is still being used and accessible to audiences today through its basic form of understanding. Similar to what Chaderopa (2013) has done with a conservation development policy analysis, my discourse analysis will then be applied to this final method of analysis. I will compare the results of my close reading and discourse analysis to other case studies, such as Al Gore's 1994 Conference on Climate Change speech that also uses the metaphor to evoke

an affective-emotional response in its audience. After reading several other case studies such as Landau & Keely-Jonker's and Warren & Ronis's articles of Obama's Tucson eulogy and speeches at the 1995 Montreal Unity Rally, I will follow their formatting of providing usable examples for policy recommendations. This case study and policy analysis section will also provide the opportunity to showcase research regarding my proposed implications of research, such as the statistics behind higher public participation rates in political events and impact of accessible policy language. If my hypothesis is proven to be correct, I hope that politicians, scientists, and advocates would consider using rhetorical methods like the metaphor to ensure understanding across multiple domains. The benefits of an easily digestible and understandable language in policy would allow for the public to engage in policy debates more often than if they are restricted from learning about it due to academic language barriers. It would also allow for the history behind the policy to be easily understood, and still relevant to modern debates or debates of the future in order to be an example for mobilizing tangible political change, as Douglas did with "Mouseland".

## **Chapter 4: Analysis**

### ***A Storyteller is Born***

Tommy Douglas is known not just as a politician; he is known as a storyteller. This reputation followed him from his early teen years which were spent as a hopeful Baptist minister memorizing recitations for a sermon rather than joining his teenaged peers at the poker table.<sup>5</sup> Growing up with the lectures and stories of Charles Hadden Spurgeon, known as the "Prince of Preachers," it is perhaps unsurprising that one of Douglas's greatest legacies remains his passion for sharing the social gospel through his religious and political performances. His

<sup>5</sup> The first-hand experiences from Douglas come from his transcribed interviews with journalist C.H. Higginbotham, recorded between September 21 and December 21, 1958. The transcriptions were edited for fluidity by Lewis H. Thomas, and published in "The Making of a Socialist: Recollections from T.C. Douglas" (1982) by The University of Alberta Press.

career as a minister allowed him to find out what types of speech resonate with audiences, leading him to his other reputation as a “master orator who can sway an indifferent crowd with his keen sense of humour and absolute passion.”<sup>6</sup> Douglas’s persuasive power stems from his mastery of ethos, character, and pathos, emotion, which are built into his presentation of the speech. By using metaphor as a medium, these rhetorical powers blend perfectly into the comprehensible message of the speech. His ability to pitch complex political and moral ideas to a wide audience makes Douglas a significant figure in Canadian politics still today. Further, his rhetorical tactics – and what I will call his affective tools – are applicable to a variety of political and social situations globally, even a half century after his famous “Mouseland” speech.

### ***Political Context of the Speech***

“Mouseland” is a speech first publicly performed by Tommy Douglas during the 1944 Saskatchewan provincial election, months before he would become the Premier of the first ever socialist government in North America. The story was originally written by Clarence Gillis, who was the first CCF<sup>7</sup> member elected in the Eastern half of the country and also a trade unionist from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. However, the speech was made famous by Douglas in this 1944 rendition. Douglas’s performance came during an exciting period of political change for the province of Saskatchewan–post World War II. The people of Saskatchewan, and of Canada as a whole, shifted their view of the state from the pre-war period of protecting crop failures and remedying economic depression, to ensuring the continuation of employment after the war as well as the “health and social well-being” of the general public (Johnson, 2004, p. 4). The sitting provincial Liberal government was “occupied with the problems of debt,

<sup>6</sup> This is the description for Douglas in a radio interview he gave with Frank Filmore on Five Nights. It can now be found in the CBC Archives at <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/tommy-douglas-canadian-funny-man>.

<sup>7</sup> The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was a democratic socialist political party in Canada that was founded in 1932, and preceded by the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961.

drought and depression” (citation? if none, comma goes inside quotes), and rather than offer new hope in the shape of policy reforms, the government seemed to be unwilling to change their existing institutions and policies.<sup>8</sup> Coming out of the Depression, the province’s social assistance program was created not with helping those in need at the forefront, but as a measure of ensuring fiscal stability in the province. In 1943, health services were mostly distributed by municipalities through doctor plans, and in order to propose medicare would require complete system reform at the provincial level. However, the post-war period in Saskatchewan brought with it a need for policy reform rather than maintaining these existing policies. Douglas and the CCF gave the people of Saskatchewan an option for new ideas and policies that centered their needs in a time of social and economic recovery.

While policy laid the backbone for the CCF’s historic win, it was also a battle of personalities between the current Liberal Premier, William John Patterson, and CCF leader, Tommy Douglas. Prior to becoming Premier, Patterson was a businessperson working in the insurance industry. His financial background led the way for his government’s goal of maintaining the province’s finances during a time of post-Depression, post-war economic issues. Patterson’s focus on business-centered economics and his professional, impersonal image did not appeal to the public who were calling for new ideas. He was described as “a businessman who believed in the free enterprise system, individual liberty and sound credit ratings”: virtually the complete opposite of how people described Douglas at the time.<sup>9</sup> Patterson’s government was seen to be as uninspired as it led the public to be, and his lack of innovation laid the grounds for charismatic Douglas and the CCF to be successful. Douglas embodied much of what Patterson lacked: his focus on “humanity first”, alongside his

<sup>8</sup> This comes from a description of the state of Saskatchewan politics at the time written by John H. Archer in *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), quote found on page 236.

<sup>9</sup> A.W. Johnson cited John H. Archer’s description of the differences between Premiers Douglas and Patterson in *Dream No Little Dreams* on pages 6-7. The quote can originally be found in Archer’s *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980) on page 260.

passionate, inspiring and emotionally-charged speeches, gave the public a reason to believe in the causes that he spoke about. His openness and humour opposed the stiff government announcements that the people of Saskatchewan were used to, and easily won their votes. While the party's emphasis on helping everyday Canadians rang true to what the public was calling for at the time, it was Douglas's personable and optimistic demeanor that was the persuasive tool in his win over Patterson's bid for re-election in 1944.

In his speeches, Douglas's personality was the perfect vehicle to persuade audiences through his affective performances that connected members of an audience to the speech's messaging. "Mouseland" as performed by Tommy Douglas in 1944 continues to be an example of how rhetoric and metaphor, through speeches, can mobilize political change to invoke an affective response in a variety of audiences. This chapter will analyze aspects of both Douglas and his speech to show how its features were compiled to become one of the most successful speeches of Canadian history, and why that is. I will first examine the content of the speech and how it reflected key debates within Canadian politics and policy analysis in the early 1940s. Then, I will perform a close reading of the speech and its rhetorical devices – primarily, the metaphor – in order to understand how a metaphorical speech can create such a strong affective response in an audience. It is then important to analyze this affective response in the audience: what emotions are being invoked through this affective performance, and how are these emotions being politicized?

### ***History of "Mouseland"***

The "Mouseland" story is a representation of Canadian politics from the point-of-view of Douglas and the CCF at the time of the speech. Tommy Douglas begins the speech situating himself and the audience as mice in a world ruled by cats. Immediately, Douglas is using his witty humour to grab the audience's attention; he is a small man—about 5'6"—and he is comparing himself to a mouse. The mice live in a land with a similar political structure to that

of Canada, with a democratically elected Parliament. Every election, the mice vote in a government of black cats who pass laws that are good for cats, and harmful to mice. Douglas likens the black cats to the Conservative Party of Canada who have a history of not enacting laws for the mice, or the common people, and instead enacting laws for cats, or the rich. Life gets more difficult for the mice, so during the next election they mobilize to vote out the black cats, and instead vote in the white cats. The white cats – representing the Liberal Party of Canada – turn out to be no different than the black cats, continuing to pass legislation that is good for cats and not mice.

The speech ends with a hopeful message: one mouse has the idea to elect a government of mice rather than cats, but the cats end up throwing him in jail. However, Douglas ends the speech reminding the audience that “you can lock up a mouse or a man but you can’t lock up an idea” – implying quite clearly that although it might be an uphill battle for the small mice of the world, there is hope for a government made by the people, for the people (1961, Radio Recording). This ending of the speech falls in line with Douglas’s public persona perfectly; it is a message of optimism and solidarity, and a reminder for the audience that collective action can create meaningful political change. The idea Douglas refers to is not just applicable to one individual person, but a representation for the power of the collective, and that solidarity is how the people can stand up against the big “cats” in power. The purpose of this speech is not only to win over the hearts and minds of voters in order to win an election, but to call the public to action in whatever way they can – be it going to the polls to vote or organizing around public policy.

### *Humour & Affect*

Tommy Douglas is known for his affective performances – both positively by supporters, and negatively by critics.<sup>10</sup> Douglas embodies what Landau and Keely-Jonker call “boisterous enthusiasm,” where the speaker delivers the speech forcefully, that could startle a drifting audience member, yet upbeat in the hopes of evoking an equally enthusiastic response (2018, p. 174). The enthusiasm from the audience comes mostly in the form of laughter, as heard loudly on the CBC recording of the 1944 speech. The present audience in the CBC recording of Douglas’s 1944 speech actively responds to almost every sentence he says by laughing, which is a physiological affective response by the audience to a relatable subject that is crucial to the success of the speech. This reaction is a result of the affective performance of which Douglas is so known: his delivery almost requires the audience’s response, and his pauses are not forms of hesitation, rather they are planned pauses to allow the audience to interact with the speech. The audience’s loud volume and eager tone of laughter creates an almost “fanatic” environment that, in turn, feeds Douglas’s performance. His use of humour evokes pathos, an affective-emotional response, in his audience, that connects the listener to the messaging of the speech and the speaker himself.

In many of Douglas’s recorded speeches, he begins with a joke; whether it is a rather long-winded story of a personal experience, or a witty quip. When asked what the strongest part of his monologues were during his ministerial days, Douglas responds with certainty: “Oh, mostly the humorous monologues” (Thomas, 1982, p. 44). While humour in political rhetoric remains mostly unresearched, it is often described as contrary to the traditional “rational political discourse” due to its affective response in audiences.<sup>11</sup> Humour can, and has often

<sup>10</sup> On the page of the 1944 recording, “Tommy Douglas’s story of Mouseland: A political allegory”, CBC summarizes these critiques by saying that critics compared his style of speaking to “ham actors”: unskilled actors who tend to overact during performances.

<sup>11</sup> Discussions of “rational political discourse” come from Mark Rolfe’s article “The pleasures of political humour in Australian democracy”. The full citation can be found in References.

been used by politicians in their speeches to rouse emotions in audiences, but humour has also had a prominent place in rhetoric due to its effect on pathos and ethos (Rolfe, 2010, para. 1).

Politicians often attempt to persuade through a rhetorical method of centering on logos, or the logic of their argument, by demonstrating that they have an answer to every question and there are no loopholes in their backing of a political policy. Douglas rejects this method, and largely embraces the pathos, emotions, of the speech and the audience. “Mouseland” is not a strict press release discussing the specifics of a new bill to a crowd of journalists – it is an inspiring, uplifting campaign speech meant to gain new supporters through a hopeful and humorous message. Douglas knows his audience, and as Martha Nussbaum explains, in order for a speech to properly cultivate public emotion, the speaker must have awareness of the location, timing, and experiences of their various citizens that make up the audience (2013, p. 380). The understanding of who the audience members are and how to provoke emotion in them is surely a reason that the speech became so popular at its first performance by Douglas.

His affective performance is also enhanced by his careful word choice. Douglas does not use complex language in the speech, allowing the audience to easily follow the story. The two terms he uses that are more complex are used as niche jokes are his references to “coalition” and “Bolshevik”. In using the word “coalition”, Douglas is taking a lighthearted jab at the 1929 coalition government in Saskatchewan. When he brings up “Bolshevik”, he is making fun of the derogatory use of the word by more conservative politicians when they refer to a socialist, stemming from the radical left-wing Marxist group.<sup>12</sup> These words are Douglas’s choice emotion words: they are the parts of a speech that have an emotional meaning from either their social context or symbolism (Landau & Keely-Jonker, 2018, p. 171). Douglas’s knowledge of his audience means that his inclusion of these two words should be understandable by two of

<sup>12</sup> The term “Bolshevik” is in reference to a member of a wing of the Russian Social-Democrat Workers’ Party led by Vladimir Lenin.



the parties he is trying to secure votes from: Saskatchewan voters in general, and socialists. These words do not hurt the cohesion of an otherwise generally-applicable speech, as heard by the audience when they give their loudest laughs and applause after these two words are spoken.

### *Close Reading*

**Personal Messaging.** The speech begins with Douglas inserting the audience into the metaphor, alongside himself and the CCF, as mice. The purpose of this allows him to place himself and his party as if they are also “the people,” the 99% or the everyday citizen, versus the current Liberal government and the Conservatives who are others, the 1% of the wealthiest Canadians. The audience is told that in Mouseland, the mice are “living very much the same as you and I do”. The immediate presentation of the mice “living very much the same as you and I do” gives the audience a reason to follow along; this is not a story about the political elite, but a story of *them*. This collective gesture of the people as the mice is repeated when explaining the specifics of how mice, which the audience certainly would have understood to imply everyday Canadians, get a drive to go vote at the polls, “[j]ust like you and me”. But these personal messages do not just act as a method of retaining a personal interest in the story, they also humanize the politician giving the speech.

**The Ethos.** In the speech, Douglas becomes a character who knows more than a member of the country’s two major parties, yet is a member of the majority of everyday Canadians: someone outside of the black cats and the white cats. This gives the speaker a form of credibility amongst listeners; this is someone who, like us, sees the ridiculousness in our country’s political voting history. Thus it is not only the logos of the speech (its logical argument, i.e. its policy analysis) that give it its rhetorical power, but the ethos and pathos of Douglas, the speaker, himself alongside the metaphor the message is packaged in. The ethos, or credibility and trust, of Douglas as “one of them” rather than the other creates a form of relatability and trust between himself and the audience. If we compared Douglas’s speech about

democratic reform to a speech by another politician on the same subject, it would make sense for both of them to be credible enough to speak on the subject in the eyes of the audience. However, Douglas is able to place himself in the same situation and experience as the audience: he echoes their frustration with the government for not doing enough to help everyday Canadians and instead supporting the larger, wealthy corporations. The ethos of Douglas makes himself a relatable authority on the subject, earning the audience's trust, and essentially, their support.

### *The Everyday Metaphor*

In order to understand the metaphor of "Mouseland", an explanation of how the metaphor is effective is required. A metaphor is a rhetorical device where there is an implied comparison between two subjects, without directly naming the common characteristics of the subjects. The tenor, or the target domain, of "Mouseland" is only indirectly spoken about: it is Douglas's policy analysis of Canadian democratic politics that is the subject of the speech. The tenor draws the audience's attention from what might be seen as a dry subject for those not interested in the political sphere, to a humorous story, while Douglas is still able to communicate his message. The vehicle, or the source domain, that which carries the tenor of the metaphor is Mouseland itself.<sup>13</sup> If we replaced every mention or description of Mouseland with Canadian politics, as it stood at the time of the speech, it becomes clear that the overall message is that voters have mistakenly voted in the wrong party every election. "Mouseland" calls in the audience and gives them ownership of the story: their votes have led Mouseland to be a place where the laws benefit the elite at the cost of the oppressed, but their votes and actions can change that. The "Mouseland" metaphor provides an alternate story of Canadian politics in order to be more directly relatable to the audience, allowing them to see themselves

<sup>13</sup> Vehicle and tenor were first introduced by rhetorician Ivor Armstrong Richards in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936).

as an active participant in the world of Mouseland, and therefore active participants in the Canadian democratic process.

The metaphor of Mouseland was successful in its purpose because of its cross-domain mapping which allows a variety of different audiences to understand and have an affective response to the speech. Metaphor is not a solely poetic device, but, more importantly, a thought device; as George Lakoff explains, metaphor really means “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” (1992, p. 1). These cross-domain mappings are systems of correlation between different ideas and meanings that happen in thought, and are the reason the metaphor is such a powerful tool of political thinking and decision-making. The metaphor is based on the foundation of conceptual knowledge, and accordingly, is “the very principle underlying our conception of the world” (Bundgaard, 2019, p. 1). Understanding that the metaphor is not simply a linguistic or literary tool, but is based on the values, emotions, and lived experiences of its audiences, can lead to a profound understanding between politicians and the public regarding important policy discussions.

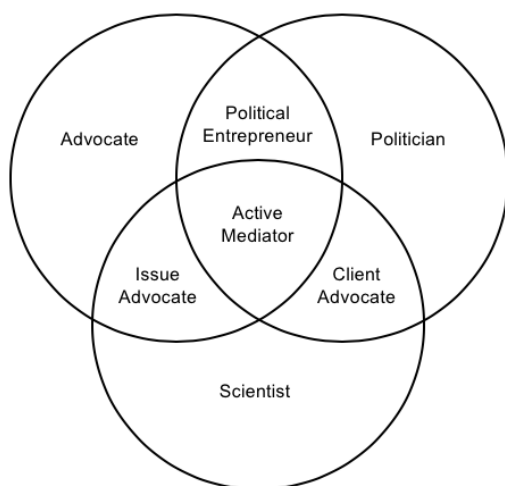


Fig. 1. My rendition of Throgmorton’s rhetorical situation of policy analysis diagram (1991, p. 156).

Conceptual knowledge varies depending on the discipline the subject is most familiar with, and this leads the subject to be categorized within a specific type of audience.

For politicians like Douglas, their target audience is more difficult to quantify, as they are aiming for the approval of the masses. The politician’s audience is a combination of categories of audiences, who have varying levels of

background information on the political issue being discussed, from little to no knowledge or only the knowledge that is applicable to their category. Throgmorton's rhetorical situation of policy analysis explains this communication gap, as seen above in Figure 1, which shows how in order for the speaker to be an effective active mediator of a productive discourse, they must be able to converse with many different intersections of audience experience. For example, a politician is giving a speech on climate change policy to an audience of a scientist, another politician, and an advocate. Throgmorton argues that each audience has a specific rhetorical method of being persuaded to support the proposed policy: "scientists talk about 'explaining phenomena in a theoretically coherent way,' politicians about 'putting the right spin on things,' and lay advocates about 'demanding one's rights'" (1991, p. 156). When one of those three discourses is the primary discourse of the conversation, it becomes "abnormal discourse" which can lead to misunderstandings and a failure of the attempted persuasion to support policy. The challenge is to create what Throgmorton describes as "normal discourse", where multiple different audiences can understand the speaker's chosen discourse and participate with their experience.

The effect of using a metaphor as the medium for "Mouseland" crosses beyond metaphor as linguistic, and into a thought-process of "normal discourse" which uses conceptual connections in a variety of audiences, allowing it to be broadly understood and applied. The messaging of the speech can be delivered to a wide variety of audiences, while creating different affective feelings in each individual regardless of what audience they are a part of or what lived experiences they have. This "normal discourse" encourages participation of the audience, not just in terms of participation within the speech, such as laughter, but beyond the speech's realm into tangible actions, such as voting. Douglas's use of the metaphor, as well as his affective-emotional performance, persuades the audience to support his cause through

ensuring understanding and a personal connection, and mobilizes the audience to physically show that support through voting.

### *Continued Relevance*

Douglas's "Mouseland" speech has become a staple for those within the NDP, as well as political commentators and editorial writers who find the metaphor to be of use: as of March 8, 2020, a search of the term "Mouseland" on an online database of radio and print news, LexisNexis, retrieved 108 individual mentions of the speech in media publications across the world. These articles include critiques of Canadian provincial politics in Saskatchewan, to issues of bureaucracy within Ontario health care associations, to references by Spanish musicians in interviews.<sup>14</sup> The widespread relevance of the speech's metaphor allows it to be used for a variety of cultural and political contexts, not limited to the Canadian political system of which the speech was created to represent. The argument of those in positions of power being "other" than the common person is easily applicable to a variety of events. The metaphor of "Mouseland" allows for a clear and versatile application, whereas if the metaphor was removed from the speech, and it was written specifically about the Canadian political parties, it would be too specific for the majority of other audiences to adopt it to their unique situations.

### *Applications to Policy Analysis*

"Mouseland" is a critique of Canadian democracy, and in turn, a broad policy analysis of political voting behaviour and continuance of the status quo. Similar to other categories of political policies, such as environmental policy, discourse theory shows us how language, meaning, and thought can be mobilized through rhetorical devices to create a more-unified affective response in its audiences. Another example of the use of references to discuss policy can be seen in Fischender & Katz's 2013 article, "The use of 'security' jargon in sustainable

<sup>14</sup> "Lo que tenemos es una ilusión de democracia", retrieved from <https://advance.lexis.com/api/permalink/6c8c0e9a-3e2d-4f83-9da9-016c28e2fe7b/?context=1516831>.

development discourse: Evidence from UN Commission on Sustainable Development.” Fischender & Katz explore how environmentalists have often turned to fear-and-shock-based metaphors and references to connect with audiences on taking action against climate change. Specifically, they studied how the use of “security jargon” in environmental policy analysis has been used to gain widespread traction across audiences through sensational media headlines and adoption by politicians. They also specifically studied how effective—and affective—this securitization when used in public, political speeches. The use of “security jargon”, by environmentalists specifically, is used for the purpose of evoking strong emotions in the audience that will propel audience members to take immediate action regarding environmental threats, such as climate change. Essentially, metaphors representing environmental threats as security issues are used to evoke emotions of fear in the audience. However, it is currently under debate if environmentalists’ use of fear as a motivating emotion is successful in mobilizing action, or if it leads to a freeze of action due to feelings of hopelessness. “Mouseland” and its use of positive emotions, such as hope and courage, avoid this dichotomy by avoiding the implications of negative emotions altogether.

Relatedly, one speech that centralizes the argument of securitization is that by former U.S. vice president Al Gore, who used metaphors when speaking at the 1994 White House Conference on Climate Change: “All of us here this morning are Paul Reveres of the environmental movement. We too are working as a team. Our enemy is more subtle than a British fleet. Climate change is the most serious problem that our civilization faces, and it has caused enormous damage before in human history” (Fischender & Katz, 2013, p. 323). Gore uses the similar affective-pull used by Douglas to insert the audience into the speech, this time as Paul Revere—the American patriot folklore character. However, whereas Douglas’s speech is lighthearted yet targeted, Gore uses war and fear by personifying the war against climate change into a well-known American enemy, the British. The use of fear, while affective, has

the possibility of moving audiences to a standstill rather than take immediate action due to the pessimism of the statements by politicians. Gore's speech is also specifically targeted at a more patriotic American audience, as his metaphor of Paul Revere is most famously known in the United States. This metaphor, when compared to the "Mouseland" metaphor, could not be easily applied in an international context due to these notably-American connotations. Gore's 1994 White House Conference on Climate Change speech provides us an opportunity to compare two political speeches that take the form of a metaphor, but from two polarizing emotional standpoints. Within the comparison of the two speeches, Gore's speech has faults that Douglas's optimistic and humorous speech avoids; their varying focuses on which emotions to evoke in their audiences opens up the forum for further research as to which specific emotions should be the target of an affective performance in order to mobilize an audience to action.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

### ***Results & Recommendations***

This paper was limited to examining the affective response of metaphor and rhetoric within a single speech in Canadian political history. While I discuss "Mouseland"'s use in an international context, its application may not be as direct as it seemed within the Canadian democratic system. As Nussbaum explains: "Some nations are ready for an appeal to strong public emotion, but in others events have made people disgusted with the public sphere" (2018, p. 381). I hoped to touch more upon the lived experiences of those whose emotions are scrutinized and policed when on public display, such as Black communities as well as women and non-binary peoples, and the specific emotions that are also more often scrutinized, such as love. Politicians within these demographics have more to risk when considering the inclusion of emotions in their public lives than my paper lays it out to be. Lauren Berlant discusses all of this in "Cruel Optimism", and explains how love is both ordinary and revolutionary (2011, p.

686). She writes: “[love’s] normative utility is that love allows one to want something, to want a world, amid the noise of the ambivalence and anxieties about having and losing that merely wanting an object generates, even when the object is a political one” (2011, p. 687). Love – for an idea, a person, a just world – is a motivating emotion, and if one can bring forth this emotion genuinely in one’s audience, it can be a powerful force in mobilizing political change. I am encouraged to see further research into the importance of love in the political sphere.

My primary recommendation is that rhetoric not be dismissed as a linguistic tool of Aristotle’s time, but a necessity for policy analysts and behaviour researchers to further study. Rhetoric is one of the most important political aspects to study in order to understand political decision-making and ensure that political change can occur within democracies. Studying emotion in politics is having a resurgence among scholars, and reason is no longer the number one trait that politicians must obtain in order to win and be successful. As we can see with governments very close to Canada’s, an audience’s emotions can be manipulated in a variety of ways. I aim to show that the metaphor is an honest way of getting a straightforward political message across audiences, and the rhetorical tools within that can be used to motivate new advocates and activists towards political action. On a case-by-case basis, the background in political theory and rhetorical studies can be used to both create and analyze other political speeches that aim at invoking an affective response in a large variety of audiences.

I want to emphasize the recommendation that politicians, scientists, and advocates would consider using rhetorical methods like the metaphor to ensure understanding across multiple domains. The communication gap between audiences relates to issues of creating accessible policy language. Politicians or policy analysts that do not ensure understanding of those beyond a certain level of sociopolitical fluency or literacy are ineffective at creating sustainable change, as those who need the services being created by lawmakers will not be able to access them without the first step of awareness. Complex political language is important



within the nuances of leaders and critics, but the everyday Canadian deserves to know what is happening within their government as well. The benefits of an easily digestible and understandable language in policy would allow for the public to engage in policy debates more often than if they are restricted from learning about it due to academic language barriers. The metaphor, as seen in “Mouseland”, provides an option to open up political discussions to those who have often been left out of political conversations.

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