



— Marlène Coulomb

Abstract zum Vortrag:

Beauty and the Beast

Body Politics on Television in the 2007 French Presidential Election Campaign

The body politic and the aesthetic dimension on television: the rise of gender as an argument in the 2007 French presidential election campaign

'In our advanced media-dominated societies, for the first time in history, the focus has been on the markers which shape the image of the individual.' (Eliseo Veron, *Après-demain*, 1987, p.33).

The media have indeed given the body politic, in the true sense of the term, i.e. politicians' bodies (their physical appearance), a visibility never before attained in contemporary French democracy. It is necessary to define how, through television, this return of 'embodiment' has occurred. This analysis is all the more imperative in that politicians' physical appearance, taken both literally and figuratively or symbolically, has been elevated to rank alongside policy statements, supposedly the basis of all electoral campaigns.

Gender as a marker distinguishing individuals became prominent during the 2007 French presidential election campaign due to the presence of a female candidate in an electable position, thereby revealing the sexual or even erotic dimension which underlies all political representation. The left-right divide embodied by the two leading candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal, was mirrored by the contrast between male and female or even between virility and femininity, since both candidates made play of this dimension, suggesting an 'ethos' of masculinity and femininity in hitherto unseen forms.

It is through this prism that this paper will analyse the 2007 French presidential campaign.