

Metaphor, Bodily Meaning, and Cinema

Maarten Coëgnarts and Peter Kravanja

In his book *The Meaning of the Body* the philosopher Mark Johnson argues that aesthetics is not just about art, beauty and taste, but rather about the way human beings construct and experience meaning as well as the bodily origins underlying this process (see also Johnson *Identity*). Johnson rejects both the conceptual or propositional view of meaning according to which meaning is only a linguistic phenomenon and the Kantian view of aesthetics according to which art is primarily subjective, connected to feelings and therefore non-conceptual and incapable of producing knowledge. For Johnson, meaning is always a matter of human understanding. It involves the question of how humans make sense of the world by means of their ongoing bodily engagement with the world. Meaning is embodied in that it emerges from qualities and patterns of bodily interaction with various aspects of our environment.

One such embodied dimension of meaning that has received much scholarly attention is the structure of conceptual metaphor, as developed by Lakoff and Johnson in their fundamental book entitled *Metaphors We Live By*. It is one of Conceptual Metaphor Theory's (CMT) most central claims that what we call abstract concepts are defined by systematic mappings from bodily-based, sensory-motor source domains onto abstract target domains. More specifically, CMT holds the view according to which we employ the logic of our sensory-motor experience (i.e., image schemas) for abstract conceptualisation and reasoning. For this reason, CMT has also been hailed as an embodied theory of cognition. Similarly to other theories of grounded cognition (see, e.g., Barsalou) it states that cognition is shaped by aspects of the body.

This special issue of *Image [&] Narrative* explores the implications of the embodied mind thesis for film by focusing on the sensory and metaphoric constituents of meaning-making in cinema. By extending the discussion of conceptual metaphor and the role of the body in the creation of meaning to that of the medium of film, rather than language, this issue situates itself within the growing academic interest in non-verbal manifestations of conceptual metaphor (e.g., Cienki and Müller; Forceville). Indeed, if our thinking about abstract concepts activates embodied logic directly, as CMT claims, and language is merely an expression of such activation, not the cause, then it is plausible to assume that other (non-verbal) modes of expression reflect this activation as well (see also Forceville *Non-verbal*; Pecher, Boot, and Van Dantzig). In other words, non-linguistic evidence of conceptual metaphor is of crucial importance for CMT because it helps to validate its claim that metaphor is primarily a matter of thought, and only derivatively a matter of form (linguistic or otherwise).

But equally, film studies can benefit from CMT. As a theory concerned with the bodily origins of meaning-making, CMT can provide some insight into the question as to how meaning is constructed in film, that is, how, for example, filmmakers can communicate abstract content to the viewer without resorting to dialogue. Recently, a number of film scholars have applied insights from CMT to different aspects of film (Coëgnarts and Kravanja; Fahlenbrach; Forceville *The Journey*; Forceville and Jeulink;

Kappelhoff and Müller; Ortiz; Rohdin; Urios-Aparisi). However, a single volume that focuses specifically on the metaphorical and embodied underpinnings of meaning-making in cinema is still lacking. With the intention to fill this gap, this special issue brings together a collection of papers whose subjects lie at the intersection of embodied cognition (with a special focus on conceptual metaphor theory) and (cognitive) film studies.

María J. Ortiz starts this special issue by examining the ways in which filmmakers use embodied patterns to express abstract meaning to the viewer. Drawing on Grady's Primary Metaphor Theory she argues that filmmakers apply different aspects of *mise-en-scene* metaphorically in order to express abstract concepts such as EVIL, IMPORTANCE, CONTROL, RELATIONSHIP OR CONFUSION. To do so she investigates a corpus of films including examples from both art house cinema (e.g., *Il Deserto Rosso*, *Martha*) and mainstream cinema (e.g., *Scott Pilgrim vs The World*, *The King's Speech*).

The question of how abstract meaning is represented in film is also central to the contribution of Merel Van Ommen. Using the work of the contemporary Japanese director Kore-eda Hirokazu (e.g., *Still Walking*, *After Life*) as a case-study she demonstrates how the abstract concept of TIME is represented visually by means of conceptual metaphors such as TIME IS A MOVING ENTITY and TIME IS A CHANGING ENTITY. As such she demonstrates that the use of spatial time metaphors is not only apparent in language, but in non-verbal modes of communication as well.

Similarly, Maarten Coëgnarts and Peter Kravanja examine the ways in which abstract binary oppositions such as CIVILISATION VS. WILDERNESS OR THE COMMUNITY VS. THE INDIVIDUAL are communicated visually in some of John Ford's Westerns. Borrowing insights from image schema research, the authors claim that these abstract concepts and themes are embodied in individual films by way of the metaphorical expansion of spatial schemas, and in particular through the CONTAINMENT schema.

Julius Koetsier and Charles Forceville, meanwhile, use Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory to highlight the embodied nature of the genre of werewolf films. Using five American werewolf films from the 1980s as examples they show how the physical transformation from human into monster invites us to construe metaphors that are variations of the conceptual metaphor DEVIANT IDENTITY IS TRANSFORMED BODY.

The embodied and metaphorical dimension of meaning-making in film is also foregrounded and elucidated in the contribution of Kathrin Fahlenbrach. Focusing on the inner concept of SHAME she argues that the emotions of characters are not only communicated directly by means of emotional expressions, but also indirectly by ways of metaphorical representations in vision and sounds. Using canonical film examples from comedy and drama she shows how filmmakers use embodied emotion metaphors in order to make the audience participate intensively in the emotional states of their characters.

Christian Quendler, in turn, explores the ramifications of the embodied mind thesis for the study of the subjective camera. Drawing on insights from phenomenology and cognitive semiotics he examines the ways in which filmic camera-eye metaphors blend sensory knowing with conceptual knowledge structures. To illustrate this, he analyses two recent explorations of point of view shots: *Le Scaphandre et le Papillon* and *Enter the Void*.

The relationship between film form and embodiment is also addressed by Paul Atkinson. In his contribution the author applies the theory of image schemas to the discussion of the temporal aspects of film by investigating how bodily attitudes inform the viewer's perception of shot duration and in particular his anticipation in the long take.

Eduardo Urios-Aparisi concludes this special issue by providing a perspective on the dynamic role of repetition, metaphor and metonymy in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* and Isabel Coixet's *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo*. Using a comparative analysis of both films he shows that these devices are important embodied resources of meaning-making used to represent and communicate the emotional states of the characters onto their audiences.

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Maarten Coëgnarts has an MA in Film Studies and Visual Culture (University of Antwerp) and an MA in Sociology (University of Antwerp). His research primarily focuses on metaphor in film and embodied visual meaning. He also has a special interest in film analysis and in the relation between film and philosophy. He is currently preparing a PhD in film studies at the University of Antwerp.

E-mail: maartencoegnarts@gmail.com

Peter Kravanja is a research fellow at KU Leuven (Faculty of Arts, research unit Literature and Culture). He holds an MS and a PhD in Mathematical Engineering and Computer Science (KU Leuven), an MA in Cinema Studies (Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3) and a BA in Philosophy (KU Leuven). His research interests include analytic philosophy of art applied to cinema, questions concerning analysis, interpretation and form, as well as the relation between film and the other arts.

Website: www.kravanja.eu

E-mail: peterkravanja@gmail.com