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Metaphor in Film: Examples and Insights from Students' Work

SUMMARY

Further developing visual and multimodal metaphor theory requires taking into account medium, mode, and genre. The medium of film has hitherto been rather sparsely studied for its metaphorical potential. In this paper I report good examples and exciting insights from assignments and essays by students in my "Metaphor & Film" MA elective, University of Amsterdam (Autumn 2024), clustering these in issues that deserve sustained scholarly scrutiny by the next generation of (film) scholars interested in metaphor.

KEYWORDS

film; metaphor theory; multimodality

1. Introduction

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) trail-blazing insight that metaphor is first of all a matter of thought and action and only secondarily a matter of language spawned the analysis and theorization of its non-verbal and multimodal manifestations. This work yields exhilarating insights, not only shedding light on metaphor but also opening avenues to other disciplines, such as multimodality (e.g. Bateman et al., 2017) and rhetoric and argumentation (e.g. Tseronis & Forceville, 2017a).

Taking seriously McLuhan's (1964) visionary claim that "the medium is the message" has crucial consequences for studying non-verbal and multimodal metaphor. Specifically, metaphor scholars need to be knowledgeable about the medium in which a metaphor occurs and about the modes this medium can draw on. A third factor that steers the study of metaphors is the genre to which the discourse under scrutiny belongs. A danger threatening multimodal metaphor theory comes from linguists who wrongly believe that the way they analyse verbal metaphors can, with minimal adaptations, be extended to the research of non-verbal and multimodal metaphors (Forceville, 2024a, 2024b).

This paper has an unusual format: it reports examples and insights from the assignments and essays of students who chose my "Metaphor and Film"

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MA research seminar in the Film track of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam, in 2024. While inexperienced researchers, these students are knowledgeable about the medium film (here taken in the broad sense of "moving images"), its modes (i.e. visuals, spoken language, written language, music, and sound), and its genres. I take this opportunity to share, and reflect on, their work. At least one example by each student in the course is discussed.

This work has been clustered under several headings in which I briefly summarize interesting examples and promising ideas, sometimes adapting the students' analyses to show how they fit my approach to visual and multimodal metaphor in film (for competing models, see Müller & Kappelhoff, 2018, and Bort-Mir, 2019). Since in many cases I have not myself seen the films discussed, or seen only short fragments of them, and moreover only superficially know the cultural context of some films, I often had to rely heavily on the students' descriptions and interpretations.

2. Examples of hybrid metaphor, pictorial simile, and contextual metaphor in film

In Forceville (1996), which focuses on static visuals in advertising, three types of pictorial (or visual) metaphor were distinguished: MP1 (or: contextual metaphor), pictorial simile, and MP2 (or: hybrid metaphor). (The fourth type, verbo-pictorial metaphor, I realized later, is actually one of the subtypes of multimodal, not visual/pictorial, metaphor.) Here are examples of these three varieties of visual metaphor in film.

2.1 Hybrid metaphor.

Carroll (1996), discusses this type of film metaphor as "a visual image in which physically noncompossible elements co-habitate a homospatially unified figure" (pp. 215–216) which Forceville (2000) calls it "hybrid" (p. 33) pictorial metaphor. Carroll considers this the most important variety of metaphor in film. I see no reason for privileging this type (Forceville, 2002, pp. 8–11), but agree with his description, which I here reformulate in my own words:

1. a hybrid metaphor visualizes two phenomena that, in the given context, are understood as belonging to different categories;
2. these phenomena are physically merged in such a way that the result is a hybrid "gestalt" that is noncompossible homospatial because two physical phenomena can in reality not simultaneously occupy the same space;
3. the two phenomena are to be construed as a metaphor in which one is the target and the other is the source.

Carroll's (1996) most convincing example is the MACHINE IS MONSTER metaphor in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). In the pertinent scene workers are thrown

into the *mouth* of the machine-turned-monster, suggesting they are *sacrificed* to a heathen idol – and it is this idea of workers being *devoured* by their work that constitutes the pertinent mapping from source to target.

Figure 1a: Nina preparing to go onstage …

Figure 1b: … metaphorically transforms into a swan. (Screenshots from *Black Swan* (Aronofsky, 2010)

Fig. 1 shows a hybrid metaphor in *Black Swan*, analysed by Estelle Bolon. Dancing "Odile" in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake,* we see the ambitious dancer Nina Sayers ready to go onstage, with spread arms (Fig. 1a); when performing, she grows wings: BALLERINA IS BLACK SWAN (Fig. 1b). Nina so completely impersonates her role that she imagines herself to be a swan, naturalness and elegance presumably being among the features to be mapped.

2.2 Pictorial simile

In film, this subtype, commonly verbalized as A IS LIKE B, can be characterized as follows:

1. two entities belonging to different categories that are both depicted can be construed as target and source;
2. target and source may be simultaneously visible (and thus capturable in a single screenshot) or visualized one after the other – sometimes with a long (screen)time in between;

3. the source domain may be part of the story that is narrated (= "intradiegetic") or it may not play a role in the story (= "extradiegetic");
4. the similarity between target and source can be achieved by various cinematic means (angles, colours, frames, lighting, characters' postures, …); and can be very saliently or very subtly cued.

A famous example of a pictorial simile occurs in the final scene of *Strike* (1927), in which Sergei Eisenstein cross-cuts between soldiers massacring innocent citizens and butchers slaughtering cattle. Since the latter are not part of the story the source domain is here extradiegetic. But sometimes a person, object, or event can be realistically present (i.e. intradiegetic) in a scene and simultaneously function as the source domain in a metaphor (Forceville, 2024a).

A nice example of a pictorial simile in the movie musical *Chicago* (Marshall, 2002) is discussed by Madison Marone. In a court scene a lawyer is interrogating a witness (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c8XLJ9MEhk). The scene alternates with the lawyer tap-dancing in an empty theatre. Marone persuasively argues that we are invited to construe a metaphor that could be verbalized as interrogating a witness in court is tap-dancing. Although the cross-cutting cues the metaphor visually, the role of the sound of the tap-dancing, audible all the time, should not be underestimated, as it makes salient mappable features such as "mastery", "performativity", and "maintaining the right rhythm" – so that the metaphor is multimodal rather than monomodally visual.

2.3 Contextual metaphor

This subtype can be described as follows: of two phenomena that can be construed as a metaphorical target and source domain, respectively, one domain is depicted, while the other domain is suggested by the visual context in which this phenomenon appears. I also consider this variety to be at stake when a living creature (usually a human being) adopts a posture, makes a gesture or movement, and/or adopts a facial expression that clearly evokes another phenomenon (possibly aided by film techniques such as framing, lighting, and all the visual elements within a shot or scene ["mise-en-scène"]) – that "other phenomenon" then functioning as the metaphor's source domain.

Figure 2: Members of the band *One Direction* steal a perfume bottle: YOU-AND-I PERFUME BOTTLE IS JEWEL. Screenshot from commercial (2014).

Figure 3: Pepsi commercial: COCA COLA CANS ARE STEPPING STONES (TO REACH FOR PEPSI). Screen-shot from (banned) commercial (2017).

Figure 4: UNPROFESSIONAL OFFICE CO-WORKERS ARE UNRULY CHIMPANZEES. Screenshot from CareerBuilder commercial campaign (2005 or 2006).

Figure 5: IVAN IS AN EAGLE. Screenshot from *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (Eisenstein, 1945).

A straightforward example of a contextual metaphor is ONE DIRECTION'S YOU & I FRAGRANCE BOTTLE IS A PRICELESS/GUARDED JEWEL, in a commercial featuring the band itself (One Direction – You & I Fragrance (Commercial), analysed by Eveline Stommels (Fig. 2). Another example is Pepsi Cola's naughty depreciation of its main competitor by showing a small boy using Coca Cola cans as stepping stones to reach up to the top button in a vending machine dispensing *Pepsi* cans

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DijFob8vxgI), yielding, as Vanessa van der Meijden proposes, the metaphor COCA COLA CANS ARE STEPPING STONES (FOR PEPSI) (Fig.3). A contextual metaphor structuring the entire CareerBuilder company campaign (CareerBuilders SuperBowl commercials (monkeys) was examined by Jacob Sirks. It portrays an office employee's colleagues as chimpanzees (or other animals) doing stupid things. The central metaphor can be verbalized as UNPROFESSIONAL OFFICE COWORKERS ARE UNRULY CHIMPANZEES (Fig. 4). The message: contact CareerBuilder to help you find a better job. Ajda Rudolf assessed the final scene of Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan The Terrible, Part I* as presenting the metaphor IVAN IS AN EAGLE (Fig. 5), with greatness, predatory behaviour and solitary dominance as potentially mappable features.

3. Monomodal and multimodal metaphor

Forceville (2006a, p. 383) distinguishes between monomodal metaphor (in which "target and source [are] exclusively or predominantly rendered in one mode", and multimodal metaphor ("target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes", p. 384). The test is: if "removal" of a mode means that the target or the source is no longer retrievable, the mode is crucial for identification of the metaphor and by that criterion is multimodal in the strict sense (Eggertsson & Forceville, 2009). Typically, multimodal metaphor construal is cued by the simultaneous presentation of target and source (e.g. visual + sound or visual + written text). But a mode may not be necessary for identification of a target or a source and still play a role in a metaphor, namely by suggesting mappable features not inferable via other modes. In this case the metaphor would be multimodal in the broad sense. Adopting the broad sense means that relatively few cinematic metaphors are monomodal; and those that qualify are typically of the VISUAL TARGET A IS VISUAL SOURCE B variety. Of course, the distinction between monomodal and multimodal metaphor only makes sense if there is agreement about what constitutes a "mode"; a thorny issue to which I will come back. Here are examples of multimodal metaphors, some of which involve the musical mode.

In the largely realistic film *C'è Ancora Domani* (Cortellesi, 2023), about women's fight for equality in the Rome of 1946, the protagonist's husband regularly beats her. In one memorable scene we see husband and wife dancing in their living room – but in such a way that it is clear that the husband hits her as part of the dance. There is no dialogue in this scene, but the dancing is supported by music (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWHECA1uV0k). Nora Testi identifies a metaphor here that could be verbalized as DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A DANCE (BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE). Among the mappable features are the rhythm and the "scriptedness" of dance moves. The visuals enable

the identification of the metaphor, but undoubtedly the music emphasizes the mappings.

The science fiction animation *Contact* (Tarasov, 1978), Ajda Rudolf argues, supports the visual GOOD IS LIGHT metaphor by bright, upbeat music while BAD IS DARK (Forceville & Renckens, 2013) is reinforced by lower, sombre tones – which could be captured by GOOD IS UP/HIGH and BAD IS DOWN/LOW (Winter, 2014). Babette Libbenga, inspired by Winter (2014) and Kromhout and Forceville (2013), contemplates the medium of videogames, identifying not only BAD IS DARK and BAD IS DOWN but also BAD IS COLD.

In a fascinating discussion of *The Puppetmaster* (Hou, 1993) about Taiwanese Budaixi [puppet theatre], Zhuolin Wu focuses on the film's central metaphor, LIFE IS THEATRE – which is also suggested by its Taiwanese title. Wu convincingly argues that while the music in the opening of the film – gongs, drums, and suona horns – evokes the audience's expectation for a puppet performance to begin, the ensuing visuals surprisingly present a family gathering where the birth of the protagonist is announced. Thus, the metaphor BIRTH OF PROTAGONIST IS BEGINNING OF BUDAIXI PERFORMANCE is cued multimodally.

A commercial for Haribo "Starmix" candy features businesspeople at a meeting talking about their favourite varieties, saying things like "I like a heart … 'cus they make me feel loved" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv64gSHZJl8, Fig. 6), but these words are voiced by children. Estelle Bolon proposes that the audience of the commercial is to construe the metaphor ADULT EATING HARIBO IS CHILD. What is mapped is apparently that Haribo candy brings back a childlike innocence and cuteness in businesspeople. As Bolon points out, the adults not only sound but

Figure 6: Businessman holding a Haribo candy behaves like a child.
Screenshot from Haribo commercial (2014).

also gesture and grimace like children, so the source domain is cued sonically as well as via bodily behaviour.

A General Electric commercial (Ideas Are Scary GE Commercial) examined by Fanar Jasim has a voice-over inform us that "ideas are scary", identifying the

Figure 7: Personified IDEA is chased away. Screenshot from General Electric commercial (2014).

Figure 8: DRINKING A FRAPPUCINO IS RECEIVING A GRANDPARENT'S HUG. Screenshot from Starbucks commercial (2024).

problem verbally straightaway. However, the commercial visualizes this insight as IDEA IS AN UNATTRACTIVE CREATURE – a multimodal metaphor of the verbo-pictorial variety. The events in the mini-story – supported by mood-music – show the unfriendly treatment of a personified IDEA (being jeered at, chased away [Fig. 7], avoided, …). Jasim rightly emphasizes, however, that the fluffiness of the creature also makes it cute, reinforcing the commercial's message that innovations that initially may seem scary can eventually be attractive, loved, and wanted.

Madison Marone verbalizes the metaphor in a Starbucks commercial for Frappuccino (*Starbucks Frappuccino Comfort In A Bottle 2024 Commercial*) as DRINKING A FRAPPUCCINO IS RECEIVING A GRANDPARENT'S HUG. We see nervous young professionals at a meeting, holding a Frappuccino, while they are simultaneously hugged by an elderly person (Fig. 8). For full comprehension of the metaphor the spoken text "the feeling of a comfortable hug from your nana" is needed. The

metaphor combines elements of the contextual metaphor and the pictorial simile variety, but is thus also multimodal.

Figure 9a: Dutch/canted angle of Tatum meeting the villain, Mr Ghostface.

Figure 9b: After being attacked by Mr Ghostface, Tatum loses her balance. Screenshots from *Scream* (Craven, 1996).

4. Orientational and structural metaphor in film

While the examples hitherto analysed are creative metaphors (Black, 1979), films can also draw on orientational and structural metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Insightful contributions to understanding the latter have been made by Maarten Coëgnarts (e.g. Coëgnarts, 2019) and María Ortiz. Ortiz (2023) demonstrates how the mise-en-scène and camera frames in the American TV series *Mr. Robot* (Esmail, 2015–2019) give rise to orientational metaphors such as LACK OF IMPORTANCE IS MARGINALITY, UNHAPPINESS IS DOWN, and DISAGREEMENT IS BEING ON DIFFERENT SIDES (see also Ortiz, 2011). Forceville (e.g. Forceville 2016) has written about the JOURNEY metaphor in animation film, which among other things exploits the BALANCE schema: when characters lose their physical balance, this metaphorically suggests something goes wrong in the pursuit of their goals, too. David Janssen combines insights from Ortiz and Forceville by showing that

in several horror films a scene in which a character is attacked by a monster is portrayed via a Dutch/canted angle (= metaphorical loss of balance), directly followed by a shot of that character falling (= literal loss of balance) (Fig. 9a, b). Janssen suggests this pattern recurs in other horror films, and thus may be typical for the horror genre (cf. Eggertsson & Forceville, 2009).

Zihan Zhang, discussing *Parasite* (Ho, 2019), draws attention to the systematic use of UPPER and LOWER spaces in the houses and apartments where characters live and work. The rich live upstairs, the poor in basements. In various ways, then, this film draws on the orientational metaphor GOOD (RICH, HIGH-CLASS, HAPPY …) IS UP and BAD (POOR, LOW-CLASS, UNHAPPY …) IS DOWN.

Both Victor Bray and Maxime van der Sande analysed Christmas films, and propose that this genre tends to draw on structural metaphors that can be captured by the metaphors CHRISTMAS SPIRIT IS LIGHT and CHRISTMAS SPIRIT IS BEING TOGETHER – the latter emphasizing happy communality at the end of the film by showing the "group" framed as individuals in close proximity to each other. Eveline Stommels, investigating the dystopian science-fiction *Insurgent* films directed by Robert Schentke and produced by Douglas Wick et al., submits that there are good reasons to claim that this genre systematically features the metaphor HUMAN VICTIM IS AN EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECT.

5. "Metaphor in absentia", allegory

Sometimes an entire film (or discourse in another medium) tells not just a story about the eponymic character in the narration, but also, and more importantly, conveys a parallel story that is largely or completely outside the film. Rebeka Milius, herself Estonian, writes about *Nipernaadi* (Kiisk, 1983) that it is a film that subtly depicts what kind of country Estonia used to be before it came to be dominated by Russia – and how it could develop into this kind of country again. So events befalling the protagonist, Nipernaadi, can be systematically mapped onto a Utopian version of Estonia. This can be accounted for with reference to Ricoeur (1977), who points out that a message or discourse may present only the source domain of a metaphor, while the target domain must be recruited from outside the text itself, labelling this "metaphor *in absentia*" (p. 186). Pertinent to Milius' case study is also Cornevin and Forceville (2017), who maintain that such systematic use of a metaphor could be called an "allegory". Notably, this way of meaning-making can help evade censorship in undemocratic countries.

6. *Must or can* we construe a metaphor?

"Incongruity" between two entities that are presented as being "the same" is often a signal that a metaphor is in order, but it is not a necessary criterion. The most important reason to construe a metaphor is that it makes sense to do so

as this yields, in the context of the film in which it appears, pertinent meaning that would otherwise be lost. Lankjær (2016) rightly points out that in fiction films a certain scene may be interpretable both literally *and* metaphorically – specifically in case of the pictorial simile variety. Here are some examples. In an Acqua di Giò aftershave commercial analysed by Rebeka Milius, a man (actor Aaron Taylor-Johnson) swimming in the ocean meets a whale (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzmI-ApEq7Y, Fig. 10). We are invited, but not forced, to construe the metaphor (ACQUA DI GIÒ-USING) MAN IS WHALE, presumably suggesting that the freshness, rareness, naturalness (or any other of a range of connotations a viewer may associate with whales freely swimming in the ocean) can somehow be mapped onto the man and his favourite aftershave.

In one long, wordless scene in the iconic anime *Ghost in the Shell* a female cyborg, Kusanagi, is seen wandering around in, and absorbing the atmosphere of, a metropolitan city. Maintaining that "identity and how it is influenced by the modern technological world is at the heart of this movie", Babette Libbenga proposes the metaphor IDENTITY IS CITY (*Ghost in the Shell – Ghost City*, Fig.11), with the city's artificiality and its claustrophobic and disorienting impact as pertinent mappings. During the scene, moreover, the same song is heard that was also audible in the opening sequence of the film when Kusanagi was created/assembled, further reinforcing the "identity" theme – thus making the metaphor arguably multimodal. Margherita Zocca argues along similar lines. Discussing the urban landscape in *La Notte* (Antonioni, 1961), she points out that "Milan, with its towering skyscrapers, impersonal industrial zones and vast urban spaces, is not just a backdrop but a representation of the emotional and spiritual emptiness that permeates the lives of the protagonists", enabling the construal of the metaphor PROTAGONISTS' ALIENATION IS CITY.

Figure 10: MAN IS WHALE. Screenshot from commercial Acqua di Giò aftershave (2024).

Figure 11: (KUSANAGI'S) IDENTITY IS CITY. Screenshot from *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii, 1995).

Figure 12: CHICKEN IS WINNING COWBOY IN A SHOOTOUT WITH A TURKEY.
Screenshot from KFC (Christmas) commercial (2018).

Figure 13: PEOPLE WEARING CLOTHES MADE OF ANYTHING EXCEPT WOOL ARE ZOMBIES.
Screenshot from Woolmark commercial (2024).

Sometimes the cue that a metaphor is to be construed requires knowledge of a specific film genre. Xuewei Li analyses a Christmas (!) commercial for KFC (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnOrg5oGOmw) portraying a chicken winning a shoot-out with a turkey (Figure 12; payoff: "Turkey comes and goes, but chicken is here to stay"). Both mise-en-scène features (bodily postures, movements) and what Coëgnarts and Kravanja (2012) call film-specific cues (music, extreme close-ups of eyes typical of Ennio Morricone's Spaghetti Westerns) help build up the source domain of the metaphor KF CHICKEN IS WINNING COWBOY IN A SHOOTOUT. But somebody who has never seen a Western would have no clue what is going on here.

Another example of the pertinence of genre recognition appears in a Woolmark commercial promoting: "wear wool, not waste" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6o_RrorNl0). Xuanshuo Li rightly points out that the crowd of "empty" clothes that all run together toward a ravine invites the metaphor PEOPLE WEARING CLOTHES MADE OF ANYTHING EXCEPT WOOL ARE ZOMBIES (Fig. 13). Again, in order to be able to comprehend this metaphor, one must be familiar with the iconography of the genre that cues the source domain: the Zombie film.

7. The pervasiveness of the JOURNEY metaphor

Our species recruits only a few source domains systematically to metaphorize the target domain ACHIEVING A GOAL. Arguably, the one used most often is JOURNEY (the main rival: BATTLE). Indeed, the JOURNEY metaphor (which in turn draws heavily on the Source-Path-Goal schema; see Forceville, 2006b) frequently recurs in the students' essays. Liam Rothwell-Pessino assesses the final scene in *The Darjeeling Limited* (Anderson, 2007), in which three brothers running after a departing train in the hope of catching it throw away their deceased father's suitcases. LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and the suitcase being a metonym for the JOURNEY domain, the brothers thereby get rid of the burden of the problematic past with their father. This analysis, incidentally, also shows how important metonyms often are in metaphors. Once an object has been imbued with specific connotations, it can function as a metaphor's target or source. (Another example, though not pertaining to the JOURNEY domain, is Christina Zhang's analysis of a scene at the end of *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997). Rose, now an old woman, drops the "Heart of the Ocean" diamond, which has become a metonym for her memories of Jack, into the sea, inviting construal of, say, COMING TO TERMS WITH THE TRAUMA OF JACK'S DROWNING IS DROPPING THE "HEART OF THE OCEAN" INTO THE SEA). Zhuolin Wu examines an American Democratic party commercial (2024) in which a mother decides not to let her daughter get on the school bus when she sees that the driver is Donald Trump: the often-used metaphor A COUNTRY IS A VEHICLE of course exploits the JOURNEY metaphor (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCM8YYywkoU).

Margherita Zocca inspects a 2018 Nike commercial (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SgGOYn1Df0) in which the earth has stopped turning, the solution being

that lots of people start running, like a hamster in a bogie wheel. Arguably this is a manifestation of the JOURNEY metaphor: SAVING THE PLANET IS RUNNING (ON NIKE SHOES). Dongyue Chen discusses a commercial (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fm0a4uFS08Y, 2024) featuring LAUNCHING IPHONE 16 PRO IS A ROCKET LIFTOFF, a metaphor whose source domain exemplifies another variety of the JOURNEY (see also Jia, 2024). Sanne Gronsveld meticulously analyses the direction and manner of characters' movements, and of the vehicles they use for transport, in *The Sting* (Hill, 1973), demonstrating these function not only on a literal level, but are also exploited to metaphorize the successes or setbacks in the protagonists' goals.

8. Avenues for further research

As argued by Stöckl (2019), genre, medium, and mode are the key concepts in multimodality scholarship – and hence also in the study of multimodal metaphor. The commercials and film scenes discussed above suggest various ideas and questions for further research.

Metaphor and narrative. Ricoeur (1977) already emphasizes the link between metaphorizing and story-telling. Indeed, metaphors could be said to be "mini-stories". So, how do metaphors support, or even structure, stories?

Metaphor and genre. Certain film genres (Christmas films, horror movies, science-fiction) appear to draw on particular metaphors. Is it possible to find correlations between specific metaphors and specific film genres? If so, metaphors can play a role in defining genres.

Metaphor in persuasive animation. Precisely because it need not respect physical laws, animation has unlimited freedom to create metaphors to support an argument in non-fictional shorts (Gebraad & Forceville, 2024). Madison Marone analyses creative metaphors in animated teasers promoting "mindfulness" for *Headspace* (https://www.headspace.com/meditation/meditation-videos). Moreover, the use of metaphor in documentary film deserves attention. Metaphor in film is thus worth the attention of students of rhetoric.

Other modes in metaphor. Multimodality scholarship has hitherto privileged the visual-plus-language variety. Several examples discussed above reveal that music and sound can also partake in cinematic metaphors. Provided a musical theme (e.g. a national anthem, a lullaby) or a sound (e.g. an alarm, a closing door, thunder) has a highly specific meaning, it can be used as a (metonym of a) metaphor's target or a source domain.

Modes and sub-modes. A fundamental issue was raised by Fanar Jasim with reference to the role of the colour blue in the short animation *Zima Blue* (Valley, 2019) – which resonates in Jip Eijkelboom's discussion of the significance of the colour pink in *Kajillionaire* (July, 2020). Jasim argues that if Forceville (2021) promotes sound and music (and, one may add, spoken language) – all accessed

aurally – to "mode"-status, then why shouldn't colour deserve this status, too …? To avoid endlessly extending the list of possible modes, the notion of "sub-modes" could be introduced. We could consider, for instance, "static or moving", "colour", "size", and "orientation" as sub-modes of the visual mode. But for now the jury is still out on the issue what should count as a mode, and how modes should be categorized.

Other tropes, other sources of meaning-making. However important metaphor is for meaning-making, film can draw on other tropes as well – but they await in-depth theorization (e.g. Guan & Forceville, 2022; Tseronis & Forceville, 2017b). And of course meaning is not just created via tropes; we also rely on the conventions of narrative or argumentation, on stylistic choices, on intertextual references, and other meaning-making mechanisms.

Experimental work on metaphor in film. Identifying and interpreting metaphor in film may presuppose specific background knowledge. If a viewer does not recognize and/or understand a specific phenomenon, he/she/+ can by definition not construe it as a metaphorical target or source. Testing subjects' comprehension could bring to the fore the role played by their cultural background knowledge, or by their familiarity with specific genres.

I trust that the fresh examples and ideas from students' work presented here will provide inspiration and food for thought for the next generation of metaphor scholars interested in film – and of film scholars interested in metaphor.

Acknowledgments

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