

A Course in Pictorial and Multimodal Metaphor

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Lecture 5. Pictorial and multimodal metaphor in fiction film

Introduction

Advertising is characterized by straightforward intentions (all variants of "buy me!"), which explains the relative ease with which its metaphors can be interpreted. But pictorial and multimodal metaphor can also occur in artistic texts. In this lecture, fragments from narrative films claimed to contain a pictorial or multimodal metaphor will be discussed and analyzed. This discussion leads to some cautious generalizations.

Multimodal metaphor in fiction films

It is surely the artists of the famous Russian *Montage* cinema of the 1920s and 1930s (see Bordwell 1985: chapter 11), Sergei Eisenstein their *primus inter pares*, who must be credited with discovering how to create metaphors in film. The cut from a police officer ordering a massacre of the workers to a butcher slaughtering an animal (see Thompson & Bordwell 1994: 145; Rohdin forthcoming) in *Strike* (USSR 1925) is an often-cited example. An instance from Hollywood cinema occurs in Fritz Lang's *Fury* (1936), when a cut from babbling housewives to clucking hens is obviously to be construed as a metaphor (Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 304). The technical dimensions of pictorial and multimodal metaphor in post-silent fiction film do not fundamentally differ from those in commercials, so a discussion of metaphors in film needs to focus specifically on generic distinctions. Here are some central differences:

1. Most films have a duration that is considerably longer than the 20-60" of the typical commercial, which means that target and source can be cued minutes, or even hours (e.g., in a multi-instalment TV series). We have seen in Lecture 4 that there are many ways for a director to cue similarity in salient ways, and provided the viewer recognizes the similarity between two persons, objects, or events, it can be exploited to create a metaphor.

2. The longer duration of a film also entails that a metaphor is more open to *development*: a director can gradually present new potential mappings from source to target, thereby enriching or qualifying the metaphor.
3. Artistic films have a different purpose than commercials (or even documentary films, which often have rhetorical goals). Let us say they want to entertain and move their audiences, and perhaps make them reflect on issues and problems. A consequence of this is that metaphors in feature films allow for more freedom than metaphors in commercials. While we have seen in preceding lectures that although advertising metaphors allow for a degree of “customized” interpretation, this freedom is constrained by the genre’s convention that advertising always makes a positive claim about the product, service, or brand promoted. In artistic films the only constraint, arguably, is that a construal-as-metaphor of two phenomena must tie in with, or at least not contradict, the film’s narrative demands, such as its plot and the plausible depiction of characters. Of course there is the risk of endless interpretive battles between viewers and critics about the need or possibility to even construe a metaphor – let alone interpret it. For one thing, I certainly would not want to interfere with viewers’ freedom to construe metaphors that no one else would accept as such, since art’s ability to trigger private emotions and associations is undoubtedly one of its most important powers. But in the interest of intersubjectivity, I will here (like Whittock 1990: 50; for more discussion of Whittock’s book, see Forceville 1996: 60-64) discuss only examples that, I hope, are relatively uncontroversial.

In the next section I will analyze a number of instances of what I propose are pictorial or multimodal metaphors in films, and indicate what circumstances trigger and constrain their construal and possible interpretations. Several of these are also discussed in Forceville (2005, 2008), but are here analyzed in more detail.

Case studies

Case study 1. *The Showdown* (Garlatti Costa, UK 2000)

In this 3’ gem, which contains no spoken language whatsoever, two musclemen in a workout try to outbid each other with their physical prowess. There is an atmosphere of tension, and the other fitnessers, feeling uncomfortable, leave the place one by one – with the exception of a skinny loser-type, who is blissfully unaware of what is going on. The musclemen’s mutual intimidation ends under the shower, where the entrance of the skinny man makes for a surprise ending.



Fig. 5.1 The “duellists,” with in the background the skinny man (still from *The Showdown*).

What makes the film interesting is that the visuals, the music, and the soundtrack all cue the domain of the Western: among other things, we hear a gun shot, clopping hooves, whinnying, a rattlesnake sound, a languorous whistle, the wind blowing, and a typical “Western” musical accompaniment (mouth organ, trumpet, piano, guitar); we see a plastic bag blowing past as if it were a rolling prairie bush, and under the shower the men hold their shampoo flacons as if they were guns. For good measure there is at the end of the film an extradiegetic – and in my view unnecessary – insert of a colt being fired. In short, the film’s success hinges on the apperception of the metaphor BEHAVIOUR IN A GYM IS A SHOWDOWN/SHOOTOUT.

As always, the construal and interpretation of the metaphor depends on recognition of, and familiarity with, the source domain – which in turn presupposes the awareness that the Western-domain is to be understood as the source domain of a metaphor in which “behaviour in a gym” is the target. Somebody who would be totally unfamiliar with the Western genre, and would not even know what a showdown is, would presumably be puzzled by the soundtrack, and some of the visuals, and be incapable of construing the metaphor.

The metaphor is truly multimodal. Of course the title is a strong verbal cue (the only one) for the source domain. Music and sound contribute substantially as well, and so do various behaviours, movements, and other forms of body language on the visual track. Once the metaphor is cued by the viewer, aesthetic pleasure consists in finding as many mappings as possible, in all the modalities drawn upon. Even framing choices help trigger the source domain of the metaphor: the various extreme close-ups of the men’s eyes will be recognized by connoisseurs as references to the showdowns in such Sergei Leone Westerns as *Once Upon a Time in the West* (USA 1968, <http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ4bNTU965E>), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (USA 1966, <http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=awskKWzjlhk&NR=1>), *For a Few Dollars More* (USA, 1965, <http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=b214IKz3m7c&feature=related>), including the famous scores by Ennio Morricone.

Case study 2. *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, USA 2000)

In one of the best-known scenes from *American Psycho*, the eponymous hero Patrick Bateman and his fellow businessmen outbid one another with the stylishness of their business cards (<http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=923xrzsb3hI>). We see one of the men giving his card to another with an outstretched arm, accompanied by a “swoosh” sound; a close up shows a shiny cardholder flicking open with a distinctive click, and when at the end of the scene Patrick is presented with the all-surpassing business card of “Paul Allen,” it falls from his hands on the table, his eyes glazing over, while the man sitting next to him says, “Something wrong? Patrick? You’re sweating!”



Fig. 5.2 Patrick Bateman’s card: “That’s bone. And the lettering is something called ‘Silian Rail’” (still from *American Psycho*).



Fig. 5.3 Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) takes “Paul Allen’s card” (Still from *American Psycho*).

I propose (following a suggestion by Anton Kanis) that a metaphor can be construed here: BUSINESS CARD IS KNIFE OR COMPARING BUSINESS CARDS IS A KNIFING DUEL. It is noteworthy that such a metaphor nicely sums up the ruthless working atmosphere in the firm where the men are employed, and thus reinforces a central narrative theme.

Let us briefly consider what affords the construal of the metaphor. Note that there is nothing in the visual, verbal, or sound track in the scene that is not realistically motivated. There is not, for instance, a cut to an extradiegetic source domain (“knife duel”), as in the case of the Eisenstein, Lang, and Garlatti Costa examples discussed above, nor is the word “knife” mentioned at any moment in the scene. The source domain is thus nowhere cued explicitly, and hence there is no cue that *forces* a metaphoric construal. I propose that two conditions must be minimally

fulfilled to construe the metaphor as formulated above: in the first place we must somehow be strongly reminded of the source domain, say, knifing duels as we know them from Westerns, gangster or “hood” movies. If this is what happens, it is presumably certain postures and facial expressions we recognize, such as the outstretched arm and the “wounded” Patrick dropping Paul Allen’s card. Moreover, the silver-coloured card holder springs open – and sounds! – like a stiletto. If and when *any* single of these cues is picked by a viewer, s/he can start seeing and hearing other cues that exemplify the metaphor, particularly on a repeated viewing, galvanizing the metaphor.

The second, related, condition to be fulfilled for construing the metaphor is the presumption that every communicator tries to be optimally relevant to his or her audience (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995; Wilson & Sperber 2004). In the present case, this means that the filmmakers want their viewers to get as much aesthetic pleasure from the scene as possible, and one way to achieve this is by suggesting the businessmen metaphorically engage in a knifing duel.

Since no metaphor *need* be construed, much of the fun and aesthetic pleasure evoked by the scene is still there for viewers who do not construe the metaphor. That being said, it may well be the case that a viewer, subconsciously (?) aware of the underlying aggressiveness of the men’s card-exchanging behavior, understands the metaphor on a more abstract level, say, AS EXCHANGING BUSINESS CARDS IS A BATTLE, without the specification of a battle-with-knives.

Indeed, it is possible to activate a different metaphorical source here, one compatible with the BATTLE domain: that of a card game (Antonio Barcelona, Rosario Caballero, personal communication). In that case, different aspects of the target domain are cued than in the KNIFING DUEL scenario: the fact that business cards have the same rectangular form as playing cards; that they are called “cards” too; and that the cards are thrown on the table in a certain manner.

And there is another type of battle domain, also commensurate with the target domain, leading to yet another metaphor: COMPARING BUSINESS CARDS IS COMPARING WILLIES ... I am sure that many viewers upon seeing the scene have thought of this young boys’ bravura act and found this childish behavior pertinent to their interpretation.

Let me end the discussion of this scene with some general observations: (1) the three different metaphorical construals (and there may be more) are possible because there are no cues that explicitly cue the source domain (as happens in the “colt-shooting” shot in *The Showdown*); (2) the fact that the scene occurs in an artistic film, unlike, for instance, in an advertising commercial or an instruction film, means that we need not *choose* between the metaphors – they can exist side by side, and if we are alert and receptive enough to see/hear all three of them, this only enhances our aesthetic pleasure; (3) the identification of the three metaphors, and their ensuing interpretations, depends on conferring salience on different aspects of the scene, with

the card-showing as the stable factor. For the KNIFE DUEL metaphor the silver cardholders, and their clicking open, is presumably the key. For the card game version, the emphatic showing of the cards themselves, and the self-congratulatory c.q. intimidated expressions on the men's faces while doing so is crucial. And in the COMPARING WILLIES version it is perhaps the general bragging, largely conveyed verbally, that steers the interpretation.

Case study 3. *Singing Teacher* (Anatoly Petrov, USSR 1968)

This 3' animation shows a man who is surprised to open his front door to an ungainly hippopotamus who unceremoniously strolls inside. The man, a music pedagogue, tries to teach the hippopotamus to sing, but grows ever more impatient and desperate when the beast keeps repeating the inelegant bray that comes to him naturally. But then the hippopotamus swallows the singing teacher, and suddenly he (or rather: the singing teacher from within his innards) is capable of performing beautiful songs. <http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=57V61gm1euM>



Figure 5.4. The teacher tries, in vain, to teach the hippopotamus to sing (still from *The Singing Teacher*).

As in the *American Psycho* scene, there is no *need* to construe a metaphor. It is perfectly possible to enjoy the bizarre story of a hippopotamus wanting to sing, and only succeeding after having swallowed his teacher – and probably this is the level at which most children will appreciate the tale. But a culturally sophisticated audience might want to go beyond this literal level and detect a metaphor. For instance, one could interpret the film as suggesting that in order to truly learn something, one needs to “internalize” one’s teacher (Dirk Geeraerts, personal communication) – either as an act of tribute, or as a necessary act of destruction. The metaphor would then be formulated as something like LEARNING IS EATING ONE’S TEACHER.

However, a contemporary Russian audience is likely to have construed a different metaphor. The text in the booklet accompanying the DVD (*Masters of Russian Animation*, volume 1) says about the film, “Soviet audiences ... knew well about bureaucrats who ‘swallowed’ the ideas of others for their own benefit.” In this construal, the metaphor would be verbalized as, say, BUREAUCRATS ARE ART/ARTIST-DEVOURING HIPPOPOTAMI. In this latter situation, the target is not rendered in the text itself; it has to be adduced from one’s knowledge of relevant circumstances of the time and place of production. Without the text in the DVD booklet presumably many Western viewers would have been unable to construe this metaphor. Uptake of the metaphor thus requires what Vandaele (2008) calls “invisible framing”: in order to understand crucial elements in a text, one may require essential information that is not formulated explicitly in that text itself. The latter may have various reasons: one possible reason is that something was considered so self-evident to the audience at which a text was directed that explicitness was deemed superfluous; another is that censorship forbade such explicitness. The latter is the most likely scenario in this case.

Case study 4. *Mountain of Dinosaurs* (Rasa Strautmane, USSR 1967).

Another Russian animation film from pre-1989 Russia that invites a metaphorical interpretation is *Mountain of Dinosaurs* (Masters of Russian animation 1). The story is as follows: For millions of years, dinosaurs put their eggs on the top of a high mountain, where the warm rays of the sun ensured they would be hatched. But when the climate became structurally colder, the egg shells grew extra layers. A dinosaur baby wanting to be born is now unable to break out of the shell. It asks the shell to release him, but the shell keeps repeating in a mechanical voice: “I have to protect you.” The baby dinosaur begs, “I have to see the sun. Even a cold sun. Please let me out. I can adapt. I swear!” but the egg keeps uttering its mantra, only adding “I must fulfill my duty.” The voice-over concludes “Duty was fulfilled,” and when monkeyish creatures much later find and hack open the shells they find them empty, and they understand that the dinosaurs are extinct.

As in example 3, the story can be taken at face value, but undoubtedly a discerning audience adopted a metaphor scenario to make sense of it. The baby dinosaur had to be mapped onto the Russian people; the thickening shell to the Party bosses; and the cold climate presumably to dangerous foreign influences. Again, the metaphor’s target has to be inferred extratextually, and again, the strategy chosen was clearly meant to mislead the censors.

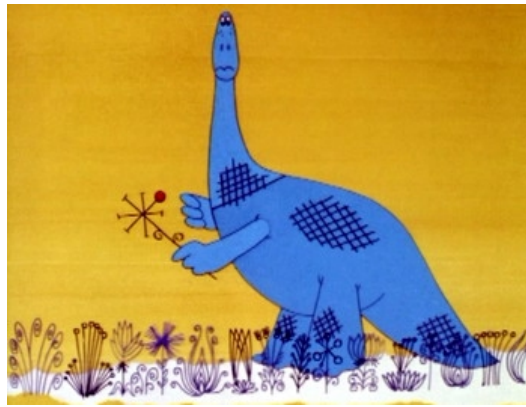


Figure 5.5 Endearing dinosaur (still from *Mountain of Dinosaurs*).

I propose that construal of the metaphor depends on knowledge of the socio-cultural environment of Cold War Russia. But there are other factors that play a role. For one thing, the story is arguably rather weak on its own terms, lacking a twist or punch. For another, the music both at the beginning credits and the end of the 10' film is loud and slightly cacaphonic. Moreover, the story clearly creates empathy with the dinosaurs (mapped to the Russian people): they are depicted as endearing (see figure 5.5) and said to be “peaceful,” and the babies are wide-eyed cuddly creatures.

Case study 5. *Requiem for a Dream* (Darren Aronofsky, USA 2000).

Aranofsky’s disturbing film portrays four characters whose respective addictions inexorably lead them to physical and spiritual wreckage. One of them, Sara Goldfarb, takes diet pills in order to slim down, but she is nonetheless sorely tempted by the prospect of eating. In the course of the film, the refrigerator, a metonym for the food it contains, takes on ever more ominous features in her feverish mind. At one moment, it seems to leap forward to her. In the last of the fridge scenes, where other events make clear that Sara is severely hallucinating under the influence of her pills (see figure 5.6), the refrigerator leaps forward again, and splits open horizontally at the top, revealing a terrifying, red-lit maulish aperture, while at the same time a menacing growl is audible. The metaphor, cued by the visuals as well as the sound, and reinforced by the lighting in the scene, is something like REFRIGERATOR IS MONSTER OR REFRIGERATOR IS AGGRESSIVE ANIMAL.



Figure 5.6 Sara Goldfarb (Ellen Burstyn), addicted to diet pills (*Requiem for a Dream*).

Several points can be made with reference to this multimodal metaphor. In the first place, the metaphor *develops* in the course of the film. Initially, the refrigerator is simply saliently framed, as an object that Sara is increasingly obsessed by, but it is only when it starts to move toward her that it acquires metaphorical overtones. At this stage the metaphor would not go beyond alarming personification (REFRIGERATOR IS MENACING CREATURE). Not until the very end, when the fridge splits open, the personification is fine-tuned to AGGRESSIVE ANIMAL OR MONSTER. A second observation follows from this: since it is Sara who experiences the fridge as a wild animal, the metaphor reveals her (distorted) point of view. Strictly speaking, we might have to say that while the *viewer* understands the fridge-animal identity in terms of metaphor, Sara may well not have this distance, and believe that the fridge has *literally* transformed into an animal. In other words, multimodal metaphors can occur at different narrative levels, ranging from endorsement by an external narrator to a highly colored focalization by an unreliable character (see Bal 1997, chapter 1, section 5 and Branigan 1992: chapter 4 for more discussion of the narrative status of information). Finally, the metaphor can by and large be characterized as a visual hybrid: the refrigerator and the wild animal form a single gestalt that cannot occur in the real world. Visual hybrid metaphors can therefore only occur in films which depict the otherworldly – horror films, fables, science fiction – and as focalized in otherworldly circumstances (hallucinations, dreams, drunken misperceptions).

Case study 6. *Black Robe* (Bruce Beresford, Canada/Australia 1991).

Black Robe, a film based on a novel by Brian Moore – who also wrote the screenplay – tells the story of a young priest in 17th century Quebec, who has come to the jungle because he is intent on converting the Indians to Christianity. In one scene (almost 40' into the film), the priest wanders through the woods, looking up (figure 5.7) at

the tall trees (figure 5.8) in a circular tracking movement. The scene is intercut by a four-second shot with the same circular movement featuring church columns (figure 5.9). The viewer recognizes the columns as part of the church where the priest made his decision to depart for Quebec to go on his mission (figure 5.10). Hence the similarity between the trees and the columns, reinforced by the low angle and the camera movement, can be explained by construing a metaphor: TREES ARE CHURCH COLUMNS or, by extension, WOOD IS CHURCH, or even CONVERTING INDIANS IN THE CANADIAN JUNGLE IS PREACHING IN CHURCH. The “church” concept is further cued when the priest, afraid he has lost his way in the wood, begins to pray.



Figure 5.7 The priest looks up in the wood ...



Figure 5.8 ... and sees the trees ...



Figure 5.9 ... which remind him of the columns in the church...



Figure 5.10 ... where he first understood that his mission was to convert the “savages” to Christianity (stills from *Black Robe*).

The metaphor “scenario” (Musolff 2006) can be further fleshed out: the priest hopes to transform the wood into a church, with the Indians (“savages”) as the believers. The shot of the church is thus extradiegetic relative to the scene in the wood itself,

but diegetically motivated as triggering a flashback of the priest – a flashback that the viewer understands as such because of the earlier scene in the church (figure 5.10).

The metaphor is apt, since it succinctly captures the goal, or quest (see Forceville 2006a) of the film’s protagonist. That this goal is totally alien to the Indians themselves is played out nicely in the sequel to this scene. The priest, temporarily lost in the woods, is to his great relief found by his Indian companions. One of them asks scornfully how he could ever get lost here: “Did you forget to look at the trees?” To the Indians, the trees are orientation marks; to the priest they are the target domain of a metaphor – a fine way of underscoring the vast cultural differences between the “black robes” and the Indians that are central to the film’s theme.

Case study 7. *Gracious Curves/Naisenkaari* (Kiti Luostarinen, Finland 1997).

To the extent that a film is argumentative rather than narrative (following Chatman [1990], who distinguishes “descriptive” as a third possible goal of discourse), a metaphor occurring in a documentary film differs from one in a fiction film. Defining documentary, particularly in contradistinction to fiction film, is notoriously difficult (for attempts at characterizing documentary, see Nichols (2001), but in the face of the numerous difficulties hampering adequate definition as well as the existence of so many hybrids, I nonetheless fully endorse Carroll’s (1996) view that it is crucial to maintain and monitor the distinction between fiction and non-fiction in film (and other media). Without further delving in this thorny issue, let me say that whereas feature films aim for pleasurable polyvalence and/or audiovisual spectacle, documentaries want to persuade us of the correctness or at least validity of a more or less specific view of a person, a community, or a state of affairs, and adduce some sort of audiovisual evidence to support that view.



Figure 5.11 Weight scales, accompanied by the sound of a roulette ball (still from *Gracious Curves*).

Luostarinen's disturbing documentary is a poetic reflection on the pressures women feel on how their bodies are supposed to look, and on what activities others, or they themselves, believe they could or should undertake to conform to this ideal. In one shot, the pointer in the window of a weight-scale is shown moving until it settles on a number. During this shot we hear the sound of a spinning roulette ball. The striking incongruity between visuals and sound invite metaphoric construal. Given the theme of the film, it makes more sense to construe WEIGHT-WATCHING IS PLAYING ROULETTE than PLAYING ROULETTE IS WEIGHT-WATCHING. The presumption of relevance then further encourages us to find one or more properties of "playing roulette" that can be mapped onto "weight-watching." One salient property of playing roulette is that it is a game of chance rather than skill or competence, suggesting that so is the process of weight-watching. But other mappings are possible: the element of frustration or excitement are pertinent as well – and which of these mappings is actually processed depends partly on the specific viewer's own attitudes to weight, and partly on how s/he interprets the film's valuations of this issue. A few shots later, the viewer is presented with a close-up of a young girl rope-skipping. Every time the rope touches the ground we hear the cracking of a whip. Again, given the film's topic, a metaphor can be construed: ROPE-SKIPPING IS WHIPPING (ONESELF), with "self-torture" as the mapped feature.

Both these examples are multimodal metaphors of the pictorial-sonic kind. As always, the ability to construe the metaphor requires first of all recognition of the source domain. It is to be noted that when the sound's origin and provenance is not, or no longer recognized, the metaphor stops being interpretable. Somebody unfamiliar with the sound of a roulette table (say, a country child with no access to TV or film) or a whip (say, a city child with no access to TV or film) will be barred from construing and interpreting the metaphor. Moreover, while some sounds have become obsolete, others have only recently entered history: think of the tray of a CD or DVD-player sliding open, or the rolling of suitcases-with-wheels being dragged over a pavement. In short, just like language and visuals (and gestures, tastes, and smells), sounds have a (sub)cultural and historical dimension, and this has an impact on our apperception of any multimodal metaphors that draw on them.

One other dimension of the use of multimodal metaphors of the pictorial-sonic kind in a film or TV programme must be mentioned: if the person sitting next to you in the cinema, or on the couch, happens just to be crunching popcorn or biscuits during the scene, you may miss the metaphor.

Some conclusions

A few case studies cannot, of course, allow for sweeping generalizations, but on the basis of the analyses made here (and some more in Forceville 2005, 2008, Rohdin forthcoming), at least the contours of the dimensions to be taken into account when researching multimodal metaphor begin to transpire. Since *technical* implications of the medium (“moving images”) for metaphor have been discussed in Lecture 4, I will here summarize any characteristics that pertain to the *genre* under consideration here: fiction film.

In the first place, *the degree of emphasis with which a metaphor is presented presumably covers a greater range in feature films than in advertising, while this emphasis may moreover change in the course of the film.* Perhaps some viewers of *The Showdown* simply do not initially notice the oddness of the soundtrack of the film, and – perhaps not knowing the meaning of the title – do not construe the metaphor until they are confronted with the extradiegetic shot of the colt being fired. Conversely, certain viewers may already at the very first shot of the saliently framed refrigerator in *Requiem for a Dream* have been reminded of a monster. In *Black Robe*, it is possible that cinematically sensitive viewers construe the metaphor trees are church columns in the split second before the insert of the shot of these columns, that is, on the basis of the circular camera movement alone.

Second, *metaphorical targets may not be conveyed text-internally and may have to be supplied by the viewer on the basis of relevance and socio-cultural knowledge.* We have seen in the two Russian animation films that one reason for presenting a metaphor in this way is to circumvent censorship. Incidentally, to pass censors it is presumably always necessary for a film (or a different work of art) to afford a plausible non-metaphorical or an innocent-metaphorical reading. I note in passing that in *advertising*, metaphors with text-internal targets are presumably very rare, given that in this genre metaphors have the product or service promoted as their target.

Third, *any stylistic choice that strongly or uniquely connotes a semantic domain, irrespective of the modality in which it is conveyed, can serve to cue that domain as a source in a metaphor.* The stiletto-click of the cardholder in *American Psycho*, the “Leonic” extreme close-up of the eyes in *The Showdown*, the sounds of the roulette ball and the whip in *Gracious Curves* – they all evoke a fairly specific source domain. This knowledge may, of course, be (sub)culturally determined.

Fourth, as we have seen in earlier lectures in this course, *verbalizations of metaphors are never innocent.* Whether a given verbalization reflects our thinking or the other way round remains a vexed issue, but I submit that once a certain verbalization is accepted, certain interpretations are activated that may differ from those evoked by a different verbalization. The three possible metaphors discussed with reference to the *American Psycho* scene are a case in point. This last example

alerts us to another point: viewers who see in it the general EXCHANGING BUSINESS CARDS IS BATTLE metaphor surely miss out on much of the aesthetic pleasure that viewers experience who see one or all of the more specific metaphors embodied in the scene. This is a healthy reminder that while the NOUN A IS NOUN B verbalizations that Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999) favours are important to tap the conceptual level of metaphor uptake, it is at the more specific, “basic” level (Lakoff 1987: 3ff.) that a metaphor provides the greatest array of potential mappings.

Fifth, *in the realm of moving images metaphors are almost always multimodal*. Of course claiming this presupposes that it is possible to define mode/modality. This is a very difficult issue (see Forceville 2006b for more discussion), but even if we were only to accept a crude mode-division into language, visuals, and non-verbal sound, most of the metaphors discussed draw on more than one mode – if not necessarily for the identification of target and source, then for the cueing of mappable features, and thus the metaphor’s interpretation. It would be interesting to speculate whether art films tend to rely on different combinations of modes than commercials. Perhaps commercials may want to reinforce metaphors verbally to a larger extent.

Six, *the less conventionally narrative a film is, the more scope there is for a viewer to construe a metaphor*. In abstract films, the sky is the limit, particularly if it is not even necessary, as demonstrated, that a metaphor’s target is rendered within the film itself. And if the aim is playful morphing, perhaps to activate creative thinking as a goal in itself, a lot is possible, too (see: <http://neurokids.nl/speel/aap-noot-mies/aap-noot-mies-morphmaker/>).

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