Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression in Moving Images

Biannual Conference of RaAM
*Association for Researching and Applying Metaphors*
University of Cagliary
June, 20-23th, 2014

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1. Audiovisual Metaphors. Introducing Remarks

- **conceptual metaphors and conceptual mappings** are realized in different semiotic systems, e.g.:
  - in **language**
    (cf. Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987, Kövecses 2002, and others)
  - in **visual and audiovisual media**
Audiovisual Metaphors

- **Audiovisual metaphors** are elements of cinematic style that transfer cultural meanings in conceptually based metaphoric gestalts.
  
- Moving images create **audiovisual metaphors**
  
  a) as **original mappings** between **image schemata in vision and sound** as **source domains** and **abstract concepts in narration** as **target domains**
  
  b) and by referring in filmmaking to **conceptual metaphors** that are already anchored in our mind as **cognitive concepts**

(Fahlenbrach 2010: *Audiovisual Metaphors. On the Embodied and Affective Aesthetics in Film and Television* (translated title, orig.in German), 2014: "Metaphoric Narratives. Paradigm Scenarios and Metaphors of Shame in Entertainment Films.")
Emotion Metaphors

**Emotions as Target Domain**

**Source Domains**
- Image Schemata
  - Force
  - Dark – Bright
  - In – Out
- Cognitive Concepts
  - e.g. Burden
  - e.g. Darkness
  - e.g. Heat/Explosion

**Target Domains**
- Emotion Scripts
  - Cause of Emotion
  - State / Appraisal
  - State / Coping Strategies
  - e.g. of Fear
  - e.g. of Sadness
  - e.g. of Anger

**Emotion Metaphors**
- e.g. FEAR IS A BURDEN
- e.g. SAD IS DARK
- e.g. ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER

**Symbolic Manifestations**
- e.g. verbal: 'Fear weighed heavily on him'
- e.g. verbal: 'To be in a dark mood'
- e.g. verbal: 'To explode from anger'

(Kövecses, Z. 2003: *Metaphor and Emotion. Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*; Table from Fahlenbrach 2010)
Emotion Metaphors in Audiovisual Media

• **Audiovisual emotion metaphors:**
  – help viewers to label feelings of characters
  – Intensify emotions in the screen
  – Offer cues evaluate cues by interpreting the ‘invisible‘ aspects of the emotional state
2. Metaphors of Depression – Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression

Depression is a ubiquitious experience, including:

- physical pain
- intensive negative feelings and moods
- cognitively: pessimistic attitude towards self & world

(cf. Matthew Ratcliff 2013, „Depression and the Phenomenology of Free Will“.)
“Depression is a condition that is almost unimaginable to anyone who has not known it. A sequence of metaphors (...) is the only way to talk about the experience”.

Trans-Cultural Metaphors of Depression

- DEPRESSION IS LACK OF VITALITY
- DEPRESSION IS DARK
- DEPRESSION IS HEAVY
- DEPRESSION IS DOWN
- DEPRESSION IS LACK OF CONTROL

Metaphors of Depression in Informative Animation Videos

Illustration by Sylvie Reuter (2012)
Informative Animation Videos on Depression. Example (1)

Kids Helpline. www.kids.helpline.au
Informative Animation Videos on Depression. Example (2)

“Depression”, by Eileen Hai Hing Kwan.
Informative Animation Videos on Depression. Example (3)

## Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression in Informative Animation Videos (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphors of Depression identified in Psychology and CMT</th>
<th>Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression performed in Animation Videos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>DARK</strong></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS A <strong>DARK SPACE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS A <strong>DARK TOWN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS A <strong>DARK ANIMAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS A <strong>DARK SHADOW</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>HEAVY</strong></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS A <strong>HEAVY FORCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS A <strong>HEAVY ANIMAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>DOWN</strong></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS <strong>FALLING DOWN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEPRESSION IS <strong>SHRINKING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>LACK OF CONTROL</strong></td>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>LACK OF MOVEMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>LACK OF VITALITY</strong></td>
<td>DEPRESSION IS <strong>SLOW MOVEMENT</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression in Informative Animation Videos (2)

### Further audiovisual metaphors of depression:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPRESSION</th>
<th>IS A PATH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IS HUGE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IS A HUGE ANIMAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IS A HUGE SPACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A DEPRESSED PERSON IS SMALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IS A NATURAL FORCE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• RAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• STORM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• AN OBSTACLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IS SILENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A DEPRESSED PERSON IS A DIVIDED SELF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| COPING DEPRESSION | IS COPING WITH ANIMAL  
| | IS GETTING ANIMAL EXHAUSTED  
| | IS LEASHING ANIMAL  
| | IS SHOWING ANIMAL  
| | IS DOCUMENTING ANIMAL  
| | IS HUGGING ANIMAL  
| | IS LOVING ANIMAL  
| | IS RISING BODY SIZE  
| | IS ACQUIRING BODY BALANCE  
| | IS PROTECTING BODY  |
Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression in Movies
Opener of *Melancholia*
(Lars von Trier, DK/S/F/D 2011)

• DEPRESSION IS LACK OF VITALITY
• DEPRESSION IS LACK OF MOVEMENT
• DEPRESSION IS SILENCE
• DEPRESSION IS A FALLING ANIMAL
Melancholia

- DEPRESSION IS PARALYZED MOVEMENT
- DEPRESSION IS HEAVY
- DEPRESSION IS A PATH
Melancholia

- DEPRESSION IS A DARK SPACE
- DEPRESSION IS A FALLING ANIMAL
Melancholia

- DEPRESSION IS LACK OF CONTROL
- DEPRESSION IS RESTRAINED MOVEMENT
- DEPRESSION IS A DARK SPACE
- DEPRESSION IS A PATH
Melancholia

• DEPRESSION IS LACK OF CONTROL
• DEPRESSION IS BEING TRANSPORTED
• DEPRESSION IS SLOW MOVEMENT
# Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression in Movies: *Melancholia*

| DEPRESSION | IS LACK OF VITALITY  
|            | IS SLOW MOVEMENT  
|            | IS LACK OF CONTROL - IS LACK OF CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT:  
|            | IS LACK OF MOVEMENT  
|            | IS PARALYZED MOVEMENT  
|            | IS RESTRAINED MOVEMENT  
|            | IS BEING TRANSPORTED  
|            | IS A FALLING ANIMAL  
|            | IS A DARK SPACE  
|            | IS HEAVY  
|            | IS SILENCE  

# Audiovisual Metaphors of Depression in Movies: *Melancholia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPRESSION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IS LACK OF VITALITY</td>
<td>IS SLOW MOVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS LACK OF CONTROL - IS LACK OF CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT:</td>
<td>IS LACK OF MOVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS LACK OF CONTROL - IS LACK OF CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT:</td>
<td>IS PARALYZED MOVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS LACK OF CONTROL - IS LACK OF CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT:</td>
<td>IS RESTRAINED MOVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS LACK OF CONTROL - IS LACK OF CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT:</td>
<td>IS BEING TRANSPORTED <em>(Movement)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS A FALLING ANIMAL <em>(Movement)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS A DARK SPACE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS HEAVY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IS SILENCE</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Conclusion

(1) audiovisual metaphors of depression observed in the study

a. refer to established conceptual metaphors of depression
b. create specific metaphors by the use of vision and sound

(2) multiple mappings in audiovisual media:

• Shots and scenes can include several conceptual mappings
• They audio-visually manifest different image schemata that are projected to the same ‘target‘ in the narrative / topic.
References: