Metaphor and Ideology in Film

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Abstract.

Metaphor is not just a mere decorative device, but must be regarded as a central process in language and cognition. This dissertation explores the possibility to employ Max Black's interactional theory of metaphor and cognitive metaphor theory to study metaphor in film language. This point of view has not yet been considered within film studies, yet it is indispensable for the analysis of complex metaphorical structures in film texts, and it may also provide a precise framework for the understanding of associative film language. First of all, the description of the metaphorical process proposed by interaction and cognitive metaphor theories is discussed and applied to the analysis of film texts. A special attention is given to how ideology is involved in the construction and reception of conventional and non-conventional metaphors. In the last part of the dissertation, Neil Blomkamp's *District 9* and Roland Emmerich's *2012* are analysed in detail, with a particular focus on the interaction of structuring, personification and displacement metaphors in the determination of the ideological discourses of the films.

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Introduction.

Metaphor is widely considered one of the most fundamental structures of language and cognition (Goatly, 2007), which means that most of the time, in common speech as well as in scientific discourse and, indeed, also in literature and cinema, we conceive our experiences and construct our representations of them in terms of other experiences and representations. Therefore, metaphor is not just a means of creating decorative linguistic expressions, but it is central in textual interpretation (Semino, 2008). Metaphor is also an important organizing principle of the narrative and a means of conveying meaning efficiently, and pleasantly, by the association of signs, or through the interaction of more or less complex, basic or conventional, cognitive structures (Goatly, 2007: 21-22). Moreover, reading film in general, and critical reading in particular, frequently make use of metaphors in order to construct the meaning of the texts (Kim, 2002).

This dissertation attempts to describe metaphor in film language from the point of view of cognitive metaphor theory, which is one of the most detailed descriptions of the metaphorical process in linguistics, and that has never been applied thoroughly to the study of metaphor in film. The benefits of this approach reside mostly on the possibility to analyse complex metaphorical structures in film texts. Cognitive metaphor theory also gives a simple and common explanation to various textual phenomena: metaphor, simile, metonymy, personification and, more generally, to the effects of the association of different signs or concepts. Indeed, while the symbolic meaning of single sign can be already explained as secondary signification (Barthes, 1957), metaphor theory addresses the interactions between more than one sign. Metaphor can also be used to explain the process from which a particular connotative meaning of a sign arises in a given context, which of its other possible meanings are downplayed and with what effects, and, finally, how this meaning can be extended in other, related, metaphorical and textual configurations.

This dissertation presents cognitive metaphor theory in its possible applications to the analysis of film language. The works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980a, 1980b, 1999), Lakoff and Turner (1989), Zoltan Kövecses (2002, 2006), Andrew Goatly (1997, 2007) and by George Lakoff alone (1987, 2001a, 2001b), can be taken as an introduction to the core of the cognitive theory of metaphor, covering its basic elements and also some of its cultural, artistic and ideological implications. This work also relies on some previous adaptation of cognitive metaphor theory for the analysis of literary texts (Semino 2008), and visual signs (Forceville, 1995, 1996). In particular, *Metaphor in Discourse* (Semino, 2008) constitutes a clear and complete evaluation of the limits and virtues of the cognitive metaphor theory in textual analysis, which the author applies to different fields, from literature to politics, science and advertising.

Within film studies, a cognitive approach to metaphor is rare. Trevor Whittock (2009) and Noël Carroll (1996) both move on from a purely rhetorical view of metaphor to address its semantic dimension, referencing to Lakoff and Johnson's theory. Nevertheless, they fail to address the importance of conventional metaphors in film, and they are mainly concerned with the level of metaphorical expressions rather than with their conceptual level. Even if Whittock, in the short section of his book dedicated to Lakoff and Johnson (Whittock, 2009: 113-118), acknowledges the importance of conventional metaphors in film, throughout the book, his analysis is limited to non-conventional metaphors - metaphors that stand "at the frontier of human consciousness" (Whittock, 2009: 7), rather than metaphors that make up the core of it. Also, Whittock classification of metaphor (Whittock, 2009: 49-69) is based on differences in the form of metaphorical expressions, rather than on differences in their conceptual relations. in a similar way, Noël Carroll's homospatial metaphors, which are considered as the most characteristic and fundamental type of metaphor in film (Carroll, 1996: 214), must be regarded only as a specific case of non-conventional metaphor in the broader framework provided by cognitive theory. Homospatial metaphors, indeed, require the "compresence of noncompossible elements" (Carroll, 1996: 215), i.e. the condensation of elements from different domains in a single figure of the film, usually a character, as well as a strong opposition between such elements, which are however characteristic only of non-conventional metaphors according to cognitive metaphor theory. Carroll and Whittock's accounts of cinematic metaphor do not value sufficiently the importance of conventional metaphors, and, as a consequence, they also fail to recognise the specific ideological power of basic and conventional metaphorical structures in film.

The first chapter of the dissertation connects metaphor with Eisenstein's notion of montage, as an introduction to the more broad use of the term "metaphor" in cognitive theory. The second chapter covers the basic definition of metaphor given by cognitive metaphor theory, as well as a discussion of Max Black's interaction theory, from which it was developed. In the third chapter Semino's metaphor identification procedure is outlined and adapted to the analysis of film texts. The following two chapters deal with various characteristics of conceptual metaphors, developing some of the most basic points of cognitive metaphor theory in order to employ it in textual critique. Chapter five analyses metaphorical structuring in its textual effects, as well as discussing personification, fusion and fission as metaphorical modes, connecting metaphor with specific issues of film language. Finally, the last two chapters contain a more detailed analysis of two recent mainstream films, Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* and Roland Emmerich's *2012*.

Montage and metaphor.

Generally speaking, using metaphor is talking (representing, feeling or thinking) of something in terms of something else. For example, in expressions like "your claims are indefensible" or "his criticisms were right on target", we speak of the an argument in terms of war (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a: 4).Metaphor is not limited to poetic expression but it is widely used in speech and thought. Cognitive metaphor theory considers metaphor as a pervasive and fundamental structure in language and cognition, claiming that "our ordinary conceptual system [. . .] is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a: 3), which means that most of our concepts and discourses are frequently structured and understood in terms of other, usually more simple, conceptualizations.

Metaphor is present in film as a means of understanding and signification: a film can express itself metaphorically, or we can perceive a discourse, sequence, situation or character in the film as metaphorical, understanding them in terms of something else. It is important to note that, when we talk of metaphor in film, we have to consider the whole range of possible meanings arising from the encoding and from the decoding of a metaphorical expression. For example, in the final sequence of Eisenstein's *Strike* (*Stachka*, 1925), a scene of workers being killed is cross cut with sequences of a bull being butchered. This can be seen as a basic visual metaphor, created by means of montage, in which an event is represented in terms of another, i.e. the massacre of the workers is understood in terms of the slaughtering of the bull. We can therefore read the scene as signifying that "the workers are being butchered as bulls".

According to Eisenstein, it is the associative link of "butchering" that merges together the two distinct images and creates an idea, representing the meaning of the sequence with a powerful emotive and ideological effect (Eisenstein, 1949: 57). So, the sense of the scene arises from the metaphorical interaction between the shots, and not by their mere juxtaposition. In other words, metaphorical montage always signifies something more than the literal sum of its parts.

Eisenstein uses this scene in his theoretical work to illustrate his idea of montage: "Montage", he writes, "is an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots" (Ibid.: 49). Eisenstein description of montage can be seen as quite similar to the interactional and cognitive theories of metaphor. Eisenstein and cognitive linguistics alike define montage and metaphor as universal principles of understanding and signification. Both principles are considered to function through linguistic, cognitive and emotional associations between different elements and domains. The two theories also highlight the ideological power of montage and metaphor respectively, and strongly define these processes as cognitive in nature.

So far we have only considered metaphor as an effect of montage. Yet, according to Eisenstein, we can call "montage" any conflict of concomitant elements, that may exist at every level of language and representation, and not only in the editing of the shots. For Eisenstein, montage can therefore take place *within* the frame, in the conflict between the whole shot and its parts, between close shots and long shots, between sound and image, between an event and its duration, and so on (1949: 39-40, 45-63). He also recognizes montage in the technique of the actor that achieves a particular emotional state by imagining and feeling a series of short and defined situations (ibid: 42-44). All these tropes in film language can achieve metaphorical effects, not only montage in a proper sense.

On the other hand, while Eisenstein's realizations of montage, in a wide sense, tend to be metaphorical, not every kind of montage is necessarily metaphorical. Montage will achieve a metaphorical effect only if the elements in the sequence are of different kinds and if it is possible to understand one element in terms of the other. Eisenstein's scene in *Strike* can therefore be considered metaphorical, only since a literal reading of the cross-cut images does not fully make sense: the scene does not mean that a bull is being butchered *in the same place* or *at the same time* in which the workers are killed, but it only acquires its full meaning through the metaphorical interaction between the two sets of images. Indeed, metaphorical montage can be distinguished from a "literal" sequence of images only at the level of meaning.

The edited shots in metaphorical montage are not only juxtaposed, but superimposed at the level of meaning. A classical example would be the Kuleshov effect, in which two consequent shots determine a third unitary conceptualization solely depending on their interaction. The same effect is described by Hitchcock in a video conversation with Fletcher Markel (1964). Hitchcock alternatively shows a shot of his smiling face edited, first, with an image of a family, and, after, with an image of a girl in a bikini. In the first case, we are drawn to see him as a benign, sympathetic character, while in the second case, we see him as a dirty old man. In both cases, a different meaning is given to the same image (Hitchcock's face, or the face of Ivan Mozzhukhin in the case of Kuleshov's experiment) depending on the different images that are associated with it. This can be imagined as a passage of implications from one image to the other: in Hitchcock's example, the sexual attractiveness evoked by the image of the girl interacts with the face of the character, and we are drawn to read a particular meaning in his gaze, that was not there in the beginning. This extra meaning is determined by a metaphor in the sense that it is a result of the conceptualization of one image in terms of some implications arising from another. This definition of metaphor is clearly broader than its classical definition as a mere figure of speech that substitutes a literal term for a non-literal one, and includes the description of *how* the non-literal meaning of the metaphor

is determined.

So, there is always something more resulting from the interaction of two shots than their literal meaning. But we have to say that this extra meaning is not always metaphorical. We consider metaphorical only those interactions from which one element is understood in terms arising from another. So, for example, while the shot-reverse shot trope shares the same structure of the above examples, being constituted by two shots from which arises the idea of seeing, it must be regarded as "literal" rather than metaphorical - that is, as more codified and less dependent on the contingent interaction between the images. Normally, we do not structure the seer in terms of what he sees, as it happens instead in Kuleshov's and Hitchcock's examples, but we merely understand the action and the situation of seeing. So, while in the previous examples the meaning of one image depends on its interaction with the other, the shot-reverse-shot trope simply shifts the attention of the spectators to the seen object without creating any metaphorical interaction.

Also, we have to reject an outright equation between abstractness and metaphoricity. We cannot consider literal on the one hand, only the realistic representations of events, shot in long unedited takes, and on the other hand, metaphorical, only the necessarily mediated representations of abstract events or concepts. Even if it is true that abstract phenomena tend to be represented through metaphor, we can always speak metaphorically of a concrete event, or make literal statements about something abstract.

Metaphor can be achieved through the association of a concept to an image. In *October* (1927), a sequence of a huge gun-base coming down and a sequence of entrenched soldiers are combined in order to convey a statement against war. However, here the metaphor is not in the montage, but "inside" one of the shots. The meaning that Eisenstein assigns to the scene, as a symbolic representation of anti-militarism, is mainly determined by the understanding of the gun-base as standing for the whole military apparatus. Even a "literal" image of the gun-base effectively crushing the soldiers could possibly be interpreted as a metaphor of their being killed by the war as an abstract conceptualization, rather than by the concrete object. Now, it can be objected that, according to traditional definitions of metaphor, this should be classified as a metonymy, a part standing for the whole. In a similar way in cognitive theory metonymy is set apart from metaphor for being referential rather than having a function of conceptualization (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a: 30). However, in my view, metonymy cannot be considered purely referential. Indeed, if we refer to a whole through one of its parts, we are also necessarily orienting our understanding of that whole in a certain direction: choosing a part instead of another will suggest different ideas about the same whole. This is clear if, for example, we speak of human beings as "hands", rather than "hearts": in the first case we are referring to them as workforce, while in the second we are invited

to consider their feelings. So, the textual effect of metonymy, other than being referential, is also metaphorical, since it structures one element (the whole) in terms of implications arising from one of its parts. The fact that metaphorical structuring takes place in metonymic expressions is particularly important for a discussion of metaphor and cinema, since in film it is quite frequent to take a "part" (an object, a character or a situation) to stand for a "whole" concept, or a complex or abstract situation.

Metaphor elements and metaphorical process.

We have seen how metaphor involves two elements and conveys meaning by means of their inter-action. We have now to define more precisely the characteristics of these elements and how the metaphorical process works in creating and conveying meaning.

According to Max Black's interaction theory, metaphor consists in projecting a set of associated implications from a primary subject upon a secondary subject (Black, 1979: 28). The projected implications frame the secondary subject in a way that invites the reader to understand it in terms of the primary subject. For example, in the phrase "the sky is crying", the implication of pouring tears associated with crying is projected onto falling rain in order to construct a metaphor of the sky as a crying person.

In interaction theory, each of the two subjects of a metaphor must not be regarded as a single element, but rather as a system of relationships. What actually interacts in the metaphorical process are implications within a system of relationships predicable of a subject. Black calls these systems implicative complexes (Ibid.). For example, in the final scene from *Strike*, the primary subject is not simply the image of a bull, but a whole set of implications that are linked with the image of the bull. In the metaphorical process, the whole implicative complex of the bull (primary subject) is projected onto the whole implicative complex of the workers (secondary subject). This projection frames our understanding of the secondary subject, that is, we are invited to perceive it in terms of the first. Also, Hitchcock's shot of the girl in a bikini worked as a trigger for a certain set of associations, that were clearly different from those arising from the image of the family. And we saw how these two different implicative complexes created different metaphorical interpretations of the same subject.

The implicative complex. It is of great importance to define the nature and extension of the implicative complex, since it will define what kind of elements we must consider when dealing with metaphor in film. Forceville regards it as the "theoretical totality of properties, features, notions, beliefs, metonymic extensions" that can be predicated of a subject (Forceville, 1996: 8). The implicative complex is therefore an open set of associations, that is ultimately realized only in the mind of the reader or viewer, but that is nevertheless to some extent predetermined by conventions within culture and ideological paradigms. So, the implicative complex of the bull in Eisenstein's sequence is made first of all by all the commonplaces about bulls in general: bulls are big, have horns, they hate red, they are killed in bullfights and so on. Black calls this a "set of associated commonplaces" (Black, 1979: 29).

It is important to note that the implicative complex of a given subject is always greater than

the set of commonplaces associated to it. In fact, the implicative complex includes all potential associations arising from the context of the expression, even the unique associations that a single reader could make.

If a film regularly associates, for example, murder and cherries, so that we have several sequences in which during, or after, a murder, we have a shot of a cherry, the next time we see a cherry in the film we will be drawn to think of murder. Within the context of this hypothetical film, murder would be part of the implicative complex of the cherries. Outside the film, "murder" is obviously not part of the conventional associations of "cherry". The status of associated commonplace may be acquired and lost by a metaphor in a given context according to cultural and textual dynamics.

In addition to context related associations, implicative complexes may include idiosyncratic associations, that are unique to a given reader, and are determined by his personal experiences and memories. These associations, that are an important part of implicative complexes and also have a place in ones understanding and pleasure of a film text, are nevertheless almost impossible to analyze in textual critique. Indeed, scriptwriters, producers, and critics, are forced to rely mostly on non-idiosyncratic associations and conventional interpretative paradigms to construct and deconstruct the meaning of metaphorical texts.

Another important thing to note is that implicative complexes do not correspond to what is objectively true, nor to what is technically predicable of a given subject. Therefore, the definition of an implicative complex is not so much a matter of objective relations, as of perceived relations, culturally and, to some extent, subjectively determined.

Cognitive metaphor theory. Cognitive metaphor theory is largely (and almost tacitly) based on Max Black's interaction theory, since they share the same fundamental conception of the metaphorical process. However cognitive theory is more developed in certain respects (properties of metaphorical domains, metaphorical structuring and extension, definition of basicness and conventionality of metaphor) that are crucial for the analysis of metaphor in film.

As a first step, cognitive metaphor theory distinguishes metaphorical expressions from conceptual metaphors: "it is a prerequisite to any discussion of metaphor that we make a distinction between basic conceptual metaphors, which are cognitive in nature, and particular linguistic expressions of these conceptual metaphors" (Lakoff and Turner, 1989: 50). Conceptual metaphors represent the conceptual relations on which metaphorical expressions are based. In our example, we can distinguish the scene in Eisenstein's film (a visual form of metaphorical expression) from the underlying conceptual metaphor WORKERS are BULLS, which represents the conceptual link between the two elements in the metaphorical expression. As a consequence of this definition,

many different metaphorical expressions may be grounded on the same conceptual metaphor.

Conceptual metaphor in cognitive theory is indicated with the formula A is B, and it is defined as the "mapping of part of the structure of our knowledge of source domain B onto target A" (Goatly, 1997: 59). The source domain corresponds to the primary subject in interaction theory, while the target domain corresponds to the secondary subject.

Cognitive domains are somewhat smaller than Black's implicative complexes, since they correspond to the systems of associated commonplaces predicable of a given subject plus all possible associations which are cognitive in nature, and therefore have a rational basis, or are rooted in universal and basic experiences. Idiosyncratic associations are not part of cognitive domains, since they are usually linked to a certain subject only in an irrational or unsystematic way.

Another difference between the two theories is that, according to cognitive metaphor theory, the metaphorical process takes places between a selection of elements within cognitive domains, and not between the whole implicative complexes, as in Black's interaction theory. Before the mapping from source to target domain takes place, the conceptual metaphor selects a set of elements within each domain, downplaying some of their features, and highlighting others (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980b: 458). For example, the cognitive metaphor LIFE is a JOURNEY can focus on journeys as perilous adventures, or as itineraries with a destination, thereby resulting in the mapping of quite different meaning over the domain of life. The same can happen in the target domain, varying what aspects of life are mapped through the metaphor.

Mapping. Mapping works by structuring elements in the target through elements in the source domain, resulting in a mediated understanding of one in terms of the other. According to cognitive metaphor theory, mapping usually takes place from a more defined source to a less defined target domain. Indeed, metaphor frequently uses very familiar ideas and objects to structure our understanding of little known or undefinable phenomena. Thus love, life and death are common target domains of both conventional and non-conventional metaphors, while typical source domains include the body and its parts, its movements and orientation, physical sensations.

It has been noted that "mapping" is not the best term to indicate the metaphorical process, since it suggests that metaphor is a device that represents already existing relations (the way a map abstractly represents concrete geographical features), rather than creating new ones. In a similar way, interaction and cognitive theory of metaphor reject the idea that metaphorical expressions are determined by an essential similarity of their elements. If that was the case, the metaphor in *Strike* could be understood only because of some essential similarity between bulls and workers that the film would merely play out. On the contrary, metaphor *creates similarity*. In our example, it is

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the conception of the killing of the workers as a merciless slaughter that determines the similarity between them and the butchered bull, not vice versa. It is only through the conceptual link created by the metaphor that this analogy may exist. Cognitive metaphor theory also claims that metaphor may induce similarities that go beyond existing analogies, and that the main function of metaphor is precisely to conceptualize something that was previously outside our experiences (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 150).

Now, we can define conceptual metaphor as the result of an interaction between some elements within two systems of associations in language and cognition. Elements from the more defined domain usually structure the less defined domain, highlighting some properties and downplaying others.

Metaphor identification procedure.

In order to use metaphor theory in film studies, the first step, after giving a definition of metaphor is to determine a procedure for the individuation of metaphorical expressions and of underlying conceptual metaphors. This will grant comparable data for the analysis of metaphors in film.

A procedure for the identification of metaphorical expressions within texts is not provided by cognitive metaphor theory, but has been recently developed within the field of discourse analysis. In fact, only in the last two decades cognitive metaphor theory has begun empirical linguistic research on conceptual metaphors. In the first publications following Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), conceptual metaphors were presented as basic and universal schemas in the organization of language and cognition without proper grounding in linguistic and cultural data, and without defining any objective method to identify and analyze them.

According to Elena Semino, "the main proponents of CMT [cognitive metaphor theory] mostly relied on artificially constructed examples to support their claims, and did not develop an explicit methodology for the extrapolation of conceptual metaphors from linguistic data" (Semino 2008: 10). Reacting to this criticism, Andrew Goatly and his group at Lingnan University developed the Metalude database of metaphorical expressions and underlying conventional conceptual metaphors. A similar database, focusing more on cognitive relations, has been realized in Berkeley. In this way, cognitive claims on the pervasiveness of metaphor in general, and of particular metaphor schemata, can be supported, and studies in metaphor may have a standard lexicographical reference.

First of all, we have to recognize that the application of cognitive metaphor theory to textual analysis also creates a different range of problems. Knowing that a given conceptual metaphor is more or less fundamental and diffused often does not say much about the textual significance of a metaphorical expression which is based upon it. In a similar way, it does not clarify the significance of its connections with a given cultural context. For instance, cognitive metaphor theory can claim that many sequences and the overall discourse of *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992) are grounded in the conceptual metaphor SEX is VIOLENCE. But this kind of research alone cannot explain the textual effectiveness of these sequences and discourses compared to other discourses, nor attempt in any way an analysis of the film reception, and, even less, a cultural critique of the discourses expressed through this kind of cognitive configuration. It will therefore be necessary to consider metaphor as a process, in order to address the textual dynamics of interaction between signs.

In order to employ metaphor theory in textual analysis, the Pragglejaz group (2007) developed a metaphor identification procedure (MIP) to identify metaphors in literary texts, integrated with linguistic corpora, that can be adapted for the identification of metaphor in film.

The first step of the Pragglejaz metaphor identification procedure is to read the entire text-discourse, in order to be able to refer the analysis of each lexical unit to the general comprehension of the whole text (Semino, 2008: 11). This point can of course be directly translated into film analysis.

Less immediate to define within film studies is the second MIP step, which is to determine the lexical units in the text-discourse (Ibid.). While in written texts these correspond to single words, or strings of words, in film, lexical units do not have an exact equivalent.

Lexical units in film might be seen to correspond to shots or sequences, as in the case of Eisenstein's montage. But there will be cases in which different sections of the same take should be considered different units for the sake of text-discourse analysis. Then, lexical units might be seen to correspond to actions, objects or characters within the same shot, so that the metaphorical interaction may be present within the compositional space of the frame, as Eisenstein described. Eventually, elements of metaphor in film text-discourse can only be defined at the conceptual level. For example, in analysing the metaphorical significance of Iron Man's armour from the homonymous film series (Favreau, 2008, 2010), we will relate every notable characteristic of the armour, and every way in which it is involved in the discourse of the film, to the ARMOUR conceptual domain. It is the whole of the discursive occurrences of Iron Man's armour in the film to constitute the minimal unit for metaphor analysis.

Any element of the film can be used to create metaphors: for example, the use of dark, contrasted illumination in a close up of an actor, conventionally suggest evilness. This can be considered as a conventional metaphorical expression based on the conceptual metaphor DARKNESS is EVIL, that is realized in film by means of the interaction between the face of the actor and the use of light. It is arguable that evilness can also be described as part of the connotative meaning of "darkness". Yet it is undeniable that this particular meaning arises from the interaction of some associations among the two implicative systems of "light" and "face". Indeed, it seems impossible to imagine any connotative meaning that does not involve the association of the corresponding literal meaning to some other element of discourse or context.

In the end, we must consider as elements of film metaphor, corresponding to the MIP lexical units only for the sake of metaphor identification, not just shots and elements of the frame, but, in some cases, also the use of light, sound, camera movements and angles. This ensemble of diverse elements can be considered a first, perfectible, definition of cognitive domain specific to film language.

The next step in the MIP procedure is to establish the contextual meaning of the lexical units. If the unit has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts, and if its contextual meaning

can be understood in comparison with its basic one, then the lexical unit is marked as metaphorical. So, dark and contrasted illumination has a more basic meaning in representing a night scene, but can have a metaphorical meaning in representing the personality of a character.

More approximately, metaphor can be frequently identified by one of its elements being somewhat outside its original context, but still employed in signification as a projected set of relations, which interacts with another element of the discourse. Indeed, the more out-of-context the elements of a particular metaphorical expression are, the easier would be to identify the expression as metaphorical. On the other hand, metaphorical expressions based on conventional system of relations are less easy to spot in this way.

A clear example of overt metaphorical expression in film can be taken from Eisenstein's *October* (Eisenstein, 1930): towards the middle of the film there is a sequence in which shots representing Kerensky are cross cut with images of an iron automaton in the form of a peacock. Peacocks and robots are radically different from politicians, as far as we consider the conventional linguistic, cognitive and ideological associations. But still, elements within one domain are translated to the other: namely, the idea of vanity associated with the peacock and the absence of free will of an automaton, are used to signify Kerensky's authoritarian velleities and his subjection to the ancient regime.

It is important to note that a film scene can be structured by more than one conceptual metaphor. In *October*, within a single visual metaphorical expression we have at least two underlying conceptual metaphorical structures: Kerensky is framed by features of an animal and of a mechanical device, in respect to his personal and political stance. Indeed, very few metaphorical expressions, especially in film, are so simple that they can be reduced to a single conceptual metaphor. They are, instead, a combination of conceptual metaphors, usually structured on multiple levels. So, analysis of film metaphors requires us not just to identify metaphorical expressions and point out their conceptual grounding, but frequently it is a matter of addressing the effects of the combination of different conceptual metaphors. For instance, using again the example of Iron Man's armour, we can consider at least three levels of literal and metaphorical meaning. The armour can be seen as a literal representation of an element of the film narrative: actually an armoured suit that the character builds and uses, that has certain features and functions in the diegesis which are signified and understood directly – it can protect from bullets, fly, project waves of kinetic energy, and so on. At the same time, it can be seen as a metaphor for the character's life and social identity within the context of the film. Among the many expressions based on this metaphorical structure, we can choose how the moral degeneration of Tony Stark is linked to the slow depletion of the armour's battery which is poisoning his body. But, if we do not consider

just the diegesis of the film, but also its social and cultural context, we might connect Iron Man's armour to various discourses on the US armed forces.

In conclusion, we cannot evaluate in textual critique, or even describe, a metaphor as a matter of language alone, but we must consider its semantic level. Yet this meaning cannot be thoroughly explained without resorting to the level of pragmatics, of existing cultural and ideological discourses and institutions.

Classification of metaphors.

A classification of metaphors in film can be based upon different criteria: source or target domains, cinematographic tropes and elements of film language through which the metaphorical effect is created, characteristics of conceptual metaphors, or modes of metaphorical process. Discussing these different criteria for classification ultimately has the purpose of defining various characteristics of metaphors that have to be taken into consideration in textual analysis.

Cognitive domains. A straightforward classification of metaphors in film, as in textual analysis in general, can be made on the basis of the cognitive domains involved in metaphorical expressions.

Grouping all metaphorical expressions that use a particular source domain on the one hand, or on the other, all the metaphorical representations of the same target, may be useful in order to highlight discursive and stylistic patterns within a text or groups of texts, or to point out the modes of representation of a particular discourse. But to take this approach to deal with the whole cinematographic corpus of texts, that is, to ground the study of metaphor only in a classification of domains, falls short of structuring and deductive power.

Cognitive metaphor theory produced similar catalogues of metaphor themes based on a classification of domains and relations between domains, but with a lexicographical intent, not a critical one. Goatly, for example, commented on many of the textual and cultural representations of the basic conceptual metaphor IMPORTANT is BIG (Goatly, 2007: 35-41), but his analysis of the pragmatic and textual level of this metaphor lacks of development. Generally speaking, in cognitive linguistics, the analysis of texts, cultural practices and social events is made to obtain cases to support claims on the pervasiveness and universality of a given conceptual metaphor. Schemas, not texts, are the main objects of study. As far as textual analysis is concerned, cognitive metaphor theory is more interesting for its definition of the metaphorical process, than for the description of basic metaphor schemata.

We can also find works on metaphor and film that apply the same kind of schematic classifications, even if most of them are not overtly referring to any precise framework of metaphor theories (Frezza, 2006). While these classifications are not particularly poignant, they may nevertheless have the merit to make evident the wide and frequent use of metaphor in film language. Moreover, they can be useful in exemplifying and teaching cognitive metaphor theory and, most of all, in building a corpus of universally recognized conventional metaphor themes to be used as a reference in textual analysis. Indeed, in order to evaluate the meaning of a metaphor it is necessary to consider its rapport with more or less conventional metaphor themes.

Means of signification. Another possible classification of metaphor in film can be focused on the means of signification: as we saw, metaphor can be constructed in film by means of montage, visual analogy or metonymy. On this basis, we can distinguish two categories of metaphors. One that operates through associative links between shots or elements of the frame, which includes montage and analogy, and another, which includes metonymy, that operates by associating a single film element with an external domain.

In the first category of metaphors, which we may call "montage metaphors", the different shots correspond to the two subjects of the metaphorical process, and the metaphorical meaning arising from their interaction will depend from the reading of the complete sequence. In this case, the metaphorical expression in film and the conceptual metaphor structuring it are isomorphic.

An example of this type of metaphor could be a shot of a face reflected in a broken mirror. The interaction of these two elements within the same shot may metaphorically convey the meaning of a troubled personality. The conceptual metaphors underlying this metaphorical expression could be SELF is IMAGE (in the mirror) and SICK is BROKEN, which is grounded in the root schema HUMAN BEINGS are MACHINES, that is, inanimate objects. Note that the shot is not *necessarily* metaphorical: only the context of the shot eventually determines if it should be interpreted simply as a face reflected in a broken mirror, or as a statement on the character's psychology. In this category, we have conventional metaphors, such as the above example of the mirror, as well as non-conventional metaphors, such as that of Kerensky and the peacock. In any case, the linguistic basis for metaphorical interpretation will be already present in the text, and, if the connected domains are different enough, the metaphor will be immediately recognizable.

On the other hand, a second category of metaphors can be characterized by a source element in the film text to which is associated a target conceptual domain that is not overtly stated by the text. This kind of metaphor is probably the most frequent, and it is regularly employed in reading and textual analysis. We have this kind of metaphor every time we understand a character, a situation, an object or any other element of a film in terms of non-diegetic conceptualizations, or as standing for something that belongs to a different, or simply wider, conceptual domain. For example, if we read the Na'vi in *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) in terms of native Americans, or as citizens of an underdeveloped country, we are establishing a metaphorical frame of understanding, connecting a set of elements of the film (the NA'VI system of implications) to external systems of concepts (AMERICAN NATIVES and, possibly, THIRD WORLD). In studying these kinds of metaphors we have to consider their degree of idiosyncrasy and their distance or proximity to the text and its cultural context. First of all, since we can potentially associate any concept to any element of a film, we have to exclude idiosyncratic associations, that are not meaningful

for cultural and textual interpretation. Indeed, in order to be meaningful, a metaphor must be grounded within recognized cultural discourses, or oppose them. Secondly, since specific readings create new metaphors, or apply sets of existing metaphors, using the text as a source, we can distinguish between readings that are more or less "close" to the text. On one side, we have what we might call textual metaphors, metaphors that are active within the text's own cultural context, and on the other side interpretative metaphors, that link the text to largely independent conceptualizations in order to explain or extend its meaning.

Interpretative metaphors establish cognitive relations that create conceptual similarities, and possible meanings, beyond the original body of the text. Indeed, critical analysis frequently extends the range of possible meanings of a text by means of projection of systems of conceptual relations, foregrounding some of the elements of the text and necessarily downplaying others. This is simultaneously a recognition of the artistic nature of the critical enterprise as Roland Barthes suggested (1989), and an acceptance of the limits of objectivity in film critique.

Cognitive metaphor and ideology.

Basicness. According to cognitive metaphor theory, conceptual metaphors can be more or less basic. Less basic metaphors are grounded in more basic schemata (Kövecses, 2002). For example, the metaphor schema HUMAN BEINGS are PLANTS is more basic than the related schema WOMEN are ROSES, and so do all the metaphorical expressions grounded in it. Ultimately, all knowledge can be seen as rooted in a few very basic and universal metaphorical schemata, which are the main interest of cognitive linguistics.

Among these extremely basic schemas, which constitute the fundamental metaphor structures of language and cognition, there are ontological and spatialization metaphors. According to the ontological schema, which can be regarded as the most fundamental schema in cognition, concepts are metaphorically assimilated to objects. For example, we can say that "globalization is killing the environment". In this sense, the concept of globalisation can be considered as an ontological metaphor, a conceptualization functionally limiting an enormous number of disparate phenomena into a single linguistic and conceptual object that can be readily employed in thinking and communication. In film, for example, a complex phenomenon may be represented as a character, determining what we will call personification. Spatialization metaphors frame conceptual relations as spatial relations, so that we may be *far* from comprehending a theory, or *very close* to a political position, therefore understanding comprehension in terms of closeness.

Metaphorical basicness on its own can be used to classify groups of metaphors and to relate them to larger narrative or conceptual structures. Quite obviously, an evaluation of basicness may help to distinguish more specific from more general features of film metaphors, informing a classification based on cognitive domains. Other than that, we can connect metaphorical basicness to the analysis of narrative structures. Indeed, the implicative system of a metaphor includes narrative relations. For example, the conceptual metaphor LIFE is a JOURNEY has many relevant implications at the narrative level. Furthermore, a metaphor that is particularly basic in the organization of a text will most likely condition its narrative, up to the point that narrative may be used to create or reinforce a particular metaphor. For instance, if a disaster movie opts to present its catastrophe in terms of an apocalypse or a deluge, that is through a metaphorical reference to religious themes, also part of the narrative will be determined according to that metaphor and its implications.

Metaphorical basicness is also important for the evaluation of metaphor conventionality. Non-conventional metaphors will be non-conventional only insofar they differ in some aspects from an established norm, that is partly constituted by cultural practices, partly by basic cognitive conceptual structures. For example, we can consider the topic self-sacrifice of the hero in mainstream

Hollywood film as a generic level schema that gives birth to many different metaphorical endings. Self-sacrifice can be seen as a metaphorical schema as far as it has metaphorical implications in our culture, pertaining, for example, to the figure of Christ. Indeed, metaphorical basicness can further be linked to ideological value and conventionality. More basic metaphors tend to be more conventional and ideologically stronger, in the sense that they are not perceived as metaphors, but as natural conceptualizations. Natural, of course, in the sense of ideologically determined.

Yet, it is important to note that the ideological value of a metaphorical expression is not necessarily decided at the most fundamental level of its metaphorical structures. It arises instead from the interaction between more and less fundamental layers within a single metaphor. For instance, the fact that Von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) uses several "WOMAN is a WITCH" metaphors to represent a situation of bereavement and couple dynamics bordering madness, does not automatically make the film a piece of medieval obscurantism. What is true at the diegetic level (the female character does identify with and behave like a witch) it is not true at the level of the film discourse, which indeed uses the metaphorical reference to witchcraft only in order express the feelings of mourning and guilt.

Schemata with negative connotations can in fact be used to convey any kind of ideological statements, more or less neutral, conventional, radical or progressive. The ideological significance of the metaphor has to be decided confronting the range of possible meanings activated by the text with the more or less fundamental structures through which the meaning is conveyed, including metaphorical and literal expressions. In a similar way, it is arguable that the fundamental LOOKING metaphor, with all its implications, while being the most fundamental structure through which cinema is conceived today, is not the only one possible. Such metaphor, as we see in the works of many radical film makers, is constantly questioned, extended and analyzed.

In the end, the effect of basic, underlying metaphorical structures has to be taken into account very carefully in order to describe properly a metaphorical expression at a level of language, discourse, and ideology.

Conventional metaphors. Conventionality of metaphor is linked to ideological conformism. In discussing this rapport between conventionality and ideology we will initially adopt a broad definition of ideology as an internalized system of relations (Althusser 1970), and as a paradigm in Thomas Kuhn's sense (Kuhn, 1962), that is a system of conceptual frameworks, theories and terminology that structure the interpretation of a set of phenomena.

Conventional metaphors are more widely and frequently used than non-conventional ones. The widespread employment of conventional metaphors, along with their generally higher basicness, give

as a result that many conventional metaphorical expressions are perceived as literal. Therefore, detecting a conventional metaphor will usually be more difficult than pointing out non-conventional ones, especially in film, which lacks a codification as definite as that of verbal language. Since ideological statements are stronger when they are not identified as such, the fact that we do not perceive conventional metaphors as metaphors at all, is a first prompt to connect conventionality and ideological effect.

Incidentally, we may note that literal expressions and conventional metaphors have the same ideological power. Indeed, cognitive metaphor theory claims that "the scale of metaphorical effect runs in the opposite direction from the scale of ideological effect, precisely because with literal language and conventional metaphor the ideology is latent, and therefore all the more powerful" (Goatly, 2007: 29). While this sentence seems to set metaphorical effect against ideological effect, this opposition is limited to non-conventional metaphor.

Yet, conventionality is not just a matter of use: the very structure of language, thought and culture is based on conventional metaphor. According to cognitive metaphor theory, conventional metaphors "structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture, which is reflected in our everyday language" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 139). Every new conceptualization is therefore understood on the basis of existing structures. Conventional metaphor schemata function as universal pre-understandings, necessarily shaping every linguistic and cultural phenomenon. By saying this, cognitive metaphor theory all the more suggests a connection of conventional metaphors and ideological paradigms, which can indeed be seen as similar systems of pre-understandings, through which events are framed and knowledge is organized (Eagleton, 1999: 3-4).

Moreover, cognitive linguistics take conventional metaphor structures as given and *natural*: "concepts that occur in metaphorical definitions are those that correspond to natural kinds of experiences", among which "love, time, ideas, understanding, arguments, labor, happiness, health, control, status, morality" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 118). It would be naive, at least, to consider such kinds of experiences as natural in the sense that their definition and understanding is essential, and not subject to historical and cultural influence. Conventional metaphors may have a consistent meaning only within a given culture, and frequently have specific meanings only within given subcultures.

As a matter of fact, cognitive metaphor theory does consider the relation between culture and metaphor, but, Lakoff and Johnson spoke only of "coherence" between fundamental concepts, without explaining how the the connection between fundamental social values and metaphor works: "the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in a culture" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 22). We have to note that,

first of all, there are no essentially fundamental cultural values. Each value can be more or less fundamental only within a determined ideological structure, and its status is determined not just by essential qualities, but by social and cultural dynamics. To quote Baudry, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (Baudry, 1970: 56).

As we said, metaphors have consistent meaning only within a given culture, but culture itself is not a single, compact and consistent set of values. Within it, there are many different, sometimes conflicting, ideological paradigms, many systems of associated and intertwined discourses. We can see ideological paradigms within a culture as being organized in a sort of gravitational system: more influential concepts, as planets or stars with more mass, have more influence in the structure of the system. Among the most important concepts of a paradigm there are the very concepts through which the paradigm itself is constructed: in our metaphor of gravitational systems, the concept of gravity itself.

Ideology and metaphor alike, structure understandings on relations of "gravity", that is according to more basic, more conventional, elements within paradigms. For metaphor, these elements are those stronger and more fundamental in the implicative system, while in the case of ideology, they are the values that inform the most fundamental social and personal relations. Eventually, this "gravity" corresponds to power. By means of metaphor and ideology, meaning and signification may create, sustain or destroy relations of power.

Now, the meaning of a metaphor, analyzed within its proper cultural and ideological context, may have a greater or lesser degree of conventionality. Furthermore, we can distinguish two levels of metaphor conventionality: conceptual conventionality, that defines the fact that the *range of possible meanings* of a metaphor can be more or less based on existing commonplaces, and ideological conventionality, or conformism, that defines the fact that a metaphor can more or less conform to the dominant ideological structures of the culture in which it exist.

By "range of possible meanings", we intend the sum of all meanings that a metaphor can have according to all its possible interpretations. Of course, the range of possible meanings is a theoretical abstraction, while the actual range of meanings of a metaphor is ultimately determined by the different readings that are relevant within the cultural context, and it is much more restricted. Therefore, the meaning of a metaphor is ultimately decided at the level of pragmatics, by textual practices, communication and reception. By this, what is also suggested is that metaphor is influenced by ideology not only as a cognitive linguistic process, but also as a social phenomenon.

So, what is the link between conventional metaphor and ideology? First of all, conventional metaphors are coherent with hegemonic ideological discourses. Metaphor may use ideology as a means of acquiring a recognisable conventional meaning. This happens on account of the fact

that the relations implied within conventional metaphor structures may include many ideologically relevant discourses. But, while in a classical view of metaphor as a matter of language alone, metaphorical expressions were seen as directly determined by ideological concepts, cognitive metaphor theory, instead, affirms that ideology and metaphor function as intertwined systems of relations (Goatly, 2007: 26). Significantly, the structure of the metaphor will be more basic, more conventional and more powerful according to the basicness and power of the ideological structures implicated in the metaphorical process. Furthermore, this suggests a link between immediateness of signification and ideological effect of a metaphor.

So far, we have considered every metaphor to be ideologically relevant. However, this really depends on the broadness of the definition of ideology that we are using. If we consider ideology as any set of rigid pre-understandings that condition language and social practice, it will always be implied in metaphor use. Yet, when we are dealing with issues of properly social or political concern, it would be more practical to reduce our definition of ideology to specifically address the political effect of metaphor use. For this purpose, ideology can be considered as "any set of ideas by which men posit, explain or justify *ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action*, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order" (Seliger, 1976: 7, my emphasis). According to this definition, only some metaphors will be ideologically relevant.

Metaphor is frequently based on conventional relations that are expressions of ideologically dominant discourses, but it is also true that ideology regularly expresses itself by means of metaphor, as it has been pointed out by Chilton (1996) and Semino (2008), in a way which is also comparable to the most recent analysis of political discourse (Hodges, Nilep and others, 2007).

Cognitive theory also claims that very few cognitive phenomena are understood on their own terms, while the vast majority of phenomena is indirectly structured through basic and conventional metaphor schemata, to which new and complex phenomena are reduced. Ideological power is connected with this *structural function* of metaphor, that is, with its ability to create understanding of unknown phenomena by reconnecting them to known patterns of knowledge.

Internalized paradigms. Ideology and metaphor function as *internalized* systems of relations, or paradigms.

Conventional metaphor and ideology are internalized in three senses: they are used unconsciously, they are early apprehended, and they are used as fundamental structures for the organization of experiences.

Ideology and conventional metaphor are internalized, since they are used before being subjected

to control and they are a product of cognitive and psychic unconscious. As we saw, conventional metaphor is often used unconsciously, but, each time, we have to define the level of such unconsciousness. It is possible that only some implications of a metaphor are perceived, or that only the linguistic or the least basic levels are understood as metaphorical. In that case, discourses implied at the most basic levels of the metaphor will not be perceived, or will be perceived as literal. The study of a metaphor is therefore made by a complete analysis of the possible implications of an association of images and concepts.

Similarly, ideology structures conceptual and social relations, at the same time trying to deny its nature of partial discourse and pretending to be objectively true. Unmasking ideological "objectiveness" can be made by "opening up" the metaphor, that is, presenting other meanings that challenge the conventional interpretation, which is the case of reading against the grain. Or, it can be made by carefully extending the analysis to the level of the social context, that is, by presenting valuable reasons to challenge the objectivity of the ideological discourse on an empirical basis, which is demystification.

Both conventional metaphor and ideology are internalized also in the sense that they are apprehended at a young age, and that they influence action and thought deeply and from early on. As basic structures, conventional metaphors and ideological paradigms are internalized by the children and then reproduced in the organization of most of an individual's experiences. This happens on account of the basicness and conventionality of specific metaphors, as well as of the structural function of the metaphoric process in the organization of knowledge in general. So, some metaphors will be more internalized, that is, more basic and influential in the organization of experience in general, and of specific subjects.

At a social level, phenomena are similarly structured by ideological paradigms, that are basic and conventional systems of relations introjected first of all in the sphere of the individual. Thus, for example, according to Marcuse (1972) authority is internalized by the child, to whom it is more acceptable, and then reproduced in the individual's relationships with every social institution. In a similar way many ideological conceptions, such as a clear-cut distinction between good and bad, can be seen as rooted in the early experiences of the individual.

Metaphors are fundamental and pervasive devices in language, thought and action alike. Therefore, the idea of separating film metaphors from real life metaphors is misleading, since both are conceptual in nature. Indeed, metaphors already regulate our understanding of reality and, as in the words of Slavoj Zizek, "if you take away from our reality the symbolic fictions that regulate it, you will lose reality itself" (*The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, 2006).

Saying that conventional metaphor and ideology structure our experiences means to accept that

they are also instruments of knowledge. As such, they primarily act when we experience something that is outside our conventional conceptual universe. Everything that shatters the limits of our conceptual reality must be fictionalised and brought back to known structures and domains. In this respect, conventional metaphor and ideology are similar to Marc Augè's symbolic universes, as "they constitute a means of recognition, rather than knowledge, for those who have inherited them: closed universes where everything is a sign; collections of codes to which only some hold the key but whose existence everyone accepts; totalities which are partially fictional but effective [...]" (Augé, 1995: 33). Symbolic universes are places where "all the inhabitants have to do is recognize themselves in it when the occasion arises" (ibid: 44). This is comparable with the notion of interpellation (Baudry, 1970: 162-163), that has already been adapted to describe the functioning of ideology in film.

As internalized systems of relations, both ideology and metaphor influence transversely language, cognition and social practice. This is why metaphor can be taken as a means of investigating the mutual relations between ideology, language and society.

Ideological stance. While conventional metaphors are usually consistent with dominant ideological discourses, non-conventional metaphors, and novel extensions of conventional ones, are a way of modifying and challenging existing ideological structures.

New, or non-conventional, metaphors are, according to Lakoff and Johnson, "outside our conventional conceptual system" and they are more "imaginative and creative" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 139). This does not mean that we can simply divide between popular, everyday conventional metaphors on the one hand, and literary or "artistic", non-conventional metaphors on the other. Nor can we deduce that conventional metaphors simply correspond to basic, universal schemata. New metaphorical expressions, more or less conventional, are continuously and equally created in everyday speech acts as in artistic practice, and they can have different levels of conventionality regardless of their origin.

Indeed, as our experience suggests, metaphors *become* conventional. To consider how a metaphor becomes conventional in its cultural context will highlight the importance of ideology in the study of metaphor in general, while to describe how non-conventional metaphor is created can help clarifying the ideological implications of metaphor use at a textual level.

A metaphor, in order to be conventional, has to be widely diffused, frequently used, and successful against other competing metaphors of a similar kind. As a consequence, we can say that media and ideological paradigms are what ultimately determines the degree of conventionality of a metaphor, its very existence in its cultural context. In fact, apart from the basic institutions

of language (grammar, dictionary, schools and the like), only organized media, and especially the visual media, have sufficient power to establish the meaning of a novel conceptual metaphor among the necessary number of people to create a convention. Media can even be capable of imposing metaphors regardless of their validity, aesthetic and cognitive significance, or of a genuine audience appreciation.

Non-conventional metaphors are in fact always related to conventional schemas. Every new metaphor must be considered in its relations with pre-existing metaphors on the same subjects, and with more basic metaphor schemata. Cognitive metaphor theory distinguishes three ways in which a new metaphorical expression can be created: by "automatic versification" of existing conceptual metaphors, by "combination" or "extension" of existing conceptual metaphors, or by attempting to create a new metaphorical structure that necessarily destabilizes existing metaphors (Lakoff and Turner, 1989: 51-52).

Automatic versification is the creation of a metaphorical expression which has the exact meaning of an existing conventional metaphor, but that is expressed through novel signifiers. Examples of automatic versification in film may regard single metaphors or systems of metaphors.

Automatic versification is especially important for the study of ideology and metaphor, since it implies the existence of two levels of metaphorical conventionality: conventionality at the level of metaphorical expressions and conventionality at the conceptual level. The first regards the choice of domains, or elements within the domains, which are interrelated in the metaphorical process, while the second pertains to the conceptual relations that are established between the chosen domains. The two levels of the metaphorical process are always connected, but not necessarily corresponding. For instance, non-conventional metaphorical expressions frequently have conventional meaning. The combined analysis of metaphor conventionality at these two levels is of extreme importance in the discussion of its ideological implications.

We can assign a generally negative ideological value to automatic versification, since it tends to covertly confirm existing values. We will see how *District 9*'s signification of social diversity through an ALIEN metaphor, while being clearly non-conventional on a linguistic level, is nonetheless cognitively conventional, and ideologically conservative if we consider the whole metaphorical structure of the film.

Cognitive linguistics claim that "modes of thought that are not themselves conventional cannot be expressed in conventional language" (Lakoff and Turner, 1989: p50). This claim can support the idea that no radical film can be done without radical film language, in the sense that non-conventional "language" - that is, the employment of non-conventional metaphorical structures - may seem a first, necessary step, in order to challenge hegemonic ideological assumptions. Yet, we

will have to distinguish between the more superficial non-conventionality which is achieved through metaphorical extension and the more radical non-conventionality required for the creation of novel metaphors.

Metaphoric extension is to use different elements within the implicative complex of an already existing metaphor in order to signify something that is different, yet it is still connected with the original one. We can take as an example a short film by Pixar animation studios, *Partly cloudy* (Sohn, 2009) that was released together with the film *Up* (Docter and Peterson, 2009). This short animation extends the traditional "birth in term of storks" metaphorical framework in at least two ways. First, by adding a novel element to the conventional domain - clouds that mold the babies from vapor, and second, by activating a normally downplayed implication of the traditional domain - bad, spiky, biting, head-butting animals are given to the unfortunate stork to carry. This, on its own, is funny.

Then, we can further analyze the basic metaphor and its extensions. For example, we may note that the second extension, the dangerous animals, can be based on another, more fundamental metaphor, highly conventional in animation - "human beings are animals". In this sense, the split between good (football playing) children and bad animals, can work as a metaphor of an outright distinction between good and bad children. We can therefore propose an interpretation of the narrative as a reassurance that even the birth of a bad child is well accepted. By the way, we can note the ideological relevance of the football equipment as a sign of goodness. Eventually, the creation of a novel metaphor implies an original expressive and conceptual configuration. As a direct consequence, a novel metaphor must oppose some previous conventional conceptualization, otherwise it must be considered only as an extension. So, while extension often takes place at the level of metaphorical expressions, the creation of a novel metaphor must first of all be considered at the conceptual level. For example, it is not sufficient to connect two previously unrelated or opposed domains in order to create a new metaphorical structure, it is the interaction between the domains that has to be non-conventional.

Automatic versification, extension and the creation of novel metaphors can be linked to the three different stances of a reader in relation to an ideological discourse, according to the model proposed by Stuart Hall (1979). In brief, we can say that automatic versification corresponds to the acceptance of the implicated ideological discourses, therefore to a dominant stance. Extension may modify a certain metaphor in order to confirm it or to challenge its original meaning, and it may accept some and question other aspects of the underlying conventional discourse, therefore having a negotiated meaning. And finally, novel metaphor creation is necessarily oppositional.

Basically, ideology is connected to the cognitive level, so that the same conceptual configurations

will convey the same ideological discourse. Yet, non-conventionality at a linguistic level may challenge conventional conceptualization, and, ultimately, every level must be assessed at the level of the social and cultural context.

Openness. Metaphor conventionality is partly determined at the moment of encoding, and definitively at the moment of its decoding. Thus, when we consider the meaning of a metaphorical expression, its possible readings within different cultural contexts or theoretical paradigms, we are supposing that the range of meanings of this expression is not fixed and predetermined, but varies according to reception, time and place. Brought to the extreme consequences, this means that by the very act of reading a metaphor, we are necessarily modifying it to a certain extent. Another consequence of this is that every metaphor will have some, possibly minimal and negligible, idiosyncratic elements.

We can call the potentiality of a metaphor to be extended, and therefore to have a wide range of possible meanings, metaphorical "openness". More basic and more conventional metaphors tend to be less open. Conversely, idiosyncratic metaphors, or random sequences of words or images, can be ideally seen as the maximum example of openness, because they do not have a conventional, objective, reading, and their possible meanings are totally dependent on the readers' associations.

Nevertheless, ideological significance is not directly connected with openness, so that more open metaphors are necessarily less ideologically active. Even if their encoding is less conventional and ideologically determined, they are at the same time also more open for a conventional, hegemonic decoding. Indeed, incomprehensible events tend to be reduced to already known, basic and conventional conceptualizations.

Fairy tales are a perfect example of metaphorical openness, since the very same tale in the same form can be told many times and may assume many meanings every time, for different people. Films sometimes act like fairy tales in this sense, and indeed metaphor openness may account for the longevity of some films. But films can as easily be replaced by conceptually similar productions, based on automatic versification or extension.

Openness is connected with immediateness of signification. The less a metaphor is open, the easier it is to comprehend. Both in metaphorical and literal expressions ideological conformism is functional to the immediateness of communication. In fact, conventional relations between words, concepts, discourses and situations structure the conceptual content in a way that is easier and quicker to understand.

As a consequence, we can see a connection between metaphorical conventionality, openness and ideological conformism in the distinction between popular and radical cinema. The language of pop-

ular films must be smooth and conceptually unchallenging, that is, mostly based on conventional, non-open, metaphors and discourses. Radical cinema, on the other hand, employs metaphors that present themselves clearly as metaphors, it foregrounds the openness of these metaphors and prompts the reader to go beyond the limits of the structure that they define.

Metaphor modes.

Metaphorical structuring. Structuring is the main effect of metaphor. When we say that we understand a concept in terms of another by the use of a metaphor, we are structuring the target domain according to certain elements and relations chosen in the metaphorical process. This will inevitably limit and orient the understanding of the concepts in a certain direction.

Structuring is influenced by the systematicity of metaphor, which is that aspect of the metaphorical process by which only certain slots within the source and target domains are selected and interrelated. Therefore in the metaphorical process some objects, features, or relations are selected and interact, while other elements or possible connections are left out and downplayed. In this way, metaphor may suggest or induce a certain partiality of the discourse at an ideological level. For example, in the "Kerensky is a Peacock" metaphor, not every implication of the PEACOCK domain was mapped onto Kerensky. We just selected vanity, downplaying other elements of the implicative complex, among which some could not make sense ("peacocks lay eggs"), and others could make a completely different meaning ("peacocks are beautiful"). The almost automatic, unconscious, choice of "vanity" is partly determined by the strength of the association of that concept to the PEACOCK domain, partly by the context.

Since the strength of implicated associations of conventional metaphors is determined by cultural conventions, ideology has a role in conventional metaphor structuring. The structuring effect of conventional metaphor is in fact connected to the structuring effect of cultural discourses and practices. In other words, conventional metaphors are based on the same structures that inform ideology and social practice, and more conventional metaphors will generally correspond to more powerful and more basic ideological assumptions. Again, this correspondence is dialectical, in the sense that, for example, metaphors of femininity reflect ideological discourses on femininity, and conversely, the hegemonic conceptualization of femininity is frequently expressed by means of metaphor.

Of course, the relationship between metaphor and culture is not direct in the sense that conventional metaphor structures reality as it is. The ideological potentialities of metaphor are grounded in highlighting and downplaying, that is, in the possibility to select certain images, discourses and relations within the metaphorical process, and to conceal others. We have an example of this in the documentary *Food Inc.* (Kenner, 2008): the conventional images that advertise farm products are closer to the ideological construction of farming as an Arcadian, family enterprise, than to the industrial, noxious reality, which they are in fact conceived to conceal. We can consider this as a highly ideological, conventional metaphor on the grounds that it conceptualizes one thing in terms

of another with the clear intent of distorting our perception of reality, and the relations that we have with it, that is, our choice as consumers. At a conceptual level, this metaphor conventionally maps from the ideological domain of the nuclear family and of the American prairie, and, more banally, from the conventional implication of farming as a rural activity. Note how its ideological effect is also reinforced by the pervasiveness of the metaphor (many different products employ the same metaphor) and by the lack of information of the reader regarding the provenance of the products (if the spectators knew their origin, then the metaphor would be evident as such, and lose most of its convincing power).

Moving on from conventional structuring to metaphor structuring in general, we can say that it fulfills two important functions, which are to explain and to condition. The explanatory power of metaphor is evident in the fact that metaphor is very commonly used to create examples. Indeed, through an associative link with a more familiar, more basic, and possibly more conventional, situation, new or less defined concepts or phenomena can be more easily understood.

In particular, metaphor is used to frame and define unknown or undefined experiences. This includes complex events, abstract conceptualizations, different cultures, unexpected situations and emotive experiences. Indeed, Lakoff and Johnson noted that "metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 193).

In film, metaphors are a necessary conceptual framework for the representation of the unknown or the uncommon: animals, aliens, monsters, otherness of time, space, religion, gender, all these situations are usually structured by metaphor. Aliens are perhaps the perfect example. In order to conceive an alien, indeed, we are forced to resort to metaphor. Indeed, while aliens should not have much in common with human beings or with our conception of the world, they are nevertheless forcibly conceived in metaphorical terms: their biology, society and behavior are conceivable only in relation to a human or animal model. In this sense, aliens in film show us the limits of our imagination, and of our conception of social structures and human relations.

First of all, aliens have a metaphorical physical structure. When they do not have, or snatch, a human form, they are imagined either in terms of an extension of the human body (the aliens of *Star Trek*), of its alteration (the little green men), or as an extension, alteration or combination of animals (the arachnids of *Starship Troopers*). Indeed, aliens can be seen as having a "symbolic biology", a term used by Noël Carroll in his article on fantastic beings (Carroll, 1981). In other words, it is possible to connect the alien's biology, as an element within a wider metaphorical structure, to their ideological implications. Generically speaking, humanoid aliens are more prone to signify inter-human relations, while monstrous aliens, as the eponymous Alien of Ridley Scott's

film (1979), are used to represent conflicts within the individual.

Alien mentality is often structured by ideological otherness, as has been recognized in science fiction films of the cold war period. Human-alien encounters are really just a metaphorical transposition of human relations. Indeed, the imaginary relations between aliens and humans are based on existing social or cultural phenomena, and they differ from them in some points, that are at the same time the points of metaphorical structuring and of eventual ideological relevance. We will see how, in the creation of the alien metaphor of *District 9* (Blomkamp, 2009) there is a distorted reference to District 6 and more generally to the South African apartheid, that orients the film in a certain ideological direction.

One film that tries at least to pitch a more plausible impossibility to imagine and communicate with the aliens is Robert Zemeckis's *Contact* (1997), that, however, ends up in diegetically justifying the most conventional metaphors: since Jodie Foster cannot really see and talk to the aliens, they present themselves to her in the form of her lost father, on a beautiful white sandy beach, an heavenly environment which is strongly implicated in the ideological discourse of the film on death and religion.

The structuring effect of metaphors frequently operates at the level of the whole text, informing many metaphorical expressions and orienting the general meaning of the film discourses and its narrative structures.

Metaphor condensation and metaphor displacement. Different conceptual metaphors can be present in the same element of the film discourse (condensation), and different elements of the discourse may concur to determine a single conceptual metaphor (displacement).

In his article we quoted above, Noël Carroll uses the terms "fusion" and "fission" (Carroll, 1981: 18) to describe two processes that structure symbolic formations, which are similar to metaphorical condensation and displacement. Fission is defined as a multiplication, a creation of doubles, each standing for another aspect of the self. Fusion is instead a division within the individual. These two processes are usually supported by metaphor, and can be regarded as more specific modes of metaphor condensation and displacement that map conflicting emotions of the individual.

An example of condensation may be the character of Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* (Clements and Musker, 2009). For its understanding we have to combine, in fact, two metaphorical relations, with their two sets of implications: the implications of adolescence, as in the original narrative structure of the fairy tale, and the implications linked to African-American minorities. That is, the character is metaphorically related to the issues and experiences of children or adolescents who are the readers of the narrative, yet it is also related to another set of implications

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arising from the non-conventional colour of her skin. First of all, we have to analyze the interplay between the two domains, that is, how her ethnicity is placed within the narrative and metaphorical structures of the original fairy tale and how it modifies them. Metaphor condensation, in this case, can be seen as a way of extending at the level of metaphorical expressions an existing conventional system, the narrative of Grimms' *The Frog Prince* through the association with a non-conventional domain.

Condensation may involve metaphors that have non-coherent conceptual implications between them or even that convey conflicting ideological statements. In the last analysis, the meaning of the metaphor is a result of the interaction of all condensed implications. A fine example can be taken from Noël Carroll, when she describes Dracula as "a fusion of the conflicting elements of the bad (primal) father, and of the rebellious son which is simultaneously appealing and forbidding because of the way it conjoins different dimensions of the oedipal fantasy" (Carrol, 1981: 20). As this case suggests, metaphor condensation always occurs in part as a consequence of a particular textual configuration, and partly due to interpretation. Indeed, many cases of condensation are created in textual analysis.

At the level of the whole text, the various metaphorical implications interact by superimposing one on the other, and the final analysis of metaphor conventionality and ideological stance can be made only after these interactions are taken into consideration. For example, in *Children of Men* (Cuaròn, 2006), we can see the child of Kee as a condensation of a metaphor of regeneration through social change with a more conventional Christian metaphor of (re)birth as salvation - he is the child of an illegal immigrant that must be accepted and saved in order to restore fertility to the human race, but he is also connoted as Christ in several scenes, from his revelation in the barn to the battle scene towards the ending. These two metaphorical themes interact with the basic "social distress is sterility" metaphor of the film in an ambivalent way: if we consider the "birth as salvation" metaphor as predominant or more fundamental (possibly on the basis that the narrative structure involves the self-sacrifice of the hero), we are drawn to perceive the ideological message of the film as essentially Christian.

Displacement has to be distinguished from metaphor clusters. Clusters are sets of metaphorical expressions used throughout a text that are all grounded in the same conceptual metaphor, or a specific group of conceptual metaphors that are linked together. Banally, if a science fiction film establishes a metaphor of aliens as soviets, we will likely have more than one metaphorical expression in the text that points to that metaphorical relation. Such relation may not be simply going from each metaphorical expression to a single conceptual metaphor, but, as we said, to a group of conceptually or ideologically linked metaphors.

Differently from metaphor clusters, displacement separates aspects of a conceptual metaphor on more than one film element. For example, a text may displace the representation of "America", with its different features, onto different characters. Such elements can be seen as partial metaphors, connected with specific elements of the American domain, yet their metaphorical meaning can only be comprehended if we consider the displacement metaphor as a whole.

As in the case of Carroll's fission, displacement can regard emotions or parts of an individual's personality. Such a type of displacement can be seen in *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999), as a narrative device, and an example of displacement in interpretation is provided by Slavoj Žižek in his *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Žižek, 2006), where he reads (using a deliberate interpretative metaphor) the three Marx brothers as the displacement of the three ego functions according to Freudian psychoanalysis: Groucho as the Super-ego, Chico as the Ego and Harpo as the Id.

Displacement, along with personification, is frequently employed to show different outcomes of the narrative. It does so by representing as different behaviour of multiple characters, what could be interpreted as different choices of the same individual. For example in *Boyz n the Hood* (Singleton, 1991), the two brothers might be perceived as the displaced personification of two different choices of the same person, that corresponds to the ideological statement on what is right, and what is not right to do in the situations detailed in the narrative. This displacement device can be seen to operate in the more basic metaphorical context of the "hood" as representing the African American experience, as pointed out by Paula Massood (1996).

Displacement of complex and abstract concepts, such as America, into more than one character seems to create a less rigid structuring, that is, a greater variety in the range of meanings. As a consequence, displacement may seem to determine a similar variety at an ideological level. Indeed, it is different if the representation of "America" is given to a single character, that will necessarily structure the domain according to certain ideologically relevant features, or, through displacement, to a certain number of different characters. Yet, ideology is almost equally strong in the use of displacement metaphors. In fact, ideology usually operates in displacement devices through the death of some of the characters. Basically, the ones who die are wrong, and the ideological positions they represent or the ideas they have are thus "downplayed".

A similar device has been described by Bruno Bettelheim in fairy tales (Bettelheim, 1978). Children identify with the character that remains alive, understanding right and wrong on the basis of the survivor, and not vice versa. Indeed, the prototype of this "displacement and death" device can be traced back to the folk tale of the three little pigs. According to Bettelheim's psychoanalytical interpretation, the three pigs all represent different attitudes of the same person, the child listener (Ibid.). We can say, the narration is structured through a metaphorical displacement,

to which the reader relates. In the original version by the Grimms, only one of the pigs remains alive, after he has eaten the wolf and his two brothers that are inside the belly of the predator. At the end, the only living pig becomes a condensed figure (literally having all the other characters inside him), and a symbol of the mature wholeness and complexity of the individual.

Instead, Disney's sterilized version with which we are familiar, probably not too keen on cannibal pigs, disrupts the displacement and in its ending it does not present an integration of different aspects of an individual. The pigs do no longer stand metaphorically for different attitudes (or ages) of the same individual, but they are effectively different individuals. In the same way, the wolf is no longer a metaphor of an inner threat, which is comprehended and internalized at the end of the original tale, but a representation of a firmly externalized threat. The ideological relevance of this shift of metaphor is huge: what in Grimm's tale promoted an effort toward integration and comprehension becomes a message of relying on another, more skilled and powerful person when facing an external menace.

It is no surprise that the very same narrative structure underwent a small, cosmetic, adaptation, being turned into a war bonds propaganda during World War two. In that animation, the two civilian pigs take refuge in a fortified house with incredibly large guns, that stands for the United States, and finally abandon their carefree neutral attitude to unite and kill the Hitler-wolf under the direction of their bigger brother.

Analysis of film metaphor can be used to detect those slight changes in the structure of the text that nevertheless may produce interesting discursive and ideological differences, especially in cases of complex clusters of metaphors and multiple levels of interaction, that are less easily spotted and analysed through a classical approach on the meaning of metaphorical expressions.

Personification. In cognitive metaphor theory, personification is considered as the most obvious case of ontological metaphor, a metaphor in which an abstract phenomenon is first of all conceptualized as a single object, and furthermore as a person (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 33). Personification is also one of the most important metaphorical device in film language, and has major ideological implications.

Generally speaking, we can define personification as the conceptual framing of abstract phenomena into individual narrative. More specifically, ideologically relevant personification in film frequently entails a reduction of social phenomena to the level of the individual, such as addressing the whole issue of immigration trough the story of a single migrant. The necessary downplaying and highlighting that takes place in the metaphor is frequently ideological, since the criteria for the metaphorical structuring may correspond to an ideologically influenced conception of the given

phenomenon.

Personification has a strong effect on conceptual structuring and ideological discourses, since the kinds of relations that exist between abstract phenomena cannot be mapped onto individual on inter-personal relations without being altered to a certain extent. In other words, social and individual phenomena are most likely incommensurable, yet they are frequently connected through ideological discourses and conventional metaphor, especially in film.

The prominence of personification in film can be in part explained by the apparatus itself (star system, primary and secondary identification), in part by the preferred mode of film narrativity, that centres the revolvings of the plot on, and in many cases inside, the protagonist.

Far from being a way of promoting personal agency in public matters, representation through personification metaphors ignores many important aspects and alters the perception of social reality. Above all, personification negates to some degree the collective dimension of social experiences. Indeed, relationships between individuals are not relationships between social bodies: they are quantitatively, but also qualitatively different. Collective experiences are linked to individual experiences, but are not exactly the same. For instance, the guilt of a person is not exactly the guilt of a nation.

Indeed, in personification, quantitative aspects of power relations are usually downplayed in favour of moral discourses. A character representing an imperialist nation can feel guilt, but, as a complex ensemble of people, infrastructures and institutions, a nation cannot. If a film suggests that we interpret the political action of a nation in terms of guilt, it is employing a metaphor that alters our understanding of the whole discourse. As a result, the suggested understanding may not be appropriate to social reality.

War, social struggle, poverty, exploitment, colonialism and other social conflicts are frequently represented in film by means of personification. The personification metaphor may refer to, but never deal with the complex dynamics of such conditions. In most cases, it does not even address the implications of the audience in them. Yet, such narratives regularly include a solution to these conflictual situations in the ending of the film. And since the narrative conveys a partial understanding of social phenomena, the solutions must be unfitting.

We can see the limits and potentialities of personification in a documentary like *The Cove* (Psihoyos, 2009), in which Ric O'Barry stands as a *mise en abyme* of the prospected development of the audience's stance toward dolphins. In other words, his personal history is used to frame the ideological intention of the film.

At the beginning of his history, O'Barry was the trainer of the Flipper dolphins of the popular television series. After the death of one of them, he decided to turn against their exploitment

and killing and became an eco-activist. In the documentary, we are shown him with a team of other exceptional men (a Hollywood special effects designer, a rock tours organizer, two world class free-divers and so on) that infiltrate a secret cove in the Japanese bay of Taiji to register on camera a massacre of dolphins that happens there every once in a while. With the film, they are going to try to influence the public opinion and stop the slaughter.

Now, no one in the audience may have O'Barry's background, and very few are or will become eco-activists. Nevertheless, the personification of an attainment of conscience and of the resolution to act against dolphin abuse through O'Barry's personal experiences in the narrative of the film is a useful device of communication. The film's narrative invites us to become O'Barry, which we can only metaphorically, but it does not confine its ideological message to personification, as most fiction films do. Indeed, at the end of the documentary, the audiences are invited to sign a petition, which reminds them of their actual situation and of their potential involvement, beyond the personification suggested by the film. In most other cases, instead, personification metaphors tend to obscure the involvement of the audience and the complexities of the subject, so that, generally speaking, we might assign to personification a negative ideological value.

Eventually, abstract social phenomena are framed and twisted by personification in a way that usually creates and supports fictional, ideologically determined, relations between the audience and their social reality, instead of promoting their actual comprehension.

Little white men: *District 9.*

The success of *District 9* was explained in part by its inventive marketing campaign, in part by the trendy hand-held camera documentary style, and, finally, by the central importance given to aliens as objects of discrimination (Ebert, 2009).

The marketing campaign included billposting of fake segregationist notices, that advertised the film by bringing some elements of its diegesis in the real space. This extended on the internet, where Sony created human and alien websites about the District, as if the situation described in the film was real ("www.d-9.com"), as well as the MNU (Multi-Nationals United) official site ("www.sonypictures.net/movies/district9/mnu/"), and an alien blog dedicated to counter information and integration between the human and non-human communities ("http://www.mnuspreadslies.com/").

All this suggested a reading of the aliens in terms of objects of discrimination, that is, through a metaphorical relation to real subjects of discrimination. But, exactly, what kind of discrimination, by whom, and against whom? As suggested by the title, there might be a reference to a precise event, the forced removal of sixty thousand people from Cape Town District 6 during the apartheid regime in the Seventies. This was perpetrated according to the principles of segregation, and in order to free an area of the city which was close to the center and make it available for residential development for richer, white, people.

Yet, the film never refers to these events directly, nor explain their link to the fiction. Indeed, apart from some, more informed on South African history, the events of District 6 were not known, and consequently, were not related to the film by most of its spectators.

There is a similar vagueness about the meaning of the whole film, that has been alternatively read as a piece of racist propaganda, as a radical denouncing of discrimination, or simply as an action film. Indeed, according to Fowler (2009), three different narratives are inscribed in the film, which imply different ideological stances. A narrative of human cohesion against the alien invasion, one of denouncing of the apartheid, for which, however, the choice of using an alien metaphor should be explained, especially since blacks are also present in the film, and finally, a narrative of harmonious coexistence between human and aliens.

The film, as we saw, is overtly metaphorical, yet the structure is open enough to sustain very different readings, especially at the level of ideological discourses. Metaphors in *District 9* mainly operate through structuring and personification. The "aliens are others" fundamental metaphor of the text determines the context of most of the film's discourses, while the personification metaphor turns the still abstract implications of the alien metaphor into the personal narrative of Wickus, even inside his body. We can link the perception of three different "narratives" to the ambiguity

of the use of racist assumptions and imagery to ground the alien metaphor, and also to the ambivalence of the implication of actual events in South African history. But, eventually, the issues of personification necessarily orient the interpretation of the film not towards full blown racism, but nevertheless towards a conventional and conservative view of social otherness.

Aliens are others. We can shortly refer to the main metaphorical structure of *District 9* as based on a "aliens are others" conceptual metaphor - *human* others, of course. The metaphorical structuring of aliens as others constitutes the most fundamental metaphorical level of the text, on which all the other conceptual metaphors are based.

The use of an overt and extensive mapping of human-alien convivence from actual discrimination constitutes an oppositional deviation from the conventions of the genre, that depicted aliens mostly through a metaphor of war, that is, as enemies or possible allies. The shift of *District 9* can be significantly related to the centrality of immigration in contemporary discourses and to a change in the imaginary of the war, in which the enemy is becoming more and more indistinguishable from a civilian.

In a generic way, the aliens' otherness is signified by their aspect, ways and language. All these characteristics belong to a conventional representation of aliens as "strangers from another planet". Yet, the alien metaphor in *District 9* does not highlight their extraterrestrial origins. The aliens have been living as refugees in a slum near Johannesburg for almost thirty years at the present time of the film. So, the metaphor first of all downplays the moment of the encounter with the alien race, with all its implications and its centrality in conventional alien narratives, in favour of their representation as aliens within our own space.

More specifically, aliens are structured as *social* others, which can be regarded as an extension of the conventional "aliens are strangers" metaphor to map the more specific field of social relations. As we saw, the conceptual basis for this metaphor is conventional and, at the ideological level, it uses conventional negative ideological implications about social otherness.

The readings of *District 9* as a denouncing of discrimination rest on the assumption that the aliens as others metaphor provides a correct description of the negative ideological implications of social otherness, and also that this metaphor acts as their *exposure* - in other words, that the metaphorical construction of the film intends to demystify reactionary discourses on social otherness. Yet, *District 9* presents a description of discrimination which is significantly incomplete and with some partially misplaced interrelations, but most of all it fails to challenge existing ideological discourses on discrimination, mainly because of the employment of covert personification and structuring metaphors to map the domains of the self and of social agency.

What makes *District 9*'s discourse on discrimination inadequate to its social context is first of all the abstention from an analysis of the discriminators. The film frequently shows citizens of Johannesburg complaining about the aliens without a real reason, somewhat hinting that they are being manipulated by the MNU, by the "system". Yet there is no reason for the MNU to act in such a way. So, the metaphor mapping is incomplete, since it refers correctly to the mostly unjustified sentiments of hatred against social others, it includes the idea that power and media control may incite those feelings, but does not address why or how the MNU, or the human citizens may benefit from this situation.

Indeed, the MNU attitude toward the aliens, and its mapping of actual or historical social issues, is incoherent to say the least. The aliens are not used as workforce, their technology, let alone their culture, are not investigated nor exploited, the spaceship, or whatever makes it float over Johannesburg without any power are totally disregarded. The only exception to this are the alien weapons and suits, that can only be operated by the aliens, whose DNA the MNU, and, with different means, human rebels are trying to obtain, as we will see.

The fact that many of the "concerned" citizens in the interviews are black, simply signifies that, at this level, the metaphor stands for universal discrimination, and not specifically for racial discrimination, or for the discrimination of South African blacks. Consistently with the ruling out of the reasons for social hatred, the film does not discuss the dimension of labor in relation to the invasion. In the diegesis, the aliens are treated as refugees, but metaphorically they are mainly conceived in terms of immigrants, since immigration is the only invasion of "social others" that is normally experienced by the generic Western audience to which the film was targeted. As a consequence, the spectator is presented with ideas on immigration, that are however framed by textual references pertaining to refugees. In this way, work, which is arguably the most important aspect of the issue of immigration, but that is not as central in conventional discourses about refugees, is almost completely ruled out from the discourse of the film (a "structuring absence" if we like). Therefore, the connection of the alien metaphor to discourses on immigration is mismatched, and the film stance against discrimination is weakened.

Personification and "influence is disease" metaphor. The alien metaphor in *District 9* structures the understanding and the representation of the social unrest caused by coexistence of different cultures. But the problems that it poses to the white élite are further structured by personification, and ultimately, it is only by personification that a solution to these problems is proposed. Soon in the development of the plot, Wickus, a white Afrikaans bureaucrat in charge of the forced removals from District 9, becomes the central element of all the discourses of the film.

Before that, Wickus is established as a prototype of the white colonialist and bureaucrat. His character, clumsy and with a mix of politeness and hatred toward the aliens, is entailed in the delineation of MNU as a repressive, and yet irrational and irresponsible institution. This is the starting point for the creation of an effect of personification, in which Wickus stands for the whole society menaced by the alien invasion, that is, in fact, for the audience.

Personification is fully achieved when Wickus accidentally gets infected and begins to turn into an alien. Here we can devise, along with personification, another conceptual metaphor that maps disease over the alien invasion and their influence on human culture, in the sense that Wickus' contact with the aliens, with their culture as well as their artifacts, determines an illness, a mutation into his body. This "influence is disease" metaphor, can be seen as part of the metaphor schema INVASION is DISEASE described by Goatly (2007: 49-51). The disease metaphor extends the personification metaphor to a deeper level, so that we have a passage from a personification of society threatened by social alterity in Wickus, to an *embodiment* of this threat. But it is, at the same time, a common structural metaphor in contexts of racism and colonization, which entails the prohibition of physically mingling with the colonized. So, Wickus' mutation can be taken as a personalized representation of post-colonialism, or post colonial white élite. But such a representation, especially in the light of its development towards the end of the film, is extraordinarily racist.

The "disease" domain obviously conveys a negative sense to the whole influence and personification metaphors. In fact, the "influence is disease" metaphor in the film automatically structures out any possibility that this "disease" might be something positive, and therefore it ideologically stands against integration. Such is the power of the metaphor, that the contact with the aliens, in the collective, as well as in the personified narrative, does not have a single positive effect. In order for Wickus' mutation to be cured, *the aliens* must return to their home planet, in a strident inversion of the colonial experience.

Furthermore, the fact that Wickus gets infected by chance is highly significant from an ideological point of view. Not explaining his disease as an unavoidable consequence of social proximity, but as a consequence of Wickus' personal clumsiness, the film negates the responsibilities of the élite. At the same time, it gives an unclear and incomplete definition of cultural influence and speaks of its solution, as we will see, in terms of violence and purification.

Ultimately, the "influence is disease" metaphor makes ambiguous the discourse of the film on social alterity, that is, it does not refuse the idea of coexistence of cultures, nor recognizes its necessity. Arguably, we can consider this position as sustaining the status quo of discrimination.

Action is violence metaphor. The metaphorical structures that we have analyzed so far, lead the narrative towards the removal of Wickus' mutation and the concomitant removal of the aliens from the human space.

Despite the fact that seeming the alien refugees, the MNU and the enraged citizens all desire the return home of the visitors, no attempt is made in that direction. Indeed, the collective narrative does not entail any form of cooperation, while the personal narrative of Wickus eventually sees him and a singular alien, the scientist Christopher, join forces only to violently restitute purity to the little white men.

At this point, the film seems to pay a tribute to its genre, as Wickus and Christopher get hold of the alien weapons acquired by a gang of outlaws and blast the MNU headquarters to get hold of a vital component of the power source of a small spacecraft. Following the metaphorical structures analyzed above, here we have a very conservative idea of violence as the necessary means of achieving a solution to a problem, in this case applied to the coexistence of different races. Contrary to the fundamental metaphorical structure, here the conservative ideological discourses are not presented as a demystification of segregationism, but actively adopted as a resolution of the narrative.

Christopher's narrative is only functional for Wickus to regain his lost purity. The effort to cooperate made by Wickus and Christopher transforms the expected return of the aliens into a redemptive experience. But as we did not know why the aliens were stranded, the film does not tell us where they are going. Ultimately, *District 9* is not as much concerned with the aliens, as with the humans dealing with their presence.

A final remark can be made on the fact that both MNU and rebellious outlaws are trying to obtain alien DNA to use their weapons, which is the only way in which humans seem to care about aliens, other than as receptacles of social hatred. Again, the reason does not seem to be diegetical, since alien weapons are not particularly more advanced and deadly than the MNU's. Indeed, this interest in the control of alien DNA can be conceptualized as an ongoing struggle to exploit social unrest as a political means, by the governments on one hand, and by revolutionary groups or more generic insurrectionalist groups on the other hand.

Now, the gang of black criminals, a minority among the aliens, is structured according to the model of terrorist organizations lurking among civilians. Incidentally, the outlaws are characterized as Nigerian, and their chief's name is homophonous with that of the former President of Nigeria. The fact caused the ban of *District 9* from that country and several readings of the film as a denouncement of the Nigerian regime (Nkem, 2009).

Alien resistance to the MNU very limited, consistently with this scenario, and corresponds more

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to civil dissent than to struggle or revolution, which is part of their disempowered and passive representation of aliens. They never try to use their weapons against the MNU, only Wickus' narrative allows that. Indeed, the aliens become a military threat only insofar as their weapons fall into the hands of a more politicized ethnicity. This can suggest a reading of the weapons as standing for the political power that can be gained by "handling" the alien emergency. If this is correct, its reductive and militaristic structuring through the domain of violence has again strong and negative ideological connotations.

Through the weapons, the more generic level of interpretation of the alien metaphor as standing for social otherness is briefly returned to the more political, more defined South African scenario, only to be distorted within the individual narrative of Wickus and eventually serve for a violent refusal of integration.

Unnatural selection: *2012.*

2012 is constructed around a core "deluge" metaphor, which interacts with several "displacement and death" devices, and with pervasive and strong issues of personification throughout the text. The most relevant ideological effect of this metaphorical configuration is in that it structures the outcome of the disaster as essentially better than what there was before. This happens at all the levels of the narrative, from the lives of the main characters, to global society, and no matter how many cities are destroyed, or people are killed. In other words, entailed in the fundamental metaphorical structure of the film is that the disaster is cathartic.

Yet, unlike the case of *District 9,* it may seem inappropriate to label the structure of Emmerich's film as metaphorical. Indeed, the biblical suggestions of the catastrophe are so evident and conventional, that they seem not only natural, but absolutely neutral from an ideological point of view. The same can be said about the many "displacement and death" devices and about the focus on individual narratives.

Everything, from the typology of the characters, to their death, down to every twist of the plot is conceptually unchallenging and conform to conventions. This very conventionality and apparent neutrality is a central ideological aspect of *2012.* As a consequence, the critical interest in reading a film like *2012* lays not in what is signified, which is already known or analyzable on its own as a set of ideological commonplaces, but in how it is signified. The study of metaphor does not address specifically the social significance of thinking about death in terms of redemption, but describes how these ideas are connected in language and cognition.

The deluge metaphor. Many elements of the film, already at the most shallow level of signification, prompt us to read the film as based on the deluge narrative, that is, as representing destruction in terms of rebirth. First of all, the emphasis on the final wave of tsunamis and all the implications of the construction of the "arks". But also the fact that we know it will be an apocalypse with a happy ending, and that someone will survive the disaster for the sake of a better world. Like in the narrative of the deluge, all must be destroyed so that all can be built again.

As we said, implicit in this fundamental construction of the narrative, is that the new world will be better. Here, the coherence of the text with the metaphor overcomes the coherence within the diegesis. If we should consider the disaster objectively, or from any other point of view, there could be no positive outcome. Only the specific metaphorical framework underlying the film can provide us with the means of interpreting the end of the world as a happy ending.

We can say that the whole film is configured to represent what Robert Torry called "the selective benefits of Apocalypse" (Torry, 1991: 11), that is to show who is going to survive and why. Survival

is motivated at the level of ideological discourses and of genre conventions, and, again, has more ideological than diegetical consistency. Thus, characters that embody positive ideological values are unrealistically lucky, while those who carry with them negative ideological implications are going to die regardless of the odds.

The ideological relevance of the deluge framework is strengthened, at the formal level, by the focus on visual effects rather than on the plot, and, at the level of content of the film, by the randomness and apparent naturalness of survival. Both these devices distract from the more fundamental ideological determination of the survivors. Indeed, while in the original narrative of the deluge, the survivors were chosen directly by God on the overt basis of their faith and moral integrity, in *2012*, the criteria for survival are not clearly stated, but in most cases life and death seem to be decided by chance. As we will see, the fact that most of the survivors are rich westerners is systematically masked. This corresponds to a reification of the moral and cultural values on which the choice is made, and therefore at an empowered ideological effect.

Fundamentally, and in an extremely conventional way, disaster in *2012* is conceptualized as a cathartic experience for both society and the family, collapsed one into the other, on the line of a covertly moralistic and Christian narrative of drowned and saved.

The drowned... The main deluge metaphor in *2012* structures the survivors of the catastrophe as a personification of the redemption of society.

This involves the displacement of society as an abstract idea onto different typified characters. In other words, various elements of discourses on society are represented through different characters, whose death corresponds to a negative judgment on the values that they represent. Indeed, a direct relation between social deviance, the non conformity to ideological and social standards, and death of the characters can be constantly verified in popular film and television.

The allocation of different ideological statements to different elements of the film happens at two levels, depending on whether personification also takes place or not: the individual level, that of Jackson Curtis, his family and all the other characters in the film, and the global level, that of the crowds of people that can or cannot board on the arks. The two levels interact, mainly in the sense that the individual level structures our understanding of the global narrative.

At the individual level, the most important ideological death of the film is the one of Gordon Silberman, the current boyfriend of Jackson's ex-wife Kate. The death of Gordon is ideologically necessary, since it restores the wholeness of the American middle class family. It is further motivated by Gordon's decision to leave Jackson behind when they have to escape from the volcanic eruption, which presents him as a non sympathetic character. Yet, Gordon's death happens by

pure chance. Similarly, the reunion between Jackson and Kate is fatal, and not really an expression of a choice. In this way, the ideological imperative of the nuclear family is reified and presented not as an expression of a determined institutional or personal will, but as a casual and unquestionable configuration of reality.

We may want to consider Gordon as a personification of everything that might trouble the nuclear family. Then, the choice of a person, and furthermore, the choice of the particular typology of the "lover" to represent what troubles the unity of the family, are again significant conventional ideological discourses. This kind of personification has in addition several interesting implications. For example, it entails the devirilization of the main character, that has to be "cured" through the deluge metaphor. At the end, indeed, Jackson not only has survived, but has established himself as a hero, a father and an acknowledged writer. Again, this does not happen on behalf of personal qualities, but mostly by chance: his book, for instance, is saved only because Dr. Helmsley has unintentionally brought it with him on the ark.

As a further effect, the ideological implications of the family narrative are projected onto the global level, framing the whole narrative of the film. Ultimately, the happy ending is possible only if the personal perspective totally overcomes the global one, that is if the latter is understood in terms of the first. As it is typical within the disaster genre, the discourse of *2012* only make sense if perceived as an individual narrative. The outcome of the global narrative and the outcome of the personal narrative go hand in hand. This parallel is in fact the similarity created by the personification metaphor.

At the ideological level, personification connects the discourses on the family, its salvation from all the inner and external threats, to other discourses that concern the entire human race, in a way in which they mutually support one another. In other words, the connection created by personification prompts us to acknowledge in an almost automatic way the acceptability of one discourse in terms of the acceptability of the other. This results in an absurd syllogism: if its good that the family is reunited, *then* its good that only few people survive.

Then, who are these few that survive in the collective narrative? Personification gives us the impression that everyone is saved along with Curtis, but in reality, all other American families are exterminated, and only the idea survives. A completely different sort of people is saved in the arks, people who had the means of power, intellect or money required to board. Here, the representation of a prototypical family surely does not function in a referential way: in the new world, the Curtises will be the only exemplar of US middle class.

... and the saved. So, the great majority of the saved are rich. They are those who funded the construction of the arks onto which humanity seeks its salvation. Here, it is significant for the personification metaphor that the funds come from private citizens and not, as we might expect, directly from the governments. The fact that the construction of the arks and the selection of the saved takes place individual by individual, and not as a collective phenomenon, is part of the personification metaphor and reinforces it. The collective nature of the apocalypse is partly concealed through the focus on Curtis and Helmsley, but also through the events that take place immediately before the boarding: while the passengers are waiting, an unforeseeable accident seems to force the leaders of the world to abandon most of the people on the docks. Again, it is a random event that triggers two sequences of the film that are relevant for our analysis: Helmsley's speech on humanity, and Yuri's revolt and death.

The first sequence serves as a distraction from the true dimension of the global annihilation. Helmsley, speaking in favor of accepting all the passengers on board, regardless of the imminent danger, reminds everyone that the new world cannot begin with an act of cruelty. Too bad, cruelty has already been committed. Indeed, his apparently humane speech concerns the saving of a thousand more privileged people or less in view of the holocaust of everyone else. This scene, once again, operates according to a personification metaphor, where we read the small group of passengers as standing for the whole human race. Again, such a use of metaphor cannot be regarded as purely referential, since the richness of the passengers is not a irrelevant implication.

In addition, Helmsley remembers in his words his fellow scientist and friend from India, who was the first to discover the disaster and that has just died "in vain", that is, without help from the united governments of the world. This is again part of the personification structure, and has the effect to focus sentiments of pity and grief on the individual narrative of Dr. Satnam, and not on the global holocaust, which includes the fact that probably India, and surely many third world countries have been *a priori* excluded from the list of the saved. Which is something that is present in the film, yet that is not brought clearly to the surface.

The second sequence structures Yuri as a personification of the rich, and especially of their arrogance and egoism, which is mainly signified through the fact that he decides to abandon Tamara and her dog. When the governors refuse to open the doors of the arks, Yuri leads a small revolt, bringing a crowd of people in front of the gates, where many of them fall in the gap before the ships. The moment Tamara is saved she shows Yuri the middle finger, and after that the Russian mogul sacrifices himself for his two sons. The insult, and Yuri's death, work together to wash away the disagreeableness of the other privileged, and strengthens the idea that only the good survive.

Africa. The final piece of the metaphorical structures in *2012* is the survival of Africa, the fact that the continent raises some meters above the sea level, again, without any rational reason. Indeed, this last event is a conventional return to the origins, and it is moralistic, since it is based on the fundamental assumption that less civilization means less sin, and therefore more right to salvation. Eventually, this element of the narrative is also hypocritical, since, in the very act of putting Africa morally above the greater powers, it downplays the severe responsibilities of the developed countries in causing political unrest and economical crisis in the third world. In a sense, Africa is actually suffering a similar threat of destruction with little hope, by the hands of the intervening economical and political powers of the great nations. So, by reversing the narrative and hiding any trace of human responsibility, the survival of Africa is made to correspond to the absolution from its exploitation.

Indeed, it is not clearly stated that the survival of Africa happens thanks to its superior morality, it is not stated that it happens for the sake of Africans at all. It almost seems an act of God, finally taking his stand in the disaster. In fact, God is implied in a metaphor in which Africa is the lost paradise and the promised land at the same time, the crucible of the sins of the colonizers, where their conscience has been stained, and where it will be cleansed. However, in *2012,* God seems more interested in the survival of one middle class ghost, and second rate science fiction. And in a perfect scenario of reification, human institutions and ideological structures have taken his place, setting him apart from Adam, while the Vatican's dome crushes down. So, at the diegetical level, the self proclaimed Noahs of *2012* will not see in Africa an opportunity for their redemption, but most likely the fulfillment of two of their most urgent needs after the catastrophe: a land for them to settle, and a source of workforce.

Hand in hand, the conventionality of the structures of signification and the conformism of the ideological discourses of the film, necessarily prompts us to imagine a gloomy aftermath for such a happy end of the world.

Conclusions.

The description of the metaphorical process given by cognitive metaphor theory can be used in the analysis of film texts to link our understanding of metaphorical expressions, similes, personification, montage, narrative and conceptual structures. In particular, conventional conceptual metaphors have a central importance in the study of ideological discourses in film. This dissertation begins to outline how cognitive metaphor theory can provide a framework for the analysis of interactions between concepts in film texts, especially, but not only, in the case of metaphorical expressions. Yet, in order for this task to be complete, further studies have to be carried out, that will address more specifically the relation between cognitive metaphor theory and the theory of ideology within film studies and, above all, the psychoanalytic theory of cinema, taking into consideration not only the cognitive, but also the emotive level of metaphor configurations. A task that was clearly beyond the possibilities of this work, but that, nevertheless, I consider fundamental for a complete evaluation of metaphor as a general process of association between signs, in the sense early suggested by Sergei Eisenstein.

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