

# Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Embodied Meaning-Making in Film

Maarten Coëgnarts

Published: 4th December 2017

## Abstract

This article aims to examine some aspects of the cinematic work of Stanley Kubrick from the embodied and interdisciplinary point-of-view of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Central to this theory is the idea that abstract concepts such as emotions, relationships and mental functions are metaphorically understood in terms of concrete concepts of human bodily experiences such as movement and spatial boundedness. Given that Kubrick's work is characterised as highly conceptual, it is therefore plausible to assume that the meaning entailments of his films arise from the same mappings of embodied source domains. This paper sets out to illustrate this hypothesis by offering a dense analysis of various concise scenes taken from his oeuvre. It is precisely through Kubrick's mastery of the devices of filmmaking (e.g. framing, camera movement, editing, etc.) that, as this paper demonstrates, his films exhibit a formal precision rooted in the human sensory-motor system, which enables them to reach a level of conceptual sophistication.

**Keywords:** Stanley Kubrick; Conceptual Metaphor Theory; sensory-motor system

**Maarten Coëgnarts:** University of Antwerp (Belgium)

Corresponding Author: [maartencoegnarts@gmail.com](mailto:maartencoegnarts@gmail.com)

Maarten Coëgnarts (Belgium) holds a PhD in Film Studies and Visual Culture and an MA in Sociology (University of Antwerp). Since 2010 he has been doing research on the interplay between conceptual metaphors, image schemas and cinema. The results have been published in *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, *Cinéma&Cie*, *Image [&] Narrative*, *Metaphor and Symbol*, *Metaphor and the Social World*, *New Review of Film and Television Studies* and *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind*. He is also co-editor of the special issue *Metaphor, Bodily Meaning*, and *Cinema of the Journal Image [&] Narrative* and the book *Embodied Cognition and Cinema* (Leuven University Press, 2015).

## 1 Introduction

The films of Stanley Kubrick continue to fascinate audiences and it is generally recognized among scholars that a large part of their appeal lies in their powerful ability to convey conceptual themes in a purely cinematic and visual manner.<sup>1</sup> This claim to higher meaning, however, exhibits a paradox, anchored in the ontological reality of cinema itself. This paradox revolves around the seemingly contradictory question of how cinema is capable of expressing conceptual knowledge while at the same time being essentially non-conceptual in nature.<sup>2</sup> In other words, if we accept that Kubrick's work is exceptional in its ability to express abstract meaning, then there must be something in his work that overcomes this paradox. It is the central aim of this article to demonstrate that this "something" can be further explained in terms of Kubrick's technical and stylistic craftsmanship. It is precisely through the mastery of the devices of filmmaking that, as this article will show, his films impose a structural precision and formal cohesion onto the first-order world of perception by which they create the foundation for the emergence of concepts. To theorise this conditional link between "structure", on the one hand, and "meaning", on the other hand, the article draws on the theoretical framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth, CMT) (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff and Johnson 1999). CMT proposed a theory of embodied cognition, rooted in the field of cognitive linguistics, according to which human concepts are grounded within "structures" of human sensory-motor experience. This is how, for instance, we come to understand mental functions such as cognition metaphorically in terms of movement ("I *arrived* at that conclusion") or emotions in terms of containment ("I'm *in* love"). Hence, if we accordingly claim that (1) Kubrick's cinematic work is highly conceptual and (2) that this conceptual meaning is grounded within structures of sensory-motor knowledge, then, (3) we might assume that the same structures also play a pivotal role in the grounding of meaning in Kubrick's cinema. To test the validity of this claim, however, we first have to answer two basic questions: (1) which are the abstract concepts under scrutiny in this paper with regard to Kubrick's cinematic *oeuvre*, and (2) which are the structures of sensory-motor knowledge that humans use in order to ground these concepts? This will be the task of the first theoretical section of this article, which when applied in the second section will demonstrate, by means of various concise case-studies, how Kubrick's films manage to evoke these structures stylistically in order to elicit conceptual meaning.

## 2 The role of the body in conceptualizing the (fictional) being

What exactly do we mean by saying that a Kubrick film exerts higher order meaning? On a general note one can say that films with higher meaning tend to focus on "how experiences are processed in the inner world, as opposed to focusing on experiences in an exterior world" (Grodal 2009: 228). This article will narrow this definition by focusing on two property domains of the fictional being that are not directly perceptible, namely what Jens Eder categorises as "sociality" and "mind" (2010: 24). Sociality refers to the connection of a fictional being to a proposition about his or her relation to other characters. It includes such concepts as group membership (e.g., family, friendship, partnership), interrelations, interactions, positions of power, and status. The mind refers to the connection of a fictional being to a proposition about his or her inner life or personality. It includes such mental faculties as perception ("the character *sees* something"), cognition ("the character *knows* something"), and emotion ("the character *feels* something"). Evidently, there is some overlap between both property domains. Mental states such as perception and emotion are mostly also directed toward others making them social at the same time. Likewise, the mental states within the domain of the mind should not be conceived in isolation, but rather in close association with each other. The mental faculty of perception (i.e., of an outer event), for example, is often seen causally associated with the rise of cognitive and emotional states in the perceiver.<sup>3</sup> In selecting both categories as suitable places to locate a significant part of Kubrick's

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Falsetto 2001, Günther 2004, Appelt 2004: 257.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to language, traditional film has a purely causal relation to the first-order world of perception it denotes. Cfr. Gaut 2010: 52, Grodal 2016: 103.

<sup>3</sup> See in this regard also the concept of "emotional causality", that is, the folk understanding of emotion according to which our experience of emotion is embedded in a larger chain of causation which is usually centred around three events: (a) an outer event (b) an emotional state and (c) a physiological reaction or other response. For a good discussion of this concept, see Radden 1998.

cinematic meaning, we are motivated by the uncontroversial claim that his films, like many other narrative films, have the intention to convey meaning about the social and mental or subjective life of characters. References to both domains can be found in most of Kubrick's films, ranging from General Mireau's (George Macready) acceptance of General Broulard's (Adolphe Menjou) bribe of promotion in *Paths of Glory* (1957), to HAL 9000's cognitive mindset in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), or Redmond Barry's (Ryan O'Neal) seduction of Lady Lyndon (Marisa Berenson) in *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and Dr. Harford (Tom Cruise)'s emotional breakdown in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), to name a few.

If we consider the property domains of sociality and mind as two important abstract target domains in Kubrick's work, what, then, are the resources appropriated to make these domains perceptually accessible to the viewer? In order to answer this question, it is perhaps useful to consider how humans in general tend to conceptualise such concepts as relationships, emotions and mental functions. Addressing this issue brings us to the field of cognitive linguistics and the broader research program of embodied cognition. Rather than explaining linguistic patterns by examining the structural properties internal to and specific to language (i.e., Chomsky's notion of "generative grammar" (1965)), cognitive linguistics aims to examine how these linguistic structures relate to cognitive principles and mechanisms that are not medium-specific (i.e., situated outside language).<sup>4</sup> One such principle that has received considerable attention among scholars has been the mechanism of conceptual metaphor, as it was introduced in the early 1980s by philosopher Mark Johnson and cognitive linguist George Lakoff (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Underlying this concept is the idea that metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, but an indispensable tool of human understanding whereby people make use of structures that are grounded in physical and bodily experience in order to reason about abstract concepts. Hence, as a great deal of attention within cognitive linguistics has been devoted to the study of the cognitive principles governing the ways people reason about relationships, emotions and mental functions, it might be interesting to briefly consider some of the insights gained in this area of research. A discussion of this literature would take an overview of an extensive body of research. For our purpose, however, it is enough to list some of the most cited metaphors for conceptualizing the inner life of human subjects (see Table 1).<sup>56</sup>

As can be seen, there is a significant degree of overlap among the source domains used to conceptualise both emotions and mental functions. A large part of this overlap is centred on the basic human experiential domains of physical movement and spatial boundedness, or containment. As Lakoff and Johnson have pointed out, these domains each give rise to a specific structure, what they call an "image schema" (Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987, Hampe 2005). Image schemas are recurrent patterns, shapes, and regularities in, or of, human ongoing bodily activities that emerge as meaningful structures within our conceptual system. The structure underlying movement is that of the "source-path-goal" schema or simply "pathschema" (Johnson 1987: 113-7, Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 32-4). Because a path is a means of moving from one location to another, it consists of a starting point or "source", a destination or "goal", and a series of contiguous locations in between which relate the source and goal. The gestalt underlying the experience of spatial boundedness is that of the "in-out" schema or simply "container" schema (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 31-2). Its internal structure is made up of three structural features: an inside, an outside, and a boundary. Precisely because both schemas are internally structured, consisting of a small number of parts and relations, they are particularly suitable for the purpose of expressing non-imagistic (abstract) target domains such as emotions and mental faculties (i.e., the question of metaphorical extension). This is, for example, how we come to understand visual fields in terms of the inferential logic of containers ("The ship is *coming into* view," "That's *in the centre of* my field of vision") and intimacy in terms of the inferential logic of closeness ("We're *close* friends," "We were *tight as a glove*"). As such the various figurative words and expressions become the formal and outer signs of a human conceptual system that is based upon the metaphorical extension of structures that are grounded in bodily experience.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For a good introduction to the field of cognitive linguistics, see Vyvyan and Green 2006.

<sup>5</sup> This table comprises a selective list of conceptual metaphors compiled from various (landmark) studies in the field of cognitive linguistics including Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Kövecses 2000, Yu 2003, Yu 2004, Sweetser 1990, Yamanashi 2010, Johnson 2007: 165, Lakoff 1995, Gibbs Jr. 2005: 97, Lakoff 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Please do not worry if you do not understand all of these metaphors at this point. Most of them will be illustrated throughout the analysis part of this essay.

<sup>7</sup> It is precisely for this reason that metaphors are usually addressed in small capitals in order to denote their conceptual nature and to distinguish them from their formal and linguistic manifestations.

<b>RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONS</b>	<b>MENTAL FUNCTIONS</b>
CONTROL OF SELF BY SUBJECT IS POSSESSION	KNOWING IS SEEING
EMOTIONAL CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS	MENTAL CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS
EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP IS A DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO ENTITIES, AN	MENTAL FUNCTION IS MOTION
EMOTIONAL STATES ARE LOCATIONS	MENTAL FUNCTION IS PERCEPTION
EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS	MENTAL STATES ARE LOCATIONS
FRIENDS ARE CONTAINERS (THAT OPEN UP TO EACH OTHER)	MIND IS A BODY, THE
FRIENDSHIP IS A STRONG (PHYSICAL) BOND	MIND IS A CONTAINER, THE
FRIENDSHIP IS CLOSENESS	PERCEPTION IS CONTACT BETWEEN PERCEIVER AND PERCEIVED
HAPPY IS UP	PERCEPTION IS MOTION
INTENSITY OF EMOTION IS AMOUNT/QUANTITY (OF SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER)	PERCEPTION IS RECEPTION
INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS	PERCEPTION IS TOUCHING
LOSS OF CONTROL IS LOSS OF POSSESSION	SEEING IS TOUCHING
PEOPLE ARE CONTAINERS	THINKING IS MOVING
RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL LINKS OR CONNECTIONS	THINKING IS PERCEIVING
SAD IS DOWN	THINKING IS SEEING
(...)	UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING
	VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS
	(...)

Table 1. Metaphors of the inner life

The principle of conceptual metaphor, however, is not the only cognitive way available for humans to reason about emotions and mental functions. Another bodily resource equally fundamental, but often overlooked, is that of conceptual metonymy (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 103). Metonymies differ from metaphors in that they do not provide mental access to a domain through the inferential logic of another distinct conceptual domain (the “A is B” relation), but through a part of the same domain (the “A stands for B” relation). Two domains in particular are believed to play an important metonymical role in the representation of emotions and mental faculties, namely body parts and physiological responses (see Table 2).<sup>8</sup> For instance, it has been argued that humans have a natural tendency to associate the head as a whole with the cognitive faculty of thinking, while the body parts of the head such as eyes and ears are generally seen as standing for the perceptual functions associated with them (seeing and hearing). Likewise, people tend to metonymically relate particular facial cues with specific underlying cognitive functions and emotions (e.g., frowning to thinking, raising of the mouth corners to joy, etc.).<sup>9</sup>

RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONS	MENTAL FUNCTIONS
EFFECTS OF A STATE FOR THE STATE	BODY PART FOR ITS TYPICAL (MENTAL) FUNCTION
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS FOR EMOTION	EYES FOR SEEING
PHYSICAL CLOSENESS FOR INTIMACY	HEAD FOR THINKING
PHYSICAL CLOSENESS FOR LOVE	INSTRUMENTALITY FOR MENTAL ACTIVITY
PHYSIOLOGICAL AND EXPRESSIVE RESPONSES OF AN EMOTION FOR THE EMOTION, THE	PERCEPTUAL ORGAN FOR PERCEPTION
REDNESS IN THE FACE FOR ANGER	PHYSICAL FOR THE MENTAL, THE
(...)	(...)

Table 2. Metonymies of the inner life

On the basis of this short overview one might raise the following hypothesis: if (1) bodily source domains such as facial expressions, distance, movement and containment are important cognitive resources for conceptualising human relationships and mental states linguistically, and (2) these resources are not modality independent (i.e., being cognitive, they are only derivatively linked to language), then, (3) one might assume that the same bodily resources play a conditional role in the expression of the (fictional) mind in cinema. Testing the validity of this assumption requires that we take into consideration the resources of cinema. Indeed, cinema can only exploit a potential for further metaphorical and metonymical extensions if the bodily resources upon which these extensions are based are imposed upon the visual content of the filmic frame. What, then, are the tools available for filmmakers and their entourage in order to achieve this task? In general, one might emphasise the importance of at least three different techniques in order to evoke the cognitive source domains mentioned above, namely: (1) acting (2) framing (including camera movement) and (3) editing.<sup>10</sup> The visual elements of the actor's performance are most suitable for instantiating “facial expressions”. The frame, by its nature, lends itself to the expression of the “container” schema with an interior (on-screen) and an exterior (off-screen). The frame also imposes various “distances” onto its inside material (left-right, top-down, front-back), while mobile framing and editing are particularly useful in “connecting” these distances, the first device by showing the various locations between starting point and ending point, the second one by cutting straightaway from starting point to ending point (i.e., through a process of elimination).

<sup>8</sup> This table comprises a selective list of metonymies as mentioned in the following references: Kövecses 2000: 134, Barcelona 2002, Hilpert 2006, Yu 2004.

<sup>9</sup> For experimental support of this claim, see e.g., Ekman et al. 1980, Ekman and Friesen 2003, Scherer 1992, Kaiser and Wehrle 2001.

<sup>10</sup> For a more elaborate discussion of these techniques, see Bordwell and Thompson 2004.

Having briefly sketched out the theoretical foundation of this article, we are now able to examine the following question: how does Kubrick's work manage to embody the fictional being by relying on the resources as listed above? This will be the task of the next section, which is divided into two parts. The first part is a general discussion of some of Kubrick's visual and creative strategies for embodying relationships between characters (e.g., group membership, perceptual relationships, etc.). The second part is more specific and involves an inquiry into the causal linkage between one specific type of relationship, namely the perceptual one, and the change of state it triggers in the character's inner life (e.g., cognitive, emotional).

### 3 Embodying the fictional being in Kubrick's cinema

#### 3.1 Embodying relationships between characters

As literature indicates, humans have a natural tendency to conceptualise relationships in two embodied ways, either as DISTANCES BETWEEN ENTITIES or as SPATIAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ENTITIES (Kövecses 2000: 92-4). In this section we will show, by means of a description of various scenes, how Kubrick's work seems to extend both metaphors systematically in order to impose various relationships between characters.

To illustrate the first extension, let us consider a scene from *Spartacus* (1960) in which a group of gladiators (including Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) himself) await a gladiatorial battle to the death inside a wooden cabin (see Figure 1).<sup>11</sup> The event is rendered in a single static shot. The left-right schema is appropriated in order to align the characters symmetrically inside the frame. The distance between both sides of the frame is extended in order to position the gladiators as rivals of each other. Both pairs, similar in dress and outer appearance, are separated from each other by the presence of a wooden sliding door in the center of the frame. As the door slides open, two new parties enter the frame. In the top background we can see the Roman audience sitting on a balcony waiting for the gladiators to enter the arena, while the arena itself in the center middleground of the frame is taken in by their brutal trainer Marcellus (Charles McGraw). As a result, a new distance (and by extension a new relationship) is created. Where the gladiators previously viewed as two distinct groups sitting opposite of each other (grounded in the left-right schema), they are now united in the lower foreground of the frame, forming one proletarian group against the elite in the top background. By extending the foreground-background structure, or front-back schema, Kubrick manages to underline the contrast between the two opposing worlds.



Figure 1. *Spartacus*

For the next case study, I want to consider a different example in which the relationship between the characters is not rendered by way of aligning various "distances" in a static frame with stationary characters, but by way of eliciting "connections" by means of movement. A vivid example of this strategy can be found in *The Killing* (1956), Kubrick's cinematic rendering of a race track heist by a group of would-be criminals. After the successful robbery the conspirators are gathered at the apartment where they are to meet Johnny (Sterling Hayden), the leader of the gang, and divide the money. This moment of anxious waiting is rendered in one

<sup>11</sup> For a comparable analysis of the same scene, cfr. Appelt 2004: 257.

single take in which all the individual members of the group are united through the movement of the camera as it tracks the nervous walk of the clerk George Petty (Elisha Cook Jr.) (see Figure 2). The chain of connections starts with a shot of the corrupt policeman, Randy Kennan (Ted de Corsia), sitting on a sofa smoking his cigarette. As his eyes move up, George enters the scene from the left side of the frame. He walks towards the curtains where he holds still for a few seconds, only to move again, this time diagonally in a forward direction. As he stands still towards the right middleground of the frame, Marvin Unger (Jay C. Flippen), the bookkeeper of the group, shows up. From the right side of the frame George then walks from the middleground to the foreground, thus filling the frame with his bodily appearance. As he leaves the frame, the face of Mike O'Reilly (Joe Sawyer), the track bartender, is revealed. The whole scene is built upon a succession of the source-path-goal schema, whereby each time George moves from one location to another a character is exposed. In a purely visual manner the film conceives the individual members as one group.



Figure 2. *The Killing*

A similar case in which a relationship is elicited by way of moving the camera in relation to the movement of a character can be found in the scene in *Lolita* (Kubrick, 1962) where Humbert Humbert (James Mason) goes down to the lobby of a hotel to enquire about a rollaway cot to place in Lolita's room. The scene shows Humbert as he enters the lobby while drinking at the same time (see Figure 3). As he approaches the front desk from the left, the silhouette of a male head appears in the lower right corner of the frame. The viewer recognises it as the head of Clare Quilty (Peter Sellers). As Humbert reaches the desk, Clare gains the company of his female writing partner. Humbert is now positioned in the centre background of the frame in the middle of the couple in the foreground. The destination of the source-path-goal schema gives rise to a new front-back schema, and by extension a new relationship. By walking towards the desk Humbert has placed himself within the visual field of the couple, thus becoming the object of their gaze. In one single camera movement the film moves from an objective to a semi-subjective shot. If Humbert were to have been filmed semi-subjectively during the whole course of his movement and if he, at the end, turned into the perceiver as opposed to the perceived, one would get a structure similar to the one underlying the tricycle scene in *The Shining* (1980) when Danny (Danny Lloyd) turns a corner and faces the ghosts of the murdered Grady twins (see Figure 3). Here the empty-full schema is appropriated to enhance the suspense of the scene (i.e., the anxiety that goes together with the sudden filling of an empty visual field).<sup>12</sup>

In both cases the perceptual relationship that unfolds at the end of the movement is grounded in a distance between front and back. One might ask how this distance might be further "bridged" by "connecting" both entities within the shot? Kubrick's films provide us with some striking examples in this regard. Consider, for example, the moment in *Barry Lyndon* when Lady Lyndon is introduced for the first time in the film through the perception of Redmond and the Chevalier du Balibari (Patrick Magee). The shot starts with a static

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. Coëgnarts and Kiss 2017.



Figure 3. *Lolita* (top) and *The Shining* (below)

composition akin to the ending points of the shots already analysed from *Spartacus* and *Lolita*. However, as the characters move their heads inwards towards the centre of the frame, the frame becomes mobile as the camera starts to zoom-in on the Lyndon family promenade (see Figure 4). From a relationship grounded in a “distance” between front and back, the scene moves to a relation based on a “connection” between front and back. Perception is metaphorically understood in terms of motion or contact between perceiver and perceived.



Figure 4. *Barry Lyndon*

One could also reverse this movement by using a zoom-out, starting from the front side of a character or a group of characters and gradually pulling back until the viewer has a full view of the space in front of the character(s) (which, in case of reciprocity, might be occupied by another perceiving entity). Consider, for example, the marching scene of the British Grenadiers in *Barry Lyndon* (see Figure 4); as the drummers begin to play and Captain John Quin (Leonard Rossiter) starts to march, the camera zooms out as the men continue moving forward, pulling back until we have a view of civilians standing with their backs to the camera, a panorama of them watching the marching Redcoats and the surrounding fields. The zoom-out evokes a foreground-background structure that turns the men into the object of the civilians' perceptual field.<sup>13</sup> Film style is used as a means to structure the first-order world of perception.

### 3.2 Embodying the fictional mind

The previous section investigated how relationships are imposed onto the first-order reality in front of the camera by structures that are grounded in sensory-motor experience (source-path-goal, left-right, front-back, etc.). It is through these structures that distances and connections are formed and that, by extension, relationships are brought into being. One of these relationships was the perceptual relationship. The next section takes this target domain a level further by demonstrating its causal pairing with another target domain, that of a change of state in the character's mind (e.g., the rise of an emotion or an idea) whereby the former is seen as the cause of the latter. As argued elsewhere (Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2016: 449), this linkage can be rephrased more formally as follows: the character's perception of an event causes the state of the character to change from one state to another (Perception [Entity/event] → Change [Entity, State<sup>1</sup>; Entity, State<sup>2</sup>]). In what follows, we will show how this conceptual formula underlies various cinematic expressions in Kubrick's work in which each expression differs in terms of its representation of the two central target domains, namely character perception (as cause) and the mental change of state (as effect). To structure the analysis, we distinguish between two groups of examples each depending on the nature of the change of state (cognitive versus emotional). This distinction is made for analytical purposes. In cinema, as in reality, emotions and cognition are closely intertwined. Nonetheless, it is possible to roughly separate between examples that are either predominantly cognitive or emotional in their propositional content.

#### 3.2.1 Cognitive states

##### 3.2.1.1 Humbert's plan to murder "the Haze woman"

For the first "cognitive" example, I would like to analyse a case in which the mental change of state is rendered solely by way of the metonymical resource of acting. Consider, for example, the moment in *Lolita* when Humbert lies on the marital bed contemplating murdering his wife Charlotte (Shelley Winters). This sardonic plan is triggered in Humbert's mind by his perception of Charlotte's late husband's gun, which lies on the night table. The event can be rephrased as follows: Humbert's perception (gun) → Humbert's cognition (idea of murdering his wife). The scene consists of four shots (see Figure 5). In the first shot Humbert's attention is drawn to the gun on the night table as he puts on his slippers. In the second shot, the relationship between Humbert and the gun is intensified by mapping the foreground-background structure onto the perceptual relationship between object perceived and perceiving character, respectively (PERCEPTION IS A DISTANCE). Framing imposes a structure onto the first-order reality. Next the film cuts to a point-of-view shot revealing to the viewer that the gun is loaded, thus contradicting Charlotte's earlier statement. The inside material of the frame is mapped onto Humbert's visual field (VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER).<sup>14</sup> The fourth and final shot consists of a single

<sup>13</sup> One might wonder what the effect is of zooming-out from a character that is looking in front of him? Also here, Kubrick's work is insightful. Notable examples in this regard are the zoom-out accompanying the dreamy melancholic stare of Lady Lyndon in *Barry Lyndon* or Alex (Malcolm McDowell)'s stare in the opening scene of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Because the characters' eyes are directed towards the camera itself, the zoom-out is unable to reveal the object of their gazes (i.e., the camera cannot film itself). It appears as though the character is looking straight into the eyes of the viewer.

<sup>14</sup> *Lolita* considers an example where the object of perception inside the point-of-view shot resides close to the character's eyes (i.e., the camera). If the object would be located far from the character, the filmmaker might bridge this distance by zooming-in on the

static shot of Humbert as he stares in front of him. The performer's body and facial expression allow us to apprehend what the character is thinking<sup>15</sup> (HEAD AND FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR THINKING), namely the rising idea of murdering Charlotte (i.e., that which Mason's voice-over is also communicating verbally).



Figure 5. *Lolita*

### 3.2.1.2 Barry's plan to escape the British army

The above considered a case in which only the perception of Humbert was rendered metonymically by extending the inferential logic of the container schema and the front-back image schema. The next example considers a case in which the target domain of the change of state is not only rendered metonymically, but also metaphorically. One such instance can be found in *Barry Lyndon* when Redmond "sees" an opportunity to escape his six-year commitment to the British army by stealing the clothes and steed from an officer (see Figure 6). This idea is triggered in Barry's mind when he observes two naked army-men embracing each other in a lake (i.e., Barry's perception [men] → Barry's cognition [idea of deserting the army]). The perception part of the equation is rendered by zooming in on the couple, starting from a location behind Barry at the river's edge, passing over his shoulder, and moving into a close image of the two men (PERCEPTION IS MOTION or PERCEPTION IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN FRONT AND BACK). The relationship between Barry and the object of his perception is elicited in the same manner as Barry's perception of Lady Lyndon, as discussed earlier in this paper (i.e., by connecting foreground and background). Once the connection is achieved, the film cuts to a front angle view of Barry in long shot. We now turn towards the effect of his perception onto his mental state of mind. At first his cognition is triggered metonymically by the performance of Ryan O'Neal. He turns his face around a couple of time to see whether or not he is alone: bodily behavior betrays an underlying intention of the mind. Then he stares in front of him, much in the same way as Humbert did in our previous example. But unlike *Lolita* the film adds something new to the scene. As he stares in front of him, the camera starts to gradually zoom in on Barry face's, thereby simulating the "movement" of his thinking (CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION or THINKING IS MOVING). This movement is now inwards rather than outwards as the object of his mental perception (i.e., the idea) is located inside his mind rather than outside, in the external world. As with *Lolita*, the exposition concerning the character's state of mind is further uttered by a voice-over informing the viewer in clear verbal terms what the protagonist is thinking.

object. Kubrick uses this technique of combining a point-of-view shot with a fast zoom-in on the object in several of his films. Notable in this regard is the cinematic rendering of the Vietcong sniper's perception of the American marines in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).

<sup>15</sup> On the relationship between acting and thinking, cfr. Hewko and Taylor 2016.

Figure 6. *Barry Lyndon*

### 3.2.1.3 HAL 9000's discovery of Dave and Frank's plans to disconnect 'him'

The above example considered a case in which the CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION metaphor was triggered cinematically by way of zooming in. The same effect, however, can also be achieved by way of editing. Consider, for example, the scene in *2001: A Space Odyssey* when HAL 9000 discovers Dave (KeirDullea) and Frank's (Gary Lockwood) plan to disconnect him (see Figure 7) (Cfr. Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2016: 102-3). This cognition is triggered by HAL's perception of the movements of the astronauts' lips as they are talking to each other in a sealed space pod (HAL's perception [lips] → HAL's cognition [discovery of murder plans]). In the first shot, the front-back schema is extended in order to oppose Dave and Frank (as one group) perceptually to HAL. They are talking about a navigational failure that HAL may have made, and the possibility of disconnecting him. As the conversation continues, apparently outside of HAL's range of hearing, the film cuts to a closer shot of the computer's eye, followed by a return to the initial framing of the first shot. The film then cuts to an extreme close-up of HAL's eye. Editing rather than camera movement is used to elicit a change of location and by metaphorical extension HAL's change of state. The scene forms an interesting contrast with our two earlier examples in that it does not fall back on the metonymical resource of acting to infer HAL's cognitive mind-set: since HAL is no human actor, but a computer, he cannot express his mental activity through his facial features. The camera then cuts to the final shot: a silent extreme close-up of Frank's moving lips, screen right, from the perspective of HAL. Then, for the first time, the camera brings movement to the scene by panning left to Dave's lips, back right to Frank, and finally left again to Dave. Thus, the film shifts to the computer's point-of-view (VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER). By making the viewer share HAL's visual field, the audience is made aware of the astronauts' plans to shut him down. In other words, HAL's visual perception is used as a means to reach HAL's cognition of the astronauts' motives (KNOWING IS SEEING).

## 3.2.2 Emotional states

### 3.2.2.1 Barry's seduction of Lady Lyndon

For the first example of a character's perception inducing a change of state that is more emotionally driven rather than cognitively motivated, I would like to consider the pivotal seduction scene from *Barry Lyndon* (see Figure 8).<sup>16</sup> Redmond Barry and Lady Lyndon are silently sitting at a table opposite each other while playing cards. As Redmond keeps staring at her, she is gradually drawn to him (Lady Lyndon's perception [Redmond] → emotional state in Lady Lyndon [of being in love]). The scene involves a juxtaposition of images in which each character occupies its own bounded region of space (PERSONS ARE CONTAINERS). The perception

<sup>16</sup> This analysis considers a significantly revised version of our earlier discussion of the same scene, see Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2012: 12.



Figure 7. *2001: A Space Odyssey*

between the two characters is elicited cinematically by way of connecting both containers (both characters) through editing and the shot-reverse-shot technique. During the whole time of the intersection of their gazes, Barry is rendered in the same medium shot. His face almost fully occupies the space he is residing in, giving him an intense and domineering presence. His “container” is not being interfered by the appearance of other characters. The contrast could not be greater with the way Lady Lyndon is portrayed: the camera does not capture her in medium shot, but in long shot, and she resides in the background, right side of the frame. In the left foreground we can see the back of Barry interfering with “her space”. Perception is now elicited by way of framing a distance between left-right and front-back. By eliciting this formal contrast, the film manages to realise two things. Firstly, it succeeds in giving Lady Lyndon the impression that she is less in control of her container (her own self) as opposed to Barry (LOSS OF CONTROL IS LOSS OF POSSESSION OF SPACE). Secondly, by keeping a distance between the camera and Lady Lyndon, the film elicits the idea that Barry has not yet fully taken control over her. The film upholds this strategy for the duration of two connections. As we enter the third connection, however, the situation changes as Lady Lyndon is now also portrayed in the same way as Barry (i.e., in medium shot). Lady Lyndon now occupies more space in the frame (INCREASE OF EMOTIONAL INTENSITY IS INCREASE OF AMOUNT OF SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER), while at the same time the distance has been reduced (INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS). Barry has seduced her. In the final shot, Lady Lyndon announces that she is going outside for a breath of fresh air, thus introducing the upcoming balcony scene (i.e., the actual and literal kissing scene).

### 3.2.2.2 Dr. Harford's emotional breakdown

The second example occurs at the end of *Eyes Wide Shut* when Bill suffers a breakdown right after seeing the mask, symbol of his moral and marital betrayal, as it lies on a pillow next to his sleeping wife (Nicole Kidman) (Harford's perception [mask] → change of state [Bill's emotional breakdown]) (see Figure 9). The perception part of this emotionally intense scene is rendered through a single camera movement: as Bill enters the bedroom and his head turns to the bed, the camera quickly moves to the right connecting his facial expression to the mask, the object of his perception (PERCEPTION IS MOTION or PERCEPTION IS CONNECTION). The speed of the movement is fast as a way to evoke Bill's shock of seeing the object. The film then cuts to a medium shot of his reaction (FACIAL EXPRESSION STANDS FOR EMOTION). The intensity of the emotion increases, as he now occupies more space inside the frame (INCREASE OF EMOTIONAL INTENSITY IS INCREASE OF AMOUNT IN A CONTAINER). The film then cuts to a closer shot of his wife. This back-and-forth change of location is repeated once more. Despite these connections between perceiver and perceived, both characters reside in their own private space (PERSONS ARE CONTAINERS). Then the scene reaches its emotional climax. The camera shows an empty blue colored space. From above right side of the frame, Bill enters the frame with his body (mid-level). As he keeps staring at his wife, he falls lower and lower into the frame until his face fully occupies the centre of the frame. He starts to cry. The location of the camera is remarkable. By placing the camera at a level closer to the marital bed (to his wife) and lower than Bill's eye level



Figure 8. *Barry Lyndon*

(at standing position), the film manages to express even more intensely the effect of falling down (SADNESS IS DOWN). In the next shot he enters the frame of his wife by lying next to her. By leaving his own bounded region, he has now lost himself (LOSS OF SELF IS LOSS OF CONTROL OVER SPACE).



Figure 9. *Eyes Wide Shut*

### 3.2.2.3 General Mireau's friendship with General Broulard

For the final example I would like to consider the visually complex opening scene from *Paths of Glory* (see Figure 10). General Mireau is promised a promotion by his superior General Broulard on the condition that he launches a “suicidal” attack on the heavily defended Anthill. During the scene, the state of their relationship repetitiously shifts between “cold” and “warm”, eventually ending in friendship as soon as Mireau accepts Broulard's offer. The scene starts in affection: as General Broulard enters the room, both generals are captured together in one shot (INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS) (see Figure 10a). But as soon as they take a seat around a table and Broulard starts to outline his plans to attack the anthill, fragmentation takes over as each character is now reduced to its own private frame (PEOPLE ARE CONTAINERS). The camera alternatively cuts between the two generals. When Broulard mentions his plans to Mireau, he is no longer filmed in long shot, but in medium shot. By shortening the distance between the camera and the character, the film visually announces the increase in intensity of their talk.

As a reaction to Mireau's lack of excitement towards his plans, Broulard stands up (see Figure 10b). Matching this action, the film cuts to a long shot uniting both generals again in the same frame. This unity, however, is short lived as Broulard walks away and the camera simultaneously pans to the right, thereby abandoning Mireau to the off screen world. To regain his favour, Mireau claims his space by walking into Broulard's frame as they encounter each other near the whisky table. Their friendship improves only for a few seconds as



Figure 10a. *Paths of Glory*

Broulard returns to the table leaving Mireau standing alone. Fragmentation takes over again. As Broulard stays seated, Mireau walks towards a desk. He starts to talk about how important the lives of his men are. The camera, however, does not follow him. Because Mireau is left standing in the background, he loses his dominance within the frame. As such his words are ripped from any credibility. Yet at the same time, the film manages to preserve the distance with General Broulard.

Mireau approaches the table again, yet now it is Broulard who is distancing himself by leaving the table and moving to a location further behind him (see Figure 10c). The camera renders them together as a perceptual relationship in one shot by extending the front-back schema. Then General Broulard starts to lure him with the possibility of a promotion. The film cuts to a medium shot of Mireau's facial expression in profile, thus metonymically revealing his excitement and the change of state in his mind. He now approaches General Broulard by joining his space. He takes him by the arm, and together they start to walk twice around the round shaped interior plant in the middle of the room. Their bond is ratified by way of circularity (FRIENDSHIP IS A STRONG SPATIAL BOND). Their movement ends up with a handshake in the corner of the room. The camera, however, stopped following the two generals as soon as they left the centre of the room, detaching itself from their immoral agreement.

## 4 Conclusion

In an interview included in Joseph Gelmis' *The Film Director as Superstar*, Kubrick once commented that, "anyone seriously interested in comparative film techniques should study the differences in approach of two directors, Eisenstein and Chaplin. Eisenstein is all form and no content, whereas Chaplin is content and no form" (Gelmis 1970). By definition, the director who combines both form and content is normatively speaking a "greater" director than the one who only masters either one of the two categories. This paper shows that Kubrick belongs to that unique category of filmmakers who creatively makes use of the resources of cinema in order to express its thematic concerns in a purely cinematic and non-verbal manner. Consequently, the



Figure 10b. *Paths of Glory* (continued)



Figure 10c. *Paths of Glory* (continued)

paradoxical question underlying this unity is how form and content can intertwine, given their opposing relationship. This article sought a solution to this problem in the notion of “structure” as it received considerable attention in the field of cognitive linguistics, in particular Conceptual Metaphor Theory. It argued that the reason why Kubrick manages to elicit conceptual meaning in such a visual manner is that his work, in addition to the resource of acting, heavily relies on structures of sensory-motor experience (e.g., front-back, source-path-goal, container) in order to communicate its thematic content (e.g., about the fictional being). The article, however, is not without its limitations: it tested the hypothesis almost exclusively with respect to the visual design of Kubrick’s films. The aural dimension of meaning-making, however, merits equal attention, especially given the importance of music and sound in Kubrick’s *oeuvre*.<sup>17</sup>

## References

- Appelt, Christian (2004). “The Craft of Seeing.” In *Stanley Kubrick*, edited by Hans-Peter Reichmann and Ingeborg Flagge, 254-65. Frankfurt: Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main.
- Barcelona, Antonio (2002). “Clarifying and Applying the Notions of Metaphor and Metonymy within Cognitive Linguistics: An Update.” In *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, edited by René Dirven and Ralf Pörings, 207-78. Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson (2004). *Film Art: An Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Chattah, Juan (2015). “Film Music as Embodiment.” In *Embodied Cognition and Cinema*, edited by Maarten Coëgnarts and Peter Kravanja, 81-114. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Coëgnarts, Maarten and Miklós Kiss (2017). “Look Out Behind You! Grounding Suspense in the Slasher Film.” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 15(3): 348-74.
- Coëgnarts, Maarten and Peter Kravanja (2016). “Perceiving Causality in Character Perception: A Metaphorical Study of Causation in Film.” *Metaphor and Symbol* 31(2): 91-107.
- Coëgnarts, Maarten and Peter Kravanja (2016). “Perceiving Emotional Causality in Film: A Conceptual and Formal Analysis.” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14(1): 440-66.
- Coëgnarts, Maarten and Peter Kravanja (Winter 2012). “Towards an Embodied Poetics of Cinema: The Metaphoric Construction of Abstract Meaning in Film.” *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* (4).
- Eder, Jens (2010). “Understanding Characters.” *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind* 1(4): 16-40.
- Ekman, Paul and Wallace V. Friesen (2003). *Unmasking the Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions From Facial Clues*. Los Altos: Malor Books.
- Ekman, Paul, Wallace V. Friesen, and Sonia Ancoli (1980). “Facial Signs of Emotional Experience.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39(6): 1125-34.
- Falsetto, Mario (2001). *Stanley Kubrick: A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis*. Westport: Praeger.
- Gaut, Berys (2010). *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gelmis, Joseph (1970). *The Film Director as Superstar*. New York: Doubleday and Company.
- Gibbs Jr., Raymond W. (2005). *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grodal, Torben (2009). *Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture, and Film*. New York Oxford University Press.

<sup>17</sup> For a very insightful analysis of the role of image-schematic driven metaphors in the film music of *Eyes Wide Shut*, see Juan Chattah 2015: 108-10.

- Grodal, Torben (2016). "Film, Metaphor, and Qualia Salience." In *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games: Cognitive Approaches*, edited by Kathrin Fahlenbrach, 101-14. London-New York: Routledge.
- Günther, Winfried (2004). "A Shot Conveys an Outlook: Some Aspects of the Mise-en-scène in *Spartacus*." In *Stanley Kubrick*, edited by Hans-Peter Reichmann and Ingeborg Flagge, 56-65. Frankfurt: Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main.
- Hampe, Beate (2005). *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*. Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hewko, Bryn and Aaron Taylor (2016). "Thinking Through Acting: Performative Indices and Philosophical Assertions." *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* 3(4) <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2016/11/22/thinking-through-acting-performative-indices-and-philosophical-assertions> (last accessed 18-03-17).
- Hilpert, Martin (2006). "Keeping an Eye on the Data: Metonymies and Their Patterns." In *Corpus-based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy*, edited by Anatol Stefanowitsch and Stefan Thomas Gries, 123-52. Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Johnson, Mark (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, Mark (2007). *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kaiser, Susanne and Thomas Wehrle (2001). "Facial Expressions as Indicator of Appraisal Processes." In *Appraisal Processes in Emotion*, edited by Klaus R. Scherer, Angela Schorr and Tom Johnstone, 285-300. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Zoltán (2000). *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, George (1995). "Reflections on Metaphor and Grammar." In *Essays in Semantics and Pragmatics: In Honor of Charles J. Fillmore*, edited by Masayoshi Shibatani and Sandra A. Thompson, 133-44. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lakoff, George (1996). "Sorry, I'm Not Myself Today: The Metaphor System for Conceptualizing the Self." In *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar*, edited by Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser, 91-123. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George (1987). *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Our Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Turner, (1989). *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Radden, Günter (1998). "The Conceptualisation of Emotional Causality by Means of Prepositional Phrases." In *Speaking of Emotions: Conceptualisation and Expression*, edited by Angeliki Athanasiadou and Elzbieta Tabakowska, 273-94. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Scherer, Klaus R. (1992). "What Does Facial Expression Express?" In *International Review of Studies on Emotion*, edited by K. T. Strongman, 139-65. Chichester: Wiley.
- Sweetser, Eve (1990). *From Etymology to Pragmatics: Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vyvyan, Evans and Melanie Green (2006). *Cognitive linguistics. An introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Yamanashi, Masa-aki (2010). "Metaphorical Modes of Perception and Scanning." In *Tropical Truth(s): The Epistemology of Metaphor and Other Tropes*, edited by Armin Burkhardt and Brigitte Nerlich, 157-75. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Yu, Ning (2003). "Chinese Metaphors of Thinking." *Cognitive Linguistics* 14(2/3): 141–65.

Yu, Ning (2004). "The Eyes for Sight and Mind." *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 663–86.