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Metaphor and symbol

SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME in animation film

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The quickly growing discipline of multimodality has hitherto primarily found its inspirational models in semiotics and in Systemic Functional Linguistics. However, Cognitive Linguistics, and specifically its Conceptual Metaphor Theory branch, has over the past years proved a store of knowledge and methods of analysis that can benefit the further advance of the young discipline. In this paper the metaphor SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME in animation films is examined. It is shown that (a) analysing this metaphor presupposes understanding "home" as a symbol; (b) animation has medium-specific affordances to implement the metaphor; (c) the metaphor combines embodied and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, symbolism, life is a journey, source-path-goal, animation film, multimodality

1. Introduction

The journal *Metaphor and Symbol* (formerly called *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*) has in the more than 25 years of its existence been true to one half of its name by publishing a vast number of papers with the word (or root) "metaphor" in the title. In fact, a count of titles including the word or root "metaphor-" at least once in the first 25 volumes (1986–2010) yields no less than 275 instances. By contrast, "symbol" or one of its derivations occurs only 8 times in that same period.¹

Since the very name of the journal suggests that "metaphor" and "symbol" are closely related tropes, this is a somewhat surprising finding. Perhaps one reason for the scarcity of work on symbolic activity is that Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), with its mission to lay bare structural "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff &

Johnson, 1980), has long focused predominantly on the embodied dimension of metaphors. CMT only later developed more interest in metaphors' cultural dimensions (e.g., Fludernik, 2011; Gibbs & Steen, 1999; Kövecses, 2005; Semino & Culpeper, 2002; Yu, 1998) – and symbolism is a cultural phenomenon *par excellence*. Another reason may be that whereas studies linking poetic and conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Turner, 1996) pertain only to the verbal realm, the study of symbolism has a long tradition in art history scholarship, a discipline that has hitherto not engaged much with CMT, or vice versa (but see Rothenberg, 2008). This is unsurprising precisely because of CMT's penchant for studying *verbal* manifestations of non-literal thinking.

But it is important to investigate how metaphor and symbol are related. In formulating more precisely how the poetics of the mind (Gibbs, 1994) govern the production and interpretation not just of verbal, but also of visual and multimodal discourse, CMT can complement and refine the work on multimodality done in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) tradition (e.g., Jewitt, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Royce & Bowcher, 2007). More specifically, CMT can contribute to the discipline of multimodality by its theoretical explicitness and its greater commitment to methodological rigour (for more discussion of these problems in SFL, see e.g., Forceville, 2010a). In this paper I intend to aid CMT and of multimodality scholarship by examining the concept HOME in a variety of the metaphor *PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION* in animation films, showing how metaphoric and symbolic dimensions interact in the creation of meaning. I will first briefly consider the relation between “metaphor” and “symbol.” Subsequently I will discuss five animation films that feature, I argue, the *SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME* metaphor, concentrating on the visual and verbal modalities. Finally I will draw tentative conclusions and make suggestions for broadening this project.

2. Metaphor and symbol

Lakoff & Johnson's (1980, p. 5) “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” remains a useful description of metaphor. That is, we comprehend target domain A as source domain B. Making sense of a metaphor is done by mapping salient properties (and where possible: relations between those properties) from source to target. Importantly, the mapping is to be understood as including salient connotations adhering to the source, and also typical emotional responses to it (Forceville, 1996). Target and source belong to semantic domains or categories that in the context in which the metaphor occurs are understood as different. By contrast, in symbolism we understand a source domain B, in a

given (sub)cultural community, to *stand for* a target domain A (see e.g., Beckson & Ganz, 1975, p. 246; Wales, 2001, p. 379). Some well-known examples are the following: a rose stands for love, a cross for suffering, a skull for death, an hour-glass for mortality. In these examples, B stands in a metonymical relationship to A, where in contrast to metaphor both target and source belong to the same semantic domain. The lover gives (red) roses to his beloved; Christ died on the cross; the skull is a part of the human body's remains after death; and the hour-glass visualizes the passing of time. I suspect that most symbols are rooted in metonymy rather than in arbitrary convention.

To avoid terminological confusion, it is crucially important to emphasize that I use the word "symbol" for a sign that typically exemplifies a *non-arbitrary* relation between signifier (e.g., cross) and signified (suffering). By contrast, in his famous triad "icon-index-symbol" Charles Sanders Peirce reserves the word "symbol" precisely for signs with an *arbitrary* relation between signifier and signified. In his theory, the verbal signifier "dog" refers to the signified (or concept) DOG purely by an arbitrary convention adopted in the English language. Given my view that a symbol is a special kind of metonym, my "symbol" is closer to Peirce's "index." Whether symbolism can also be based on an *arbitrary* link between source and target is a difficult question. After all, what appears as arbitrary may once have been a motivated, metonymic connection that is now no longer retrievable. (Has the metonymic motivation for the one-time symbolizing of gayness by wearing a single earring been lost, or was it a symbol arising out of an arbitrary convention in the first place?)

If this reasoning is correct, we could say that – always: within a given cultural group – in symbolism one metonym of a concept has become so salient at the expense of other (existing or unrealized or possible) metonyms of that concept that this privileged metonym suffices to evoke that concept on its own, even with no or minimal context. The test for this is to provide the members of a cultural group (country, club, party, gang ...) with the word for the metonym ("cross," "rose") and ask them to provide connotations. If the members of the group significantly often mention the same connotations, the metonym can be said to serve as a symbol for that salient connotation ("[Christ's] suffering," "[romantic] love").

3. House/home as symbol

The concept "house" is a phenomenon with a wide network of connotations. A house is a usually man-made structure that ideally provides protection against extreme temperatures and other unpleasant weather conditions (Brown, 2010, p. 89). In addition, the house protects humans against hostile creatures, whether

animals or unfriendly fellow humans. A suitable house thus helps human beings to survive. Inasmuch as houses are often places where humans live together in groups, often as (extended) families, houses are typically places where they live out, or perform, a large part of what they consider their identities. Intimate relationships flourish or derail in houses, one entertains friends there, and people are born, love, and die in houses. The connotations of a house as a place where one can be oneself, where important events take place, and where one feels safe, adhere more specifically to the concept that, in English, is referred to by the word “home”: “home” = “house” + positive connotations. This transpires from expressions such as “my home is my castle,” “home is where the heart is,” “there’s no place like home,” “make yourself at home,” and “East, west, home’s best.” In short, human beings strive to have some sort of house-as-home. (Even though other languages do not make the house/home distinction, I will henceforward assume that the positive connotations adhering to “house” are widespread, possibly universal; I will thus go on using the word “home” as shorthand for “house + positive connotations”). The material conditions of such a home can differ: it can be made of stone, wood, clay, ice, or cloth; it can be a hut or a mansion; and while homes are usually man-made, existing natural conditions such as caves or bowers can be adapted to function as homes, too.

The house-as-home is often used as a symbol for safety, intimacy with kin and friends, and thus for experiencing a sought-after identity. In this paper I will examine the metaphor SEARCHING FOR ONE’S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME, which is a special case of the more general metaphor PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION. The popular version of this latter is X IS A JOURNEY – where X can for instance be LIFE, A RELATIONSHIP, OR A CAREER. The JOURNEY metaphor is probably one of the most deep-rooted metaphors in human thinking (see Forceville, 2006, 2011a, 2011b; Forceville & Jeulink, 2011; Johnson, 1987; Katz & Taylor, 2008; Ritchie, 2008; Yu, 2009). Here, my central claim is that the search for a/the home has such strong symbolical connotations that artistic discourses exemplifying it evoke the metaphor SEARCHING FOR ONE’S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME.

In Max Black’s (1979) terms, SEARCHING FOR ONE’S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME would be a “strong” metaphor: it is *emphatic* in that it would be very difficult to replace the “home” part of the source domain by another concept without affecting the potential mappings from source to target, and it is *resonant* in that it allows for a wide range of mappings. These mappings in most contexts do not consist of isolated features, but of structured networks of features in which the relations between the features are co-mapped (this is discussed in terms of “structure mapping” by Dedre Gentner; see e.g., Gentner & Jeziorski, 1993, p. 448; I

will here assume that connotations, too, can be part and parcel of “structure mappings”). It is to a considerable extent the mappability of these relations between the pertinent features in the source domain that make the metaphor emphatic. Thus the source domains LOOKING FOR/GOING TO CHURCH/THE OFFICE/THE MUSEUM, for instance, while all potentially giving rise to emphatic metaphors in their own right, cannot serve as replacements to LOOKING FOR A HOME because what people typically do at home is very different from what they do at these other buildings. Another way of putting this is that the symbolic connotations (if any) evoked by these other buildings do not coincide with those of “home.”

4. Case studies

As in Forceville and Jeulink (2011) and Forceville (2011b), the case studies analyzed here are animation films. One reason for focusing on film is CMT’s central tenet of “embodied cognition,” which entails that humans typically conceptualize the abstract in terms of the concrete – where the concrete is that which is perceptible or pertains to the body’s motor functions (Forceville 2011a, p. 282). However, hitherto little work using the CMT framework has been applied to film (exceptions are Coëgnarts & Kravanja, 2012; Fahlenbrach, 2007, 2010; Forceville, 2006, 2011a; Kappelhoff & Müller, 2012; Yu, 2009). Animation is a specifically interesting type of film because the visuals of animation usually are entirely *made* (rather than the result of *registering* a pro-filmic reality), and can for instance easily make use of transformation and exaggeration without requiring a realistic motivation. They are thus to an unusually large extent under the control of the creator. This enables the exploitation of embodied schemata such as BALANCE, PATH and CONTAINMENT for metaphorical purposes more easily than for instance in live-action film. Since in terms of resources (money, time), the making of animation is moreover a costly procedure, it is a medium that requires careful planning of each detail that is to end up in the final film. Perhaps more than in live-action photography or film, in animation (as in comics) we are encouraged to find each single element meaningful. A further reason for the focus on animation films is that they are often short (say, between 1 and 15 minutes): meaning appears in condensed form. Finally, short animation films often have no language, so that demonstrating how structural metaphors are the motor for their interpretation helps show that “the locus of metaphor is thought, not language” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 204).

4.1 *Hoppity Goes to Town/Mr. Bug Goes to Town* (Max & Dave Fleischer, USA 1941, 78')

Summary

After a long trip, Hoppity the grasshopper returns to the small “Lowlands” world where his fellow bugs live, commenting “There’s still no place like home.” However, the Lowlands, a patch of urban garden in the middle of a metropolis, is under threat by “the human ones,” who carelessly drop their garbage on the bugs’ houses and disturb their territory. Hoppity is shocked: “Nobody’s safe in their own homes – or out of them. How long has this been going on? ... There’s only one thing that we can do, we’re in a groove, we got to move.” Together with Mr. Bumble, he goes scouting for a new place, but on this expedition Mr. Bumble is almost drowned. He is rescued by the lady of the house, who says, “There you are, Mr. Bumble, this is where you belong, right out here in the garden.” Eventually Hoppity finds the bug community’s new home: in the garden next to a cottage on top of a skyscraper.

The variety of the central metaphor at work here could be formulated as SURVIVAL IS LOOKING FOR A HOME. That the garden where the bug community will settle is where they “belong” was anticipated by the lady of the house’s rescue of Mr. Bee. The notion of looking for a safe house runs through the entire film. Hoppity is in love with Honey Bee, but his rival, Bagley Beetle, puts pressure on Mr. Bee to let him, Beetle, marry his daughter by promising that the two of them can live with him in the vase-house that adorns the fence surrounding the Lowlands. Tellingly, this vase-house is located higher than the houses of the other bugs; and it is no less significant that the place where the bugs eventually find their new abode is high up, exemplifying the metaphor GOOD IS UP (Plate 1). The animation medium

Plate 1. The bug community tries to find a safer place to live, higher up.
Still from *Hoppity Goes to Town*

is well-suited to depict, with due exaggerations, the embodied strains and difficulties of climbing toward a craved-for home on a high location.

4.2 *Arrietty the Borrower* (Hiromasa Yonebayashi, Japan 2010, 94')

Summary

Arrietty is a miniature girl who lives with her parents in the basement below a country house, unbeknownst to its owners. Normal, big people are considered dangerous enemies (like the “human ones” in *Hoppity Goes to Town*) intent on getting rid of miniature people. The family survives because the father every now and then undertakes a nightly expedition to the big people’s home to “borrow” things they don’t need or won’t miss, such as a lump of sugar, or a lost pin. However, once the ill-disposed servant Haru has discovered the family’s existence and whereabouts, Arrietty and her parents need to move house.

As in *Hoppity Goes to Town*, the home where the protagonists live is no longer safe. Moving towards a new home, then, is again primarily a matter of SURVIVAL IS LOOKING FOR A HOME, but by extension the new home is where the miniature people can be themselves and peacefully live out their true identity. In the film’s final shot (Plate 2) the family is seen travelling down a stream toward the sunshine, in search of a new home. The film medium, with its depth-of-field, here optimally exploits the spatial dimensions of the journey via the TIME IS SPACE metaphor: the family travels not just forward into the distance; they travel towards the future.

Plate 2. Final shot: Arrietty’s family travels down a stream in a tea kettle boat in search of a new home. Still from *Arrietty the Borrower*

4.3 *The Village of Idiots*

(Eugene Fedorenko & Rose Newlove, Canada 1999, 13')

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLGnekh2y6k>

[last accessed May 2012]

Summary

Shmendrick, living in the small Polish village of Chelm, has “a thirst for more knowledge” – as his voice-over tells us – and leaves wife and children for Warsaw “to see the big city.” On the way he takes a nap and waking up, without realizing, takes the same road *back*. He is surprised to find a village which is precisely like Chelm, with people very much resembling those he knew in Chelm and a woman and children shockingly similar to his own family. Only he himself is not there ... After some qualms, he decides to stay, believing that his alter ego is now in the village that he left, and that in the end “perhaps the entire world is simply one enormous Chelm.”

Plate 3. After his nap, Shmendrick thinks he walks on to Warsaw, while actually retracing his steps back to Chelm. Still from *The Village of Idiots*

Plate 4. Shmendrick's dream of transporting his house and the rest of the village from one place to another. Still from *The Village of Idiots*

Although Shmendrick's ostensive goal is to gain knowledge and see the big city, the idea of "going home" as going to the place where one can live out one's true identity is strongly present. Unlike Shmendrick himself, the audience knows that he has simply returned home. The idea of making a journey toward where you are already in order to find your identity is cued in an interesting manner in the opening of the film: we see Shmendrick on the roof of his house with a pile of soles with holes in them. He addresses one of them, and says, "an old sole [punning on "old soul," ChF] must have travelled far, having seen many places." He puts corks in the holes of the soles, and then hammers the soles over the holes in the roof. In this context, that is, the soles are metonymically tied to both shoes, and therefore to journeying, and to the home – the symbol of identity and the destination of the journey. Again, spatial dimensions are made to work metaphorically: in Plate 3 Shmendrick walks toward a future that is simultaneously his past. The visualization of Shmendrick's dream, too, draws on movement: the journey toward his "new self" is a *circular* one, and shows him carrying his native village, the locus of his home and thus his identity, on his back (Plate 4).

4.4 *The Lost Thing*

(Shaun Tan & Andrew Ruhemann, 2010, 15')

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EMzzJhH1Ec> and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODdagZUp4tI>

[last accessed May 2012]

Summary

A boy, bottle cap collecting on the beach, runs into a large machine-like creature with which he plays. At the end of the day he realizes it has nowhere to go and decides to take care of it. After investigating this "Lost Thing," his scientifically minded friend Pete says that he "didn't think the Lost Thing came from anywhere, and didn't belong anywhere either." The boy then takes it home. His parents are not very interested and he installs the Lost Thing in the shed behind the house, where it "seemed happy." But this can only be a temporary solution, and the next day he takes the creature to the "Federal Department of Odds and Ends." However, in this depressively dark building, the Lost Thing would just be stored away and forgotten. A cleaner advises the boy to take his ward to a place he can find by following a wobbly arrow sign. Eventually, they arrive at "what seemed to be the right place, in a dark little gap, off some anonymous little street." After opening a door, a brightly lit world appears where all kinds of oddly-shaped "lost things" happily play around. The boy takes leave of his friend, who from now on lives in this haven for lost things.

Plate 5. The bright and happy world which will become the home of the Lost Thing. Still from *The Lost Thing*

Plate 6. The Lost Thing moves to screen-right, whereas other people move to screen-left. Still from *The Lost Thing* (thanks to reviewer 1 for pointing this out)

While the place the Lost Thing ends up living in is not, in the strict sense, a house, the world in which it is finally “home” has house-like qualities: its entrance is a door-like porch, and it is partly “enclosed” (Plate 5). The fact that it is obviously too big to live in a normal house (as transpires from its size when it sits on the roof of Pete’s house, and when it occupies too much space in the parental living room) further supports the idea that the bright world is its new, and definitive home. Here, too, spatial dimensions are important. In the search for a home, the Lost Thing generally moves screen-right (Plate 6), and the camera’s panning (= moving horizontally) reinforces this left-right direction. Thus, the past is screen-left, and the future is screen-right.

- 4.5 *La Maison en Petits Cubes/Tsumiki No Ie*
 (Kunio Kato, Japan 2008, 12')
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50-fWCXvhAY>
 [last accessed September 2013]

Summary

In this wordless film (which won an Oscar in 2009), an old man lives alone in a house that stands in a sea, along with many other houses (Plate 7). But due to persistent rain the water keeps rising, so with regular intervals he needs to add a new floor to his house (Plate 8). Each floor is separated from a lower one by a trapdoor. One time, he drops his pipe, which floats down through the open trapdoor. He swims down in a diver's suit to retrieve it, but then decides to go even further down, through more trapdoors. At each underwater floor he

Plate 7. All houses stand in the sea; their inhabitants live in the top story.
 Still from *La Maison en Petit Cubes*

Plate 8. The old man regularly needs to build a new story on his house to be safe from the rising water. Still from *La Maison en Petit Cubes*

relives the period of his life spent there – with his ageing wife, with his young wife, the birth of their daughter, his marriage ... – the shift to memory-status being signalled by a warm yellow glow as opposed to the real, greyish blue of the underwater world. At the bottom of the sea we see how he meets his future wife and together with her builds the first story of their house. He also finds a wine glass there. When he is up again, he pours two glasses of wine, toasting his now dead wife.

The home symbolizes the old man's identity, each floor representing an episode in his life. No words are needed, because we understand this, again, thanks to the visually presented metaphor *TIME IS SPACE* (see Forceville, 2011b; Forceville & Jeulink, 2011). Interestingly, *TIME/SPACE* is represented on a *vertical*, not the more customary *horizontal* dimension. In this orientation, *PAST IS DOWN* and *FUTURE IS UP*. So the man needs to literally *descend* into his past (cf. "digging into the past"). The homes the man is diving into are earlier versions of the home he is currently living in. In order to understand the film, we need to recruit both the *REMEMBERING THE PAST IS GOING DOWNWARDS* metaphor as a specific instantiation of the *TIME IS SPACE* metaphor, and the home as symbol of identity. The old man thus literally dives into his earlier identities as husband, father, young man, and child. These two conceptual schemas (*TIME-AS-SPACE* and *HOME-FOR-IDENTITY*) are productive throughout the film. The higher the story the old man builds, the older he is (the fact that, as Plate 7 shows, some other houses are under sea level suggests their owners are now dead). The rising sea level exemplifies thus the inexorable progress of time; the moment the man can no longer summon the strength or will to build a new story on top of his house, he will drown in the sea of time. The *TIME IS SPACE* metaphor is also supported by the fact that, in the first scene, we see the man fishing through the trap-door in his house, presumably angling for memories of the past. It is also telling that each time he has to move to a higher story, he takes part of his furniture with him. But as we can witness during his diving to lower floors, he also left some furniture behind – a chair, the bed in which his wife was ill and possibly died and, lower down yet, a couch where he remembers photographing his daughter and son-in-law with their child. Moreover, his initial motivation for diving down is that he lost his pipe, and although he at first considers the option of buying a new pipe from a travelling salesman, he rather dives down in the hope of retrieving his beloved old pipe. These events reinforce the idea that the home and the objects used in it are closely related to the man's identity: the bed is tied to his identity as married man, and when his wife is dead he no longer wants the bed; but the pipe is part of an older identity he is not yet ready to relinquish.

5. Discussion

The five animation films discussed all draw on the house-as-home as the symbolical locus of literal survival and, by extension, of identity. Inasmuch as human beings (or their anthropomorphized animal or fabled counterparts) are typically always in search of their identity, it is unsurprising that the structural metaphor *PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION* has as one of its recurring manifestations *SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME*.

While the two feature-length mainstream films discussed, *Hoppity Goes to Town* and *Arrietty*, primarily emphasize the search for a new home as a strategy for literal survival, here too, there are overtones of the home as symbol of identity. For instance, it wouldn't feel right for Mr. Bee and Honey Bee to go and live in Beetle's house, since the price would be Honey's forced marriage with Beetle, whereas she loves Hoppity. Living in Beetle's house would be a violation of Honey Bee's identity. In *Arrietty*, the grandfather of the big people's family long ago made a doll's house for the miniature people, hoping that one day they would realize that some human beings are friendly to them, accept his present, and start living there. That is, he wanted to provide a home allowing them to live out their identity peacefully. By contrast, in the three short art animations, the home shifts from being primarily a resort of protection against physical harm to being the locus of identity in a more spiritual sense.

In both *Hoppity Goes to Town* and *Les Maisons de Petits Maisons* the movement takes place along a vertical dimension, the *UP/DOWN* orientation being important here. But it is important to realize that the source domain here is linked to different target domains. In *Hoppity* there is little doubt that both *FUTURE IS UP* and *GOOD IS UP* (and *PAST/BAD IS DOWN*). By contrast, in *Les Maisons*, only *FUTURE IS UP* (and *PAST IS DOWN*); a healthy reminder that a given source domain – here spatial image schemas – can occur with different targets (Kövecses, 2010, p. 136, calls this the “scope” of metaphors; see also Hampe, 2005).

The case studies show that the metaphors governing the animation films, while crucial for the stories, are no more than very basic templates for the sophisticated refinements that can only be appreciated by audiences familiar with symbols, intertexts, and genres: basic, embodied templates acquire rich meaning only by being enhanced and nuanced by aesthetic and cultural details. It is important to be aware of the continuum from deep-rooted, embodied, presumably universal image schemas and metaphors, via culturally specific knowledge, to the idiosyncrasies of unique texts. Cognitivist scholars should never forget that the convention to write conceptual metaphors in small capitals enables unequivocal

references to the CONCEPTUAL level of metaphor as distinct from its verbal level – but that this is no more than convenient shorthand whose precise formulation is of little consequence. I completely agree with Pettersson who, in a demonstration of conceptual metaphors' role in poetry, warns that a healthy development of CMT scholarship requires sensitivity to stylistic elements: "In terms of cognitive literary theory [...] one ignores essential thematic and formal qualities if one reduces literary works to cognitive patterns or techniques" (Pettersson, 2011, p. 108) – a point that pertains no less to the animations discussed here. There is always the danger that the small-capitals version of conceptual metaphors is taken as a somehow "correct" rendering of what happens in the mind. But if Lakoff and Johnson are right – as I think they are – that metaphors are "primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 153), the verbal rendering of metaphors' conceptual level is no more than an approximation of our minds' activities. A discourse, particularly an artistic story, can be informed by or even depend on certain metaphors, but it can never be reduced to them. So in the end, analysis of conceptual metaphors in artistic discourse requires the analyst's attentive and sensitive eye and ear not only to the skeletal metaphors and symbols that structure it, but also to the medium-specific stylistic and narrative choices made by its maker to present them afresh. The same principle, incidentally, pertains to the genre of political cartoons (see Bounegru & Forceville, 2011). Much more is going on in any multimodal discourse than whatever can be captured by the conceptual metaphor that may trigger its central strategy of interpretation.

6. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have made the following points – all of which require further investigation and empirical (dis)confirmation:

1. The PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION metaphor has as one of its most interesting and possibly most significant variants SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME.
2. Adequate analysis of this metaphor requires considering "home" as a symbol. If my proposal to consider a symbol as a special kind of metonym makes sense, this will facilitate future examination of symbolism within a CMT framework. Acceptance of the proposal also means that symbols can play a role in conceptual metaphors.

3. The focus on a structural metaphor in a non-verbal/multimodal medium such as animation film further supports the CMT tenet that we *think* metaphorically; simultaneously it shows that to further ground this tenet CMT must expand and broaden the fledgling research on structural metaphor in visual and multimodal discourse (film, comics, cartoons, gestures, music).
4. Whereas *SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME* occurs in other media (e.g., language, live-action film), animation has medium-specific affordances to express it. Since it can easily defy laws of gravity and realism, animation can (audio) visually exaggerate and emphasize embodied elements of metaphors that may be more difficult to convey in other media. Specifically, the *TIME IS SPACE* metaphor has been exploited to a smaller or greater degree in all five films discussed; in *The Village of Idiots* and *La Maison au Petits Cubes* the to-and-fro of spatial movements moreover maps on the notion of circularity in the *TIME* dimension (for more discussion of this issue, see Forceville & Jeulink, 2011).

Further work on the topic discussed here could branch out in several directions. In the first place, it is worthwhile to test other animations featuring *LOOKING FOR A HOME* in light of the claims made here. We may for instance ask: are there other target domains to which *LOOKING FOR A HOME* is systematically connected? A systematic investigation of the direction of movement as well as of the vehicle of movement is also worth pursuing. My hunch is that walking or other ways of progressing depending on protagonists' own muscle activity is privileged over transportation in cars, planes, trains, motorboats, etc., since this reinforces the physical and existential nature of *LOOKING FOR A HOME*.

It is to be expected that the home will not only feature as a symbol for identity in journeys toward it, but also in building, repairing, extending, and changing the home. Are there animation films which feature these other activities pertaining to house-as-home, and if so, how are these metaphorically exploited? It could also be insightful to investigate different kinds of buildings. I could imagine that *X IS GOING TO/BUILDING/REPAIRING A HOUSE/A CHURCH/A CASTLE/A MUSIC HALL* might occur, and that, given the symbolic potential of these buildings, they might function in conceptual metaphors as well. If so, it would be interesting to see whether they are perhaps systematically linked to specific target domains.

Of course, there is no reason to limit such investigations to animation films. Many live-action road movies and comics, too, feature the *SEARCHING FOR ONE'S IDENTITY IS LOOKING FOR A HOME* metaphor non-verbally and multimodally – and the alternatives suggested in the preceding paragraph (different buildings, different activities) are no less worth examining. Indeed one reviewer of this

paper, stressing the “containment” dimension of the home, suggested that it makes sense to investigate the Western genre, “whereby the inside of the home often symbolizes civilisation, family values, and the outside symbolizes danger, Indians, cruel nature.”

And finally, this paper may further spur on the work to be done on charting with more precision how different pictorial and multimodal varieties of tropes (metaphor, metonymy, symbol, irony, hyperbole, oxymoron ...) relate to one another (see Forceville, 2010b).

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Notes

1. The 25 volumes comprise 474 papers and book reviews. Occurrences of the two keywords were counted in the titles of the reviewed books if these were indicated in the online database at <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hmet20/current> (accessed January 2012). The word “irony” occurred in 30, and the root “figur-” in 28 titles. The root “metonym-” appeared fewer than 10 times.

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