CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture
ISSN 1481-4374
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

Volume 7 (2005) Issue 4 Article 4

Aesthetics and Audiovisual Metaphors in Media Perception

Kathrin Fahlenbrach
University of Halle-Wittenberg

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb

Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, and the Critical and Cultural Studies Commons

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, Purdue University Press selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies.
Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Fahlenbrach, Kathrin. "Aesthetics and Audiovisual Metaphors in Media Perception." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 7.4 (2005): <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280>

This text has been blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.
The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 871 times as of 11/04/13. Note: the download counts of the journal's material are since Issue 9.1 (March 2007), since the journal's format in pdf (instead of in html 1999-2007).

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture (ISSN 1481-4374), the peer-reviewed quarterly of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, is published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University online in full text and in open access. The journal publishes scholarship following tenets of the disciplines of comparative literature and cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies" in a global, international, and intercultural context and with a plurality of methods and approaches: papers for publication are invited to <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/submit.html>; for the aims and scope of the journal consult <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/clcwebaims>; for the journal's style guide consult <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/clcwebstyleguide>. In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series* <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/library>. Work published in the journal is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, in Humanities International Complete, and in the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America. *CLCWeb* is member of The Council of Editors of Learned Journals <http://www.celj.org> and it is listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals. *CLCWeb* is mirrored on the website of the British Comparative Literature Association <http://www.bcla.org/clcweb/>, it is preserved at research libraries in the Stanford University lockss system <http://www.lockss.org/lockss/>, and it is archived in the *Electronic Collection* of *Library and Archives Canada* <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/electroniccollection/>. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* is affiliated with the Purdue University Press hard-copy monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies and selected papers of the journal are published in thematic annuals in the series <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/comparativeculturalstudies.html>.
Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

CLCWeb Volume 7 Issue 4 (December 2005) Article 4
Kathrin Fahlenbrach,
"Aesthetics and Audiovisual Metaphors in Media Perception"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss4/4>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 7.4 (2005)
Thematic Issue *Media and Communication Studies at the University of Halle-Wittenberg*
Edited by Reinhold Viehoff
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss4/>

Abstract: In her paper, "Aesthetics and Audiovisual Metaphors in Media Perception," Kathrin Fahlenbrach presents a model of audiovisual analysis where focus is on audiovisual aesthetics perceived physically and affectively. Fahlenbrach starts out from the assumption that image and sound are inseparable in audiovisual media and must be treated as a unit, a "synchresis" (Chion). Fahlenbrach proposes that only this premise is able to cover the pre-consciously perceived elements sufficiently, namely the sensorial and affective structures of audiovisual aesthetics. Fahlenbrach articulates some aspects for an audiovisual aesthetics that concentrate on the interfaces between audiovisual perception and audiovisual design and employs to this end the Aristotelian concept of *aisthesis*. Following the theory of cognitive metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson), Fahlenbrach assumes that audiovisual codes and signs always rely fundamentally on schemata of physical and affective experience. Following George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Fahlenbrach regards the mapping of physical schemata onto acoustic, visual, and, respectively, audiovisual elements in the media as a metaphorical process. Drawing on an example of film sound, she explains how filmmakers project acoustic qualities onto visual *Gestalt* patterns and thereby construct audiovisual metaphors that we recognize immediately and long before we reflect on them, that is, they activate meanings that rely on basic experiences of our body.

Kathrin FAHLENBRACH

Aesthetics and Audiovisual Metaphors in Media Perception

Translated from the German by Benjamin Kraft

When flipping through television channels with our remote, we are either attracted or repelled by the tiny fragments of sounds and images. The complex set of acoustic and visual information lasting only seconds triggers sensory sensations, affects, associations, and particles of knowledge that already influence our decision to stay either on one channel or to continue the flipping through the channels. It is not only the highly conventionalized and socio-cultural codes we have that allow such a quick classification. On a deeper level, it is the audio-visual direction of primary sensory features that, within fragments of seconds, can be analyzed in their succinctness by our system of perception in a psycho-sensory and affective manner. Cutting rhythm, color intensity, visual and acoustic tone color, visual and acoustic surface textures, that is, primary sensory stimuli, which control perception in a first step and which are experienced especially intensely in their audio-visual heightening. In this study, I present criteria with which an aesthetics of audiovisual media can be described; described as an aesthetics of perception that occurs along our sensory and affective experience. I propose that such a model of aesthetics could be understood as located prior to the workings of cultural codes, schemas, and plots which in fact orient viewers cognitively to look at the television or movie screen. I also attempt to show how structural interfaces between the primary psycho-sensory process and the technical and aesthetical (artistic) forms of audiovisual media occur. In order to ground my understanding of interfaces between aesthetic perception and aesthetic experience, I introduce the concept of *aisthesis*, a notion that has received, more recently, new significance and relevance in the study of media aesthetics. Further, I develop in my paper the concept of audiovisual metaphors based on the theory of cognitive metaphors by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Following a brief discussion of some recent approaches in cognitive film psychology, in the last part of my paper I illustrate the proposed model of audiovisual metaphors with regard to film.

As we know, the theory of aesthetics has been dominated by logocentric and, currently, especially by cognitive approaches. At the same time, in the history of aesthetics there is a long-forgotten Aristotelian concept -- *aisthesis* -- rediscovered with the development of audiovisual media (see, e.g., Mollenhauer and Wulff; Böhme). Succintly put, *aisthesis* describes the transitions between perception as sensory-affective experience and aesthetic arrangement and I propose *aisthesis* may offer important theoretical points of departure in the search for aesthetic categories to describe the transitions between aesthetic arrangement, sensory perception, and aesthetic experience by which audiovisual media are characterized. Wolfgang Welsch reconstructed Aristotle's concept of *aisthesis* and demonstrated that it was among the first concepts to view sensory experience as a starting point for aesthetic perception and rational cognition. For Aristotle, sensory perception is an active process of not only sensory recognition but also of cognitive differentiation and, consequently, of rational recognition. According to Welsch, Aristotle's *aisthesis* is located in the rational domain and consequently in the affective-emotional domain of human perception, thus suggesting that sensory recognition is bound to the sensorial feeling of desire. The sensorial experience of taste is viewed here as a direct comprehension of sensorial qualities. With the sense of taste, Aristotle described not only a basic characteristic of sensory perception but also one of aesthetic experience: The immediate experiencing of positive and negative sensations that are simultaneously felt physically, affectively, and cognitively. In the course of the spreading and differentiation of audiovisual media, the concept of *aisthesis* has thus received new relevance: With modern media technology, the structural analogy between aesthetic arrangement and aesthetic perception was developed and differentiated ever more strongly. In this sense, it can be said that the evolution of media aesthetics takes place against the background of an aisthetic orientation along perception, while, conversely, the (aesthetic) perception of the modern human has been shaped more and more by this medial *aisthesis*. As is well known, Marshall McLuhan described technical media as prostheses that intruded into the human body technically, reduced

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

human perception selectively, and thereby "drugged" entire sensory domains; humans thereby made themselves into "servo-mechanisms" of their objects (see McLuhan 63). Interpreted from the perspective of modern cognition theory, this means that sensory data are linked to plots and schematas. Those schemata, that guide cognitive recognition as well as emotional and spontaneous associations are shaped and structured by media perception. This can also be understood in the context of McLuhan's dictum that "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (18). The message of a medium is therefore determined more by the effect it has on people and not by its content.

While such an aisthetic interaction between media aesthetics and media perception has already been discussed from a philosophical, cultural, and anthropological perspective for some time now, this structural analogy is still being neglected in the analysis of modern media aesthetics: In accordance with McLuhan we find, again and again, the content at the heart of most media analyses, i.e., the question "What is being shown? What is being said?" What we see less is the question "How is the perception of the observer directed by the aisthetic orientation along his structures of perception?" As a result, we also see less of McLuhan's question "What effect does the medium have on the sensory organs of the person?" This content orientation is especially problematic in the analysis of audiovisual media because films and television offerings are still primarily being analyzed in categories of text analysis and semiotics as, for example, a current survey of the methodology of current media analysis by Heidemarie Schumacher shows. Even in the field of cognitive film psychology which brings the effect of the aesthetics of the film to the fore, we still find a domination along linguistic or semiotic categories such as signs/symbols, narrative structures of action, schematas/genre/forms. Thus, in connection with recent developments in the study of perception I present several criteria for the description of perception as *aisthesis* in the context suggested above. These criteria accentuate the interfaces between aesthetic experience and aesthetical arrangement in audiovisual media: What criteria exist that allow us to examine perception as a sensuous-affective, creative process of recognition that controls the aesthetic experience fundamentally and is therefore always appealed to by the media in ever more subtle and differentiated ways? And what conclusions can we draw from this in respect to the aesthetics of audiovisual media and their analysis?

A prerequisite of perception as a creative and aisthetic process is its self-reference. In the cognitive, emotion-theoretical, and neurological theory of perception, perception is almost unanimously described as an active and self-referential process which interprets external environmental data creatively in a sensorial, cognitive, and emotional manner following neurological and cognitive-emotional mechanisms and structures of expectation. Meanwhile, the semantic structures which regulate the interpretation of environmental data are also considered to be anti-hierarchical for the most part (see Cytowic; Goschke and Koppelberg). They are seen as flexible, dynamic networks within which experiences, attributions, interpretations, etc., are interconnected with one anotherassociatively in a way that can hardly be regulated emotionally or cognitively. Over the last few years, research has pointed toward the conclusion that the analysis of sensory, emotional, and cognitive stimuli is primarily a task of the limbic system as the brain's center for dealing with emotion. For example, the neurologist Richard Cytowic attributes the central task of directing perception on a sub-cognitive level and filtering out such environmental stimuli that are fended of affective-emotionally: "We are irrational creatures by design and emotion, not reason; it may play the decisive role both how we think and act. Additionally our brains are not passive receivers of energy flux but dynamic explorers that actively seek out the stimuli that interest them and that determine their own contexts of perception" (*The Man who Tasted Shapes* 15). And according to the latest findings, these networking processes, which shape perception in a self-referential, affective, and associative manner to a high degree, are based on a processing mode that allows the parallel evaluation of different sensory data. This mode is called "cross-modal perception." Neurologists and neuroscientists discovered the phenomenon of cross-modal perception within the framework of studies on synaesthesia (see, e.g., Adler and Zeuch). Above all, synaesthesia is treated here as a pathological phenomenon, namely the conscious experience of multi-sensory data. For example, synaesthetes can see not only colors, they taste

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

and smell them as well. Cytowic was among the first neurologists to recognize that the basic principle of synaesthetic experience, namely the simultaneous processing of multi-sensory data, is also a general principle of human perception. To be able to analyze and evaluate the complex multi-sensory data and then interlink them, the processing system has to rely on its ability to evaluate and interlink the a-modal characteristics of the various environmental data simultaneously and in parallel. In short, it relies on the ability of cross-modal evaluation and connection of stimuli. In general, the following qualities are considered as central characteristics of a-modal qualities, characteristics which can be evaluated and put in reference to each other equally by eye, ear, nose, tongue, etc. (see also Marks; Stern): Intensity: Affects the experience of stimulus density (strong–weak), Rhythm/Duration: Affects the experience of temporal patterns (Fast–slow, long–short, etc.), and Gestalt Pattern: Affects the primary tendency of the brain to classify all experienced stimuli according to binary gestalt categories (such as moving–stationary, harmonic–disharmonic, complex–simple, varied–redundant, contrasting–similar, symmetrical–asymmetrical, etc.) (see Mehrabian). On the level of gestalt patterns, assigning primary stimuli affects visual and acoustic features such as colors, textures/surfaces, sizes, and perspectives. These can be related to musical gestalt patterns like melody, themes, tone color, and acoustic roughness. Further, the linked evaluation of such primary sensory data is considered a basic operation of semantic attribution. For example, the neurologist Lawrence Marks assumes that the cross-modal processing on the sensory level creates semantic structures by analyzing slight differences between the a-modal qualities of various stimuli that are related to one another semantically. Therefore, cross-modal perception shapes perception as a whole fundamentally: Not only does it direct attention, it also connects the sensory interpretation of environmental data with their cognitive interpretation. As a result, abstract and symbolic knowledge, for example of the kind represented in language, is also linked to sensory perception. In sum, we construe the verbal aspect of cross-modal equivalence in terms of a mapping of sensory meanings according to their positions in a multidimensional conceptual space that finds its roots in a largely, but not wholly, innate multidimensional perceptual space (on this, see also Marks and Hammeal).

With the discovery of cross-modal perception, the importance of sensory and affective experience for the semantic (and as a result also the cognitive) interpretation of environmental data has come to light over the last few years. Accordingly, Cytowic suggests describing the mode of operation of the sensory and affective interpretations as metaphors, namely a mode of connection that transfers connotations from one thing to another in an irrational way. For Cytowic, metaphors capture our relationship to the world physically, i.e., our sensory experience of the environmental stimuli that are linked to biographical memories, associations, etc.: "I mean that metaphor is experiential and visceral, an irrational transfer of connotations from one thing to another. The emotional, irrational self is wise beyond knowledge, and we can see this wisdom in the way metaphor physically encapsulates our relations with the world. While metaphor is a means of seeing the similar in the dissimilar, it is empathically not rational analysis" ("The Experience of Metaphor" 206). Cytowic emphasizes thereby that our ideas are not only defined through fixed characteristics, but that we -- sensorially and affectively -- interact with objects, because "understanding grows out of the entire scope of our experience" ("The Experience of Metaphor" 207). With this, Cytowic follows the theory of cognitive metaphors formulated by Lakoff and Johnson. They showed that metaphors do not just constitute aesthetic forms of dealing with language creatively, but also a fundamental psychological and cognitive mechanism of human thought: "Metaphor is the cognitive mechanism whereby one experimental domain is partially 'mapped', i.e. projected, onto a different experimental domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one; the domain that is mapped is called the source or donor domain, and the domain onto which the source is mapped is called the target or recipient domain. Both domains have to belong to different superordinate domains" (Barcelona 3). Therefore, the concept of metaphoric projection is based in principle on a multi-sensory and cross-modal networking of stimuli, within which the semantic associations and empirical experiences of one experimental domain are projected onto another one. Since metaphors join cognitive, emotional, and sensory experiences to an (autonomous) semantic unit, they are an essential

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

prerequisite for the unified perception and interpretation of environmental stimuli. With this metaphoric foundation of cognitive thought processes, the branch of cognitive linguistics that follows Lakoff and Johnson shows that these thought processes are not only multi-sensory and cross-modal networking processes in principle, but that they are also creative processes in the aisthetic sense as well. By employing such fundamental categories of perception as color, space, time, etc., they demonstrate how abstract concepts of human thought are linked with cognitive, emotional, and motor-sensory experiences and neurological structures. Using complex, culturally encoded concepts such as morality, love, etc, they demonstrate that these concepts are based on semantic metaphors that have been developed in a multi-sensory fashion. As Lakoff and Johnson put it: "Our most important abstract concepts, from love to causation to morality, are conceptualised via multiple complex metaphors. Such metaphors are an essential part of those concepts, without them the concepts are skeletal and bereft of nearly all conceptual and inferential structure" (73). In a similar way to Cytowic, sub-cognitive processes come to light based, essentially, on the mechanisms of cross-modal processing. It is thus that in his survey of cognitive metaphor theory Antonio Barcelona emphasizes that "Cognitive linguistics also stresses the fact that conventional metaphors and metonymies are usually automatic, unconscious mappings, pervasive in everyday language (5). This strengthens the aforementioned premise that human perception operates creatively and aisthetically. Wherever rational and cognitive control is pushed into the background, associative processing mechanisms in the form of metaphoric structures come to light. These processes are influenced by the sensory and affective experience of concrete sensory environmental data. On a sub-cognitive processing level that is primarily controlled emotionally, the concrete sensory characteristics of persons, objects, surroundings (colors, smells, tactile features, etc) are -- in the sense of Aristotle's theory of taste -- experienced aisthetically: As pleasant or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, etc.

Next, I present criteria for an audiovisual media analysis on the background of the theoretical premises of perception detailed above and using them as a framework: The starting point here is the question, "What prospects could the concept of a psycho-sensorially creative aisthesis developed above offer for the analysis of audiovisual media?" Cytowic gave some interesting clues in this respect also: If we assume that the entire body, and not only the brain, is involved in processing information, then the cross-modal transmission of audiovisual data such as rhythm, the duration of images and sounds, etc., must be far closer to the medial experience than the cognitively produced image that stands at the end of this process. Because this cognitively produced image has been pre-selected sensorially and affectively by the television viewer, for example, Cytowic suggest that "By analogy the consensual image we see on the screen when watching television is the terminal stage of broadcast. Someone able to intercept the transmission anywhere between the studio camera and the TV screen would be like a synaesthete, sampling the transmission before it reached the screen, fully elaborated – presumably their experience would be different from those of us viewing the screen" (*The Man who Tasted Shapes* 12). In this sense, the analysis of audiovisual media aesthetics would proceed synaesthetically: The complex audiovisual network of connections, which the viewer primarily perceives subconsciously, would be reconstructed consciously and specifically on the level of the audiovisual design. Following McLuhan's approach, the message of audiovisual media would therefore have to be judged according to which sensory and semantic network of connections is constructed through sounds, images, speech, etc., and in which manner the senses are directed. Above, I introduced the semantic processing of sensory stimuli as a metaphoric process and I believe this to be a good transition to an aisthetic analysis of images and sounds in audiovisual media. By bringing out the sensory and semantic networks that are created in films, televisions shows, video clips, advertisements, etc., through specific and continuous syntheses of images and sounds, it may be possible to reconstruct metaphoric structures or audiovisual metaphors which are holistically, simultaneously, and associatively perceived by the viewer. I should like to note that the term "metaphor" is to be used here in the sense of cognition theory as described above and not in the linguistic or literary sense. It is to be employed here in the sense of semantic networks, which, as dynamic and flexible concepts, can be examined using aspects of cognition theory to determine in

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

what way they direct the processing of sensory input and adapt in their metaphoric structure to the system of perception's associative mode. Perhaps in this way, the reduction to visual or acoustic elements could be avoided just as much as the hypostatization of linguistic and narrative aspects and, not to forget, the one-sided examination of cognitive or emotional effects.

The close connection between cognition, emotion, and neural processes has been recognized in the field of cognitive film studies as a condition for audiovisual perception. For example, Noël Carroll emphasizes the importance of the sub-cognitive, sensory processing of audiovisual stimuli: "Through the manipulation of sound and image, filmmakers often address audiences at a sub-cognitive, or cognitively impenetrable, level of response. … The movie screen is a rich phenomenal field in terms of variables like size, altitude, and speed, which have the capacity to excite automatic reactions from viewers, while the display of certain phobic and sexual material may also call forth responses barely mediated by thought" ("Film, Emotion, and Genre" 22). While Carroll concentrates on those emotional aspects that are, in general, cognitively stabilized (for example genre-specific emotional plots in the horror movie or the melodrama, etc.), Greg Smith integrates the sub-cognitive, sensory elements of film-aesthetic perception into his film analysis. To this end, Smith suggests an associative model of emotions which places emotional experience on all experimental domains. Following the current (especially neurological) theory of emotion, he assumes that emotions have dimensions that can be experienced both cognitively and consciously and which also include sub-cognitive, sensory experience and neurological processes: "We need a model of the emotions which links responses and stimuli in flexible but stable connections. The model proposed here asserts that associations can provide just such a linkage, and that the primacy of associations is supported by the physiological and neurological structure of the emotion system" (107). In this way, Smith distances himself especially from the cognitive appraisal approaches and the social-constructivist models. These approaches place the emotional direction of the movie spectator first of all within the guidance towards specific goals, which are invested in the characters depicted and the genre specific emotional plots of the film. Thus, they describe emotional prototypes which are stabilized cognitively (and usually culturally as well) (see Smith 105). By viewing emotions as multi-dimensional, associative networks, these cognitive aspects are not excluded but, instead, integrated into the frame of a dynamic experience model.

On the background of the theoretical premises on perception presented above, I now propose considering not only the emotional aspects of film perception but the entire complex of experiences of film-aesthetic perception within the framework of associative networks. In doing so, the cognitive, emotional, and sensory experiences should be viewed as coherent. Nonetheless, they are analytically distinguishable experimental domains. This poses the question for a model of description which comes as close to the associative network structure as possible. For this purpose I suggest using the concept of audiovisual metaphors introduced above. To me, the basic metaphoric principle of projecting elements of meaning from one experimental domain onto another seems to come closest to the associative linking of images and sounds (in film, television, and video/DVD). Carroll introduced the concept of "visual metaphors" into film. Here, he means particularly those film metaphors that have been shaped as such symbolically (see Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*). According to Carroll, the metaphoric networking of symbolic-semantic domains through the connection of different visual symbols can be highlighted in this way. At this point, however, I am not dealing with symbolic metaphors that are created explicitly as such by filmmakers. Instead, I focus here on the perspective of audiovisual design and its effects. Thus, my aim is to emphasize the metaphoric references that are already invested in the audiovisual synthesis and correspond to the cross-modal and associative processing mode of the human system of perception. In the broader sense, audiovisual metaphors can therefore be understood as metaphoric mechanisms of the audiovisual synthesis, within which the acoustic and the visual meanings are immediately projected onto one another and which thereby enable autonomous semantic experiences. This is based on the assumption that, unlike their film-aesthetic perception, the film-aesthetic design of metaphoric structures occurs intentionally, in a controlled manner. Even if film makers often connect the various dimensions of single audiovisual effects in a highly intuitive manner, the basic effects that they intend to initiate are established in

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

the audiovisual design and can thus be scrutinized. As suggested at the beginning of this paper, audiovisual media offer highly developed technical and aesthetic possibilities to serve this processing mode. With the concept of audiovisual metaphors as an aisthetic model of analysis outlined, it is my aim to accent the level of audiovisual design in a new way following the prerequisite of the integrative model of perception described above, namely from the aspect of the structural analogy between audiovisual aesthetics and the network of perception. While in classical and cognitive film analysis the forms of artistic design of the sensory and emotional structures of a film are inferred usually from its narrative codes, I highlight, instead, the interplay of the various levels of design based on its sensory structures. To my knowledge, Michael Chion is one of the first to show in his work on film sound how films already construct autonomous semantic structures on a pre-symbolic and sensory level in their audiovisual synchronism by coupling image and sound. These structures direct perception in a manner that usually remains subconscious. By showing what influence sounds have on images in a movie, he developed a semantics of film, starting out from the basic audiovisual elements of the film-specific design. In doing so he shows how the semantic domains of sound and image track influence each other and create a specific semantic added value in their audiovisual synchresis, in which sound and image are experienced and interpreted as a necessary unit: "The phenomenon of added value is especially at work in the case of sound/image synchronism, via the principle of synchresis, the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears" (5).

The central condition for the phenomenon of synchresis is that acoustic elements are continuous in filmed time, while the visual elements are recorded usually discontinuously and then re-assembled in the montage and are therefore perceived primarily spatially. Synchronously occurring spatial information on the visual plane and time-related information on the acoustic plane are linked to a necessary semantic unit by the observer in an immediate fashion. This also explains why objects can be perceived as a "natural" connection of image and sound, as for example in science fiction. The sound designer and film scholar Barbara Flückiger has demonstrated this synchronism of image and sound very plausibly with a fictional object by using the famous light sabres of the science-fiction movie *Star Wars* as an example. When the sabre is introduced in the movie, the image shows Luke Skywalker's holding the pommel from which a laser beam in the shape of a blade emerges. In the dialog, this object is introduced as a "light sabre." While the light sabre is shown, the observer hears an unpleasant hissing when the weapon is switched on as well as a metallic humming that is adapted to the object's movement acoustically. This occurs in the scene by phasing and, lastly, by a grating crackle when the sword touches a person or another object, wounding or destroying it (*Sound Design* 144-45). Here, an object that does not really exist is invested with the semantic qualities that are experienced immediately as "fast" and "dangerous" through its acoustic and tonal characteristics. Flückiger writes that "In the process of cross-modal association, the recipient combines the various characteristics that are a result of the visual and acoustic representations to a meaningful whole. These are characteristics of form, color, and surface texture as manifested in the image; they are processes and movements which adapt to one another through synchresis; they are physical properties, which are induced from the acoustic form and affective qualities which correspond to the tonality" (146). By reconstructing the a-modal qualities on the visual and acoustic planes in this way, it is possible to depict contrasting and assimilating relationships between the acoustic and the visual elements and thereby it may be possible to reconstruct the metaphoric relationships between them. The structural analogy to the cross-modal processing of sensory stimuli already becomes apparent here: The evaluation of the visual and acoustic stimuli occurs through the relation of rhythm, intensity, and primary gestalt patterns on the visual and acoustic plane. The clusters that arise on the basis of cross-modal evaluation regulate not only cognitive attentiveness but also the intensity and the flow of the emotional experience. Therefore, these clusters of experience form the prerequisite for further semantic processing and they form the basis for the associative and metaphoric connections and projections of the cognitive and the emotional system. As a result, these cross-modal clusters are the very basis of the specific semantic "added value" or "intrinsic value" within audiovisual synchresis. Following Cytowic, Johnson and Lakoff, and others,

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

it can be assumed that these processes possess a high level of metaphoric structure. Since, depending on the focus of the recipient's attention, the acoustic or visual experiences are projected onto the other domain, respectively. In doing so, the dominating experience (depending on attention, intensity of the stimulus, etc.) takes on the role of the "source domain," while the other becomes the "target domain." It goes without saying that this is a fluid process and that the two domains alternate continuously in the course of the film perception -- although it can be assumed that in traditional cinema the sound would be in the service of the image. In an aisthetic model of audiovisual metaphors it would be necessary to keep an extensive record of the sensory structures of a film or a television show as well as the cognitive and emotional structures of audiovisual compositions. These structures could then be analyzed with respect to their metaphoric relations. In this way it could be possible to depict complex networks of audiovisual metaphors which to a high degree connect conventionalized symbolic semantics with dense sensory compositions. To the degree in which such a metaphoric reconstruction of semantic structures analyzes the similarities and differences on all levels of audiovisual composition, audiovisual semantics could be viewed as a dynamic composition, while at the same time the associative domains that are subjectively experienced and interpreted by every individual observer are also taken into account.

Note: The above article is an updated version of Kathrin Fahlenbrach, "Wahrnehmungsästhetik der Medien als 'Aisthesis'? Überlegungen zu einer Theorie Audio-Visueller Metaphern" in *SPIEL: Siegener Periodicum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft* 22.1 (2003): 49-62.

Works Cited

Adler, Hans, and Ulrike Zeuch, eds. *Synästhesie. Interferenz – Transfer – Synthese der Sinne*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002.
Barcelona, Antonio. "Introduction." *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*. Ed. Antonio Barcelona. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. 1-31.
Böhme, Gernot. *Aisthetik. Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*. München: Fink, 2001.
Carroll, Noël. "Film, Emotion, and Genre." *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*. Ed. Carl Plantinga and Greg Smith. Baltimore: U Johns Hopkins P, 1999. 21-48.
Carroll, Noël. *Theorizing the Moving Image*. Cambridge: UP, 1996.
Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.
Cytowic, Richard, ed. "The Experience of Metaphor." *The Man who Tasted Shapes: A Bizarre Medical Mystery Offers Revolutionary Insights into Emotions, Reasoning, and Consciousness*. New York: Putnam, 1993. 206-10.
Cytowic, Richard E. *The Man who Tasted Shapes: A Bizarre Medical Mystery Offers Revolutionary Insights into Emotions, Reasoning, and Consciousness*. New York: Putnam, 1993.
Cytowic, Richard E. "Wahrnehmungs-Synästhesie." *Synästhesie. Interferenz-Transfer-Synthese der Sinne*. Ed. Hans Adler and Ulrike Zeuch. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002. 7-25.
Cytowic, Richard E. "Phenomenology and Neuropsychology." *Psyche* (1995): 2-10.
Cytowic, Richard E. "Phenomenology and Neuropsychology." (1995): <http://psyche.cs.monash.edu.au/v2/psyche-2-10-cytowic.html>.
Flückiger, Barbara. *Sound Design. Die virtuelle Klangwelt des Films*. Zürich: Schüren. 2002.
Goschke, Thomas, and Dirk Koppelberg. "Konnektionistische Repräsentation, semantische Kompositionalität und die Kontextabhängigkeit von Konzepten." *Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven der Kognitionsforschung*. Ed. Helmut Hildebrandt. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993. 65-109.
Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
Marks, Laurence. *Sensory Processes: The New Psychophysics*. New York: Academic P, 1974.
Marks, Lawrence. *The Unity of the Senses: Interrelations among the Modalities*. New York: Academic P, 1978.
Marks, Lawrence, and Robin Hammeal. *Perceiving Similarity and Comprehending Metaphor*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987.
McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: Routledge, 1992.
Mehrabian, Albert. *Public Places and Private Places: The Psychology of Work, Play, and Living Environments*. New York: Basic Books, 1976.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280

Mollenhauer, Klaus, and Christoph Wulff, eds. *Aisthesis/Ästhetik. Zwischen Wahrnehmung und Bewusstsein*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1996.
Schumacher, Heidemarie. *Fernsehen fernsehen. Modelle der Medien- und Fernsehtheorie*. Köln: DuMont, 2000.
Smith, Greg. "Local Emotions, Global Moods, and Film Structure." *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*. Ed. Carl Platinga and Greg Smith. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 103-27.
Stern, Daniel. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. London: Karnac Books, 1993.
Welsch, Wolfgang. *Aisthesis. Grundzüge und Perspektiven der Aristotelischen Sinneslehre*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987.

Author's profile: Kathrin Fahlenbrach <http://www.medienkomm.uni-halle.de/institut/team/wiss_mitarbeiter/fahlenbrach.shtml> teaches media and communication studies at the University of Halle-Wittenberg, where she received her doctorate in 2000, with a dissertation entitled *Protestinszenierungen. Visuelle Kommunikation und kollektive Identitäten in Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen*. Prior to her doctoral work, Fahlenbrach studied German and French literature, theatre, and comparative literature at the universities of Berlin and Siegen and conducted research on the literary system of the former East Germany at Halle-Wittenberg. In her current research, Fahlenbrach works on audiovisual aesthetics and media perception. Her publications include the book form of her dissertation, *Protestinszenierungen. Visuelle Kommunikation und kollektive Identitäten in Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen* (2002) and papers such as "Wahrnehmungsästhetik der Medien als 'Aisthesis'? Überlegungen zu einer Theorie Audio-Visueller Metaphern" in *SPIEL: Siegener Periodicum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft* (2005) and "The Emotional Design of Music Videos: Approaches to Audiovisual Metaphors" in *Journal of Moving Image Studies* (2004): <http://www.avila.edu/journal/kat1.pdf>. E-Mail: <kathrin.fahlenbrach@medienkomm.uni-halle.de>.

Translator's profile: Of US-American and German parentage, Benjamin Kraft is working towards his *Magister* (M.A.) in media and communication studies at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. Concurrently, he works as a freelance translator in Berlin and elsewhere. He translated several papers for the thematic issue *Media and Communication Studies at the University of Halle-Wittenberg* of *CLCWeb Comparative Literature and Culture* as part of his *practicum*, a requirement for his diploma. E-mail: <ben.kraft@gmx.de>.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1280