

Mise-en-scène, Embodied Metaphors and Mood in Hannibal

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Wyatt (1994) defines TV-Series as a "high concept", a recognizable object that has a modular structure that can be parceled and replicated. For Pescatore & Innocenti (2012), TV-Series are no longer textual objects, but the result of a design with a high degree of consistency among its components, similar to an ecosystem. The characteristics of this narrative ecosystem are, among others, that it is made up of open systems inhabited by stories and characters that change in time and space, that have interconnected structures and that tend to maintain the balance of their universe (Pescatore, Innocenti & Brembilla, 2014).

In our proposal, an element that maintains the cohesion of a TV series, and that therefore could be one more element of the narrative ecosystem, is the *mise-en-scène*. This *mise-en-scène* not only has to do with the visual style but also helps to generate a mood through emotion markers and visual manifestations of metaphors that have a cognitive origin.

1 EMBODIED METAPHORS

Embodiment is one of the main issues in cognitive science. In an early artificial intelligence stage, mind was thought to be something like a computer. Nowadays, however, evidence has been found that perceptual and motor sensory systems play an important role in our thoughts. Everything we experience, understand, communicate, imagine, value, and do in our world depends on the nature of our bodies. A simple example of this embodiment of mind, meaning, and thought would be the various ways we tend to project our body structures and orientations onto objects and scenes that we experience. For instance, being "up" and "on top of" suggests, at first, physical control, and later, it extends to social, moral, or political superiority as in "She rose to the highest level of corporate power".

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that this kind of sentence contains a primary metaphor. The primary metaphors are characterized by having a source domain which includes image content "related to bodily sensation and perception in any modality, plausibly refer to universal elements of human experience" (Grady, 1997). All the source-domains of primary metaphors are based on image-schemas or dynamic embodied patterns. The target domain, in contrast, has no image content and refers to basic units or parameters of cognitive functions which are consciously accessible. For

instance, in the primary metaphor QUANTITY IS VERTICAL ELEVATION¹, the source domain (VERTICAL ELEVATION) contains an image resulting from visual perception, while the target domain (QUANTITY) lacks this visual aspect and is a basic cognitive abstraction. Grady states that concepts possessing image content are easier for us to manipulate cognitively, which makes it difficult for us to think of quantity without activating the image of elevation, or to think of similarity without activating the image of proximity, so that primary metaphors are essential for thinking processes. Various experimental studies in psycholinguistics have confirmed this theory, and suggest that primary metaphors not only affect the interpretation of many everyday metaphorical expressions but also our understanding of abstract concepts (cf. Gibbs, 2011; Casasanto, 2008; Boot and Pecher, 2010; Casasanto and Boroditsky, 2008).

Primary metaphors are present in our everyday language but can also combine with one another to form complex, sophisticated or original expressions via different cognitive mechanisms (Grady, 2005). For this reason, using primary metaphors as units of verbal corpus analysis offers several advantages: (1) they show what elements in the source domain are projected on to the target domain and why, (2) they help in the study of metaphorical projections and of the relationships between complex metaphors, and (3) they draw our attention to sensory-motor experience as the origin of metaphors.

Numerous researchers have devoted their efforts to the study of embodied metaphors in verbal language, but these metaphors also exist in other, non-verbal corpora. Their presence has been analyzed, for instance, in comics and advertisements (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009), as recurrent visual-metaphor patterns in advertising (Ortiz 2010; van Weelden et al, 2011), in non-verbal gestural language (Hurtienne et al., 2010), or as visual-metaphor components in films, television and videogames (Fahlenbrach, 2007, 2016; Ortiz, 2011, Winter, 2014).

2 MISE-EN-SCÈNE AND EMBODIED METAPHORS

Mise-en-scène is used in film studies in the discussion of visual style. The word is from French and originally from theatre. It means literally “placing on stage”. It referred to the arrangement of all the visual elements within a playing area: the stage, acting, costumes, etc. In films, mise-en-scène is more complicated, a blend of theatre and photography. Gibbs (2003) proposes a useful definition: “the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised”. In his view, the concept not only includes what the spectators can see but also the way in which they are induced to see it. Sikov (2010) says everything in the filmed image is described by this term: settings, props, lighting, costume, makeup, figure behaviour (actors, gestures, facial expressions), and photography (angles, position, lenses, movement). Since everything in the filmed image

¹ Conceptual metaphors are conventionally printed in small capitals, and metaphorical expressions in italics.

comes under the heading of *mise-en-scène*, a shorter definition is “the totality of expressive content within the image”.

Ortiz (2011, 2014) argues that when the film-maker orders the elements in a certain frame in such a way as to lead the viewer to see them, primary metaphors will often be used simply because they are inherent in human thought and essential in the expression of abstract concepts devoid of image-content. That is, primary metaphors manifest themselves visually through scene-setting techniques such as composition, framing or lighting. Primary metaphors that manifest visually through the *mise-en-scène* can be:

1. **BAD IS DARK/GOOD IS BRIGHT.** A verbal example is “There are dark forebodings in the report”. These primary metaphors are related to **MORALLY GOOD IS CLEAN/MORALLY BAD IS DIRTY** seen in “She is a woman of spotless virtue” and “I don’t want to hear any more of your filthy lies.” Psychological studies reveal the underlying conceptual nature of both of these metaphors (cfr. Meier, Robinson, & Clore, 2004; Crawford, Margolies, Drake, & Murphy, 2006). Dark shadows have been used since the early days of filmmaking as a metaphor of evil. According Forceville & Renckens (2013), this primary metaphor is eminently usable in the medium of film, as well as provides opportunities for a degree of creative play. Moreover, the analysis of horror movies highlights the striking consistency with which the two metaphors “EVIL IS DOWN” and “EVIL IS DARK” are used within this genre to help in creating fear (Winter, 2014).
2. **KNOWING/UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING.** A verbal example is “I can’t *see* how to use this telephone”. Out-of-focus images form the source domain that can express the target domain of the lack of understanding or awareness.
3. **CERTAIN IS FIRM, NORMAL IS STRAIGHT, CONDITION IS SHAPE.** A verbal example is “Our plans have *gone awry*”. Curved or distorted images serve as a source domain to express the target domain of abnormality or uncertainty.
4. **IMPORTANCE IS SIZE/VOLUME.** A verbal example is “Today is the *big* day.” Shots in which two people appear to be different in size function as a source domain to express their importance.
5. **A SITUATION IS A LOCATION, STATES ARE (TEMPORARY) LOCATIONS, CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SURROUNDINGS, MENTAL STATES ARE PLACES.** For instance, “I feel *out of place* here” or “The director finds himself in a difficult *position*”. A character is shown against a certain type of background as the source domain that expresses the target domain of that character’s situation, mental state or circumstances.
6. **BEING IN CONTROL IS BEING ABOVE, SOCIAL STATUS IS VERTICAL ELEVATION, HAPPY IS UP.** A verbal example is “He has a whole team *under* his command”. From early reflections on cinema techniques high-angle and low-angle shots were already considered metaphorical. When there is no reason why the character should be shown at a lower or higher level than that of

the spectator, we then understand that it is the character who is metaphorically lower or higher and thus has lost or gained control, status and/or happiness.

7. TIME IS MOVEMENT. A verbal example is “We shall soon be *entering* a new millennium.” Fast motion, slow motion and reverse motion are the source domains that express the target domain of time.
8. EMOTIONAL INTIMACY IS PROXIMITY, RELATIONSHIPS ARE ENCLOSURES. Verbal examples are “It’s very difficult to *get into* the inner circle of advisers” and “My family has *thrown me out*.” Setting a couple in different frames-within-the-frame is the source domain that expresses the target domain of the lack of unity in the relationship.
9. INTENSITY OF AN EMOTION IS HEAT. Verbal example is “He is a man of *fiery* passions.” Pawlik (1996) shows that there are a synesthetic relationship between colour and temperature. Above all, orange and red convey heat whereas blue and green express coldness. That is, colours can convey heat and, metaphorically, intensity of an emotion.

3 MOODS

According to the mood-cue approach (Smith, 2003), the film uses a coordinated set of cues to create a mood. Moods are longer-lasting emotion states with an orienting function. They play a crucial part of the emotion system because they focus us on certain stimuli and not others. Moods support the expression of emotions and, at the same time, brief burst of emotion sustain the mood. He says that the primary emotive effect of a film is to create mood. To sustain a mood, the viewer must experience emotional moments through the acting, *mise-en-scène* and narrative situation. These elements are never used in isolation, but form a redundant whole which increases the possibility of achieving the desired emotional state in viewers of differing sensitivities. They do not have to be aware of these elements, whose function is to activate their associative emotional network in order to generate a specific mood. In the mood-cue approach the beginning of the film is of vital importance, as it establishes the emotional state which will be maintained throughout the film.

Although goal achievements and obstacles create emotions, the classical cinema also uses “emotional markers”, brief moments of emotion congruent with the conveyed mood. The emotion marker neither is related to the protagonist’s goal, neither provides new story information. They are simple and direct devices. For example, the tarantulas on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981) elicit disgust or fear in the viewers rather than be an obstacle to Jone’s progress. Once the mood has been established, the emotion markers sustain the emotional address.

Platinga (2012) explains that highly talented filmmakers are able to connect moods and emotions by making use, among other strategies, of the formal characteristics of the *mise-en-scène*. To create a happy mood, for instance, they use brightness and light, whereas a sad mood is better transmitted by dark, heavy elements. In our opinion, these techniques described to convey a mood may be visual

manifestations of embodied metaphors. In our opinion, the unbalanced compositions which transmit a sense of degeneration and contribute to the creation of the film's pessimistic mood may be linked to the primary metaphors CERTAIN IS FIRM, and FUNCTIONALITY/VIABILITY IS ERECTNESS. Likewise, the embodied metaphors serve as emotion markers, redundant emotional elements which play no part in the narration but which are necessary in order to maintain the mood.

On the other hand, Platinga (2014) argues that the mood of a film, also called tone or atmosphere, is due to the mood of a character and the expression of that mood. For example, a sad film has a character associated with sadness and moreover expresses the notion that what it shows is sad. That is, the moods embody a perspective on the filmic world. The mood of a scene is experienced as a gestalt and is a fundamental means by which the narration communicates attitude, perspective, or point of view. It has a central place in the aesthetics of film and four types can be listed: disclosive (characteristic of the entire film), episodic (confined to a sequence), transitional (from one scene to another), autonomous. Other categories established are: focalized (of one or more characters) or world-based (of the fictional world). Narrative films induce moods in at least three ways: by provoking emotions, emphasizing qualities of form and content associated with a certain mood, and stimulating a cognitive style associated with the mood in question. Platinga also propounds that moods are a central concern for an ethic perspective. As the mood expresses a perspective, it can affect the viewer's moral understanding of character and narrative situation and can have the capacity to influence their moral judgement. Moods can play an important role in altering our moral intuitions about characters and situations. For example, the mood of anxious concern in *Blood Diamond* (Zwick, 2006) is established not only by the events but also by the image and sound (music, close-ups of crying faces, chaotic editing, etc.). This anxious mood is world-based and the viewers not only can be sympathetic about the fictional characters but also about the people in Africa in similar situation. However, there are films with a less clear perspective. In *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971), the mood of some scenes seems inappropriate (cfr. the cheerful treatment of sexual violence) but this discordance might encourage a distanced consideration about the human nature.

4. ANALYSIS OF *HANNIBAL*

Hannibal is an American psychological thriller developed for NBC by Bryan Fuller and our analysis, that is a work in progress, is focused on season 1.

Hannibal can be labelled as both thriller and horror, and it is an example of a “preboot”, a term coined by Brinker (2015) mixing the words prequel and reboot. *Hannibal* can be considered a prequel because it picks up the Hannibal Lecter character from *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991). But, while a remake pays an homage to the original, a “reboot” offers a contrast with the original, applying an ironic or modern reading to the original material. A reboot takes a story back promising both familiarity and retranslation.

The protagonist is Will Graham (Hugh Dancy), an FBI profiler with a mental condition, able to empathize so exceptionally with killers that he can provide essential leads to capture them. Let’s see the very beginning of the show, a clip that encapsulates a lot of the essential features.

CLIP

4.1. THE EMPATHY OF WILL

During this sequence that shows how the mental state of the main character allows him to literally adopt the point of view of the real killer, we can find several visual metaphors from a cognitive background. Specifically, we can find primary metaphors such as CHANGE IS MOTION/STATES ARE LOCATIONS, INTENSITY OF AN EMOTION IS HEAT, UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, etcetera.

We can find the variation CHANGE OF EMOTIONAL STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION which visually turns into INCREASE IN EMOTIONAL INTENSITY IS DECREASE IN SPATIAL DISTANCE BETWEEN CAMERA AND CHARACTER. It happens when, in order to express the anxiety and emotional impact in a character, we switch from a general shot to a close-up. In *Hannibal*, there is usually a zoom-in when Will is watching a crime scene. Namely, crime provokes an emotional impact in the character and this is highlighted shortening the distance between the camera and the character.

Besides this spatial change, when Will gets in the killer shoes, the screen changes to an orange-coloured tone. There is the primary metaphor INTENSITY OF AN EMOTION IS HEAT. In the synesthetic relation between heat and color, the orange palette exudes more heat. That is, the ability to empathize with the killer generates Will such a distress

that his body temperature upsurges. This reinforces the idea of emotional intensity/heat produced when Will puts himself in the killer's place.



ILUSTRACIÓN 1: CHANGE OF COLOR AND DISTANCE BETWEEN THE CAMERA AND THE CHARACTER TO EXPRESS THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT CAUSED BY THE CRIME

In order to recount visually how Will enters the trance state to revive the murder, the narrative uses Will's gaze as a metaphor for understanding (UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING). Will looks at the crime scene with his own eyes, but he does not *see* it, he does not understand it. When he closes them down and opens them up again, he looks now at the scene with the killer's eyes and then, yes, he *sees* it as the killer would do, he understands the scene as the murderer. From that point on, every thought on the murder is metaphorized through his vision (MENTAL FUNCTION IS PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE). That is, what Graham experiences as the murderer is what he believes the killer did.

Another metaphor we can find in this mental representation is TIME IS MOTION. Will move backwards as a visual depiction of he getting back in time. He marches backwards because he is heading to the past, which in western culture is behind us, while the future is ahead of us. Just as we say "we have plenty of time *ahead*" or "we have left the spring *behind*", in this case Will gets *back* in time to place himself at the moment *prior* to the assassination. Once there, Will acts as the murderer has acted, repeating all his actions while describing them. Verbally we would assert that Graham puts himself in the killer's shoes.

To sum up, the visual depiction of Will's trance is based on a series of metaphors sharing a cognitive origin. That's why the viewer can address correctly this visual representation. Verbally, we would say that Graham *places himself in the same place and time of the killer, watching everything as the killer would do*. This resource is based

on primary metaphors that we need to reason, that is why it is so effective to transmit the mental state of the character.

SLIDE Will: from close empathy to total identification

Will's identification with the psycho-killers gets bigger and bigger. The absence of a *mise-en-scène* denoting Graham's state of trance, concurs with Hannibal Lecter finding Will's medical condition: an encephalitis that can explain his psychological misperception.

In *Hannibal*, we start feeling *with* Will the horror of the murders, discerning perfectly reality and imagination. Will empathizes somatically and **motory** with the murder, and so does the spectator. It is a chain of empathy: spectator-Will-murderer. But, throughout the series, Will cease to *place himself in the same place and time of the killer, watching everything as the killer would do*, and, instead, he begins to identify with the killer in such an immediate way that he hardly can distinguish his own self. There is no backward shots, no pendulum, no changes of color, no gaze. Little by little, Will cannot differentiate reality and imagination and neither can the spectator (there are not any *mise-en-scène* marker), who keeps feeling *with* Graham in his confusion.

In *Hannibal*, the character of Dr. Lecter contributes to the threatening mood pervading the whole narrative. On one hand, our extradiegetic memory of the character allows us to know how menacing he can be for everyone around.

We can find a visual example of the metaphor BAD IS DARK, present from the very beginnings of cinema (cfr. *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*, Wiene, Germany, 1919). The horror genre exhibits this metaphor related to UNDERSTAND IS SEEING. If the screen is dark, we cannot watch it properly and, therefore, we cannot understand it completely. That is, it provokes fear because we consider darkness as a bad thing, but also because it is unknown to us. Stemming from this, darkness is usually used in horror genre as a means to generate fear. The first time we see Hannibal he is in darkness because he is an evil character that seem to staring at us in a defiant way. But, at the same time, he is a character we barely know, that is, we do not *see* his intentions though we know they are *dark*.



ILUSTRACIÓN 2. HANNIBAL IS A *DARK* BEING

There is another way to emphasize the danger Hannibal entails: the implicit clues present in the several close-ups of food. As a matter of narrative economy, these shots are usually absent in any narrative. But, in *Hannibal*, they are present in excruciating detail almost in every episode. They are exquisitely prepared recipes, always cooked with meat, always with some red element in it, and always suspiciously offered by Hannibal to his guests.



ILUSTRACIÓN 3. FOOD AS A THREAT

Color red is another *mise-en-scène* element related to the feeling of being threatened. It is a saturated red, similar to that of blood. It is logical that the viewer connects this frequent colour red with the red from the victim's blood, and, therefore, the use of red colour causes anxiety. It could be seen as an emotion marker of the dread provoked by these psychopaths. Additionally, red is a defining feature of the opening credits and it is present not only in blood and food, but also as the background of Hannibal's practice and in Alana Bloom's wardrobe.

There is the primary metaphor CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SORROUNDINGS (“She’s in a tough spot”) and CIRCUMSTANCES ARE FLUID (“I’m immersed in paperwork these days”).



ILUSTRACIÓN 4. BEING *SORROUNDED BY BLOOD*



ILUSTRACIÓN 5. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PATIENT’S AND HANNIBAL’S PLACES

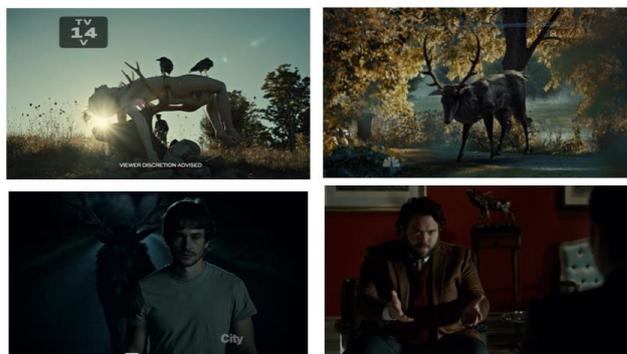


ILUSTRACIÓN 6: WILL FILLS THE PLACE OF THE VICTIMS



ILUSTRACIÓN 7. RED COLOUR IN FEMALE WARDROBE

The deer is another element that usually shows up with an intimidating resonance. At first, the deer is associated with the way the psycho-killer Hobbs murders his victims: he impales young girls on a deer's antlers. Since Will kills him in self-defense, the deer shows up during Will's dreams.



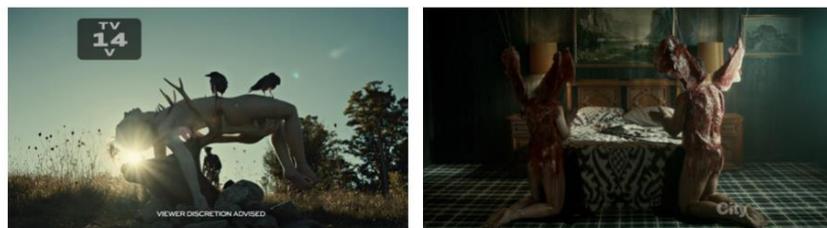
The deer as a menacing element reaches its peak during the first season finale. Will sees a wendigo in the same exact spot of Hannibal. A wendigo is a mythological creature, a

cannibalistic deer-like **being** that is known to eat human flesh. That is the moment when Will *realizes/sees the position* the genuine Hannibal *occupies*. That is, some primary metaphors are used: UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, A SITUATION IS A LOCATION.



4.3 EVIL AND BEAUTY

One of the features that make *Hannibal* so unique comes from the beautifully elaborate and dreamlike design of every murder. Both the composition and the cinematography would be considered highly attractive if it were not for the fact that we know every *tableau* deals with human victims. The music surrounding the images is eerie, highlighting the sinister and horrific nature of the crime. Therefore, there is a strong dissonance between the gorgeousness of the photography and the dread mood suggested by the melody. If, as Plantinga argues (2014), mood expresses the point of view of the narration and affects the moral understanding of a situation, these *Hannibal* scenes emphasize a contradiction: evil and beauty can join together, despite the fact that we cognitively associate evil with ugliness.



5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Hannibal* highlights the relevance of mise-en-scène and mood as part of the narrative ecosystem. *Hannibal*'s mood has to do with the presence of a constant threat as much as with a nightmare feeling. The elements building this atmosphere are shown in the pilot episode and, later, they are repeated and echoed throughout the whole series. One of those defining elements is Will's empathy towards the killer, exhibited using visual metaphors. Will is *able to see and feel* as a psychopath and, consequently, the spectator *feels with* the character.

Another necessary element as a *preboot* is that Hannibal has to be represented as a *dark* character. Cannibalism as an ongoing threat is suggested by the elegant, intricate and gourmet plates continually showing up—peppered with some red detail, reminiscence of blood. Red color functions as a metaphor of the victims, because of its resemblance with blood and its incessant presence both in the scenery and the costumes. And red color also works as an emotion marker of Hannibal's threat. Lastly, the dreamlike beauty of the murders, opposed to an unnerving score, creates the atmosphere of dread and nightmare that singles *Hannibal* out.

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