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Review of Michał Szawerna's *Metaphoricity of Conventionalized Diegetic Images in Comics: A Study in Multimodal Cognitive Linguistics*. *Łódź Studies in Language* 54, Frankfurt am Main-New York: Peter Lang, 2017

Artistic creativity tends to resist attempts at clean formal analyses. A good artist aims at making their texts original and unique, often transcending the limitations of artistic conventions and imagination of their times. A good researcher aims at discovering general patterns and mechanisms that transcend the idiosyncrasies of particular authors' style. For this reason, the efforts of artists and scholars usually pull in opposite directions. Michał Szawerna's *Metaphoricity of Conventionalized Diegetic Images in Comics*, an ambitious project aiming at capturing the semiotic complexities of the relatively young but incredibly rich art of comics, is no exception in this respect. Even though the wealth of comics creators' artistic imagination tends to escape from elegant categories devised by a theorist, the theorist can nonetheless reveal much not only about artist's imagination but also about the cognitive mechanisms of the sign-using mind.

Michał Szawerna is certainly not the first one to undertake the task of offering a semiotic characterization of the comics medium; French and American scholars have been proposing various theoretical frameworks with this aim in mind for several decades. Nonetheless, Szawerna is probably the first to make such an extensive use of the tools devised in the field of cognitive semiotic and the first one to propose such a wide range of in-depth case studies. From the methodological point of view, Szawerna describes the semiotic complexities of comics employing

the theory of conceptual metaphor and metonymy (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980), which he elegantly dovetails with elements of Charles S. Peirce's theory of signs. This two-pronged methodological framework allows him to describe the semiotic make-up of comics with remarkable scope and depth. Do not be misled by the title, which may suggest a relatively narrow focus limited to the analysis of one property (metaphoricity) of one type of images in comics (conventionalized diegetic). The book delivers more than it promises: potentially, Szawerna's framework could be used for analyzing virtually all aspects of the semiotic complexities of comics, even though the author limits himself to the case studies of several most common types of signs.

Chapter one of *Metaphoricity* is a theoretical introduction to comics scholarship (with special emphasis on the new developments in the field), Peircean semiotics, and conceptual metaphor and metonymy theory. Towards the end of the chapter the author demonstrates the compatibility of Peircean and cognitive accounts of metaphor. Given the notorious obscurity and relative scarcity of Peirce's writings about metaphor, the question remains open whether the American philosopher would endorse Szawerna's essentially cognitivist interpretation of his theory but this is not an important problem. After all, the goal of the author is to construct a novel analytic framework rather than to offer an orthodoxly Peircean account of his subject matter. The following chapters present extensive case studies of selected types of signs frequently found in comics narratives: chapter two analyzes "panels and multi-panel complexes," chapter three representations of motion, chapter four representations of sounds (including speech events), chapter five representations of mental experiences (including thoughts and emotions). Each of the analytic chapters opens with a short introduction and an overview of the material covered in the section, and concludes with a brief discussion about the findings. The book ends with a more general conclusion.

Considered from the perspective of comics scholarship, one of the biggest strengths of *Metaphoricity* is the solid theoretical background in comics studies, cognitive linguistics, and Peircean semiotics. Unfortunately, it is often the case that researchers in this field have incomplete or oversimplified knowledge of the theory of signs (e.g. McCloud 1994; Duncan and Smith 2009, although the relative scarcity of their theoretical background is perhaps explained by the fact that their books are aimed at wide non-academic audience), or rarely enter into a substantial constructive dialogue with other comics scholars (e.g. Toeplitz 1985; Groensteen 2009, although in the case of Toeplitz, the scarcity of comics scholarship in the Poland of the 1980s should be taken into account). This apparent isolation from the rest of scholarship creates the impression that every author makes a titanic effort of building the semiotics of comics almost from scratch and that the field itself is fractured and disconnected. Szawerna avoids this problem not only by abundantly referring to the works of other scholars but also by initiating a critical and constructive dialogue, which connects *Metaphoricity* more fully with the fields of

comics studies and cognitive linguistics alike. It is worth noting that the author also refers to the Polish comics scholarship mentioning Janusz Dunin, Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, and Jerzy Szyłak, whose original and valuable contributions to the field are not sufficiently appreciated outside Poland.

Yet even though this engagement in debates with other researchers is usually a positive and praiseworthy characteristic, at times it lands Szawerna into unnecessary digressions. A good example of this is the critique of Neil Cohn's theory of Visual Language (Cohn 2014) on the pages 23–26 of *Metaphoricity*. Szawerna uses Charles Hockett's "design features of language" (Hockett 1963) to demonstrate the patterns of visual narration in comics do not constitute a language, at least not in the literal sense defended by Cohn. The arguments against Visual Language are compelling and the discussion is worth expanding into a separate publication but it is superfluous in the context of book's overall goal. Virtually nothing in Szawerna's project turns on whether the patterns of comics narration can be treated as a literal language, so the author does not seem to have any real stake in demonstrating the inadequacy of Cohn's approach, at least in the context of *Metaphoricity*'s main line of discussion.

Combining Peircean semiotics and cognitive theory of metaphor suggests an intriguing question that was not fully spelled out in the book, namely the relationship between representation and metaphor. Peirce defined the sign explicitly as "a thing which serves to convey knowledge of some other thing, which it is said to *stand for* or *represent*" (Peirce 1998: 13; original emphasis), yet conceptual metaphors do not seem to perform this representational function (it is usually ascribed to conceptual metonymies). In the paradigmatic cognitive approach, the source concept does not serve to represent the target but rather to facilitate the conceptualization of the target. Thus, the metaphor *TIME IS VALUABLE RESOURCE* does not represent *TIME* as *VALUABLE RESOURCE* because *VALUABLE RESOURCE* is not used as a conceptual and referential stand-in of *TIME*. Instead, by highlighting and constructing similarities between the two concepts, the metaphor gives rise to a new understanding of *TIME* in terms of *VALUABLE RESOURCE*. Representation is a different process than metaphorization, even though, as one might expect, it may be hard to draw a clear-cut demarcation line between the two in every case. In prototypical representation users tend to realize more clearly that the representing and the represented entities are not identical. It would be hard for a competent representation user to confuse a picture of the Eiffel Tower with the Eiffel Tower itself, despite the fact that the picture can play an important epistemic and communicative role as far as the construction is concerned. In a typical metaphor, however, the degree of identification between the source and the target are much greater: it may take a special and somewhat unnatural effort for a competent metaphor user to understand that time is not literally a valuable resource. Therefore, in spite of many similarities, the Peircean and the conceptual metaphor do not always coincide. To provide a further example, Szawerna correctly identifies the rise of the

fluid in a thermometer as an example of Peircean metaphorical hypoicon (i.e. an icon representing through parallelism rather than imagic or structural similarity, cf. Szawerna 2017: 64) but it would be hard to argue that competent thermometer users take the fluid in the thermometer to be temperature. Users may, of course, think about temperature as rising or falling in co-variation with the fluid in thermometer via an orientational metaphor but even in such a case the fluid and the temperature are kept conceptually distinct (one would not try to reduce fever by shaking down the level of fluid in the thermometer). It would be unfair to criticize *Metaphoricity* for not discussing the interrelations between metaphor and representation, since such an extensive topic surely deserves a separate monograph. Nonetheless, with both Peircean and cognitive theories of metaphor, Szawerna has all conceptual resources for keeping the distinction more explicit, which could make some parts of his analyses even more insightful.

What is more, overlooking the distinction between representation and metaphor is a problem because it may result in somewhat problematic and rather un-intuitive analyses. For example, in section 5.6.3. the author proposes the metaphor SEQUENCES OF INNER SPEECH SOUNDS ARE LETTER STRINGS and SOUND SEQUENCES ARE LETTER STRINGS, which do not appear to achieve the degree of source-and-target identification characterizing typical metaphors; the cases in question are probably more adequately analyzed as representations. My intuition as a comics reader is that we understand that inner speech or spoken utterances of characters in comics are not letter strings, not even in the metaphorical sense. It seems more likely that the readers understand that letter strings *represent* inner utterances which are not necessarily uttered in the form of written texts. By the same token, the readers probably understand that spoken utterances are acoustic utterances *represented* graphically. In short, readers are unlikely to believe that the characters in a narrative “think or speak with written text” (so to say), which suggests that they do not conceptualize thought and speech in terms of writing. If one wishes to stay within the framework of Lakovian theory, representing sequences of inner speech sounds and sound sequences as letter strings looks more like instances of metonymies rather than metaphors.

Yet I am nit-picking at this point. Given the impressive scope of the ambitious project undertaken in *Metaphoricity*, the project of combining two vast theoretical frameworks in order to describe a mindbogglingly rich area of visual art, it would be unfair to expect that all conceptual minutiae of the framework are fully fleshed out. To be fair, if it was not for Szawerna’s eye-opening case studies, the problem described in the previous paragraphs of this review may not have occurred to me in the first place. Thus, *Metaphoricity* as it stands is an important milestone in the cognitive research on comics but also a starting point for further investigations and debates. The book nicely fits into recent trends in cognitive linguistics, which is becoming more open to the studies on multimodal texts and the interfaces between linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic expressions in general. Szawerna’s

book may have an impact beyond comics scholarship and become an inspiration and a source of almost exemplar solutions for researchers working on cartoons (often distinguished from comics narratives proper), advertising, industrial design, and other areas where linguistic expressions function as a part of visually rich semiotic messages.

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