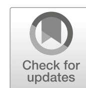
# Chapter 25
# From Statics to Dynamics: Intersemiotic Conversion of Metaphor and Its Consequences




**Miloš Tasić and Dušan Stamenković**

**Abstract** The present chapter combines the tools developed in multimodal studies of metaphor in comics and film, as well as those we find in comparative narratology and intersemiotic translation, in an analysis of a corpus of comic books and their film adaptations. All instances of visual and multimodal metaphor have been extracted from the collected comics corpus, along with certain examples of metonymy and specific alterations of standardised pieces of comics vocabulary that reinforce the metaphorical content. The fact that the comic books examined in this chapter have been adapted using two different media (animation and live action) provide us with an almost unique opportunity to investigate the ways in which metaphor gets converted from drawings into the animated and live-action forms, how this conversion alters the way in which metaphor can affect the audience, and whether the power of metaphorical messages can be retained in this conversion. The chapter presents different direct and indirect strategies for expressing a number of nonliteral messages (some of which appear to be very comics-specific) in different media – each of these media has to calibrate the instruments it has in its inventory in order to express different meanings within the animated or live-action discourse. The static nature of comic books seems to require a more abundant use of nonliteral representations so as to convey the intended meaning, thus making such instances more frequent in the analysed examples. Conversely, using the dynamic media of animation and live action, abstract messages can be contextualised in such a way that does not depend entirely on images with overt nonliteral content.

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## 25.1 Introductory Remarks

From Aristotle to contemporary cognitive neuroscience, the study of metaphor has mostly been directed towards investigating metaphorical expressions in human languages. This dominance of the study of verbal expressions of metaphor does not imply that nonverbal metaphors should be neglected. The basic definition of metaphor as using a term to describe one thing by referring to something else that is conceptually very different can readily be extended to nonverbal media, given that it will be guided by the affordances of the medium in question (Holyoak, 2019: 24). The importance of metaphor is undeniable and the overall complexity of this phenomenon is best reflected by different mechanisms that cooperate in producing and understanding figurative language (e.g., Beaty & Silvia, 2013; Chiappe & Chiappe, 2007; Holyoak & Stamenković, 2018; Stamenković et al., 2019). Aristotle (c. 335 BCE) claimed that the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor and even went on to call it the mark of a genius. More contemporary views (Embler, 1966; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) would not attribute the command of metaphor to geniuses only, but to everyone, as they see it as an integral part of our everyday language and thinking. Producing and comprehending metaphors are distinctively human abilities that depend on the interplay between language and thought, and scholars have so far attempted to frame models of metaphor processing and production based on combinations of general reasoning and semantic knowledge (Stamenković et al., 2020: 286), but the final outcome has not yet been satisfactory nor applicable to a large deal of metaphors. The fact that computational models are still being developed and tuned in order to accommodate metaphorical language makes metaphor a highly relevant topic in nearly all branches of cognitive science (see Rai & Chakraverty, 2020). Metaphorical language is thus still a challenge even if we limit our approach to verbal metaphors. Given the fact that we find them outside language makes the phenomenon even more difficult to study. This chapter presents an attempt to scrutinise the intersemiotic translation of nonverbal metaphors from the medium of comics to those of animation and live action, using Marjane Satrapi's comic books *Persepolis* and *Chicken with plums* (*Poulet aux prunes* in the original) and their respective animated and live-action adaptations, co-directed by Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud.

## 25.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

### *25.2.1 Multimodal Metaphor and Cross-Modal Resonances*

Using one concept instead of another is common in modalities other than language, which means that metaphor can function even with no words around – we can find metaphors in drawings, paintings and other visual media, and, in this case, call them pictorial metaphors. If coupled with a verbal component, they become verbo-pictorial or multimodal metaphors and the importance of these modes in conveying

metaphorical meaning can vary, thus we can identify at least three different types of verbo-pictorial metaphors based on the relation between the two modalities: (1) image-dominant metaphors, (2) text-dominant metaphors, and (3) complementary metaphors (see Tasić & Stamenković, 2015). Multimodal metaphors have so far received much attention within the circles that support Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cognitive linguistics, where metaphor itself is considered to be a central cognitive mechanism. Within cognitive linguistics, the term metaphor is understood to refer to a pattern of conceptual associations, rather than to an individual metaphorical use or a linguistic convention (Grady, 2007: 188–189). The studies of multimodal metaphor within CMT are centred around the claim that "if researching non-verbal and not-purely-verbal metaphor does not yield robust findings, this jeopardizes the Lakoff-and-Johnsonian presupposition that we think metaphorically" (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009: 4). In multimodal metaphors, people tend to use entities that are more depictable (serving as the source domain) to describe those that are less depictable (serving as the target domain), where one has to pay attention to their stylistic properties as well (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009: 12). In investigating a set of metaphors that are labelled multimodal due to the fact that they combine images and words, one should also consider the fact that those domains that involve spatial configuration, size, clarity, and colour are "more noticeable in visual discourses than in verbal ones" (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009: 13). This chapter will investigate the process of converting such metaphors from one medium into another, i.e. during intersemiotic translation. Namely we will explore the path of metaphors in converting comics into animated and live-action films.

The conversion of different metaphors from a static to a dynamic form, which will be investigated in this chapter, involves adding the temporal and the auditory dimension and creates a rather specific environment. This allows us not only to see how these media "tune the instruments" (Ryan, 2014: 25) they have in their inventories in order to express different meanings, but also to witness the functioning of multimodal resonances (El Refaie, 2015). The term multimodal resonances is used to describe "the way creative multimodal metaphors are often grasped intuitively and imaginatively, [ . . . ], between the source and target domain and between the distinct semiotic modes that are used to represent a metaphor" (El Refaie, 2015: 18–19). In El Refaie's (2015) view, the meaning potentials of different modes increase when they are used together, i.e. combined. Moreover, they are even likely to give us new insights into linking domains using different channels and their affordances. This is close to what the analogy scholarship calls "analogical resonance". Within this phenomenon, coupling different concepts can cause meanings of these concepts and associations to "resonate" and therefore modify each other. This can, in turn "highlight both similarities and differences between concepts, and create new, context-dependent meanings" (Holyoak & Stamenković, 2018: 658). The comparison in this chapter will allow us to see how static and dynamic resources will work in conveying (multimodal) metaphors and how their combinations resonate with regard to these facets of figurative meaning. It is likely that we will witness the interanimation of modes, similar to what Richards (1936) described as the "interanimation of words."

### 25.2.2 Intersemiotic Translation

The term intersemiotic translation originates from Jakobson's tripartite division of translation into (1) intralingual translation (or rewording), which includes an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language, (2) interlingual translation (or translation proper), which means translating verbal signs from one language by means of some other language, and (3) intersemiotic translation (or transmutation) in which verbal signs are interpreted by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems (Jakobson, 1959: 233). Eco (2003) considers the very process of intersemiotic conversion metaphorical in its essence, and avoids using the term translation for the process. Dusi (2015: 182) notes that when we talk about translation between different semiotic systems, we can go beyond the linguistic one, so intersemiotic transmutations or translations can exist between cinema and theatre, painting and cinema, and literature and cinema, among others. The term has thus been broadened and includes semiotic resources that are not necessarily linguistic (Kourdis & Yoka, 2014; O'Halloran et al., 2016). Specificities of different media lead us to the problem of the degrees of indeterminacy, caused by the fundamental differences in semiotic systems regarding the different ways in which they represent the world (Dusi, 2015: 192).

As the scope of its definition has become broader throughout the last three decades, intersemiotic translation has been frequently related to a set of other concepts from the domain of translation studies and beyond. When the process of translation is related to the process of adaptation (Tsui, 2012), adaptation itself can be seen as translating by performing intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system to another and as transcoding and transmutation using different conventions and signs (Hutcheon, 2013). Intersemiotic translation can lead to new forms which can be able to express ideas and feelings in a better way as compared to the forms they originated from. For instance, poetry podcasts can activate the orality and aurality of poetry and its performance, filmic poetry or video poems can activate the visual, iconic elements of poetry (Perteghella, 2019), whereas the application of digital technologies to poetic texts has changed the way in which we analyse and appreciate poetry (Alghadeer, 2014). In linking the concepts of multimodality and intersemiotic translation, Pârlog (2019: 21) notes that multimodality is established by using different types of signs (signals, indicators, expressions, gestures, etc.), symbols and their intertwining, and that "the intersemiotic translation makes the understanding of knowledge widely available for those who are not able to grasp it properly". Apart from multimodality, intersemiotic translation is nowadays also linked with vehicles of audiovisual translation (AVT), such as dubbing, subtitling, and voice-over (Taylor, 2020). Furthermore, aspects of intersemiotic translation have been associated with the processes of creating book illustrations (Pereira, 2008) and book covers (Sonzogni, 2011). The fact that intersemiotic translation within and across multimodal processes can be so complex for analysing and modelling has led authors such as O'Halloran et al. (2016) to call for using multimodal annotation software, mathematical modelling and visualisation tech-

niques in various procedures in analysing this type of translation. While translation of verbal metaphors has been studied, revealing a plethora of complexities (see Shuttleworth, 2017), intermedial translation of multimodal metaphor has not been studied thoroughly, and we hope to draw more attention to this phenomenon within this chapter.

### *25.2.3 Intermediality*

Even though the present analysis will merely focus on instances of metaphor translated or transmuted from the examined comics to animation and live action, and not their narratives in general, the relations between these different media, with comics as the source and animated and live-action film as the target of adaptation, nevertheless necessitate a discussion of the concepts of intermediality, adaptation and, even, transmedia storytelling, as representative of some of their aspects (for a more detailed analysis of the transformation of *Persepolis* from comics to animation, on the one hand, and self-adaptation and transnationality in *Chicken with plums*, on the other, see Escande-Gauquié 2009 and Kennedy-Karpat 2015, respectively). The concepts in question are mainly related to the fields of communication theory and media studies, which are not of primary concern here, yet we can draw on these theoretical underpinnings in our attempt to better explain the ways in which the examples analysed below are translated from one medium to another. It is, indeed, in the affordances of these different media that one should search for the motivation behind certain decisions on the part of the authors in the process of adapting the comic books to their animated and live-action versions, and the above concepts will serve to locate these decisions within a wider context.

Intermediality can generally be understood as “the interconnectedness of modern media of communication” (Jensen, 2016: 972), and as such it can encompass all sorts of relations between media. It is a very complex and diverse concept and “[a] variety of critical approaches make use of [it], the specific object of these approaches is each time defined differently, and each time intermediality is associated with different attributes and delimitations” (Rajewsky, 2005: 44). Thus, depending on the viewpoint from which it is observed, intermediality can stand for a number of different notions. For example, in communication research, based on what a medium primarily is, one could talk of discursive – communicating through several discourses and modalities at once, material – employing separate material vehicles of representation, or institutional intermediality – describing the interrelations between media as institutions (Jensen, 2016). Or, if intermediality is examined within the discourse that surrounds it, one could define four types of intermediality, namely synthetic – a fusion of different media, formal (or transmedial) – formal structures found in different media, transformational – the representation of one medium through another medium, or ontological – where intermedial relations precede single media as such (Schröter, 2011). Even the media of interest in this chapter, comics, animation and live action, are sometimes described as intermedial

themselves since they combine at least two distinct media or medial forms of articulation (Rajewsky, 2005; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Stein, 2015). Nevertheless, we would rather define them as multimodal and not intermedial, in the sense of Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 21–22), where modes are understood as semiotic resources used for the realisation of discourses and interactions, while media are material resources employed in semiotic products and events. The medium of comics, for example, combines the verbal and the pictorial mode (and sequence as the third mode according to Kukkonen, 2011: 35), in communicating meaning, but is not intermedial *per se*, in our opinion. The issues of intermediality arise only when two such multimodal media, as is the case here, get into contact with one another.

Intermediality can also be defined in the narrow sense for the purpose of analysing texts or other media products (Rajewsky, 2005: 51–53), which is, in fact, of main importance for the present chapter. If one "concentrate[s] on concrete medial configurations and their specific intermedial qualities" (Rajewsky, 2005: 51), intermediality can be divided into three subcategories: (1) medial transposition, or transformation of one media product into another medium, (2) media combination, which includes phenomena such as opera, film, theatre, etc., and (3) intermedial references, where a literary text references a film, for example. It is clear that the analysis that will follow deals with instances of medial transposition, with comic books transformed into animation and film, since intersemiotic translation must necessarily include resources offered by the two media in contact, making it in its essence intermedial. Rajewsky (2005: 53) goes on to describe that certain media configurations, such as a film adaptation, can actually encompass all three of the above subcategories, however, since our focus will not be on analysing the entirety of the comic books, but only specific instances of metaphor, we will not dwell further on this topic.

### *25.2.4 Adaptation and Transmedia Storytelling*

Intermediality thus leads us to the issue of adaptation of the analysed comics. As we will see, the two comic books, *Persepolis* and *Chicken with Plums*, are adapted into an animated and a live-action film, respectively. There are not many studies that deal with film adaptations of comics where the comics artist is also the (co-)director of the film (for some pertinent examples see Geoffroy-Menoux, 2007; Grgurić, 2016; Kennedy-Karpat, 2015), because there are not many such self-adaptations in the first place (the exception perhaps being animated versions of Japanese manga such as *Akira* or *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*). This is important because the discussions on the topic of adapting comics to film usually imply a different author taking hold of the process of transforming a text from one medium into another. Notwithstanding the obvious similarities between comics and cinema, and the fact that there is no change in the mode of engagement – both comics on the one hand, and animation and live action on the other, belong to what Hutcheon (2013: 22) calls the showing mode, there still remain certain differences regarding the ways in which

they are received by the audience, namely “the material shape of the images and the social aspects of reception” (Lefèvre, 2007: 3). The adaptation of comics into film is generally fraught by four main problems, according to Lefèvre (2007: 3–12): (1) the deletion/addition of material, (2) the unique characteristics of page layout and film screen, (3) the translation of drawings to photography, and (4) the importance of sound.

When speaking of adaptation, Gaudreault and Marion (2004: 58) say that a story necessarily goes through a number of informing and deforming constraints imposed by the other medium’s intrinsic configuration. To them, an encounter between a story and a medium “has important consequences because it assumes that any process of adaptation has to take into account the kinds of ‘incarnations’ inherent in this encounter in terms of the materiality of media” (Gaudreault & Marion, 2004: 61), and it has to deal with the issue of intermediality, among other things. They further point to the conceptual categories of mediativity and narrativity, with the former being of special interest for the present analysis. In their words, mediativity is the expressive power of a medium or its intrinsic capacity to represent and communicate. In the case of comics, for example, that would mean a combination of images and words, as well as the sequence into which they are organised, and this capacity “is determined by the technical possibilities of the medium, by the internal semiotic configurations that it calls up” (Gaudreault & Marion, 2004: 66). Also, bearing in mind the differences in mediativity between comics and their film adaptations, these authors claim that readers of comics immersed in the story will always be disappointed with adaptations since comics is a much more participatory medium, and that every self-respecting adaptation needs to take good care of the shaping of the source work to its own intrinsic configuration (Gaudreault & Marion, 2004: 68–69). The above readers’ reaction is, in fact, closely related to the problem of fidelity in adaptation (Kukkonen, 2013: 80–85), and their expectations when it comes to the transposition of the story from one medium to another, particularly involving those aspects of the work that require more participation from the readers of comics and concrete decisions by filmmakers, e.g. voices of comics characters (Gaudreault & Marion, 2004: 68).

Finally, the notion of transmedia storytelling, as part of the wider concept of transmediality, may also bear some importance for the task at hand. There are several different definitions of transmediality (Eder, 2015: 69), among which this concept can be understood both as media-unspecified phenomena observable in more than one medium (Rajewsky, 2002: 206) or as a translation of one medium into another (Verstraete, 2010: 10), which is similar to Rajewsky’s medial transposition. Jenkins (2006: 95–96) uses the former definition to describe transmedia storytelling as a process by which a story is told using multiple media, with each new text contributing to the overall narrative in a distinctive and valuable manner (as an example of transmedia storytelling based on comics, Kukkonen, 2013: 74 discusses the *Superman* franchise). This could perhaps rule out those adaptations that do not contribute significantly to the expansion of the story, however, based on Verstraete’s definition of transmediality, transmedia storytelling can also simply mean that a narrative exists in different media, regardless of the fact how much novelty new

adaptations bring to the original, which would then includes the works analysed here as well. Thus, we could, perhaps, say that the two comic books and their respective adaptations, with all the changes introduced in the process of remediation thanks to the specific semiotic resources and media affordances of animation and live action, and stemming from their intermedial relations, constitute instances of transmedia storytelling that uses different platforms to expand the original narratives.

### *25.2.5 Static and Moving Images*

Before we move on to the presentation of the results of our analysis, let us briefly discuss one of the more important differences between the medium of comics and those of animation and live action. In tackling the third of his four problems of adapting comics to film, the translation of drawings to photography, Lefèvre (2007: 6) notes that there is a "crucial and striking difference" between the two media, namely comics employs static images, while film functions with moving images (or the photographic form, as he calls it, which is, of course, not the case in animation, even though it uses moving images as well). According to Lefèvre, viewers of static images are always aware of the fragmented and frozen time (what may also be called a "pregnant moment" in Kukkonen's 2011: 43 interpretation of G. E. Lessing's critical essay *Laokoon*), while moving images normally create a greater impression of realism. However, as Kukkonen (2011: 43) notices, these still images are organised into sequences in comics so as to suggest movement, and provide a specific dynamic to what is, in its essence, ultimately a static medium. It is, therefore, through the sequential interaction of panels on a single page, that this static medium begins to "move", while often employing techniques such as motion, speed or impact lines, among many other things, to heighten this impression (e.g. Cohn, 2013; Forceville, 2011; McCloud, 1993; Tasić & Stamenković, 2017). Due to all of this, Atkinson (2009: 55) believes that time in comics is more synchronic rather than static because it usually depicts an action or a movement and not merely an instant in time.

On the other hand, Rowe (2016: 4) believes that framing in film, compared to framing in comics, can also be understood as static, yet not because it shows frozen time the way comics does, but because the film frame presents a stable formation when there is not much movement of the camera. In comparing the film adaptations of the comics *300*, *Sin City*, and *Watchmen* to their source material, Rowe (2016: 7) shows that if the frame in a film remains static and the image it displays stable, one could present a comic panel and a film frame as two exchangeable entities with regard to the mise-en-scène. Nevertheless, the very instant that movement is introduced into this relation, the two types of images begin to diverge and disclose the differences in their modes of expression (Rowe, 2016: 8). With movement, duration also becomes a property of the cinematic frame, which allows these images to be perceived as both spatially and temporally dynamic, as opposed to comics that conveys movement through poses and gestures (Rowe, 2016: 10). For Rowe, a film

adaptation needs to translate the specific rhythm that is created by comics without any reference to time by modulating it relatively to chronological temporality. The differences in these dynamics naturally lead film or animation directors to make decisions when adapting the original comics. Sometimes, they can contribute a new dimension to the source material, as Kukkonen (2013: 74) shows in the example of Superman who only began to fly once he was adapted to first short films, or they can take away something and leave the static medium of comics feel much more dynamic than its animated version, as was the case with certain adaptations of the *Adventures of Tintin* (Gaudreault & Marion, 2004: 68). The subsequent sections will show us how the analysed instances of metaphor shift from statics to dynamics in the examined material.

## 25.3 Methodology and Materials

The present study looks at the instances of metaphor in Marjane Satrapi's comic books *Persepolis* (2000/2004) and *Chicken with Plums* (2004/2006) and their animated and live-action adaptation, respectively. Both of these adaptations were co-written and co-directed by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud – the animated film in 2007 and the live-action film in 2011, which was the main reason behind choosing these two comic books for analysis. Our intention was to see how comics authors themselves adapt their own work from one medium to another in regard to figurative expressions, thus potentially staying truer to the source material and more closely translating the examined metaphors to the target media. Furthermore, the chance to track the adaptation process of comics to both animation and live action was another reason that drew us towards Marjane Satrapi's work. By having these adaptations at our disposal, we could also attempt to observe the differences in the two moving images media, and see whether comics are more easily transposed to animation, which is perhaps more intimately related to comics (particularly when directed by the author of the original work) than to live action. Both comic books were drawn in the black-and-white technique, whereas the animated film combined it with colour in certain parts, though predominantly black and white itself, while the live-action film, which includes some animated parts, was shot completely in colour. Bearing in mind all of this, we searched primarily for differences in graphic representation, the use of colour, framing and the introduction of sound in the adaptations.

The collected comics corpus comprised a total of 2706 panels, from which all presented examples of visual metaphor were extracted for further analysis, at times reinforced by metonymy and specific alterations of standardised pieces of comics vocabulary, such as modified speech balloons and upfixes (Cohn, 2013). The two authors of this chapter served as the raters for the metaphorical material, and only those instances on which both of us agreed were in turn used in the comparison with the adaptations. The analysis itself is of a qualitative and descriptive type, since we wanted to see how the intersemiotic translation worked between the media at hand,

disregarding the quantitative aspect at this occasion due to a relatively small number of occurrences of the tracked phenomena. Moreover, once we decided on the appropriate examples, we then searched for the elements of these selected examples that "survived" the process of translation to the other medium and compared them one to another. Therefore, the largest part of the analysed instances contain their manifestations in both comics on the one hand, and animation and live action on the other, while, additionally, there are also a few examples that illustrate those cases where the same scene was present in both media, yet the metaphor was absent from the adaptation. Naturally, these examples also contain the possible explanations for such decisions by the authors of the examined works. In the next section, the selected examples will be presented and discussed. The majority of figures related to the comic books contain entire pages rather than single panels, while the same scenes from the animated and the live-action film are illustrated using still frames with added explanations of what actually takes place in the analysed scene.

## 25.4 Analysis

### *25.4.1 Persepolis*

The first part of the analysis deals with the examples from the comic book series *Persepolis* and its animated adaptation. *Persepolis* is an autobiographical account of Marjane Satrapi's own childhood and early adult years in her native Iran during the Islamic Revolution, including a period she spent in Austria pursuing her studies. The series was collected into two volumes by Pantheon Books, *Persepolis: The story of a childhood* and *Persepolis 2: The story of a return*, and this edition was used in the analysis. To avoid any possible claims of a greater significance of particular examples to our study, they will simply be presented in the order they appear in the comics.

Even though our task here is to trace the transposition of metaphor from comics to film, we will begin our analysis by focusing our attention on an opposite example – the presence of a specific metaphor in the film that is completely absent from the comic books, simply due to its extremely prominent character. Namely, what at first appears to be one of the most important differences between the comic books and the animated film is the use of colour in the latter (Fig. 25.1). The first scene of the film in which Marjane arrives at Paris Orly Airport is animated in colour, which immediately strikes the viewer as a major deviation from the source material. However, as the film progresses, this very soon turns out to be just a metaphorical device used by Marjane Satrapi and her co-director Vincent Paronnaud to distinguish the present from the past. As already mentioned above, the comic books are drawn in black and white, and the film uses the same technique (or more precisely greyscale) for the vast majority of its duration, except once at the very beginning, twice in the middle and once at the end, in order to make a distinction

**Fig. 25.1** The use of colour in the animated adaptation. (Source: *Persepolis*, copyright © 2007 by Sony Pictures Classics)

between the points in time at which the action on the screen takes place and serve as an introduction into another period of Marjane's life (e.g. her experiences in Europe begin after the first of the two colour scenes in the middle of the film). Drawing on the history of the medium itself, the filmmakers use colour metaphorically to signal that what we see happens in the present, while the black-and-white technique is used to narrate the events from the protagonist's past. The symbolism of colour might perhaps be developed further to include certain aspects of Marjane's own coming of age, yet we believe that its primary role here is the narrative one based on the above metaphor, which is of main concern for our analysis.

The next example is the first of the two in which we see the loss of metaphor in the intersemiotic translation from comics to film. Figure 25.2 shows the final full-page panel in the narrative arc concerning Marjane's uncle Anoush, a dissident executed by the Iranian government under the accusation of being a Russian spy. Marjane nurtures a very close relationship with her uncle, and she is the last person that he wishes to see on death row. Before the execution, Anoush makes two swans out of bread in prison, which can be seen in Fig. 25.3, and gives them to Marjane telling her that one of the swans is the other's uncle, thus turning the bread figures into metaphors of Marjane and himself. Also, the final thing that Anoush says to her is that she is his shining star, which leads us to the metaphor contained in the panel below. Having learned of her uncle's tragic end, Marjane is devastated and feels lost in the world lying in her bed with the two bread swans next to her. As we can see in Fig. 25.3, this is where the scene is at in the film and the only other thing that happens before it concludes is that God appears to comfort Marjane but she tells him to go away, with the camera finally zooming in on the two bread swans. In the comic book, however, her short conversation with God precedes the panel

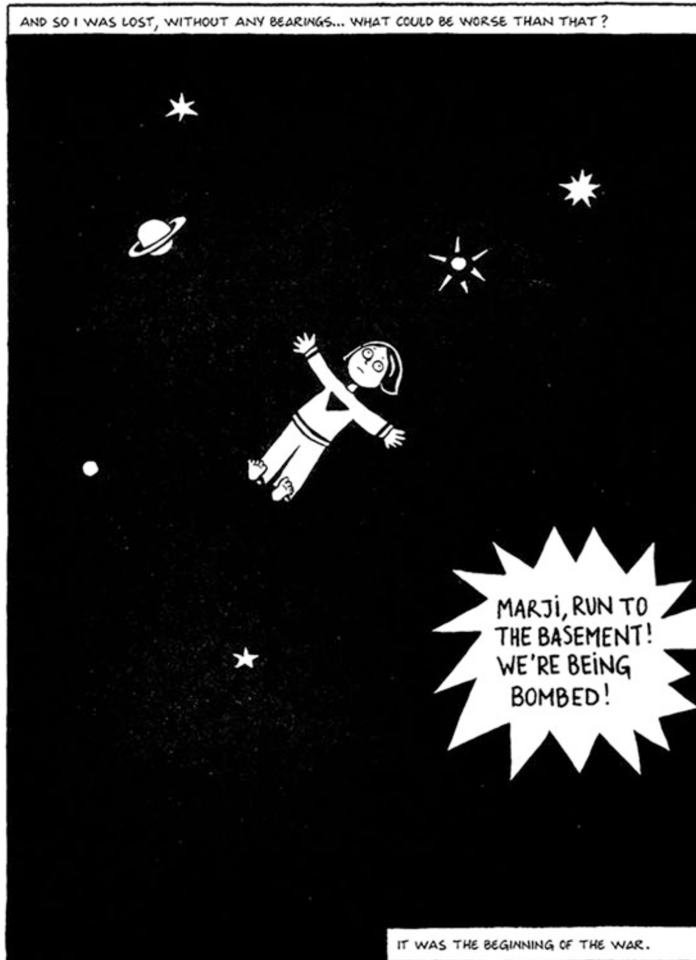


**Fig. 25.2** The shining star. (Source: *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (p. 71), copyright © 2003 by Pantheon Books, translation copyright by L'Association, Paris, France)

above in which we see Marjane levitating in space, surrounded by other stars and planets, clearly recalling her uncle Anoush's final words. Thus, there is no visual manifestation whatsoever of the examined metaphor in the animated adaptation.

The reason for this omission might lie in the fact that the final panel in the comic book plays an important role structurally, which would not necessarily be the case if it were translated to film with great fidelity. This panel ties in the whole narrative arc that revolves around uncle Anoush and its full-page size both implies the importance of the displayed content and serves as one of the crucial checkpoints on Marjane's journey through the whole series. Transposed to film, this visual metaphor would

**Fig. 25.3** Marjane remembering her uncle. (Source: *Persepolis*, copyright © 2007 by Sony Pictures Classics)

probably not have the same impact unless elaborated in much more detail, whereas the effectiveness of the above panel lies precisely in its apparent simplicity.

In the following example the ability of film to present continuous movement through time comes into play. The metaphor is one of dehumanisation through a specific graphic representation of the human form as shown on the page in Fig. 25.4. Having just purchased a tape cassette from the black market, Marjane is stopped in the street and questioned about the way she is dressed by two women wearing chadors and acting as the Guardians of the Revolution. Satrapi intentionally draws the women's garment, and in turn the women themselves, in such a style so as to remove their humanity from them by reducing their human form to a face wrapped in a large piece of black cloth. It is not completely clear whether both of them engage in scolding Marjane for the way she is dressed, since they are drawn practically identically, yet from their positions we can presume that it is just one of them questioning Marjane about her clothing choices. All in all, everything we see of the two women (apart from their faces) is a single hand emerging from under the chador during the scene, with only one panel showing the "interrogator's" both hands. The fact that this is not merely a consequence of the way in which their apparel has to be depicted is underlined by a later episode in the series in which Marjane, the protagonist, learns how to draw women in chadors and recognise their figure and haircut underneath the garment, even though they all look the same at first.

It is, in fact, through the aforementioned ability of film to show movement that the author's intention becomes far clearer in her animated adaptation than in the comic book. Unfortunately, we cannot adequately reproduce the entire scene here, but the still frame in Fig. 25.5 should, at least, imply the depicted movement of the two women. As can be seen from the positions in which their motion is captured

**Fig. 25.4** The Guardians of the Revolution questioning Marjane. (Source: *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (p. 133), copyright © 2003 by Pantheon Books, translation copyright by L'Association, Paris, France)

**Fig. 25.5** The snake-like postures of the two women. (Source: *Persepolis*, copyright © 2007 by Sony Pictures Classics)

in the image, they both move in a snake-like fashion, more resembling a couple of cobras about to strike than human beings. Unlike in the comic book, they are here both involved in the process of questioning Marjane, and they can even be distinguished from each other by certain facial features. Their hands still show on several occasions but their increasingly unhuman movement evidently suggests their inhuman behaviour. At one point in the scene they even become fully depersonalised when a medium shot of Marjane shows her against the black background formed by the chadors of the two women, with only one of each woman's hands discernible on Marjane's shoulders. What we see here is how movement in film can help a certain type of metaphoric content be communicated much more effectively than in comics, even though the animation in this case is produced in such a manner so as to resemble the source material as much as possible. The addition of the movement dimension of the film image to the author's inventory allows her to express the intended message in a more dynamic mode, certainly more dynamic than the medium of comics is able to provide her with. It can also be said that this inclusion of movement contributes to the intensity of the cross-modal resonance of this multimodal metaphorical expression, as it portrays the snake-like motion of the two women far more vividly.

The last example from *Persepolis* will show us how metaphoric content based on metonymy is reduced in quantity in the animated adaptation, yet still remains sufficiently salient for the audience to easily infer its meaning. The panel that we see in Fig. 25.6 occupies two thirds of the page in the comic book and comes at the moment in the story in which Marjane is trying to assimilate into Austrian society and leave her past and her cultural identity behind. However, as evident from the panel, her unconscious catches up with her, not letting her forget who she is and

**Fig. 25.6** Marjane's unconscious. (Source: *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (p. 40), copyright © 2004 by Pantheon Books, translation copyright by Anjali Singh)

where she comes from. The panel is then followed by an incident involving Marjane lying about her nationality, after which she later overhears some girls recounting the event, and decides to openly declare to them that she is Iranian and proud of it, which is how this episode ends in the comic book. Marjane Satrapi here uses the intrinsic ability of comics to represent multiple timelines in a single instant to a remarkable effect. All the separate images from this rich panel stand metonymically for certain events in the diegetic world of the comic books, each of them recalling an important episode from the story thus far and together forming what Marjane, the protagonist, labels her unconscious. Furthermore, the images also metaphorically represent her memories, which are, in fact, the ones troubling her during this specific period in which she is trying to let go of her past and blend in with her surroundings. By the end of the episode, as described above, her unconscious becomes her conscience, and she embraces her identity fully.

The animated adaptation takes a rather different approach to convey the same meaning. In the film, the metaphorical content is reduced in quantity and only a single character from the myriad seen in the above panel is used to convey the author's message. Marjane's grandmother is, probably, the most significant person in her life, and the directors intentionally use her to serve as Marjane's unconscious and conscience in the film. The scene is presented as a play of shadows that take on both a metonymic and metaphoric character. In it, Marjane's and her grandmother's shadows on a wall converse about Marjane's doubts and questions about her own identity. On the one hand, the shadows stand metonymically for the persons casting them, while on the other, the metaphorical content is similar to the comic book with grandmother's shadow first representing Marjane's memory of her, which in turn becomes her own conscience. This way the same meaning is construed from the original scene and its adaptation, even though it is expressed differently, utilising the specific semiotic resources of the two media. In the next section, we will analyse the examples from the *Chicken with plums* comic book and film.

### *25.4.2 Chicken with Plums*

The second part of the analysis presents the examples from the comic book *Chicken with plums* and its live-action adaptation. As characteristic of Satrapi's graphic narratives, *Chicken with plums* is yet another tale based on an actual figure (albeit much more loosely, see Kennedy-Karpat, 2015: 70–71), this time of her great uncle Nasser Ali and his final days in Tehran in 1958, following his (fictional) decision to die after his wife breaks his beloved musical instrument, the Iranian lute-like *tar*. As with *Persepolis*, the examples from this comic book and its adaptation will also be discussed in the order they appear in the story.

The first example from *Chicken with plums* is the other one that deals with the loss of metaphor in the process of intersemiotic translation from comics to film. The scene shown in Fig. 25.7 is of Nasser Ali and his wife arguing during the preparation of a meal, which was very skillfully used by Marjane Satrapi to highlight the rising tension in the argument between the spouses. As the page from the comic book shows, both the temperature of the meal being prepared in the pot and Nasser Ali's wife's Nahid temper are rising. Here the well-known metaphor of anger being represented as heat of a fluid in a container, which is manifested as steam in the upfix position above Nahid's head, is combined with the literal heat of the meal being cooked. The progression of the panels further amplifies the rising anger as the argument goes on, because we can first see only a single small cloud of smoke in the sixth panel and then two clouds in the ninth, where the argument reaches its climax. Other indicators of rising tension are also present in the final row of panels on this page, such as the spiked speech balloons and larger font (Eerden, 2009; Forceville, 2005). Together with representing the actual heat coming from the boiling pot, all of these additional graphic devices are used by the author to steadily increase the dramatic effect of the scene employing all of the tools of the

**Fig. 25.7** The argument in the kitchen. (Source: *Chicken with plums* (p. 10), copyright © 2006 by Pantheon Books, translation copyright by Anjali Singh)

comics medium. Readers can easily sense the atmosphere of this quarrel between the characters and the quickening of its rhythm as it escalates from panel to panel. The anger metaphor is communicated clearly, and the accompanying literal content of the meal being cooked in the pot further emphasises the represented event.

Contrary to this, the same scene, albeit slightly modified in the film, loses all of its metaphoricity in the adaptation (Fig. 25.8). This time the argument occurs over already served dinner, and the spouses engage in their squabble while eating. Again, the argument progresses in time, similarly as in the comic book, and ends in both Nasser Ali and Nahid (renamed Faranguisse in the adaptation) springing from their chairs and calling each other names. Since the presence of actual movement and sound can easily be used by the directors to build up tension in this specific scene, there is no actual need to employ anything similar to what we have seen in the comic book. And, indeed, the adaptation conveys the same message without relying on the anger metaphor. The reason probably lies behind the specific semiotic resources found in the two media, and the more extensive inventory of tools that a film can use in expressing the intended meaning. Thus, we can see how comics authors may go a little further in using figurative language to narrate their story since the medium in which they work might compel them to for the sake of a clearer representation, and how those authors may decide to enact the same scene differently in another multimodal medium when its modes allow them to still portray the scene as desired while omitting the metaphorical content from the source material.

The next example shows us how different media employ different means to convey the same metaphorical content, with the comic book again using graphic representation, this time through notes as musical symbols, while the film uses the sound of music itself. In the scene in question (Fig. 25.9) we see Nasser Ali playing a new tar, at first satisfied with the way it sounds, only to be completely disappointed in the end – the outcome that leads to his final decision around which the entire story revolves. In the film counterpart (Fig. 25.10), he plays a new violin, and the scene ends in the similar vein, with Nasser Ali in tears, utterly dissatisfied

**Fig. 25.8** The argument over dinner. (Source: *Poulet aux prunes*, copyright © 2011 by Le Pacte)

**Fig. 25.9** The devastation of Nasser Ali. (Source: *Chicken with plums* (p. 17), copyright © 2006 by Pantheon Books, translation copyright by Anjali Singh)

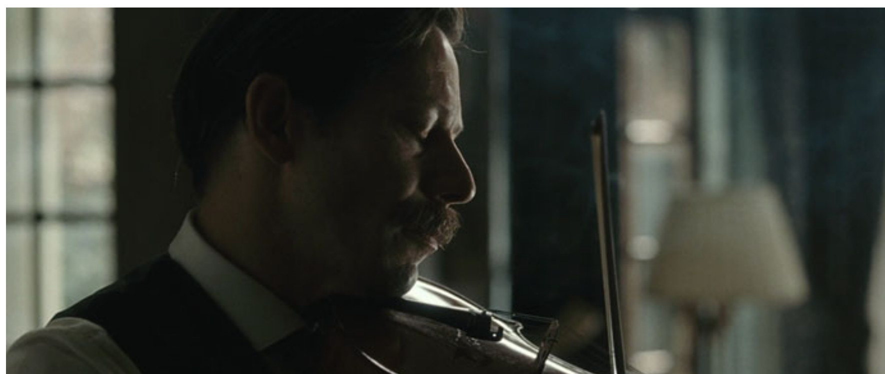

**Fig. 25.10** The violin replacing the tar. (Source: *Poulet aux prunes*, copyright © 2011 by Le Pacte)

with the new instrument and his life without the one that his wife broke. Before we move on to examine the ways in which the metaphorical content is communicated in this scene, there is a very important difference between the two works of art that needs to be addressed upfront. The first problem in adapting comics to film according to Lefèvre is the decision by the film director related to the deletion or addition of material. One of the main changes from the source material in the film adaptation is the Westernisation of Nasser Ali's instrument (Kennedy-Karpat, 2015: 79). As mentioned above, in the original he plays the tar, an Iranian string instrument belonging to the lute family, and here closely connected with the setting of the story that takes place in Tehran. For the film version, which is a French-German-Belgian co-production, directed primarily towards the European and North American audiences, the instrument is changed from the tar to the violin, to bring it closer to the target viewers. There is even a point in the comic book where the author compares one brand of the tar (Yahya) to the famous Stradivari family, calling the former the most renowned makers of the Iranian instrument. Perhaps this is where the decision to change the instrument initially came from, with Marjane Satrapi believing that substituting the violin for the tar would elicit a stronger response from the audience since they would be much more familiar with the violin, or as Kennedy-Karpat (2015: 79) opines, this might also be down to the inability of film as a medium to adequately offer an explanation as the one provided in the footnote in the comic book, which leads to an outright change in the instrument in the live-action adaptation.

In this scene, the music and the melody that Nasser Ali plays metaphorically stand for his disappointment and a broken heart, to use another metaphor. After his favourite instrument is destroyed by his wife, his whole life makes no sense any more, and he simply cannot find satisfaction in the many instruments that he tries out following the incident. The music *is* his life and all that appears to be left for him, after suffering a romantic misfortune in his youth with a woman named Irâne, who figures prominently both in the comic book and the film. Without delving

deeper into the symbolism of the instrument and Irâne in the story (see Kennedy-Karpar, 2015), since that is not of our primary concern here, let us observe how this metaphor is expressed in the two examined media. In the comic book, the shape of the notes begins to change gradually, accompanied by different facial expressions ranging from surprise to sadness (McCloud, 2006: 80–101; Stamenković et al., 2018). The shape of the notes may perhaps indicate that there is a problem with the way that the instrument sounds, it being out of tune or something similar, but by knowing that Nasser Ali is a virtuoso of his instrument, we are drawn more towards the conclusion that the instrument is, in fact, not to his liking on a different level, and that nothing can substitute his original tar. We might even interpret the changing shape of the notes as the changing melody of the music, with it becoming sadder as Nasser Ali plays, and that is what actually happens in the film adaptation, where the violin itself sounds fine, only the melody being played becomes increasingly melancholic, leading us to infer that something is going on inside Nasser Ali, which in turn becomes the focus of the narrative. The presence of sound also allows the camera to move in for a close-up of Nasser Ali's face, as opposed to the wider framing employed in the comic book, and concentrate on the moment in which his expression betrays that he has come to terms with the futility of his quest for a replacement instrument. The use of the auditory channel increases the resonating element of the multimodal metaphor we encounter in this scene, which ends in the film with him setting the instrument aside, taking a final tearful look at his old violin and making the fatal decision as indicated on the page from the comic book shown above. Unlike in the previous example, where the aural mode is used to remove the metaphorical content without changing the meaning, here the ability of film to "show" things with sound further intensifies the emotion metaphorically represented by the melody being played, and the somewhat abrupt ending of the music points more accurately to the moment in which Nasser Ali finally gives up his search for a new instrument and realises that his life is no longer worth living.

The final example from *Chicken with plums* spans several pages in the comic book and a couple of scenes in the film and it contains the metaphorical representation of a person's soul as smoke.[1] In the comic book, it begins with the depiction of Nasser Ali's mother smoking on her deathbed, refusing to quit even though she is aware of the consequences of her actions. Nasser Ali sits in front of his mother's window and plays the tar, knowing that while there is cigarette smoke coming out, his mother is still alive. However, one day he realises that there is no smoke leaving her room any more, implying that his mother has died. Following her death, a cloud of smoke appears floating just above her grave and a conversation starts between the funeral attendees, each offering a different opinion on the origin of the smoke, as conveyed by the narrator of the story. The same cloud of smoke lingers on through

[1] The importance of smoke in the narrative, and the idea behind the scene that originally came from her own grandmother, was explained by Marjane Satrapi herself at a discussion following the screening of her film at the 2012 Kustendorf International Film and Music Festival, which was attended by one of the authors of this chapter.

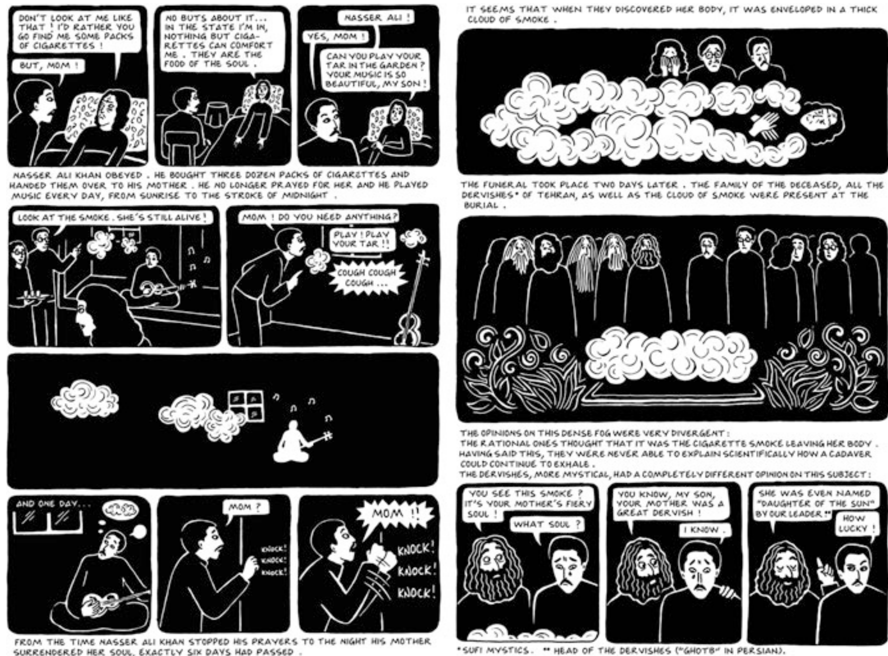


**Fig. 25.11** The soul of Nasser Ali's mother. (Source: *Chicken with plums* (pp. 60–61), copyright © 2006 by Pantheon Books, translation copyright by Anjali Singh)

several ensuing pages, finally exiting the diegetic space of the comic book through the top right corner of the panel in which one of the characters says that Nasser Ali's mother simply had to leave because her time had come. The metaphor itself is rather clear and some of the attendees even mention her soul in the discussion on the source of the smoke, however, it is the manner in which the cloud of smoke is depicted in the two media that is of crucial importance for our analysis. As we can see from the two pages above that open up as a spread in the comic book (Fig. 25.11), Marjane Satrapi draws the cloud(s) of smoke differently to emphasise the movement. On the left page we see several smaller clouds exiting Nasser Ali's mother's room, and appearing to travel further away from it. On the right, we first see a cloud of smoke enveloping her body and then hovering above her grave. It remains at the bottom end of several panels on the following pages until its final elongated form is shown as if leaving the panel described above, with the specific shape intended to cue in the motion that cannot be represented differently in static images. Nevertheless, the sequential mode of the comic book still succeeds in providing the necessary and sufficient information for this movement to be understood as such by the readers.

On the other hand, the film adaptation uses its dynamic ability to display motion in real time to a profound effect in this case. In the film (Fig. 25.12), the cloud of smoke is first exhaled by Nasser Ali's mother and then it begins its journey through the window of her room and further outside their courtyard, presumably towards

**Fig. 25.12** The journey of Nasser Ali's mother's soul to her final resting place. (Source: *Poulet aux prunes*, copyright © 2011 by Le Pacte)

the cemetery. Before that, his mother says to Nasser Ali that smoke is the food for the soul, thus explicitly linking the two, and asks him to go into the garden and play the violin for her. Once she exhales her last breath, a series of edited shots track the single cloud of smoke, contrary to what we see in the comic book, as it moves away from Nasser Ali's mother, accentuating the continuity of the cloud and indicating that what at first appears to be only cigarette smoke is, in fact, his mother's soul leaving her body. The last cloud-tracking shot transitions seamlessly into the next scene in which we witness the cloud's appearance above Nasser Ali's mother's grave, and the link between the two is further strengthened through the voice-over that narrates the story in the similar fashion as in the comic book and adds yet another level to the visual mode. When compared to the manner in which this metaphor is communicated in the comics version, its film counterpart seems more potent visually, and there appears to be less intense urgency in calling on the verbal mode to help convey the intended meaning, which cannot truly be said for the more multimodal manifestation of this metaphor in the comic book. We could even, perhaps, say that the medium of film is better suited for representing such metaphors while relying exclusively on the visual mode, and that the sequence

of panels employed by the artist in the comic book simply cannot come across as dynamic as the film version in this case. The aspect of motion, therefore, makes the above metaphor more intense and resonant.

This example concludes our analysis of the selected representative instances of metaphor translated from the medium of comics to those of animation and live action. We have seen how the intrinsic semiotic resources of these media can be used in the process of intersemiotic translation or medial transposition, and what happens with the transmuted metaphorical content. The final section will offer some concluding remarks and possible directions for future research.

## 25.5 Conclusions and Further Research Directions

The analysis allowed us to see potential outcomes of intersemiotic translation of metaphorical content from the medium of comics into the media of animated and live-action films. The differences that appeared in every analysed example were caused by a range of various factors. They include media-specific affordances that allow for more or less intense expressions of monomodal and multimodal metaphor, as well as the authors' decision on whether and how to alter the expression. Other reasons might be related to the process of production, where some scenes ended up being either simplified or left out of the films completely. In any case, the examples made apparent the process of calibrating or retuning the instruments of the analysed media, with the different arsenals at their disposal used to creatively express the same or similar metaphorical content, reinvigorating the more entrenched metaphors through the use of elements that were not available in the original medium as a result of cross-modal resonances. By employing temporality, motion and sound, both animation and live action open wider horizons to expressing metaphor, which differentiates them from the multimodality of comics (and even more so from the monomodal verbal expressions). The ability of the two filmic media to represent movement through time was observed as particularly effective in conveying metaphorical meaning in certain cases, bringing to life the static images of comics with the intrinsically dynamic semiotic resources of animation and live action.

Comparing the ways in which the source texts were adapted by these two media, and bearing in mind that the adaptations were co-directed by the author of the original comics, who presumably served as the main decision-maker in the process (Kennedy-Karpat, 2015: 81), we could conclude that the animated film is more faithful to the source material than the live-action one, both visually and narratively. Perhaps it is the photographic realism of the live action film that is responsible for such an impression, along with a number of alterations introduced for the purpose of appealing to a wider audience. However, if we compare the creativity of metaphorical expressions that comes with the peculiarities of these media, the results are more or less similar. This is best seen when the authors attempt to transfer a certain metaphor from the original material while trying to retain fidelity

in adaptation. These counterparts are never the same, nor do they represent mere translations from one semiotic mode into another. Both animation and live action display a number of shared characteristics that distance them equally from comics, so gathering further materials relating to the conversion of metaphor from one medium to another is likely to give us a better insight into how this process depends on specific media affordances.

When it comes to future directions in this line of research, there are several ways in which it can be extended. One may involve finding similar examples from other schools and genres of comics, where the authors were themselves responsible for animation and live-action adaptations of the source material, or vice versa from animation and live action to comics (e.g., the aforementioned *Akira* by Katsuhiro Otomo or *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* by Hayao Miyazaki). Second, one could look for adequate examples where artists have directed adaptations of other authors' source material, so as to compare the approaches to specific metaphorical content and the ways in which it has been expressed in different media. Given that these adaptations do not occur that frequently, one cannot expect that a large-scale corpus that would allow us to study intersemiotic metaphor translation might appear soon. However, these and similar examples could be approached and analysed using a different framework, with a potential candidate being the application of formal discourse analysis to the scenes portraying multimodal metaphors, as this has already been done both in the realms of film (Wildfeuer, 2014, 2017) and comics (Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2014).

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