Audiovisual Metaphors in Moving Images

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1. Part: IMAGE SCHEMATA AND PRIMARY METAPHORS IN MOVING IMAGES

10-11:30 am

Metaphors in Movies – A first Example

Inside Out (D: Pete Docter, Ronaldo del Carmen, USA 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1S0RKRRyqhQ

I.1. Short General Introduction into Metaphors & Image Schemata

Classic Understanding of Metaphors

A *metaphor* is "...a figure by which the **actual meaning** of a word is transferred to **another meaning** which belongs to it only by the force of a comparison."

(Du Marsais, quoted in Winfried Nöth. Handbuch der Semiotik, 2000, p. 342).

A **metaphor** is based on a relationship of *similarity*:

- two **signs** (e.g. words or pictorial motifs) are linked by a **common signifying feature** (e.g. 'The *world* is a *stage*', *'Boiling* with *rage'*)

- Basic metaphorical principle: **analogy/comparison** between **different concepts**

Classic Understanding of Metaphors

Metaphors are considered as **tropes of figural** speech: they act as stylistic devices of **emphasis** and **figurative illustration of abstract** thoughts, ideas, arguments

"**Something said** refers to something that is not said, is **absent** in the concrete utterance, but is **actually meant**, whereby what is actually **meant** must become clear from the **structure of what is said**."

(Dennis Gräf et al. (2011). *Filmsemiotik. Eine Einführung in die Analyse audiovisueller Formate*. Marburg, P. 53)

Founders of Cognitive Metaphor Theory

George Lakoff (1941)
Linguist, USA (Berkely)
Early Works, e.g. :

- (1980): "Metaphors we Live by" (with Mark
            Johnson
- (1987): „Woman, Fire, and Dangerous Things.
            What Categories Reveal about the Mind"

Founders of Cognitive Metaphor Theory

Mark Johnson (1949)
Philosopher, USA (Oregon)
Early Works, e.g.:

- (1981) *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor.*
- (1987) *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason.*

Cognitive Understanding of Metaphors

- *Metaphors* do not only establish a **comparison** between **conventional meanings** of e.g. words, pictures and sounds (=*symbolic metaphors*).

- *Metaphors* are a basic **principle of human thinking**
  - ➤ We conceptualize **abstract and complex terms/concepts** etc. with the help of simple **gestalt patterns**

- *Metaphors* are based on **cognitive transfer** between a (mostly abstract) **target domain** and a (sensual-concrete, body-based) **source area** (= *conceptual metaphors*)

- also *Symbolic metaphors* are based on *conceptual metaphors* of thinking!
  - ➤ e.g. "time flies" (symbolic metaphor) -> 'time is a natural force' (conceptual metaphor)

Conceptual / Cognitive Metaphors

- *Metaphors as cognitive concepts* transfer the **gestalt** of **body-based schemas** (such as 'way', 'force', 'balance', 'container') to an abstract **target** domain (e.g. life, time, society):
  - 'life is a path',
  - 'time is a natural force/ a flying force' (e.g. time flies),
  - 'society is a building' (e.g. 'upper level of society')
- *Conceptual metaphors* are realized in different sign systems, e.g.:
  - in language
  - in body language
  - in visual and in audiovisual media

Time Flies!

Cognitive Schemata & Concepts

- ***Schemas & concepts*** are **general knowledge structures** that reflect the most important features of the subject area to which they refer and, at the same time, indicate what relationships exist between these features
  - e.g. 'building': a fix space with single entries & windows, often several levels
- **Why do we need Schemas? Central functions, e.g.**:
  - Reduction of complexity of sensorial data
  - Organization & representation of knowledge (top-down-bottom-up-process of cognitive information processing)

(Anderson, John R. 2005: *Cognitive Psychology*.)

Body-Based *Image Schemata*

- *Gestalt*: The **stimuli** received by the senses (e.g. light, shadow) are recognized by the cognitive system in their **elementary gestalt forms** and grouped according to patterns that belong together:
  - lines, dots etc.
  - circular, angular, soft, sharp etc. shape patterns
  - more complex shape patterns
- **Image schemata**: gestalt-based cognitive concepts:
  - E.g., path-, container-, force-, balance-schema.
  - they have **gestalt** elements, connected with a knowledge schema (e.g. ‚building')
  - Gestalt perception is crucial for 'body-based meaning attribution' (embodiment)

Image Schemata

"An **image schema** is **a recurring dynamic pattern** of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives **coherence and structure to our experience**. […]

Experience is to be understood in a very rich, broad sense as including basic **perceptual, motorprogram, emotional, historical, social and linguistic dimensions**."
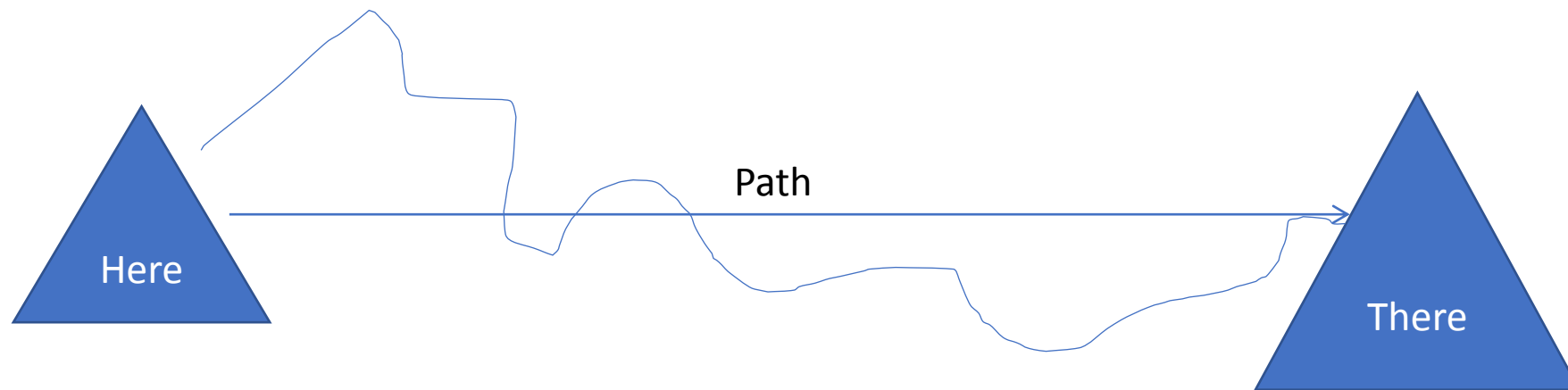
Mark Johnson 1987, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.* (xic, xvi)

Container-Schema:
Gestalt-Elements: In-Out

Out

In

Source-Path-Goal-Schema (SPG):
Gestalt-Elements: Here – There - Path

Path

Here

There

Balance-Schema
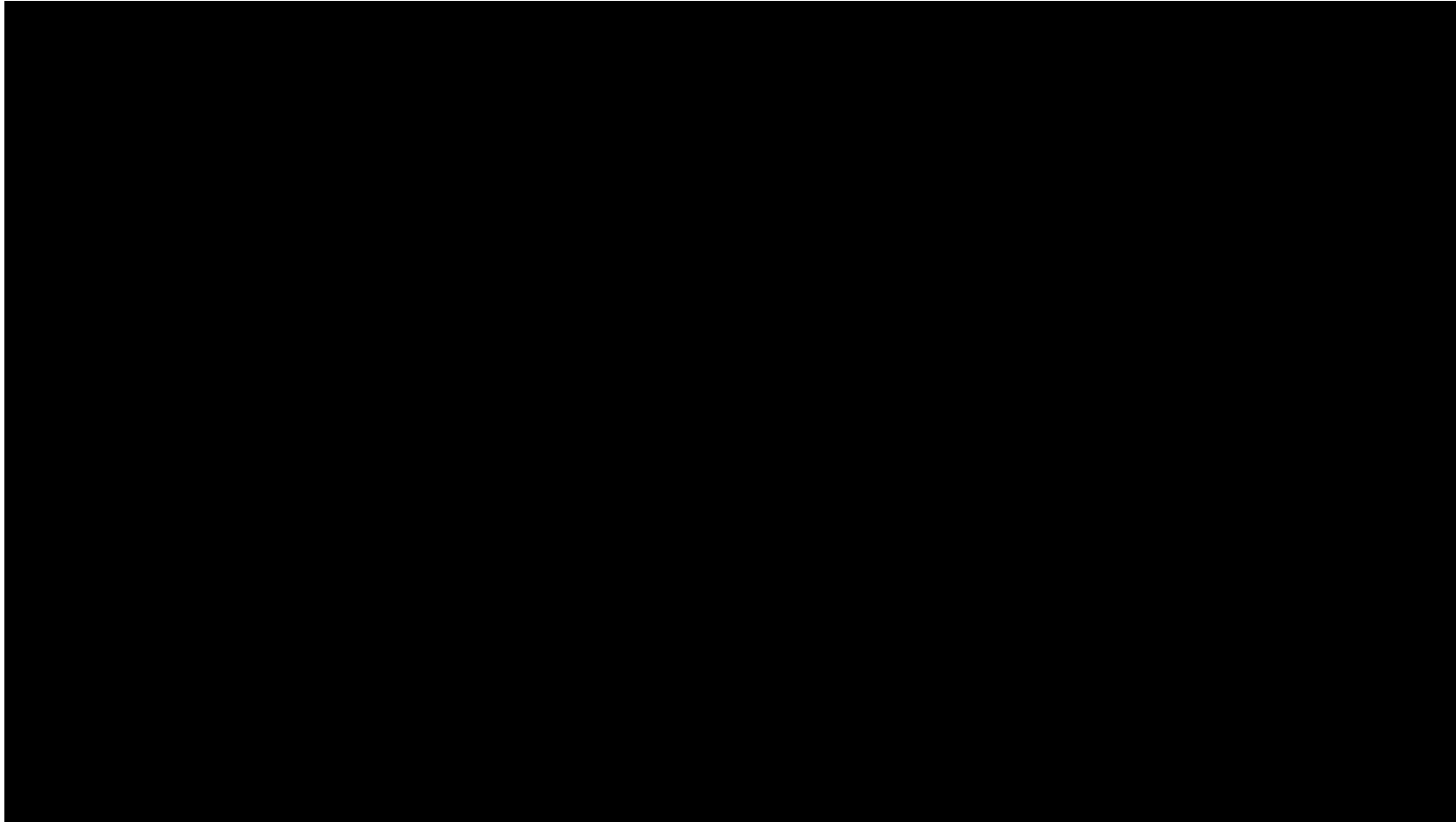**Gestalt-Elements: even vs. uneven** (in relation to a horizontal axis)
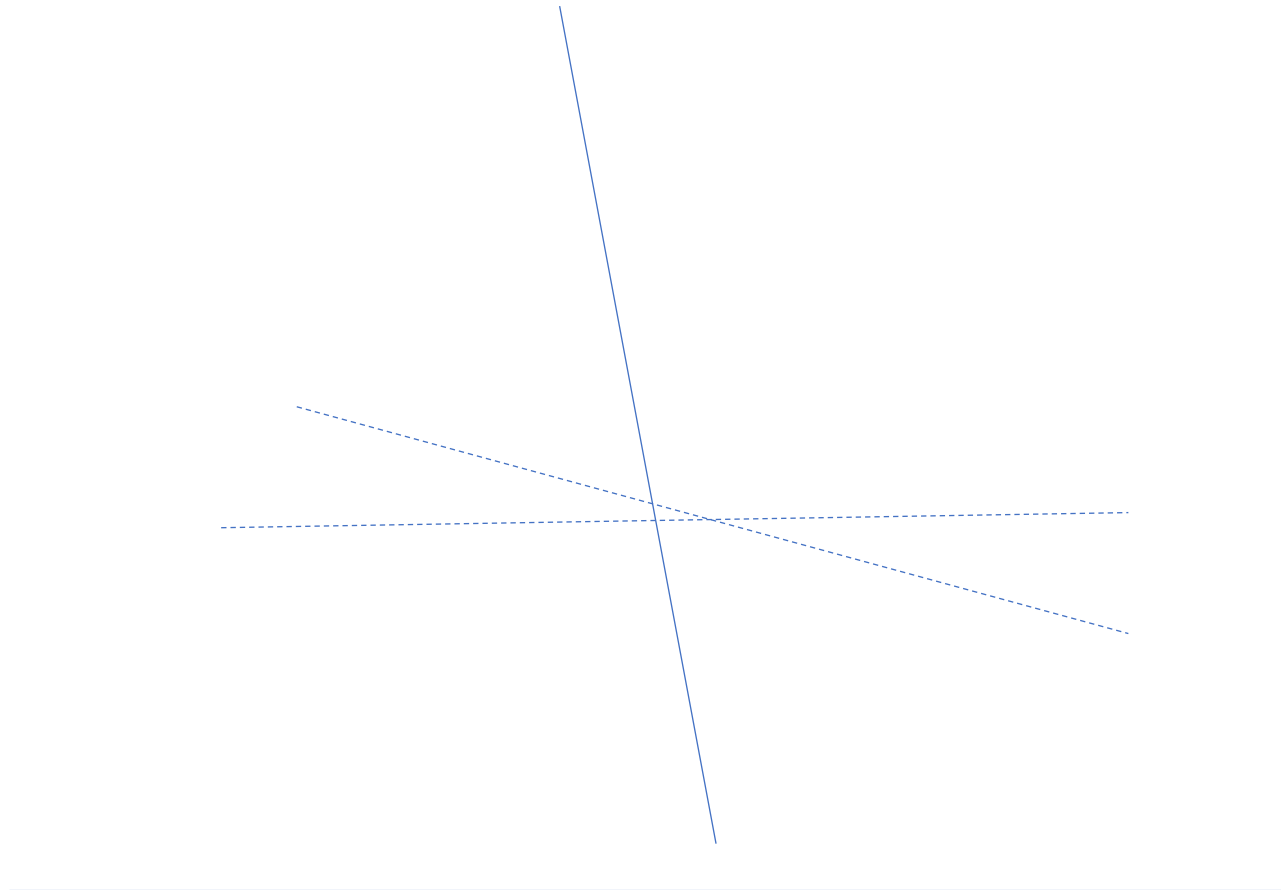
Example: Image Schemata in Comics

Asterix: *La Zizanie* (Goscinny and Uderzo, 1970)

The Source-Path-Goal-Schema (SPG) in Movies – An Example:

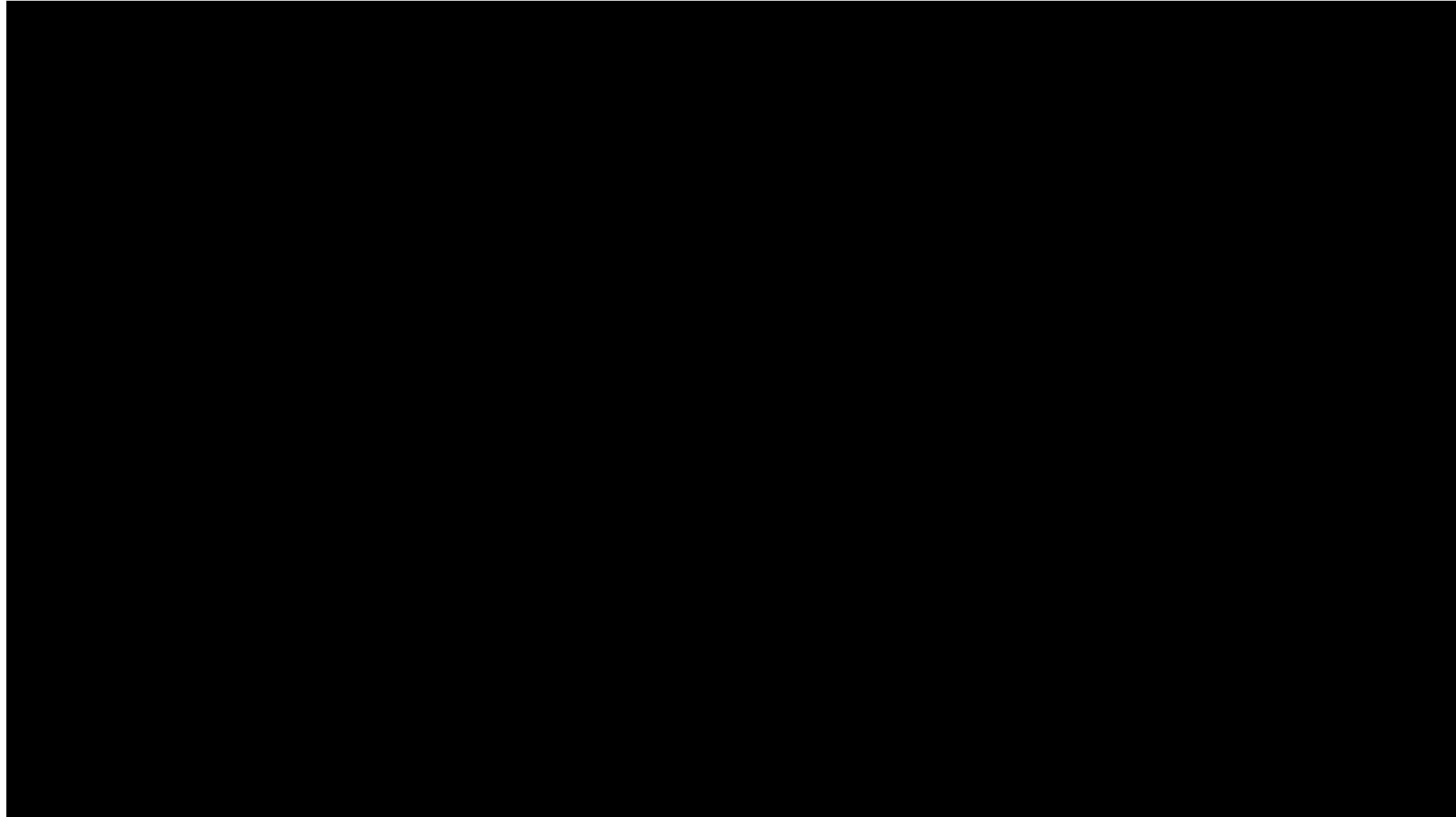‚Life is a Journey'-Metapher in animation movies (Charles Forceville)

I.2. Group Work: Analysis of Image Schemata in a Movie Scene

Metaphoric use of image schemata by film style
Example: *Inside Out* (2015) – The Family-Dispute-Scene

Metaphoric use of image schemata by film style
An Example *Inside Out* (2015) – The Family-Dispute-Scene

Group-Task:

Link to the scene: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAL0nwCo0h8

- what *image schemata* can you identify in the **use of camera;** in the way**, images are composed**; the way, the **movement of characters** and **objects** are displayed, but also by the **use of sounds**?

- More specifically, please look especially for the following **image schemata**:
    - Container (in/out)
    - Paths (here-there)
    - Force (strong/intense – weak/low)

Part II: PART II AUDIOVISUAL METAPHORS IN MOVIES: SPACE METAPHORS
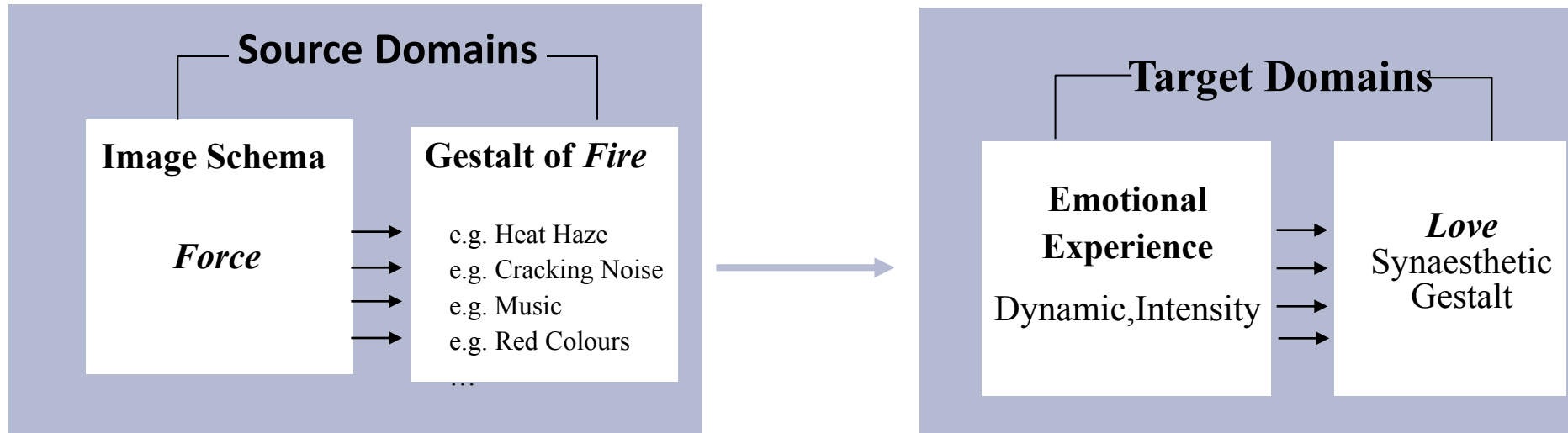
2:00-3:30 pm

II.1: Introduction into Audiovisual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphors – Symbolic Metaphors
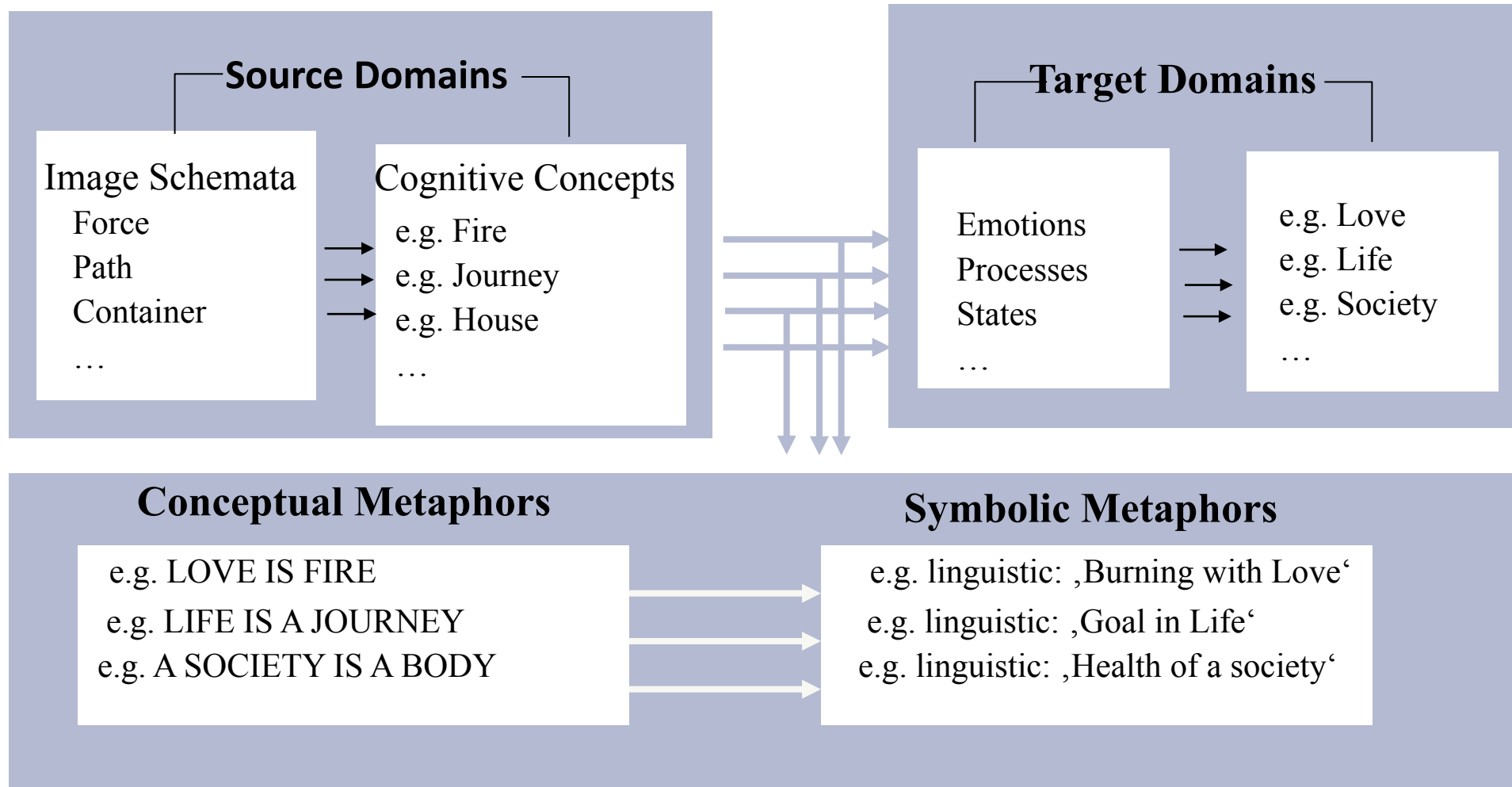
Audiovisual Metaphors in Moving Images

Conceptual Metaphor: ‚Love is Fire'

Audiovisual Metaphors

"(...) movies, television shows, video games, or other moving images recurrently generate **audiovisual metaphors** in their **motifs** and in their **audiovisual compositions**

(a) by manifesting **conceptual metaphors** already established in our minds and in (media-)culture; and

(b) by **creating original mappings** in the **metaphoric use of embodied source domains**, which are elements of the very audiovisual composition and abstract or complex target domains in the genre-typical semantic framework of a piece.
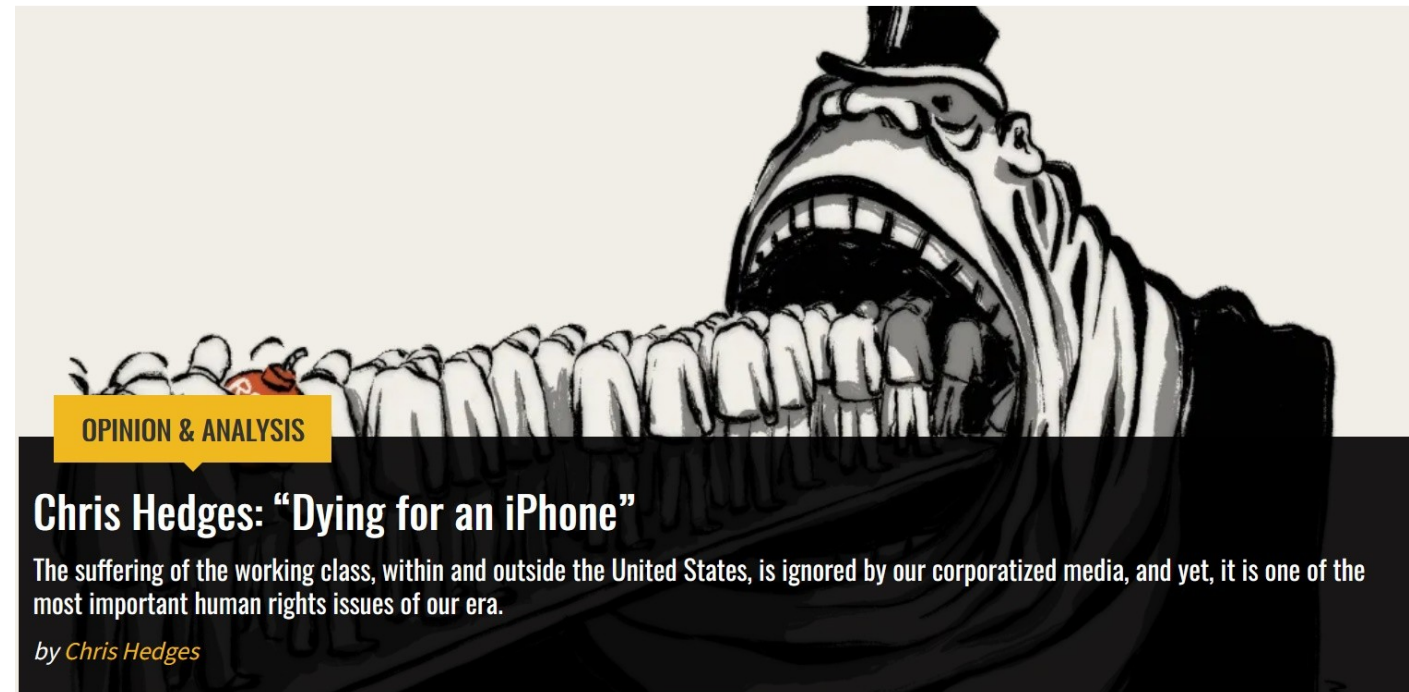
(Fahlenbrach 2016, p. 34)

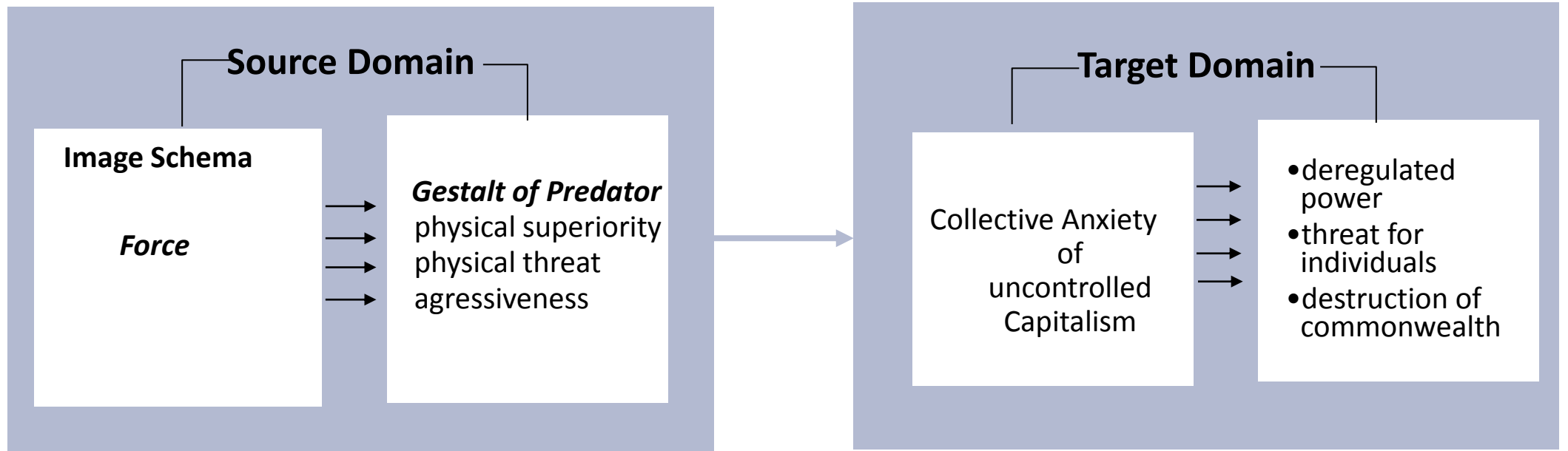# Example for Metaphors in Visual & Audiovisual Media:
„Predatory Capitalism"

Conceptual Metaphors:

‚Capitalism is a natural force' ->'capitalism is a living being' ->'capitalism is a predator'

Godzilla, *freelance corporate strategist*

‚Predatory Capitalism' as an Audiovisual Metaphor

Source Domain

Image Schema		Gestalt of Predator
Force	→	physical superiority
	→	physical threat
	→	agressiveness

Target Domain

Collective Anxiety of uncontrolled Capitalism		
	→	• deregulated power
	→	• threat for individuals
	→	• destruction of commonwealth

Metropolis (Fritz Lang, D 1927)

Two Types of Conceptual Metaphors

System Metaphors

Referring to
states, systems etc.:

- 'The mind is a machine'
- 'Social organizations are plants'
- 'Careers are buildings'
- 'Society is a machine' etc.

(Kövecses 2002, 127)

Event Structure Metaphors

Referring to
relations, events etc.:

- 'Progress is motion forward'
- 'Action is self-propelled motion'
- 'Means are paths'
- 'Changes are movements'

(Kövecses 2002, 134)

Two Types of Conceptual Metaphors in Audiovisual Metaphors

System Metaphors for Designing audiovisual Motifs	*Event Structure Metaphors for Designing Audiovisual Style*

Audiovisual characters and objects
as complex systems

↓

- ‚Complex systems are buildings'
- Referring to the *container*-schema

↓

Metaphoric Design of spatial Motifs etc.

Audiovisual
Processes and relations via *motion*

↓

- 'lack of control over change is lack of control over movement'
- 'action is self-propelled movement'

Metaphoric use of camera movement, movement of characters / objects…

II.2. Audiovisual Spaces as Audiovisual Metaphors

Cinematic role of Audiovisual Metaphors

- **Main function** of audiovisual metaphors in movies and cinematic TV series: giving **narrative meanings** a **bodily** and **affectively** appealing **aesthetic gestalt**

- **Key bodies** and **key action spaces** of a cinematic narrative stand at the centre of its **metaphoric embodiment**
  - ➤ key **bodies** and **action spaces** can act as **audiovisual key metaphors**
  - ➤ **metaphoric networks** of **submetaphors** are often created around bodies and spaces as **audiovisual key metaphors**

Primary Audiovisual Metaphors in Cinematic Spaces

- **Audiovisual Spaces** <u>always</u> imply embodied **image schemata**:
  - e.g. the **container-schemata** (in–out) between the **frame** and the pictorial **field**, as well as within the **depicted spaces** (e.g. in the display of limited spaces with doors, walls etc.);
  - e.g. **path-schema: movements** of the camera and of **moving objects** along **paths** (here--there), and across the limits of the **depicted spaces** (e.g. interior rooms)
- further **embodied elements in audiovisual spaces**:
  - **gestalt patterns**: e.g. up-down, size (big- - small), or dark–bright;
  - **cross-modal qualities**: **duration** (long-short), **intensity** (strong-weak), and **position** (above-below, central-peripheral, close-distant)

The Hotel as an audiovisual Key Metaphor
Example: *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, USA/G/UK 2014)
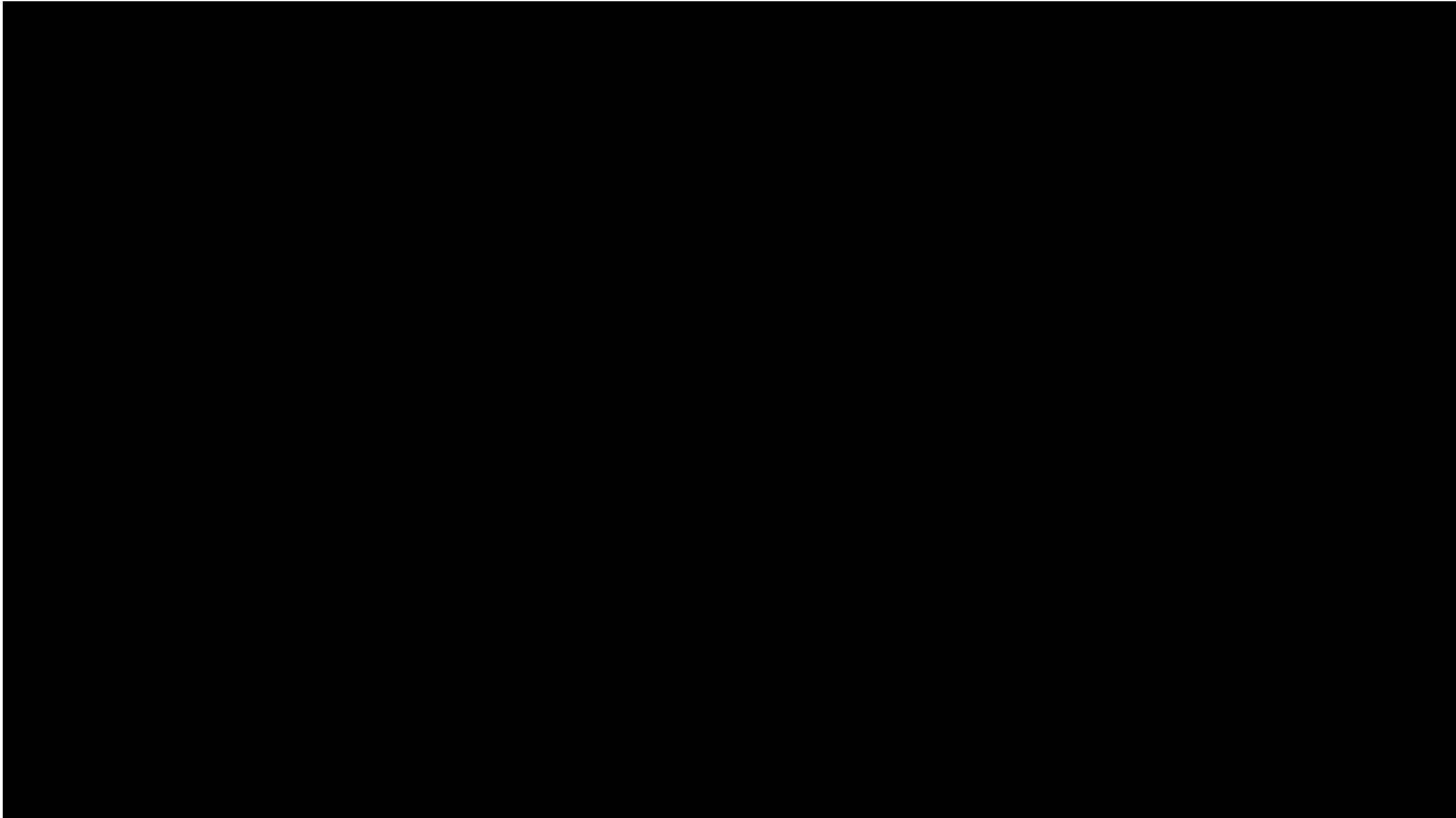
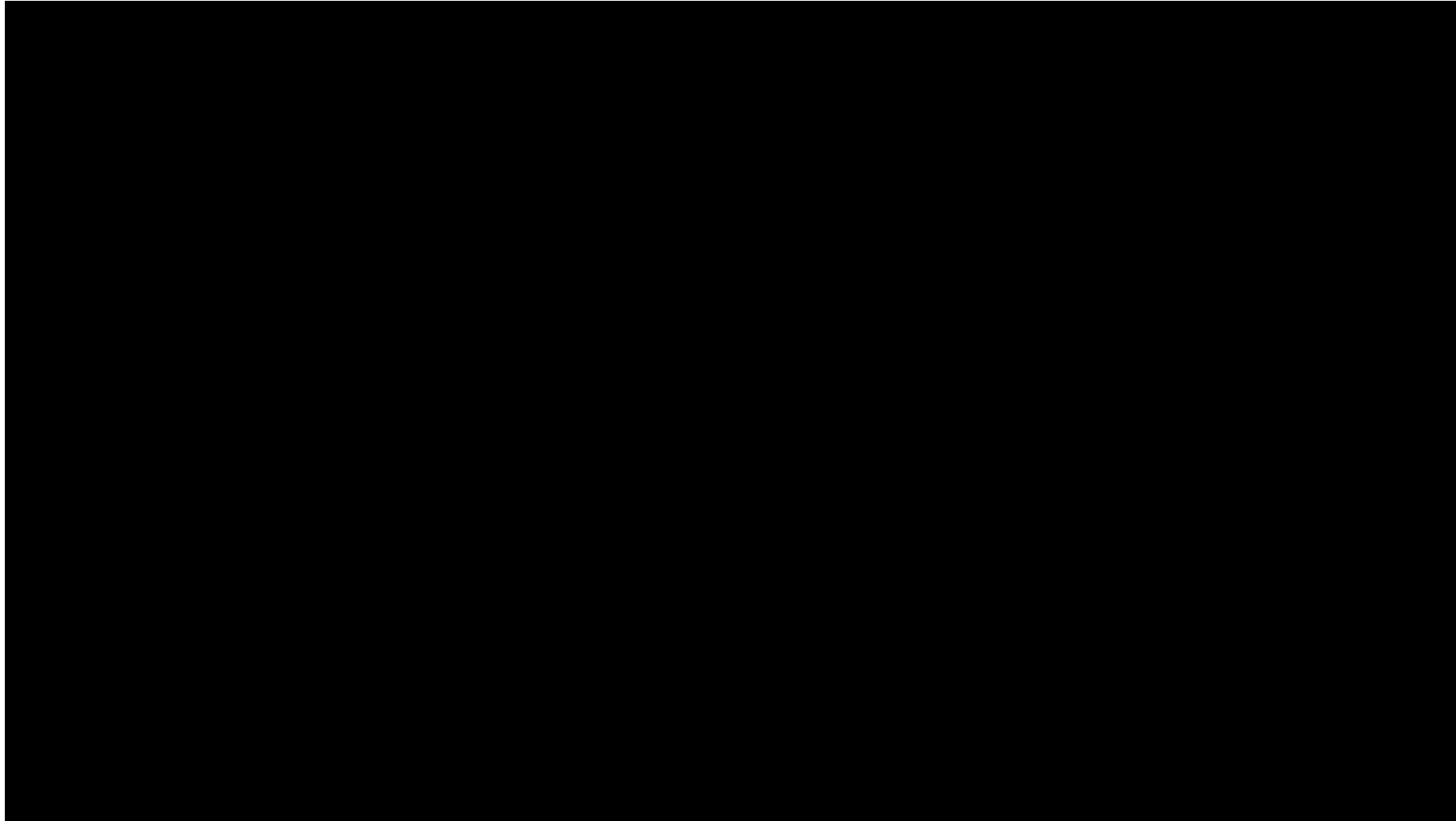*The Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, USA/G/UK 2014) - Trailer

Gustave's Movements in the Hotel

Gustave's Movements in the Hotel

Gustave's Movements in the Hotel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN5sqSEXxm4

Motiv of Hotel as Key Audiovisual Metaphor:
,social life is a hotel'

Key Audiovisual Metaphor:
- 'society is a building' – 'social life is an hotel'
- 'social hierarchies are levels of a building'
- ➤ Container-schema as source domain
- ➤ hierarchic structure of levels as source domain

,social life is a hotel': The *Grand Budapest Hotel* in the early 1930s

Audiovisual Submetaphors: ,wealth is a big, bright room' - 'poverty is a small, dark room'

‚social life is a hotel‘: The Grand Budapest Hotel during fashist Dictatorship in 1930s

Audiovisual Submetaphor:
‚Political Repression is mass occupation of a building‘

‚social life is a hotel': The *Grand Budapest Hotel* in 1968

Audiovisual Submetaphor: ‚an individualistic society is a small human group in a huge empty building'

Bodily Performances of Gustave as Key audiovisual Metaphor
‚Trespassing of social limits is passing levels of a building'

Example: One of Gustaves Gazes, performed by
camera & editing as transgressing the levels of
the hotel

‚mastery of social order is fluid/self-controlled motion thoughout in a building'