Michał Szawerna
University of Wrocław, Faculty of Philology
e-mail: michal.szawerna@uwr.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-1196-6834

Film Genre and Theories of Conceptual Representation: Toward a Schema-Based Account of Film Genre Oriented to Multimodal Cognitive Linguistics

Abstract

The topic of this article is situated at the intersection of cognitive linguistics, multimodality studies, film studies, psychology, and genre theory. The article's goal is to contribute to multimodal cognitive linguistics by discussing the concept of "film genre", which has so far been under-represented in this research area, from the perspective of major theories of conceptual representation with a view to characterizing film genre as a viable theoretical concept of multimodal cognitive linguistics. Specifically, the schema-based characterization of the concept of film genre proposed in this article is meant to account for such theoretically problematic aspects of film genres and their filmic exemplifications as textualization, inclusiveness, exclusiveness, hierarchicality, and filmic multivalency.

Keywords: film genre, cognitive linguistics, multimodality, categorization, conceptual representation, schema theory, conceptual metaphor

1. Introduction and Theoretical Background

Recent years have seen a surge of publications in the research area that has come to be known as "multimodal cognitive linguistics" (Langlotz 2015: 55; Moya Guijarro [2013] 2015: 117). The scope of this research area is jointly defined by the basic tenets of multimodality studies and cognitive linguistics. On the one hand, multimodal cognitive linguistics (henceforth, MCL) embraces the following tenets of multimodality studies: (1) the view that communication almost invariably involves simultaneous, coordinated use of multiple established means of making meaning referred to as "modes" (see: *e.g.* Jewitt and Kress 2003: 1–2; Jewitt, Bezemer, and O'Halloran 2016: 2–4; Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala 2017: 15) and (2) the view that advertisements, animations, cartoons, comics, feature films, musical

pieces, paintings, posters, sculptures, tourist brochures, and other kinds of systematically organized 'modal ensembles' (Bezemer and Kress 2016: 6) constitute multimodal "texts" (see: *e.g.* Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 24; Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala 2017: 132; Post 2017: 20–21). On the other hand, MCL subscribes to a central tenet of cognitive linguistics whereby verbal and non-verbal communication are both guided by the same mode-independent conceptual mechanisms, notably categorization, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, and conceptual integration (a.k.a. conceptual blending) (Forceville 2016, 2021; Szawerna 2020: 190, 2021: 319; Szawerna and Zygmunt 2023: 80).

The goal of the research in MCL, which is considered a major linguistically informed area of research into the workings of modal ensembles (Pinar Sanz [2013] 2015: 2), has been to shed light on how mode-independent conceptual mechanisms guide the creation and interpretation of a broad range of multimodal texts. This is evident across a range of publications in MCL, such as Abbott and Forceville (2011), Abdel-Raheem (2019), Caballero (2009), Coëgnarts and Kravanja (2012, 2015), Díaz Vera ([2013] 2015), Díaz Vera and Manrique-Antón (2015), Eerden (2009), Eggertson and Forceville (2009), El Rafaie (2009), Fahlenbrach (2016, 2017), Forceville (1996, 2005, [2013] 2015), Forceville and Jeulink (2011), Forceville and Kashanizadeh (2020), Forceville and Paling (2018), Forceville, Veale, and Feyaerts (2010), Górska (2020), Müller and Kappelhoff (2018), Ortiz (2015), Popa ([2013] 2015), Potsch and Williams (2012), Rohdin (2009), Schilperoord and Maes (2009), Shinohara and Matsunaka (2009), Szawerna (2017), Szawerna and Zygmunt (2023), Teng (2009), Urios-Aparisi (2009), and Yu (2009).

This article is an attempt to contribute to MCL by considering the concept of "film genre" from the perspective of theories of conceptual representation (a.k.a. categorization theories). This concept has been under-represented in MCL despite the fact that the film-oriented strand of multimodal cognitive linguistic research has been a burgeoning one (Forceville 2016, 2021). Arguably, film genre has also been a largely under-represented concept in MCL's parent academic field of multimodality studies. It is only mentioned in passing on a handful of pages in Bateman and Schmidt (2012), and even Tseng (2013), whose ideas have in no small measure informed this article, discusses it somewhat tangentially. This is somewhat surprising because, on the one hand, film genres have been of major concern in academic fields whose interests are to some extent convergent with those of multimodality studies, such as film studies (see: *e.g.* Altman [1999] 2000; Chandler [1997] 2000; Stam 2000; Langford 2005) and transmedial narratology (Ryan 2004; Alber and Hansen 2014), and, on the other hand, film genres seem very real to filmmakers, producers, viewers, reviewers, and critics (see: *e.g.* Post 2017: 43–67).

The attempt undertaken here seems worthwhile for three reasons. Firstly, certain popular film genres, such as filmic fantasy, horror, and science fiction abound in characters, objects, and settings that are particularly amenable to being analyzed from the perspective of MCL as metaphorical, metonymic, metaphtonymic (Goossens 1990), or blended representations (Szawerna and Zygmunt 2023). Secondly, many, if not most, mainstream films produced today are aptly characterizable as film genre hybrids which variously mix two or more genres into increasingly more exotic combinations.[1] Understanding film genre

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1   These exotic combinations include, among others, western and science fiction (*Cowboys and Aliens*, 2011), science fiction and war film (*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, 2016), science fiction and film noir (*Blade Runner*, 1982), science fiction and comedy (*Men in Black*, 1997; *Galaxy Quest*, 1999; *Guardians of the Galaxy*, 2014), horror and war film (*Overlord*, 2018), horror and romance (*Let the Right One in*, 2008; *Twilight*, 2008), musical and drama (*La La Land*, 2016), science fiction, horror, and war film (*Aliens*, 1986; *Starship Troopers*, 1997), and martial arts, action, comedy, drama, and science fiction (*Everything Everywhere All at Once*, 2022).

from the perspective of MCL may facilitate the analysis of such filmic hybrids as multimodal conceptual blends. Thirdly, and most importantly, the characterization of film genres put forward in this article is intended to account for various oft-noted characteristics of film genres and their filmic exemplifications, such as, "textualization" of film genres, whereby genres are embedded in individual films, "inclusiveness" of film genres, whereby they are typically exemplified by films that vary, sometimes quite dramatically, in terms of their thematic, iconographic, and narrative makeup, 'exclusiveness' of film genres, whereby film genres are typically characterized with reference to a handful of films that are widely regarded as highly representative examples of their genre, "hierarchicality" of film genres, whereby highly inclusive film-genre categories comprise less inclusive film-genre categories, which in turn comprise even less inclusive genre categories, and "filmic multivalency" (a.k.a. "genre mixing" or "genre hybridity"), whereby individual films may, and often do, exemplify more than one film genre.

Structurally, this introductory section is followed by the article's main body, which in turn resolves into four sections. The first section focuses on film genres as conceptual categories organized according to the principles of similarity-based theories of conceptual representation: the classical theory, the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory as well as, albeit to a lesser extent, the exemplar theory. This section demonstrates that similarity based accounts of film genre, which are implicit in non-expert discussions of film genres, films, and the categorizing relations between film genres and films, are to a large extent founded on metaphorical objectification of films and film genres (*i.e.* their conceptual reification as physical objects), rather than on systematic observation of generic properties of films. The second section discusses problems inherent in similarity-based accounts of film genres and argues for their schema-based characterization framed in the context of a current theory problematizing films as multimodal texts. The third section outlines this kind of schema-based characterization of film genres. The fourth section discusses the advantages of the proposed schema-based characterization of film genres over similarity-based accounts with relation to such thorny issues as textualization of film genres, inclusiveness as well as exclusiveness of film genres, hierarchicality of film genres, and filmic multivalency. The main body of the article is followed by the concluding section, which situates the findings of the article with relation to the goal set in the introduction.

2. Similarity-Based Accounts of Film Genres

Film genres are often characterized according to the principles of the classical theory of categorization, especially by non-experts. In the classical theory, concepts are conceived of as discrete, mutually exclusive, and internally homogenous categories whose membership is defined in terms of closed sets of individually necessary and collectively sufficient attributes, which are binary rather than gradable (*cf.* Komatsu 1992: 502; Taylor [1989] 2003: 20–26).

For example, the concept "square" is definable in terms of the classical theory as a shape that has (1) equal sides connected at (2) right angles. These two attributes (1. equal sides, 2. right angles) are individually necessary and collectively sufficient for squares, which means that a shape qualifies as a square only if it possesses both of these attributes, but other attributes (such as those pertaining to the shape's size or orientation) are considered redundant. If either of the two defining attributes is left out, the extension of the category changes by allowing other shapes to be included. A category of shapes defined solely in

terms of right angles includes not only squares, but also rectangles, as its members, and a category of shapes defined solely in terms of equal sides comprises various equilateral polygons: equilateral triangles, squares, rhombuses, *etc*. Conceived of in accordance with the classical theory, the category of squares has discrete boundaries (A shape either qualifies as a square or it does not), homogenous internal structure (All squares are equally good representatives of the category), and its necessary and sufficient attributes are objectively verifiable (observable, measurable) properties of its members. On this account, squares have a fixed identity, determined once and for all by the category's defining attributes.

The implicit understanding of film genres as classical categories by non-experts becomes apparent in online discussions of the genre status of popular films. A case in point is a discussion initiated by a freelance feature writer Elle Hunt, who is neither a film critic nor a film reviewer, of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and, albeit to a lesser degree, the film's sequels. On April 6, 2021, Hunt posted a poll concerning the genre identity of *Alien* on the American microblogging and social networking service Twitter.[2] The topic of the poll was somewhat provocatively framed as a controversy by the heading "Settle an argument: is Alien a horror film? Give reasons why pls", and the poll generated a very high turnout of nearly 120,000 recorded votes. While the results were unsurprising, with 93.7 percent of the respondents answering Hunt's question in the affirmative, the comments posted by the poll's initiator and her respondents seem quite symptomatic of how many non-experts conceive of film genres.

In an answer to several comments in which some of Hunt's respondents emphatically confirmed the genre status of *Alien* as a horror film, Hunt said that this film is not a horror because "horror cannot be set in space." This statement may sound factually problematic, but whether or not it is factually true is less important here than what it reveals about Hunt's idea of filmic horror and of film genres in general. In particular, it indicates that Hunt conceives of film genres as classical categories, definable in terms of binary attributes like "can/cannot be set in space," *i.e.* as categories with fixed identities and "clear, stable identities and borders" (Altman [1999] 2000: 16), whose membership is an all-or-nothing affair. Additionally, by arguing that *Alien* is not a horror film because horrors cannot be set in space, Hunt implicitly subscribed to a form of exclusionary fallacy whereby an individual film cannot exemplify more than one category of film genre. In other words, Hunt seems to believe that "[i]ndividual films belong wholly and permanently to a single genre" (Altman [1999] 2000: 18).

The understanding of film genres as classical categories is also implicit in the comments posted by multiple respondents of Hunt's poll, who may or may not agree with Hunt on the genre status of *Alien*, but seem to subscribe to the concomitant exclusionary fallacy whereby an individual film belongs to a single genre, to the exclusion of others. Some of the respondents simply identified *Alien* and/or its sequels as belonging to one film-genre category or another ("Yes. Alien is a horror. Aliens is a war movie," "It's a horror movie," "Absolutely, Ridley Scott's version was undoubtedly a horror film," "For me it's body horror," "However, Aliens is an adventure film," "Alien is a thriller"). Others justified their choices by listing what they consider to be the defining attributes of the film genre ascribed to *Alien* ("It's horror, in my opinion, as it frequently elicits intense feelings of fear, shock, and disgust," "No it's a sci-fi monster movie. There are no ghosts, serial killers or zombies. Just because a movie is scary, doesn't make it a horror film," "Horror as a genre is defined by the emotions it evokes. ALIEN evokes those emotions. It's all there – rising dread, very personal stakes, jump scares, the safe place made suddenly unsafe. That it's set in space doesn't change any of that — horror is not defined by setting").

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2   https://twitter.com/elle_hunt/status/1379341076687904773 [date of access: 30th April 2021].

But film genres are very different from squares, and it has been widely noted that unlike the latter category, film genres refuse to conform to the principles of the classical theory of categorization. According to film critics, film-genre categories are not "monolithic" (Stam 2000: 128), and their boundaries are fuzzy rather than discrete, with individual films typically possessing attributes characteristic of two or more film genres (Altman [1999] 2000: 130–131, 135, 141; Stam 2000: 128; Johnston 2011: 11, 23–25; Allison 2016: 254). Just as their boundaries are regarded as non-discrete, the internal structure of film-genre categories is considered non-homogeneous, which is attributed by film critics to the way film genres emerge and then evolve, according to the principle of "sameness and variety" (Langford 2005: 7). This means that new films are on the one hand designed to reproduce various thematic, iconographic, and/or narrative elements from previous films in order to satisfy genre-related expectations of their target viewers, and on the other hand they are designed to introduce enough thematic, iconographic, and/or narrative novelty to induce the viewers to see them.

According to Altman, this interplay of familiarity and novelty recurs cyclically:

> Once a genre is recognized and practiced throughout the industry, individual studios have no further economic interest in practising it as such (especially in their prestige productions); instead, they seek to create new cycles by associating a new type of material or approach with an existing genre, thus initiating a new round of generification. (Altman [1999] 2000: 62)

Film critics have also pointed out that film genres do not make up classical categories because the sets of necessary and sufficient attributes that would define them are impossible to specify in a non-arbitrary fashion. In other words, there are no "rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion" (Gledhill 1985: 60) for film genres, and that is why they "are not discrete systems, consisting of a fixed number of listable items" (Gledhill 1985: 64). Since film critics generally concur that film-genre categories are not structured according to the principles of the classical theory of categorization, a question arises concerning the reasons why many non-experts seem convinced that film genres are indeed characterizable in terms of necessary and sufficient attributes.

One answer to this question is that the popular conception of film genres as classical categories is based not so much on systematic observation of genre-related properties of individual films as on the way non-experts make sense of abstractions in general, and complex abstract categories like film genres in particular, that is, by reifying them conceptually as physical objects. Research in the field of conceptual metaphor theory has shown that due to the phylogenetic and ontogenetic primacy of the concept of object over other concepts (Szwedek 2008: 310–312), human conceptualizers regularly metaphorize non-physical entities in the abstract domains of time (events, states, periods, *etc.*), emotions (fear, anger, love, *etc.*), reasoning (mind, idea, thought, *etc.*), and many others, as physical objects (Radden and Dirven 2007: 82).

Proponents of conceptual metaphor theory have observed that metaphorical reification of abstract entities as objects, referred to as objectification (Szwedek 2000, 2002), affords conceptualizers a number of advantages: it allows them to make sense of these abstractions by referring to them, quantifying them, identifying their particular aspects, ascribing properties (orientation, structure, function, *etc.*) to them, construing them as causes, acting with respect to them in a certain way, and so on (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 25–32). But there are disadvantages, too. Conceptual metaphorization is said to highlight as much as it hides (see: *e.g.* Kövecses [2002] 2010: 91–103), and while metaphorical objectification of abstractions provides the conceptualizers with a sense of understanding (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 26),

it does in fact seriously downplay the multifaceted complexity of these abstract entities by creating the illusion that they are not unlike standardized, mass produced objects (say, golf balls, pencils, or paper clips): bounded, replicable things with firmly established identities that persist over time.

Like the non-physical entities listed above, films and film genres are much more abstract than physical objects. Unlike golf balls, pencils, or paper clips, which by and large persist over time in a relatively unchanged form, a film is something that happens: a transient multimodal event that unfolds over a certain period of time. Yet, like other temporally bounded events (Radden and Dirven 2007: 82), films are regularly objectified because conceptualizers (filmmakers, producers, viewers, reviewers, and critics) need to refer to them, quantify them, identify their particular aspects, ascribe properties to them, *etc.* Arguably, conceptual objectification of films gives rise to a metaphorical entailment[3] whereby generic properties of films are construed as their readily identifiable characteristics, akin to sensorially perceptible attributes of physical objects (color, shape, size, weight, rigidity, texture, *etc.*), that persist over time in an unchanged form. Metaphorization of films as objects with fixed generic characteristics may be taken to motivate the objectification of the generic categories films are associated with, that is, film genres themselves, as permanently established containers with "clear, stable identities and borders" (Altman [1999] 2000: 16).

If films are metaphorized as physical objects and film genres as box-like containers, it stands to reason that the categorizing relations between films and film genres are understood in terms of a logic of spatial containment based on conceptualizers' recurrent observation of and interaction with various containers and their contents (*cf.* Johnson 1987: 39–40). More specifically, the spatial logic mapped onto the categorizing relation between films and film genres is based on the experience-based knowledge that certain topological properties of containers, in particular the discreteness and impenetrability of their boundaries, prevent an object from being situated in more than one container at any given time unless the containers are of graduated sizes, so that a smaller container fits inside the next larger container (as is the case with Chinese boxes and Russian dolls). The mapping of this spatial logic onto the relation between films and film genres gives rise to another metaphorical entailment, whereby "[i]ndividual films belong wholly and permanently to a single genre" (Altman [1999] 2000: 18).

On the whole, then, metaphorical construal of films as objects, film genres as containers, and the categorizing relations between films and film genres as spatial relations between objects and containers seems to provide a conceptual foundation for the idea that film genres constitute classical categories. As indicated previously, this idea is now largely rejected by the community of film critics, but it is espoused by non-expert film viewers, such as the respondents of Hunt's Tweeter poll on the generic status of *Alien*. But the participants of Hunt's poll did not all respond alike. In reaction to the comments posted by Hunt and those who seem to implicitly subscribe to the view of film genres as classical categories, some of the poll's respondents addressed the exclusionary fallacy concomitant with this view by observing that there is no reason why *Alien* should belong to only one category of film genre, and that it is in fact both a horror film and a science fiction film ("Scifi and horror aren't mutually exclusive, a film can be more than one category. I say it's both scifi and horror. It's [sic] premise requires scifi, but killer monster is horror," "Her argument seems to be that science fiction and horror are mutually exclusive. I don't get it either," "Yeah,

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3   In conceptual metaphor theory, metaphorical entailments are characterized as additional conceptual entities belonging to the rich knowledge associated with the source domain that are "used for the purposes of metaphorical comprehension" (Kövecses [2002] 2010: 121).

Alien is horror and science fiction at the same time," "It's a sci-fi horror film. Movies can be classified as more than one genre.").

Viewed from the perspective of theories of conceptual representation, the comments posted by the respondents of Hunt's poll who expressed the view that an individual film may exemplify more than one generic category indicate that their understanding of film genres is consonant with the idea that categories are structured according to the principles of the so-called family resemblance theory of categorization, inspired by Wittgenstein's ([1953 /1936–1946/] 1953: 66–67) seminal discussion of various games conceived of as forming a kind of family, and its direct intellectual descendant, the so-called prototype theory of categorization (Rosch 1975, 1977, 1978). According to Komatsu (1992: 504), the family resemblance theory replaced the restrictive requirement of the classical theory whereby all category members share a set of necessary and sufficient conditions with a considerably less restrictive requirement that an attribute featuring in the description of a category be shared by a minimum of two category members, which are then said to bear a family resemblance to each other.

Due to the family resemblance requirement, attributes are not all on a par with each other, but instead differ in terms of their relative prominence, or "weight", which is in turn directly proportional to the number of category members a given attribute applies to. Komatsu (1992: 503–504) explains that the variable weights of the attributes describing a category are indicative of the central tendencies observable in this category insofar as they reflect the variable similarity between an individual member of a category and its remaining members. The degree to which an individual member of a category is similar to its remaining members is directly proportional to the degree of the member's prototypicality: the greater the similarity is for a given member, the more prototypical the member is for the category as a whole. Since prototypicality is a matter of degree, category membership is gradable: the members of a category vary in terms of how representative they are of the category they belong to. As a result, categories are not discrete, and the boundaries between them are fuzzy rather than clear-cut.

In the area of film-oriented MCL, the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory afford an advantage over the classical theory of categorization by providing a rudimentary account of certain oft-noted characteristics of film genres, films, and the categorizing relations between film genres and films. For example, since the two theories make no requirement that a fixed set of necessary and sufficient attributes apply to each and every member of a category, they account for "filmic multivalency" (Altman [1999] 2000: 135) by allowing individual films, such as the above-referenced *Alien* (1979), to possess attributes characteristic of more than one film genre. Perhaps more importantly, the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory reconcile what seem to be mutually incompatible attributes of film genres: their inclusiveness, whereby popular film-genre categories comprise films that vary enormously in terms of their thematic, iconographic, and narrative makeup, and their exclusiveness, whereby popular film genres are in each case characterized with reference to a handful of films that are widely regarded as highly representative examples of their genre (see: Altman [1999 /1984/] 2000: 216–217).

The distinction between an inclusive and an exclusive characterization of a film genre may be illustrated on the example of the film-genre category 'war film'. An inclusive characterization of this film-genre category amounts to a broad description like 'any film to do with armed conflict, however tenuous the connection', which applies to such thematically, iconographically, and narratively diverse films as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), *M*A*S*H* (1970), *The Dogs of War* (1980), *Kagemusha* (1980), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989),

Schindler's List (1993), *Braveheart* (1995), *Aliens* (1986), and *Starship Troopers* (1997). In contrast, the category's exclusive characterization is based on films widely regarded as highly representative war films — notably *Platoon* (1986), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), *Memphis Belle* (1990), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and *Black Hawk Down* (2001) — which depict "the direct experience of battle of the small military unit with clearly defined membership and boundaries (paradigmatically the infantry platoon, gunship or bomber crew)" (Langford 2005: 107).

Viewed from the perspective of the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory, inclusiveness and exclusiveness of popular film-genre categories appear as two sides of the same coin. Both characteristics are symptomatic of the internal heterogeneity of film-genre categories, which emerges as a consequence of the minimally restrictive family resemblance requirement, whereby an attribute characterizing a category need not be shared by more than two category members, and the concomitant variability of attribute weights, whereby attributes characterizing a category may vary in terms of their relative prominence, calculated on the basis of how many category members a given attribute applies to. Conceived of in terms of the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory, a film-genre category such as the above-referenced "war film" is internally heterogeneous, and its members run a gamut from the most central members, i.e. prototypes, which possess the highest number of the most prominent attributes characterizing this category, to the most peripheral members, which possess the lowest number of the least prominent attributes. For war film, category prototypes are exemplified by films widely regarded as highly representative of this film-genre category (*Platoon*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *etc.*) and peripheral members by films that for various reasons deviate most significantly from the prototypes — not least because they possess prominent attributes of other film-genre categories: historical epic (*Lawrence of Arabia*, *Braveheart*), comedy (*M*A*S*H*, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*), science fiction (*Aliens*, *Starship Troopers*), *etc.*

Summing up, the conception of film genres informed by the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory, with individual film genres characterized as internally heterogeneous categories organized around prototypes possessing the highest number of the weightiest category attributes, seems to offer a more realistic account of film genres than their naïve view framed in the classical theory, wherein film genres are assumed to be fully characterizable in terms of sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. Due to its minimally restrictive family resemblance requirement and the concomitant variability of attribute weights, the family resemblance theory provides an account of the enormous thematic, iconographic, and narrative diversity among films belonging to any popular film genre ("war film", "science-fiction film", "horror film", *etc.*).

Additionally, the idea of the prototype, conceived of as a category member possessing the highest number of the category's most prominent attributes, accounts for the centrality effects observable across popular film-genre categories, whereby they are typically characterized with reference to a handful of films widely regarded as highly representative examples of their genre. Last but not least, the fuzzy boundaries of categories structured according to the family resemblance requirement allow individual films to belong to multiple film-genre categories, in this way accounting for their multivalency. Despite the undeniable appeal of the family resemblance theory and the prototype theory, which made them popular among genre theorists in the past (Chandler [1997] 2000: 1), they cannot be used as a basis for formulating a psychologically plausible characterization of film genres. This is to do with the fact that in these theories the attributes are unrelated — not only to each other, but also to anything else. If we

were to use an analogy, it would not be too far from the truth to say that a representation of a film genre in the form of a list of unrelated attributes is as psychologically plausible as a representation of, say, an internal combustion engine in the form of an itemized list of engine parts. In the latter case, this kind of representation obviously ignores multiple relations, some of which are largely intrinsic to internal combustion engines themselves, while others pertain to various contextual, pragmatic factors that are largely extrinsic to such engines.

Regarding the engine-intrinsic relations, this kind of representation ignores not only the way the parts are interconnected and function collectively as components of an integrated whole (the engine), but also the way this integrated whole functions as a component (specifically, the propulsion unit) of a more inclusive integrated whole (a car, boat, plane, *etc.*). Regarding the engine-extrinsic relations, this kind of representation ignores the contextual situatedness of these integrated wholes: how internal combustion engines are operated by their users, how they are subject to pertinent laws and regulations in different countries, where and how they are produced, maintained, and repaired, *etc.* Just as a psychologically plausible characterization of an internal combustion engine needs to specify various category-intrinsic and category-extrinsic relations, so does a psychologically plausible characterization of a film genre. Komatsu (1992) refers to theories of conceptual representation that take the former kind of relations into account as schema-based views, and he refers to theories of conceptual representation that additionally take the latter kind of relations into account as explanation-based views.

3. A Schema-Based Account of Film Genres

Schema-based views of conceptual representation center around the notion of the schema, originally proposed by Piaget (1926) and Bartlett (1932), which is variously referred to as *schema*, *script*, or *frame* (Komatsu 1992: 510). In essence, schemas are data structures (Komatsu 1992: 510) that model conceptual categories of any kind, irrespective of how general/specific, simple/complex, autonomous/dependent, or generic/unique they may be (Rumelhart 1980: 34; Barsalou 1992: 29). These data structures are organized in terms of variables that are referred to in some sources as *slots* and *values* (*e.g.* Komatsu 1992), and in others as *attributes* and *values* (*e.g.* Barsalou 1992). Henceforth, these variables will be referred to as *attributes* and *values*. According to Komatsu (1992: 510–511) and Barsalou (1992: 28–33), both kinds of variables are concepts, but they differ along the parameter of generality/specificity, with attributes being general and values being specific. The reason why attributes are general and values specific is that in a schema representation of a conceptual category attributes resolve into ranges of permissible values. Importantly, the values tend to approximate certain defaults. Collectively, these default values characterize the prototype(s) of the category.

In schema-based views of conceptual representation, the status of a variable is relative, and it depends on the status of its associated variables as attributes or values. A variable that functions as a value with relation to a more general variable (which then constitutes its superordinate attribute) may at the same time function as an attribute with relation to a more specific variable (which then constitutes its subordinate value). Since a general variable may resolve into a range of specific variables, and each specific variable may in turn resolve into a range of more specific variables, *etc.*, the variables making up a schema form taxonomies of concepts situated at different levels of specificity. Usually, three such levels

are distinguished: the superordinate level, the basic level, and the subordinate level. Since all variables are concepts in schema-based views of conceptual representation, a relatively more general concept can be resolved into relatively more specific concepts at any level of generality/specificity, with the result that schemas may be embedded in other schemas and in this way create elaborate taxonomies of schemas.

This view of conceptual representation can be used as a basis for an account of film-genre categories that is psychologically more plausible than any account informed by the previously discussed similarity-based theories of conceptual representation. That said, in order to account for the previously listed properties of film genres and genre films (textualization, inclusiveness, exclusiveness, hierarchicality, and filmic multivalency), a schema-based characterization of the concept of film genre needs to be framed in a theory that conceives of films as texts, such as the one outlined by Tseng (2013) in the area of multimodality studies informed by systemic-functional linguistics. For this reason, individual films are treated below in line with Tseng (2013) as multimodal texts that instantiate the potential of the filmic medium. This means that the filmic medium is understood here as providing a basis for a comprehensive characterization of any of its instantiations, that is, any filmic text. Since texts are modal ensembles that express complex content in a structured form, the filmic medium must characterize the plane of narrative content, the plane of filmic expression, and relate the two planes to each other.

The following paragraphs offer a tentative description of the interrelated planes of content and expression that make up the filmic medium instantiated by filmic texts, and then situates the concept of film genre against this background. Due to the medium's immense complexity and the limited scope of this paper, the following description is necessarily selective, but it hopefully gives a sufficient idea of the workings of the filmic medium, which in turn makes it possible to explain how the medium is instantiated by filmic texts. This is important because the properties of film genres that are the focus of this paper can only be accounted for in the context of the relation between the medium of film and filmic texts.

Central to the plane of content is the notion of an event since, on the one hand, films represent sequences of interrelated events, which may be referred to as 'storylines,' and, on the other hand, events comprise other key elements of the plane of content that interrelate with each other: characters, objects, settings, and actions (Tseng 2013: 1). From the perspective of schema-based views of conceptual representation, events and their interrelations are coexisting attributes of storylines, while characters, objects, settings, and actions are coexisting attributes of events. These more general attributes comprise more specific coexisting attributes, which may in turn comprise even more specific coexisting attributes until the most specific attributes resolve into ranges of mutually exclusive values.

As regards the first attribute of events, i.e. characters, they are describable in terms of multiple coexisting attributes: appearance, behavior, attitude, ability, occupation, language, *etc*. While some of them arguably resolve into ranges of mutually exclusive values quite straightforwardly, others certainly presuppose further coexisting attributes, which may or may not presuppose even further coexisting attributes before they resolve into mutually exclusive values. For example, the attribute of age comprises mutually exclusive values, while the attribute of appearance presupposes more specific coexisting attributes (structural makeup, clothing, adornments, *etc.*), which in turn presuppose even more specific coexisting attributes (*e.g.* clothing > garments, footwear, headgear, gloves), and so on, and so forth (*e.g.* garments > shirts, jackets, dresses, trousers, *etc.*) until the most specific attributes resolve into mutually exclusive values (*e.g.* trousers > jeans, chinos, sweatpants, dress pants, cargo pants, *etc.*).

This kind of schema-based representation of character situated on the content plane of the filmic medium constitutes a potential that is instantiated by individual characters on the content plane of filmic texts. Conceived of as instantiations, these individual characters are particular combinations of values selected from specific character-related attributes available on the content plane of the filmic medium. Arguably, the values across these character-related attributes are not completely independent of each other, but are instead interrelated in accordance with conventionalized patterns that are established intertextually, that is, on the basis of how the character-related values co-occur in characters across filmic texts. These intertextually established patterns, which constitute character types associated with various film genres, are thus embedded in schema-based representations of characters.

Conceived of in this way, different character types, such as, for example, "the helpful robot" instantiated in numerous science-fiction films (*e.g.* Robby the Robot in *Forbidden Planet*, 1956; R2-D2 and C-3PO in *Star Wars*, 1977; GERTY in *Moon*, 2009; TARS in *Interstellar*, 2014) or "the harsh instructor" instantiated in multiple war films (*e.g.* Gunnery Sergeant Hartman in *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987; Master Chief John James Urgayle in *G.I. Jane*, 1997; Drill Instructor Fitch in *Jarhead*, 2005) are characterized in terms of ranges of values within attributes pertaining to characters. The ranges vary in terms of how broad they are because they comprise the values selected by attested instantiations of a given character type within particular character-related attributes. For example, the range of values for the attribute of structural makeup is arguably narrower for "the harsh instructor" than for "the helpful robot" given that the former character type is instantiated by humans whose bodily structure shows little anatomical variation, whereas the latter character type is instantiated by non-humans that exhibit a considerable amount of structural variation. In some cases, the ranges of values are even empty because certain attributes fail to apply to certain character types. For example, since none of the specific attributes subsumed under the general attribute of clothing apply to "the helpful robot", the ranges of values within these specific attributes remain empty for this character type.

This schema-based model of how character-related information is represented on the content plane of the narrative filmic medium is flexible enough to account for the immense variation among individual film characters.

Firstly, the potential embodied in the schema-based representation of character situated on the content plane of the medium of film may be instantiated in novel ways by film characters that do not conform in any obvious way to intertextually established genre-specific character types. Such characters, typically created by auteur filmmakers, constitute more or less unique combinations of values selected from multiple specific character-related attributes. Notable examples of such original film characters include Stourley Cracklite from *The Belly of an Architect* (1987), Ada McGrath from *The Piano* (1993), Alvin Straight from *The Straight Story* (1999), and William Miller from *Almost Famous* (2000).

Secondly, this character-related potential may be instantiated by film characters that conform to individual genre-specific character types. Science-fiction films are populated by countless instances of such character types as "the space explorer", "the rebellious android", "the genius scientist", "the sentient computer", "the deadly alien", and "the benign extraterrestrial", war films by countless instances of such character types as "the brave enlisted man", "the incompetent officer", "the ace pilot", and "the distressed civilian", western films by countless instances of such character types as "the sheriff", "the gunslinger", "the outlaw", "the settler", "the preacher", "the bartender", and "the hooker", and so on, and so forth.

Thirdly, this character-related potential may be instantiated by film characters that selectively combine values of more than a single genre-specific character type. Pertinent examples are easily found in popular films. Yul Brynner's character in *Westworld* (1973), referred to as the Gunslinger, is a conceptual blend (in the sense of Fauconnier and Turner 2002) of values pertaining to the science-fictional character type of 'the rebellious android' and the character type of 'the gunslinger', associated with westerns. The character of Boba Fett in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), played by Jeremy Bulloch, is a conceptual blend of values pertaining to the science-fictional character type of 'the space commando' and the character type of 'the bounty hunter', associated with westerns. The character of Alex Murphy in *RoboCop* (1987), played by Peter Weller, is a blend of values pertaining to the character type of "the righteous police officer", associated with action films, and the science-fictional character type of "the lethal cyborg".

As regards the second attribute of events, objects, they are also describable in terms of many coexisting attributes: shape, size, material, structure, orientation, function, origin, *etc.* (Langacker 2008: 47). Like the attributes of characters, some attributes of objects arguably resolve into ranges of mutually exclusive values quite straightforwardly (*e.g.* size, orientation), others likely presuppose further coexisting attributes before they resolve into mutually exclusive values (*e.g.* structure, function, origin). As was the case with schema-based representation of character, the attributes and values associated with objects make up a potential on the content plane of the narrative filmic medium that is instantiated by individual objects on the content plane of filmic texts. Here it also stands to reason that the values across the attributes of objects are interrelated according to intertextually established patterns that are associated with particular narrative filmic genres, so that various genre-specific object types are embedded in schema-based representations of objects.

For example, the film genre of fantasy is associated with various types of magic artifacts (magic jewelry, magic weapons, magic items of clothing, magic accessories, *etc.*), the film genre of science fiction with various types of imaginary technological devices (energy weapons, advanced vehicles, teleportation pods, time machines, *etc.*), the genre of war film with various types of weaponry (handguns, rifles, artillery pieces, tanks, *etc.*), the genre of spy film with various types of real or fictitious equipment used in espionage (listening devices, video recorders, concealed weapons, electronic locators, *etc.*), and so on, and so forth.

Like character types, the types of objects associated with particular film genres are characterized in terms of value ranges that may be broader or narrower since they comprise the values selected by attested instantiations of a given object type within particular object-related attributes. This may be illustrated on the example of the object type "the hero's handgun", which is instantiated in narrative films across multiple genres. Arguably, the ranges of values characterizing this type of object in multiple attributes (notably shape, size, material, structure, origin) are the broadest in the genre of war film because war films may be set in any historical period, and they feature handguns typical of the period they depict, ranging from early flintlock pistols to modern semi-automatic pistols. In contrast, the ranges of values characterizing "the hero's handgun" in action films and in western films are likely narrower. Since western films are set in the Old West, they feature the kinds of handguns that were widely used in the American West in the second half of the 19th century (*i.e.* single-action revolvers), while action films feature more or less contemporary handguns (*i.e.* double-action revolvers and semi-automatic pistols) because they are set in the present day relative to the time of their premiere, and the genre of action film is a recently emerged one (Langford 2005: 233).

As was the case with information relating to characters, the schema-based model of how object-related information is represented on the content plane of the medium of film seems flexible enough to account for the tremendous variation among individual objects featured in films. Unlike film characters, however, filmic objects rarely constitute completely novel instantiations of the object-related potential on the content plane of the medium of film. This is to do with the fact that many objects featured in films, even those that constitute uncontroversial exemplifications of established film genres, have identical counterparts in the real world.

This may be shown on the example of how the object type "the hero's handgun" is instantiated in a war film, a western film, and an action film. In the war film *Apocalypse Now* (1979), set during the Vietnam War, the character of Captain Benjamin L. Willard, played by Martin Sheen, carries a Colt M1911A1 semi-automatic pistol, which was indeed widely used in that conflict ("Apocalypse Now"). In the western film *Unforgiven* (1992), set for the most part in 1880 Wyoming, the character of William Munny, played by Clint Eastwood, uses a Smith and Wesson Schofield Model 3 single-action revolver, produced in the years 1875–1878 ("Unforgiven [1992]"). In the action film *Die Hard* (1988), the character of Detective John McClane, played by Bruce Willis, carries a more or less contemporary handgun: a Beretta 92F semi-automatic pistol, which was made in 1984, but is still in production ("Die Hard").

That said, novel objects, which do not have counterparts in the real world and do not conform to intertextually established genre-specific object types, do occasionally appear in films. One likely candidate to the status of a novel object is the so-called "neuralyzer", featured in the science-fiction film *Men in Black* (1997). In the world of the film, the neuralyzer is a cigar-shaped device of extraterrestrial origin used by the eponymous men in black to erase people's memories ("Neuralyzer").

More typically, however, fictitious filmic objects do conform to intertextually established genre-specific object types. In such cases, the fictitious objects are realized either as modifications or conceptual blends, as conceived of by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), of real world objects. For example, the so-called "blasters" featured in the science fiction film *Star Wars* (1977), which exemplify the science fictional object type "energy weapon", largely resemble real world firearms with various additional parts attached to them. Indeed, the blaster props built for this film were based on a variety of firearms used in the First and Second World War ("Star Wars blasters"). In contrast, the "starfighters" featured in *Star Wars* (1977), which exemplify the science fictional object type "advanced vehicle", blend selected characteristics of real world spaceships with selected characteristics of real world fighter planes. Similarly, the flying automobiles, a.k.a. "spinners", featured in the science fiction film *Blade Runner* (1982), which also exemplify the object type "advanced vehicle", blend selected characteristics of real world automobiles with selected characteristics of real world aircraft.

As regards the third attribute of events, settings, understood in line with Tseng (2013) as the physical environments where events take place, they are like characters and objects in that they are characterizable with reference to multiple coexisting attributes, such as shape, area, material, layout, bounding, function, origin, *etc.*, which either straightforwardly resolve into ranges of mutually exclusive values (like area or bounding) or presuppose further coexisting attributes before resolving into mutually exclusive values (like layout, function, origin). Analogously to schema-based representations of characters and objects, the attributes and values associated with settings make up a potential on the content plane of the filmic medium that is instantiated by individual settings on the content plane of filmic texts. As was the case with characters and objects, the values across the attributes of settings are interrelated according

to intertextually established patterns that are associated with particular film genres. In this way, various genre-specific types of settings are embedded in schema-based representations of settings.

For example, the filmic genre of western is associated with such setting types as "the homestead", "the ranch", "the main street of a small town", "the hotel", "the saloon", "the jail", "the Native American village", "the prairie", "the mountain pass", "the desert trail", "the ford", *etc.*, the filmic genre of science fiction is associated with such setting types as "the inventor's laboratory", "the city of the future", "the interior of a spaceship", "the moon base", "the terraforming settlement", "the space station", "the post-apocalyptic wasteland", *etc.*, the filmic genre of horror is associated with such setting types as "the haunted house", "the vampire's lair", "the cabin in the woods", "the remote village", "the base of a satanic cult", "the mad scientist's laboratory", "the serial killer's basement", *etc.*, and so on, and so forth.

As was the case with character types and object types, the ranges of values characterizing the types of settings associated with individual film genres may be broader or narrower since the ranges are composed of the values selected by attested instantiations of a given setting type within particular setting-related attributes. This may be shown with reference to the setting type "the besieged fortress", which is associated with various film genres. It stands to reason that the ranges of values characterizing this type of setting in virtually all of its attributes (shape, area, material, layout, bounding, function, origin, *etc.*) are the broadest in the genre of war film because war films may be set in any historical period and cultural context, and they may feature any kind of castle, citadel, fort, military base, fortified outpost, bunker, strongpoint, redoubt, fortified encampment, *etc.*

Pertinent examples are not hard to find in war films. In *Zulu* (1964), set in 1879 in the British colony of Natal, the setting type "the besieged fortress" is instantiated as a fortified missionary station defended by a company of British soldiers against an overwhelming force of Zulu warriors. In *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), set during the Battle of Normandy in 1944, this setting type is instantiated as a series of German strongpoints at Omaha Beach, stormed by American troops. In *Hamburger Hill* (1987), set in 1969 during the Vietnam War, "the besieged fortress" is instantiated as a heavily fortified hill of the Vietnamese Army, attacked by an American platoon.

While the ranges of values characterizing "the besieged fortress" are arguably broad in the genre of war film, which is reflective of how diverse the instantiations of this setting type are across war films, the ranges of values characterizing "the besieged fortress" are likely narrower in certain other film genres, such as western film or action film. Since western films are set in the American West in the second half of the 19th century, they feature instantiations of "the besieged fortress" that constitute more or less faithful reproductions of the kinds of fortified locations that were commonly found in that place and time. For example, in *Fort Courageous* (1965) "the besieged fortress" is instantiated as a wooden fort surrounded by a stockade made of spiked logs. Similarly, since the action film genre is recently emerged, and action films are set in the present day relative to the time of their premiere, they feature instantiations of "the besieged fortress" that constitute more or less faithful reproductions of contemporary fortified locations. For example, in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* (2016) "the besieged fortress" is instantiated as a contemporary American diplomatic compound.

What is common among the instantiations of the setting type "the besieged fortress" in war films, western films, and action films is that they constitute reproductions of the kinds of fortified locations that either exist or used to exist in the real world. This is not necessarily the case in fantasy and science-fiction films. That said, the instantiations of this type of setting in films exemplifying the genres of fantasy and

science fiction tend to resemble real-world fortified locations to a considerable degree. For example, the besieged city of Minas Tirith in the fantasy film *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) bears a strong resemblance to some real-world medieval fortresses. Morrison (2014) reports that the design of Minas Tirith was in fact directly inspired by the medieval fortress of Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy. Indeed, the besieged city does look a lot like Mont-Saint-Michel except that it is considerably larger than its real-world inspiration. Similarly, the besieged military installation referred to as Whiskey Outpost in the science-fiction film *Starship Troopers* (1997) is not too dissimilar in terms of area, shape, and layout from a typical military outpost used by the United States Cavalry in the Old West, of the kind reproduced as the wooden fort in *Fort Courageous* (1965). The most notable difference concerns the attribute of material: Whiskey Outpost is a structure made of metal, not wood.

While it is likely the case that most instantiations of various genre-specific setting types constitute reproductions or modifications of real-world environments, novel settings, which do not have counterparts in the real world and do not conform to intertextually established genre-specific setting types, do occasionally appear in films as well. One likely candidate to the status of a novel setting is the eponymous cube device in the film *Cube* (1997). In the diegetic world of the film, several people are trapped inside the mysterious cube device, which consists of multiple cube-like rooms that change position relative to each other, with some rooms containing deadly traps.

Regarding the issue of how the content plane elements discussed above — characters, objects, and settings — are represented on the expression plane of the filmic medium, it centers around the concept of mode, as conceived of by, among others, Jewitt and Kress (2003: 1–2), Jewitt, Bezemer, and O'Halloran (2016: 2–4), and Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala (2017: 15, 113–117). According to Szawerna (2020: 195–196), modes are best thought of as multidimensional concepts, characterizable as combinations of values along such parameters of "materiality", "semiotics", and "discoursivity" (*cf.* Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala 2017: 113–117), that are hierarchical by nature insofar as they vary along the parameter of "generality/specificity", which in turn leads to the emergence of more or less elaborate taxonomies of modes. A four-tiered taxonomy of modes designed to account for the kinds of elements and relations that need to be specified at the filmic medium's plane of expression has been constructed by Burn (2013).

At the highest level of his taxonomy, Burn (2013: 8) draws a distinction between two maximally inclusive categories of filmic modes: the "orchestrating" and "contributory" modes. At the second level, the category of orchestrating modes is divided into the more specific categories of "filming" and "editing", while the category of contributory modes is divided into the more specific "embodied", "auditory", and "visual" modes. At the third level, these already quite specific categories are divided into even more specific categories. For example, the category of filming resolves into "frame", "angle", and "proximity", the category of editing into "segment", "transition", and "counterpoint", the category of embodied modes into "dramatic action" and "speech", the category of visual modes into "lighting" and "set design", and so on. At the lowest level, the taxonomy features the maximally specific filmic modes. For example, the category of dramatic action is subdivided into "gesture", "facial expression", "movement", *etc.*, the category of speech into "lexis", "grammar", "tone-tonicity", *etc.*, the category of lighting into "direction", "intensity", "focus", etc., and so on.

The bundles of interrelated filmic modes with which the content plane elements of characters, objects, and settings are expressed occupy overlapping, albeit non-identical, areas of Burn's (2013) taxonomy. As regards characters, they are expressed predominantly by means of the embodied modes of

dramatic action (comprising the submodes of gesture, facial expression, movement, proxemics, make-up, and costume) and speech (comprising the submodes of lexis, grammar, meter, dynamics, and timbre), but also by the auditory modes of music (comprising the submodes of melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, instrumentation, *etc.*), whenever a character is associated with a leitmotif, and sound effects (as is the case with characters such as Darth Vader, Chewbacca, and R2-D2 in *Star Wars*, 1977),[4] and the visual mode of lighting (comprising the submodes of direction, intensity, focus, color, *etc.*). As to objects, they are expressed predominantly by means of the visual modes of lighting and, on occasion, the auditory mode of sound effects (as is the case with most weapons and vehicles, realistic as well as imaginary). Regarding settings, they are expressed predominantly by means of the visual modes of lighting and set design (comprising the submodes of architecture, imagery, texture, color, *etc.*).

On the content plane of the filmic medium, characters, objects, and settings are variously related through the actions performed by characters. A five-element typology of actions, referred to somewhat more accurately as "process types" and designed to account for the kinds of relations between characters, objects, and settings that need to be specified at the filmic medium's plane of content has been proposed by Tseng (2013: 116). This typology includes (1) "transactional actions", a category of process types "showing dynamic interactions […] between characters or between characters and objects" (Tseng 2013: 116), (2) "non-transactional processes", a category of process types "showing characters" behaviour without interaction with other characters and objects" (Tseng 2013: 116), (3) "reactional processes", a category of process types indicating a character gazing at something, "often realised in POV shots" (Tseng 2013: 116), (4) "verbal processes", a category of process types "showing dialogue or monologue of characters" (Tseng 2013: 116), and (5) "conceptual processes", a category of process types involving "minimal action, focusing on revelation of identity or part-whole relation of characters, objects or settings" (Tseng 2013: 116).

On the filmic medium's plane of expression, Tseng's (2013) filmic process types are in all likelihood associated with the same filmic modes that were previously said to be associated with filmic characters, objects, and settings. This is arguably the case because Tseng's (2013) filmic process types are conceptually dependent on the conceptually much more autonomous filmic characters, objects, and settings in the sense that the process types necessarily presuppose the existence of characters, objects, and settings, but the reverse does not hold (*cf.* Langacker 2008: 104). Consequently, transactional actions such as, say, hitting, kicking, or breaking will be associated primarily with the embodied mode of physical action, and secondarily with the auditory mode of sound effects, whereas verbal processes such as, say, announcing, commenting, or objecting will be associated primarily with the embodied mode of speech, and secondarily with the embodied mode of physical action (in particular with the submodes of gesture, facial expression, movement, and proxemics).

Collectively, filmic characters, objects, settings, and actions (a.k.a. "filmic process types" Tseng 2013: 116) make up representations of filmic events. On the filmic medium's plane of content, these representations are arguably not very different from such knowledge structures stored in long-term memory as Schank and Abelson's (1977) "restaurant script" or Fillmore's (1982) "commercial event frame", at least insofar as they characterize events at a relatively high level of schematicity by specifying the roles assigned to their participants and the types of interactions in which they are engaged within the settings in which they are located. On the filmic medium's plane of expression, however, the former

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4   Please note that the auditory mode of sound effects is not included in Burn's (2013) taxonomy of filmic modes.

differ from the latter inasmuch as they are not linked solely with the verbal mode, but, as argued above, are associated with a range of filmic modes, such as the ones included in Burn's (2013) typology. Tseng (2013) refers to such representations of filmic events as 'action patterns'. From the perspective of theories of conceptual representation, Tseng's (2013) notion of action patterns constitutes a schema-based model of the potential on the part of the filmic medium to represent filmic events — a model which seems flexible enough to account for the full range of filmic event instantiations across individual filmic texts.

Firstly, Tseng's (2013) schema-based model of the filmic medium's potential to represent filmic events may be instantiated in novel ways by events that do not conform in any obvious way to intertextually established genre-specific filmic event types. Such events are not at all hard to come across in narrative films of any kind, but they are particularly abundant in films made by auteur filmmakers. In *Annie Hall* (1977), the protagonist Alvy Singer and his girlfriend, the eponymous Annie Hall, are standing in a line to see the Holocaust documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* when they overhear another man deriding the work of Marshall McLuhan. Suddenly, at Alvy's invitation McLuhan himself steps in and criticizes the man's comprehension. In *Sonatine* (1993), a group of yakuza gangsters from Tokyo who are forced by a rival gang to take refuge in a remote beach house engage in a series of outlandish games and pranks on the beach. In *Clerks* (1994), the protagonist Dante Hicks organizes a hockey game played by himself and his friends on the roof of the grocery store where he works as a retail clerk. These filmic events may be unique in that they diverge almost entirely from intertextually established genre-specific filmic event types, but they are straightforwardly characterizable as novel instantiations of Tseng's (2013) schema-based model.

Secondly, Tseng's (2013) model may be instantiated by filmic events that do conform to intertextually established genre-specific filmic event types. Science-fiction films abound in instantiations of multiple genre-specific types of filmic events, including "the friendly human-alien encounter" (*cf. Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977; *The Abyss*, 1989; *Arrival*, 2016), "the landing on a distant planet" (*cf. Pitch Black*, 2000; *Prometheus*, 2012; *Interstellar*, 2014), and "the human-cyborg confrontation" (*cf. Terminator*, 1984; *RoboCop*, 1987; *Ex Machina*, 2015). Western films also abound in instantiations of multiple genre-specific types of filmic events, such as "the hero-villain duel" (*cf. High Noon*, 1952; *Shane*, 1953; *Silverado*, 1985), "the train robbery" (*cf. The Great Train Robbery*, 1903; *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, 1969; *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, 2007), and 'the saloon brawl' (cf. *The Spoilers*, 1942; *Shane*, 1953; *For A Few Dollars More*, 1965). Similarly, war films abound in instantiations of multiple genre-specific types of filmic events, including "the mission briefing" (*cf. The Dirty Dozen*, 1967; *Black Hawk Down*, 2001; *Jarhead*, 2005), "the training of recruits" (*The Dirty Dozen*, 1967; *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987; *Jarhead*, 2005), and "the climactic battle" (*Platoon*, 1986; *Hamburger Hill*, 1987; *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 2022). All of these genre-specific filmic event types are straightforwardly characterizable as intertextually established action patterns in Tseng's (2013) schema-based model.

Thirdly, Tseng's (2013) model may be instantiated by generically hybrid filmic events, which conform to more than one intertextually established genre-specific filmic event type. Examples of generically hybrid filmic events are easily found in mainstream Hollywood cinema, especially in films exhibiting many textual indicators of filmic science fiction. For example, *Star Wars* (1977) features a generically hybrid variant of 'the mission briefing' event type familiar from many a war film in which a Rebel general instructs the starfighter pilots under his command how to approach, attack, and destroy the Death Star, an armored Imperial space station with enough power to destroy an entire planet. Similarly, *Aliens* (1986) features a generically hybrid variant of 'the climactic battle' event type. In this film, a team

of the Colonial Marines are ambushed by the eponymous aliens inside a terraforming colony on a distant planet. The team suffers severe casualties, and the survivors barricade themselves inside the colony in order to protect themselves until help arrives to rescue them. Inside their makeshift fortress, the Marines are besieged by the aliens, who cut the power and attack through the ceiling. In the ensuing firefight, the team is all but annihilated. These generically hybrid filmic events, and many other like them, are straightforwardly characterizable with reference to Tseng's (2013) schema-based model as conceptual blends, in the sense of Fauconnier and Turner (2002), of intertextually established action patterns.

At the highest level of complexity, the filmic medium's plane of content characterizes entire storylines made up of temporally and causally interrelated filmic events. In most schematic terms, these interrelated events make up functionally distinct segments, such as *exposition*, *i.e.* "introduction to the proper action" (Post 2017: 90), *inciting moment*, *i.e.* "the first event of proper action" (Post 2017: 90), *development of the action*, *i.e.* "set of events in the chronological order" (Post 2017: 90); *climax*, *i.e.* "the turning point, event concerning something expectable and leading to changes" (Post 2017: 90), and *denouement*, *i.e.* "the end of the action" (Post 2017: 90). To the extent that filmic storylines are filled with more specific content that is intertextually established, they become associated with particular filmic genres.

For example, according to Basinger ([1986] 2003: 67–69) the storyline common to many World War II combat films comprises the following temporally and causally interrelated segments of filmic events: (1) "A group of men […] undertake a mission which will accomplish an important military objective" ([1986] 2003: 68), (2) "As they go forward, the action unfolds. A series of episodes occur which alternates in uneven patterns the contrasting forces of night and day, action and repose, safety and danger, combat and noncombat, comedy and tragedy, dialogue and action" (Basinger [1986] 2003: 68), (3) "The enemy's presence is indicated" (Basinger [1986] 2003: 68), (4) "Conflict breaks out within the group itself. It is resolved through the external conflict brought down upon them" (Basinger [1986] 2003: 69), (5) "Members of the group die" (Basinger [1986] 2003: 69), (6) "A climactic battle takes place, and a learning or growth process occurs" (Basinger [1986] 2003: 69), and (7) "The situation is resolved" (Basinger [1986] 2003: 69).

Arguably, Basinger's ([1986] 2003: 67–69) "combat film" storyline constitutes the default value of the attribute 'storyline' at the current stage of the development of the "war film" genre. This is to do with the fact that since World War II this storyline has been instantiated, with relatively minor variations, by multiple films – such as *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), *A Bridge Too Far* (1977), *Platoon* (1986), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), *Memphis Belle* (1990), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and *Black Hawk Down* (2001) – whose wide recognition as prototypical examples of the "war film" genre was likely motivated not only intra-textually, but also extra-textually, by a combination of interrelated contextual factors, that is, factors that are more or less independent of the films themselves, such as the status of these films as major Hollywood productions, the prestige of their cast and crew members, the accolades they received, their box-office returns, and their enduring popularity among filmgoers and television viewers.

Importantly, various components of the "combat film" storyline have been included in non-prototypical war films, such as *Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), *M*A*S*H* (1970), *The Dogs of War* (1980), *Kagemusha* (1980), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Casualties of War* (1989), *A Midnight Clear* (1992), *Braveheart* (1995), and *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016). Additionally, there are the more peripheral members of

the generic category "war film", such as *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (1983), *Come and See* (1985), or *Schindler's List* (1993), whose storylines have very little in common with the "combat film" storyline. Last but not least, some components of the "combat film" storyline have been featured in films characterized by "filmic multivalency" (Altman [1999] 2000: 135), as evidenced by such hybrids of science fiction film and war film as *Aliens* (1986) and *Starship Troopers* (1997). Where the latter films diverge most significantly from prototypical war films is of course in the way these "combat film" storyline components have been realized, predominantly in terms of characters, objects, and settings.

4. Discussion

The schema-based characterization of film genres proposed above makes it possible to account for textualization of film genres by characterizing them in terms of ranges of values permitted for multiple variables situated at the filmic medium's plane of content. This schema-based conception of film genres seems to harmonize with the way the notion of genre has been characterized by transmedial narratologists in relation to the concept of medium: "the difference between medium and genre resides in the nature and origin of the constraints that relate to each of them. Whereas genre is defined by more or less freely adopted conventions, chosen for both personal and cultural reasons, medium imposes its possibilities and limitations on the user" (Ryan 2004: 19). In the context of a schema-based account of film genres, this means that while the filmic medium specifies the more obligatory variables characterizing filmic texts on the interrelated levels of representation, genres specify the permitted ranges of values within these variables that can be more or less freely utilized by filmmakers. For example, to the extent that filmmakers necessarily construct storylines comprising events made up of characters, objects, settings, and actions, these entities constitute obligatory variables of filmic texts and are characterized by the filmic medium, but since the filmmakers are more or less free to select whatever they need from a wide variety of intertextually established characters, objects, settings, and actions that are characteristic of westerns, science-fiction films, horrors, *etc.*, these multiple options make up the permitted ranges of values within the obligatory parameters of character, object, setting, and action, which are in turn specified by film genres.

Additionally, this characterization makes it possible to account for such intuitively convincing generalizations as the following: "Some film genres tend to [be] defined primarily by their *subject matter* (e.g. detective films), some by their *setting* (e.g. the Western) and others by their *narrative form* (e.g. the musical)" (Chandler [1997] 2000: 13). In the context of a schema-based characterization of film genres, these generalizations, which essentially indicate that film genres are not all on a par in terms their most readily identifiable properties, are represented in terms of how narrow/broad the permitted ranges of values are relative to each other for the pertinent variables. For example, saying that detective films are primarily defined by their subject matter is tantamount to saying that the permitted ranges of values for the variables of character and action are narrower for this genre than the permitted ranges of values for the genre's remaining variables. In turn, saying that filmic westerns are primarily defined by their setting amounts to saying that the permitted range of values for the variable of setting are narrower for this genre than the permitted ranges of values for the genre's remaining variables. Similarly, saying that filmic musicals

are primarily defined by their narrative form means that the permitted range of values for the variable of action are narrower for this genre than the permitted ranges of values for the genre's remaining variables.

Perhaps more importantly, this kind of schema-based characterization makes it possible to account for the oft-noted (see: *e.g.* Chandler [1997] 2000: 1–2; Post 2017: 57–67) hierarchicality of film genres, whereby highly inclusive film genres are subdivided into less inclusive film genres, which are in turn subdivided into even less inclusive film subgenres, *etc*. For example, 'melodrama', which in its broad understanding refers to "cinema's most popular parent genre" (Altman [1999] 2000: 5), is an umbrella term for films characterized by "visual spectacle, sensational episodic storylines, performative and presentational excess, and starkly simplified, personalised narratives" (Langford 2005: 236). Conceived of in this way, filmic melodrama may be said to comprise all major Hollywood genres: westerns, musicals, war films, horrors, action films, gangster films, adventure films, fantasy films, comedies, and so on (*cf.* Neale 1993). These basic-level genres are in turn often divided into subgenres. For example, Kawin (2012) divides filmic horror into the following subgenres on the basis of what constitutes the source of the horror: films about supernatural monsters (demons and the devil, vampires, zombies, *etc.*), films about non-supernatural monsters (transforming monsters, constructed monsters, composite monsters, *etc.*), films about humans (mad scientists and doctors, mad killers, psychics and telekinetics, *etc.*).

In the schema-based characterization of film genres proposed above, the hierarchicality of film genres, whereby highly inclusive film genre categories comprise progressively less inclusive film genre categories, is represented in terms of progressively narrower permitted ranges of values for the variables collectively characterizing the progressively less inclusive genre categories, situated at progressively more specific levels of categorization. With reference to the examples listed above, the highly inclusive film genre of melodrama is situated at the superordinate level of categorization, and it is collectively characterized by permitted ranges of values for its variables that are broad enough to comprise the permitted ranges of values for the variables characterizing the basic-level film genres of western, musical, war film, horror, *etc.* Each of these basic-level film genre categories is in turn collectively characterized by permitted ranges of values for its variables that are broad enough to comprise the permitted ranges of values for the variables characterizing its subgenres, situated at the subordinate level of categorization. The permitted ranges of values for the variables characterizing the film genres situated at the same level of categorization may overlap to a varying degree, in this way accounting for the oft-noted fuzziness of film genre categories (Altman [1999] 2000: 130–131, 135, 141; Stam 2000: 128; Johnston 2011: 11, 23–25; Allison 2016: 254), whereby non-prototypical films exemplifying different basic-level or subordinate-level film genres will often share certain similarities. Other things being equal, the more specific the level of categorization, the greater the overlap between the categories situated at this level (see: *e.g.* Ungerer and Schmid [1996] 2006: 79–81). Consequently, the sub-genres of filmic horror (films about supernatural monsters, films about non-supernatural monsters, and films about humans) will be more similar to each other than basic-level film genres (western, musical, war film, horror, *etc.*).

Last but not least, this schema-based characterization of film genres offers an account of the inclusiveness of film genres, their exclusiveness, and filmic multivalency that is decidedly superior to the previously discussed account, framed in terms of the family resemblance theory of conceptual representation. The reason why this is the case has to do with the fact that unlike the schema-based theories of conceptual representation, the family resemblance theory lacks a mechanism that would allow a characterization of film genres formulated in accordance with its principles to be more or less seamlessly

integrated with a comprehensive theory of films as multimodal texts, such as the one implicit in Tseng (2013). For this reason, the previously discussed family-resemblance characterization of film genres was based on arbitrarily selected and mutually isolated attributes, thereby making the family resemblance account of the inclusiveness of film genres, their exclusiveness, and filmic multivalency largely arbitrary as well.

In contrast, the schema-based characterization of film genres proposed above makes it possible to account for the inclusiveness of film genres and their exclusiveness in a non-arbitrary fashion by virtue of the fact that it is more or less seamlessly integrated with Tseng's (2013) theory of film. More specifically, the inclusiveness of film genres is represented in their schema-based characterization in terms of how narrow/broad the permitted ranges of values are for the pertinent variables. All other things being equal, the broader the permitted ranges of values, the more inclusive the film genre, and, inversely, the narrower the permitted ranges of values, the more exclusive the film genre. In turn, the exclusiveness of film genres is represented in their schema-based characterization in terms of the defaults assumed by values for the pertinent variables, which collectively characterize category prototypes: films widely regarded as best representatives of a given film genre category.

Similarly, this schema-based characterization of film genres makes it possible to account for filmic multivalency, whereby individual films may, and often do, exemplify two or more film genres, in a non-arbitrary way due to the fact that it is integrated with a theory of film. With reference to the previously discussed film *Alien* (1979), this kind of schema-based characterization specifies which values selected by the film for its variables are situated in the ranges permitted for the genre of filmic horror and which are situated in the ranges permitted for the genre of filmic science fiction. Generally speaking, it is perhaps fair to say that for the variable of storyline, *Alien* (1979) in large part selects a value situated in the range permitted for the genre of filmic horror, and in particular for the prominent sub-genre of filmic horror referred to by Kawin (2012) as films about monsters, whereas for the variables of character, object, setting, and action, *Alien* (1979) by and large selects values situated in the ranges permitted for the genre of filmic science fiction, and in particular for the prominent sub-genre of filmic science fiction referred to as films about space travel (Aldredge 2020) or space exploration (Telotte [2001] 2004: 101–102; Johnston 2011: 64–67).

On the whole, then, a schema-based characterization of *Alien* (1979) as a film genre hybrid makes it possible not only to state that this film blends (in the sense of Fauconnier and Turner 2002) elements of filmic horror with elements of filmic science fiction, but also to show exactly how the two genres (and their respective sub-genres) are integrated in this film. In short, a schema-based characterization of *Alien* (1979) as a film genre hybrid makes it possible to demonstrate quite explicitly that this film is aptly characterized as a horror set in space, which is consonant with the intuitions of several respondents of the previously discussed Twitter poll on the generic status of *Alien* (1979) ("its [sic] a classic monster movie that happens to be in a scifi setting"; "Alien, especially, is a great example of horror set in space").

5. Conclusion

This article has hopefully demonstrated that from the perspective of MCL, film genres are productively characterized in terms of the schema-based view of conceptual representation. Unlike the similarity-

based accounts of film genres discussed in this article (framed in terms of the classical theory, the family resemblance theory, and the prototype theory of conceptual representation), the schema-based characterization of film genres proposed above makes it possible to formulate a relatively non-arbitrary account of their theoretically problematic properties: textualization, inclusiveness, exclusiveness, hierarchicality, and filmic multivalency. What makes this account of film genres non-arbitrary is the fact that it has been integrated with a current multimodal theory of film implicit in Tseng (2013) through hierarchies of variables that characterize the filmic medium and become specified as values in individual filmic texts instantiating this narrative medium.

It is also important to point out that while the account of film genres proposed in this article is for the most part framed in terms of the schema-based view of conceptual representation, it does exhibit certain characteristics of what might be regarded as an explanation-based account insofar as it takes into consideration not only the category-intrinsic characteristics of film genres, but also their category-extrinsic characteristics. One category-extrinsic characteristic of film genres taken into consideration in this article is the fact that conceptualizers, especially those non-expert in film theory, may well entertain conflicting views on what film genres are like. For example, non-experts may on the one hand subscribe to a schema-based view of film genres by being able to recognize elements of more than one genre at the interrelated levels of representation of film genre hybrids, such as *e.g. Alien* (1979), and on the other hand they may subscribe to the view of films and film genres framed in the classical theory of categorization, which seems largely motivated by the pervasive conceptual metaphor whereby abstract concepts are reified as physical objects.

Additionally, this article has hopefully demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinary synergies in MCL by showing how research in the field of psychology (specifically, studies of conceptual representation) and linguistics (in particular, studies of conceptual metaphor) may be productively utilized to formulate a conception of film genre that may facilitate ongoing research into film in MCL. Insofar as the schema-based account of film genre proposed in this article presupposes a particular theory of film as a multimodal text (implicit in Tseng 2013) and provides a consistent idea of what film genres are and how they relate to the filmic medium and filmic texts, it may be used as a frame of reference for a range of case studies focusing on how film genres are textualized in particular films. For example, this account may provide a basis for a systematic and revealing examination of filmic multivalency by enabling the analyst not only to identify the film genres that are mixed in a film genre hybrid, but also to specify the relative contribution made by these film genres to the hybrid's overall genre makeup.

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