

“Spinning the thread(t)s” around images of time

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This paper tries to solve the semantic equivoque (Wunenburger 1997/ 2004) within the etymology of the concept *image* (1. Lat. *imaginem* - picture, frame, pattern, or shape; 2. Gr. *eidolon*, L. *fictio* - mental imagery) by offering an epistemological (traditional and social semiotic) analysis to mental (re)presentations of an abstract concept, namely *time*. The text that my analysis is based on is actually a continuous “melting” of pictures (Salvador Dali’s *The Persistence of Memory*) and verbal images (Carl Sandburg’s *Solo for Saturday Night Guitar*).

Starting the (de)construction of the semiotic system of *time* from M.A.K. Halliday’s ideational metafunction which places experience at the core of any representation, I will analyse the relational processes of classifying, identifying and symbolizing the different *embodiments* of the two pictorial and verbal empirical instances of *time*. The implied process of “carrying beyond” revealed by the etymology of the concept *metaphor* will be used as the theoretical background in the process of subjective definitions of *time*.

Being an argument that establishes the structure of levels of reality (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1993; Nicolescu, 1996), a metaphor can be interpreted either as a matter of figurative language or as a matter of cognition (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980; Turner, Fauconnier, 1995; Danesi, 2002).

My choice of different theoretical approaches to metaphors has a twofold motivation:

on the one hand, the cognitive approaches to metaphors, through their mechanisms of *mapping*, *blending* and cognitive *flow* might constitute a plausible explanation to the unexpected verbal and visual juxtapositions within the surrealist cultural movement. The surprising simulacra obtained are actually what A.J. Greimas and J. Fontanille (1993) call junctions projected by the subject/ (non)verbal producer (Dali and Sandburg) into the imaginary space of deontic and epistemic modality (wanting, having-to, being-able *versus* knowing – “the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images” as Plato used to say in *Book VII of the Republic*);

on the other hand, the source-targets show that there are extraorganismic and intraorganismic (Wąsik, 2003) experiences to time achieved either through objects (melting watches – Baudrillard, 1968) or through states (love – Greimas & Fontanille). Dali’s visual representation of time will be analysed taking into account Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s four semiotic systems, namely: represented participants (centripetal or centrifugal vectors; movement on a horizontal or winding axis of time), composition (Groupe μ ’s visual parameter of “formemes”, Arnheim’s centrality *versus* eccentricity), modality (Groupe μ ’s visual parameters of “chromemes and texturemes”) and interactive participants (the sensory space through a synesthesia of senses: the visual and auditory perception of the threats coming from the metaphorical ‘taste’ of a bodily disintegration in time – Merleau-Ponty, 1999).

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