WALLPAPER

(Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Metaphor and Creative Writing)

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Dedication

Thank you, sincerely, to anyone who has had to listen to me waffle on about this project, about metaphor, for the past few years.

To Ed and Geoff for your excellent reading/writing brains and, above all your friendship.

To Jeannette and Richard. I couldn't have wished for better supervisors and mentors. Thank you for taking on this weird project, for embracing its weirdness.

To Dawn, the best English teacher I've ever had. You made me realise what language could do, and what I could do with it.

To Em—I love you. You've been amazing through this. Thank you for your genuine interest in this project, and for your support. You got me over the line, no doubt about it.

To my nan, for your stories, for being always, and without fail, there for me.

To my grandad. I miss you. Your sense of humour has stayed with me all these years. We will always be mates.

And lastly, to my mum. You made me the person I am today. You supported me when I showed an interest in writing, and your creativity inspires me to this day—I owe you everything. The sentence you had engraved on your last gift to me ('My love will always be with you') is as true as it has ever been.

Abstract

Aim: Cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor have been applied to literature, but a gap exists, a lack of engagement, between these approaches and creative writing as a practice. *Wallpaper* seeks to close that gap.

Methods: *Wallpaper*'s form (creative-critical) and method are one and the same. An overarching narrative has, at its heart, John and Su, whose relationship provides a springboard to discussions about and insights into metaphor, metaphor theory, and models of metaphor. *Wallpaper* also contains poetry, short stories, flash fiction, and spaces for the reader to collaborate. The creative and critical elements feed off of, react with and bleed into each other, and it is through these interactions that plot and critical discussions and arguments are developed.

Firstly, the findings and implications of contemporary metaphor scholarship are expressed through narrative. Then, it is demonstrated that metaphor theory and its models can be appropriated in the act of writing creatively, that they have fed into the act of writing *Wallpaper*. Lastly, *Wallpaper* seeks to show that creative writing can be used as a research tool to examine metaphor, deploying itself as an attempt to do just that.

Results: Deployed in this way, *Wallpaper* (and the creative metaphors it contains) is reframed as an exercise in "data" collection. This "data", combined with a reading of Agustín Fernández Mallo's *Nocilla Trilogy* that is informed by metaphor theory, serves to demonstrate that existing metaphor models do not fully account for the kinds of metaphoric indeterminacy at play in creative texts, for the processes at play in their production, implementation and reception.

Conclusions: A new class of metaphor is proposed—half-built, half-deliberate metaphor. It is shown that a modified version of Fauconnier and Turner's blending theory can account for and model these metaphors satisfactorily, but also that their existence has implications for blending theory and its modelling of creativity more widely.

Wallpaper

Tom White



Table of Contents

Dedication ____ **2**

Abstract ____ **3**

Introduction: Metaphor Theory and Creative Writing—Closing the Gap ____ **8**

What is Wallpaper? ____ *9*

Mapping and Gapping (1) ____ *12*

The Whys and Wherefores ____ *13*

Why Metaphor? ____ **16**

The Dictionary is Not King ____ *18*

The Solitary Ninth: Born Synaesthetic—the Metaphoric Ape ____ *22*

Metaphor Purged ____ *37*

'…': Metaphors We Live By, a World Without Metaphor ____ *43*

Slaves to the Cognitive Unconscious ____ *57*

An Origin Myth ____ *58*

The Source and the Target ____ *61*

In the Frame it was Regarded ____ *82*

Sans Metaphor ____ *89*

Speculative Biology, Speculative Linguistics ____ *94*

Weaponised Silences ____ *99*

Rootless? ____ *107*

Embodied Cognition and Material Culture – from Experience to Metaphor and Back Again ____ **113**

Board Games ____ *114*

Before Your Eyes ____ *116*

Primary Metaphors ____ *117*

Image Schemas ____ *121*

The Well-Grounded Man ____ *126*

Embodiment: A Two-Way Street? ____ *128*

The Symphony from the Groove ____ *130*

The Physical is Conceptual ____ *133*

Literature as Architecture, Architecture as Story ____ *136*

The Map and the Mapped ____ *141*

To Think Like a Human ____ **144**

The Origins of Language ____ *145*

The Future (John, 60) ____ *149*

Béton Brut (Interlude) ____ **151**

Hauntology: Taking Stock ____ *152*

How I Intended Wallpaper to Turn Out ____ *153*
Everyone Has a Plan Until They Get Punched in the Mouth ____ *157*

It's Always More Complicated Than That ____ **161**
Mixed Metaphors, Mixed Signals? ____ *162*
Metaphor as Needle, Metaphor as Thread? ____ *164*
How Conceptual are Conceptual Metaphors? ____ *169*

Discourse Dynamics ____ **170**
Transcript 1 ____ *172*
Abstracted and Pure ____ *173*
Transcript 2 ____ *175*
Excavation ____ *177*
Metaphor Identification ____ *181*
Metaphor Systematicity ____ *182*
Transcript 1 Analysis ____ *184*
Transcript 2 Analysis ____ *187*
Metaphor Tables ____ *188*
Discourse with the Dead (the Dynamics of) ____ *193*

The Beach ____ **199**

Blending Theory ____ **204**
Digital Ghosts ____ *205*
Thought, Modelled ____ *207*
Governing Principles ____ *209*
Networks ____ *213*

Researching and Applying Metaphor in the Real World ____ **215**
MELC ____ *216*
The Stranger ____ *218*
I Will Have Always Been Here For a Time (1) ____ *219*
The Waiting ____ *220*
One Hundred Degrees of Boiling Hot Water ____ *224*
Art as Cancer, Cancer as Art ____ *225*
4AM ____ *230*
Faith (1) ____ *232*
Rhubarb (1) ____ *234*
Faith (2) ____ *235*
The Stranger (2) ____ *238*
Shadows in the Grass (1) ____ *239*
Shadows in the Grass (2) ____ *240*
I Will Have Always Been Here For a Time (2) ____ *242*

Morphine 243
Rhubarb (2) 244
'Feels like a strange thing to ask, but, how was it? The funeral I mean?' 246
Metaphor Menu 249
John Alone 255
Thinking about Thinking 260
Sea Wall 261

A One-Sided Coin **262**
Mapping and Gapping (2) 263
Metaphor Theory as Model 264
Creative Writing as a Research Tool 275

?=? **277**
Creativity 278
Anglerfish=? 279
p(n,r)= 281
Is the Hermit a Neutrino, or is the Neutrino a Hermit? 287
Nothing is Unstable 292
Fragments as Inputs 293
Three Fragments from Nocilla Experience 294
Beyond Subjective Feeling 296
Should You Wish 299
Should You Wish (2) 302
Challenges for Classification and Identification 303
Half-Built, Half-Deliberate? 306
A Hitherto Unmapped Source of Creativity 308
Satiated by Fragments 310

Coda **312**
Beginnings 313
Endings 315
Poem Not Found—the Paper it was Written on Mistaken for Scrap by John and Discarded 316

Bibliography **318**

Introduction: Metaphor Theory and Creative Writing—Closing the Gap

What *is Wallpaper*?

1) *Wallpaper* is interested in cognitive linguistic approaches to, and models of, metaphor[1]. It is interested in creative writing, and all this entails: character, plot, dialogue. It is interested in the reading mind, and the writing mind[2].

Wallpaper is interested in applying metaphor theory to creative writing, in where metaphor theory and creative writing intersect; where they don't, and perhaps should. It is interested in using metaphor theory as a lens, through which to look at the products of creative writing, and creativity more generally, in new ways. Sometimes, *Wallpaper* sets these two spheres, metaphor theory and creative writing, side by side, just to see what happens.

2) *Wallpaper* is a **novel**, insofar as it written largely in prose, and contains extended fictional narratives and characters. Metaphor theory will not be mentioned explicitly for pages at a time, when the need for narrativisation (or a longing for digression) outweighs the critical impulse.

3) If *Wallpaper* doesn't make you *feel* something, it has failed. If *Wallpaper* doesn't achieve this, it is not the *Wallpaper* I hoped for. Again, *Wallpaper* is a **novel**.

4) *Wallpaper's* focus is initially broad, offering an overview of metaphor research and theory. *Wallpaper*, then, at times, especially in its first two-thirds, has the feel of a **literature review.**

5) *Wallpaper*, containing as it does lessons (implicit and explicit) on how aspects of metaphor theory can be appropriated as creative writing models, is an **instruction manual** for writers (putting aside for a moment whether such a thing can or should exist).

6) *Wallpaper* is a **research project** in its own right—a book which, as it narrows in focus, examines the nature of and processes involved in its own composition, in order to add to the body of knowledge constituted by the fruits of metaphor theory and the discipline of creative writing.

7) Wallpaper has its fair share of neuroses. At its least ambitious, *Wallpaper* wants you to accept it for what it is. At its most ambitious, it wants you to take metaphor theory

---

[1] Where I hereafter speak of contemporary metaphor theory, metaphor theory, or models of metaphor, it can be assumed that I am referring to cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor in particular.

[2] I've always been fascinated by metaphor. When I was young, a writer of needlessly fragmented, incomprehensible short stories, it was for reasons I couldn't put into words, but I am tempted to say it was because of metaphor's transformative properties—that it turned *things* into other *things*. When I was a little older, an undergraduate student of literature and creative writing, I became interested in metaphors in a drier sense, an almost truth-functional sense. I developed, naively, and insufferably, my own theory of metaphor, which I dubbed *connotative triangulation.* The theory went something like this: Metaphors are lies, and come packaged with all kinds of things that are not true about their subject. If writers are to write truthfully, and precisely, the only way they can do so whilst retaining metaphors in their writing is to use several metaphors to describe the same thing. In this way, connotations supported only by one or two metaphors would, in the mind of the reader, be disregarded, in favour of the core connotations, those supported by each and every metaphor deployed. The end result would not be a statement of truth (something I saw metaphors as incapable of providing) but a triangulation of it.

My writing suffered as a result—it was not a good theory.

forwards, into your own writing, your own artistry, and as per *5)* gives you the tools to do so, and should be considered a failure if it does not do this. As per *6)*, Wallpaper wants to both feast on and justify itself. *Wallpaper* is a **snake biting its own tail**.

8) Is *Wallpaper* really a novel? There is a through-narrative, of sorts. There are also **short stories**, and **poetry** (these are, admittedly, sometimes tied in with overarching narrative). *Wallpaper* quotes other sources at length. *Wallpaper* digresses. *Wallpaper* is a **collage**, held together with paste.

9) *Wallpaper* is **creative-critical**[3] insofar as it approaches 'research as a creative practice' and exhibits what I hope are innovative ways of conducting and presenting academic work'[4].

---

[3] My first experience of such a hybrid, creative-critical text was Terry Pratchett's *The Science of Discworld* (1999). Its opening chapter sees a group of wizards accidentally create a new universe. In contrast to their own, this universe obeys the laws of physics, rather than magic and narrative. The 'Roundworld' it contains likewise stands in stark opposition to their own world—a disc borne through space on the back of four elephants and a turtle. From here on in the narrative is developed through the odd-numbered chapters, whilst the even-numbered chapters explore the science of 'Roundworld', using the preceding fiction chapter as a springboard. This mixing of forms blew my (circa) fifteen-year-old mind, exploding my notions of what fiction was, what it could do. It was this book I turned to first when thinking about how creative writing and metaphor theory might intersect in a single text.

[4] Though *The Science of Discworld* was my first experience of such formal hybridity, other texts proved to be more formative when it came to fleshing out the details of what an experimental, creative-critical exploration of metaphor might look like.

Susan Howe's *Spontaneous Particulars*: *Telepathy of Archives* (2014) weaves verse, prose and images of archival material in a 'collaged swan song to the old ways' (2014, p.9), to the physicality of archival research through which, unlike with digital resources, 'the portrait of history in so-called insignificant visual and verbal textualities and textiles' (2014, p.21) can be found. The text's hybridity, its form, is, in a sense, its argument, serving as an enacting, rather than merely a description, of how understanding is mediated by form; the connections between texts, material culture and history. From it, I took this sense of how a text's form can not only support its argument, but perform it, offering an argument from experience, as well as from more abstract reason.

Confessions of the Fox (2018) sees Jordy Rosenberg, a trans academic and teacher of eighteenth-century literature and gender and sexuality studies, reimagine Jack Sheppard, a notorious thief and escape artist, as a trans man. The bulk of the book is framed as a long-lost memoir, authored by Jack, and discovered by Dr Voth, a contemporary scholar of the eighteenth century, whose footnotes initially serve first as a gloss, before becoming more autobiographical (Dr Voth, it is revealed, is also trans) and serving to bring (real) historical theory and historiography to bear on the fictionalised history. The revelation, in the final third, that the memoir has been edited by a troupe of librarians who seek to free texts from their historical trappings, solidifies what has been a gradually developing discussion throughout *Confessions* about who gets to write and re-write history; the stories that find themselves told in primary sources, and those that do not. I found Rosenberg's use of footnotes to be instructive, but also his fruitful application of real theory to imagined situations.

The Monkey Grammarian (1974) could be characterised as a travelogue. In it, the author (Octavio Paz) details his journey to the ruined temples of Galta, Jaipur. His physical movements and his surroundings find analogues in his more abstract contemplation of the nature of language. Having described how 'this morning's sunlight has fallen uninterruptedly on the motionless surface of the little table', Paz notes that this image 'finally has a function in these pages' (1974, p.19). The function being to serve as a 'dubious demonstration' of the ideas expressed in the preceding pages about the

10) *Wallpaper* is **collaborative**. There are gaps, as in all literature—some explicit, some not. As with all gaps, it is up to you what you furnish them with, or whether you furnish them at all.

---

contradictions inherent in the phrase 'fixity is always momentary' (1074, p.17) (itself a springboard to argue that 'momentary', derived as it is from 'momentum', from ideas of movement rather than of time, is a metaphor (this idea itself a springboard to demonstrate the impossibility of deconstructing language so as to arrive at an imagined 'primordial word for which all others are metaphors')). *Wallpaper* is informed by the status of place and objects within *The Monkey Grammarian*—their sometimes-analogous relationship to the argument being made, and the fact that this relationship is always being tested, renegotiated, this shifting serving the plot, as well as the argument, as it develops.

Geoff Dyer's *Out of Sheer Rage* (1997) is a book about trying, and failing, to write a book about D.H. Lawrence. In Dyer's failing (in his outlining of what he'd have liked to include in his book; in his visits to places where Lawrence lived; in his wrestling with who Lawrence was, and is, to him; in his indecisiveness, which mirrors Lawrence's own) we learn much about Lawrence, and much about the sway that writers themselves hold over the reading mind; about the act of writing, and the act of not writing. James Wood wrote of Geoff Dyer that he was a 'glorious truant from study' (cited in Dyer, no date) *Wallpaper* contains no quantitative study of metaphor, which has become the norm. From Dyer, then, I take solace, and hope—solace in the idea that there is more than one way to successfully write and learn about a topic, and the hope that I can be a truant from one kind of study whilst pursuing, successfully, another.

There is much daylight between these texts, much to separate them in terms of their form and methodology. Together, however, these texts triangulate something like my own conception of the creative-critical, each of them acknowledging the act of research as an 'event or encounter or happening' (Benson and Connors, pg.2), and, as such, treating 'the form of academic writing as constitutive of its conceptual argument' (Creative Critical Writing, no date). Rather than existing as mere vehicles to carry broader arguments, these texts offer themselves up as proof of concept.

Mapping and Gapping (1)

11) Academic interest in metaphor has skyrocketed since the early eighties[5].
12) Metaphor has strong folk associations with literature. Metaphor is regarded, by many, as a literary phenomenon, a 'device of the poetic imagination' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.3).
13) Metaphor research has been appropriated as a lens, a framework of understanding, and has become more applied across numerous fields in recent years.

14) If creative writing and literary theory inhabit two sides of the same coin, then the creative writing side can be said to be concerned with procedural knowledge and resulting practice, and literary theory with declarative knowledge and analysis.
15) Contemporary metaphor research and theory have been appropriated with a view to enriching literary theory through, for example, cognitive poetics.
16) This is an endeavour associated with declarative, rather than procedural, knowledge.
17) Given *12),* it is natural that *13).*

18) However, there has been very little work done on how contemporary metaphor research can interface with the discipline of creative writing. Given *11)* and *12)*, this is an incongruity.

19) There is an 'intellectual and theoretical division between the creative practice of writing and the scholarly or critical study of literature' (Dawson, 2005). Coin thin, the space between the two endeavours is a bone of contention—both for those who wish it were a gulf, and those who see no gap whatsoever. A sense, too, that creative writing is diminished by attempts to understand it. The *creative* in *creative writing* implying 'limitlessness, and infinitude is by definition impossible to circumscribe within any context' (Mills, 2013, p.79).

20) Given 1*9), 18)* is to be expected.

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[5] It was whilst formulating my PhD proposal (I had, back then, a vague sense that I wanted to do something around both metaphor and creative writing) that I was introduced to Lakoff and Johnsons *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). A foundational text with regards to cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor, it foisted huge claims on metaphor, in particular on what it called conceptual metaphors—often unconscious metaphors that sit beneath and find expression in the linguistic metaphors we utter as part of everyday speech. Conceptual metaphor theory (and the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor more generally) has been applied to various academic fields, at the societal and psychological levels, as well as to politics, in healthcare contexts, and many more besides.

The Whys and Wherefores

21) *18),* then, is an incongruity, but also a gap to be filled.
22) *Wallpaper* will seek to narrow the gap between creative writing and contemporary metaphor theory.

23) *Wallpaper* will express and explore metaphor theory, the findings and implications of metaphor research and its applications, through creative writing[6]. Or rather, through a series of interlocking creative responses that are themselves a kind of hybrid creative-critical writing[7].
24) *Wallpaper* will demonstrate (sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly) that models drawn from metaphor can be applied to the act of creative writing.
25) *Wallpaper* will use creative writing as a research tool in its own right, to say something new about these models as they relate to literature and creative writing[8].

---

[6] Metaphor scholars may find very little that is new to them theory-wise in these initial exchanges. Perhaps there is something to be said for familiar themes being expressed in unfamiliar ways.

[7] Footnotes will be used liberally. Narrative, characters and critical ideas will be developed both above and below the lines (Su, for reference, loves the kind of books that use footnotes liberally; John doesn't see the point, thinks they needlessly fragment the narrative, are the preserve of writers who enjoy being needlessly complicated, in fact rely on being this way, in lieu of having anything worthwhile to say). Convention dictates that footnotes are non-essential, that the text above the line can be understood without the text below it. This is not the case with *Wallpaper*.

[8] The form that *Wallpaper* takes, the shape of its argument, is perhaps unexpected, but there is a logic to it, this logic informed by the tension it seeks to express and (in part) resolve. The tension, remember, is that metaphor's most common folk association is with literature, but that metaphor theory has, by and large, neglected to engage with the processes that create literature, with creative writing as an endeavour, whilst engaging extensively with literature itself.

What you might quite reasonably expect, given this aim, is for *Wallpaper* to focus, by and large, on metaphor use in the generation of literature. What you get, for the first two-thirds or so of *Wallpaper*, is a literature review of cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor as applied in the real world, at psychological and sociological scales. That this literature review takes a creative(-critical) form is the first step to resolving the above tension, demonstrating that creative writing, the traditional bedfellow of metaphor, can be used to express and synthesise the findings and implications of metaphor theory in areas beyond literature.

With *A One-Sided Coin*, *Wallpaper* begins to feast on itself. Here, I pivot to examining how metaphor theory and its models can be appropriated in the act of writing creatively, in particular how they have been applied in the act of writing *Wallpaper*.

?=? completes this devouring—*Wallpaper* is reimagined as an exercise in "data" collection. This data, revealing as it does the subjective experience of creating *Wallpaper's* metaphors, demonstrates that existing metaphor models do not fully account for the kinds of metaphoric indeterminacy at play in creative texts, for the processes at play in their production, implementation and reception. This argument is further developed with reference to a reading of Agustín Fernández Mallo's *Nocilla Trilogy* (2019) (itself an experimental, hybrid text, blending fiction and non-fiction in unusual ways) through the lens of metaphor theory.

A new class of metaphor is proposed. It is shown that the existence of this metaphor has implications for metaphor theory and its understanding and modelling of creativity more widely.

26) Not all gaps are bad. Not all holes are there to be filled. The whys and wherefores should be established, then.

27) Creative writing as an academic endeavour treats literature as though it were 'a continuous experience and not a mere corpus of knowledge – as if it were a living thing' (Myers, 2006, p.4). Initially conceived as a 'means of teaching literature from the inside, as familiar experience, rather than from the outside...It was intended to be an elephant's view of zoology' (2006, p. 9) with its own epistemology, constituting 'a body of knowledge and a set of educational techniques for imparting this knowledge' (Dawson 2005, p.2)[9].

Wallpaper, then, seeks to kill two birds with one stone. Rather than presenting outwardly and for its duration as a text about metaphor use in literature (in particular in experimental, hybrid forms of literature) it instead focuses, initially, on areas where metaphor theory has, in my view, proven to be most fruitful, where it has most convincingly shown metaphor to be at the heart of how we think. That it does so whilst embodying the form it later pivots to applying metaphor theory to means that it can be about two things at the same time, and can demonstrate, rather than merely argue, that the models applied so fruitfully to the real world can also be applied to the production of creative metaphor, in particular in experimental, hybrid forms of literature. The final chapter, being as it is a demonstration of how such texts can be parsed, serves as somewhat loose manual for how *Wallpaper* too*,* its hybridity, its sudden changes of register, might be parsed.

The form that *Wallpaper* takes, then, arose from trying to resolve this primary tension from a number of angles, through a number of approaches.

[9] Further tensions arose as I wrestled with what metaphor is, what it can do, the limitations of both the theories that try to capture it, and the form I chose to write in. As creative writing's practice-orientated epistemology and perceived 'limitlessness' have, historically, set it at odds with the study of literature, so it finds itself at odds with quantitative approaches to studying metaphor, and the resulting drive to identify and categorise metaphor.

These tensions manifest in *Wallpaper* in a number of ways. Seeming non sequiturs, fragments of thought, creep in. A certain pataphysical logic takes over at times, by which I mean that thought experiments are introduced, the slanted logic that governs them given primacy for a time. These pataphysical constructs give rise to pataphors—extended metaphors that serve to contradict or problematise claims made earlier in the text. Ironies emerge, are sometimes resolved, but oftentimes multiply (Bob, for example, rallies against metaphor, his rallying taking on a distinctly metaphorical tinge).

Debates about categorisation have real implications for metaphor scholars. Labelling a metaphor as 'deliberate', for instance, is to make claims about how it is processed in the brain, about whether it is processed as a metaphor at all. It's not like metaphor scholars are not aware of the limits and dangers of categorisation, then. Following Raymond Gibbs' lecture *The Metaphorical Body: Why Metaphor May Be Everywhere* (2022) at the University of Birmingham, attendees gathered outside the staff bar and, pints in hand, worried aloud that Gibbs was overextending metaphor as a category, and so making a metaphor of potentially any act, rendering metaphor too all-encompassing, unwieldy as an object of study. In *Wallpaper*, such tensions are there to be toyed with (which is not to say that there won't be resolutions). In this toying, *Wallpaper* comes to reflect what I see as metaphor theory's unending struggle to categorise and understand something that, once delineated, sometimes seems to lose so much of what made it attractive and enigmatic, but oftentimes (depending on mood, perhaps) seems to gain the same.

28) Because '[Creative writing] provides an intimate and practical insight into how language works, so acting as the ideal bridge between literary and linguistic concerns' (Royle, 2013). Those who practise creative writing 'make discoveries about the subject…to which no amount of reading or analysis could give them access' (Everett, 2005, p.236). Creative writing, if these statements hold water, has the potential to close the gap inherent in post-hoc literary analysis, retrieving the 'intellectual work that normally goes missing in translation' (Carter, 2004, p. xi) during the process of writing. Used in tandem with metaphor theory, I propose that new insights can be gleaned into creative writing as a process (and, therefore, literature), metaphor, and models drawn from metaphor theory.

29) The enacting of *23)* through to 2*6)* will suggest a broadening out of what creative writing research can entail, of how it can interface with other disciplines. Alternative ways for metaphor theory to engage with creative works, for creative works to engage with metaphor theory, will be stress tested.

But of course, none of this tells us much at all about why metaphor is important in the first place. And so—why metaphor[10]?

[10] Because also contained within *Wallpaper* is a subtext about its author, and his journey to understand metaphor as more than a poetic device, to go beyond its dominant folk associations.

Why Metaphor?

John never got the chance to

- Go_____.
- Do_____.
- Give_____
  _____
  _____
  _____.
- Say_____
  _____
  _____
  _

The Dictionary is Not King

Metaphor, *n.* [13]

1. A **figure of speech** in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable; an instance of this, a metaphorical expression. Cf. metonymy *n.*, simile *n.*

2. Something regarded as representative or suggestive of something else, esp. as a material emblem of an abstract quality, condition, notion, etc.; a symbol, a token. Freq. with *for*, *of*.

Lifted from the Online Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'metaphor' (OED, 2016). Not a definition that instils a sense of gravitas. And so what then should we make of the fact that whole and oftentimes heavy books have been written about the phenomenon of metaphor?

George Bataille suggested that a dictionary 'begins when it no longer gives the meanings of words, but their tasks' (1929, p.31). What is, in this case, metaphor's job specification? What is being achieved when a word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from that to which it is literally applicable? Why is there the need to regard some things as being representative or suggestive of other things entirely, and when and how often does this occur? What is it about the abstract that requires it to have material emblems, and what effect do these emblems have on that which they purportedly emblemise?

figure, n. [14]

21. *Rhetoric.*
a. Any of the various 'forms' of expression, deviating from the normal arrangement or use of words, which are adopted in order to give beauty, variety, or force to a composition; e.g. Aposiopesis, Hyperbole, **Metaphor**, etc. Also, **figure of speech**.

[14] Lifted from the Online Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'figure' (OED, 2016). Metaphor then from a family of deviants, an outlier, a divergence from the norm. Metaphor a matter of speech, of words, of words written or spoken, but words alone it would seem.

But then, whole and heavy books, separated from the fiction on my shelf, and with serious spines to boot: *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*; *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*; and more besides. Again—what is metaphor's job specification? What, in short, could be so important about metaphor that it justifies all this papery weight?

‘You can find it when you face the sun, close your eyes, and watch the coloured lines dance,’ Michael Taussig (2004, p.ix) wrote in *My Cocaine Museum* ‘Follow them, follow the heat, and you’ll get there like I did.’.

There being Columbia’s Gold Museum, which, though softly lit and not at all vulgar in its presentation, is conspicuously mute on many things—that it is cocaine that shapes the country now, for one.

These silences are what drove Taussig to write *My Cocaine Museum*—a book, framed as a counter-museum, which he hoped would serve as a foil to Columbia’s Gold Museum. The existing museum simply did not address fully enough for him the ‘tasks’[15] of gold and cocaine. That is to say, their subversive and shaping influences[16].

[15] It was Taussig who introduced me to Bataille’s idea of what a dictionary should be—he utilises the quote above early on in *My Cocaine Museum.*

[16] Taussig understands cocaine as a transgressive substance. Transgressive in that it is in constant violation of boundaries, be they material or geographic, moral or semantic. Cocaine is never just cocaine: cocaine is coca but for the chemical processes that extracted and isolated it; cocaine would be predominantly found in South America but for the efforts of organised criminal gangs. The chewing of coca is, for the Quechua communities, a pillar of cultural identity (Allen, 1981, p.158). To chew coca together is to distil the structure of social relationship into a single ritual, it is to mediate a relationship with spiritual beings. And then in its movements, from country to country, from table to nose, cocaine becomes a byword for moral transgression, a gross amplification of the capitalist impulse, both disturbing existing orders and creating new ones.

If transgression is understood as a violation, a ‘passing over or beyond’ (OED, 2016), then what of metaphor’s violation? What of its transfer of meaning in violation of that which is literally applicable?

‘A world without metaphoric processes would be no world at all. Without the ongoing capacity for metaphoric processes, human experience would not be identifiable, discernible or even describable. All perception would devolve into discrete and unusable sensory impressions. Without metaphor, the potentially infinite amount of sensory input at any given moment would be a bombardment of particulars without any sort of filtration or conceptualisation. There would be no patterns, no observations, no predications or predictions—in effect, nothing’ (Katz, 2013, p.18)[17].

Is metaphor, as the OED suggests, just another language device, another tool of writing? A tinselly, wallpapery thing that, far from giving us the world, whole and observable, offers us mere beauty, mere variety, mere rhetorical force?

Taussig found the Gold Museum to be inadequate as a locus of history, a sensory experience divorced from hidden historical predicates. And if Katz is right, we should regard the OED to be wholly insufficient as a source of information for what metaphor really is, practically silent on what it does behind the scenes, its social realities. We should then also understand the transgression and violation that metaphor represents as central to our sense-making, to our ability to discern and therefore live in this world at all.

Not everything is Scrabble—the dictionary is not at all times king.

And if metaphor is as important as all that, something that, as these books on my bookshelf suggest, is at play in everything we do, then where better to start than at a hospital? Here we have life, in off-kilter form, distilled: irreligious hope and desperately religious goodbyes and the first, bloodied hellos; advertising because how else could the doctors know what drugs are the newest and best; economics because even (especially) here, life has its price; politics, dripping from above, in the board rooms, and because there is no hiding from it ever; poetry, the traditional bedfellow of metaphor, as therapy, a way to pass the time, relive old times; every emotion possible and in a heightened form; science, of course, the leading edges and the bluntest words; art, on the children's wards, and graphs and charts on every wall, clipped to the foot of each bed, every undulating or sharply spiking line representing, should we pay attention, something not itself.

Follow the street lamps along the promenade, watch them flicker out as you pass, the sea suddenly grey and suddenly distinguishable from the sky in the half-light. See the hospital in the distance. Turn inland and be there, sooner than you thought. And see now that the sky to the east of where you are stood at its revolving doors is being made complex by the very beginnings of a sunrise.

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[17] Katz (2013, p.19) draws attention to the work of Modell (2008), who has discussed what happens when metaphoric activity breaks down in cases of trauma. At the one extreme, where only similarities are discerned, this results in ‘frozen’ metaphors, and a concertinaing of time—events in the present are understood only in terms of what they have in common with the past. Recontextualisation, the creation of new meaning, is precluded, and the present becomes an identikit version of the past, impervious to interpretation.

At the other extreme, it is theorised, where differences only are perceived, the transferal of learning and knowledge from one concept to another would be impossible. Empathy, in such a world, would not exist without the common ground afforded by analogous connections. Without metaphorical links to draw, each and every concept would have to be approached as if completely alien, unlike anything else in the world.

The Solitary Ninth: Born Synaesthetic—the Metaphoric Ape

There is a baby whose weak legs fight but win against only the smallest creases in the material draped over him. His name was decided by a semicircle of doctors and nurses gathered around the kettle in the staffroom some day last week, which makes the whole process sound more detached and loveless than it was.

The name that got the most votes was Andrew, and so Andy unfolds one spindle arm and his wrist lolls westwards towards a pristinely closed curtain. No one calls him Andrew now. His incubator looks like a lidless, multipurpose storage box, padded out at the bottom so as to safely store valuables but laced seemingly with the kinds of sucking and bubbling tubes that keep expensive fish alive and flitting in their tanks. Though splayed, Andy takes up barely any space in the incubator.

Elsewhere on the neonatal ward windows shaped like a ship's portholes eliminate context. The sunrise through these portholes is experienced as if flat, something without drama, lacking shade or texture. Stood in this ward it is as if the whole sky has always been and will forever remain the smoothly plastic red that these portholes pick out. Nurse Jones is reminded each and every morning of how craggy wounds become, under the influence of high-powered microscopes, like sparse CGI landscapes—too simply drawn to support life and more like melted plastic flows than flesh. And today the portholes glow redder than usual.

Nurse Jones was not a part of the semicircle, chose not to be a part of the semicircle, not that they came knocking.

Horizons Hospital has the sleek and futuristic look of a building that may just be the place where Andy's condition might be rectified. This, bearing in mind what part of him is eight ninths missing, is testament to the ambition and vision of its many and celebrated architects. Its tenth floor is reserved for neonatal matters. Its sixteenth is windowless and not accessible via public lifts, though bits of paper are placed into plastic containers and sent up to it from the floors below through pipes that make slurping, pneumatic noises, and medicines drop down in response. There is no seventeenth floor as such. Instead, a rooftop garden from which the sun can be seen to rise impressively above an east that is dominated by a flat sea, hemmed in by a thin sliver of beach.

The morning is cool and it is fresh but it has a potential for warmth that draws patients up onto the roof, and the burgeoning sunrise keeps them there. Many of them in ill-fitting gowns of dimensions that would otherwise be considered highly immodest. Lifts are dotted around the garden but are framed by thick ivy or partly absorbed into hillocks and so blend into the landscape and intrude on the scene with the only the softest of hums when they arrive at the surface and slide open, disgorging patients and their families.

The feeling of having survived the night, rather than merely slept or tossed and turned through it.

A clamp each side of each park-style bench where IV poles can be stabilised. An elderly couple making use of both of these. Probably not a couple, actually, but it is easy and preferable to fancy that they are fast becoming one. Patients draped across the perfect grass despite their ill-fitting, hiked-up gowns and signs suggesting that they Keep Off. Otherwise healthy, wide shouldered young males with their thick, trophy winning arms held—trophies in their own right—in slings. Completely healthy-looking patients, their reasons for being here unclear, but you fancy that there is something skittish about their eyes, the way they avoid yours.

Babies, too, the usual nine ninths present and correct, and so the presence of new and thus far healthy life every which way in a kind of loose perimeter around us. Because each and every newly pleasant morning new mothers, new fathers and their neonatal bundles are given the best seats in the house. This is a tacit agreement that survives the shifting ranks of the sick and the visiting, and it explains why so many patients are sprawled on the grass verges—they have been consigned there to make room along the parapets for these new families. That the cold dew can become a kind of salve to skin made hot and blotchy by hospital bed plastic is barely even a consolation prize, but they don't mind.

The solitary security guard stationed up here is new to the job, and perpetually nervous. His eyes flit between the alcohol hand-wash dispensers and the points along the parapet beyond which there are the most uninterrupted drops and, over which, probably because of this reason, visitors, with hair swept smoke-like by the wind, enjoy leaning, enjoy imagining falling, and contemplate their own fate, or the fate of those who they are visiting, who they have left recumbent below decks.

He projects something indiscernible towards the parapet. His eyes are wide, wide and watery, and unashamedly he allows them to stay that way until one woman in particular has turned to look him in the eye, and caught him like this, and drawn her own conclusions.

A brave gesture in its own way, he hopes she realises, a really open and brave gesture to stand teary-eyed like that before a stranger.

What a strange way for a security guard to talk. Is he crying?

It's almost easy to imagine, looking at this woman, that Su[18] won in the end, he thinks. I'm glad she didn't end up here whilst alive, beautiful though it is.

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[18] Su as in Susan, Su, his late and wonderful wife, an older spit of this woman when she was around.

Or, alternatively, since we have already admitted to being here for our own ends, Susan Sontag, author of *Illness as Metaphor,* a volume which though slim and not at all heavy *is* well known in some circles, influential in yet more, and sitting too on the portion of my shelf reserved for books whose titles allude to metaphor, or else whose pages assert, in a multitude of ways and with accompanying scholarly references, the importance of metaphor.

'The healthiest way of being ill' is the way 'most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking' (1978, p.3) claimed Sontag in the prelude to *Illness as Metaphor*. This claim seems just a

little wayward and hyperbolic if metaphor is, as its dictionary definition suggests, merely a matter of speech, of describing things in terms of other things to which they bear a similarity; a matter of symbols and of tokens rather than a matter of thought.

Let us instead use Sontag's dedication of her inquiry to a liberation from metaphor in a more freely associative way:

'...'

I'll start.

It conjures, in my mind at least, the image of a body cleansed of metaphor. And I mean cleansed in a physical sense—a body emptied of the fleshy bits that are required for metaphorical thinking to happen in the first place.

'Why does he look like that, mum?'

Andy.

As above so below and beyond, in this kingdom of the sick[19]. Below decks, as on the seventeenth, a cross-section of society, but a cross-section enfeebled, as if for use in an attenuated vaccine against itself. Each and every individual sedated—by illness, or sedatives, or both. The visitors here healthy in the main but sluggish all the same, numbed by the presence of the slow-moving drip-draggers, by having to walk the corridors below decks not knowing what face to prepare, what half-open rooms it would be terrible to find themselves staring into, to find someone staring right back, half gone. And you with a wildly inappropriate face set for such an eschatologically terrifying moment. Everyone here just visiting, passing through/on, for better or for worse.

The time parsed by beep after sanitary beep and white coat lab coat after white lab coat, and visiting hours that are always too long, or too short, never optimum. But it seems as though time has barely passed in the traditional sense since we arrived, and it will only feel like it has when the sunrise is done with the sky and the sky itself a settled blue and dimensionless once more against the empty space that this place gets us thinking about, that we can hardly imagine lies beyond[20].

Which is to say that illness—just being exposed to its sights and smells and language— makes everything askew. A glitch, as if each and every thing here has been described with *almost* the right words just before we arrived, and, in some bizarre fuckup with regards to the relationship between words and things, stuck that way now. All shook up. The I—and all that it is privy to—is other than what it more normally is, here[21].

Transfigured is perhaps not too strong a word for it.

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[19] 'Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.' (Sontag, 1978, p.3)

[20] Suciu et al (2010) write of the 'institutional symbolism' that imbues doctors with a certain otherness, with the 'sacred significance of an almost divine power'. Hospitals themselves generate 'a certain emotional climate, special cultural ambiance, with "sacred" valences for most of the "outsiders". The ritual of the visits and evening visits, the tensioned activity of the reanimation sections and emergency services, therapeutic procedures, pain and sufferance, the organizational way of living in common, and finally the fact of being so close to the death circumstances, everything appears—for the patient—veiled in a strange atmosphere, with almost a hieratic character.'

[21] A phrase bastardised from *I is An Other*, the title of a book by James Geary (2012).

‘I said, mum, why does he look like that? Mum…Mum!’

‘He looks like that because he's special, he's beautiful. He's unique'.

'Is he really special, mum?'

'Really special, dear.'

'The most specialist cousin that there is in the world?'

'...'

‘Eight ninths missing, they said? That’s an awful lot of something to be missing, especially of something so important.’

‘I know. Eight ninths, yes. A rare and ultimately fatal condition.'

'Why? Why eight ninths missing? Why any ninths missing at all?'

'They aren't sure, the scientists and doctors. They don't really know.'

'The fault of the parents? Malnutrition?'

'Probably a "combination of genetic and environmental factors"(Sadler, 2005). Some drugs increase the risk of this kind of thing happening, but not by margins to write home about.'

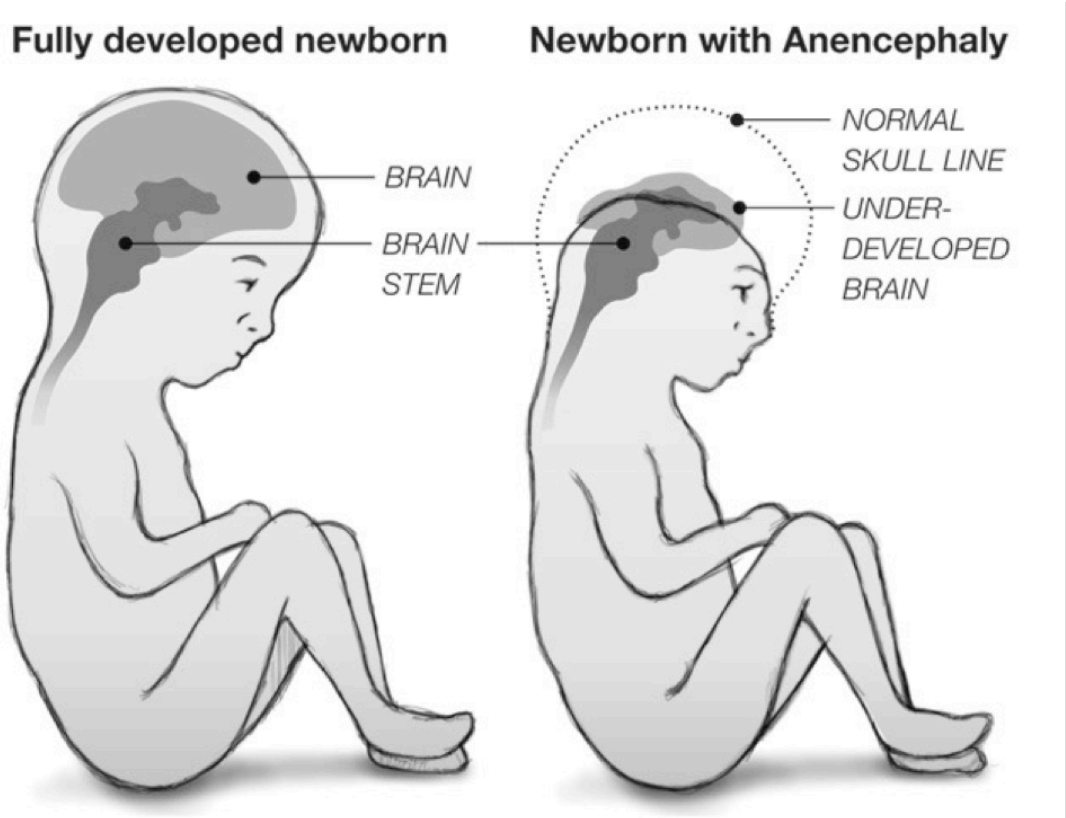
'Who is at fault here? With whom does the blame lie?'

'There is no blame and no one is at fault.'

'So why here, then, why now? Why have so much of him missing? What purpose could it possibly serve? What in god’s name is the point?'[22]

[22] Again, we are here for our own ends. Whole and heavy books—why all that papery weight?

Graham et al (1978, p.322) noted that the anencephalic infant under their examination (and care? No, that's not the right word for it) had, of the nine ninths that more normally constitute a full and healthy neonate's brain, just the solitary ninth.



(Fetal Health Foundation)

There has been talk of bringing Andy up to the rooftop.

‘It’s so sad. He’s barely been out of this stuffy little room yet.’

‘It breaks my heart, it *literally* does. I just want to pick him up and cuddle him all the time, although I know we mustn’t. '

‘I know, so sad.’

‘I just want to take him up to the seventeenth.’

‘And his little hat.’

‘Yes, careful with that, we don’t want it to come off now do we. Not with what is—or, rather, isn't—underneath. It’s a preemie hat. I got the patterns from an American friend.’

‘Like a soft woolly surrogate skull—an understudy skull.’

‘What?’

‘Coaxed in from the wings to do a job customarily reserved for bone.’

‘...’

‘And doing it admirably, I must say. He's a sweetie.’

‘...’

‘It looks nice. Lovely. The hat looks really nice on him. Baby Blue. Such a good job you’ve done there. And lovely stitching. Preemie hat you say? Patterns from a friend was it?’

Should Andy be taken up to the seventeenth?

A question that has featured heavily in the conversations which have been centred around him, and which have sprung up frequently in the nineteen days since he was born, but especially so in the ten days since his mother and father and carefully selected bedside friends and relatives called it a day and upped sticks and took with them just about everything they had arrived with—minus, of course, Andy, who was not even Andrew, back then, had no name to be unaware of, back then. They had, if you will allow me to paraphrase and to speak on their absent behalves, decided to just leave it all to nature and to the better judgement of the nurses and whatever the medical profession could salvage organ[23] and morale-wise from the whole hopeless, life-disaffirming mess.

The general consensus whenever this question has been raised is that yes, Andy should be taken up to the seventeenth, because that's where newborns are taken. A rite of passage, a grand 'hello' to the world below. And why should he be any different? But no, no, you're right. It wouldn't do for people to see him like that, especially not new mothers and fathers, full of hope for their perfect little bundles.

Nurse Jones often fantasises about marching into the spaces across which such conversations are crisscrossing and standing there with Andy, held roughly under one arm, and his baby blue hat clutched in the opposite hand and, having screamed at all present to look, to just look at him for the love of all things holy, to shake him a little, to scream at them some more, daring them in a multitude of ways to use their God-given common sense and tell her that Andy is not both blind and deaf, reinforcing with each new screamed iteration that yes, that is his brain, all of it, because that is all he had been blessed with.

'Yes, blessed, because you seem to think that he is blessed just to be here with us at all don't you.

'Yes, that is just a "rudimental brain stem"(National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke) Yes, it is poking past where his skull should be, yes, his skull should be doing a better job of covering it.

'And yes, I am still shaking him, but you needn't worry, it's not like he will ever attain even a basic level of consciousness, a self to speak of, let alone an experience of pain' (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke).

'Yes, the seventeenth! Such a lovely view, oh such lovely flowers! How well kept! And the fragrances! Carefully picked to have a relaxing influence on the patients. You might as well take the picture of your dead gran up there with you too, the one you keep in your wallet, for all the good it would do them both.'

And then, having cleared the room with her actions and provoked the kind of lockdown normally only reserved for filmic depictions of spacecraft with breached hulls, she would whisper to the empty room that, should anyone have the temerity to argue that a kind of sickly-sweet sentimentality is a positive quality to have in her line of work, then they should just go right ahead and argue it, but god and high heaven help them.

Such daydreams went a long way when it came to keeping her sane in this job.

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[23] See the story of Teddy Houlston, an anencephalic infant born in 2014 whose kidneys were appropriated to save the life of a patient with renal failure. Teddy, who lived just 100 hours, became the UK's youngest organ donor. A representative of NHS Blood and Transplant described the donation as a 'selfless act of heroism' (Weaver, 2015).

In the neonatal ward, behind locked doors, ring binders are stacked crazily, as if perpetually falling against one another, and so are held firm and do not fall. And for each folder a digitised equivalent. An older generation of healthcare professionals and administrators whose fingers root around still in the most influential of pies, and who are distrustful of invisible complexities, who imagine that there are scarier digital cognates to *moth eaten* and *lost in the post* and plain old *mislaid* or *stolen*, and who are of course entirely right, and have fought for the duplication of information in yellowing paper and for the space and folders to store it, and won. A large folder for Andy. The largest, in fact, and the cornerstone without which the wall of binders would collapse. Full to bursting, stuffed far beyond its recommended capacity, the metal rings inside Andy's folder are disfigured, and its teeth no longer aligned—they would snap right past each other were Andy's notes to suddenly evaporate.

There is a multifunction colour photocopier in the neonatal ward reception. When it springs into life the flashes of light underneath its lid put you in mind of a multi-storey car park, of concrete and temperamental wiring and the low, cold spaces between concrete. It hums, too, in the aftermath of having done something useful, and makes the kinds of noises that only other photocopiers imitate.

It does this time and time again, all day long. They are sounds that, having passed through the walls here, and into the rooms where the most fragile of babies are being nurtured by machines, become softened and linguistic almost. And so all day long these most vulnerable babies—each splayed and in their own rooms and for the most part alone—are whispered to at regular intervals, whether they have visitors or not, doting people to visit them or not.

When exposed to stimuli, babies generally display either a negative 'avoidance reaction' (typified by a quickening of the heart) or, if the stimulus is more familiar, an 'orientating reaction' (typified by a slowing of the heart) which is indicative of interest, of the baby having become accustomed to the stimuli and so turning the spotlight of its consciousness towards it (Maurer and Maurer, 1988, p.195).

Armed with this information, you would perhaps expect the normal babies (the ones with each and every one of their ninths intact) to display an orientating reaction to the sounds of the photocopier, its predictable and soft rhythms, to the riffling of paper overhead and sounds and sensations that are more human still—a hand on the cheek, warm breath, the frictions of a blanket being drawn over bones that look like they could never, given all the blankets in the world, be warm.

From Andy, it is difficult to imagine any such orientation or habituation[24].

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[24] A mistake. The anencephalic infant studied by Graham et al (1978, p.322) displayed an avoidance reaction to repeated linguistic sounds. By his nineteenth day he had become habituated to these sounds, and so displayed an orientating reaction. Non-anencephalic babies under the age of two months, on the other hand, rarely have orientating reactions to stimuli. Even repeated exposure to the same stimuli often only elicits an avoidance type reaction (Maurer and Maurer, 1990, p.195).

Maurer and Maurer claim that this has something to do with what they call 'synaesthetic confusion' (1990. p.197), a 'neurophysiological maelstrom' (1990, p.196) that occurs within the mind of the non-anencephalic infant, but not within those such as Andy.

Synaesthesia, n. [25]

1. *Psychol.*
a. A sensation in one part of the body produced by a stimulus applied to another part.[26]

b. Production, from a sense-impression of one kind, of an associated mental image of a sense-impression of another kind.

c. Agreement of the feelings or emotions of different individuals, as a stage in the development of sympathy.

2. *Literature*.
The use of metaphors in which terms relating to one kind of sense-impression are used to describe sense-

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[25] Lifted from the Online Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'synaesthesia' (OED, 2016).

According to the neonatal synaesthesia model, for the non-anencephalic newborn, 'sights have sounds, feelings have tastes, and sounds can make [them] dizzy' (Maurer and Maurer, 1990, p.196). There are two competing explanations for this failure to make a distinction between inputs from different sensorial modes:

- The confusion is born out of the widespread neural connectivity between cortical areas that characterises the first few months of a normal infant's brain activity, and which leads to activity in each and every sensory system seeping into the others (Wagner and Dobkins, 2011).
- The multimodal limbic system is more mature than the cortex, and so is functioning with little input from it (Kadosh et al 2009).

Daphne and Charles Maurer were led to describe the infant's felt reality at this point in time as a sensual 'bouillabaisse', a 'monadic' universe (1990, p.196).

In time, the non-anencephalic individual will be capable of seeing a butterfly alight on its hand, of feeling the weight of each discrete butterfly foot, of seeing both the parts and the whole, the antennae and proboscis and the wings that could, at any point, rob her, or him, of this moment.

But for now, I imagine, its reality is more like floating in the soup of a butterfly cocoon mid-metamorphosis—the pressure from all sides indistinguishable from the smell of reconstituted parts and mushy warmth, not knowing that body parts crowd in around it, whether that silkiness against its leg is a half-complete wing or the lining of some digestive organ. Everything in the process of becoming something else, everything other than what it is, and all of it held inseparable, loose and singular both, by membranes beyond its reach, processes beyond its comprehension.

(Which is not, strictly speaking, how metamorphosis happens, but you catch my drift.)

And so that is why the normal, non-anencephalic babies don't learn to recognise and so become habituated to the sound of the photocopier—their realities are too synesthetic, too confusedly and soupily pureed to pick out and so react to individual occurrences. The minds of anencephalic babies, on the other hand, do not suffer from the same inner chaos. Their brains are stripped back, lacking in the cortical areas of the brain responsible for this chaos. They are, in comparison to their cerebrally unabridged peers, specialised, *specialist.*

' "Specialest" isn't a word, dear, not in the way that you mean it. But I agree. He is special. Very special indeed.'

impressions of other kinds; the production of synæsthetic effect in writing or an instance of this.

3. *Linguistics*.
a. The expression of more than one kind of sense-impression in the same word.
b. The transfer of the meaning of a word from one kind of sensory experience to another.

Non-anencephalic newborns live in a world where synaesthesia is, moment by moment, the structuring principal in how their reality is perceived, acting 'as if they are able to relate input between distinct modalities' (Kadosh et al, 2009). Walker et al (2010) demonstrated that cross-modal associations (defined as non-arbitrary, and so *systematic,* associations) across perceptual modalities exist between auditory pitch and visuospatial height, and between auditory pitch and visual sharpness in 3- to 4-month old infants. In an experiment testing pitch-height association, the infants watched a shape move up and down a screen, either in congruence with an accompanying sound (moving up when pitch was increased, and down when it was decreased) or in incongruence (moving down when pitch was increased, down when it was increased)[27]. In an experiment testing pitch-sharpness association, the infants watched a grey shape metamorphose between two states of being—pointed and rounded—whilst the same sound from the first experiment played. In the congruent phase, the shape became more pointed as pitch rose, and more rounded when pitch fell. The opposite occurred during the incongruent phase[28].

In both experiments, the infants tended to look longer at the screen during the congruent, rather than the incongruent, phase, demonstrating an unlearned, and so innate, sensitivity to the 'correspondences linking auditory pitch with visuospatial height and visual sharpness' (2010, p.22), suggesting that a metaphorical harmony had been realised, a recognition of abstract similarity between two physically unlike occurrences. Neonatal synaesthesia, then, is an experience characteristic of a puerile brain, and so an experience that is watered down as neural pathways adapt to received stimuli and are pruned (or, another theory goes, as the cortex matures).

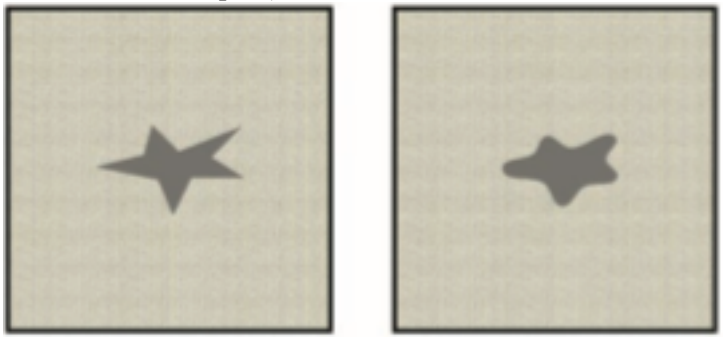
'If you were to cut open a cocoon or chrysalis at just the right time, caterpillar soup would ooze out. But the contents of the pupa are not entirely an amorphous mess'. (Jabr, 2012)

27



(Walker et al, 2010, p.21)

28



(Walker et al, 2010, p.22)

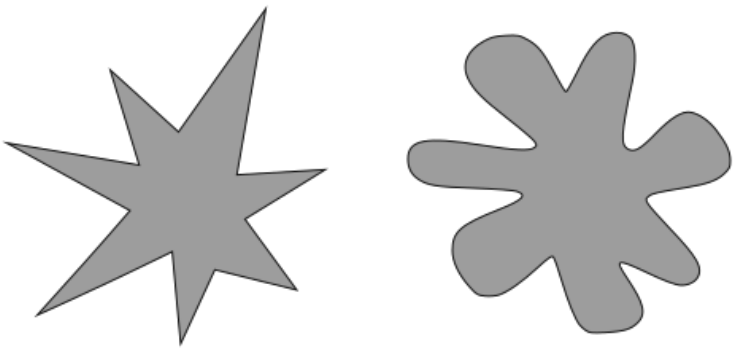
Neonatal synaesthesia it is an experience that, though weakened by the brain's restructuring, makes a resurgence as cross-modal associations with environmental correlates are activated frequently, and so strengthened, and those rarely experienced are curtailed. Residues of these initial associations remain because of 'incomplete pruning or inhibition' (Maurer et al, 2013).

Köhler (1929) found that, when presented with an angular and a more rounded shape, and the pseudowords 'maluma' and 'takete', English speakers were more likely to associate the angular shape with 'takete', and the rounded shape with 'maluma'. Ramachandran and Hubbard (2001) modified and repeated the experiment, finding that 95% of English speakers labelled a spiky shape as 'kiki', and a smooth-edged shape as 'bouba' [29].

A weird psychological quirk? Something to try out on a napkin with on your friends, sat round the dinner table, at the pub? So what, someone might say, where are you going with this?

And they would have a point—of what relevance is it to our realities, to future iterations of this moment, the last of the food gone and the alcohol depleting, that we are predisposed from birth to draw parallels between things that are, on the surface, unlike? To make metaphoric connections? To, if the spines of certain books are to be believed, *live by* metaphor, that backbone of poetry, itself a medium seen by many as existing very much in its own, airy-fairy bubble—*'Most people ignore most poetry because most poetry ignores most people'* (Mitchell, 1964, p.1).

29



(Ramachandran and Hubbard, 2001, p.4)

Metaphor Purged

' “Poetic Thinking Across Media” is a course at Stanford University offered to advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Our goal is to examine the human aptitude to approach life and the worlds we inhabit poetically, that is in manners of writing, speaking, and artistic creation that are *not* governed by **systematic reasoning**' (emboldened by myself) (Stanford, no date)

Plato wrote that ‘poetic assertions are distinct from true knowledge' (cited in Gibbs, 1994, p.118), Hölderlin that poetry ‘freely invents its world of images and remains lost in thought in the realm of the imagined,’ shirking there the ‘seriousness of decisions', Poetry, then, is 'like a dream, not reality; a play with words, not the seriousness of action...harmless and ineffectual’ (1987, p.119).

Knowledge, as well as having value for its own sake, has a practical, instrumental value. The holding of Beliefs that are both True and Justified (Plato, cited in Fine, 2003, p.5), and so of relevance when it comes to facing up to, or facing down, the real world, surely depends on us seeing reality as it really is—s*ystematically,* rather than in terms of what it is not; on speaking about it in terms of what it is, rather than in terms of what it is not; on ensuring that the pictures of reality that we create linguistically are as accurate as possible.

A [metaphor] must be a [metaphor] for something. And if [we] can describe a fact by means of a [metaphor] [we] must also be able to drop the [metaphor] and describe the facts without it (Wittgenstein, 1965).

Which is not to say that we must forsake metaphors or poetic language entirely, but when we do turn to them there must be a possible recourse to literal language.

Should we then understand poetry, that which 'that which gets lost out of both prose and verse in translation' (Frost, 1961, p.7) and so for which there cannot be a navigable recourse to literal language, and the metaphorical mode of thinking associated with it, as an aesthetically pleasing brand of specious thinking? A thinking devoid of systematicity? Metaphor then an exercise in being mistaken about things, often on purpose and for your own titillation, or else for rhetorical zip? Poetry can be fun, for sure, but would you live your life according to its cockeyed logic? Finding yourself stranded and without a book to read and with a dead battery in your phone, you would get little sympathy if your excuse was that you confused your last bus, with its dead, neon lights and numb-eyed passengers, for the immaterial concept of spiritual stasis, and so did not flag it down, having deigned to live life for a few hours according to the axiom of metaphor[30]. It would not be the first time that whole and heavy books had been mistaken about the way things are, after all[31]

[30] I=Another; A=B.

[31] You can insert your own examples here, depending on your own political/ philosophical/ religious bent:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

All of this seems to suggest that, when it comes to real world application, metaphor cannot hope to be anything but a hindrance. Easy to agree with Sontag, then, when she urges us to purge metaphors from our talk of illness.

Perhaps, by extension, it should be purged from our discussion of anything of import.

‘…’: *Metaphors We Live By*, a World Without Metaphor

There is a kettle in the small staffroom behind the reception desk in the neonatal ward, and the water has just this moment come to the boil. There is a plastic measuring jug tenderly referred to as the slops bucket. Steam rises, and people with clipboards walk by.

A man walks in, as if on cue, a volunteer, as indicated by his name tag.

Bob Seymour.

They do not take kindly to the medically unqualified having a backstage pass, is how they justify speaking ill of him behind his back, but then it's not like he skimps when it comes to making the doctors and nurses and midwives drinks, or lingers in a creepy way outside the rooms where bloody and amniotic things are happening, and so he is considered a part of the furniture now.

He doesn't seem the type to pry. He doesn't seem the type to do much of anything. He rarely even talks. None of them can remember him saying anything specific, actually. Which isn’t to say that they can remember him never saying anything *per se*. That the master key which grants him access to the hot drink making facilities grants him access to the paper versions of the patient records too is less an oversight than a risk that they are more than willing to take for hot caffeine on demand. Besides, the multi-tiered, government mandated and extensive background checks uncovered nothing illegal in his past.

What he does do here he does well. What he does is this: he knocks on the door where routine check-ups are happening, waits for a 'come in', comes in, smiles, waits as the nurse explains to the pregnant and their retinue that they can have a hot drink of their choice while they are being examined/ waiting, returns with hot drinks made to order in immaculate mugs (only opening the door when it has been made clear to him that all midriffs are covered, all outie bellybuttons stowed away), delivers the drinks with irreproachable courteousness and then leaves, unobtrusive and appreciated.

He has returned to the staffroom to collect the hot drinks he left brewing some minutes ago. He has the timing down, they say, each of them smiling, to a tea/T.

Despite being unpaid, he turns up pretty much every weekday, and is always the first to arrive for the dayshift, the last to leave, and so they leave him every evening cleaning up in the staffroom, never deigning to ask him about the weird enthusiasm that must inwardly consume him (else why would he keep coming back here?), deigning in fact never to comment on or ask about it, because what if what provoked him to volunteer on a neonatal ward is something terrible and guilt-related (but of course, entirely legal) in his past?

Does he have someone? A wife? A girlfriend? That is difficult to imagine. He doesn't look the type to have someone, more the type to have had, and lost, someone. And they don't want to know about that—they are nurses and midwives and doctors with important jobs to be getting on with. Besides, he passed all the prerequisite checks, and there is only so much interest you can have in someone who is essentially just a mobile, voice-activated drinks machine clad in skin.

And so it is not surprising that when, some moments ago, he popped a small vial of something into three of the cups—these three destined for women in the early stages of pregnancy, who are visiting the hospital for routine check-ups, missing out the cups destined for accompanying mothers, husbands and best friends—his actions went unnoticed. And he has been doing this several times a day over the past few weeks and months, oftentimes his actions within one or more peripherals, but each and every time going unnoticed.

But this is to be the last time. If overheard conversations are to be believed, then the chemicals that he has been introducing into the diets of pregnant women have had their desired effect—there is, somewhere on the ward, a disciple of this procedure and these

chemicals, newly born, abandoned, and ready to fulfil its purpose. There is, too, a stillness and relative silence on the ward that means that there is time yet (once the hot drinks have been delivered) to find what needs to be found from the patient records.

Bob Seymour stopped speaking one day. He was fifty-seven.

He was a man of extremes. Having come back from the pub in the early hours one morning to a chemical stink, to find a blackness encroaching on—and, at the doors, even *into*—the beachside house he shared with his wife Kate, and, having waded drunkenly through that mess and woke up in the morning still covered in it, and sat in the morning, hungover, his feet still covered in it, and watched as the story about a tanker split open and upturned in a storm unfolded on the news, he vowed never to be a polluting influence, and walked everywhere from that moment on. Was late to important meetings and family occasions, even refusing to attend them if the distance was insurmountable on foot, from that moment on. Kate stuck by him. If others referred to what had happened as a breakdown, she would acknowledged only that he had changed. *He was a good man*[32].

Having chanced upon the writings of Peter Singer ('If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it… we ought to give the money away, and it is wrong not to do so' (1972, pp.234-235)) some few years later, he took it to heart. The all-encompassing pressures of trying to live up to such tenets, coupled with his natural desire to maintain a life of meaning and fun and excitement, and a relationship with his wife that extended into the foreseeable, led him to have a severe breakdown within weeks of reading those lines. Still, she stuck by him. He was a *principled* man.

More accurate, perhaps, to say that he was an all or nothing man, himself be damned. The breakdown changed him only by degrees. He emerged from it a little more broken, a lot more determined. Lying in bed, day after day, trying to figure in his mind a way of undermining Singer's words, he had drawn blank after blank, and, in those last few feverish days, resigned himself to living the rest of his days according to them.

But ceasing to talk altogether, that is something else. That took something more sustained, something that nagged and throbbed, that ate gradually away at him, ground him down, day by day. It took years of arguing, with his friends and with Kate. It took years of them not understanding where he was coming from, and then, later, understanding, agreeing even, but flat out refusing to act in a way logically consistent with their agreeing. It took years of low-level resentment, of resenting intensely their ability to ignore what was logically consistent in favour of what was not, and be happy, happier than he, as a result.

His beef, in particular, was with metaphor. The way that, confronted with the cold, diamond-hard facts (that the money they spent on music, on books and alcohol, was money that could be used to save lives), his friends would reach for something that transcended such things, and hit, jokingly at first, and in what they saw as good humour, upon metaphor:

'You're a modern-day king Canute, rising early in the morning to rail uselessly against the waves from your house on the beach.'

(And then, later.)

'You're a drop in the ocean, Bob, nothing more.'

(And then, still later, this time humourlessly and in desperation.)

'What you are doing—it's cutting you off from everyone.'

'It's cutting you off from Kate, this ridiculous behaviour.'

'You're tearing her to shreds.'

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[32] This whole section is in part loosely based on the story of John Francis, who made the choice not to speak for seventeen years. It started as a 'gift to his community'. (https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/nov/25/i-didnt-speak-for-17-years-experience-planetwalker?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

‘Sitting in your ivory tower.’
‘Standing on your sugar fucking pedestal.’
‘Unforgivable, what you are doing. You’re dead to us if you carry on like this, Bob.’

And this he hated the most—when, in a proxy realisation that he was right and they were wrong, they would give up on facts entirely, and present the world as it quite literally was not.

This should have vindicated him in his own mind, and it did, to a point. But still, that hate, because although he knew the facts, knew that he was right to refuse to buy new clothes; right to refuse to eat anything beyond the most basic of meals, and so let himself wither, his skin become sallow; right to sit and stink, because paying for hot water and deodorant and soaps was morally wrong, their words still had a pull for him.

They had no right to make him feel insignificant, like a droplet quivering with impotent volition. And King Canute? That was not the message of the myth at all. No right to make him feel, and intensely too, as if it was he severing something physical, almost umbilical, that connected him with Kate. No right to make him imagine her floating weightlessly off into life without him. No right to imply that facts were something that you hunted down only to stand triumphantly on the pinnacle of, that eventually dissolve beneath you—the facts were the facts, nothing less, and what’s more, they told you, should you listen, all you needed to know about what needed to be done, the life that should be lived. But still, that pull over him—he should not, he knew, be made to feel that way.

There are physiological marvels living amongst us. People who have gained control over parts of their anatomy that are normally isolated completely from the self. Try, for example, telling your liver to stop doing its valuable work. It’s not only that it’s not listening, it’s that these kinds of signals cannot reach it, and would mean nothing to it anyway, if by some biological miracle they did.

See Wim Hof, who, I have read, has demonstrated that he can consciously control his immune system. See the Egyptian performer—Hadji Ali in the early 1900s—who would swallow a sequence of objects, and regurgitate them in an order determined by his audience. For the finale, he would swallow water, then kerosene, and, holding a lit match out before him, violently regurgitate first the kerosene from his stomach, turning himself into a human flamethrower. Water would then follow, in equally impressive volumes, quelling the resulting fire. There are videos of this online. David Blaine travelled to India to find a man who could do the same, and learned from him how to control his stomach muscles in the necessary way, and performed the act on primetime. Look it up.

Bob was no less a marvel than these men. Hating metaphors—the kind that people reached for when they were trying to convince him to live his life differently—for their non-literal, and so in his eyes, problematic, relationship to what is actually the case, but unable to ignore their pull on him, he set to learning, without precedent, without a Hadjii Ali of his own, how to not just disregard metaphor when it arose, but, deeper than that, to make his brain immune to it. How he accomplished this is impossible to say. It’s not like there is a metaphor node in the brain, a region of pink tissue somewhere in the skull that, starved of blood, will simply cease to interpret metaphor, cease to understand it when things are spoken about in terms of other things, decline to reach for metaphor when all else, when understanding and literal language, fails. What we don’t have is an understanding of how he did this. What we did manage to do is procure an interview with Kate, which is a start.

Ed: Kate, thanks for being here. Your husband was, before all this, what you describe as a *bread and butter* kind of guy. *Straight down the middle*. Tell us about what changed.

Kate Seymore: It began as evenings without him. That was when he'd spend days walking to friends' houses, hundreds of miles away. The whole oil spill thing, which I know isn't what you're here for. And then of course there was his refusal to spend any money whatsoever, and his breakdown. It was hard, but I coped. We argued, of course, about his behaviour, what he was choosing to do. We argued badly, actually, but we coped. And it was all the more difficult because it was his choice. He told me so. He told me that he was sick of metaphors, of their lies, and that he was going to close himself off to it all. I didn't understand, truth be told, but I loved him, and that had got us through his other breakdowns. But then it progressed. And it progressed to a point where the evenings I spent with him might as well have been spent without him, and these were worse, and harder to explain, or describe away. We were in your generic affair territory, is as close as I can get, speaking little and touching less. Me being careful with my words because he was too. Being careful with my words because more and more it seemed like he hated words, and I didn't want him to hate mine. Maybe he just didn't like talking to me anymore, I thought. He'd always been the shy and quiet type, but you'd think of all people I would be able to tell the difference. It's not like his friends didn't notice any difference in him, either. It practically was an affair, for all I cared and for all it was doing to us. He stopped working, which was fine. He spent every hour he could working at Horizons Hospital, which was worse. Any excuse to spend time apart, is how it felt. I always earned more anyway, enough to support us both. It's strange how it can get like that and still be bearable. It's not like it happens overnight. You adapt. It wasn't like everything was falling apart, not at first.

Ed.: Hm?

Kate: But you reach a point where everyone needs to know what the future holds. You just hit a brick wall and then one day you're saying enough is enough. You're saying it in front of the kids, over dinner, not that we have kids. You're saying I need to know where I stand and you do too. But try as I might to force the issue there was no talk of dead ends, of parting ways or of sticking together. No talk of thick, of thin, of sparks flying, not that they ever did fly. He was never one for language like that 'flowery romantic language' he called it, although I would disagree. He was always matter of fact. But this was something else. It's like the flatness of his language ran deeper—a flatness of thought at the root of it all. I'm not making much sense, am I?

Ed.: Hm?

Kate: And it wasn't like he just didn't talk about these things, before. As I said, he was always quiet, but it never felt stagnant like this before, it had always felt steady and a dependable relationship to come back to in the evenings. I had always felt secure. It's difficult put into words. It's like...it's not like he couldn't put things into words, it's like he didn't understand what it even meant to do that, to put things into words. He said to me once, he said this: you can't put things into words because they aren't containers. It's not like water or the cups of tea I make us. It's not like water and a watering can. That's just not how it is. I don't get it. That's what he said. He got quite irate about that. And I couldn't make him understand. Later that evening when he had calmed down I brought him a cup and a pot of tea, and I poured it for him, taking care that he should watch. And then I whispered to him, in his ear, and I said, like this, I said it exactly like this, soft, so that it sounded and must have felt like water being poured almost, I said…a word in your ear, like this. And he looked at me and smiled, and pulled me close, and whispered in my ear, he whispered no…a word in yours, if only…if only I could put into words how much I love you, but I can't. And he said

that sadly, but for the rest of the evening he was more contented, at least. And by morning he had regressed again, but at least we had that moment.

Ed.: Back to that flatness. Can you talk about that?

Kate: It was like everything he had ever learned, every single thing we take for granted, was foreign to him. Sometimes he'd have this haunted look, like he was trapped in his own body, trapped in a strange world. And I know I'm not making much sense. I'm finding this very difficult to explain.

Ed.: Take your time.

Kate: Okay let's try again.

Ed.: Hm.

Kate: At times it was like I'd married someone who sat somewhere on some sort of psychological scale or spectrum[33]. What I mean is I had to be exact, and precise, and say exactly what I meant. And none of that kind of thing runs in his family, so far as I'm aware.

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[33] It was only in retrospect, poring over this interview again, that what Kate said here resonated, and its relevance became clear. What we dismissed initially as a lazy, perhaps even insensitive comparison, opened the whole thing out for us considerably.

Children with high-functioning autistic spectrum disorders, it turns out, encounter difficulties when it comes to interpreting metaphor. Melogno et al (2012) presented two autistic children with the Junior Metaphor Comprehension Test. The test is comprised of twenty-five novel metaphors, many of them based on metaphors spontaneously produced by typically developed 4-6 year olds. Thirteen of these metaphors are presented on their own, cut off from contextualising tissue. The remaining twelve are presented in short stories.

The goal of the test is to explain verbally what the metaphors mean. The experiment assumes that metaphor arises as a 'semantic incongruence' which must be smoothed over—the participant is judged on their ability to do just that, realising, for example, that though the moon might not literally be a light bulb, there are commonalities that exist between a lightbulb and the moon that make the statement intelligible. Their results were interesting, and pertinent, given the recordings of Bob that Kate later presents us with.

One child tended, the majority of the time, towards a refusal to accept the meaning of the metaphorical statements ('it's not true'(Mologno et al, 2012, p.181)). One such refusal, however, contained within it an implicit understanding of the metaphor in question—in response to the proposition that 'the house has a hat', the child exclaimed that 'the house has no hat…it's the roof' (Mologno et al, 2012, p.183). The examiner asked, after the test was over, if a roof is *like* a hat. That the metaphor had been reframed as a simile exposed its scaffolding, and allowed the child to identify that a roof is like a hat, in that it protects against 'sun and cold' (Ibid).

Similarly, when we hear Bob denying that things can be 'put into' words, his denial contains within it evidence of understanding, in the form of the exclamation that he doesn't 'get it.'. When talking about talking, we often utilise a set of metaphors which suggests that ideas are physical objects which are sent, received, and which can be handled. This metaphor sees ideas put *into* words. A letter can be *filled* with meaning, an apology can be, ultimately, a *hollow* gesture. Meaning is *conveyed,* from one person to the next. 'I don't know what *gave* you that idea', someone might say. It just *'came to me',* someone may respond. An academic text can be *impenetrable*, like a package overzealously wrapped, or else its meaning can be easy to *unpack.* That John doesn't '*get it'*, then, is

There is a prolonged relative silence, A smattering of tentative phonemes, as Kate starts, then immediately abandons, several sentences.

Ed.: Maybe you need a prompt. Tell us a little about the recordings you have for us today.

Kate: I made them when Bob was in a bad way, and kept making them when things got really bad. There's a few months between each recor...

Ed.: Let's dive right in, then.

There is the click of a Dictaphone button.

> **Kate:** Our relationship is on the rocks…it's breaking apart, Bob. What do you think to that?
>
> **Bob:** Vodka, vodka on the rocks. I don't know why they call it that, and then we climbed on the rocks when we were young, we sat on the rocks when we were young. We were in Spain. Is that what you mean? We are not on the rocks now, we are here, on the sofa, which is soft. I enjoyed it on the rocks, with you, looking at the sea.[34]
>
> *The sound of a tape in fast-forward.*
>
> **Kate:** Sparks don't fly, anymore. There is no emotional warmth. Tell me about that.

---

a language-level manifestation of metaphorical understanding at work within him, in that he doesn't feel he is *receiving* the information Kate was trying to *give* to him.

And can it be argued that Kate's response to Bob in this instance is akin in form and in impact to that of the examiner's? By whispering like that in Bob's ear, by allowing the words she speaks to become conflated with the almost liquid spray feeling of warm breath entering the ear, she effectively achieves the impact of a simile without using one, making it physical and tangible how a conversation is *like* a flow, reconnecting Bob with the notion that, like a watering can that can be filled, words can *contain* meaning. Can it be argued that the specific vocalisation of Bob's frustration—that he is unable to '*put into* words' how much he loves Kate—is evidence of the semantic incongruence being, at least temporarily and in part, resolved? Though he is unable to say exactly what he means, it is at least an unconscious acknowledgement of the metaphoric language we use to talk about talking.

[34] The same child was also prone to what Melogno et al describe as 'partial centrations' (2012, p.181). That is, when the metaphor as a whole is disregarded in favour of a focus on one or two of the words in the metaphoric utterance. 'A kite is a bird' led the child to focus entirely on the kite, its construction and function: 'it's made out of sticks and a special paper, you tie them [the threads] with a thread and make them fly with the wind, this is why we tie all these threads, otherwise they fly away. (2012, p.183)'

And here, too, there are echoes of Bob, when, faced with a relationship that is on the rocks, that is breaking apart upon them, only has eyes for the rocks—it is a centration that awakens in him a strong memory he has of sitting on the rocks in Spain with Kate.

Bob: We are warm when we are close to each other, too warm when we cuddle in summer but just right when it is winter. Sparks cause warmth because they cause fire, and I like being warm and I love you, which is what that means, I think

The sound of a tape in fast-forward.

Kate: Lovesick…the feeling, do you remember it?

Bob: In sickness and in health, that's what was said. I love you when you're sick, and when you are well. When you are sick your eyes are half-closed like when you say 'I love you' in bed, and I remember feeling sick when I didn't know if you would marry me, or when I did something wrong and I thought you might want a divorce. Did I get it right?[35]

The sound of a tape in fast-forward.

Kate: It's driving a wedge between us, this silence

Bob: Wedge, wedge of cheese on a cheesemonger's stall. Smelly, and no one will buy it. They only ask how much it will cost. The cheesemonger does not sell the cheese and dies, because he is poor. And his kids, we never find out what happens to them.[36]

Kate: You've broken me, Bob. You've won.

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[35] Many of the second child's responses were characterised by an off-kilter overdevelopment of associations. Asked to interpret a short section where the dad opens a cellar and the child 'sees the night' and becomes scared, the child responds with '[He] went down to take some stuff ... something for cellar ... he was stolen and could see things behind him ... he goes into the cellar ... night, moon, stars ... stage ... the performance begins.' (Melogno et al, 2012, p.183)

This kind of response is described as a 'Metalinguistic S [semantic] Drift' (Ibid). Melogno et al note that the direction of the drift is away from the relevant centre of the metaphor's intended contents. Though the shift is gradual, with the associations between each word and phrase discernible, there is no 'backward monitoring' (Ibid)—the starting point is all but forgotten, the resulting string of associations not constrained by the metaphor that spawned it.

(Ships in the night…the centre cannot hold.)

We see evidence of S-Drifting occurring when Bob is asked about sparks and warmth, and again when he is asked about lovesickness. There is, however, a difference. Bob's associations are by and large tempered, maintaining a thematic closeness to Kate's utterances, and Bob maintains, it seems, a remembrance of the original metaphor, of the starting point. Where the second child loses control of their own discourse entirely, Bob orbits more closely.

[36]The first three recording were, however, from the early days, a later conversation with Kate clarified. Bob's response to not him driving a wedge between them, which was recorded some weeks later, shows little to no sign of backwards monitoring.

> **Bob:** Broken plates and broken laces and shoes that fall off. A snapped belt and braces stasis, airs and graces, paces? Maces and traces. Races. Is. Is.[37]
>
> *There is another click, and the sound of Kate stifling a sob is cut short.*

Ed: Not what you'd expect from a man of his age.

Kate: As the weeks went on, and I had to be more exact. There were less and less of these less exact phrases that I could use without him responding strangely. Every word I used had to be used with precision. And these phrases that he did still understand, the ones that were not as exact as all that, he fixated on, and would shout them out at every opportunity. Sometimes happily, sometimes in desperation, like he was clinging to the little understanding he had left, trying to claw it back. 'I've got my eye on you!' he'd say, wagging his finger at me. Or 'You're a brainbox, you are!' when I did something right. Or, 'Let's talk about Spain.'

And he'd repeat that, over and over, 'Spain, Spain, Spain.'[38]

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[37] When asked to interpret 'the kite is a bird', the second child responded 'Bird ... hammer ... the pecker ... the woodpecker ... the decker ... the speaker.' (Melogno et al, 2012, p.183). Less like an outwardly spiralling orbit, this feels more like darts in the dark—the child 'decomposes and recomposes so as to generate new associations' (Ibid). This even more drastic ignoring of semantic incongruity is dubbed a 'P [phonological]-drift' (Ibid). Though there are initially loose semantic links between the individual words, concepts and meaning soon cease to have any pull at all, and the only connecting tissue from woodpecker and beyond is purely phonological.

That Bob responds in much the same way to Kate when, in the final recording, she finally admits defeat ('You've broken me, Bob'), suggests that, at this point, Bob has progressed to the point where metaphor means nothing to him anymore—his enterprise has been a success. But the question remains, how did he achieve this? It has been hypothesised that Bob found a way of cutting away at his vocabulary, of hacking back his semantic memory, until all that remained were the sounds of the words, rather than their meanings. Does this account for the manner in which his speech deteriorated?

[38] These phrases, the figurative phrases that were the last to remain intelligible to Bob, are all alike in that they are metonyms:

> 'Whereas metaphor usually involves some sort of comparison between largely unrelated entities (or entities that are construed as being unrelated in that particular context), in metonymy, the relationship between a term and its referent is usually much closer.' (Littlemore, 2018, p.1)

What this 'close relationship' amounts to are terms and referents that are drawn from the same domain, rather than different domains, as is the case with metaphor. Where metaphor is built around analogous similarities, metonymy works through contiguity (Fass, 1997).

In the above cases, 'Eye' is being used to refer to sight, the act of watching; the brain ('brainbox') denotes thought, intelligence; Spain, the entire country, becomes a referent for certain memories, a certain period in Bob's life. See also 'The pen (the written word) is mightier than the sword (violence)'. Metonymy often springs up when we need a placeholder, to bring something that is complex, consisting of both concrete and abstract elements, under a single umbrella term.

Why is it that metonymic understanding sticks with Bob longer than metaphoric understanding does?

Kate: But it wasn't just that. It wasn't just like he no longer understood words that don't mean what they literally mean. There were deeper things at play. His understanding of anything you could name seemed to diminish with each passing day. And he started camping out on the beach at night. Once a month or so, at first, then multiple times in a week. I didn't get it. It would start getting dark and he'd just up sticks and go.

Ed.: You've been very useful.

Kate: Until then one day it was over.

Ed.: You've been very useful.

Rundblad and Annaz (2010) found that metonymical understanding in autistic children developed in line with their vocabulary, whilst their metaphorical understanding developed in line with their chronological and mental age. Metonymical understanding, they suggested, is more dependent on the breadth of semantic knowledge that is being drawn on because it is easier to process literally. Metonymy can be regarded as existing between metaphor and literal language on a sliding scale. Unlike with metaphor, there is only a single domain to bear in mind (that of eyes and sight, or Spain and the experiences had there) and the source domain is already present in the desired meaning— 'eyes' as a notion is contained already within the idea of watching, of seeing. As Pauwels (1999, p.256) notes, there is a greater 'cognitive distance' between concepts when it comes to metaphor.

Metonyms, understood as a puzzle to solve, can be easily solved by the application of a sufficiently comprehensive vocabulary, with reference to a single semantic field. This is harder with metaphor, owing to the greater semantic distances that exist between a metaphoric term and its referent. This would suggest that there are cognitive processes involved in the understanding of metaphor, in the closing of this cognitive gulf, that are absent, or else not so prevalent, in the interpretation of metonymy. That Bob's metonymy comprehension outlasted his metaphor comprehension suggests that it was these cognitive processes that were malfunctioning, rather than his vocabulary that was in decline.

Weak Central Coherence, which is the tendency to 'process information locally rather than globally' (Runblad and Annaz, 2010, p.5), to focus on the details rather than relevant contextual and social knowledge (to see the trees but not the wood), has been posited as a key factor in the inability of autistic individuals to understand metaphor. Skoyles (2011) notes that autistic individuals 'pick up bizarre and restricted ideas about the meaning of words', because they are 'limited to its direct associations with events and situations.' And so we have Bob, interpreting his relationship being 'on the rocks' in terms of literal rocks he sat on once; interpreting the notion of a metaphorical wedge being driven between him and his wife with reference to the wedges of cheese you see on market stalls.

Gold and Faust (2012) describe how the difficulties that individuals with autism face when interpreting novel metaphorical language are an extension of the difficulties that they also face when presented with non-systemised processes. Metaphor often involves the flaunting of semantic rules at play in literal language, in favour of a more flexible combining of concepts. They cite Daniel Tammet, an individual with Asperger, who, on hearing that his brother got out of the wrong side of bed this morning, applies rules of interpretation better suited to literal language and wonders, as a result, why he didn't just get up on the right side.

Rule violation, they argue, is what gives language the capabilities to extend beyond the literal. Limited to semantic rules, we lack the flexibility to transfer 'multiple associations from one concept to another efficiently' (2012, p.65), bringing the complex and multidimensional nature of much of our thought within the range of our expressive faculties.

Kate: He came home and that was that. It was over. He was over. He just didn't speak and would not, could not be made to speak. Even the most literal, the most simple language evaded him. He was still working at Horizons, god knows how, but by then I suppose he was just making drinks. He was no longer living, no longer engaging with life.[39].

Ed.: Thank you. You've been very useful.

Kate: I called mum and she took the kids away for a while and still, he couldn't speak or make any noises that could be said to mean anything. And still to this day I don't know why. And those rumours about him? About what he was doing at the hospital? I don't understand. I don't understand why you're not interested in that part, to be honest. Everyone else is. And then the police came for him, and took him away in handcuffs. Not that they needed handcuffs. They just lead him away.

Ed.: You'd call them rumours?

Kate: I don't know what the word would be. It's not true, is all I know.

Ed.: He was held in custody. You were questioned.

Kate: It doesn't make sense, is what I'm saying. Why Bob, why would anyone do that? And besides, it's not like they had footage. It was all circumstantial.

Ed.: They found the baby, one of the anencephalic babies, they found Adam, in his tent, on the beach. It was on the news. Hardly rumours, were they?

Kate: All I'm saying is it doesn't make sense. Why would anyone do that?

Ed.: What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence (Wittgenstein, 2001).

Kate: Hm.

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[39] Drawing parallels, as we have done above, between studies done on metaphor comprehension in autistic children and Bob, might shine some light on the mechanics of what was going on in Bob's mind. It is worth emphasising, of course, that, if Bob is to be believed, his condition of being closed off completely from metaphor was elective. It is hard to imagine that the full and complete breakdown that Kate describes was similarly elective, however. Maybe, having somehow found a way to inoculate his mind against metaphor, he unleashed processes within himself that he could not control.

We have explored how a reduction in metaphoric understanding would result in an inability to unpack certain utterances, and put inner experiences into words, but what we have not established is why Bob's shirking of metaphoric understanding would correlate with a complete and utter disintegration in his mental faculties, of his inner experience, in and of itself. The work cited above give us models through which to understand Bob's flatness of language, but what of the flatness of his thoughts?

Kate held the two stones, one in each hand. They had found them in Spain, spied them in the surf as they walked along the shore arm in arm

'They look like they are hugging!' Bob had said, and they did—something about the way the smoother of the two curved around the other, holding it firm in the foam. He lifted them both from the water and inspected them in the sun. The smooth stone was grey, a line of white running through it, as though it had been found broken on the beach and glued hastily back together.

'It must be from the cliff face,' Kate said of the other. 'It's the same sandy colour. I bet it was a part of the cliff until recently, it's still so rough and spiky.'

'Strange that the water does that,' Bob said. 'You wouldn't think that it could do that to stone, not when its lapping against your ankles like this. What shall we call them?'

'Call them?' Kate laughed.

'Yes! We are going to name them, take them home, and they are going to sit together, hugging like this, together on our shelf until we are old, until our grandchildren ask us about them, but by then we will have forgotten what they are called or why they are there, and we will make jokes about how these two stones are their inheritance, so they better well behave.'

'Then let's call them Kate and Bob. Let's not forget what they are called or where they are from. But which will be you, and which will be me?'

Bob held them up to the sun again, his face creased in mock concentration. He passed Kate the grey stone. 'This is me,' he said. 'If you drop me it's all over between us.'

'Why am I the spiky one? Why do you get to be the nice smooth one?

'Well I'm so calm and easy-going. I've weathered the waves of life, all it's got to throw at me, and am better for it. Me and that stone we're like peas in a—'

Kate angled a kick at the next wave that rolled in, but Bob was already out of range of the spray, running backwards and laughing and trying to explain himself. 'No, no. It's our names, you see? Kate Kate Kate. Bob Bob Bob,' and he accentuated the words as he said them, and made purposeful shapes in the air with his hands in a way that stuck with Kate for years to come.

‘Put them back,’ Bob said, suddenly out of his chair. ‘Put the stones back where they were, else the books will fall.’

‘I’m just remembering.’

‘Put them back.’

‘Do you not remem—.’

‘Put them back.’

‘Don’t you remember? No, just listen. That day on the beach. Does it mean nothing to you now, that we named these stones, that they’ve sat on our shelf all these years? Kate and Bob on the shelf through thick and thin.’

‘Thick and thin?

‘Life.’

‘Life isn’t thick or thin. That book there is thick, that book there is thin. You’re crazy. We were crazy to call them that. That’s not us on the shelf. Just stones that we named when we were crazy, and I know that now.’

Kate held the stones out to him. ‘Tell me which one is you, and which is me. Please just grant me that. Grant me that and I’ll drop it, just show me that you remember.’

Bob, as suddenly as he had got out from his chair, was in front of her, his face the face of someone confronting something beyond understanding, wide-eyed and scared, and the stones fell from Kate’ hands as she winced and cried out, and they hit the wooden floor with a crack. Kate remained intact, bouncing noisily away. Bob in shards, no longer smooth, split along the white line and countless others, each fragment now a miniature Kate, jagged but grey, and skittering across the floor[40].

[40] Ramachandran and Oberman (2008) presented children on the autistic spectrum with the Bouba and Kiki test, finding that they chose the ‘correct’ names for the shapes in only 56% of cases.

‘Just beyond contempt how you are behaving, Bob. Utterly beyond contempt.’

‘I couldn’t tell you the residing place of contempt, nor that which lies beyond it. And I doubt that you could either.’

Slaves to the Cognitive Unconscious

There's a lot we can't do with our thinking when it stays in our heads,' Su said pointedly, surprising herself. She had spent the morning trying to get John to make a decision, any decision, about something, anything, and then vocalise it.

'I sit and I think a lot, as if that's special. About this and that, about the important things in life. But more and more often nowadays I get this feeling, like all of a sudden I'm thinking and with a snap realise that the voice in my head has been silent the entire time, and I get scared. Because if I've been thinking at all then I've been thinking in a way that didn't involve words. And it's like the kind of wordless and gut and uncontrollable thinking that happens before you suddenly decide that you don't like the taste of something after all, which hardly seems to class as thinking at all. Like the *me*, my *self,* was there all along just under the surface but just humming away the whole time, and I get scared. Like it's just died and left enough of itself behind to realise.

'But that's not the scary thing, not really. The scary thing is when I calm down and realise that what's happened is this—it's like the wordlessness of it didn't matter at all. Whatever it was I was thinking wordlessly about, I know now what I think *about* it. And it's like we don't need words to work anything out, which doesn't sound like it could be true to me. Words mean we can track our thoughts, assess their validity, measure them up against others, change them, make things in the real world better. And it's like, what good are all my words, all my talking, if basically it all just happens under the surface?

'Because what if I owe my opinions on all sorts of things to those wordless moments? It's like there's a great weight and structure holding these opinions up and into the fresh air of my consciousness, justifying and anchoring them, but I don't know what this great bulk is or what it looks like because it is dark and wordless and under some surface that is itself indescribable, except for its opacity[41].

'So it's like I'm sure of all these things, but don't know why, and shouldn't be able to trust the fact that I'm sure, but I do, I really and truly do, I assure you.'

'Are you saying you should talk less?' John said eventually, and playfully, he hoped.

'You think?'

'I'm sure of it.'

'You're sure about lots of things, aren't you?'

'No.'

'I know. That's the joke.' But she had distracted herself. Any energy she would have had to be annoyed with him had been used up in another one of her detours. God she loved him. God knows why she did, but she did.

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[41] 'Cognitive science has something of enormous importance to contribute to human freedom: the ability to learn what our unconscious conceptual systems are like and how our cognitive unconscious functions. If we do not realize that most of our thought is unconscious and that we think metaphorically, we will indeed be slaves to the cognitive unconscious. Paradoxically, the assumption that we have a radically autonomous rationality as traditionally conceived actually limits our rational autonomy. It condemns us to cognitive slavery - to an unaware and uncritical dependence on our unconscious metaphors. To maximize what conceptual freedom we can have, we must be able to see through and move beyond philosophies that deny the existence of an embodied cognitive unconscious that governs most of our mental lives' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, pp.537-538).

An Origin Myth

'He said something that upset me. He said that our relationship had hit a dead-end street,' she said.

'If it has hit a dead-end street, you can't keep going the way you have been going. You may have to turn back,' he said.

The 'she' of this exchange is an undergraduate student who has burst into a university seminar, late and wet with rain and tears, crying about a 'metaphor problem' she has been having with her boyfriend. The year is 1978.

The first 'he' of this exchange is her boyfriend.

The second 'he' is George Lakoff, teacher of the aforementioned seminar, and co-author alongside Mark Johnson of *Metaphors We Live By,* the idea for which grew out of what happened after this girl burst in, late and disruptive with her metaphor problem, and the first book I was advised to read when *Wallpaper* was just the germ of an idea. In the video, *George Lakoff on how he started his work on conceptual metaphor* (2009), Lakoff is giving a lecture, and talking about that day in 1978.

'You may have to turn back'.

Lakoff relates that, this being an English language seminar, this moment was seen as an opportunity for impromptu linguistic analysis. There are lots of expressions in English in which love is seen as a kind of journey, the class came to realise:

- It's been a long and bumpy road.
- We are going in different directions.
- We are at a crossroads in our relationship
- The marriage is on the rocks.
- We've been spinning our wheels.
- The relationship is on the wrong tracks.
- We've got to bail out.

Lakoff asked the class what generalisations could be made about the list that they had compiled. They concluded that in every case

- Love is seen as a journey.
- The lovers are the travellers on this journey.
- The relationship itself is the vehicle in which this journey is happening.
- The common life goals of the lovers is the final destination of the journey.
- The difficulties that arise within the relationship are problems and obstructions along the way.

Having written all of this down (student still, presumably, crying), Lakoff suggested that what lay before them resembled a systematic, internally coherent, mathematical kind of mapping, in which reasoning about actual, physical travel was being mapped onto reasoning about relationships, and from which inferences could be made. A couple admitting that their marriage is 'on the rocks' for example could suggest that

- The relationship has taken a 'wrong turn'—like a ship that has turned onto the rocks.

- That this may not have occurred had correct guidance been followed and/or available—like a ship that did not heed or had to do without the beam afforded by a lighthouse
- That the relationship could break—like a ship being repeatedly pushed against the rocks by waves.

For Lakoff, the realisations made in that seminar ran counter to the classical theory of metaphor, which did not allow for *thinking* in terms of metaphors.

> 'Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.1)

So begins *Metaphors We Live By*[42].

[42] The power of cherrypicking.

Hölderlin did not stop there— 'Full of merit, yet poetically, man/ dwells on this earth'. What of the context in which Plato was writing? And Wittgenstein? I have read some of his work, for sure, enjoyed its poetic(?) (and seeming) contradictions, half-understanding half of what I came across, but I'm not a philosopher, far, far from it, and should not be gifted willy-nilly the mandate to recommend single sentences of his like that. Stanford, though—Stanford should know better.

The Source and the Target

The idea that the human conceptual system is inherently metaphorical in nature became known as conceptual metaphor theory. Integral to conceptual metaphor theory are the notions of a source domain and a target domain. Without these two things, there can be no conceptual metaphor.

The target domain, put simply, is the domain that is being understood. The source domain is what the target domain is lending structure *from,* what it is being understood in terms *of*. At the level of conceptual metaphor, the target domain is often abstract, involving abstract attributes, processes and relationships, whilst the source domain consists of a set of literal entities, attributes, processes and relationships (Deignan, 2005, p.163). Together, these literal components amount to a cognitive model, or schema[43].

These literal entities, processes and relationships are what give the target domain its structure, through a process called cross-domain mapping. Lakoff and Johnson suggest that though we are not necessarily conscious of the conceptual metaphors that underlie our experience of the world, their existence and form is betrayed by the linguistic metaphors that we use in everyday discourse. Just as the source domain lends its configuration, it also lends its language, the semiotics of this configuration— 'entities, attributes and processes in the target domain are lexicalized using words and expressions from the source domain' (Onchoke and Wen, 2017, p.345).

And so, we can examine what our metaphorical conceptual system is like, what the structure of our fundamental cognitive structures is, by looking at the metaphorical language that we use, since it is rooted systematically, hierarchically, in the same metaphorical concepts that bootstrap our thought.

For example, that we often conceptualise TIME in terms of MONEY or as a LIMITED RESOURCE or VALUABLE COMMODITY is betrayed by utterances like

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[43] When we reach for what a word means, we reach beyond language. Our understanding of the word *home* depends on other cognitive structures—the familiar notion of having a static abode, for one. A space siloed off from the rest of the world, for another. These notions can only be understood against an experience and understanding of three-dimensional space, of the orienting schema of up and down, of being inside or outside of something. What emerges whenever we interrogate what a word means in this way are 'embedded patterns of knowledge and belief' (Taylor, 2003, p87)—a web of domains further structured by schemas.

Picture a deep-sea creature, caught for the entirety of its lifetime miles below the surface, and miles above the ocean floor, its world devoid of landmarks, and its fins too weak to prevent it from being buffeted along by currents. By what measure would it understand fixity, what it would mean to have a point of stasis it could return to, in spite of wherever else it may find itself? Without rocky holes to swim into, how could it understand the idea of containment, of being inside or outside of something?

Leech (1983, p70) described linguistic meaning as being demarcated from the world, from states of affairs real or imagined. With that in mind, imagine that our deep-sea creature, though lacking an understanding of our world, has somehow acquired a dictionary-like knowledge of our language. Its understanding of what *home* means, having never had one, would be deeply impoverished. Similarly, an understanding of what metaphor is, isolated from states of affairs both real and imagined, is severely impoverished. Each and every word presupposes the existence and awareness of further cognitive structures, further frames. Relying on a dictionary to ascertain what 'metaphor' means, what it really means, cannot help but leave us ignorant to its role in structuring our cognitive experience.

You're wasting my time with this bullshit
This shortcut will save us time
You cost me a year of my life
I invested a lot of time in her
Is it worth it, after all this?
I feel like I'm living on borrowed time
The treatment is expensive, but it will buy me some time at least
Thank you for your time
I don't have enough time
I've used up all my time

Lakoff and Johnson posit that, in a system of systematic sub-categorisation, TIME IS MONEY necessarily entails that time is also a LIMITED RESOURCE, which in turn entails that TIME IS A VALUABE COMMODITY, because that is what money means to us in our culture. The systematicity of this system carries over into the expressions which spring from it (1980, p.8), and so our folk understanding of money (something tangible) becomes too our common understanding of time (something far less tangible) (Lawler, 1986).

DeVoe and Pfeffer (2006) conducted an experiment in which American participants were asked to rate their agreement with a variety of statements. Each of the statements appeared twice, featuring 'money' in its first iteration ('If I have wasted [money] on a particular activity or item, I try to save it on another activity or item') and 'time' in its second ('If I have wasted [time] on a particular activity or item, I try to save it on another activity or item') (2006, p.4). Having controlled for a number of variables (earnings, education, etc.) they found that participants with more exposure to hourly payment were more likely to adhere to the mental accounting model when it came to their time, suggesting that being paid by the hour, a practice which casts time more starkly as a resource, leads to a more economic evaluation and conceptualisation of time. Participants with a low exposure to such work, once encouraged to recast their own time as a resource by calculating their hourly wage, exhibited similar results [44].

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[44] The mental accounting model demonstrates that despite our resources often coming from a single 'pot', we mentally divide it and label it according to the manner in which it is going to be depleted. This results in us, for example, neglecting to go to the theatre that weekend because we have already spent our entertainment budget earlier that week going to the cinema, instead of reapportioning the money intended for clothes into the entertainment pot, where it could be put to better use, and bring, overall, more happiness.

(John didn't need a new jumper, indeed didn't care about clothes or fashion, found no joy in the wearing of a new and trendy garments, but he bought it anyway, having decided some months ago that he should spend X amount of his budget each month on clothes, because...well because did he not owe himself that?)

Heath and Soll (1996) demonstrated that outgoings that are easier to categorise are more likely to be treated in this way—budgets less easily defined are more easily spent

(Robbing bastards, John thought, looking at their catalogue. Each page more expensive than the last, and the descriptions increasing in grandeur in line with the price: '*Cardboard Manilla Coffin - Price Reduced! —Best-selling Eco-friendly cardboard coffin, made from biodegradable cardboard'* right up to *'Royal Domed Casket—Imported from South Africa, the Prestige domed casket has been expertly designed and manufactured to a high standard.'* Robbing bastards, he thought again, the funeral director opposite, silent and convincingly reverent. But you only went out once, and he'd be damned if Su didn't go out in fucking style.)

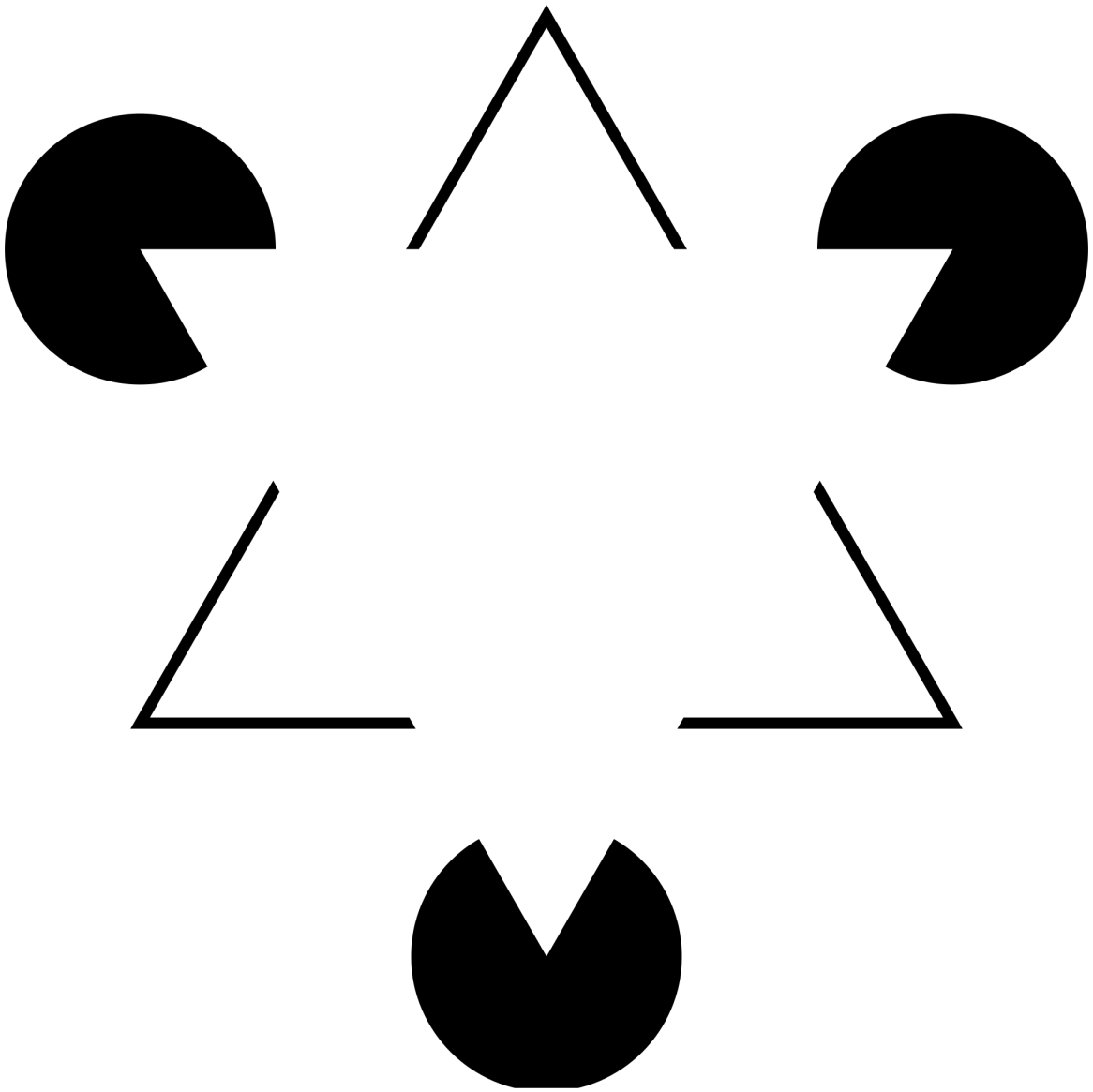
Lakoff and Johnson argue that comparatively new practices in our society ('hourly wages, hotel room rates, yearly budgets' (1980, p.8)) have, in the process of structuring our activities, structured in turn our conceptualisation of time in an analogous way, as a resource to be depleted in exchange for gains elsewhere, leading to the TIME IS MONEY conceptual metaphor.

The TIME IS MONEY conceptual metaphor is rare amongst the Inari Saami, an indigenous people of Finland. Instead, much of their language about time suggests a TIME IS NATURE conceptual metaphor Idström (2010) details how their day-to-day activities are dictated by the rhythms of nature and responses to it, rather than by the framework of monetised work. Where in the Western world an unprofitable idea is often referred to as a 'waste of time', an Inari Saami speaker might say *allet maid kal leibi-lase*, which translates as 'this plan will not bring us any food' (2010, p.167). The focus, then, is on the end result—time becomes the context in which certain events happen, rather than the salient focus.

Cross-domain mappings, of the kind that sees us understand time in terms of money, and so suggest that time too is something that can spent, rely on us making mental projections, the shape of these projections dictated by analogical reasoning—that is, reasoning that 'cites accepted similarities between two systems to support the conclusion that some further similarity exists' (Stojkoski, 2018, p.41).

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Under this model, it is easy to see how, having categorised time more solidly as a resource, we are more likely to focus in on its depletion, more likely to attempt to budget or compensate for time spent, than if it remains something more intangible, as just the nebulous space in which things happen.



Faced with a weekend with no obligations and plans, and not fancying herself as a painter, or a sculptor, or DIY extraordinaire[45], Su fancied herself as a spoken word poet. She abandoned John, who was napping in the garden, and, fuelled with the vague idea that spoken word was primarily an American thing, and with the recurring bitterness (after all these years!) that her local grammar school had rejected her, set about composing poems on scraps of paper that were brash and confrontational, and that also mirrored the analogy problems found those days in the entrance exams for selective schools.

'This is not a poem as such,' she said, returning to the garden, waking John, and handing him the first scrap of paper. 'But it will ease your tiny mind into the performance. It's all very metaphorical, you see, or it has the potential to tend that way, if you cooperate.'

1)

Flow
is to
river
as
stagnant
is to

A. Rain
B. Stream
C. Pool
D. Canal

[45] 'Freelance' was how described her profession, 'freelance this and that'. She could turn her hand to anything, it seemed to John.

‘Don’t look so happy with yourself. That one was easy.’

John, confused, but not surprised, sat up, wiped his eyes, and looked attentive.

2)

Speaking
is to
stuttering
as

_____

is to
stumbling

A. Trainers
B. Stumbling
C. Jumping
D. Gasping

‘That again was not a poem, really, but I had to get my head in the game, too. Again, don’t look so pleased with yourself. This is where it gets more interesting.’

3)

Dreaming
is to a
daydreamer
as
base jumping
is to

A. The R.E.M sleep cycle
B. A feather and cannonball dropped simultaneously in a vacuum
C. A skydiver
D. A parachute

‘Is this really poetry?’
‘Shut up. It gets better.’

4)

Is
knowing that 1098 x 168 = 1028373 (but only because you punched numbers into a calculator)
to
knowing that 1+2=3
as
caring about a terrorist attack (34 dead) in a city thousands of miles away
is to
caring, really caring, about someone who is terminally ill and irreplaceable to you?

A. Yes
B. *No*

‘I don’t know. Probably not. Try the next one on me.’

‘This is where it gets real interesting. See, you know how as an audience member I hate not being involved? Remember my jealousy at the ballet? Well, this is my artistic stand against that. Poetry should be in the gaps, and if you as the audience can’t fill the gaps, and subsequently don’t like my poetry, well then that’s your lookout, and it probably says more about you than it does about me and my artistry.’

5)

_____

is to

_____

as
The pain of a tongue piercing
is to
the taste of a lemon[46]

[46] ‘Tip: The two things you choose to fill in the blanks here should probably come from the same place (as taste and the pain of a tongue piercing do), and they should be different, not like chalk and cheese, but different by degrees. The taste of lemon, after all, can be described as sharp, and can cause discomfort—something like pain—if you’re not expecting it. *Jack is the citrus tang, Phil the piercing pain*, you might hear it said of twins—Jack being brash, but loveable for it, well-meaning even. Phil like Jack, but with no dimmer switch—brash, but in a way that attracts violence.

‘Was that part of the poem?’

‘I’m helping you out,’ Su explained.

The next page was strewn with words, phrases. John wasn't drunk but felt it. 'What the hell am I meant to do with this?'

'Whatever you want. Nothing. Something amazing, something shit—connect the dots, combine them in wonderful ways, make new poetry out of them, or don't. Maybe there's no dots to connect. It's up to you.'

'It's up to me if there's dots?'

'Let's just move on, shall we?'

6)

The guilt felt upon opening up,
finally, but too much. *Pressured into partaking in a new experience by friends, you make the necessary arrangements: train tickets, accommodation, etc. Checking your bank balance the next day, you sigh.*

The ~~squeak~~ squeal of a hinge.
The wide-eyed expression you make when your
attention is focused,
not so much on listening,
but on making it utterly clear that you are listening—too sincere, too cloying.
You are last in line to receive communion. Your head is bowed, your eyes are closed ~~(is this how it's done?)~~, your hand has been cupped a while, and starts to cramp up.

Your first incision as a qualified surgeon. ~~The feeling of that.~~ Too quick, you feel—the moment went by unappreciated.

Too keen to show your friends the contents
of your backpack, you unzip it too quickly,
and now
~~it is broken~~ the zipper teeth are snagged in the fabric. *The unfurling leaves—spring—did not bring the expected satisfactions.*

~~A door slams against its wall guard, startling you (it's a summer's day and the windows are open)~~

A new bank account raises a husband's
suspicions. *.*
Coming out of a recession. New businesses, new distractions.
Less time spent admiring the Victorian facades along the high street.

He had a goofy, toothy
grin, and smiled open-mouthed. Disappointing, she thought.

‘I’m lost. I’m completely, irrecoverably lost.’

‘Well then this will have you stumped. It’s stumped me, too, but see above for comment on audience complicity. You have an hour. I’ll leave you to it.’

And with that Su presented John with her last poem, and sauntered off inside to pour herself another glass of wine, leaving John to stare at the words on the page, fan himself with it lazily, lean back again in the deckchair, and fall asleep, in love and immeasurably happy in it.

7)

If
leather sofa
is to
taxidermy
as

_____
is to
_____

(which it is, undoubtedly)

then

_____
is to
_____
as
_____
is to
_____

and my life is different having realised this.

Signed

_____

Seeking shelter from the rain one dreary February, Su dragged John into a café. ‘There’s a gallery space upstairs. Let’s take a look while this blows over.’

A piece of paper was sellotaped to the wall at the foot of the stairs, displaying the title of the piece (*Let Me In*!) and a statement from the artist. ‘I never read further than the title,’ Su insisted, ushering John up the stairs. The space itself was poky and, as far as they could tell, completely empty.

‘The exhibition must have finished,’ John said. ‘They just forgot to take down the sign.’

Su stood in the doorway, her arm stretched out before her. ‘Fuck, it’s so cold in there.’

‘Let’s go get a coffee.’

‘No, no. Wait.’

‘It’s an empty room.’ But Su was resolute, and remained, shivering, in the doorway.

‘Come in, just for a moment. It’s time for a lesson.’ John knew what lesson she meant, and he had been avoiding it since the last time they were caught in a downpour and wound up in a gallery. That time, he had been saved by a break in the clouds, the sun streaming through the windows, a promise that the day as intended could resume. He stood with Su in the doorway, a chill draught blowing out from the room, the sound of rain loud still.

‘How strange,’ Su said, stepping into the room.

‘What is?’

‘That draught, the sound of rain. We aren’t on the top floor. There’s no way the rain should be that loud. And none of these walls border outside. Where on earth is that draught coming from?’

She was right. And not just the loudness of the rain—something else about the sound seemed off. There was none of that muffling that came from being behind double glazing, or beneath a roof. You could practically hear individual raindrops. And the draught too, more a breeze now, changing direction as if they were outside, lifting and dropping pieces of Su’s hair as they both circled the room, inspecting the walls.

It was John who found the holes in the walls. Covered in mesh that was painted so as to blend into the walls, they were almost invisible, and it was only by following the breeze that he found the first. Putting an ear up against it, he could make out something whirring mechanically. Following the sound of the rain they found more of these holes, similarly disguised, with speakers behind. It was Su who noticed the sensor, again painted the same colour as the walls, up in one of the corners. On spotting it, she jumped up and down enthusiastically, waving.

And that is when the sprinklers came on.

Or rather, spluttered, dribbled a few drops on their heads, before gurgling into inaction again.

Su could barely stand upright, and had to be supported from the room, and down the stairs, so tickled was she by the ordeal. Back in the café, having composed herself, she set at last to her lesson.

She explained that the *thing* with conceptual art was that the idea was the *thing*, rather than the steel, the fabrics or the paint of the art object itself. The execution was perfunctory (LeWitt, 1967, p.2), a relative irrelevance when compared to the larger ideas behind the art. And this, she said, reaching her crescendo, was why it didn't matter that the sensor was not sensitive enough, that the sprinklers didn't work as intended.

John did not at the time buy this defence of the work (or, he suspected, understand it—'If the idea is the thing, then why bother with...oh never mind') and suspected that it was based on a misreading (albeit a creative one, with rhetorical purpose) of what conceptual art was all about.

They visited the exhibition again, some weeks later. The day was hot and still, silent but for the chatter of birds nesting on the roof of the café-cum-gallery. The space the artwork was situated in (or rather, the materials and spaces and sounds that constituted something that was at once the artwork, but also not) was hot too, the air still, and through the speakers the sound of birds chirping could just about be heard.

Whilst Su was alive, John was in thrall to her words. That day in the garden, with her bringing him her poems, swaying slightly as she handed them to him, was held up in his mind as something quintessentially Su. Not that this was a regular occurrence (she had never again written and presented him with poetry, in fact) but it exemplified for him the pull she had over him, when she took words and bent them out of shape like that. He found it thrilling, like something was hidden; a prize, like she had just whispered in his ear at a restaurant breathily about what was under, or rather not under, her dress.

Everything she said had both a weight and a density. Weight because he hung on every word, could not help but invest each and every one with importance[47]. Density because even the reciting of a shopping list was made into a kind of linguistic game, one whose rules he would be coming to terms with just as they changed again.

Su dead, her words held the same weight, the same density. Left with just her words, John took to remembering them, as best as he could, finding them, as they were when she was alive, to be impenetrable, impervious to interrogation. Gone, however, was the thrill that arose when her words came in tandem with her. One afternoon, having tried and failed to compose her eulogy (her funeral was next week—time was on his side), he set to sorting out their bookcases, to forging some sort of order from its mess of non-fiction and fiction, leaflets, clippings and folders. He found the poems she had brought out to him in the garden, and others he had never seen, turned into makeshift bookmarks, dog-eared and scattered, folded over the pages of various books she had been reading during her last year alive. There were longer pieces, too, typed up, on pieces of A4 stapled together. There were extracts that felt conventional, almost, like a paragraph from a novel people actually read, but then the next paragraph would be a cut and paste job, from Wikipedia, a philosophy journal, a how-to manual.

Life's admin abandoned, he sat down to read them.

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[47] After one of their arguments, John's shoulders would be dipped as he walked after her, or sat brooding, as if weighed down under sacks of sand.

Gone the thrill, but gone too any sense that there was a sense there to be found in her words. What were they about?

An hour passed, the bookshelf and the piles of paper in the hall forgotten. What meaning were these poems, these conglomerations of text, trying to convey? Were they finished? Unfinished?

Another hour, and John could not work out if he had unpacked Su's writings to find them empty, or had been unable to unpack them at all. What knowledge, if any, had transferred from the texts to him?

The weight and density something suddenly without appeal, something foreboding. He was reminded of a recurring impression he'd had when he was young, ten or so, that the houses he passed at night in his dad's car, coming back from scouts or swimming lessons, were in fact fake, solid all the way through. Their windows were dark because of cool concrete that filled the houses, rather than the darkness of unlit space, and the people moving in and out of the houses were illusory, completely unknowable once they vanished behind closed doors. And then John would be home, stepping through his own front door, hearing the neighbours arguing on the other side of the fireplace, and the impression would be gone.

The days leading up to Su's funeral saw John fixate on the poems. Quintessentially her, he figured that musing on them would birth a eulogy that captured who Su was to him, to everyone.

Unsatisfied with the eulogy, right up until the last, he found himself crossing out words and inserting others, even as the funeral procession pulled up outside the church, even as he stepped from the car to the chiming of the church bells. Beguiling, was one of the words he scribbled over another, and 'beguiling' is a word he said, stood up there in front of a captive audience. It was not the right word, he clarified (going, for a moment, in his panic, off-piste) but then, how to put Su *into* words? He just didn't have the nous, he admitted, but they all knew her, they all knew what he was trying to get across, didn't they? And he had meant it as a compliment. Her friends nodded solemnly, her family did not. They hadn't *got* it, he consoled himself by thinking. But it's not my job to please them, is it?

Of the approximately 180 expressions Reddy lists that are part of the metalingual apparatus we use (that is, the language we use to talk about talking), 140 of these are scaffolded by the CONDUIT metaphor (1979, p.298). He describes how avoiding using the metaphor in speech is possible, but that doing so involves constant care and effort. Asking a student if they '[got] anything out of the article' becomes 'were you able to construct anything of interest on the basis of the assigned text?' In attempting to talk about the act of communicating without the conduit metaphor, you are 'struck dumb' (1979, p. 299).

Even if we were to forgo expressions relating to the conduit metaphor, we would not be released from its structuring influence. When we say of a poem that it is unrhymed, or illegible, or that it consists of 40 words, 'poem' here is referring to the individual words, to the marks on page and the sounds they represent. When we talk of a poem as logical, or depressing, or obscene, we are using 'poem' to refer to the conceptual and emotional *content* of the words taken as a whole. The word 'poem' is revealed as being polysemous, ambiguous, but this ambiguity is resolved by the conduit metaphor, which sees the second meaning existing within, and dependent on, the first. Reddy labels these meanings as $poem_1$ and $poem_2$. In a world in which the conduit metaphor had somehow failed to form (or in an individual whose ability to think using the framework had been stripped away...) the inability to see $poem_2$ as contingent on $poem_1$ would mean that there were, in theory, as many $poem_2$'s in existence as people who have read the poem. The same would hold true for other words we use to describe communicative objects (word, phrase, sentence, essay, novel).

Talking about the meaning of a particular sentence ($sentence_2$) for example, would require a debilitating amount of energy before even two people's interpretations could be reconciled—without the conduit metaphor, without a $_1$ for every discussion of $_2$ to be founded upon, meaning would have to be constructed anew each time. In such a world, communication itself would break down. Reddy characterises this breakdown as a semantic pathology, a situation where 'two or more incompatible senses capable of figuring meaningfully in the same context develop around the same name' (Ullman, 1957, p.122).

Which is not to say, Reddy continues, that the conduit metaphor fulfils our every communicative need. However, such is the systematicity and prevalence of the metaphor that we might find it difficult to think about the act of communicating in a way not logically entailed by it. The conduit metaphor, in its implication that $_2$ necessarily arises from and is contained within $_1$, has the potential to blind readers and listeners to the importance of constructing and reconstructing meaning, embedding the idea that they need simply *unpack*, or *get*, what is already there. Following the logic of the conduit metaphor, ideas can be found in words, which can be found in books, which can be found in libraries. The logic can easily be applied to the internet—our culture can be *found* in libraries, can be *found* on the internet. In the modern world, there are more repositories of information from the past than ever before, which, if we are thinking in terms of the conduit metaphor, would seem to suggest that we are doing a better job of communicating our cultural heritage than ever before.

Reddy concludes that the conduit metaphor may continue to have negative technological and social consequences. Though our repositories of information are swelling, our dominant metalinguistic framework does not highlight the roles of, for example, synthesis and integration in knowledge acquisition and meaning making, instead suggesting that all knowledge is already captured in words, and that acquiring this knowledge for ourselves involves the simple act of reading. Reddy concludes that the public might, as a result of this metalinguistic conceptualisation, and in spite the amassed information at their fingertips, might be less culturally informed than expected.

The task of preserving cultural identity, under this view, exists on a knife edge. Off to the left the idea, supported by our dominant metalinguistic conceptual metaphor, that our

cultural identity is simply *there*, contained within words. Off to the right, the idea that it should be constructed anew in each passing moment—an act that would drive anyone insane.

Christensen (2015) suggests that the idea of knowledge transfer, the notion that knowledge is something that that ‘can be stored, retrieved, and distributed easily, in a thing-like manner’, as supported by the conduit metaphor, as a semantic pathology in its own right.

Christensen pinpoints a symptom this pathology as being the way in which large organisations use IT systems and knowledge management systems to stockpile information, in order to facilitate understanding, collaboration, and the alignment of processes. The design of these systems assumes (as motivated by the conduit metaphor) that this knowledge, once stored, will be useful, and can be accessed easily. The end result, however, is often an ‘information junkyard’ (2015, p.5), the form the information takes, and its level of detail, at odds with its purpose.

Christensen advocates for the complete abandonment of the conduit metaphor when it comes to designing and using these systems—‘it is too deeply entranced in our discourse and everyday language to be altered or tempered by criticism alone’ (2015, p.6).

If they hadn't *got* it, then it was because he hadn't captured who Su was, he began to think, sat in the corner at Su's wake. They were her family after all. John drank deeply from the glass in his hands. The room swam in and out of focus. The hazy, meandering thoughts that followed can be untangled and distilled as follows:

Su's words were a part of her.

An immeasurably important part of her.

There were certain things she had said (or written) that resonated most strongly with him, now she was gone.

These were (barring the sincerest of the 'I love you's' and suchlike), the words that to this day had maintained their impenetrability, that thrill of something folded up in her words.

The words that resonated most strongly were the most important, when it came to remembering who Su was, to him.

Ascertaining what had transferred, from Su to him, was, then, a crucial step in figuring (in Su's absence) who Su was, to him.

A crucial step too in figuring out who he had been, in those years with her, and therefore who he could be.

The words$_1$ that resonated most strongly were those that carried little in the way of meaning$_2$.

Then, a sudden realisation (it came with the force of an epiphany) which, drawing on tattered threads, coalesced into something more pin-downable: He had never really known Su—he had never known her in a meaningful sense of the word, and did not know her now. And who had *he* been? *He* who had, since their early days, drawn so much of his identity from their pairing? It was, this epiphany, like suddenly finding out that your messiah is an imposter, your belief structure predicated on a misunderstanding, a mistranslation; on forged historical documents and fudged figures.

And what had John been to Su? Those last months of her life, what had he been to her?

Su *putting* her feelings about illness and death and the process of dying *into* words. John sometimes not *getting* what she was saying, *unpacking* what is was she meant and responding, all the while worrying about the *emptiness* of his responses.

(If there was more to it than this, then John could not see it. Oblivious to the conduit metaphor, his mind was nevertheless running on its tracks, moving in time with, and held by, the elegance of its logic.)

What if, wearied by cancer and treatment, and by John's not understanding, Su had settled on certain words, compromising as a result the message, what she wanted to convey?

The hollowness of his responses, as he now perceived them, kept him up at night. Replaying what she had said, he composed better responses, each composition, each imagined conversation a missed opportunity, and the missed opportunities multiplying exponentially as he remembered and composed, remembered and composed, until, exhausted, he fell at last to sleep.

In the Frame it was Regarded

Individuals who implicitly hold a 'fixed theory' of interest see their interests as existing out in the world, there to be discovered. Individuals who on the other hand have a 'growth theory' tend to see interests as things that are developed, that only become fully-fledged passions through active effort and careful attention.

O'Keefe et al (2018), noting that the advice to 'find your passion' has grown in popularity over recent years, devised a series of studies to test the implications of these theories on the individuals who hold them. They predicted that the belief that passions are developed over time, rather than discovered, as if already fully-formed, leads individuals to accept that difficulties might arise in following their passion, and that subsequently their interest might be sustained when roadblocks are encountered. Through the lens of a fixed theory, however, difficulties become 'evidence that the interest was not "the one[48]" after all' (Ibid).

They found that individuals holding a fixed theory were less likely to become interested in areas beyond their existing passions. Though they tended to experience 'boundless motivation' on the 'discovery' (Ibid) of a new area of interest, they were also less likely to predict possible difficulties in pursuing their interests, assuming that this motivation would prevail indefinitely.

Having had their interest in black holes piqued by an engaging video about the phenomenon, those holding a fixed theory were more likely to see their interest decline when presented with a specialised scientific article on the subject, especially if they found it difficult to understand. It was concluded that the advice to 'find your passion' can, ironically, undermine the development of new interests, implying as it does that interests exist externally, awaiting discovery, and so priming individuals to adopt a fixed theory of interest.

The word metaphor is absent from the article that reports these findings, but the spectre of metaphorical inference is present in the predictions which spawned the studies in the first place. These predictions can be seen as being based around extending and elaborating on the metaphors that constitute the theories of interest themselves.

Reformulating the 'fixed theory' of interest as a conceptual metaphor, we get PASSIONS are FULLY-FORMED OBJECTS IN SPACE. It is logically consistent, given this formulation, to interpret difficulties as evidence that a passion might not be a passion after all.

'Growth theory' on the other hand becomes PASSIONS are STRUCTURES TO BE BUILT. Contained within the notion of building is the concept of effort, of striving and labour. These inferences make sense of the prediction that this theory would engender a realistic expectation that difficulties might arise, and that these difficulties are a natural part of the developmental process when it comes to the cultivation of passions and interests.

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[48] An analogy is drawn to the way we conceptualise love—relationships can be characterised by how partners conceptualise difficulties in their relationships, either seeing them as opportunities for growth, or as 'indications of a bad investment', the former conceptualisation leading to 'open coping strategies' when confronted with a partner's 'less-than-ideal qualities' (Knee and Petty, 2013).

The notion that passions can be found, then, whilst not directly describing passions as fully formed objects in space, draws on this conceptual metaphor, and so serves as a primer, encouraging people to see passions through this metaphorical frame[49]

[49] Metaphorical framing occurs when a conceptual metaphor serves to 'emphasise specific problems, causal relationships, and moral evaluations, and/ or solutions' (Brugman et al, 2019, p.2), often by hiding or highlighting certain similarities between a source and target domain. In the example above, the linguistic metaphor of *finding* your passion serves to highlight the similarities between passions, and physical objects in space which can be discovered, and subsequently the evaluation that the discovered passion was an imposter, should difficulties arise. One possible solution, that active effort be deployed to aid in the nurturing of said passion, does not fit within the logic of this frame, and so is hidden. By examining the effect of metaphorical frames, researchers seek to ascertain the influence of metaphor on our reasoning faculties.

Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) ran an experiment in which two sets of students were asked to read a report about crime. The first set read a report where crime was described as a 'beast preying' on the city. The second set read a report where crime was described as a 'virus infecting' the city. The reports were otherwise the same, including identical statistics, such as 10,000 more crimes being reported in reported in 2007 than in 2004. When asked to propose solutions to the problem of crime, 71 percent of the participants who read that crime is a beast called for more enforcement, compared to 54 percent of the participants who read that crime is a virus. Of the 485 participants, only 15 identified the metaphors used to describe crime as the most influential part of the report when it came to coming up with solutions. The remaining participants pointed to the statistics.

Thibodeau and Boroditsky conclude that metaphors (even a single metaphor) can exert a strong influence over how people attempt to solve complex problems. Metaphorical frames invite inferences consistent with their logic, and can do so in a covert way—participants were largely blind to the influence of the framing metaphors, and how they shaped the inferences they drew from the statistics in front of them.

Su would catch herself thinking in terms of 'the one', sometimes. If she was out with friends, the thought prompted by wine and the way that couples speak when they are apart and with friends, she would become contemplative, but pragmatic with it. If there were such things as a *one* for each and every person, or at least a singular type for each, and John did not fit the bill, well then, that was just a possibility to mull over, to examine from dispassionate angles. Does that not scare you? Her friends might ask, and no, she would answer, truthfully, thoughtfully, but the answer devoid of sentiment, as though she were figuring a mathematical equation with no bearing on reality.

There is someone out there for me. If she was alone, and the thought sprang up unsolicited, it sprang, she realised, from fantasies of perfect days, from vague snapshots, in which she and *the one* were held together, perfect for each other, in perfect moments. Though vague and static, relatively speaking, it was clear from these snapshots that as a couple they were in constant flux, traveling unprepared and spontaneously from place to place, nothing going right, according to their plans, which were hastily drawn and only then once the next step had already been settled on, but each and every day was better for it. Snapshots of flux and movement (a vorticist painting; a drawing of a falling artist, completed by the artist as they fell), appealing only because they were vignettes, the life admin, the petty quarrels, lying beyond their indefinite borders[50], and they dissolved under closer examination.

There is someone out there for me. It was a childlike thought, and she found comfort in the childishness of it, if not in its implications.

If she was with John when the thought came, and the thought arrived just like that, unsolicited, then there would be guilt, as she looked across to see him dozing or cooking, but the guilt would be short-lived—this was how it was, for Su. If she found a way of thinking to be undesirable, then she could just flick a mental switch, and skip to another. She often found herself frustrated with others, the way they seemed trapped by their unexamined ways of thinking, which she likened privately to little triangles of sky, caught between high-rise buildings; to sentimental photographs upstaged by the frames they had been mounted in. In contrast, her own malleability seemed like a superpower, to her. Rebecca had lost her job last year. An inevitability—she had hated it, and mouthed off at her boss one too many times. Rebecca spoke of it as a regression, a setback in her life. Why does life have to be a journey? Su had countered. Why not simply think of it some other way?

Because as quickly as the sky could be framed, it could be opened up, framed again if Su so chose, in whatever way she chose, so long as she recognised that there was a choice to be made.

The sentimental photographs Su did have she kept in a drawer, loose, to sift through whenever the urge came. The framed photographs on the wall—they were John's doing. He needed them, their fixity and prominence, she understood, and that was more than fine by her.

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[50] Like how low-res photographs hide blemishes, how arguments are watertight until they are vocalised and, mid-sentence, we realise that they are not.

One the subject of *the one*, John was noncommittal. He had not thought much, in his youth, about what kind of person he would end up with. Now, as an adult, what he did have was faith in was Su's momentum, the flux that was the only constant thing about her. He had faith, too, that he would never tire of her, and a confidence in his own ability to change with, and be changed by, her. Constantly adjusting, exhausted by these unending adjustments, he nevertheless *would* adjust, and even if he adjusted only for her to change again, he would at least be keeping pace, sometimes behind, but keeping pace nonetheless. If Su wasn't *the one* today, well, maybe she would be tomorrow.

Su was his passion (he struggled to name hobbies of his own, when pressed) and he was more than happy for his passion to change him. If relationships were there to be cultivated, then he was happy to be the half that was cultivated more.

John admitted all this to himself frequently, trying the idea out for size, testing the truth of it in light of what had happened in the time since his last confession. Each and every time he found it to be both true, still, but, most importantly, a truth he was happy with. They both knew of this truth, John was sure of it—it's just that the knowledge went unspoken, so fundamental and obvious was it to who they were together.

'What are the saddest two words that you can think of?'

They were drunk in the garden, which was full of guests and their guests' children and sunlight, and everything was right and good with the world when that question was posed. 'You first, John.'

'Cot death,' said John, quickly. He had been hoping to ascertain the spirit in which the game and its rules should be interpreted before giving his two pence.

'Oh, nice! In at the deep end. Never kissed. That's mine.'

John looked guiltily into his bottle.

'That's rubbish. At least go for “never loved” or something with a bit more oomph. “No hope”. That's mine.’

'Abstract. I like it. Give me a moment to think. Su, do you want to jump in?'

'Dishwater octopus.'

'Dishwater...?'

'Octopus. Dishwater octopus.'

'Yes, I thought so. Care to explain?'

But already Su's eyes were welling up at the mere thought of eight intelligent legs furling and unfurling in the murk beneath the suds, seeking solace in dirty cups, picking burnt egg off the pans that had been left there to soak overnight.

We frequently employ multiple conceptual metaphors when talking and thinking about a single concept. TIME is MONEY, for example, coheres, but it cannot hope to emblemise everything that there is to emblemise about our experience of time—we cannot learn everything that there is to learn about time by looking at money, and nor do all the ways in which we think about time find their counterpart in the ways in which we think about money. It can be useful to think of your time as a valuable commodity, to make sure things are *worth your while* before doing them and use time in a *profitable* way, but then there are certainly moments when we do not think about or experience time with this kind of capitalist tinge. The TIME IS MONEY metaphor does not account and is not logically consistent with the relief we feel when life events we dreaded are now *in the past.* It is at such times that we see TIME AS A CONTAINER, and feel as though bad events are stowed away *in* our past, or see TIME AS A LANDSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH, in which case the past must logically be behind us, the bad event becoming less visible with each step, as memories recede over time.

When our understanding changes, so do our metaphors. This happens at a collective level, as well as at the level of the individual.

For instance, the nature of metaphors used by psychologists to describe the mind has evolved over time. Where psychological literature was once peppered with metaphors which treated the mind as an animated being (or as several, independent animated beings) in its own right (‘ego defences’, for example). Use of this class of metaphors has dwindled over time, giving way to spatial metaphors (‘connections between ideas’) and systems metaphors (‘attentional switchboard’) (Gentner and Grudin, 1985). Psychology students tend to use more metaphors for the mind, as their familiarity with the subject and expertise increase (Cooke and Bartha, 1992). In fact, the language of science is largely metaphorical. 'Scientists rely on metaphor and analogy to make sense of scientific phenomena and communicate their findings to each other and to the public.' (Taylor and Dewsbury, 2018, p.2).

Sans Metaphor

Without metaphors, we ‘may not be able to conceptualise, or communicate, abstract scientific phenomena’ (Taylor and Dewsbury, 2018, p.2).

What, though, about everyday phenomena? The abstract of the everyday? What happens when we try and communicate *that*? The preceding pages, John’s wrestling with the conduit metaphor, would suggest that we rely on metaphor, both to communicate publicly, and to privately reason about, the abstract.

But John is a fabrication. A conglomeration of thoughts I’ve had/things I’ve overheard, pruned, and attributed to a fictional entity I’ve chosen to call John.

And so, with that in mind, real-life reader, pick something abstract. The *meaning of life*, perhaps. Something without concrete existence, that lives only in collective skulls. Try, in the lines provided below, to talk about it, without metaphor:

Now do so with metaphor:

And this is what I predict has happened: you found yourself hesitating far longer, pen poised above the first block of blank lines, than you did the second; that, having paused for so long, pen poised above the first block, you eked out a word or a line or two, before giving in, and moving to the second block, at which point you found yourself inundated with words and phrases, many of which metaphorical. 'Life is what you *make* of it', perhaps, or 'the meaning of life is *not an answer,* but a *process of interpretation* requiring effort and *continual attention'*, or something like it.

And if what I predicted would happen came to pass, then the difficulty of engaging with this question sans metaphor, in contrast to the relative ease of engaging with it with metaphor at your side, might go some way towards explaining Bob's complete and utter disintegration—if a person were deprived of metaphoric understanding entirely, it would not simply entail an inability to comprehend metaphor as it exists at the surface level of language, but also of the very systems that allow us to engage with the concepts that structure our life. Unlike the children with AS, Bob did not lose only his ability to understand novel metaphors, but the conventional, unconscious ones that up that that point in time structured his base experience of the world.

What would this feel like, being trapped in mind whose conceptual systems are being dismantled, fading away to nothing? We need only return to Katz, whose metaphor starved world is 'no world at all', a world without a conceptual system to process it, its sensory impressions unusable.

(Nails invented before blunt objects to bludgeon them with; a camera gutted for its usable parts, its processor and lenses sold for quick cash)

In such a world, communication itself would be impossible—metaphor is 'required for the formation of languages and other forms of symbolic representation'. For Nietzche, every word was a metaphor, insofar as each and every word is a concept, relating not to a 'unique and wholly individualised original experience', but to 'innumerable, more or less similar cases'. Each and every word, or concept, then, comes about through 'equating what is unequal' (1967, p.373).

We exist on a knife edge, it would seem, metaphor the blade, and oblivion dropping off to either side. Off to the left, the oblivion of our infancy—the synaesthetic confusion of those first weeks, of ultra-connectivity, of reality as a singular pulsating mass of metaphoric associations. It is an oblivion from which we escape, as our neurological pathways are pruned, and our conceptual system can at last start to form.

Off to the right, an oblivion of disconnectedness, of what the world would be to us if metaphor failed. You could shout down to this second void and ask it what it is like down there, but your voice would reach it as an unintelligible mess, disconnected vibrations in the air. And if this void did by some miracle hear you, it would not have the capabilities to tell you what it is to be this void—lacking metaphor, what on earth would it compare itself *to*?

In his introduction to the 2007 edition of *The Best America Essays,* of which he was the guest editor, David Foster Wallace wrote of the modern world as a period of 'total noise' (2007, p.1). A maelstrom of facts and context and arguments and counterarguments that is unfathomably tangled and getting more so, with much non-fiction merely adding 'more noise to the overall roar' (2007, p.6). One of the criteria that he applied for including essays in this edition was that such essays should provide a framework for how this noise could be 'arranged in meaningful ways' (2007, p.6). The ideal role, as Wallace saw it, of non-fiction as a provider of structuring principles, is analogous here to the role of metaphor in our lives. Writing both fiction and non-fiction is done as if above an abyss, he suggested—writing fiction happens above 'nada' (2007, p.2) , the blank page; non-fiction above this total noise.

That metaphor—a device for so long associated with the fictive, rather than the non-

fictive—provides the logical lines along which our reality is structured is an irony, a beautiful irony, at the heart of what metaphor is to us.

Metaphor, then, resolves into something that is at once special and commonplace—commonplace in that ‘what is most clichéd and conventional about reality are those aspects of experience that are primarily constituted by metaphorical thought.’ (Gibbs, 2017, p.3), and special in that if metaphor it is central to how we come to understand and work with the abstract, then those conventional aspects are revealed as being inherently poetic.

A test for the importance of metaphor might be ubiquity. Vaièenonienë (2000), in an examination of the way in which the words ‘idea’ and word’ are used metaphorically across English and Lithuanian corpora, found that the conduit metaphor is pervasive in both languages. In Lithuanian, as well as in English, ‘words hide something in them’, and ‘the process of communication is perceived as sending, which implies such additional notions as direction, receiving and unpacking’ (2000, p.163), leading to the conclusion that perhaps the conduit metaphor is a ‘universal metaphorical model’(2000, p.165).

The conceptual metaphors HAPPINESS IS UP and HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER are found in English, Chinese and Hungarian—languages which belong to very different families and cultures, and which evolved with very little contact taking place between them (Kövecses, 2002, pp.164-165):

HAPPINESS IS UP in Chinese

Ta hen gao-xing.
he very high-spirit

Ta xing congcong de.
he spirit rise-rise

Zhe-xia tiqi le wo-de xingzhi.
This-moment raise my mood

HAPPINESS IS FLUID IN A CONTAINER in Chinese

Ta xin-zhong chongman xiyue. he heart-inside fill happiness
heart-inside fill happiness

Ta zai-ye anna-buzhu xin-zhong de xiyue.
she no-longer press-unable heart-inside

HAPPINESS IS UP in Hungarian

Ez a film feldobott.
This film gave me a high. / This film made me happy.

Majd elsza´ll a boldogsa´gto´l.
almost away-flies-he/she the happiness-from

HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER in Hungarian

Tu´lcsordult a sz´ıve a boldogsa´gto´l.
over-flow-past the heart-his/her the happiness-from

Nem b´ırtam magamban tartani o¨ro¨mo¨met.
not could-I myself-in hold joy-my

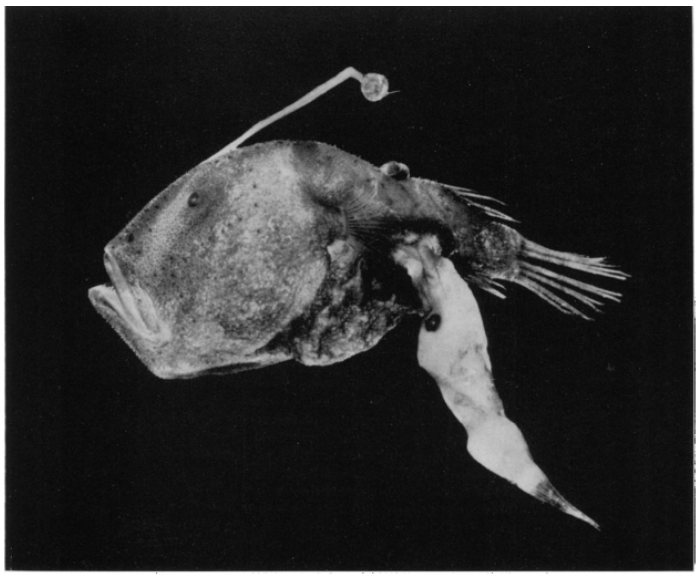
Moral metaphors, too, of the kind that assess the rightness or wrongness of our actions, equating them to source domains lifted from our visual experience (WHITE and BLACK, LIGHT and DARK, CLEAR and MURKY, CLEAN and DIRTY, PURE and IMPURE) are

widespread across languages that are, in their origins, unrelated. (Yu, 2015).

It is clear that it is not just metaphors that are ubiquitous, but that some of the same metaphors, the same building blocks, the same structuring agents, are found again and again, across languages and cultures.

Speculative Biology, Speculative Linguistics

The *Anglerfish Intelligentes,* a species of Anglerfish found in the depths of the Atlantic, which has its own, independently evolved language, its own myths, legends and culture. Since their discovery, these creatures have captured the imagination of the scientific and lay community alike. Here is a creature, with what some marine biologists have characterised as 'close to human intelligence', which could not be more alien to us.



The *Anglerfish Intelligentes* are, in appearance, indistinguishable from their close, dumb relatives: The males are tiny, the females large. Their mating habits, too, are the same—in order to reproduce, the male must willingly bite down, and be absorbed into, the female. As his blood vessels fuse with hers, the distinction between them collapses. Internal organs atrophy, eyes dissolve and his brain shuts down. Only his reproductive organs remain functional. He (if there is a sense in which *he* still exists) is at once parasite and life-giver, a fleshy nodule that was mistaken for just that when these creatures were first discovered.

Inroads have been made into understanding the language of this creature. Stranger still than the form this language takes (bubbles of air, of purposeful sizes, released and made to dance in intricate patterns by deft fin strokes) are the conceptual structures that underpin it.

Where our understanding of life and relationships is structured metaphorically as a journey, this metaphor scaffolded by the more basic orientational metaphors of UP is GOOD, DOWN is BAD, the *Anglerfish Intelligentes'* understanding of life could not form along these lines. In the aphotic zone of the open ocean, where less than one percent of sunlight can penetrate, there is no such thing a journey, not really—there are no landmarks against which to measure such a thing. Up and down are likewise are less important in an environment where gravity has a weakened affect, where jellyfish, literally brainless creatures, can often be found to be pulsating their way through 'life' upside down. There is, however, light, however occasional— the sporadic bioluminescence of life, of both prey and predator.

As such, it is this notion of light that structures the *Anglerfish Intelligentes'* understanding of life. One patch of darkness is the same as any other, but light signifies that change is afoot, that something is about to happen. LIFE, then is RANDOMISED FLASHES OF LIGHT IN THE DARK.

The *Anglerfish Intelligentes* does not regard the time they spend in darkness as life, but rather as the spaces between it. This NOT QUITE DEATH, then, is THE SPACE BETWEEN LIGHT.

And here is where is gets complicated. DEATH is LIGHT too, because a flash of bioluminescence could be the flash of food, but it could just as likely be the flash of some fanged, hungry thing that regards you as food. LIFE is LIGHT in that light can signify the presence of a female, and the opportunity to mate.

LIFE is also DEATH, insofar as the final darkness experienced as the male's eyes are subsumed into the female, in those final days before his brain too is subsumed, and his consciousness flickers out, tells him that new life will spring from their union.

The *Anglerfish Intelligentes'* metaphors for love (because they experience love intensely, it is clear), continue in this contradictory, tangled way. Both the male and female fish conceptualise LOVE as PAIN (the drawn-out union is, they assure us, excruciating for both parties). They similarly conceptualise LOVE as LIFE, given that their blending together (the ultimate testament to their love) results in new life. For the male, LOVE is DEATH, for obvious reasons. For equally obvious reasons, LOVE is DARKNESS.

Perhaps more surprisingly, for the female, LOVE is also DEATH. *Anglerfish Intelligentes* mate for life (quite obviously, in the case of the males). Having fully absorbed her mate, her lover, the female fish shuns light (and by extension, LIFE) from then on, clinging to the shifting and extensive patches of darkness, until she too perishes. How else should one react, the 'light of your life' (rough translation) gone, a likeness of theirs clinging to your underbelly, haunting your own ghostly movements through the dark?

LOVE is BLIND(NESS) is specific to the male fish.

The species has other ways of conceptualising love and relationships metaphorically which are completely at odds with our own. Some examples of how these conceptualisations manifest in language, roughly translated, are given below. They talk of

- Being 'lured in' (remember that, like their closest biological relatives, the *Anglerfish Intelligentes* glow from the tips of lures which hang down in front of their faces
- Love as an intense feeling of attachment (this is the case even before the literal attachment takes place)
- Love as 'closeness/proximity' (ditto)
- Love as 'becoming one' (ditto)
- Love as 'giving yourself completely' to the other (ditto)[51]

It is difficult to imagine a creature further removed from us in appearance, and now, with a conversation opening up between our species, we see how the strangeness of their language and conceptual system falls in step with the strangeness of their with their watery world, with their bodies and its operations,

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[51] Which is not to say that things are always so rosy between potential mates. Arguments do take place, but are understood, not in terms of war and conflict (large scale conflict is simply not a part of their lives—they are, apart from their biological unions, largely solitary creatures), but in terms of 'illuminating the darkness, together', underpinned by the conceptual metaphor FINDING COMMON GROUND is JOINING LIGHTS. It is only then that the dance (which results in the male biting for the last time onto the female's underbelly (having nibbled and danced, danced and nibbled) for the last time. Without this common ground, they are just 'dancing in the dark' (IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES are DISCONNECTED LIGHTS).

The notion of winning an argument simply does not figure in their thinking in the same way.

Difficult to imagine, too, is our species reaching the heights that it has, had its conceptual systems been as fraught with contradictions as theirs. One thing is for certain—the conversation will continue, and there is much yet to discover.

Returning for a moment to that moment, real or apocryphal, in Lakoff's classroom.

What it amounts to is the genesis of a new way of understanding the role of metaphor in structuring our lives. Where previously the role of metaphor in thought was speculated, Lakoff and Johnson went on to provide evidence from language for the metaphors below, at the level of thought and mind. If metaphor had previously seen as something akin to wallpaper—pretty, sometimes, but a structural irrelevance—then it was like that first layer had been steamed away, hacked at with a stripping knife, only to reveal that it was wallpaper through and through[52]. Justification, it would seem, for the papery weight, bloated and bevelling my shelf[53].

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[52] There is an Armando Iannucci sketch (Twats, 2001) in which a man and a woman—a couple looking perhaps for their first family home—are being shown around a house by an estate agent. They seem keen, and impressed. The kitchen is done out in 'this season's colour'. As the estate agent wanders off to let them chat, the man rubs the kitchen worktop, evidently confused.

'It's made of paper,' he says.

'If you keep touching things, you're going to break it,' she says. 'Why do you have to touch everything?'

He punches his hand through the paper microwave. Becoming more incensed, he shreds the paper cupboards.

'I don't think you're supposed to do that,' the estate agent says on her return.

He turns to the sink and the taps are floppy, disintegrating paper: 'the whole kitchen is made of paper'.

The estate agent runs outside, shedding her disguise as she goes, the couple in pursuit. By the time she gets outside, she has transformed into a young boy. Waiting there are three more young boys, huge crayons in hand. The couple turn to face the house. The whole thing is paper. Its windows are crayon-drawn and lopsided, and the proportions are all wrong.

Lakoff and Johnson as steamers, as hackers. Down a layer, down a layer—paper, still. But paper with not inconsiderable structural potential. Have you ever tried, holding the entirety of a book with both hands, to rip it apart?

Paper in a world where paper is the only building material available. Make do, make mend, because the alternative is literal nothingness. Paper compacted, as if by compacting it could become wood again, could become beams, scaffolding, supporting walls. But it is still paper—it flexes, it can be peeled, it warps, cracks, expands and flakes. Paper, yes, but necessarily so—what else do we have?

(A kiss made possible because of a Yellow Pages, a papier mâché mind.)

[53] The approaches to metaphor detailed in this book come from the realm of Cognitive Linguistics—an approach to language that stems from three tenets:

- The function of language is to convey meaning.
- Linguistic description must rely on constructs that are psychologically real.
- Grammar emerges from usage (Dąbrowska, 2016).

Metaphors We Live By, centring as it does the role of metaphor in thought and language, is regarded as a foundational text within the broader filed of cognitive linguistics.

Metaphors have entailments that extend along logical lines beyond their initial starting point—if, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, ARGUMENT is WAR, then arguments are also things that should be won, sometimes at any cost. Conceptual metaphors, then, can be seen as licenses to think, talk and so act in a certain way[54].

Lakoff and Johnson imagine a culture where argumentation is instead understood as a dance, where the goal of an argument is to 'perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way' (1980, p. 2)

[54] In the film *Arrival* (2016), aliens come to Earth in vessels that hang, serenely, as if frozen in time seconds before impact, feet from the floor. The spacecraft's exteriors are inscrutable, windowless, seemingly carved from some basalt-like material. The word's governments send language experts up into the craft to ascertain one simple thing—*what is your purpose.* The Chinese government try to communicate with the aliens using mahjong, a game much like chess, in that the concepts of competition and conflict are built into its rules—a draw can only occur only when neither player has triumphed and there are no more tiles to bring into play. A war of attrition in which both sides are left spent.

Where the protagonist of the story, an American linguist called Louise Banks, understands that they have come to 'offer tool', the Chinese government concludes that they have come to 'use weapon'.

(Give someone a hammer, and everything will start to look like a nail.)

Weaponised Silences

‘It’s like the fire triangle, John tried to explain to Su as they were both getting ready to go to work. ‘You get rid of the heat, or fuel, or oxygen, and try as you may, you’re not going to get a fire’.

They had argued last night, or rather, John had fallen silent the moment something like an argument started, and Su had (as John might have put it) not got the memo, and did not get the memo until he asked her, half asleep, to keep it down, because they had work in the morning, but even then the argument continued in her head, and she tossed and turned with its twists and turns, wide awake until suddenly she wasn’t, and fell asleep, exhausted.

Su had woken up in a conciliatory mood. She had asked, with a hand on his waist, if they could talk about it now, with clear heads, over their breakfast. John had recoiled, actually physically recoiled from her, and said he didn’t want another argument. ‘Why are you acting like I’m the sole cause?’ Su had said. And that’s when he told her about his fucking fire triangle philosophy.

‘So I’m the fuel? You’re saying that when we do argue it’s my fault?’

‘I like to think of you as the spark,’ John said, carefully. Sparks were good, right? And he did think of Su as a spark, in a way, bright and fizzing. She lit up rooms with her presence and ignited lively conversation. ‘*A* spark, rather,’ he corrected.

‘Good save.’ Except it wasn’t, and Su glared at him as she said it, and John threw his arms up in exasperation, as though he were dealing with an unreasonable child (just like that, Su thought), and Su slammed the door, and stormed out the house, and John stood there, Su knew from experience, frozen to the spot, watching her through the window. He could not see how someone like him, someone who shied away from conflict and took pride in doing so, could ever be seen to be the cause of arguments.

And Su thought about that all day, about how John saw her and her alone as the root cause. It was true that he backed away at the slightest sign of conflict, but why should that absolve him? And she didn’t want to absolve him, she wanted him to be implicated, fairly, but in no uncertain terms, for his role. Things weren’t as they should be between them, things were not as they had been, and she had been bending over backwards of late, trying to make it work, trying to figure out what had gone wrong between them. In response, John had become even more inscrutable, closed off, as though him opening up would illuminate how far they had drifted from each other, would expose the gap as something unfixable.

Yes, he should shoulder some of the blame, but his cowering made him slippery, unpindownable— she was sure, in fact, that his backing away, consciously or unconsciously, was a smokescreen, hiding the role that he played. How to prove this to him, when their arguments, seen from the outside, had her fingerprints all over them? She would, after all, invariably be the one to raise her voice first, the one to storm out, the one to call the other an asshole.

At work she planned her line of attack. She thought about the immorality of ignoring a humanitarian crisis, of how incendiary a policy of non-interventionism could be. She thought about that philosophical problem where walking by a lake, ignoring a child drowning not far from the shore, is as bad as pushing a child into a lake, knowing that they will drown. Or then again is it? Was that the point of it? Yes, of course it was, and who could possibly disagree?

Inaction is action. John sitting and seething was not a neutral act. That was the lesson.

But then what if the child in the water is an adult who might pull you under, or at the very least break your arm in the rescue attempt?

How much did John risk on the rare occasion when he did argue back, speak his mind? Not much, surely?

In the gloomy silences John enforced following one of her ‘outbursts’ (his word, not hers) she felt like she was drowning. Silences are suffocating, bad atmospheres can invade your psyche, your lungs, make your ears ring, weigh heavy on your chest, make you choke on your own words, sharpen them when they do eventually come. How much was John willing to sacrifice to make this relationship work? How little of it was he sacrificing now, sat with sullen stubbornness for fifteen minutes or more now on the end of the sofa, pretending to watch the 6 o’clock news, petulant, all because Su had snapped a trifle too sharply at him, about—about god-knows what, some trifling thing that mattered squat then, and mattered squat now.

‘We are going to have an argument,’ Su said suddenly as the news finished. ‘And I’m going to start it, because apparently I always do. And you’re not going to close off, you’re going to listen and respond, and disagree if you really fucking have to.’ She’d cornered him, and he looked cornered, actually drew his knees up to his chest. She tried not to take much joy in seeing him look that way, but by god was it satisfying. ‘Inaction is action,’

‘What do you mean?’

‘I mean that you withdrawing from me, doing nothing, you sitting there all high and mighty, is a cause of conflict. It’s like something small happens, some disagreement that’s so small in the grand scheme, and then you close off and withhold any chance of a resolution. It’s cruel.’

‘I wouldn’t withdraw if you weren’t so quick to flare up.’

She wasn’t all that bad, surely? Outspoken and forthright, for sure, but that had always been her way, for as far back as she could remember—a way she half inherited, half forged together with her mother, she explained. It’s how they communicated, and no one was ever angry for long, preferring to get it all out there, storm out of the room, into the rain if necessary, and so burn out in a flash rather than sit and smoulder. Arguments were a way for Su and her mother to know where they stood, a way to poke and prod their relationship, a stress test that was invariably passed, the passing nonetheless a necessary thing, that reaffirmed their closeness.

‘I don’t see why the poking and prodding. That’s never been the way I’ve worked. For me, it’s like, what does it say about us, if we need to poke and prod, constantly? Does that not mean we are dissatisfied, that there’s always going to be a gap?’

He was right, but also wrong, Su thought. He was right to draw those kinds of conclusions from what she had said (stress test really was an ugly, cold way of looking at it). ‘Let me start again. At least you know when I’m annoyed. With you it’s like a guessing game, all of the time. It’s exhausting. I never know what you are thinking, about anything, and what else am I to do but assume the worst? And all of these silences, they grow. These small things become real things, they grow and grow, become bigger than the sum of their parts, fed by inaction, by us not nipping them in the bud. There’s this dread that grows where the silences are, and maybe they shouldn’t, but how can they not, when the silences just pile up and up? All these blind spots, these spaces where things could have been resolved, but weren’t.’ Su paused. ‘It’s more like a dance.’

‘A dance?’

‘A dance.’

A dance, Su explained, slowly, figuring it out as she went, in which two people, move to the same music, but with different steps. Sometimes they move apart, sometimes they are right up close, cheek to cheek. They are not the same person—why should their steps be the same? Why shouldn’t the spatial relationships between them change?

‘We are not the same person,’ John repeated thoughtfully.

‘And it’s not like they aren’t moving in time. They are dancing to the same music, even as they spin away, and besides, one or the other always spins back. Their steps are different, and that’s fine, because there is this broader synergy going on.

‘So you’re saying we are spinning away from each other?’

‘I’m saying it’s inevitable and natural that this should happen. And that we don’t always have to agree entirely, but it’s only through agreeing to dance in the first place that we can find out we are dancing to the same music at least, that we can get back in step.’

‘You’re saying that I refuse to dance.’

‘I think you saying that has made me realise that’s what I’m saying, yes.’

‘I’ve got two left feet.’

‘I know. Can you at least try? I need to know what you are thinking, John, else I assume the worst. I assume you’re spinning off somewhere different entirely, dancing to some song I’ve never heard, that you play just to yourself, over and over in your head.’

‘I’ll try.’

‘That was the most beautiful argument we’ve ever had,’ said Su, her arms wrapped awkwardly around John, because he was sat rigid, taken aback, not knowing what to make of this reaction. He had listened, he had understood. He had even *felt,* in those moments of compromise, even as they both remained at opposite ends of the sofa, as though they were moving closer, were moving more in sync, spiralling steadily towards a common centre.

But for all the talk of dancing and music, he still could not imagine a John for whom an argument was not something to avoid. An argument with Su in particular was a maze to outrun, its walls shifting, colluding against him, its pits almost invisible, their spikes shimmering like heat haze, its minotaurs sometimes foam-fanged, otherwise vicious, but always roving.

In truth, he was, by and large, happy to keep what he deemed to be risky thoughts to himself, until such time that his thoughts mirrored Su’s more closely (she could be endlessly persuasive, and he was happy to be persuaded), or else until the divergence didn’t matter, until the issue was no longer a flashpoint.

Even this ‘argument’ had left him drained. That’s one thing that Su’s dance thing didn’t account for—the fruitlessness of it all. How many arguments ended with one or other side having changed their mind? Sure, you might tinker with your argument, make little concessions outwardly, but it’s all cosmetic. Each time a war of attrition. You wear each other down, until you’re mentally drained, and fucking again. And you change your mind—maybe you change your mind. Maybe six months later you change your mind. But god knows if that had anything to do with all these spats. Maybe you just read something in a newspaper one day, maybe you read a few things. Maybe a thousand things built up. Maybe the dam just broke.

And he was ill-suited to wars of attrition. Arguments were things in which he could not help but invest himself fully. Heart, soul, and everything else that comprised him, all thrown in. it was exhausting. Su knew to keep parts of herself in reserve. She could argue with her head, and her heart would be kept out of it[55]. She could argue with her heart, and in her head, she would be would be thinking about how there was nothing in the fridge for dinner.

How much had been resolved through this argument about arguing? Could this argument be stronger than the years spent thinking another way? How, when he didn’t have the energy to argue, would be conjure the energy to bring this new model to mind, and apply it each and every time?

Had they really and truly re-written the text about the text? Could the frame be more powerful than the painting?

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[55] It reminded john of when they stood in front of art together. Su could wax lyrical about it whatever it was—a painting, a sculpture a video installation. She could say whatever it was that came to her mind, she could contradict herself, and she could do so with a kind of disconnect, without feeling self-conscious. For John, it felt personal, as if in reacting to the art in any way would be to let a little hidden part of himself loose, a little part of him that was sacred, shameful, or both. Or else maybe in saying what he thought he would display his pretensions, his ignorance, the inadequacy of his thoughts, his mind, his self.

Maybe nothing had been sorted, but it was over, thank fuck it was over, and Su was embracing him, and the embrace held promise of more, and he was happy to go along with that.[56]

[56] Aikin notes that the case against war metaphors rests, in part, on the notion that they 'encourage a conception of argument as an adversarial activity' (2011, p.251). There is, however, an 'essential adversariality' (2011, p.258) tied up in the concept of argument, just as there is an intrinsic roundness to circles—if arguments were not adversarial in any way, they would cease to be arguments at all, and become something else. Alternative metaphors, then, should complement the argument as war metaphor, rather than seek to usurp it entirely, insofar as they should acknowledge the nature of arguments as involving an element of conflict, whilst moderating the metaphor's potential to provoke needlessly combative actions and approaches.

A fucking dance? It sort of worked, as a metaphor (John seemed happy, and had resolved to 'do better'*),* but still, a dance? She knew where the idea had come from. Deep down, she saw confrontations as performances. Viewed by a passer-by, or a couple at the next table over, they should have a clear ebb and flow, a dynamism, a sense of movement, a beginning, a middle, an end. If written down, by the same passer-by, the same couple (doing their best to hide their interest, of course), they should have the same.

And so that is where the idea had come from. It had little to do with arriving at a truth, together, but, having said the word, *dance,* alternative possible meanings had announced themselves to her, and she had been more than happy to go along with them.

Rootless?

‘I don’t care about your generalisations, my boyfriend is breaking up with me’. This, Lakoff reports, was his student’s (not unreasonable) response to him hijacking her love life for the purpose of linguistic theorisation.

If Lakoff's account as a whole leaves something of an apocryphal taste in the mouth, then this final touch, this comedic, bathetic finale, is surely the seasoning. What Lakoff’s account *does* do (fabricated or not) is situate the lightbulb moment in a time and a place (Newton beneath the apple tree; Archimedes in the bath). It grounds generalisations and theory in specified character and dilemma. It gives us plot. It lays out in narrative form the discrete parts that are up for discussion.

The student with a ‘metaphor problem’ (fabricated or not) was more concerned with the rather more pressing fact that, for whatever reasons, her boyfriend was trying to break up with her. For her, the breakup was foregrounded, rooted, at the heart of her experience, these generalisations connected only tangentially, loosely, if at all, with her own direct experience.

And who can blame her? Life's surfaces, its plots and characters and sensations (its pots and pans, its prickling grasses underfoot, its drunken spats) are so immediate, its underlying edifices murky and paling in comparison, brought to the fore only through conscious effort.

Harnad (1990) formulated the ‘symbol grounding problem’. The problem can be sketched out as follows.

Models of cognition which focus on the ability of the mind to manipulate abstract symbols hit a brick wall, in that these abstractions have their own existence, their own arbitrary shape, independent of what they symbolise. If the manipulations that these symbols go through are no longer determined by the rules that govern the symbolised entity, in what sense can these manipulations be said to have any bearing on reality, once they enter into relationships with each other through language?

Harnad offers the analogy of trying to learn a foreign language solely by looking at a dictionary of that language—without knowing what these symbols are connected to, you are working with thin air.

Symbols must be grounded somehow, they must be connected to external information, to be *about* anything at all. The alternative is meaninglessness, with each ungrounded symbol propped up only by more ungrounded symbols, the construction floating, wispy, indistinct, and disconnected from anything real, anything with phenomenal existence.

Crick and Koch (1990) hypothesise that our consciousness may arise from certain neural oscillations in the cerebral cortex. This theory, Chalmers suggests, tells us 'nothing about why these oscillations 'should themselves be accompanied by experience' (1995, p.207) Here, the reductive approach fails.

Consciousness cannot be explained away with reference solely to basic, physical processes. Chalmers advocates a non-reductive approach, in which consciousness is regarded as a fundamental feature of the universe, citing the introduction of electromagnetic charge and electromagnetic forces in the nineteenth century when mechanical processes could shed no light on the electromagnetic processes being observed. We will, predicts Chalmers, take 'experience itself as a fundamental feature of the world, alongside mass, charge, and space-time'.

Perhaps we should regard metaphor as being fundamental in a similar kind of way?

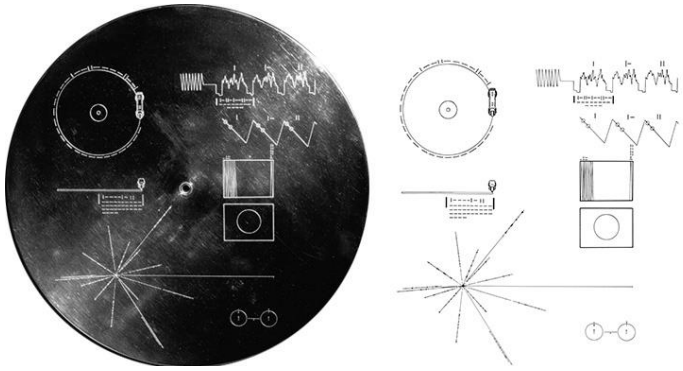
'If you try and take a cat apart to see how it works, the first thing you have on your hands is a nonworking cat' wrote Douglas Adams (2002, p.135). Once you take consciousness apart, it does not work. You simply don't get what you want. You get something reductive, dry, and ultimately useless. Similarly, when you try and talk about the world and come to understand it without metaphor what you are left with, dry, dissembled and still and uninspiring on the floor, is something that does not work like it did before, something that has lost its 'life'.

A world understood without metaphor, a paraphrased metaphor, a metaphor dropped for literal language, is the dryness you get when you try to explain consciousness. It is Douglas Adams' cat. It is a list of ingredients and you, sat at the kitchen table, salivating over what could have been.

Maybe, then, metaphor not only shouldn't be picked apart, but can't be? Maybe it is both fundamental and ungrounded—maybe it just *is*.

In 1977, the voyager spacecraft left our atmosphere. 40,000 years will pass before it reaches a habitable planet.

A gold-plated phonograph record was placed inside, containing variety of sounds, both natural and manmade, and 115 images: sand dunes, dolphins, human sex organs; trains, an airport, a radio telescope; the sound of surf, whales; culturally and temporally diverse music, greetings in fifty-five languages. A 'kind of time capsule, intended to communicate a story of our world' to any civilisation that might pluck the craft out of space like lint from the air. Also provided were cartridges, needles, and, on the record cover, instructions 'in a symbolic language' (NASA) explaining how the record should be played.



(*The Golden Record,* Lomberg, 2017)

How to communicate humanity's story? How to measure its place in the universe in a quantifiable way, lacking a common language with which to do so?

Mathematics is the language in which God has written the universe...

Which might be true, belief in god notwithstanding, but the possibility that the symbols which denote universal mathematical systems here on earth are duplicated beyond it is vanishingly small. The first challenge, then, was how to demonstrate how our number system works. One of the images on the record represents numbers first with dots, which are labelled with Arabic numerals, which are then presented in equations, showing how these can be added together, subtracted, and multiplied and fractionalised.

But this only gets you so far. Numbers alone do not offer a sense of scale. How to give numbers weight, length and time?

Hydrogen has just the one proton, just the one electron, spinning either in the same, or opposite directions. As they switch from one configuration to the other, radiation is released, this radiation having a wavelength of 21 centimetres.

On one image was depicted a hydrogen atom, with its electron and proton spinning first in parallel, and then in opposite directions. '1M', then, becomes the weight of a hydrogen atom,1 ↑ the time it takes for the electron to switch direction. A diagram of the radiation wave, presented alongside the image of the hydrogen atom, offers the opportunity to explain centimetres, metres and kilometres.

Hydrogen, most common element in the universe, gave the scientists a grounding from which to build a measurement system, derivable from its universal physical properties. This measurement system is then used to contextualise diagrams of our solar system, to demonstrate our physical proportions, how long we live for, and where.

'It gave a fuller picture of human life by being able to include things like that' (Lomberg, 2017).

‘For we are like tree trunks in the snow. In appearance they lie sleekly and a little push should be enough to set them rolling. No, it can't be done, for they are firmly wedded to the ground. But see, even that is only appearance.’ (Kafka, 2005, p.382)

What are metaphor's axioms? What, if anything, saves metaphorical meaning from being ungrounded, unrooted, meaningless?

Embodied Cognition and Material Culture – from Experience to Metaphor and Back Again

Board Games

Su and John were sat cross-legged on their bed, the board game *Concept* balanced precariously on a cushion between them. Su was pissed off.

The rules read as follows:

> 'In Concept, your goal is to guess words through the association of icons. A team of two players—neighbours at the table—choose a word or phrase that the other players need to guess. Acting together, they place pieces judiciously on the available icons on the game board.' (Concept, 2013)

The first counter placed, the largest, shaped like a question mark, denotes the primary concept that the word or phrase falls under. Subsequently, smaller, colour coded counters, shaped like exclamation marks, are added to indicate sub-concepts that the primary concept can be broken down into, with smaller counters yet, cube shaped (also colour coded so as to link with the relevant sub-concept), breaking these sub-concepts down further. Icons on the board include arrows representing up, down, away, together, transference; another, like the universal sign for recycling, with two arrows, pointing clockwise, curled in a circle, denoting, amongst other things, repetition, spinning. Others represent containers, people, films, places, monuments, etc. Yet more can be read to suggest certain activities: death, eating, or conflict. The number of counters placed on an icon can add emphasis, should the guessing player find themselves pursuing the wrong line of enquiry, or suggest a multitude.

For example, a player tasked with representing 'on top of the world' might place their largest counter on the icon suggestive of talking, to indicate 'figure of speech'. A red exclamation mark might go on the smiling face, a red cube on the icon with the arrow pointing up, to demonstrate that happiness is portrayed through height. A blue exclamation mark might be placed on the icon portraying the globe, to indicate that the world as a concept is present.

And Su was pissed off, because John just didn't get it. The card he had picked told him to represent with the counters the act of flying a kite. The first counter he had placed on the triangle, because, in his words, 'kites are triangle shaped, kind of, and so that's what concept they are'.

'That's not it!' Su had said, and explained (patiently, she thought) that it was a leisure activity (there was an icon for that) and that subsequent counters could have been placed on icons suggestive of height, wind, and control.

But that's not what had tipped her over the edge. Her card, in the very next round, had asked her to describe 'falling head over heels in love'. She had upped her game, she felt: her first counter she placed on the speech bubble icon, subsequent counters were placed first on the arrow pointing down, then on the picture of a head, and then the recycling-like icon, and then the foot, and then on the container with an arrow pointing inside it, and then the heart. (negative control)

And he hadn't even tried, it seemed: 'Talking about falling? Love of falling? Falling and spinning? Skydiving! No? Not close? Heads, shoulders, knees and toes!'

Head over heels indeed.

Noumenon, n

1. An object knowable only by the mind or intellect, not by the senses; *spec.* (in Kantian philosophy) an object of purely intellectual intuition, devoid of all phenomenal attributes. (OED, 2016)

Before Your Eyes

In defining the human conceptual system, Barsalou and Kiefer (2013) ask us, by way of comparison, to consider the memory of a digital camera, whose representations of moments in time are generalised, insofar as the world before the lens is captured indiscriminately, as a single static mass. A picture of a hammer and a bent nail has been processed in exactly the same way as a picture of chalk and cheese, or a volcanic landscape—that is, as light and dark—and reproduced in exactly the same manner—that is, as a matrix of dots, nothing more.

In contrast, a shot of the world through your eyes is one that encompasses 'objects, settings, events, mental states, properties, and relations' (2013, p.4). Seeing a hammer and a bent nail left on the sideboard cannot help but put you in mind of the relationship between the two objects, of the relative softness of the nail, and speak to you perhaps of a task abandoned in frustration.

From when we are infants, a 'powerful attentional mechanism' (Ibid) roves over these innumerable snapshots, and common patterns and categories of experience are teased out. Mandler and McDonough (1998), for instance, found that infants develop concepts such as animal, furniture and container when they are between 7 and 11 months old.

Primary Metaphors

In *The Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System* (1980b), Lakoff and Johnson divide our most basic of non-metaphorical concepts into three primary categories:

- Spatial orientations: UP-DOWN, IN-OUT, NEAR-FAR, FRONT-BACK
- Ontological concepts: ENTITY, SUBSTANCE, CONTAINER, PERSON
- Structured experiences and activities: EATING, MOVING, TRANSFERRING OBJECTS FROM PLACE TO PLACE

These non-metaphorical concepts are understood as they are, on their own terms, coming as they do from our experience of and interaction with the world. From these spring forth metaphorical concepts, which are structured in terms of their non-metaphorical counterparts:

- Orientational metaphors, the most basic, which organise abstract concepts according to linear, non-metaphorical orientations: MORE, CONTROL, GOOD and RATIONAL are UP, (etc.), as in, *being on top of the situation*, or *things are going downhill*.
- Ontological metaphors, which make an entity or substance of something that is not an entity or substance: SOCIETY/ THE MIND is a MACHINE, THE MIND is a COMPUTER (etc.), as in, *we are cogs in a machine', I am running out of steam, you've got a screw loose, I'm sorry, that just doesn't compute, The silicon chip inside her head/ Gets switched to overload*
- Structural metaphors (the largest group) which see one activity understood in terms of another: UNDERSTANDING is SEEING, TIME is A LANSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH (etc.), as in *I see what you mean,* or, *my appointment is looming large on the horizon.*

Grady (1997) introduced the idea of primary metaphors to describe how primary scenes (commonly recurring moments in which a physical, sensory experience is also accompanied by a more abstract cognitive experience) give rise to our most basic metaphorical concepts.

Primary metaphors stem from correlations between very basic, universally available perceptual experiences that we have from our infancy. These correlations, filtered through a puerile mind, become conflations. In infancy, the subjective feeling of intimacy is conflated with the act of being physically close to someone. These strong associations between the physical, bodily experience of being close to someone and the more abstract, subjective experience of feeling emotionally *close* to someone mean that the line begins to blur, the two domains are subsumed into one. As we age we become better at separating out these two domains, but the associations remain, rendering phrases like 'we were never close' intuitively understandable. Likewise, this physical closeness is accompanied by warmth and a feeling of affection, leading us to understand and talk about affection in terms of heat (AFFECTION is WARMTH)—loving people are described as 'warm hearted', for example.

UP is GOOD, for another example, comes from the feeling of being ill and so lying down, as opposed to feeling well and being up and mobile, and which leads to phrases like 'on top of the world'.

These most grounded and simple of metaphors allow, in maturity, for more complex conceptualisations. That we think and speak about theories as a physical construction is instantiated by such phrases as 'your ideas *broke down* under *heavy* scrutiny, the new discovery *shook the foundations* of our understanding, and the facts of the matter did not

support his conclusions. Premises and key assumptions are treated as though they were the foundations of a building, holding the remainder of the theory erect; arguments are as if intermediary elements, supporting the conclusion which is regarded as the uppermost element; the logic of an argument, how its facts and claims work together, is a framework; if these things work well together, and the argument is convincing, then the result is a *watertight* construction, one that *resists collapse*.

Other examples of prominent primary metaphors are given in bold below, with corresponding linguistic instantiations in italics (Gibbs, 2017, p.29):

EMOTIONAL STATES ARE LOCATIONS
He had always liked the way she said it, 'In love', emphasis on the 'in', as though love were something you were wrapped in, a filter that descended over everything, transforming it into someplace else.

MORE IS UP
'They're going to up my dosage. Yes, that's normal'

SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS
'For the last time, radiation from the sun is not the same as radiotherapy. The sun is not going to cur...'
'It's close enough!'

IMPORTANT IS BIG
Just because her illness eclipsed everything else, it did not mean that there was not still washing up liquid to buy, energy meters to read.

TIME IS MOTION
Feeling, at times, even in the bed she had not left properly for days, as though she were speeding, each near miss a brush with the end of time.

KNOING IS SEEING
'You see what I mean? Life goes on. It just does.'
'Yes.'
'You don't, do you?'
'No.'

DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS
The fact that he couldn't picture a future without her weighed heavily on him

UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING
'You will, John. One day you'll look back, and you'll get it. You just will. It will be like you always had it.'

PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS
'The goal here is her comfort. That is what we want for her.'[57]

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[57] The distinction between metaphor and metonymy has been sketched out, insofar as metaphor involves cross domain mappings, and metonymy involves referents and terms that are from the same domain, and are already strongly associated. The association is often one of part to whole, or whole to part, as in 'she's a pretty face' and '10 Downing Street released a statement' respectively.

Interplay between these devices, however, is common, with metonymy coming into play to allow access to metaphorical meaning (Goossens, 1990). Such combinations fall under the banner of metaphtonymy. Metonymy is often found within metaphor, and metaphor is often found within metonymy (integrated metaphtonymy). The metaphor *to bite one's tongue*, for example, used in the

sense of preventing oneself from talking, contains metonymy, with *tongue* standing in here for a person's propensity for speech.

In addition, metaphor often springs from metaphor, or metaphor from metonymy (cumulative metaphtonymy). *To be on one's hind legs*, used to describe someone defending themselves, is metonymy insofar as *hind legs* stands in metonymic relationship to a whole animal rearing up to defend itself. The resulting image activates the metaphor *people are animals*.

If the primary metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH arises from a conflation between physical and emotional closeness, then these domains can be characterised as metonymies, insofar as they are, for all intents and purposes, experienced as the same domain. The deconflation that later occurs, after which affection and emotional closeness can operate independently, as distinct conceptual structures, opens up the possibility for metaphor

('You need to be closer to me.'

'I can't get any closer. I'm practically crushing you.'

'That's not what I meant, John.')

The same argument can be applied to all primary metaphors, which has led some researchers to categorise primary metaphors as, at heart, metonymies rather than metaphors (Kövecses, 2013)

Image Schemas

The source domains in many conceptual metaphors are drawn from our experiences as bodies moving through space. These 'patterns of bodily experience' (Gibbs, 2017, p.23) give rise to image schemas, which are 'simple spatial stories' (Mandler and Cánovos, 2014, p.511) about the ways in which objects can relate to and interact with one another. Three such image schemas are SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, CENTRE-PERIPHERY and BALANCE. The first (of which LIFE is a JOURNEY as subset) is generalised from the multitude of ways in which we move from one place to another with a goal in mind. The second from our experience of cores and edges, be they physical (apple cores and orange skins) or perceptual (the horizon, the limits of our sight).

The third is tied to our experience of remaining upright, the work of our legs and core muscles in allowing us to do so. This most basic, physical of operations structures our metaphorical understanding across multiple abstract domains. That variations on the word 'balance' (or, indeed, 'imbalance') can be used intelligibly to fill in the blanks below

Psychological _____
Power _____
_____ Equation
_____Argument

indicates that a structural similarity exists between these concepts, the underlying image schema of BALANCE, giving us the conceptual knowledge needed to talk and think about each of these domains[58]. Metaphorical elaborations on this theme lead to concepts such as the scales of justice, or the notion of weighing up the pros and cons.

Source domains, and their relational meanings, are projected onto target domains selectively. We do not, for example, talk about how we must keep our abdominal muscles tight in order to balance an equation. The image schematic nature of our metaphorical understanding goes some way towards explaining why some relations are projected, and others are not. Image schemas, drawn as they are from patterns of experience, are generalised, and highly abstracted, which means that they are shorn of irrelevant details.

The 'invariance principle' provides another such constraint, describing how metaphorical mappings preserve the structure of image-schemas in a way that is 'consistent with the inherent structure of the target domains' (Lakoff, 1993, p.215). Complex

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[58] 'You can't imagine the rush that ensue
When you get three dimensions stuffed into two' (Aesop Rock, 2016)

ontological[59] and epistemic[60] correspondences emerge in line with this principle. Metaphors do not merely highlight these correspondences, but create them, in such a way that the relations between elements remain stable across the source and target domain. It is this systematicity that allows us to use metaphor to reason with and think about abstract concepts.

[59] Relations between elements in a conceptual metaphor. For example:

Source: JOURNEY	**Target: LOVE**
Travellers	Lovers
Vehicle	Relationship
Destinations	Life goals

[60] Relations that arise through the projection of ontological correspondences. For example:

A fork in the road	Splitting up
Being stuck somewhere	A feeling of stagnation in the relationship

Returning for a moment to the synaesthetic newborns, to Wagner's infants, their attention focused more acutely when perceiving abstract similarities between pitch, and movement or pitch and sharpness, and as well to the 98% of adults who identify a rounded shape as being Bouba, a spiky shape as kiki, we see that the basic metaphoric associations we are born with, which endure, are not just as if vestigial organs—interesting to think about, but irrelevant really in terms of day-to-day function—but are the basic metaphoric building blocks for more complex concepts.

And these concepts are 'not just matters of the intellect...they also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.3)

The house, newly inherited from Su's nan. Keys newly palmed. Its garden wild, neglected, beset on all sides by grey concrete and the vines that greened it.

Months passed.

The garden tamer now they had made the time to make it their own. Rough paths had been hacked and mowed through it that led, this one here, to a bench for two, this one just beyond it to a shed for one. Others led nowhere in particular—to corners where wild flowers clamoured for sunlight that was mottle only, where the motorway rumble could well be the sound of pebbles being clattered in the surf, where sickly sweet sentiments lost their sickly and uncomfortably sticky edge; or past a trampoline, half hidden in growth, on whose canvas surface a spirit level would have slid right off, on the surface of which a film of moss had grown. Su would find herself standing in the garden, looking to the sky, and imagine being up there, looking down, the roughly hewn paths like grooves, like lightning.

Trimming back the tree which dominated the end of their garden revealed a tree house, fashioned from wood now rotten through. This John mended haphazardly, and much to Su's amusement (and bemusement—why did he not just tear it down? Was he perhaps thinking further ahead than she gave him credit for?), with palettes and plastics rescued from skips at dusk. Further hacking revealed a mountain, no exaggeration, a haphazard mountain, of old tires fastened together atop concrete pillars of varying lengths, a concrete slide lined with industrial tubing, and concrete skipping stones across a shallow, concrete pond whose amphibious tenants fled when Su arrived, clattering all the way, with the tools to clean it.

'Quite the childhood you must have had here,' John said when at last the work was done.

'Quite. My Grandad started building all this to distract himself, after nan died. When he and my mum started to become estranged, he worked harder and harder on it. Trying to show that he could be a family man, that's what my mum said. By the time it was almost finished, by the time it was halfway safe for a child to roam in, they weren't speaking at all, and I was no longer a child, nineteen or so, too old and proud to find joy in it. That's then the hoarding started, although I wouldn't draw any links there. Not that I saw him much once it got to that stage. By the time I was old enough to take it upon myself to visit him on my own, unsupervised, the whole thing was overgrown. I never got to see all this completed,' Su said, and then, pointedly:

'Not until now.'

John tried hard to swallow the lump in his throat. Wiped sweat from his face exaggeratedly, coughed.

He was a self-made man, her grandad would tell her. He had started at 'the company' the day after he finished school, making gears on the factory floor. As a supervisor, he was feared. As a director and shareholder, he was despised. 'The company' flourished because of him, he told anyone who'd listen. Under his watch, it sold more gears than any of its local competitors.

Looking back, her grandad, what she could remember of him anyway, seemed to be a man immune to abstraction. He dealt in what had form, what could be dug out or planted, chopped or sanded. When he became sick, she remembered, it was that the garden was going to shit that irked him, that there was work to be done that was being neglected. Though he spent all of the time he could in the garden, it was to work on it. When the work was done, and the tools packed away, he would retreat into the house. When he looked out onto the garden from the kitchen window, it was not to bathe in what he had created, but to note with dissatisfaction some imperfection. When he and Su's nan had saved enough, enough to buy this place, he liked it because it had more rooms than his parent's house; he liked that he could afford something better than what they could. When people knocked on their door, asking shyly if they might be able to see inside, he would grunt and close the door on them.

He never learned how to pronounce the name of the house's architect, didn't care that it was one of a kind, and regarded as a classic example of its style. He didn't care that its form was meant to evoke certain feelings, thoughts.

If he was a man who ever felt at a crossroads, who ever felt on top of the world or down in the dumps, then these abstractions went unspoken. Jobs that were done were a good thing; jobs left unfinished were bad. There was no talk of trajectory, or forking paths, where another way could have been chosen—just a series of tasks that, completed, made him bearable to be around. Incompleteness made him violent. Literal roots too deep to uproot became literal bruises, once he had come in from the garden, her mother had explained, first on Su's nan's face, then on her face, too, until age softened what he could achieve with his fists, and a stroke took his right hook, and he laid what blows he could with his words, but by that point she had left home, and he had resorted, she heard, to raging down at his local with such impotence that he became, rather than a menace, a curio, 'harmless'.

When he did, finally, descend to outward signs of abstraction, it was on his deathbed, and in a way divorced seemingly from the facts of his life. He had never 'found his place' in life, he had explained, tears in his eyes, and at that point Su's mum left the room, shaking her head, fists clenched, and by the time she came back, two days later, he was all but gone. 'He could have fucked off to find his place in life, left at any time, and no one would have cried, let alone stopped him,' Su's mum said. 'I've never been one to put deathbed words on a pedestal, and I'm not going to start for that bastard.'

All of this Su had been aware of, first acutely, and then dimly, as they worked on the garden together. And as the connections with her grandad became less painful (with every hack at the undergrowth, with every weed pulled), it seemed to Su (watching from the kitchen window or wielding a shovel beside John) that the whole garden was alive with potential meaning. She stood atop the concrete mountain, newly-cleared, feeling victorious, powerful. Standing with the house behind, and John before her, lost in the undergrowth, hacking and mowing paths through it, she was overcome by a sense of what had passed (they had not yet got around to clearing her grandad's hoardings from the house), the beautiful, sunny present in which she was stood, and a future, potential futures being revealed, shooting off this way and that.

And then, of course, there were the facts of the garden. What was there, simply there. And what was there was a ready-made kid's paradise, when you got down to it, picture perfect, now, it was as complete as it would ever be, complete in its imperfections, and lacking only the games of childhood, the childish laughter; the grubby, scabby knees.

On the subject of having kids of their own, John was coy, embarrassed to address it directly, even. This, at least, was a start.

The Well-Grounded Man

The first time it happened was an accident. The second time, too. The third time the accident repeated itself only moments before the idea was about to cross his mind anyway. The fourth and fifth times followed in quick succession.

For the sixth, John set aside a whole hour. Considered lighting candles. Took the phone off the hook.

Only fizzing suds remained now, but John was still in the bath, feeling all over like the soon-to-be-discovered, pleasantly cool underside of a pillow in summertime. The anti-slip rubber bathmat that Su had insisted confusedly and with some urgency during her last week alive that he go out and buy had been placed upside down, at the foot of the bath. Two of its ends had been folded so that some of the suction cups vacuumed the mat to the porcelain, and kept it in its desired place. The rest of its suction cups faced, then, the ceiling, suctioning on nothing yet. John's toes furled and unfurled nearby. The mat itself was a creamy pink, and Su had described it as an octopus tentacle, chopped from its octopus[61]. It was, she continued (and at this point she had lost John) to an octopus what a strip of cheap laminate flooring is to a real tree.

The sounds of happy summer afternoons happening elsewhere but audible in through a window frosted for privacy's sake. Through which he could see his friends, who had arrived midway through the hour he had set aside. To surprise him, they said, and cheer him up, he knew. He had begrudgingly got out the bath for them. He had wrapped himself in a towel and opened the door to them, dripping, and promised to meet them outside soon enough. Get the barbecue started, he said, I'll just be a minute—but the allure of the bath and its mat was too great. I'll just be a minute, he told himself. He had reached for the plug and pulled it out.

Through the glass, sitting on plastic chairs, his friends were bulbous, their shapes dictated more by the florally embossed cataract fuzz of the window and its refractions than by the forms they in actuality took—anything beyond the branch tapping the window, the garden and everything in it, picked out in large, largely green and censorious strokes. Someone said something. Someone else laughed.

The privacy two-way, but thin.

And John, bathed in light that was heatless this side of the glass, his arms wrapped as far as possible about his person. As if around another person. Except now, the last of the water drained, it was more like hugging a pillow that was cool and dewy all over and that would not warm up for him, no matter how tightly he squeezed.

The expectation being that he should join them out there in the garden, clean and happy to be out there. An expectation that reached its zenith some time back before abating wordlessly around the barbecue. A bone of contention for later.

John knew emotional closeness, he knew all about it, because he had experienced it, and knew the experience for what it was, and could recall what that experience felt like, with some effort, which was of course nothing special or unusual, just memory at play. He knew, or rather, felt, that the experience of emotional closeness itself was a different thing to recalling the experience, but the point still stood—he knew what emotional closeness was, could conjure sad little echoes of it, and reverse engineer, in the moment, something like what emotional closeness was from these echoes, which he knew wasn't the same thing. But he positively knew what he was on about when he spoke of emotional closeness, was the fact

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[61] Sometimes metaphor is just plain fun.

that, sat in the empty bath, cold and shivering slightly now, he was trying to convince himself of.

Because if he did truly know what emotional closeness was, then why was he doing this? Why was he extending one toe out towards the suction cups? Why, when the toe reached the designated suction cup, was sucked on by the designated suction cup, would he feel, and strongly too, sense of emotional closeness, washing over him, receding just as quickly as it formed, but intense, warm, comforting.

Su used to suck on his toes, sometimes, when he wasn't expecting it, to freak him out. Neither of them enjoyed the act itself, but Su enjoyed his reaction, was sent into hysterics by it—the involuntary shivering as though he'd just bitten into a lemon, expecting an orange; the jolting of his foot away with such force that he would often bruise his ankle, stub a moistened toe.

He knew what emotional closeness was. It involved people, real people. It went beyond what could be touched, held, measured with tape, weighed in the hand.

It transcended what could be said without lying—he listed in his head all the phrases he could think of about love. *Closeness,* feeling physically *complete.* Love as an object that could be *given away,* that *grows,* that has *weight,* that *suffocates.* Such material language.

And he knew that everything was, when you got down to it, physical. Physical in the mind because of course everything can be reduced down to electric impulses etc. etc, but that wasn't really what he was getting it.

He knew that these were metaphors. He knew they were pointing towards something beyond themselves, approximating the shape of something not themselves. Su would have put this better.

It was like...

What was it like?

He felt like he was one of those words, one of those phrases, but boiled down to their literal meaning alone. All he had was the world broken up into its constituent parts, that which was actually the case, graspable. Su had imbued everything with the immaterial. That which could be measured by tape was just the framework, when Su was around, something to hang the stuff that really mattered off of, and now the framework was the totality.

He felt like he had traded in Su, living and breathing and touchable but so much more than that, for a plastic doll with impossibly smooth skin and glass eyes.

Not even that—a bathmat.

He felt like one of those people, in the documentaries on TV, who fall in love with the Eiffel tower, a fairground ride, their car[62].

He would shower instead from now on.

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[62] 'There's nothing wrong with loving something you can't hold in your hand.' – Nick Cave (but Su might have said something similar, if she was around, and John wouldn't have got it, and, besides, she would have been missing the point if she had said it).

Embodiment: A Two-Way Street?

John's shower had developed a fault since Su's death, a fault that he had the knowhow, but not the drive or inclination, to fix properly. The fault was this: Something inside the clamp that held the shower head loose enough to be adjusted, tight enough to remain secure once adjusted, had come loose, and could be heard rattling around when struck in frustration. Unless removed from the clamp and wielded by hand, the showerhead drooped and defaulted to facing the wall, bumping gently against it when turned on, the stream weakly propulsive.

Having neither the drive nor the inclination to do things properly, John had used an elastic band to secure the showerhead in a more upright position, and was pleasantly surprised with the result, because although the shower still drooped down, it did so over the course of several seconds as the elastic stretched, bowing as if in veneration for all that John had been through, the stream moving over his head, shoulders, back and down, giving him, much like the bathmat had shown the ability to do, a feeling of intense emotional, as well as physical, warmth. And with the sense of increasing physical cleanliness, a sense of increasing moral purity too, the guilt associated with the bathmat saga more diffuse than it had been[63]. The whole thing felt like how imagined an adult baptism must feel—complex concepts like guilt being distilled into something physical, and having been distilled in this way, washed away in a matter of moments[64].

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[63] GOOD IS CLEAN, DIRTY IS BAD

[64] Zhong and Liljenquist (2006, p.1451) asked participants in an experiment to bring to mind either an instance of ethical or unethical behaviour from their past They were then told to choose a free gift—an antiseptic wipe, or a pencil. Those who brought to mind unethical behaviour were 67% more likely to choose the antiseptic wipe than those who brought to mind an ethical act, suggesting that physical cleaning might pave the way towards a 'clean conscience after [a] moral trespasses'. Dubbed 'The Macbeth Effect', Zhong and Liljenquist's also note that 'physical cleansing, such as bathing or washing hands, is at the core of many religious rituals'.

Boroditsky and Ramscar (2002, p.185) asked a variety of people the question, 'suppose you are told that next Wednesday's meeting has been moved forward 2 days. What day is the meeting now that it has been rescheduled?'

The answer to this question is ambiguous, being either Friday or Monday, depending on whether we interpret it in terms of time being stationary, and moving ourselves through time, or in terms of being stationary, with time moving towards us ('we're approaching the end of the road' and 'the end of the road is fast approaching' respectively').

It was found that people who had just gotten off a flight were more likely to answer 'Friday'. Having just left a situation in which they were conscious of moving forwards, at great speed, from one place to another, they were primed to think about time from an ego-moving perspective, as seeing time as stationary, as something they themselves were moving through, suggesting not only that we lift ideas about space to understand time, but that we lift this metaphorical understanding from our immediate, subjective experience of space, unconsciously.

Williams & Bargh (2008) found that having people hold warm cups of coffee, then asking them to assess another's personality, led them to subsequently judge them as having a 'warmer' personality, suggesting that the primary metaphor *AFFECTION IS WARMTH* was activated, and influenced their reasoning.

Lee & Schwarz (2012) took participants to a room which had been made to smell like fish, farts or was odourless. Those who had been taken into a room that smelt of fish were subsequently

He stepped from the shower and walked, naked and dripping through the house, to retrieve the only clean towel, which was scrunched up in the drier, hard as board. Su had lectured him about this every time that she caught him doing it, fearing the appearance of mould on the walls, on the floorboards beneath them.

You're a smelly, mouldy man she would tell him, laughing.

The day was warm, and the walk was short, but a coldness of sorts encroached on him anyway, all the same.

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less likely to offer some of their own money towards a public fund, enacting the idea that, if something smells fishy, it is something to be suspicious or wary of.

Gibbs (2019), drawing attention to studies such as these, notes that metaphorical meaning arises automatically from our experience of the environment and our bodies—experiencing an embodied source domain primes us to think about associated target domains, and to draw metaphorical links between them, before acting out these metaphors unconsciously. He relates an experience from his own life, in which he was driving a truck as a delivery driver, despite not having the prerequisite qualifications. Coming across a really narrow street, he was unsure whether the truck would fit down it. Nevertheless, he decided to 'look straight ahead and step on the gas'.

From this experience, he took forward a lesson into the rest of his life, reminding himself to jut focus on the task at hand and 'step on the gas' when faced with challenges.

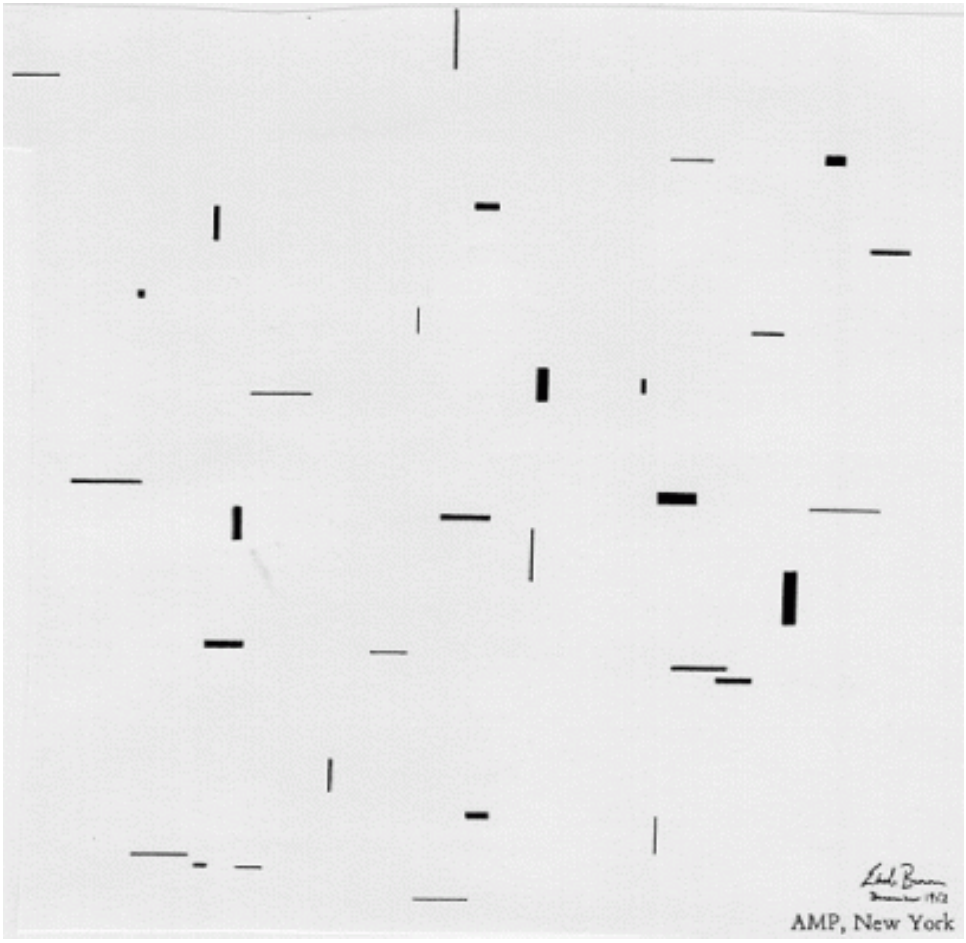
The world, in this moment, Gibbs suggests, 'just afforded the larger metaphorical, even allegorical, idea that persistence and focus may be critical to dealing with obstacles on life's many journey'

Metaphor, and metaphorical actions, Gibbs argues, arise not just from cognitive activity, but from the ecologies around us, in the form of metaphorical affordances. We offload our metaphorical actions into the world, and the world pays us back in kind. With this in mind, metaphor, and therefore, if we want to take it a step further, thought, is distributed 'across brains, bodies, and real-world ecologies'. Metaphor is something we make, experience, but also *do*.

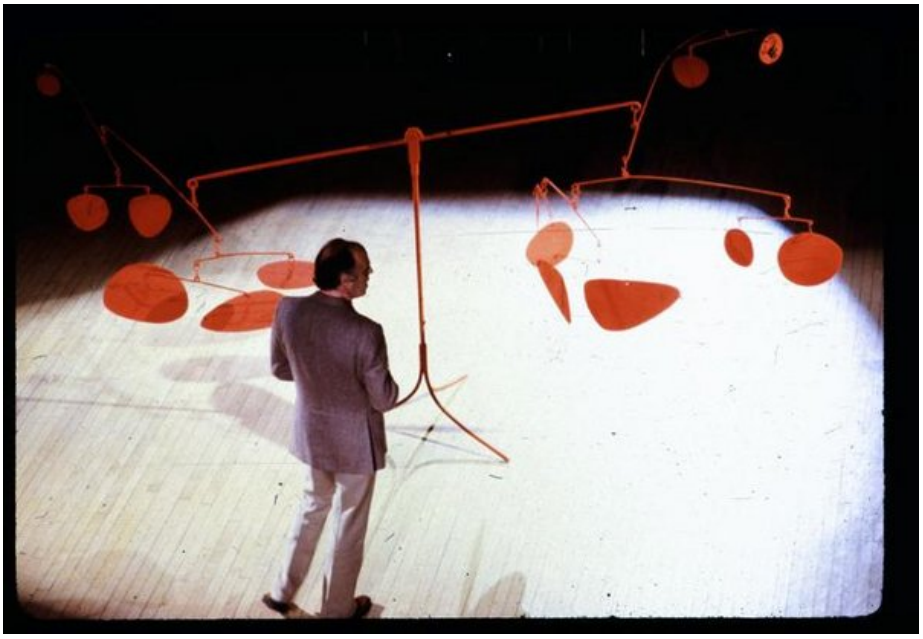
The Symphony from the Groove

'There is a general rule by means of which the musician can obtain the symphony from the score, and which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record, and using the first rule, to derive the score again. That is what constitutes the inner similarity between these things which seem to be constructed in such entirely different ways' (Wittgenstein, 2001, 4.0141).

Heil points out that the score and groove are not perfectly analogous in this instance. No one chose the grooves in a phonograph record to sound the way they do, whereas musical notation developed by way of conscious choice, through negotiation and a desire for standardisation. There exist multiple systems of musical notation, from the syllable-based solfége to the more experimental systems adopted by Earle Brown. His piece *December 1952*, for example, is represented as a series of horizontal and vertical lines of varying thicknesses in a box, which can be read from any which angle, according to their lengths and thicknesses.



Then there is Brown's modular composition *Calder Piece* and Alexander Calder's mobile, rotating sculpture *Chef d'orchestre*



Four percussionists set the sculpture in motion by playing on it, before returning to their posts, equidistant from the sculpture and surrounded by their instruments. As the sculpture moves, the musicians are conducted by it, and must translate the movement of the sculpture into sound, the refrains they play lifted from *Calder Piece,* but also informed by the position, shape and size of the sculpture's many surfaces as they pass them by.

Though standard musical notation was in a sense ‘chosen’, it is possible that these choices were guided by embodiment. Multiple hypotheses suggest that pitch, for example, corresponds with verticality in space, be it through associations between exertion in hitting these notes vocally, perceived loudness, intensity, etc. Each of these associations is mediated by the GREATER IS HIGHER primary metaphor and our schema of VERTICALITY.

Resulting are the conceptual metaphors PITCH RELATIONS ARE RELATIONS IN VERTICAL SPACE and PITCH CONTOUR IS MOTION IN PHYSICAL SPACE (Žuvela and Anić, 2018)

The Physical is Conceptual

Our sensorimotor system provides the foundations of embodied, primary metaphors; the logic of associations grounded in direct experience. The constraints that this logic lends primary metaphors, like the studs on Lego pieces, play a part in maintaining structural integrity, as these primary metaphors, combined, become more complex metaphors.

For example, the Conceptual metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS can be broken down into two primary metaphors (Grady, 1997b):

PERSISTING IS REMAINING ERECT
STRUCTURE IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

All of which means that our sensorimotor system is not just a disjunctive system evolved for the purpose of transporting our minds from place to place in the world, but central to our ability to form abstract concepts, to think and live (as we all do) in the abstract realm, as well as the physical. This is what is meant by embodied cognition.

Just as Brown's compositions can be said to break the rules of composition, it is not uncommon to think of poetic language and thinking as breaking the rules. Just as Brown's compositions are motivated by underlying metaphoric associations, poetic metaphors are often particularly creative extensions or reworkings of common conceptual metaphors, and can be broken down into their constituent primary metaphors. Even in poetry, then, embodiment provides the framework on which creativity can hang. It is precisely because metaphors, in poetry or otherwise, are tied so tightly to our physical, direct experience of the world, that they are able to express a deeply felt aesthetics of meaning.

Communicating abstract concepts is rendered impossible without metaphor, and so without embodiment. The relationships that exist between the tangible and the less tangible are what make communication in and of itself possible. The poetry inherent in these relationships is what makes poetry possible. And, if we so choose, if we make the effort to see it that way, it makes poetry of every act of communication, no matter how mundane.

That we draw on the world and our movements through it in order to give the abstract its shape means that 'embodied metaphors...turn the world into a stage for our meanings' (Veale, 2020). The alternative is reasoning, time and time again, from first principles, constructing the world anew in each moment, from the ground up.[65].

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[65] The extended mind hypothesis (which evolved separate from embodied cognition, through more philosophical discussions) takes this one step further, positing that 'if our environments serve not only to an agent's physical, social, and cultural environment can do more than distribute cognitive processing...they may well partially constitute that agent's cognitive system' (Clark and Chalmers 1998).

http://noumenoicalnonsequiters.blogspot.co.uk

Although the above page appears on Google searches the link, when clicked, leads to a page that says ‘no posts found’. Intentional or not, it’s a good joke.

It is not just the case, however, that we draw on our bodies and the world around us in order to give shape to abstract meaning. Merely experiencing a source domain can prime us to think about simultaneously occurring target domains in terms of the logic of that source domain as it presents itself, and bias our thinking in ways we are not conscious of, as metaphorical mappings endemic in our sensory experience invade our cognitive representations.

Ścigała and Indurkhya (2016) found that, presented with descriptions of morally neutral descriptors of behaviour, experiment participants were more likely to judge the description favourably when it was presented at the top of the page, rather than the bottom. Participants were also more likely to stop and talk to a charity fundraiser having ridden up, rather than down, an escalator. They conclude that the activation of the verticality metaphor[66] impacts on both deliberate, conscious moral evaluations and automatic moral evaluations.

Charged with ascertaining whether a fictional person was suitable for a job, participants were more likely to judge them favourably if they were holding a heavy, rather than a light clipboard, reflecting the logic of the IMPORTANCE IS WEIGHT[67] conceptual metaphor. Sitting on a hard chair has been shown to correspond with the dishing out of harsher punishments for criminals, in line with the SEVERITY IN JUDGEMENT IS PHYSICAL HARDNESS[68] conceptual metaphor (Ackerman et al, 2010).

Stec and Sweetser (2013) describe how buildings have metaphors 'built in' (p.265), how they take advantage of the predisposition to understand concrete objects in metaphorical terms to guide and influence the felt experience of being in the presence of these structures and spaces. Writing about the Borobudur, a Buddhist temple in Indonesia, they note that pilgrims follow an upwards, circuitous path through it. As they ascend, square terraces give way to circular terraces (circles are regarded as a metaphor for perfection in Buddhism) and high walls (indicative of mankind's confused existence) give way to an expansive view of the surrounding area. Throughout, the physical ascent maps onto the idea of ENLIGHTENMENT IS UP. In this way, 'the cognitive work is done "for free" by the monument' (2013, p.270).

In all of the above cases, it is as though the work of thinking has been outsourced, with varying degrees of say-so given, to our environment, our senses the obliging messenger[69].

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[66] A relationship exists between the concept of verticality, and notions of positive and negative, good and bad, immoral and immoral (*I'm feeling low, high-minded*)

[67] *Her words carried a lot of weight.*

[68] *Rough/soft on crime*

[69] 'We are starting to become more aware of just how much subcontracting and outsourcing and submitting to other[s]...we're all now forced to do, which is threatening (the inchoate awareness is) to our sense of ourselves as intelligent free agents. And yet there is no clear alternative to this outsourcing and submission' (Wallace, 2007, p.3).

Literature as Architecture, Architecture as Story

The *Laboratory of Literary Architecture* is a project born out of the feeling we get when reading that we are 'inside a structure built, knowingly or unknowingly, by the writer... sensing our being immersed in a space, a literary space, designed by someone else' The project draws on Alice Munro's claim that:

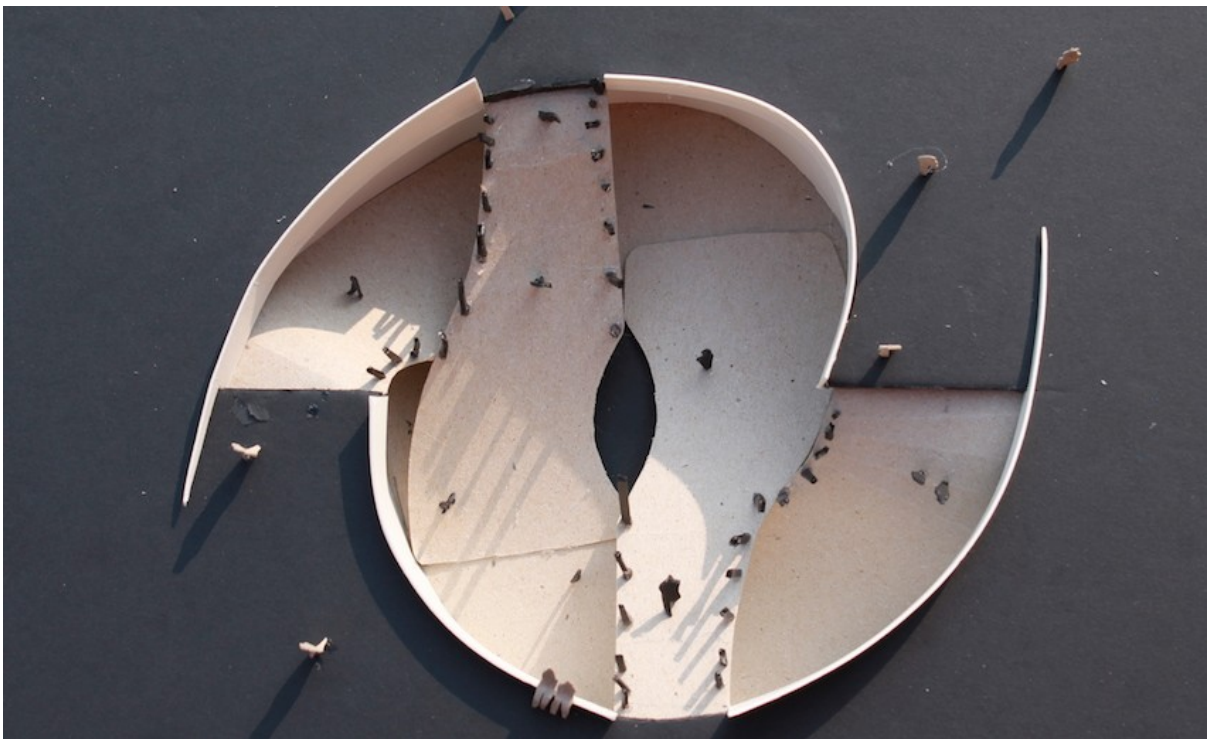
> 'A story is not like a road to follow … it's more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows. And you, the visitor, the reader, are altered as well by being in this enclosed space, whether it is ample and easy or full of crooked turns, or sparsely or opulently furnished. You can go back again and again, and the house, the story, always contains more than you saw the last time. It also has a sturdy sense of itself of being built out of its own necessity, not just to shelter or beguile you.'

The similarity in metaphors used across these domains corresponds with the similarities between the challenges that both architects and writers face. Buildings too have a narrative structure, a 'sequence of spaces, surprises and suspensions, hierarchies of space and function'. Literary and physical structures alike deal in 'pure, spatial, wordless thought' (Laboratory of Literary Architecture, no date)

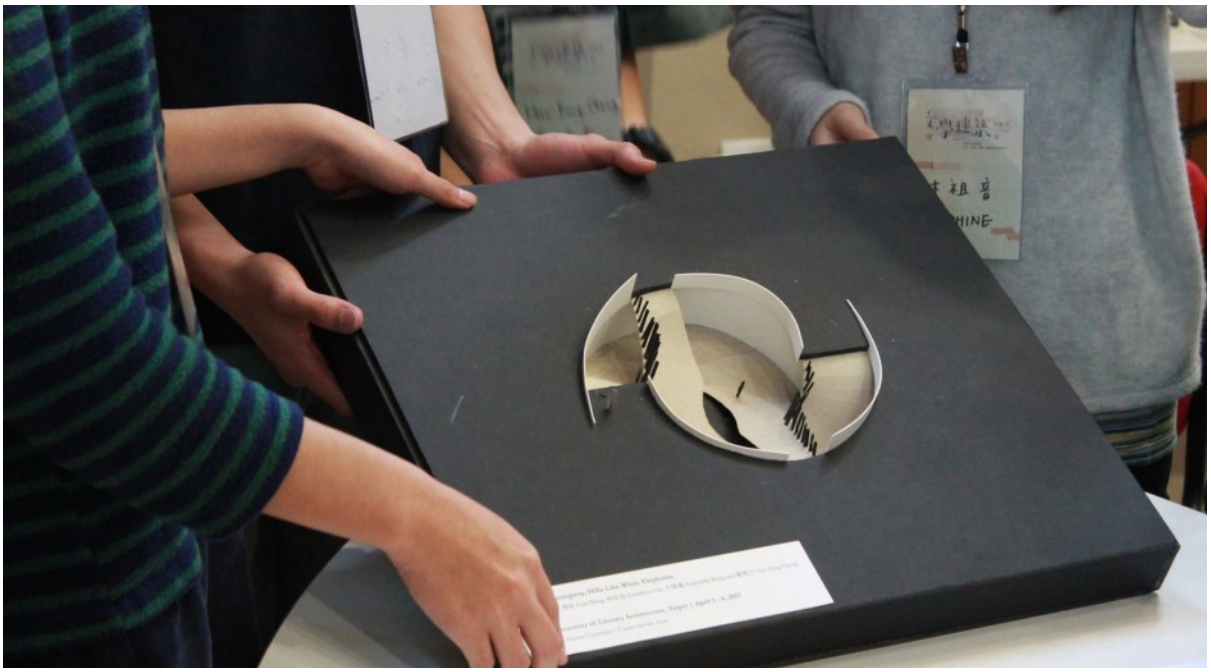
Horizon Hospital's ground plan was based on Fermat's spiral, comprising two arms curving out from the centre, pleasant walkways between. The arms are some twenty stories high at their centre, but diminish gradually in elevation, the outermost reaches of these arms giving the impression of having sunk into the ground, or of emerging from it; the hospital like something spinning, and growing, its arms thrown ever wider by centrifugal force, and the ground around these arms landscaped so as to appear like waves in their wake, these too becoming diminutive some hundred metres out from the hospital on all sides. The architects responsible for its design spoke of wanting visitors to be reassured on arrival of the broadening reach of science, the unstopping expansion of medical knowledge.

Su said that approaching the hospital made her feel as though she were being swallowed by something astral, cold and alien. John said it made him feel dizzy[70].

[70] He wanted to say that he had always disliked how a year, as it turned as if beneath your feet, structured and made certain behaviours expected: the habit of giving of flowers every anniversary, the January resolutions. He wanted to say how he disliked the smaller turning cogs whose teeth meshed with the year's central cog: the Christmas playlists on repeat, the opportunities for parties rolling around every weekend. He wanted to say that the hospital, with its confused crowds wandering around the outside of it, looking for the correct entrance, reminded him of this. He wanted to say all of this, but said instead, simply, dryly (playing the fool in a way he knew Su would roll her eyes at and find funny), that it made him feel dizzy.

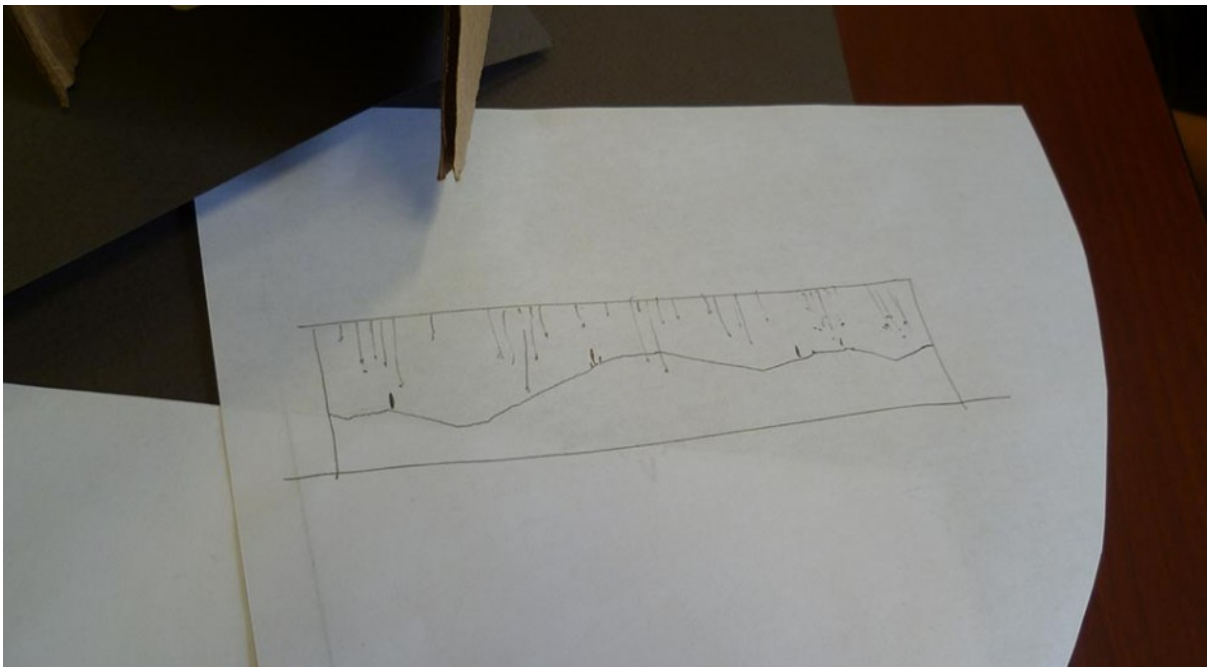


‘In [*Hills Like White Elephants*], the couple can never see the same landscape because the man has trouble understanding what is inside the girl’s eyes, which reflects her expectations. Holding different perspectives leads to their endless conversations, as two people walking around in a circle without ever finding the exit. … once you start from different perspectives, you will never reach the meeting point. And what really makes you worry is that you have no idea whether the other one is trying as hard as you are. … It seems as if the only thing you can focus on is your own path.’ (Laboratory of Literary Architecture)





‘The structure is a tall and narrow space, reflecting both the vast scope of the book as well as the intimacy of the reading experience. An uneven path is suspended along metal supports, and gradually rises and falls across the entire length of the structure. The path’s shape is dictated by the fragmented and surprising nature of the narrative, in which the novel leaps from subject to subject through unconventional avenues, such as the documentary playing in the narrator’s hotel room … The darkness of the tall and narrow space is broken by clusters of light bulbs. The constellations of lights are not comforting; they too are disconcerting … These light bulbs are the core of the novel, the details that Sebald, and his narrator, use to recover the past.’ (Laboratory of Literary Architecture)



How are you experiencing this book so far? Does it feel as though you are immersed in a structure, embodied within it, traversing its spaces? Do you feel at home?

Does it feel

[ ] Fully realised?
[ ] Half-built, as though the corridors between rooms have been left for you to complete?
[ ] Half-deliberate, as though the scenes, sentences, arguments have been thrown onto the page with a semi-present notion of how they should work together?
[ ] Like a series of rooms, from each of which all other rooms can be seen, as if through a membrane?
[ ] Like a house built haphazardly, from whatever materials happened to be lying around, the resulting draughty mess not quite making sense, aesthetically, not quite fitting together, structurally?
[ ] Like an architectural folly—the illusion of purposefulness skin-deep?
[ ] Other:

The Map and the Mapped

Steve was new to the mapmaking department, and so his job was to plot the newly-formed, and so lesser-known, paths that people create unawares, just by virtue of being present and mobile in the world. Part of his job, for example, was to add, in thin, barely-there lines, the paths that form when, over time, someone eager to shave a few minutes off their commute to and from work, sets off, day after day, across a piece of brown belt land, bending the blades down, wearing the grass down to dirt, to gravel. As the blades bent, so Steve would be at his desk, making almost imperceptible adjustments to a line here, a line there. As the dirt wore away, he would be there again, his hand perfectly attuned to what thickness of line and spacing of dashes corresponds to gravel newly exposed.

His friends and colleagues and betters dealt in the big stuff: Motorways, train lines, flight paths, the shifting of country borders. There were people in the upper levels of this building, people Steve had never seen, who dealt in the really big stuff. Such people had been there for millennia, it was rumoured. And since the jump from millennia to eons doesn't feel so big once you have half-accepted the first, the rumour persisted that some, at the very heights of the building, had been there for an age or two, an epoch or more. Such people plotted the rise and fall of mountain ranges, or tracked, with inch-perfect accuracy, entire continents as they drifted.

Steve wanted what they had, the prestige, but though he had the knack, the true mapmaker's instinct for pressure and pattern, he did not have the drive or the focus. He was forever being called into his manager's office to explain away an errant line, a path not plotted, a clumsy ink blotch where no pond was. His manager would then watch intently over his shoulder as he corrected his mistake.

One day, Steve was being berated again. He had made himself comfortable in the black leather chair opposite his boss's desk. It was business as usual, except that it was his boss's boss behind the desk. A less familiar face, but the same tired routine: Steve had been careless, and now there was a thin line (but a line nonetheless) through a thicket that no one had set foot in for years. No trace of a path existed there, but now there was this line— 'Do you see the problem, Steve?'

Steve did. And what's more, he could remember making the mistake, or rather, remember the circumstances in which the mistake was made, although of course he did not know it was a mistake at the time. Steve's brain was alive with the memory of paths already plotted—oftentimes, as he worked, he felt more like her was walking the path itself than plotting it. He could guess where a path was meant to go before he checked. He'd lost count of the number of times he had come out of this trance-like state and found, with horror, that he was about to plot a path without checking, only to find that he was right to plot it all along. The day he had made the mistake had felt particularly easy, as though he were merely retracing familiar steps, re-plotting familiar paths. He thought he had resurfaced regularly enough to catch any errors, but evidently not.

Steve promised to sort it, and got up to leave, because she didn't have the time to watch him make the amendment. He was almost back at his desk when Jacob, the work experience boy, got to him: She wanted to see him back in the office. Don't get comfortable, don't make the correction, don't think, just come back right away, was the message. Steve liked Jacob. Jacob saw the work they did here as important, and imbued every little thing with significance.

She was waiting for him, twirling a pencil between clean fingers. Had he made the correction?

Jacob had got to him in time, he said. She imbued everything with a different kind of

significance. It wasn't that things were important or not in and of themselves. It was just important that they got done.

'Good, good. Don't make the correction. The situation has changed. Someone saw the line, must have looked at their map right after you drew it, and now they are there. A rambler, his family. They are still there, picking their way through the thicket. There is now a path forming, a parting in the branches and a scuffing of the leaves, right where your line is, right where it should never have been. Of course, this is not how we do things here. We do things by the book. We plot what is the case, and we do it with precision. We do not intervene—that is a founding principle. But look, I like you, you show promise, and I'm just about important enough here to sweep things like this under the carpet. I don't need to tell you that this is bad, but I can make sure that it isn't taken any further than is necessary. The line stays, of course, for accuracy's sake, but it won't happen again, will it? Of course it won't.'

And with that a bell rang out, and the working day had been survived. He walked home, the long way, sticking to the roads, avoiding the fields and woods that lay between his office and home, because the principle of non-intervention extended beyond the working day, and it was oh so easy to go off-piste in the half-light and fugue that followed a nine-to-five.

It was a principle that seemed more than a little cracked, a little unsteadied now, after the events of today.

Months passed, Steve more diligent than before, praised even for his diligence, even if the foundations of his work felt shakier than before—did this kind of thing happen often? How much of the world had they, in the process of mapping, inadvertently created? How many people like he before him? And then his world fell apart:

'They found something there, the ramblers.' This time it was his boss, and her boss, and her boss too sat opposite him, and probably others higher up still aware of the meeting, and he knew that this was bad: 'A new and valuable material—we can't be sure of the specifics. There are hundreds of people surrounding the thicket as we speak, readying heavy machinery and prefab buildings. There are going to be mines there, factories. Housing for the workers and their families, schools and shops and cinemas and hospitals. And all of these structures springing up to enable the exploitation of this new natural resource.'

Steve walked home, a dismissed man. In the distance, black smoke curled up into the air. He could hear, on the breeze when it blew right, the cracking of tree trunks and the screech of machinery, the flattening of land never before tamed; the building of roads that would come to be plotted with ink so thick that it would cast a shadow on the page. And spidery tendrils, as if something neural, reaching out from this implied congestion.

The beginnings of a new city, a new society mapped—because of course that is and will always be the mapmaker's job—but preceded by its mapping[71].

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[71] There has been much talk so far of the abstract, of the concrete; of how metaphor is often about understanding the former in terms of the later. The neural theory of metaphor is built on the idea that, at the level of the brain, the distinction between the concrete and abstract breaks down—at this level, both the abstract and concrete manifest as neural circuitry (Lakoff, 2014).

In this view, metaphorical mappings across domains correspond to neural mappings, that is to say, 'neural circuitry linking the sensorimotor system with higher cortical areas' (Gibbs, 2017, p.32). Take for example the phrase 'his world fell apart'. This linguistic metaphor is structured by a number of conceptual metaphors:

STATES ARE LOCATIONS:	Steve's emotional wellbeing, the sum total of where he is in life, is seen as his 'world'
CHANGE IS MOTION:	Where Steve is in life is changing, as indicated by more specific notion of falling
LOSS OF CONTROL IS DOWN:	This change is one beyond his control, as falling, spurred on by gravity, is beyond our control.
BAD IS DOWN:	Given falling results in us being in a lower place than before, this change is not for the better.
ABSTRACT STRUCTURE IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE:	As well as falling, Steve's world is coming apart—the sum, abstract total of his life has no structure following his dismissal.

Inside Steve's brain, as he feels as though his world is falling apart, neural circuitry associated with both the target domains and source domains above will be activated, creating a mapping circuit. It is through this integration that both domains are processed at once, and become entangled. Individual metaphorical mappings, then, can be reduced down to actual, physical mappings in the brain that 'bind sensorimotor information to more abstract ideas', and metaphor as a whole becomes a 'natural development of the way that neural systems work with recurring mappings' (Gibbs, 2017, p.31).

The end result is efficiency—this neural binding allows for neural reuse of sensorimotor mechanisms for more complex tasks in thought and language. Such reuse is opportunistic, 'taking advantage of what is functionally suitable, right there and then' (Cánovas and Manzanares, 2014). As these activations occur concurrently, time and time again, the connections between these areas of the brain are strengthened.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that metaphor is rooted in experience, that metaphor impacts on experience through primary metaphors. In the next, ticket stub of a chapter, I will talk of how these primary metaphors can be understood rather as a cousin of metaphor, a different figurative class, and how they interact with metaphor to produce figurative meanings.

To Think Like a Human

The Origins of Language

Five years ago, a young couple in a seaside town on the south coast found that they were expecting an anencephalic baby. Five days later, another woman in the very same seaside town was found to be carrying an anencephalic baby inside her. Two days later a single, expectant mother went for a scan. Her nurse, not quite believing what she was seeing, went in search of a second opinion, a third. The mother hadn't had a medical education, but you didn't need one to know that there were two babies on the screen, and that neither were developing along normal lines. What in god's name was going on?

The next eight months saw thirty-two mothers in this same seaside town, attending Horizons Hospital for check-ups, discover that their babies were anencephalic, though it seemed, from the news coverage, as though one was being born every day. The neonatal ward, and then the hospital itself, were closed down to everyone but men and women in hazmat suits.

Statistically speaking, only three in every ten thousand babies are born with anencephaly in the developed world. And here, in a town of some forty thousand inhabitants, thirty-two. Something was wrong. A pandemic? Terrorism? The off-shore wind turbines? Medical experts were drafted in from the world over, and found nothing unusual.

And then, in one sense, it was over. The babies found to be anencephalic were aborted, or else carried to full term and died soon after, and no more were born. Though ultrasound scans remained for a long time a source of immense fear, doctors discovered abnormalities at a statistically normal rate thereafter. Thank god it was over. A weird, unexplained blip. Morse code-like signals from outer space. A 10th century manuscript uncovered in an attic, in a language found nowhere else on earth. A quiz show question ten years from now that you'll know the answer to. Over, done. Except of course in the eyes of the town, and especially in the eyes of the mothers and the families of those babies—a sense, lingering still, in the absence of scientific rhyme or reason, that this was a punishment of sorts, from above or elsewhere.

But in the meantime, in that otherworldly nine months or so, there was fear, speculation, debate and anger. There was, of course, Bob Seymour, a volunteer at Horizons Hospital, arrested on suspicion of kidnapping one of the anencephalic babies, of kidnapping baby Adam.

They found Adam in Bob's tent, which he set up at night on the beach sometimes, when he needed to 'get out of the house'. A strange man, a quiet, sad man who struggled with his words, who struggled, it seemed, with the world. The public decided he was not guilty, that he set up the tent to get away from his wife of an evening. The courts followed suit. All evidence was circumstantial, and besides, it's true—anyone could have put the baby in his tent. And then Bob, too, was forgotten, except for on a couple of niche online forums, where theories thrived, multiplied, and took on the character of fan fiction: Bob was obsessed with the idea of anencephalic babies, suggested one theory. He both idolised them and resented them, because (and this is where it gets weird, unbelievable, and strangely specific) he hated metaphor, and had read they did not experience it as other babies do. He poisoned the pregnant women who passed through the hospital, making it more likely that they would give birth to such babies. He planned to kidnap one, and learn from him or her, to study how they came to be shut off from metaphor entirely. One of the regular posters claimed to know Bob, but this was never verified.

And there were the doctors—not all of them, of course—who without political obligations relatively speaking saw in these consciousness-deprived babies the opportunity to harvest organs, to save young lives elsewhere, and said so. The public outrage at their saying

this. The political parties, all of them, in fact, who either did not agree with this or could not—vis a vis, the outrage—and accused the doctors of playing politics in the wake of tragedy and heartbreak, clambering over each other in their eagerness to do so loudest, in the most strident language. *Their hearts went out to the affected, to the families and the town.*

And then there was Su.

'I, mean, my heart goes out too, of course it does. I get that this must be awful for the families. But let's be real. There is nothing that it is to be like these babies, they have no experience of the world, quite literally. They breathe, they wave their little limbs around, but are practically rocks, or puppets, for all it matters to them. They are like jellyfish. No working brain to talk of. Imagine that! Not having the capacity for thought, for language? You can't. It's not possible. It's like trying to imagine what the world was like for you before you were born, it would be like imagining what death is like, and actually succeeding. And so use them I say. Harvest their organs. Save another baby's life. Pass on the gift of life, of language[72], of all *this*.'

'Is there not something to be said about the sanctity of life, Su? 'John hoped she wouldn't respond. Even his response had taken him to the brink of his understanding, and whatever Su said could only serve to push him beyond it.

'I don't buy it. The sanctity of life? That's just a metaphor, and an empty one at that. It presupposes life as a gift, and as such is free to be filled with one's own ideas about how a gift should be used. Filled in this way, it takes on the aspect of an always-there, inviolable doctrine, and you forget that it was you, yourself, who filled the metaphor, with your own notions and ideas[73].'

'I suppose. Still.'

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[72] Ramachandran (2001) argues that synaesthesia, and so metaphorical associations, might hold the key to the mystery of the origins of language. The mystery is how certain sounds came to be mapped onto the idea of certain objects in the first place—this is a necessary step in the creation of a proto-language. The Bouba and Kiki experiment shows that 'there may be natural constraints on the ways in which sounds are mapped onto objects' (2001, p.19). In this way, lip movements may have become mapped onto objects' external appearance, paving the way for a primitive proto-language to form.

[73] 'Sanctity-of-life does not simply refer to a value of biological existence, but to a spiritual and virtue-ethical way of how to use one's own physical existence. Hence, it is not a claim about other persons, but only a claim about one's self' (Baranzke, 2012)

When the last of the anencephalic babies was born, died in its sixth hour, the argument about what should happen with their organs died too, and what had the potential to be a watershed moment in bioethics passed by without impelling even the slightest change in legislation.

The Future (John, 60)

The future is here, the future is now. But the future was never meant to be dusty. In Su's head, maybe, but John's imaginings of the future had not accounted for dust. The future was all clean lines and minimalism and impossibly white whites and sleek blacks and completely see-through communication devices. Or else it was dark (except for the neon) and peopled at ground level by an underclass who slouched silhouetted against weirdly pulsating, heavily polluted skies and skyscrapers that cut through the pulsation, that cut right up through the clouds, into the blue beyond. And it was here, above the clouds and looking down, where John pictured the fortunate living out their lives, never having to dip below the cloud cover, flitting between the skyscrapers on craft that moved soundlessly, maybe with a slight hum if they passed close by. Dust just didn't get a look-in. Dust was for archive rooms, which in the future would be completely digitised (or so John imagined). Dust would be something half-forgotten, he thought, never seen and uncomfortable to think about come the age of self-cleaning homes. He certainly hoped so.

In this tiny room, on the other hand, tucked between the men's toilets and the cleaning supplies cupboard, there was dust. Your regular grey dust clumped and stringy in the corners or in a thin film over the shelves. Waste toner dust that ruined your clothes if it got on them, though the multifunction printer-photocopier was wheeled out of here months ago. And there were paper clips bent out of shape on the floor and boxes of paper kept around just in case they would be needed, though almost everything was electronic now, screens and interfaces so like paper to look at and work with that even the most die-hard of luddites found it pointless to protest, and so fell silent. Because even though the skyscrapers that cut through clouds had, in the main, failed to materialise, and the sky was pretty much as it had always been, and the rich and fortunate still descended to and lived out much of their lives at ground level, in this tiny room in the here and now, the future was unevenly distributed.

Because although there was dust and paper and paperclips, there was also the black box. Less sleek than it could have been, but then its design was not the important thing.

Because this black box was, according to its marketing materials, a 'one stop shop for all of your administrative, HR and management needs'. And it was sitting right where the multifunction printer-photocopier and printer sat, before John, administrator, had been instructed one day to take it out back, to where the bins were, to where the broken furniture and IT equipment waited, and was taken away each Friday. To be burned, John imagined, though he knew that this was not the case. John had been imagining a lot of things lately, getting lost in intricate visions of the future, or else in daydreams where a worrying percentage of what he imagined was on fire. He had seen notepads smoulder at the edges even as he wrote minutes on them, and neat little flames licking out from USB drives. He had seen his boss's face melt, sloughing off as he berated John for some trifling thing that mattered jot then, that mattered jot now. He had seen entire meeting rooms combust spontaneously, research committees arguing the toss even as their eyeballs melted and bones blackened. He had burned himself, so taken was he by the mental image of a firestorm sweeping through the campus that he reached inside his cooker with bare hands to take out a casserole dish. The latest in augmented reality glasses had nothing on what John's mind conjured, sometimes as if without his own say-so, into existence, superimposing it seamlessly onto what was actually the case.

It's not that he missed photocopying. There was nothing therapeutic or trance-inducing about the flipping over and feeding in of paper, the strobing of light under the lid or the insufferable whirring of gears. Not after two hours of it there wasn't anyway. It's just that the box was creepy as hell, unmoving and silent and unspeakably efficient and cold to touch.

That the black box was silent wasn't really true. It had microphones, 'ears' in every room that listened out for its name, which varied from department to department, which had been chosen by way of vote by each department. Having heard its name, the black box would know that the next utterance would be a request for information, or advice, a command to produce information, etc. And so the box could speak, too. Hooked up to speakers and every printer and computer in the building, it could speak, print, open files, write reports. It could listen in on interviews and fact-check when asked. It could step in to resolve HR complaints, advise on where time and money should be invested, taking into account the economic case but also the potential for public backlash when it came to morally dubious investments. It could do any number of things, and it did them well[74].

John had read that the brain had no nerve endings. You could, if you somehow gained access to someone's head without their knowing, lifting back a flap of their bloodied skull, prod and poke the brain within, all the while causing no pain. The epicentre of a person, was the most disembodied part, it would seem, the part immune to the cold, to pain. It was, but for its body, unfeeling, disconnected, mute and dumb.

This small room (except for the toilets), where the black box was kept, was the only place in the building where the black box could not hear you, could not speak, could not react in any way to your presence. And that's what creeped John out—not the box's intelligence. which was daunting and undeniable, but the disconnect between it and its satellite organs. If the black box was a brain of sorts, then this dusty room was its skull, and being in here made John feel alone in his own skull, alone with tired, dusty thoughts.

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[74] Gentner et al's structure-mapping theory of analogy sets out the constraints under which we interpret analogy and similarity. Its core assumption is that analogy consists of a mapping of knowledge from one domain to another. These domains can be placed in conversation with each other, even if they are on the surface unalike, owing to 'corresponding roles in the common relational structure'. For instance, the idea of unpacking meaning from a difficult text and unpacking a well-sealed parcel are analogous because they share the relationship of struggling to get something *out of* a larger structure. (1989). The Structure-Mapping Engine (SME) is a program built to simulate Gentner's theory, and in doing so, simulate human analogical processing.

'In terms of thinking like humans, analogies are where it's at...humans use relational statements fluidly to describe things, solve problems, indicate causality, and weigh moral dilemmas.' (Forbus, 2016)

Béton Brut (Interlude)

Hauntology: Taking Stock

As I write this sentence, it is set to appear at the approximate midway point of this 'novel'. The novel itself is in a state of partial construction. Much of the later half is sketched out, and much of what comes before has been nailed down as best as it can be (though will no doubt be partially disassembled, stitched back together in a new guise). Now, then, seems a good time to take stock.

There are, then, two 'nows' going on. Let's call them Now_1 and Now_2:

- Now_1 is where I have come to in terms of my putting together of this project.
- Now_2 is the midway point we have come to in terms of physical pages, in terms of passage through the text.

That I have come to Now_1 suggests to me that that now[75]is a good time to remind myself of where I've been, where I thought I was going; of the not quite ghosts of *Wallpaper*, the ambitions that haunt this project, that inform it, but that were, in many cases, at least partially abandoned.

That we have come to Now_2 suggests that here in the text is a good place to remind you of what we have been doing, and of where we are going; of what this is all *for*.

[75] Now_3, perhaps—the 'now' in which I find myself, sat in front of my laptop, typing. Now_3 also contains within it notions of Now_1 and Now_2.

How I Intended *Wallpaper* to Turn Out

Brutalist architects united purpose and design in a reaction against 'highly refined and ornamented buildings', whose ornamentations disguised the structures beneath.

Within Brutalism there is an ‘expressing...in the whole-site plan the main functions and people-flows of the buildings' (Brutalism: Online, no date). Brutalist architecture is obsessed with revealing what it is *for*, with a purity of sorts. Features are made of ‘service towers, lifts, plumbing and ventilation ducts’, and Su and John’s water tank leans out obviously from the building like a spare tooth.

Brutalist buildings are usually 'formed with repeated modular elements...representing specific functional zones, distinctly articulated and grouped together into a unified whole'. Supporting walls are exposed, without façade, to the elements and to the public gaze. The cast concrete surfaces disclose the processes involved in their construction, ‘revealing the texture of the wooden planks used for the in-situ casting forms’ (Ibid).

Having just finished reading *Metaphors We Live By*, the plan was to unite creative writing as a form with metaphor theory and research, and the cognitive structures that it had exposed as existing within all of us.

I wanted to build a novel whose structure mirrored that of metaphor’s influence, of its working. It felt good saying that out loud,

Having just finished reading *Metaphors We Live By*, conceptual metaphor theory seemed to me to have a business-like systematicity, a mathematical nature at odds with the playfulness, the *lop-sidedness* that metaphor, because of its associations with poetry, and creative writing more generally, had been synonymous with for me.

I wanted to express conceptual metaphor theory, as I then saw it, through the kind of language that has more traditionally been metaphor’s bedfellow.

I wanted *Wallpaper* to have a modular feel, built up from fragments that, slotted coherently together, whilst maintaining that which made them distinct. Creative writing would sit alongside theory, and the two would communicate, the conversation happening both on the page and in the reader’s mind, and the value of this conversation would be greater than the sum total of the modular elements taken as such.

I wanted to unite purpose and design. Language would spring from metaphorical structures, and structure from language, and neither playfulness, nor systematicity, would be compromised.



(*The Brutalist Playground*, S1 Artspace, 2016)

The Brutalist Playground, pictured above, was an exhibition at the Architecture Gallery (2016) in London described as 'Part sculpture, part installation, all play'—an 'immersive, climbable and *conceptual* landscape' (S1 Artspace) (italicised by myself). *The Brutalist Playground* consisted of foam replicas of Brutalist playgrounds as they appeared in housing estates across the country. The original playgrounds were made, like the brutalist towers they sprang up below, of rough concrete. Long drops were built into their designs, grazed knees a common side effect of exploration and play, as though to truly understand an abstract concept it has to be transformed into something you could tumble off of, bleed over.

All of this, the uniting of purpose and design, seemed, in the early days, achievable. That much of it was not is testament both to my shortcomings as a writer and the complexities of metaphor theory as it has developed beyond *Metaphors We Live By*. All *Wallpaper* need do, I thought, was to demonstrate how the logic of conceptual metaphor theory underpins our actions, and how this logic finds an expression too in metaphor use in language. The logic and simplicity was there, I thought, maths-like, there to be revealed—writing *Wallpaper* would be a peeling back of layers, a vigorous spring clean. Metaphor, and its influence, it turned out, is far more complicated than that.

The representation of conceptual metaphors in such simple terms as SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING did much to entrench this view in those naïve early days. As Gibbs points out, however, such representations serve only as 'shorthand for complex, dynamic webs of thought and feelings, each of which are continually defined and bodily enacted' (2016, p.16)

Their house: Their house was a concrete, three-storeyed ‘eyesore’ without, a bespoke ‘eyesore’, built as an artistic statement (‘concept made concrete!’) in what was countryside until a decade ago, mainly just gardens now. Still, the locals, still in that countryside mentality, resented its existence amid the quaintness. It had never enjoyed universal appeal, this concrete simplicity, and many of the house’s stylistic cousins were falling, or had long since fallen, into disrepair and ruin.

A house of such stark external logic and concrete certainty that you’d never have imagined that Su’s grandad was a hoarder. Within, the same kind of logic—inarguable lines and hard surfaces and ultra-functionality. But then the interior given over to that which, in life, he simply could not do without, to the forgotten and broken. In the attic, dusty mountains caught between ceiling and floor and walls lost from view. Curated by dubious taste and made squat by gravity’s steady press; climbable if the curious child is nimble and undaunted by crispy wasps and splinters. Mineable—a toy soldier, its leg caught between chair leg and dressing table; a cracked compass hanging from a string that disappeared in the clutter; stuffed toys, glassy eyes and dirtied fur; spilled board games, a pewter dog and plastic dice landed somewhere secret; a dead man’s surfboard. Traversable cave systems, caverns big enough to sit unnoticed in, and the rest of the house just about liveable. Hours of fun in a lifetime’s spoils, because John and Su never quite got around to getting rid of all of it, sorting it all out, finding the corridors they cleared through the mess more than ample for their needs, and finding that the children who visited enjoyed the exploration. Admittedly, they threw the real trash out, but except for in the attic (which remained untouched) the trinkets and the ornaments were merely pushed back, inch by inch, made to fit together as if in a drystack wall. And so whilst the house maintained externally its intended form, internally this form was lost in the main to clutter, peaking through from some angles only to be swallowed whole the next step you took.

Su, for reasons that she could not explain, loved that it was there, this logic, but loved almost as much that it was hidden by that which had accumulated, fungus like, within it.

Everyone Has a Plan Until They Get Punched in the Mouth

As my reading around metaphor theory deepened, I became reacquainted with the truth once again—that is to say, that metaphor is messy. To structure a novel, in such a way that its features mapped perfectly, and held at all times an analogous relationship with the workings of metaphor, would be an insanity[76]. Compromises would have to be made.

Elements of my ambitions remained, though. There is still much that is fragmentary and modular about *Wallpaper*, for example, though the greater whole is more dependent on the reader than first intended—there is more work to be done by the reader in terms of deciding which dots are worth connecting between the creative and critical components, which features should be mapped from one to the other, and which should not.

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[76]In *Synecdoche New York*, Caden Cotard, a theatre director, finds himself with the finances needed to pursue his artistic vision—to capture life in its entirety, with all its complexities.

> ***Caden Cotard:*** *I know how to do it now. There are nearly thirteen million people in the world. None of those people is an extra. They're all the leads of their own stories. They have to be given their due* (Synechdoche New York, 2008).

He takes control of a huge warehouse in New York City, and a huge cast, who he tells to act out their lives, as lived outside of the warehouse. Inside the warehouse, a 1:1 exact replica of a segment of New York city is built. Cotard's loyalty to the idea of capturing all of life is unwavering. Years pass.

> ***Needleman Actor :*** *Caden?*
> ***Caden Cotard :*** *What?*
> ***Needleman Actor :*** *When are we gonna get an audience in here? It's been seventeen years.*
> ***Caden Cotard :*** *All right, I'm not excusing myself from this either. I will have someone play me, to delve into the murky, cowardly depths of my lonely, fucked-up being. And he'll get notes too, and those notes will correspond to the notes I truly receive every day from my god! Get to work!* (Ibid)

Having hired an actor to play the part he is playing as a director, this actor then in turn hires an actor to play the part that he is playing. This process is multiplied out, across the whole cast. A second warehouse is built, a replica of the original warehouse, inside the original warehouse. A third warehouse is built inside the second, and so on.

Synecdoche, being a figure of speech that occurs when a part of something is used to refer to the whole, is a subset of metonymy. The implication, then, is that artistic representation that does not make use of part-whole relationships, that tries to capture the whole, as is, in its baffling entirety, is doomed to fail.

The old Birmingham Library, an imposing and inverted ziggurat of naked concrete that split the city in two, has been demolished. Its replacement is situated a hundred or so metres away from the site of the old library, and is clad, three quarters of it, in shiny gold trellising, the function of which is purely, as far as I can tell, decorative. It would not look out of place under a Christmas tree, its detractors are fond of saying—a ‘triumph of style over substance’, of ‘shallow aesthetics over conceptual heft’.

‘Your failure here is a metaphor. To know for what, please resume climbing.’ - Rob Dubbin (actual source unknown)

So far, the core tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory have been sketched out. Detours have been taken, but a broad picture of the landscape we are working in should be emerging.

Over the next chapter, *It's Always More Complicated Than That,* I am going to draw attention to the sketchiness of this picture, the broadness of the brush strokes that I have been making. Anything that passes through a critical lens must pass through us, too, and we are without exception scratched and warped, prone to refracting neatly delineated theories in unpredictable ways.

The two chapters after this will each outline theories that were, at least in part, formed to allow for these complications. Whilst a reaction to the perceived limits of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, these theories are not necessarily opposed to it—in many ways, they complement, build on, and can be used in tandem with, conceptual metaphor theory.

It’s Always More Complicated Than That

Mixed Metaphors, Mixed Signals?

Them: They were childless, John (28) and Su (30), but had many friends, many of whom had kids and brought them along when they visited. 'You may as well have kids,' Rebecca (also childless) said one day. 'If you're going to spend your drunken summer weekends around kids anyway, they might as well be yours.'

On one occasion, with a little cajoling by one of their friend's daughters, John and Su were persuaded not to smoke out the wasps who had nested in the corner of the tree house, having been forced to concede that they might just turn into fairies after all, given time.

One of the older children, a lanky boy who would spend the years before he filled out standing on the outskirts of conversations, had lifted the girl onto his shoulders and walked, teetering all the way, over to the nest. He had been pressured into it, he would later say, it's not like he would have chosen to do it.

Eye level with the nest, she could almost see their tiny, underpowered training wands and the tiny, half-developed, white-gloved hands they were clutched in, but then one flew at her, sensing perhaps the flower blu-tacked messily to her hair, and she screamed and swatted with one hand, and covered her eyes with the other, forgetting the fragile, benign fairies of her imagination, the buzz a sudden take-off din in her ears as the nest united against her. The boy stumbled back, caught her as she slipped from his shoulders and ran into the house, slamming the door behind, but too late for the girl, whose face was filling already with their poison.

She was fine, as it happens, tearful for a while and forever scared of wasps now, but fine. It didn't take the adults (who had been getting drunk steadily in the kitchen) long to start making light of it

'The road to hell is paved with the shoulders of giants.' Su was the first, and the girl had giggled through swollen lips at the way she said it [77]

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[77] 'Seize the window of opportunity, for therein dwells the path to enlightenment!'

Su had said that to John, a week or so after she received her final prognosis. She was trying to press forward a conversation about him, about what he would do without her, how he would travel, and make the most of it, the life spread out, the opportunities spread out in front of him—mourn, for a time, but be excited for what lies beyond, was the message she wanted to convey; I am not the be all and end all, I was not there at your beginning, and I will not, barring a miracle we should not dare hope for, be there at your end.

At this John, had well and truly clammed up. Su could tell that his teeth were clenched. His arms were drawn up tight across his chest, and his eyes had a glassy, unseeing sheen. And that is when she had said it, shouted it almost, in her best but terrible approximation of the final lines of a Shakespearian monologue.

A hint of a smile, a loosening of his arms, and the sheen broke.

Gibbs notes that 'enduring conceptual metaphors provide coherence for many aspects of experience' (2016, pviii). Why, then, do we lapse into mixed metaphors? Mixed metaphors are often criticised for for being a 'word salad' (2016, p.37), for reflecting a confused, unfocused mind. In the case of Trump, his mixing of metaphors was held up as evidence for cognitive decline, for an inability to present a 'unifying image' (2016, p.38). Gibbs goes on to note, however, that Trump's disordered speech serves a pragmatic purpose, that is, to present an image of himself as authentic and relatable.

The mixing of metaphors, the twisting of language until it breaks, the smashing together of discordant and unexpected images together in humorous ways, can be fun. But the characterising of

mixed metaphors as wordplay in all cases is misleading. Such metaphorical soups are not necessarily conscious or deliberate, forming instead as a result of unconscious, cognitive mechanisms called upon to respond quickly, to keep pace with unique and constantly changing communicative needs.

It has been discovered that mixed metaphors are common in discourse, and are often interpreted easily (Lonergan and Gibbs, 2016). Kimmel (2010) found that, when it came to clusters of metaphor, 76% of these contained mixed metaphors, and gave the below example from the Guardian newspaper:

> 'He [British Prime Minister Tony Blair] has had to play his difficult hand with due *diplomacy*, and not risk finding himself too far in the vanguard. So he was reluctant to say out *loud* that the British referendum on the constitution was suspended, let alone dead. Instead, he worked the Danes – the next in the firing line - to agree that further plebiscites would be masochism, thus countering the French view that the referenda should *continue*. In the words of the former Foreign Office minister Denis MacShane: "Even lemmings have got a right to stop at the edge of a cliff"' (2010, p.97).

The above passage has none of the imprecision and clumsiness often associated with mixed metaphors, but instead presents a complex situation lucidly, through salient comparisons. Kimmel suggests that such examples call into question the idea that conceptual metaphors are the 'coherence-maintaining device *par excellence'* (2010, p.97).

When assessing metaphors for meaning, we call to bear the surrounding discourse context, but also our theory of mind—our ability to infer intentions and mental states. It was found that participants in a study, when given bizarre metaphors ('a scalpel is a horseshoe', for example) were quicker to reject them if they were told that the metaphor had been created by AI, rather than by a human, as no communicative intent could be inferred (Gibbs, 1992).

Steen (2016) tethers mixed metaphors to the question of deliberateness directly, arguing that mixed metaphors are highlighted to us as such when metaphors are used deliberately, and their conceptual content clashes. The concept of deliberateness here concerns the 'intentional use of metaphors *as* metaphors', which is to say metaphors that draw attention to themselves, to their source domain as a 'separate domain of reference' (Steen, 2017, p.2).

The result is language that draws attention to itself as language. 'Seize the window of opportunity, for therein dwells the path to enlightenment', for instance, is clearly a deliberate smashing together of multiple metaphors, of 'seize the window of opportunity' and 'path to enlightenment' most prominently. That we are also asked to imagine the path to enlightenment existing within the window of opportunity only (and hilariously, Su thought) highlights the incongruity of the comparisons that we are being presented with.

The metaphor 'seize the window of opportunity' alone could be considered a mixed metaphor, insofar as windows are something that are typically looked through, rather than held in the hand, but the conventionalised nature of the metaphor means that it is unlikely to be used deliberately in the sense outlined above.

Mixed metaphors, then, can speak of linguistic clumsiness. They can be used intentionally, for humour. But they also speak of our 'cognitive flexibility to think of abstract concepts in a myriad of metaphorical ways' (Gibbs, 2016, pvii).

Metaphor as Needle, Metaphor as Thread?

When it is observed that people adopt a line of reasoning that is supported by a particular metaphoric frame, this can be considered as evidence for conceptual metaphor theory, since it is evidence that metaphor is central to how we think and reason.

Lakoff and Johnson claim that 'the Westernisation of cultures throughout the world is partly a matter of introducing the TIME IS MONEY metaphor into those cultures' (1980, 9.145)—a matter of a metaphoric frame having huge societal impacts. In this scenario, the metaphor is, in part, the needle, drawing a particular line of reasoning behind it.

Mueller (2016) analysed a range of Western and non-Western (Indian, Philippino, and East African) corpora with a view to investigating this claim, finding that, in line with it, instantiations of TIME IS MONEY appeared more often on average across the Western corpora than in the non-Western corpora, where English is not the first language. However, in the Indian corpora, expressions where time is described as being wasted outnumbered similar expressions across all other corpora studied, and in the East African corpora, such expressions occurred at the same rate as in the Western corpora. East Africans, for example, talk of *taking that hour to waste.*

Mueller (2016) argues that expressions involving the *wastage* of time might spring from the TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE or COMMODITY metaphor, rather than TIME IS MONEY. Where Lakoff and Johnson see the later as being contingent on the former, Mueller sees them as existing independently, with different entailments—people are not normally in a position to save or waste limited resources, whereas we have ownership over money.

Regarded as related, but separate entities in this way, the *time* and *waste* expressions in non-Western corpora become evidence not of a creeping Westernisation, but of a pre-existing, native conceptual metaphor. Further muddying the waters, though expressions of the TIME IS MONEY conceptual metaphor are not as common across the non-Western corpora, there are examples to be found. Philipinos, for example, talk of *handling time*.

What all this indicates is both the difficulty in assigning shorthand labels to conceptual metaphors, but also in tracking, reliably, the influence of a single metaphor, in establishing just how far metaphor can be said to be central to thought.

The phrasing of Lakoff and Johnson's claim places metaphor in an exceedingly privileged position. In their view, TIME AS MONEY is, in part, the needle, and Westernisation the thread, a by-product of this conceptualisation being introduced. In Mueller's concluding remarks, however, we see a subtle shift: 'Whether...[the existence of TIME IS WASTE expressions in non-Western corpora] is a result of Westernisation or whether this notion of TIME IS MONEY existed before the introduction of English is another question that remains to be investigated' (2016, p.103)

Mueller uses 'Westernisation' and the 'introduction of English' interchangeably here, switching from one to the other, equivocating them over the course of a single sentence. This could be read, uncharitably, as an attempt to muddy the waters, to make the reader forget Lakoff and Johnson's distinction between the two, forget her essay opened with this distinction, that it was this distinction that she was trying to tease apart.

What the equivocation actually reflects, however, is that conceptual metaphor theory has come a long way since its genesis. It reflects the greater depth of understanding of the complexities of metaphor, of its cultural, individualistic dimensions; that metaphor cannot be separated from culture in such a way as to ascribe cause and effect to purely one or the other.

Nay and Brunson (2013) found that framing the proliferation of conifers in an area in which they had not previously grown metaphorically, as an invasion, rather than more literally as an encroachment or expansion, led to a greater acceptance of the idea of cutting them down. This, in line with Thibodeau and Boroditsky's (2011) study on the effect of framing crime as either a virus or beast, seems to suggest that metaphor and metaphorical framing does have a significant impact on how, and what, we think.

Steen, in a follow-up to Thibodeau and Boroditsky's study, however, found no such effect, finding instead that simply reading about crime predisposed people to support enforcement, rather than 'treatment', measures. Steen submits that the question itself should be rephrased, not to interrogate *if* metaphors influence reasoning, but under what conditions it does so, and suggests a number of limiting conditions that might influence whether metaphorical framing has an influence or not:

- Studies have shown that both **a.** having a high degree of political knowledge (reference) and **b.** having a low degree of political knowledge (reference) are predictors of metaphorical frames having persuasive force in situations where political decisions are up for debate.
- Studies have shown that both **a.** feeling psychologically close to the topic under discussion (reference) and **b.** feeling psychologically removed from it (reference) are predictors of metaphorical frames having persuasive force[78].
- Not all metaphors are created equal—'novelty, artful deviation and deliberateness' (p.22) are all categories against which metaphors can be assessed, and each of these has the potential to influence how they are processed in the minds of the individuals exposed to them.
- Studies have shown that metaphorical frames have more of an impact when the frames themselves are relied upon for understanding the topic under discussion (reference), which is not the case, one would think, with crime, the impact of which can be understood without the accompanying metaphors.
- With issues that are front and centre in our consciousness anyway, it is likely that people came to the study with their opinions fully formed[79].

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[78] The contradictions in these two bullet points point towards the complexity of our interactions with metaphorical frames—there are innumerable interacting factors at social individual and textual levels that impinge on how communications, political or otherwise, affect attitudes and values.

[79] Because how likely is it, really, that one or more words in an article that has been handed to you, and only then because you agreed to take part in study, are going to change that? What are those few words, in this drab room, going to do vs all the other words, some of them said by public figures, family members, people on TV and down the pub? But if you're to study metaphor empirically, what choice do you have? Because to test the impact of metaphor and metaphor alone means to isolate it, and to isolate it means to contrive a situation in which the only variable is metaphor, in which the rest of life does not get a look in.

Say a politician frames immigration as a flood. Say a political party decides that that is how immigration should be described, publicly. Say that at every opportunity immigration is described as such, or as variations on this theme. Say that this kind of language persists, week on week, on the evening news, as you sit down for breakfast. Say that anti-immigration sentiment increases. Say that multiple polls and increased violence against immigrants confirms this. Say you wanted to test metaphor's role in all this. How would one introduce control conditions? How would one discern the

Reijnierse et al (2015) conducted another follow-up to Thibodeau and Boroditsky's study, in which the virus and beast frames were extended with additional conventional metaphoric expressions. Words such as 'cure' and 'symptom' accompanied the virus frame, whilst 'predatory and 'prey' accompanied the beast frame. They found only 'limited support' for the hypothesis that metaphorical frames would influence people's thoughts, but suggested that this might be due to the assumption, built into the hypothesis, that the participants, having read the text, not only unconsciously accepted the frame as an accurate image of the issue, but also were immediately able to reason with it, and extend it in line with its entailments in such a way as to suggest a solution. They advised that more work is needed, to examine earlier stages in the decision-making process—that is, the point at which the frame is accepted as accurate, but before it is called upon to do the legwork in suggesting solutions or causes.

Brugman et al (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of studies that examined persuasive force of metaphorical frames vs non-metaphorical frames in the political sphere. They also distinguished between two kinds of metaphorical framing—metaphorical-words framing and metaphorical-concepts framing. The former is identified by looking for metaphorical expressions that belong to the metaphorical model being examined. The latter is identified with reference to general ideas that are congruent with the metaphorical model—these ideas do not necessarily have to be expressed through related linguistic metaphors, but nevertheless can be seen as evidence of an underlying metaphoric frame[80]

Their meta-analysis suggested that both metaphorical-words and metaphorical-concepts frames influenced reasoning, but that the influence was greater for metaphorical-concepts frames. This is explained by the fact that texts manipulated to stimulate metaphorical-word frames are altered to include only a few metaphorical expressions, and the promotion of metaphorical understanding must rest on these select expressions. Texts manipulated to stimulate metaphorical-concept frames, on the other hand, are more comprehensively 'driven by the comparison between source and target domains', and so manifest as 'a metaphorical understanding of a particular topic as a whole' (2016. p.20).

The picture is made more complex when looking at the effect of metaphorical frames compared to non-metaphorical frames, which was, statistically, small. Like Nay and Brunson, they point out that politics is a domain that is 'inherently metaphorical' (2016, p.3). As such, participants may have already been exposed to the frames present in the studies, and may have already have entrenched metaphorical frames for the topics being discussed. They

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effect of non-literal anti-immigration language from metaphorical? It is simply not possible to isolate this metaphor, to measure the impact of it empirically, in situations where, it is tempting to say, it has the most impact.

[80] He was trying, that much was certain, but she longed for the day when it would come easily to him, when he would simply, in simple, everyday words, unconsciously show her that he accepted her truth—that arguments between them should be a dance. She longed for the day when he would naturalistically talk of feeling closer after a disagreement, the day when he would no longer need to *pause, and visibly, painfully deliberate* before finally, in an action that obviously pained him, indicate that, for example, he felt more 'in step' with her after they had argued about the washing up, that he was glad they had found their 'rhythm' again.

Maybe it was her fault. Maybe the dance thing was stupid. 'No,' she said to herself, and laughed. 'It's perfect.'

'No what? What's perfect?'

'Nothing John. Nothing. Now put the stupid bin out.'

suggest that metaphorical framing may have a bigger impact when it provides a novel way of thinking about a particular domain.

What the last two chapters show is that metaphor cannot be disentangled from the world like a thread from needle. Metaphor is not a needle, discernible from and unchanged by the thread that it drags. It is not a stone that can be plucked out of the pool it has just caused ripples to spread across. It is a whole lot more complicated than that.

Metaphor is a process, an interaction, a flow, between the world and us. It is experienced in the mind, but cannot be reduced down to electrical impulses. At its very inception, it is rooted in the world, in physical states, in physical laws, but without minds to experience the world, metaphor cannot form. These minds turn physical states and laws into simple stories: gravity, and its effect on us, into notions of *up* and *down;* movement into *goals*; innumerable objects into a series of *centres* and *peripheries*. And these image schemas form the building blocks of our most basic metaphors.

And these minds are messy, aren't they? Your mind is messy, isn't it?

And this messiness, the messiness of the mind's interactions with the world and with metaphor, makes it difficult to test metaphor's effects.

The claim that metaphors influence our reasoning, shorn of caveats and clarifying statements, is a sexy one. And I mean sexy in the _____ *cures cancer* is a sexy one—sexy in the clickbait headline, snappy elevator spiel sense. But just because the impact of metaphor is impossible to accurately quantify, it does not mean that it is not an important part of the flow between us and the world, between the abstract and the concrete, between the personal and political. Put another way, if you were to able to apply the KonMari method to your cognitive abilities rather than your home and (a la Bob) decided to discard with gratitude the clutter of your metaphorical abilities, how else would you think in the abstract? It would be akin to taking a sledgehammer everything that sparks joy, to the foundations of everything that makes your world your world.

How Conceptual are Conceptual Metaphors?

The question about when metaphors trigger cross-domain comparisons and when they do not is something with which Bowdle and Gentner's *Career of Metaphor* theory is in conversation with (2005). The *Career of Metaphor* hypothesis suggests that whether a metaphor is indicative of thought or not depends in part on whether it is a novel or a conventional metaphor. They conclude that, when metaphors have passed into conventionality, they are no longer processed as metaphor in thought, but have simply become polysemous; the vocabulary of war then that pervades arguments could be less to do with the initially held view that arguments are structured around our understanding of war, and more to do with the fact that this vocabulary has come to mean something different in this context.

Müller (2008) suggests that the extent to which a word or phrase can be deemed to be metaphoric or not depends on the cognitive processes at play in the individual who is speaking or hearing the potential metaphor—whether cross-domain processes are at play or not. Even when using 'dead' metaphors, individuals can demonstrate, perhaps without realising, the metaphoric content it contains. She offers the example of the downwards gestures that often accompany talking about being 'depressed'. Though the term has metaphoric origins, reflecting the conceptual metaphor SAD IS DOWN, it has become highly conventionalised, and does not announce itself as a metaphor when used. The accompanying gestural manifestations of the underlying conceptual metaphor, however, suggest that it is not quite as dead as it seems.

Steen's deliberate metaphor theory also seeks to ascertain when, and why, cross-domain comparisons occur, positing that deliberateness of metaphor use is at the heart of this, of when and where metaphor is existing at the level of thought, separate from what is happening at the level of language.

Deliberate metaphor is defined as the 'intentional use of metaphors as metaphors between sender and addressee'. A metaphor is deliberate if 'language users, in production or reception, pay distinct attention to the source domain as a separate domain of reference' (Steen 2017, p.2). Such metaphors can be signalled through metalinguistics comments, where metaphors are rejected or argued for[81]. Under this definition, talking about an argument in terms that suggest it is a war would not be a deliberate metaphor, as distinct attention is not directed towards war as a separate domain of understanding.

Deliberate metaphor theory posits, in line with the Career of Metaphor Theory, that though such metaphors may be visible 'in the polysemous lexical structure of a language' (Steen 2017, p.9), conventional metaphoric meaning does not require cross-domain mapping to be arrived at, and so cannot be said to be functioning as metaphors as defined within cognitive linguistics. Instead, lexical disambiguation processes step in—the meaning of the metaphoric word is inferred through constraining context and probabilistic calculations applied to each available sense of the word.

Gibbs (2015, p.2) argues that deliberate metaphor theory's reliance on lexical disambiguation ignores the evidence that demonstrates that the 'embodied roots of metaphorical source domains are routinely activated as part of people's ordinary interpretations of metaphorical discourse, including verbal metaphors that are characterised as being "non-deliberate"'.

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[81] 'Death is not a party, Su, please don't say that again. A journey? I can cope with that. But party, no. Do it for your old aunt, eh?'

Discourse Dynamics

Vaièenonienë (2000) notes that, when it comes to talking about the act of communication, other conceptual metaphors, not related to the dominant conduit metaphor, exist. One such metaphor, for which evidence in both English and Lithuanian was found, is the notion of LANGUAGE AS A FABRIC. Within this metaphor, ideas are regarded as threads, and the expression of these ideas is regarded as weaving, as in, *communication breakdown was a thread running through the novel* or *the fragments are, on the face of it, unrelated, but a close reading reveals that thematic strands are woven through them.*

LANGUAGE AS A FABRIC has the potential to highlight some of the complexities that come into play when communicating. For example, the layered nature of a communication event, insofar as the event as a whole can be regarded as a piece of cloth, the ideas expressed as individual pieces of yarn, with these in turn comprised of smaller strands (words). The cloth has a character that is greater than the sum of, but related to, the individual strands. Strands can have their own textures, as interlocutors have their own characters and communication styles. Patterns can be created, or broken. The complexity of the weave can differ depending on the skill of the weaver (communicator). That a piece of cloth exists as an object in its own right is made possible by the interrelatedness of the individual strands. An utterance that is seen as irrelevant, or which is cut short, can be seen as a loose end...etc.

Transcript 1

Couples Therapist: Do you withdraw as well?
Su: No
Couples Therapist: When you argue, to escape?
Su: No, I don't withdraw. I do the opposite. I come out of myself, become more than myself, an exaggerated version, larger than life, all of the flaws amplified.
Couples Therapist: And you're aware, when this is happening?
Su: It's become a conscious thing. If that's what John thinks of me, the flaws, then that's what I might as well become.
Couples Therapist: John?
John: I become absent-minded at times. A part of me does do that.
Couples Therapist: Would you agree, Su?
Su: It's like he lets his mind go, and it drifts beyond reality, it drifts inwards. It's like he wants that detachment and distance. There's no finding him.
John: I can't put it in words like Su can. There are days when I do not want to speak at all, after we have argued, that is, a whole day may pass and I may not want to say even one word to her. Su often describes to me how her grandad was. And I do think—and I don't mean the violent stuff, but the distance—what you say about your grandad then, you are describing myself to me, because I will not make the first step, not when things are bad in my own head.
Su: He was a difficult character. He spent his life inside himself. He always felt far away. Like John...
Couples Therapist: And how does a life inside himself
Su:...sometimes does.
Couples Therapist: ...seem as a future for John, for the two of you?
Su: It worked for him, but it didn't work for my nan. It's not a path that's good for us.
Couples Therapist: Been there done that?
John: Been somewhere like it. I don't think it's a fair...
Su: And knowing my grandad's problems, I wish I could go back and tell him, or, I don't know, I could somehow show him, that it is wrong to be isolated, to isolate himself. But I can tell John, I can tell him this now.

(The above was modified from a transcript found here: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1348/147608305X52586/asset/147608305X52586.pdf?v=1&t=j5z95rf4&s=a6315fb418743410a315cd5704e4d01e7f3b81e3)

Abstracted and Pure

The examples of metaphors in language given in *Metaphors We Live by* leave something of an apocryphal tang, generic as they are, devoid of conversational context, lacking in the meat and the tinsel of life. Questions have been raised regarding how representative such self-constructed, decontextualised examples of metaphor use are of the metaphors we use in real life (Steen 2011) and thus of how useful they are when it comes to ascertaining metaphor's workings and importance.

Conceptual metaphor theory has come a long way since then, with scholars increasingly making use of large corpus drawn from real-life, rather than constructed examples of metaphor, It has been acknowledged that conceptual metaphors 'should probably be seen as cognitive tendencies rather than systematic and coherent structures that fully govern the semantics of a group of lexical items' (Gibbs, 2017, p.123), but criticisms have still been levelled at the emphasis the Conceptual Metaphor Theory places on imagined conceptual systems. Steen notes that although 'cognitive linguists present their work as being about thought' (2011, p.1) it is not necessarily the case that the metaphors that we use are representative of thought as normally defined, suggesting that cognitive linguists are equivocating the 'conceptual system of the abstract idealized native speaker of a language' with the 'psychological processes of concrete individuals' (2011, p.3).

Cameron's discourse dynamics approach to metaphor seeks to shift the focus, and make more space for concrete psychological processes, for real people and the complications that they bring to the table, in her analysis of metaphor. Although she notes that 'since metaphor reveals something of how people think and feel, it can be used as an empirical tool' (2010, p.iv), she expresses concerns that the focus on metaphor at the conceptual level across whole speech communities means that the specifics of language, and the specifics of the communication events, are downplayed. Conceptual metaphors are abstracted to the point that they are regarded as fixed entities. Their 'invariance' and 'purity' makes them stable when it comes to building theories and drawing conclusions, but at some point in the peeling back, the flesh is damaged, the object of study changes nature and construct validity disintegrates' (Gibbs, 2017, p.13). The result is a theory whose applicability to societal issues is limited.

Cameron describes how, when we look at metaphor use in real conversations, had in the concrete, real world, by individuals with real psychological processes, metaphors are revealed as being fluid, as part of a cognitive process, a flow. Through this lens, metaphor's apparent stability is temporary, 'emerging from the activity of inter-connecting systems of socially-situated language use and cognitive activity.' (2009, p.3)

One outcome of this is that mixed metaphors, shorn from the fixity of their conceptual metaphor frameworks, are often revealed to not be mixed at all. Instead, they are regarded as part of the flow, as cohering with relation to the larger, temporary systemic metaphors that arise within the specific discourse event.

Looking at the use of metaphor in reconciliation, Cameron analysed a conversation between Jo Berry, whose father was killed by an IRA bombing, and Pat Magee, who planted the bomb. Metaphors that, disconnected from the discourse event, might seem incongruous ('cycle of bitterness', 'come face-to-face with that price'*)* combine naturally, given that they are grounded in the broader discourse.

That discourse occurs sequentially allows for the layering of newer metaphors on top of existing, established metaphors. Cameron also gives the example of Jo's 'healing journey' (2007, p.198)—the notion of coming to terms with trauma is well established in the

discussion before it is merged with the idea that the discussion is a journey towards understanding.

Transcript 2

(Su and John gave up on couple's therapy after the first session, a portion of which you have just read. This second session came some six months later—'We are in the same place as back then,' Su said. 'Except now I see it for what it really is.')

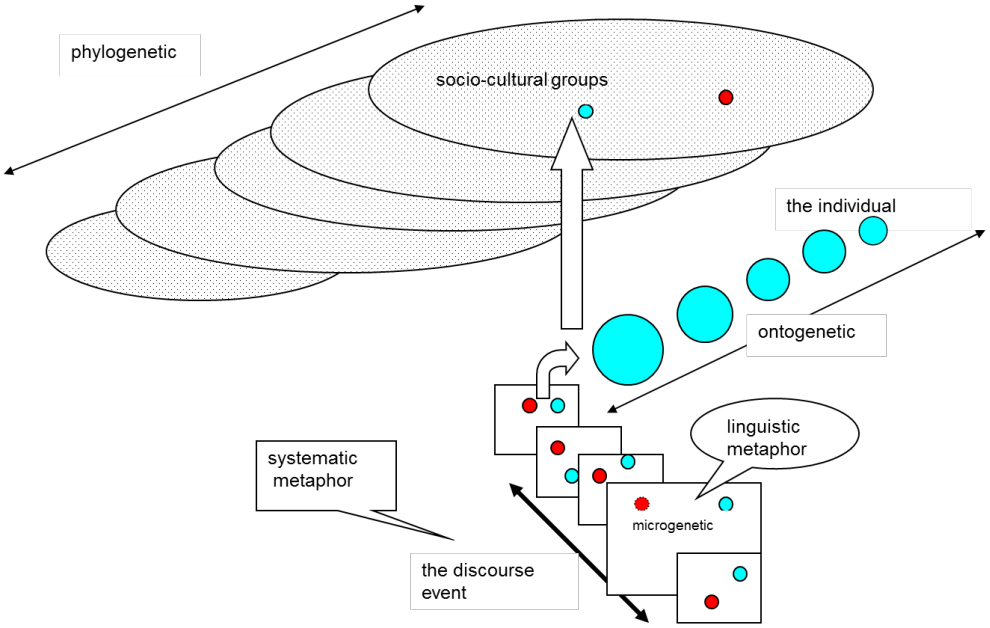
John: It is. It's hard, it's hard to be close.
Couple's Therapist 2: Is it? Help me, how does that work, then? What does that look like for you, John? It's hard to be close, it's hard to, to... what? Be held, or be...
Su: Not at all. Physical closeness has never been the issue
Couple's Therapist 2: You withdraw, do you, emotionally?
John: Well, you'd call it withdrawal. I just at times don't want me to be around her. It's not like I recoil, it's like I'm not there and never was, that's how it feels.
Couple's Therapist 2: So somehow you get to the place where you're just sort of standing back, and it's too hard for you to then really connect with Su right? You're just kind of sort of protecting yourself. Am I getting it right? And then that's, and then that's hard for you, Su.
Su: Mm-hmm.
Couple's Therapist 2: And then you lash out, Su? Figuratively...
Su: Let's run with that.
Couple's Therapist 2: And John, you go and you try to connect with her, but the message you get is somehow the thing again about that you've blown it, you didn't measure up, because of the distance, the walls you set up, am I getting it?
John: Pretty much. I think deep down I sometimes feel like I don't know Su, who she is. She's too varied to pin down, changing from one day to the next. I never know what she will be into, day to day, it's always something new. And that's wonderful, it's why I fell for her. But the opposite side of that is that I feel, on the one hand, I feel like I never know what opinions she will have, what will annoy her, what will set off the cycle this time. And I feel stale in comparison, like I'm this little unchanging thing in her shadow.
Couple's Therapist 2: Well, how do you deal with that?
John: Pretty much just leave it alone. Just leave it alone. Time passes and I thaw, or Su burns out, and we'll have sex, and we feel close again for a time.
Couple's Therapist 2: Even though this, you both get caught in this thing we're talking about here, there are times, there are little islands when you can be close, and you can connect. Is that right?
Su: I can be mean.
Couple's Therapist 2: You are?
Su: I have a...
Couple's Therapist 2: I didn't hear John say that. Is that...is that what you...
John: No, she's not. Not really. It's just that I feel like the rules of engagement change so often, I never know what game we are playing.
Johnson: Okay, guys. Let me see if I got this right. So I'm sort of parachuting in, here, okay?
Su: Pull the cord.
Couple's Therapist 2: So you help me when I get it wrong, okay? It sounds like what's happening in your relationship is you've got caught in a particular kind of pattern, a

particular dance[82] together where—whatever comes first doesn't really matter, whether it's Su being angry and expressing that, or the walls that John puts up. Let's just start anywhere. Su, a trigger for you is feeling cut off, these walls, the disconnection, and you rise up, and John retreats even further, and you get caught in trying to have him see that and understand that it's difficult for you, someone who thrives on connection and talking, and you can't get through to him somehow, right, and that must be really frustrating for you...
Su: Mm-hmm. That's pretty much that the relationship is doomed, really. Yes.
Couple's Therapist 2: I'm getting it?
John: You got it. You had it straight on.
Johnson: That's a hard one, guys, because that...
Su: It's a snake locked onto its own tail.
Couple's Therapist 2: Right. And the thing that strikes me is that that's painful for both of you, right? That's sort of... maybe there's a need for you to be able to talk to Su on a different kind of level and create some safety, a safe space. And then maybe you can create a whole new level where the two of you can talk about feelings, and you can also hear her, why she reacts like that when she's angry, why it's maybe not such a big deal for her to do that.
Su: We're in the same cycle, but we are circling alone. And I don't want that. I want us to be moving together.
Couple's Therapist 2: Does it touch you at all that Su's sitting here saying that actually she feels alone and frustrated, and that she does actually want to be with you? Does that, do you let that touch you at all, John?
Su: You hear me saying it, but you're not getting it.
Couple's Therapist 2: Can you hear her?
John: Mm-hmm.
Couple's Therapist 2: Can you really hear her?
John: I think so. It went right in.
Couple's Therapist 2: Did it?
John: I get it I get it I get it.

(The above was modified from a transcript found here:
http://www.psychotherapy.net/uploads/5112790b73d4a.pdf)

[82] It's hard to say whether Su's argument as dance metaphor came from this session (if asked, she would not have been able to recall this phrasing) or, as she thought, from her own deep-seated predilection for arguments as performance, for the thrill, the poise and balance of a good old back and forth. Maybe it was a bit of both—maybe what the therapist said resonated as a vocalisation of a belief she had not herself put into words.

Excavation



(*The dynamics of metaphor in face-to-face spoken interaction*, Cameron, 2010, p.84)

The above diagram visualises, according to the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor, the interconnected systems that might be involved in the production of metaphor in any one discourse event. At the phylogenetic scale, social change across generations is represented by overlapping ovals, with each oval representing a sociocultural group, the rightmost of these being the present-day group to which the interlocutor belongs. At the ontogenetic scale, an individual's path through life is represented by a series of circles, the leftmost of these being the interlocutor as they existed at the time of the discourse event. The discourse event is drawn as a series of squares, with individual contributions visualised as dots within each square. The microgenetic scale is the scale at which individual linguistic metaphors are uttered, with systematic metaphors arising through the connections between these.

Systematic metaphors, in the context of discourse dynamics, are sets of linguistic metaphors, occurring across a discourse event, in which connected vehicle phrases or words are used in relation to a particular topic, with *vehicle* here referring to phrasing that carries the comparison. Vehicles are similar to source domains in conceptual metaphor theory, whilst systematic metaphors often resemble conceptual metaphors in their construction. The difference in labelling reflects the fact that Conceptual Metaphor Theory 'claims cognitive reality' (Cameron, 2010, p.129) for its source domains, and regards them as fixed entities from which linguistic instantiations spring. The discourse dynamics approach does not deny the existence of conceptual metaphors (Cameron notes that conceptual metaphors may be among the sources of systematicity, given their fixity) but instead takes a bottom-up approach, beginning at the level of discourse, rather than at an abstracted, idealised level.

Whilst the thin black lines represent the passage of time, the larger, white arrows represent the potential for flow between the different systems—each participant in a discourse event brings with them the clutter of their phylogenetic heritage, the hoardings of the ontogenetic self; the utter and enveloping mess that is the microgenetic moment.

Diverging from the top-down model of conceptual metaphor theory, which sees the flow take place from thought to language, from underlying conceptual metaphors to linguistic

manifestations, the discourse dynamics model considers that linguistic metaphor production can be influenced by the nature of the discourse event, by the language which has been used by other participants previously. Individual metaphors can spring from personal histories, or be influenced by membership to a particular social group. Individual metaphors can be drawn from memory, 'as conventionalised expressions that are produced from memory in connection with certain idea', or might be 'tentative verbalisations'(p.86), a riff on a striking metaphor that occurred earlier in the discourse event, or which was overheard on the bus a couple of weeks previously.

The interconnectivity between layers means that self-organising emergent phenomenon spring up at all levels. (2010, p.87). These phenomena are different from the phenomena they sprang from, and can't be boiled down to them (as the sound of singing is different from the vibrations of a voice box, the meaning of the words being sung different from both) but are contingent on them. In this way, a conversation is an emergent phenomenon with relation to the individual participants and their interactions. A repeated metaphoric word or phrase, which takes on a meaning agreed upon implicitly by the participants, is also an emergent phenomenon.

Metaphors can morph and evolve over the course of a discourse, with this change seen as central to the dynamism and interconnectivity of the system. Such change is dubbed *metaphor shifting*, and Cameron lists four ways in which metaphors can develop:

Vehicle repetition	The term is repeated in identical or transformed form
Vehicle relexicalization	A near synonym or equivalent is used
Vehicle explication	Expansion, elaboration or exemplification of the term
Vehicle contrast	An antonymic or contrasting term is used (2010 p.89)

As such, each metaphor is 'like an excavated citizen of ancient Pompei. Just as the shape in the ash distils a complex existence into one instant, so the record of language pinpoints a momentary state in a dynamic system of thought and expression.' (Cameron, 2010, p.90).

The discourse dynamics approach begins with metaphor at the level of discourse, engaging in a search for systematicity that subsequently reveals the ideas, attitudes and values of the participants, as well as the function that metaphor plays in the discourse. By Cameron's own admission, the approach is 'interpretive...requiring (rigorous) imagination and creativity on the part of the researcher'(Cameron, 2009, p.25)

With what I will take to be Cameron's blessing, then, I will now present a discourse dynamics analysis of metaphor use across the two transcripts above. *Transcript 1* was corrupted from an interview between a couple and a psychologist, the subject being their autistic child; *Transcript 2* from an interview between a relationship therapist and a couple whose relationship is on the rocks. John and Su have been shoehorned in, and both transcripts have been modified so as to better reflect their characters, as they exist in my head and on the page. Things have been cut, much has been added—perhaps some of the realism remains.

The discourse dynamics approach to metaphor analysis can be summarised as follows:

1) Linguistic metaphors are identified.
2) These metaphors are grouped and labelled, with a view to finding patterns of metaphor use and systematicity.
3) The discourse activity as a whole is analysed to reveal what metaphor is doing, and how it is being used.

Though I expand on the above three stages below, please see Cameron (2010) (in particular chapters 6-8) for a more complete picture of the process.

The identification and grouping of metaphors across the two transcripts can be seen in the sub-chapter *Metaphor Tables*.

Metaphor Identification

Cameron adopts and adapts the Pragglejaz group's Metaphor Identification Procedure, summarised below:

1) The researcher familiarizes her/himself with the discourse data.
2) The researcher works through the data looking for possible metaphors.
3) Each possible metaphor is checked for:
    a. its meaning in the discourse context;
    b. the existence of another, more basic meaning;
    c. an incongruity or contrast between these meanings, and a transfer from the basic to the contextual meaning
    d. If the possible metaphor satisfies each of the above, it is coded as metaphor (Cameron, 2010, p.104)

Familiarising myself with the text was easy, given that I am (largely) its creator.

Possible metaphorical phrases were listed and checked to make sure they satisfied the necessary conditions for metaphor—is there an incongruity or contrast between the meaning of the word or phrase in its context, and another meaning? Can the contextual meaning be understood in terms of a more basic meaning?

For example, the phrase 'there's no finding him' introduces an incongruity, insofar as Su can presumably literally 'find' John, given that they live with each other. The contextual meaning, that there is an emotional gap hindering communication, can be understood in terms of this more basic idea of trying and failing to physically locate someone or something.

Metaphor Systematicity

The first step to finding systematicity is identifying metaphor vehicles across the discourse. This process is, according to Cameron, interpretative and flexible, insofar judgement calls must be made based on the evidence to hand, and new additions to a particular vehicle group may change its nature, and so necessitate relabelling. Groupings should be based on 'consideration of connections between metaphor vehicles and of the discourse evidence to support decisions' (2010, p.120). Cameron also notes that groupings that are too general might imply entailments and implications that are not warranted. For example, 'Come out of myself' was initially grouped as a *MOVEMENT* vehicle, in line with the preceding metaphors. Subsequent metaphors relating to the idea of being inside oneself, and so unreachable, however, suggested another, more specific grouping—that of containment. 'All the flaws amplified' was initially labelled as *SOUND*, but given Su's preceding metaphors ('more than myself', 'larger than life') which speak of becoming bigger, *GROWTH* seemed a better way of capturing the commonalities here.

The second step it to identify the topic of each metaphor (see again *Metaphor tables*). Once topics have been decided on, all of the metaphors that relate to a particular topic within each vehicle grouping are listed together as a set. These sets, imposed by the researcher, but informed by textual evidence, comprise the systematic metaphors as understood within the discourse dynamics framework. Due to the temporal nature of discourse, systematic metaphors can also be characterised as metaphor trajectories, as metaphors are repeated and reworked, challenged and disregarded. Some of the sets I imposed are below. Again, due to wordcount constraints, I have listed here only a selection—those built from the greatest number of linguistic instantiations, or else those which I found to be the most striking and relevant with reference to the topic and trajectory of the discourse:

JOHN'S EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE

And it drifts beyond reality
It drifts inwards
You'd call it withdrawal
It's not like I recoil
And John retreats even further

JOHN'S EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS BEING CONTAINED WITHIN HIMSELF

It's like he lets his mind go
In my own head

SU'S REACTION TO JOHN'S EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS GROWTH

More than myself
Larger than life
All the flaws amplified

SU AND JOHN'S RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY

It's not a path that's good for us
Been there done that

Been somewhere like it

SU AND JOHN'S RELATIONSHIP IS A CIRCLE

What will set off the cycle
We're in the same cycle
But we are circling alone

Systematic metaphors, once half-created, half-discovered, provide a starting point for further investigation.

Transcript 1 Analysis

The discourse dynamics approach sees researchers move between an analysis of discourse activity and metaphor. All the while, it must be acknowledged that metaphors may not directly reflect participants' thoughts, but will have been chosen on the fly and adapted to fit their context of use—we have to do our best with the words that come to us, because silences are awkward. Make do and mend, and hope that better words come to us in the future.

Transcript 1

The transcript opens with the therapist asking if Su withdraws 'as well'—presumably it has been established that John's emotional response to conflict can be understood in terms of a physical movement away. That Su counters this with a direct 'no' prompts the therapist to clarify the question with a logical extension of the idea of moving away—'to escape?'. It's possible the therapist, in giving this clarification, is also looking to give Su justification for her possible metaphorical movement away from John, and so make it easier to speak candidly.

Su again refutes this, stating instead 'I come out of myself', drawing on the idea of movement but reversing its flow, which serves to make clear how she regards her own response to conflict as the reverse of John's, opposed. This is a conscious reversal, as indicated by her insistence that she 'does the opposite'. Su's metaphorical movement is made more specific than the directionless idea of withdrawal, as she moves outwards from within herself, and as such the movement vehicle is also combined with notions of containment and release. Three metaphors follow in quick succession. That I catalogued each of these as *growth* metaphors suggests that we are dealing with mixed metaphors with relation to the *movement away* metaphors. However, each of these metaphors is congruent with image of moving away from yourself, given the surfaces of things that are growing move outwards. Su becomes more than herself, larger than life, and, drawing on notions of sound, her flaws are described as amplified (amplified is contingent with 'growth' given that an amplified sound is understood metaphorically as having become bigger).

That Su moves through various metaphor vehicles whilst maintaining congruency perhaps indicates that Su is trying to deepen the understanding provided by each preceding metaphor rather than to usurp it. 'Larger than life' could be a positive thing, but noting that this entails that flaws too are 'amplified' suggests a desire to clarify. It is worth noting that a therapy session such as this might not be a walk in the park, during which words come easily—Su is working with the words and images that come to her; none of them are perfect, maybe in combining and building images, she hopes to triangulate the meaning she is trying to express to John and the therapist.

The therapist asks Su if she is conscious in the moment, when she behaves in this way. Su notes that yes, it's a conscious act—if John sees her in terms of her flaws anyway, then that's who she 'might as well become'. The logic of this self-fulfilling prophecy is captured by Su in terms of metonymy here, insofar as we are talking about a part-whole relationship—Su feels that John only notices part of her, her flaws, and so feels she may as well 'become' them, making them the whole of her being.

The therapist responds with a question ('John?') although it is unclear what the question actually is—potentially the therapist is leaving it open, more an invitation to respond to what Su has said rather than having a particular thrust. Rather than respond to what Su has said (indicating perhaps an unwillingness to engage with the idea that he sees only her flaws).

John instead engages with his own characterization as someone who withdraws. The vehicle of absence is introduced ('I become absent-minded'), and though the idea of absence is congruent with the idea of withdrawal, it does subtly change the emphasis—'a part' of John is simply not there, John seems to be saying; John does not consciously withdraw, but his mind disappears, temporarily, 'at times'. The idea of becoming something suggests less agency than the idea of movement, a subtle way of disguising, through what is not entailed, John's choice to react in a certain way. This denial of agency is also heightened by a kind of anti-metonymy taking place here, as it is implied that John as a whole should not be confused with the 'part' of John that absents it(him?)self.

Su, asked whether she agrees, responds with a slew of metaphors ('It's like he lets his mind go...and it drifts beyond reality...drifts inwards, 'He wants that detachment', 'There's no finding him'). Su creates a metaphorical story (reference) in which John's actions are re-centred, and John is implicated (John's mind does not simply absent itself—John lets it go). The metonymical relationship between mind and person is reintroduced by Su, as John's mind is let go, but then is collapsed with 'he wants that detachment', 'there's no finding him' –John is made whole, responsible for the sum of his being, accountable for his actions, and su is cast as someone actively trying to *find* John.

Prompted perhaps in part by Su's metaphorical outpourings, John draws on the conduit metaphor to express how he has trouble finding the words, unlike Su ('I can't put it in words like Su can'). He then eschews metaphors of containment, movement and distance in favour of a less metaphorical description of his feelings, with 'a whole day may pass and I may not want to say even one word to her'—an admission, perhaps, that he can't compete with Su when it comes to trading metaphors. John instead relays how Su tells him about her grandad, and how when she talks of his 'distance' (it is unclear whether John is quoting Su directly, in using this metaphor, or whether he is condensing what she has described into this idea of distance), it feels like she is describing John. As metaphors can provide a proxy realm where things can be discussed safely, perhaps John feels he has found that safe place in Su's grandad.

John then elaborates on the idea of distance in relation to his own actions—he 'will not make the first step' when things are bad in his 'own head'. John, it seems, is here accepting the agency suggested by Su's metaphor story.

That John begins by addressing the therapist, but ends up addressing Su directly ('Su often describes...you are describing myself to me') also feels significant, as a metaphorical step forward towards her.

Su accepts the metaphors John uses, adopting the same vehicles of containment and distance ('He spent his life inside himself', 'He always felt far away') as they relate to both her grandad and John. As noted by Cameron, 'small acts of reconciliation, such as allowing the appropriation of metaphor, contribute to the larger [reconciliation] process' (2010, p.22). Su, in a further reconciliatory act, is at pains to emphasise that John only resembles her grandad 'sometimes', speaking over the therapist to make this point.

The therapist picks up on the idea of containment, asking how 'a life inside himself' seems 'as a future for John, for the two of [them]?' Following again in John's footsteps, Su implicitly uses her grandad as a proxy for John, acknowledging that living inside himself 'worked for him' but not for her nan. The implication here seems to be that John can carry on living inside himself, and that he will get by fine, but it won't work out for Su. Subtly Drawing on her nan and grandad's fraught history, Su, we can infer, is saying that John needs to change. This point is made more explicit with her characterisation of the future, as it looks now, as a journey that will be bad for them as a couple ('It's not a path that's good for us').

The therapist picks up on the journey vehicle, and asks Su if she has 'been there, done that?'. As the future becomes a path that is bad for their relationship, Su having dealt with her

grandad's distance becomes a place that she has been to, and to which she does not want to return. That the therapist adopts the vehicle suggests that they believe it is a fruitful metaphor. John, however, feeling perhaps that what has been lost in the extension of this metaphor is the violence exhibited by Su's grandad, elaborates on its content. Su has been 'somewhere *like'* this place. *It's simply not the same*, is what I imagine John thinking here.

Su does not acknowledge John's interjection, picking up again the threads of distance, wishing should could show her grandad that it is wrong to 'isolate himself'. Whilst she can't go back in time, John is there, and she can 'tell him this now'.

As we have seen, John and Su's relationship problems are played out in a tremendously metaphoric arena. When viewed in context, these metaphors are revealed to be, largely, congruent, part of an ever-changing, refiguring flow—as the discussion develops, metaphors are introduced, abandoned, usurped, are 'selected, adapted and built on' dynamically, signifying a circling around, a search for, common ground.

I have identified the vehicle group and topic for the metaphors present in the second transcript, but have not engaged in any analysis. A space, on the next page, for you to do just that.

Transcript 2 Analysis

Metaphor Tables

Transcript 1

Speaker	Text	Vehicle group	Topic
Therapist	Do you withdraw as well?	*Movement away*	Su
Therapist	To escape	*Movement away*	Su
Su	Don't withdraw	*Movement away*	Su
Su	Come out of myself	*Containment*	Su
Su	More than myself	*Growth*	Su
Su	Larger than life	*Growth*	Su
Su	All the flaws amplified	*Growth*	Su
Su	If that's what John thinks of me, the flaws, then that's what I might as well become.	*Personhood (metonymy)*	Su
John	I become absent-minded	*Absence*	John
Su	It's like he lets his mind go	*Containment*	John
Su	And it drifts beyond reality	*Movement away*	John
Su	It drifts inwards	*Movement away*	John
Su	He wants that detachment	*Connection*	John
Su	There's no finding him	*Concealment*	John
John	I can't put it in words	*Conduit*	Communication
John	Not the violent stuff, but the distance	*Distance*	Su's grandad
John	I will not make the first step	*Movement*	John
John	In my own head	*Containment*	John
Su	He spent his life inside himself	*Containment*	Su's grandad
Su	He always felt far away	*Distance*	Su's grandad
Therapist	how does a life inside himself seem	*Containment*	John
Su	It's not a path that's good for us	*Journey*	Su and John's relationship

Therapist	Been there done that	*Journey*	Su and John's relationship
John	Been somewhere like it	*Journey*	Su and John's relationship
Su	it is wrong to be isolated, to isolate himself	*Distance*	John

Transcript 2

Speaker	Text	Vehicle group	Topic
John	It's hard to be close	*Distance*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	What does that look like for you	*Seeing*	Su and John's relationship
John	You'd call it withdrawal	*Movement away*	John
John	It's not like I recoil	*Movement away*	John
John	It's like I'm not there and never was	*Absence*	John
Therapist	You get to the place	*Journey*	John
Therapist	You're just sort of standing back	*Distance*	John
John	Hard for you to then really connect	*Connection*	John
Therapist	You lash out, Su? Figuratively...	*Violent action*	Su
Su	Let's run with that	*Movement*	Communication
Therapist	Try to connect with her	*Connection*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	But the message you get	*Conduit*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	You've blown it	*Explosive action*	John
Therapist	You didn't measure up	*Measurement*	John
Therapist	Because of the distance	*Distance*	John
Therapist	The walls you set up	*Building*	John
Therapist	Am I getting it?	*Conduit*	Communication
John	Deep down	*Containment*	John
John	It's why I fell for her	*Control*	John
John	But the opposite side of that	*Distance*	Communication
John	Is that I feel	*Feeling*	John
John	On the one hand	*Body*	Communication
John	What will set off the cycle	*Circularity*	Su and John's relationship
John	I feel stale in comparison	*Food*	John
John	Unchanging thing	*Location*	John
John	In her shadow	*Light*	Su and John's relationship
John	Time passes and I thaw	*Heat*	John
John	Or Su burns out	*Heat*	Su

Therapist	Both get caught in this thing	*Containment*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	There are little islands	*Location*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	When you can be close	*Distance*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	And you can connect	*Connection*	Su and John's relationship
John	The rules of engagement change so often	*War*	Su and John's relationship
John	I never know what game we are playing	*Game*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	I'm sort of parachuting in	*Parachuting*	Communication
Su	Pull the cord	*Parachuting*	Communication
Therapist	Caught in a	*Containment*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	particular kind of pattern	*Pattern*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	A particular dance together	*Dance*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	The walls that John puts up	*Building*	John
Therapist	Feeling cut off	*Cutting*	Su
Therapist	And you rise up	*Movement up*	Su
Therapist	And John retreats even further	*Movement away*	John
Therapist	And you get caught	*Containment*	Su
Therapist	Someone who thrives	*Growth*	Su
Therapist	And you can't get through to him	*Movement towards*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	I'm getting it?	*Conduit*	Communication
Su	You had it straight on	*Movement towards*	Communication
Su	It's a snake locked onto its own tail	*Snake*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	And the thing that strikes me	*Striking*	Communication
Therapist	Different kind of level	*Location*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	create a whole new level	*Building*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	What we haven't touched on	*Touch*	Communication
Su	We're in the same cycle	*Circularity*	Su and John's relationship

Su	But we are circling alone	*Circularity*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	I want us to be moving together	*Movement*	Su and John's relationship
Therapist	Does it touch you	*Touch*	Communication
Therapist	Do you let that touch you at all, John?	*Touch*	Communication
Su	You're not getting it	*Conduit*	Communication
Therapist	Can you hear her?	*Hearing*	Communication
John	It went right in.	*Conduit*	Communication
John	I get it I get it I get it	*Conduit*	Communication

Discourse with the Dead (the Dynamics of)

'There were seven pictures in there, in this room we went in to. There was a dog, on its back, and a woman jumping in the rain, triumphant, her back arched. There was a child laughing next to metal storage container, a man opening what looked like barn doors and another sanding something down. There was woman, her head in the fur of another dog so that I couldn't see her face, and there was one more I can't read. Oh, I can make it out. That says feet. The picture was of feet. It was two feet in socks resting against each other on a wooden floor. Resting happily, I've written. And I remember I just didn't get it. None of the other walls had anything on them. And this man came in to get his papers, and the woman who was sat at her computer opposite me kind of shooed him out, because I was a 'deceased'. What she meant was that I was a bereaved client of the bank, and he went away, and she shut the door behind her. So there were these weird pictures in there, and I had to make a note of them because they were so strange to me. But then this woman, whose job it was to sort out our now defunct joint account, was suddenly my friend, in her eyes, and all I wanted to do was sit there and look at the pictures and wait for her to make it all kosher, and wonder what Su would have made of them, what she would have said, but this woman was trying to be my friend, and I couldn't even imagine what Su would have said, what she would have told me about what these pictures meant on the wall in the bank, on just this one wall with all the other walls blank in the office, the same pictures in every office in every branch of this bank, all across the country. And I couldn't imagine what she would have said, or, for a split moment, what she thought of banks or of anything much, and it seemed like there was a real danger I'd forget what she looked like before this all happened, before the diagnosis and decline, and it reminded me of all these photos of us on the wall, these photos I can't bring myself to even look at these days, let alone understand, because that's just how it goes when I can't imagine what she'd do or what she'd say in any given situation.'

'You're just under a lot of pressure, John. We're all a little forgetful when we're under pressure.'

'It's like losing her again and again and again, except I can't bring myself to care or hurt each and every time like I did the first, which hurts so fucking much.'

'Do you speak with her at all, these days?' Rich sucked both lips into his mouth.

John said nothing—pulled a face.

'I mean, do you ask her questions? Do you do more than just *wonder* what she would have said? Do you ask her, and try and hear her voice coming back at you?'

'That's still mental. You can't ask the idea of someone something, that's like, it's like—it's a bit like trying to cross an un-built bridge, supported by the idea of its design alone, its potential to exist.'

'That was beautiful.'

'Thanks.'

'But wrong. It's not like that at all.'

'I'm not here for bereavement counselling, Rich.'

'And I'm not a bereavement counsellor, John.'

'Do you want me to humour you? Is that what that tone of voice was all about?'

'Yes, humour me.'

'Humour you because you've been through something similar? Which you haven't, not really. I mean, what was she, your second cousin?'

'Humour me because I've driven a long way to be here, and haven't even been offered any biscuits, and I'm your friend, John, let's not forget that.'

'Fine.'

The men sat awhile, in their respective skulls, judging themselves for their words and combative tones. They felt, both of them, for the first time in a long while, as if scolded by a parent with a headache, with too much to be getting on with to put up with their shit; the men could not look at each other.

'Fine.'

A fizzing nervousness. A dryness in the throat. A realisation for John that he had just agreed to engage in a period of painful emotional openness.

'I haven't got any biscuits. I haven't had any in for weeks. I haven't shopped properly, not for weeks.'

'That's sad. You know how much I like biscuits.'

A pause.

'It is about bridges, though, in a way. It's about forging a connection with Su, something you've lost.'

'It's about realising that there's no connections to be made anymore, metaphorical or real, it's about coming to terms with that.'

Another pause.

'You're not getting it. Or I'm not saying what I think I'm saying, one of the two,' Rich continued.

'Enlighten me.'

I'm talking connections with her memory, it's as simple as that. I talk to people who aren't there all the time. I speak to you, when you aren't around. James, too. Harry, sometimes.'

'These people are alive still.'

'They are alive, admittedly, but they aren't there when I talk to them. For all I know they could be dead, they could have died just minutes before. What difference does it make?'

'Why bother?'

'To learn from them, from you. I've got a confession to make. Remember when I was going through all that shit at work? You called me, that evening, and you left a message asking me to call you back, because you were worried. I didn't pick up, but I knew it was you calling. I didn't pick up because I was having a conversation with you in my head, about what I should do, and it was going really well and you were being really helpful. And you can still do that with Su, John, she's passed, I know that, she's not here, floating in the room somewhere, of course not, that's not what I'm saying, but then most people aren't here, it's just me and you in your living room, and Su isn't here right now, because I know you don't believe in that kind of thing, and she might not be anywhere, admittedly, and she's certainly not here specifically, but still.

'So let's sit and be quiet and drink this too-milky tea that you've been very nice to make for us, and let's not think too much about the biscuit situation. Let's sit and think about what she would have made of it all, what she would have said about that woman who tried to be your friend when all you wanted her to do was sort out your bank account for you. A modest request, if ever there was one, and I know how you hate fawning.'

'I can't. I can't look at the photos of us, of her, and I have no idea what she would have said or done, in any situation, and asking just feels stupid. There may as well be holes in the walls.'

Another pause. The men sipped their tea mechanically.

'Did it work, when you had that imaginary conversation with me?'

'You were very helpful indeed.'

'That's not what I meant. Did what the imaginary me say match up with what the real me said? I remember that evening. I came around after, because you weren't picking up my calls. We went to the pub.'

'You were, both of you, both the *yous*, really helpful, in your own ways.'

'Did we say the same things? That bit is really important to me.'

'Not the same, no.'

'Then it's not a connection, it's not real.'

'But I've had conversations with an imaginary James, and then with the real James, and you'd be surprised at how many echoes there were.'

'That's easy. I reckon I'd be able to predict exactly what James would say in any given situation. Nothing against the guy, but he's flat and predictable, and he changes with the wind and agrees with you and says whatever you want to believe, and probably believes that he believes it too for the duration of the conversation, and Su was none of those things, we never knew what she'd say or do next, and when I try to know what she would have said in any given situation, it's like…I don't know what it's like. I just can't do it, that's all I know[83]. And I think I want you to leave, when you've finished your tea. No rush.'

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[83] *'You feel like that bit of brain that tries to pinpoint the exact moment of sleep, that is so interested in pinpointing it, but is always thwarted at the last moment.*

No…

'It's like trying to watch yourself blink in the mirror. At the last moment, you are blind.'

No…

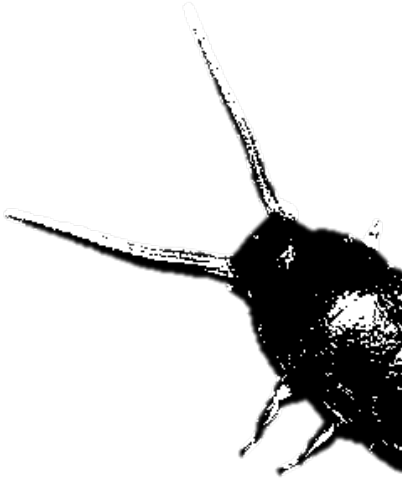
'It's like trying to watch yourself blink in the mirror.'

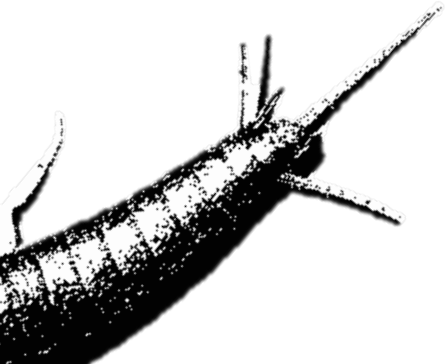
No…

'It's like trying to watch yourself blink.'

- Su (in potentia)

Whenever he came home, these days, there was always one silverfish in his bathtub. Never more, never fewer, no matter the numbers elsewhere in the house. One silverfish, waiting for him, dazzled by the light, panicked in his bathtub. Do silverfish eat silverfish? That would solve that mystery. But he thought they ate dust? They certainly turn into something like dust when you try and fail to cradle one out into the garden, smudging it instead between two disgusted fingers. Do they nest? Can they burrow, or bite, or climb something glass and vertical? Can they fall into your bedside glass of water? Where are the silverfish stories and myths? The colouring books, the nursery rhymes and fluffy toys? Where is the symbolism, the metaphor? What about them could not retain, or else could not attract it?





'That thing you said about bridges, John? That thing you said about the brain and sleep?' Rich's voice was shaking, or else the line was bad.

'What? Look mate, I'm tired. I'm sorry about earlier, and the biscuits. I shouldn't have been like that, but I'm tired and need to sleep. We can speak tomorrow, okay?'

'Hear me out, please.'

John paused: 'fine.'

'That thing you said about the un-built bridge. I meant what I said, it really was beautiful. Quite beautiful, and it came out of nowhere, like something Su would have said. Wrong, all the same, but beautiful. Just like something Su would have said. And that bit about the mirror, and blinking? It was like she was there, it was a flash of her, and I've known you for a long time, John, I've known you longer than Su, and that was not like something you would have said before you met her. Can you imagine saying that if you had never met her? And writing down what you saw in the bank? Writing it down and thinking about what it all could mean? That's not the John of old, the spade-is-a-spade John I grew up with.'

John felt the presence of photographs on every wall around him in the darkness, and they seemed to him darker than anything else in the room, cold and recessed inside their frames, portals to something beyond these four walls, and they remained like that until long after he hung up, not knowing exactly what he had said in response, or what to do with the coming days, months.

John would give anything, everything he had, to speak with Su one more time. Speaking with the idea of her—that was the only offer anyone could give him now, but even that seemed impossible. He never knew what she'd say, and whilst in life he felt he knew her, in death he couldn't quite fathom how she thought, the still, inviolable centres of her; who, in short, she was, trappings stripped away. Who was she without him, without having passed through his filter? Had he ever known her? If her way of seeing the world was a lens then it was a lens of some volatile, chameleonic substance, its angles of refraction unstable. If it was a frame then it was a frame of shifting, impossible dimensions, distending one moment so as to enclose simultaneously, within its parameters, memories from the past, trinkets on the kitchen table, an idea she once had on the bus. And these things, composed unexpectedly, arranged in relation, would merge to create, in just a few words from her lips, something distinctly of Su, distinctly her, yet he could not work out how it was her. He knew that this was just an illusion (he *did* know her, *must* have known her, surely?) but if it was just an illusion then it seemed impossible to shake. He could bring to mind certain things she had said, and certain moments in which she had thought one way, that was not enough. He could transcribe her exact words, even. He could funnel memories, phrases, the way she looked when she was annoyed at him, into something Su-shaped, but this Su-shaped thing was uncanny, like imperfect algorithms had overlaid her onto a manakin, like taxidermied animals behind museum glass.

John had the potential for creative thought, he knew that. His school reports told him as much—he had had *potential*, he *sussed things out but kept quiet about it.* He was someone his friends now described as *coming up with gems*, with *corkers,* but only now and then. To his friends, the odd off-the-wall outburst he did have were all the more surprising, funnier because they came so rarely. But he had the potential, he knew, to vocalise so much more of what was inside, to be so much more. But he never had confidence in his thoughts once they left his skull, and so kept them, for a large part, inside. Su's influence on him had been twofold, double-edged. On the one hand, she never judged what he said, even when the thought came apart at the seams when he vocalised it, even if it was a party, and the room had dropped suddenly quiet and everyone had leaned in to listen as his interjection reached its unsatisfactory end. On the other, she was the creative one, the zany, wacky, never-knew-what-she'd-say-next one, and it was pointless trying to compete with that, not when it came all so effortlessly to her. He was reminded of the couple's therapy, of how they abandoned it, of how he could never shake the feeling that it was because she felt sorry for him, of how she could wipe the floor with him with words, of how he could never find the right words, of how she didn't want an audience for that.

Had he been quieter with Su? Less confident in himself, especially when she was near? Had he been happier without her? He felt repulsed at himself. As if he had even thought that.

The Beach

Up close like this with his nose pressed against it the beach looked like a spoiled desert as viewed from the sky. The sand reeked. The surf sucked weakly at his sleeve. John was coming to.

Everything manmade letting the water in. Su gone. Promenades and harbour walls becoming sand on a timeline far greater than our own. Su gone. Horizons Hospital, futuristic and looming in the distance. Su gone, still gone and gone forever. A man, scruffy in too many clothes, picked his way along the thin beach. In one hand he held tatty brogues and his corduroy trousers were rolled up past tanned knees. He stopped to cast his shadow on a rockpool and regard the panicked things moving inside it. He stopped to shake sand from between his toes and beard, and then again to lift and drop a piece of seaweed. A day of stops and starts and objects of little interest and of little use. He was still oblivious to John, who had pulled his arm into his body and away from the surf, and was planning on remaining prone so long as he remained un-submerged.

The sand some few feet away was red with what he hoped was just crumbled red stone, or the split open remains of a crab. Something whole made multitudinous. He thought he could smell something's insides on what little breeze there was and closed his eyes to it. Some few feet were a horizon away when your eyes were this close to the ground, which was no consolation. Always smells like this at the frayed edges, in the grey area where any further and the fish and tentacled things ran out of water, where everything else ran out of land. Things just about managed in this sodden middle ground.

He imagined watery tornados spinning, miles out, their tails below the horizon; an eclipse, a coffee cup stain of light burning heatlessly down for eternity; tsunami dregs making their way back to where the sea more normally was. The catastrophes he imagined when he couldn't remember the bad things he'd been doing before he blacked out were always of an impersonal variety—panoramic shots of destructive change that became peopled only as his memory returned.

He remembered plastic baggies, something powdery with promise being passed to him, more money than he could realistically afford to spend in one evening passing from sweaty palm to sweaty palm. He remembered the world seeming slanted, as if through alien eyes that could barely be classified as eyes—sensory organs that translated signals according to vastly different algorithms. He remembered more if the same, and each and every time for diminishing chemical returns. He had no idea where he was, and he wasn't going to make an effort to change that until standing became preferable to just lying there oblivious, hurting all over on the flat sand. He really hoped the tide was on its way out. For now at least there was detachment and distance. Last night and his entire life concertinaed before it—unreal.

He wondered if he could enforce a cut-off point here, say:

The night happened, by god it happened, and everything before it, and I'm waking up on cold sand because of it, but what if I just got up and didn't let any of it affect the course of my life? Just got up and said:

There are reasons why I'm here, by which I mean events have led to my being here, but I'll be damned if I let those events determine anything from now onwards, from this point, *now*.

And the thought became grander in his head, and he imagined thumping the sand, because the thought became, in an instant, about god, about if there was one, and what if there was and what if there wasn't and what and what and what? The detachment more pronounced, now he was negotiating more abstract terrain, an increasing distance and impenetrable thicknesses and heights between his thoughts and his self.

Which got him thinking about his self, about what happened to it when he was not thinking anything at all, if it truly just went away like it seemed like it did, like laps and fists went away, like the vase between two silhouetted faces in profile when they move in at last to

kiss—and this thought, that the self could disappear as easily as that, gave him the best, most thrilling detachment of all, so far, and he wondered how he could improve on it, but decided not to force it, because that was how to lose it and lose it for good, he felt.

An intrusion from above. The wind on his face told him how they were moving—messy arcs in the sky and hungry, yellow eyes when they got up close. And the panoramas were back, massive in scope behind his eyes. There were people dragging their cracked feet below the eclipse, now, children being sucked up into the sky or else floating, face down. Pretty soon they would have names and distraught parents whimpering them and halfway recognisable, eaten-into faces.

If the detachment could not be made to return, that is. He fished in the dark of his skull, fished without effort because that was how it should be done, that was how these kinds of detaching thoughts came to you. He heard the surf hiss and sink into the sand, inches from his face. Not easy to say what the tide was doing, but opening his eyes and situating himself squarely somewhere would surely mean losing it for good, this detachment, and so, blindly, he shifted up the beach, a baby's first, lopsided crawl, feeling the world turn beneath him, resenting the broken sharpness of shells on his elbows and knees until he was pleased that there was something soft and scratchy beneath them.

The man in too many clothes had dropped his brogues and started running and shouting the moment he saw something crawling, as if from out of the sea, as if newly evolved, towards where he had slept that night.

John carried on crawling, his eyes closed, feeling that his momentum would carry him over the soft and scratchy pile, up the beach and away from the voice, which was muffled now as if a thin film was between them. A thin and loose womb that, come to think of it, he could hear moving silkily in the breeze. And then, as if his imaginings were dictating the way of the world now, his hand stroked against a thin film, and because the shock was not enough to make him stop crawling, he crawled right into it, feeling it give but not break. He pushed harder and it stretched in a welcoming way like a second skin over his head and hair. It was drier and more synthetic than he expected. The shouting with a snap was loud and behind him, no longer muffled, focused as if through a hole in the womb:

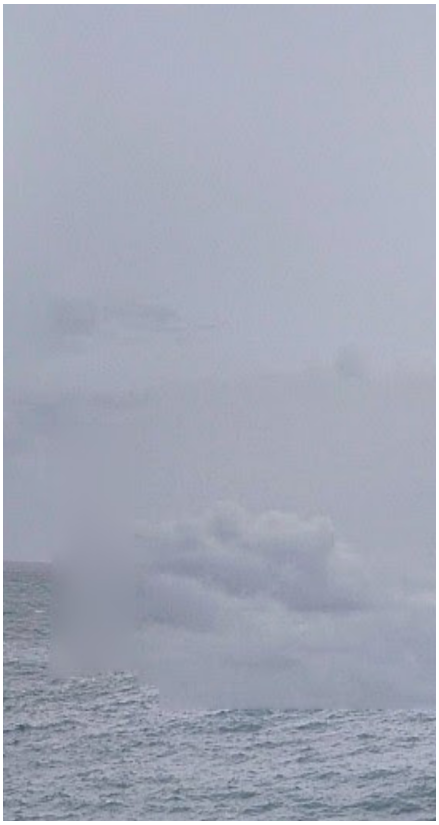
'Get out of my fucking tent.'

And then, brandishing something in his hand that glinted in the morning sun, and looking down at John:

'Run.'

And John scrambled out of the tent, and for the first time since Su's passing, ran. And it felt like he was running into the rest of his life—an underdetermined stretch of time uninterrupted until its end with only the memory of Su. And he felt, as the distance from the tent increased, the wind between his fingers, a dull ache in limbs not accustomed to movements like this, the cold air stinging the back of his throat.

And he felt, for the first time in a long time, something like freedom.



[84]

John still had sand in his shoes. Behind him, the town—a succession of narrow streets and busy market stalls and wrong, not easily correctible turns. Before him the thin beach, divided in two by a stream that exited the promenade wall below him and cut through the sand and slid into the sea without commotion. He had sat on the wall and rinsed first his feet, and then his socks, and even his shoes with a plastic bottle he found and filled with water from this stream, all the while looking out over the gently crumpling sea. But still there was the sand, grating against his heels and toes, and there was the man and his tent some few hundred yards down the beach, and a small fire burning from a pile of bleached driftwood, which was bested in terms of brightness by the morning sun and sending up no smoke, but John knew it to be there.

If what lay behind was suggesting one set of ideas to him, then the beach and the sea and the sky were suggesting something like the opposite. Thinking first of the town behind him and then the structure-less direction of the expanse before him, the structured town behind and the beach before over and over again, felt to him like an exchange, a conversation between two very different people, two different parts of him; an argument, almost, but for the salty breeze rolling in from the sea, smoothing things over. He would have to follow the breeze into the streets at some point, navigate the town into the suburbs beyond and home, even if staying here all day seemed like the only option open to him at this moment in time.[85]

---

[84] Image lifted Google Map's Street View. The sea and sky spliced, one.

John still had sand in his shoes, and wet feet now to boot, but something had come to him, from the landscape—a way forward.

Looking back, this moment on the sea wall seemed to John like a crossroad moment. The days and hours either side of that moment as if held only in his peripheral vision, unfocused and much of it guesswork, and this moment neatly siloed off in contrast. The moment when he could have become one way, but became another. If life is a wandering in the dark, between streetlamps that are only noticed once they are passed, significance imposed on them retrospectively, then this was one such streetlamp.

It was the moment John decided to take up running.

Blending Theory

Digital Ghosts

John had never been what you would call a runner. The odd run, or visit to the gym, to blow out the cobwebs when he came to feel particularly sedentary, peppered his life since his late teens. That run on the beach, away from the man brandishing, in John's memory, a knife (it could have easily been a spoon, or other utensil, he admitted to himself finally), and the way it seemed to signify more than a fleeing, but a running *into,* gave him a new-found taste for it.

Downloading a running app onto his phone one morning he was surprised to find the login details pre-populated. He didn't recognise the email address, and the password, when he clicked to reveal it, read

rUNjOhNRUN

A private joke, between Su and herself, he thought, and logged in.

An avatar filled the screen. A lycra clad cartoon, boldly rendered in bright colours, and unmistakeable Su, the way she saw herself. She ran on the spot and stretched her calves exaggeratedly, gave him a thumbs-up and wink. *Welcome back* appeared in a speech bubble. And then

> *It has been 635 days since your last run.*
>
> *Are you ready?*
>
> *Of course you are. Let's get started!*
>
> *Would you like to start a* ***New Run****, or an* ***Existing Route****?*
>
> (John clicked, automatically, ***Existing Route***.)
>
> *Remember, it's not about beating other people's times. It's about being the best you, now!*

The first route that flashed up on the screen, delineated in a red line, began at the southernmost corner of the beach, traced the edges of a monochromatic sea, skirted the town proper, and met its end at their house. His house. Disregarding the intricacies of language when it came to ownership, he resolved to beginning *there*, and ending *there*, and got dressed into tracksuit bottoms and a t-shirt, and set off for the seafront.

For the next few weeks John ran the same route along the beach twice a week at least. Despite the app's insistence that beating other people's times was not at all what running was about, he found that, as he ran, ghostly images of Su's avatar ran with him. Or rather, ran ahead, because, try as he might, he could not keep up with the paces she set, each avatar representing a time she had ran this route, faster than he, while alive. And then, when he did arrive panting and wheezing at their house, a crowd of Su's avatars were already there, waiting, jumping up and down on the spot and pumping the air, beaming cartoonishly. Though his phone depicted him moving through this crowd to their front door, when he looked up from his phone the space outside their house was empty, cold and still.

John ran more, ate better, got fitter, faster. He created his own avatar. Lacking Su's artistry, it bore only a generic likeness to him. White. Male. Short hair, a little scruffy. He gave up when the app asked him to choose his eyebrow shape and chin length.

As the weeks rolled on, he began to beat the slowest of Su's avatars, leaving his own older (but also, in a way, younger) and slower avatars in the dust in the process. Once passed, Su's faded gradually from view, and could not be made to return. His own remained, presumably the app's way of showing his progress, of how he was becoming a better version of himself.

Until, one day, there was only one of Su's avatars remaining— a solitary Su jumping up and down outside their house as John rounded the corner into their street. Her fastest time. I bet she did it effortlessly, too, John thought, throwing his damp clothes into the washing basket.

John ran twice a week at least, still. Months passed, but he got no quicker. Each and every time he rounded the corner there would be Su, jumping up and down at his door, her frizzy hair bobbing in a sea of his strained likeness, her chest the only one with a medal hanging against it. Gone the wheezing and panting, but still he did not beat her time, could not, if he was honest, bring himself to beat her time.

Then, one morning, he woke before work, and, barely functioning, barely aware he was up and mobile, dressed for his run. When he finally came properly to, having ran without foresight through a pool of seawater the tide had left behind, the cold spray pinpricking his legs, he was half-surprised to find himself on the beach and, looking down at his phone, more than a little surprised to see Su's avatar some fifty or so metres behind him on the beach, fading, barely there, a ghost of a ghost.

He slowed, and she became a little less translucent. Only fifteen minutes or so until home. Fifteen minutes to decide. He ran, keeping pace with Su, running just a few metres ahead of her, the bright colours of her running gear strong again. He left the beach, skirted the town with her right beside him. Then, as he rounded the corner into their street, and without really knowing why, he put on a burst of pace.

He reached their front door and, doubled-over, sweat dripping onto his phone, caught a split second of Su's avatar, further down the street and still running, before she faded completely, like the memory of a dream fades, entirely without fanfare.

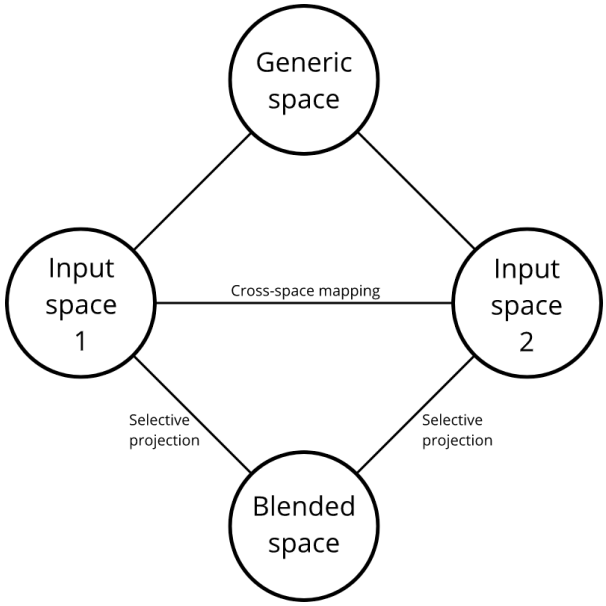
Thought, Modelled

Blending theory was developed to model the same linguistic phenomenon as conceptual metaphor theory, but also to 'unify the analysis of metaphor with the analysis of a variety of other linguistic and conceptual phenomena' (Grady et al, 1999, p.1).

Both theories see metaphor as having conceptual heft, rather than as linguistic tinsel, and both involve 'systematic projection of language, imagery and inferential structure' (1999, p.1). As conceptual metaphor theory sees the understanding of one domain in terms of another as central to our ability to think cogently about the abstract, the primary cognitive function of blending is to provide 'global insight' through the compression of relations between inputs to a 'human scale' (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998, p.339). Where they differ is in the number of modelled inputs and in the direction of travel that occurs between these inputs—where conceptual metaphor theory sees metaphor as arising from the mapping of a source domain over to its target, blending theory does not limit the number of inputs, and allows for multiple directions of conceptual travel between these.

Rather than domains, blending theory talks of mental spaces or input spaces—'partial and temporary representational structure which speakers construct when thinking or talking about a perceived, imagined, past, present, or future situation' (1999, p.1). These mental spaces may not be as entrenched as conceptual domains, but, rather, may rely on them for their general structure.

To elucidate how blending works, Fauconnier and Turner give the example of a modern catamaran that set sail from San Francisco to Boston, trying to beat the time set by a boat that sailed this route back in 1853. In the reporting of the 'race', these separate journeys are merged cogently into one—the modern boat was described as 'barely maintaining a 4.5 day lead over the ghost of the clipper *Northern Light'* (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, p.63).



Each of the journeys represents an **input space**, or mental space, containing the 'contents of a specific situation or idea. In this case, the input spaces contain the idea of a voyage, the departure and arrival points, the boat and its positions at various points along the journey, and the notion that each respective boat is trying to complete the journey as quickly as possible.

The **generic space** reflects the commonalities in structure between the input spaces. In this case, the generic space is the schematic frame of sailing from San Francisco to Boston.

The **blended space** arises from three basic processes:

1) **Composition**, in which content is projected from the input spaces into the blended space. This projection is selective, constrained by the structural similarities found in the generic space. The blended space in this way manifests as two boats that have left San Francisco at the same time.
2) **Pattern completion**, in which the blended space is also populated with reference to prior knowledge and familiar schemas that match with the blended space. In this case, the notion of a race is introduced, from our understanding of what is at stake (winning and losing) when two or more vehicles or individuals leave a destination at the same time, moving as quickly as they can to reach another destination.
3) **Elaboration**, in which the event in the blend is simulated in the mind, and further implications discovered. In this case, the race unfolds over time—the boats' relative positions change, and the excitement associated with a race is created (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, p.48-49).

Together, these spaces and their connections comprise the integration network through which two or more inputs are combined to create something new. It has been suggested that aspects of the network correspond directly with brain activity—mental spaces with 'activated neural assemblies', and connections between inputs with 'co-activation' of these assemblies.

A crucial element of blending theory is that it accounts for **emergent structure**—that is**,** how ideas that are not present in either of the input spaces come to be generated. The idea of a race is not present in either of the input spaces here, but emerges naturally, through the construction of the blended space (2002, p.48).

Fauconnier and Turner offer the following vital relations through which input spaces may be linked. These relations are what are compressed in the final blend:

- Time
- Space
- Cause-Effect
- Change
- Identity
- Part-Whole
- Representation
- Property
- Role
- Category
- Similarity/Difference (Analogy/Disanalogy)
- Intentionality
- Uniqueness (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, p.101)

In the case of "The Boat Race", it is the time between the journeys that is compressed, to such an extent that, in the emergent structure, the boats leave San Francisco at the same time.

Governing Principles

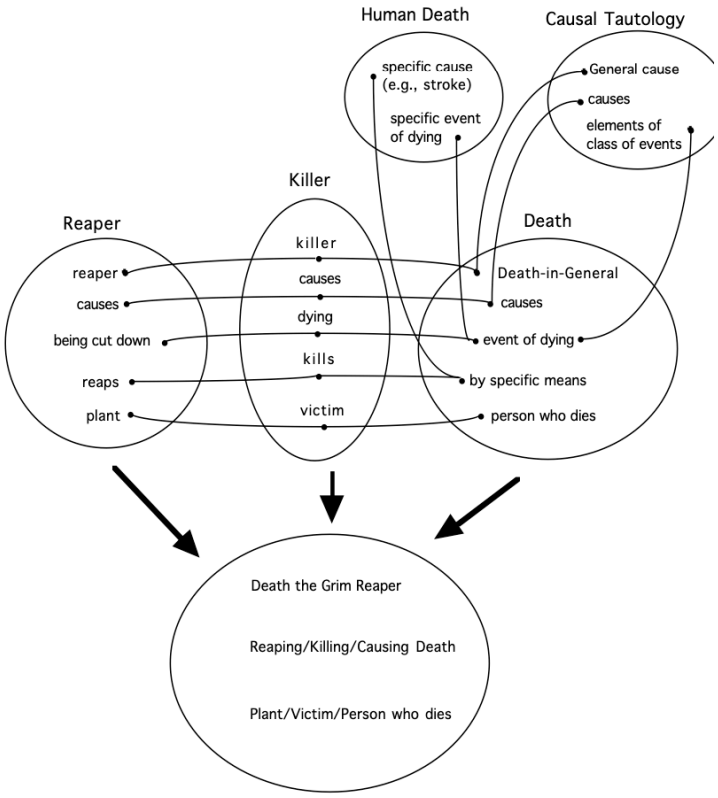
Fauconnier and Turner posit that the figure of the Grim Reaper is a result of blending a number of spaces:

1) The death of an individual
2) A more abstract space of causal tautology, in which Death causes dying
3) A prototypical killer
4) Reapers at harvest (1998, p.162)

In this example, the Reaper causes the crops to be cut down through reaping, the killer causes the death of their victim through killing them, and death causes dying through means specific to the circumstance. Reapers and killers, then, share a vital relationship through intentionality. A crop, a killer's victim and the dead, then, are also counterparts, sharing the vital relationship of cause-effect.

The skeletal nature of the Grim Reaper is not explicit in any of the input spaces, but is associated with death through a part-whole, metonymic relationship. That reapers and killers have skeletons means that these three inputs share skeletal identity.

The compression of the relationship between skeletons and death gives the Grim Reaper its final, skeletal form. Its robe and cowl, similarly, are derived from a metonymic relationship held between priests, monks and death, and the notion of intentionality is projected into the blend giving figure of the Grim Reaper agency. The scythe as a tool is also projected, filling in the causal gap that comes from embodying death as a killer.

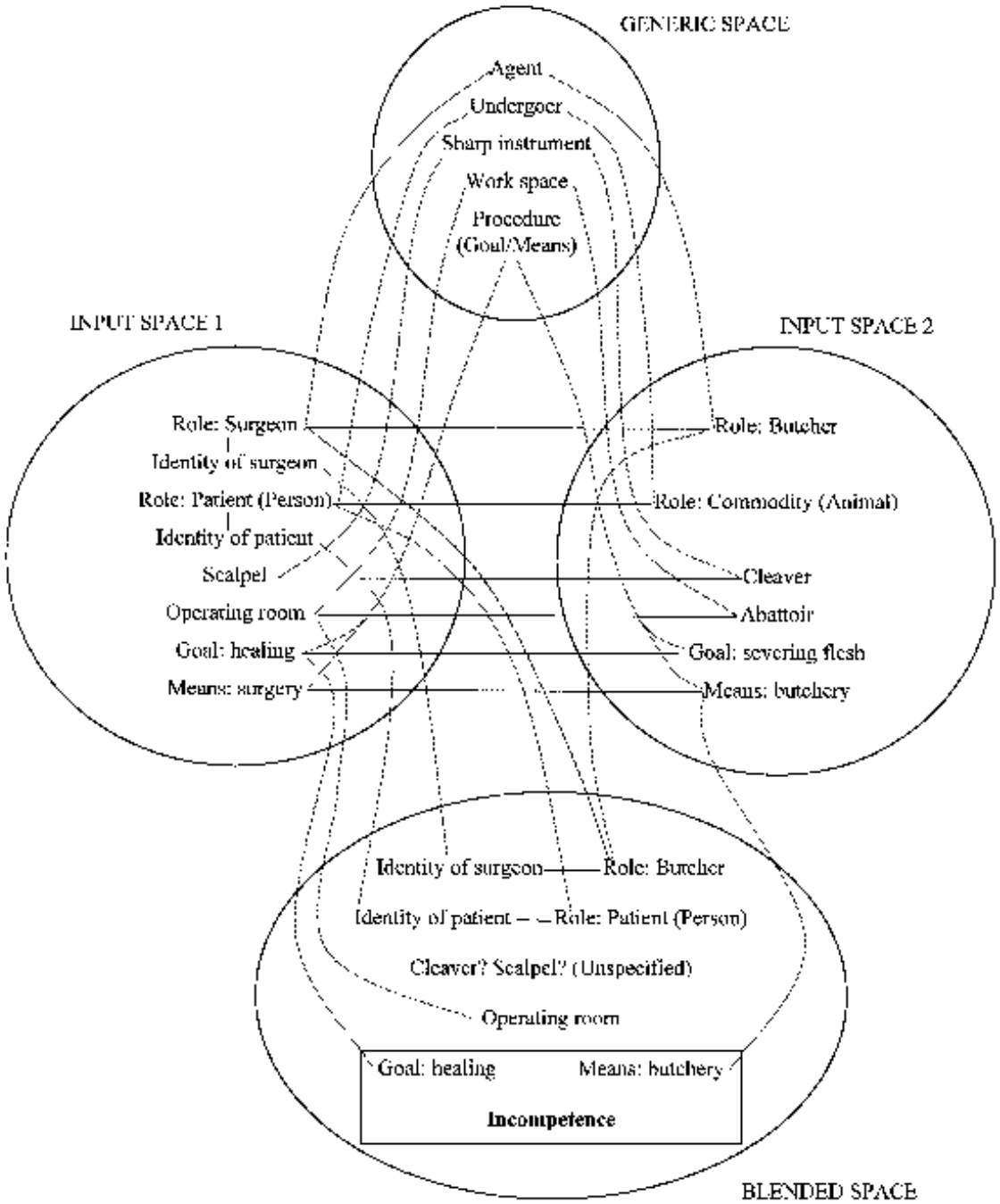


(*Blend: Death, The Grim Reaper,* 1998, p.163)

There is a set of governing principles, the *optimality pressures*, that should drive the process of generating a successful blend:

1. Integration: The scenario in the blended space should be a well-integrated scene.
2. Web: Tight connections between the blend and the inputs should be maintained, so that an event in one of the input spaces, for instance, is construed as implying a corresponding event in the blend.
3. Unpacking: It should be easy to reconstruct the inputs and the network of connections, given the blend.
4. Topology: Elements in the blend should participate in the same sorts of relations as their counterparts in the inputs.
5. Good Reason: If an element appears in the blend, it should have meaning.
6. An additional principle, leading to some of the fanciful imagery encountered in blends, is referred to as Metonymic Tightening: Relationships between elements from the same input should become as close as possible within the blend. For instance, Western images of personified Death often depict the figure as a skeleton, thus closely associating the event of death with an object that, in our more literal understandings, is indirectly but saliently associated with it (Grady et al, 1999).

Conceptual metaphor theory can't account for emergent features (that is to say, features not present in the original inputs) in the same way that blending theory can. Take the phrase 'that surgeon is a butcher', which describes an incompetent surgeon. Incompetence is not present in the 'butcher' domain, and so Conceptual metaphor theory, with its focus on what is projected from source (butcher) to target (surgeon), can't explain how incompetence comes to feature as a primary aspect of the phrase's meaning (Grady et al, 1999).



(Conceptual integration network: *surgeon as butcher,* Grady et al, 1999)

The blending theory model accounts for this with reference to the 'juxtaposition of elements from the inputs' (Grady et al, 1999). Both input spaces share and so project a *cause-effect* relationship, present in the generic space. From the butcher input space is projected the cutting and killing of the animal in order to chop it up into saleable portions. From the surgeon input space is projected the cutting of the patient in order to save or heal them. The blended space, then, contains contrasting ideas of cause-effect (cutting to kill, and cutting to heal). This incongruity leads us to infer that the surgeon is incompetent, given the implication that their cutting results in death, rather than healing.

'That butcher is a surgeon', on the other hand, would result in the inference that the butcher is deft and precise, a master of their craft—it is clear from the structure of this sentence that butcher should inherit the traits associated with a surgeon, rather than the reverse.

Networks

Four kinds of integration network exist (Turner, 2007).

In **Simplex networks** one of the inputs provides the overarching organising frame, the compositional rules according to which elements from another input are projected. If I were to tell you that *Wallpaper* is the offspring of metaphor theory and critical-creative approaches to research, input space 1 would contain the organising *family* frame, including mother, father and child and their relations. Input space 2 would contain Wallpaper, metaphor theory and critical-creative approaches to research. The blend would see the role of mother and father attributed to metaphor theory and creative-critical approaches to research, whilst the role of child was attributed to *Wallpaper*.

In **Mirror networks** the input spaces share the same organising frames. "The Boat Race" is an example of this, as both inputs share the same frame—the same point of departure and destination. The app which displays past runs against your current run, and which sees John and Su 'race' even after Su has passed, could be said to be built on the logic of mirror-networks—it also relies on users engaging in single-scope blending for the app's visuals to make sense.

Single-Scope networks consist of input spaces with different organising frames. What makes them single, rather than double-scope, is that only one of these frames is projected into the blended space.

> '"And it's not like they aren't moving in time. They are dancing to the same music, even as they spin away, and besides, one or the other always spins back. Their steps are different, and that's fine, because there is this broader synergy going on."
>
> "So you're saying we are spinning away from each other?"
>
> "I'm saying it's inevitable and natural that this should happen. And that we don't always have to agree entirely, but it's only through agreeing to dance in the first place that we can find out we are dancing to the same music at least, that we can get back in step."
>
> "You're saying that I refuse to dance." (see page 102)

The above is an example of a single-scope blend—though disagreements and arguments come with their own well-established metaphoric frame of war, this frame is not projected into the blend. The idea of 'agreeing to dance' is projected in lieu of the idea of *engaging* or *attacking* or *defending,* whilst the idea of a 'dancing to the same music, even as they spin away' is the projection of an idea not salient in the argument as war frame—that is, the idea that you can be working towards the same goal, at the ontogenetic level, whilst disagreeing at a more microgenetic level.

In **double-scope networks**, inputs contain differing organising frames, and both of these are partially projected into the blended space. As discussed, the running app relies on a single-scope logic to make sense to the app user. John, as a user can be read as introducing his own frame into the blend.

> 'As the weeks rolled on, he began to beat the slowest of Su's avatars, leaving his own older, slower avatars in the dust in the process. Once passed, Su's faded gradually from view, and could not be made to return. His own

> remained, presumably the app's way of showing his progress, of how he was becoming a better version of himself.' (see page 206).

It is dawning on me now that, though this fictional app might have been built around a single-scope blend, it relies on double-scope blending for its effectiveness. The singular run is framed as a race, but the app also relies on the runner to frame their runs in terms of their own progress through life, too. Yes, you've beaten an old time, but you've also become a better person! Well done you!

In the above extract, John acknowledges framing elements from both inputs. Explicitly, he understands the run as a race ('he began to beat the slowest of Su's avatars') and it is also implied (I hope) that his feelings about Su are entering into the blend. His passing of the slowest of Su's avatars is also framed, and therefore understood, in terms of his thoughts about Su, such that his position in relation to Su's many avatars, and the app's reaction to these, come to serve as metaphors for how he is feeling, or even, perhaps, bring certain feelings to the fore—Su's [avatars] faded gradually from view, and could not be made to return' (Ibid).

What he is thinking exactly (the final blended space) is not made clear.. Is he moving on from her without wanting to? Does he feel that beating her in the 'race' is a kind of betrayal, a sullying of her memory? An act of disrespect?

Su's avatar some fifty or so metres behind him on the beach, fading, barely there, a ghost of a ghost (Ibid).

Is he beginning to forget little parts of her? What she smelt like? How she arranged her pillows? The sound she made when she came in from the cold, hanging up her scarf and coat?

He...caught a split second of Su's avatar, further down the street and still running, before she faded completely, like the memory of a dream fades, entirely without fanfare.

Is he realising that the thing that hurts him most is how little he can bring himself to care about each and every act of forgetting?

Given the optimality principles, detailed above, what do you think? Or perhaps this is a stupid question, one which assumes erroneously that well-written characters should engage in "good" blending, and that John is an example of such a character?

Researching and Applying Metaphor in the Real World

MELC

Metaphor theory and research has been applied fruitfully in a number of ways in the real world. In this chapter, I am going to focus on one project in particular—MELC (Metaphor in End-of-Life Care)

Set up by Elena Semino, the purpose of MELC is to explore the role that metaphor plays when we find ourselves to be 'citizens of that other place' (Sontag's metaphor for the state of illness). Where Sontag aimed to cleanse the body of metaphor in the case of illness specifically (an aim she did later redact), MELC builds on the wealth of metaphor theory and research demonstrating that we are united irrecoverably with metaphor, that it is fundamental to who we are, and looks to devise ways of talking about illness in light of this.

As such, the project regards metaphor as a double-edged sword: a danger when, as Sontag argued, it contributes to representations of illness that are demoralising and confusing for sufferers and those close to them; a resource also, insofar as it enables both professionals and patients to construct accounts of illness that provide meaning. Metaphor becomes a conduit, through which patients can share their experiences, and healthcare professionals can clarify and explain.

This chapter serves to express some of MELC's findings, and to express the implications of these through the characters of Su and John. It also seeks to explore, more generally, metaphorical understandings of the end of life. As such, it contains much in the way of creative fluff.

Double Glazed Against the World

Both drunk, the curtains closed, their bodies pressed up tight against each other, and their legs entwined in a way that felt far more knotted and complicated than it was. Su called these evenings the ‘evenings they spent almost entirely without weather’.

What had she meant by this? John never worked it out, and he never asked. He knew only that what the words meant to him now, alone, sat in darkness in front of the TV, was wrong—was a bastardisation, an impoverished substitute.

The Stranger

Su wrote the following, submitted it to an online flash fiction zine, and never heard back from them:

Our new houseguest is clad entirely in white, or black. Opinions on the matter are split pretty much 50-50. Its face, if indeed it has one, is covered by a coarse fabric like the rest of it. Though its floor-length robes invite ridicule it is, after all, still our guest here. Our mockery then is gentle, but even so when we mock we do so nervously, and make sure that that there are shut doors, corridors filled with conversation and egg boxes sellotaped with foresight on the walls between us and what we assume is its pristinely robed back. Not that you can ever be sure. And so our laughter is forced, signifying a desperate need to reconfigure what its presence means to us. Living with it feels like at any moment you will turn a corner and it will be there, though it keeps itself, for now at least, largely to itself. But the house is not one of unlimited dimensions, and locks are not at all what we are about, and so it is inevitable that you will find yourself in its vicinity from time to time.

Standing before it feels like sleep paralysis, a frozen moment—like stepping into the road with your eyes closed, or hearing elation over enemy airwaves.

I Will Have Always Been Here For a Time (1)

‘I keep thinking about those anencephalic babies. Sometimes I wish I could have been something like what they are. Maybe to have lived the life I’ve lived, but lived it like a zombie of sorts, acting in the exact same ways, but with no conscious experience. Identical but for this conscious experience, but all the while giving what I hope is joy to people. No experience at all, no fear of death, because I’ve never experienced anything. Not even an abyss because that suggests something, a presence around the abyss, making something of the nothingness...

The Waiting

'How long is she normally in there?' Rebecca was new to this, to the waiting room, to the waiting.

'It depends.' John was not new to this. He knew every pastel shade, and could draw the geometric pattern that covered each chair from memory if asked. He recognised some of the patients in this room, some of their relatives and friends even, having listened and nodded as Su became familiar with them. He had never been able to shake the feeling that bubbles, sacred bubbles, surrounded each familial or friendship group, and that though these bubbles might bump against his (at the drinks machine, or when moving one seat over to let a couple sit together), these appointments were not the time and place to be making new friends, to broaden focus.

And then there was the guilt. His ignorance regarding what each of Su's appointments was specifically *for* had gone unchecked, until now, because Su didn't mind, understanding as she did his need for ignorance. Rebecca, on the other hand, was full of questions, and his calculatedly unadorned witlessness in the face of her questioning did nothing to prevent further interrogation:

'It's different each time, and impossible to predict.'

'She's meeting a new doctor today. Didn't I hear her say that earlier?'

'I'm not sure, possibly.'

'That sounds good.' (Did it? John had no idea.) 'Why is that?'

'I don't—he's meant to be really good, one of the best in the country.'

'That's something.'

'Yeah.'

'Why do you think Su–?'

Raised voices from near the reception desk.

John had noticed the boy when they first arrived. He was sat on the end of their row and had bags under his eyes. An old woman had been sat in a wheelchair next to him. The boy looked seventeen or so, maybe even twenty or more, and the old woman could very well have passed one hundred some time back. Su had remarked, a little too loudly for John's taste, that she hoped she had more time left than *her*. John had told her not be stupid, that everything was going well, and the boy had squeezed the old woman's hand as they passed.

But now the boy was on his feet, and his hands were grasping at his long fringe, and he could not believe what he was hearing from the receptionist:

'We're in the way?'

'I'm sorry, you're in the way.'

'It's funny, that. We're always in the way here. Every time we come we're in the way here, in the way there. Wherever we sit we're made to feel like we're in the way. It's not nice for my grandma to hear that she's in the way all the time.'

'Please, keep your voice—'

'I will not—'

'It's a health and safety issue. We can't get past the wheelchair easily with trolleys, and what if we needed to get a bed through? What if there was an emergency?'

The boy tugged at his hair, drawing his forehead taut. 'We're going to talk about this over here,' he said, and walked to the far end of the row, away from his grandma, motioning for the receptionist to follow him. A second receptionist made as if to wheel his grandma after them, but he was stopped by a look from the first. The boy was sat now opposite John and Rebecca, out of his grandma's earshot.

'Look—' the boy began.

'This is a non-negotiable issue.'

'I know that now.' He looked nervously back at his grandma, who was squinting down the rows and twisting as best as she could in her wheelchair to see behind her.

'It's not really that at all, is it?' said the receptionist.

'My grandma is terminally sick. It's cancer, amongst other things. And each time we come here the doctors are running behind on their schedules, and we have to sit and stew for hours before we are seen. She shouldn't be going through this, not at her age.'

'Not in a perfect world, no. I'm sorry, it's very difficult.'

Can't you just get one of the doctors to see us, please? We never take very long. It's enough that she's dying, let alone this bullshit.'

'I can't do that.'

'I just want her to be comfortable. She's eighty-eight. She's confused and doesn't know what's happening most the time. It's not like she can just waltz in and out of here as she pleases. We come on public transport, it takes us an hour to get here.'

John glanced at Rebecca and saw the look of incredulity on her face. She'd always had a tendency to become embroiled, to follow her heart or head or other organ into the fray, and you never knew which it would be until it was too late. And by then you too were neck deep in it, and then it was over, and everyone was worse off for her involvement. But at least she had got involved, was invariably her defence, at least she alone had stepped up, stuck her neck out, her head above the parapet, and made her voice heard.

'It's being dealt with,' John heard himself say to her, but it felt like a shot to nothing.

'Listen to yourself.' Rebecca directed her voice towards the boy and the receptionist. 'There's people here who haven't been as lucky as your grandma, there's people here who would kill for the time she's had at her disposal. Eighty-eight, you say? Cancer? She's looking good for it, all the same. Sprightly, a warm glow to her, she reminds me of my grandad when his liver failed. I wish I could say the same for my waxen self.'

The boy's grandma had spotted her grandson, and was squinting and waving at the group. 'Just a moment,' the boy mouthed exaggeratedly. Rebecca waved back at her, grinning with an intensity that was disconcerting, though John knew it was meant to lift the boy's spirits.

'A good innings, don't you think?' Rebecca continued, that same grin on her face. It was the grin of a teacher given the opportunity to wax lyrical on a favourite theme and to a captive audience. Except Rebecca had no favourite theme, and compensated for this by choosing causes at seeming whim, and conjuring the raw passion to defend or attack them from seeming nothing. 'A good death, comparatively.'

John saw the boy's face reddening, and felt the heat rising up to his own face too. He knew from experience how the boy was feeling, and he knew that this feeling came from not knowing what to think or what to say. John knew the feeling well. He knew the boy was feeling more and more like a boy the more that Rebecca spoke and smiled, and he was certainly looking more like a boy with each second that he spent with his face set petulantly like that. It was a feedback loop, boyishness begetting condescension begetting boyishness etcetera, and words were failing the boy with each pass. Pluck some still-hanging ones from the short-term memory, then, inflect upwardly and hope for the best:

'A good death?' The boy raised his head as he said this, exposing a jaw and neck that had been hastily shaved. It was obvious that this movement took some effort; though his exposed Adam's apple and jutting jaw in isolation spoke of an openness and invitation to converse, his crossed arms and watery eyes suggested a boy backed into the corner, a desire to curl foetus-like at the feet of someone protective. The boy was visibly shaking.

'I bet that there's people in here wishing they were as confused as your grandma. I'd put money on it. Ignorance is bliss. She doesn't even know there's a battle to be fought, and

there's no pressure on you to awaken her to that, nothing to gain from bringing her up to speed. You don't need that pressure, not with you being so young.' Rebecca was not shaking. Conflict made her focused.

John felt detached from the whole thing. Outside of the loop, he could see the loop in motion, could see how, as the boy was becoming more boyish, Rebecca was feeling older and wise beyond her years, but John had nothing to add.

Su, even at half strength today, would have known, were she here, exactly what to say. And so John focused on this, on what she would have said, directing his thoughts and anger inwards to the hypothetical situation in his head, in which Su cleaned up, wiped the floor. All the while the real situation raged still, on a level that seemed less real to him, that he was becoming less aware of, and now his cheeks were red with an arousal that was almost sexual as he imagined what Su would have said to make everything okay. Except it was not what she would have said—which eluded him—but the imagined aftermath of her involvement for all those concerned:

The boy's grandma would not have been seen any sooner by her doctor (she was out of the equation as far as John was concerned, her position and her ignorance to it one with which he simply could not relate), but the boy would have come away feeling exonerated, and, if not happy to wait, then happy to have been understood, by a beautiful woman with kind eyes and kind words.

Rebecca would have felt as though it had been she who had resolved it all, which of course Su would not bother to correct, and the story would be retold time and time again, Rebecca's involvement increasing with each retelling, even after Su's passing, which John would try valiantly to not be torn apart by.

Su would have been radiant in this situation, of that he was sure. They would have hugged before leaving the waiting room hand in hand, and tonight he would have lain in bed with her, bathing in her wonderfulness, and even with her at half strength, it would have been a night like the first they spent together, a night that felt like it came without template, drawing to a close only with the morning sun, and he hoped (because now it was like Su was in-situ, had actually intervened—the daydream had at last usurped the reality) that Su would not ruin it, because Su's understanding of human nature somehow did not extend, or rather more accurately extended beyond, but did not encompass, her own bubble. She had an immense sensitivity to the lives of others. She understood other people's lives as their property, not to be fucked with, according to the golden law, so long as they did not fuck with yours, but understood too that property disputes inevitably happen, that borders are crossed countless times over the course of a day, but knew how to tease them apart, with words alone, when this occurred, putting those involved back in their own respective spheres, and making them feel as though they had led themselves there.

But this understanding was never applied to her own life. For one thing, she invited people in, without meaning to. People were drawn to her. She was not callous, not in the slightest. She was naive to her own influence on others, perhaps, to the way she glowed, warmly, invitingly, the people who knew her accepting the invitation, only to find themselves guests in no-man's land, in the anteroom of Su. She forgot how much people invested in her, in summary. She hurt him when she forgot how much he had invested in her, and subsequently spoke about her own life as if it were nothing, *candidly* as she framed it, as if she were not the be-all and end-all, to him. And that evening would draw to a premature close because of that, Su having said something *candid* about how the sex hadn't been bad, all things considered, her condition and the medication duly taken into account:

'Not bad, not for a *condemned* woman,' she might say, rendering the evening irrecoverable with that one word.

From the other side of the room Su emerged, smiling like a woman confident that she'd got the job. John snapped out of his daydream, and Rebecca stopped mid-sentence (‘you will learn, young man, that life is like a—’), and all but ran over to meet her:

'How did it go?'

'Oh, you know, they're doing their best.'

'How was your new doctor?'

'They call him God, because of how good at his job he is, because of how he gives people more time to spend, to live. They call him God, but, as I pointed out to him, he fulfils none of the necessary and sufficient conditions. He didn't like that, not that he likes the nickname anyway, I think, and the nurse did tell me not to repeat what she had said.'

'What are you like! What was he like?

'Severely cross-eyed, so he is looking God-knows-where at any given moment in time. A poor substitute for omniscience, if you ask me. It makes no difference, though, because those who work under and alongside him refer to him as God anyway, and I will too, in time. Of that I'm sure. Coming, John?'

And with that, the three of them left: The women, arms linked, in front; John, arms crossed, behind, wondering how much he really knew Su, feeling spent, resenting the time he had spent constructing that daydream, the way he had allowed it to consume him and then disappoint him, first with how idealistic it was, and then with how realistic it became.

And the boy, angry and forgotten by Su’s entourage, attracting the attention of the whole waiting room now, pulling still at his fringe, seething into clenched teeth, his eyes watery and the nurse telling him to calm down, embarrassed for him.

One Hundred Degrees of Boiling Hot Water

John didn't know the details, how it would unfold. In his mind, sometimes, it was like he had skipped all but the opening pages, finding himself past The End, after all had been said and done, reading the author's acknowledgements, in which psychologists were thanked for their insights into grief and loss, counsellors for their counselling, for their insights into attachment anxiety, and friends and family for being, in the main and of course he'd say it anyway, there for him.

Amassing grief, then, already. Pre-empting, with each Su-cough and Su-fall, her end. But like stacking smoke in the wind, sand against the tide, what's solid-seeming can be whisked away and made unreal. Wave after wave of bills still to pay, emails and letters to 'The Homeowner', which Su was insisting he deal with now, in preparation.

John had read in National Geographic about how the height and angles of sand dunes are limited by the wind, by the physics of grain. He had, as a kid, built damns against the tide with wet sand, and he had seen smoke rising to diffuseness in the distance from unintended tire factory fires, and this felt the same, somehow, but with emotions instead of smoke and sand. Just as he didn't need to read again and again about how there is a limit to how hot water can get at any given atmospheric pressure, he would forever now know that there are constraints on how much it is possible to hurt, on the realities we can bear before we turn away, towards...

'Tea, Su?' He heard himself say this.

'With a little something stronger, if you will, sweety.'

'I don't think that's a good...'

'My tablets, John. My chemo. It's time for my fucking tablets, that's what I meant.'

'Oh.'

'*Oh.*'

'Ha.'

'Haha!'

Art as Cancer, Cancer as Art

Whereas most of our cells are specialised, having clearly delineated purposes, stem cells are undifferentiated, and can transform into specific cells on an ad-hoc basis. As such, stem cells are key to our development. Embryonic stem cells contain the information that is needed to ensure that our organs develop and are arranged in working order, and once this has happened, they leave behind a rear guard, a number of stem cells whose job it is to replenish and repair. It is through them that, Theseus's Ship-like, we outlast the death of many of our original constituent parts.

That such stem cells stick around much longer than normal cells means that they are more likely to mutate. Four alterations, in a DNA code of three billion letters, can see a stem cell turn cancerous. The tiny differences between normal stem cells and their malignant relatives mean that creating drugs that target only the cancer is challenging.

‘I don’t get it,’ Su said.

‘You never read what’s on the walls here,’

‘I shouldn’t have to.’

‘Then it’s always going to be a box on a pile of earth to you.’

‘Oh no, no. Not at all. It’s a very pretty box. Mirrored on all sides, representing...something. And what’s more it’s a pile of earth and a box in a *gallery*, which makes all the difference, I know that much. How very clever, how very enigmatic.

Rebecca rolled her eyes.

'I love it when I start to sound like you, Becs, it reminds me never to go the full, earnest hog. Don’t you get tired of being you?’

‘Enough. It’s cancer in there. It’s the artist’s cancer. See the petri dish? No, no, she’s fine. She worked with a doctor. They took some of her colon, just a slice, manipulated the stem cells in a lab so that they turned cancerous. And what’s in there is completely harmless to you and me, because they are her cells, special to her.’

‘Well that’s fucking weird.’ Su had been the one to suggest this, the monthly visits to galleries. She wanted to be an artist, back then, and this seemed like a good first step. ‘Why didn’t an artist who already has cancer do this?’

‘I’m not even going to answer that.’

‘It’s a good question.’

‘It’s a *you* question. It leads nowhere.’

‘What question would you ask?’

‘I’d ask...well no, I’d *say*. I’d say that this is about how we *conceptualise* cancer, as an enemy from without, to be fought, beaten[86].

Su stopped in her tracks, and turned to face Rebecca. 'Would you say that it’s also about challenging the language of cancer? About how we cast it as an external agent, something alien?'

Rebecca sighed. ‘I suppose I would, yes.’ So she *had* been reading what was on the walls, and closely too.

‘So it was a good question after all!’

‘Whatever.’

‘Shall we go get a drink?’

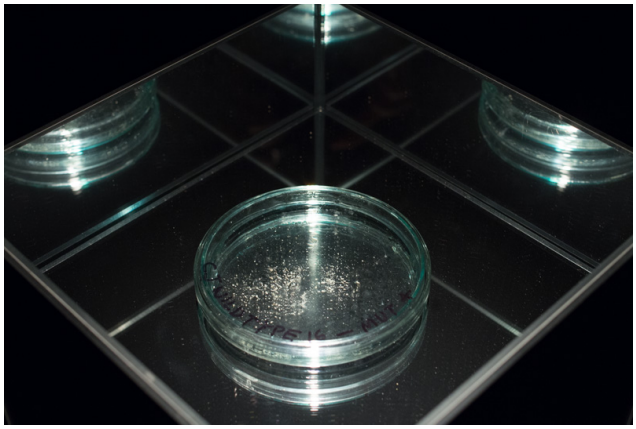
‘Whatever, sure. Yes, let’s.’

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[86] Hauser and Schwarz (2015) devised studies in which they had participants read about a patient’s cancer diagnosis and experience with cancer. The experience was framed as a fight, but also as a journey. They found that framing cancer as the enemy, as something to be fought, lessened the ‘conceptual accessibility of and intention for self-limiting prevention behaviours while not increasing intention for monitoring and treatment behaviours' (2015, p.66). Follow up studies (2020) demonstrated that this framing in addition makes cancer treatment seem more difficult, and encouraged a sense of fatalism in participants.

This conversation between Su and Rebecca, had some years before Su's diagnosis, is a conversation I imagine they would have had had they gone to see *Et in Arcadia Ego*, an installation by artist Charlotte Jarvis, together.





'The installation comprises two 'sets' facing each other. The first is a waiting room or more accurately, the trope of a waiting room. Screens show abstract snippets of medical procedures, scientific experiments and disembodied parts of a waiting patient. Corkboards display documents including private emails, rectoscopy photos, lab imagery and sketchbook pages. The second space houses a spot lit mound of soil. Atop the earth sits a box – entirely mirrored, inside and out – creating an illusion of infinite space, within which tiny specks of Charlotte's cancer sit preserved in Ethanol in a petri dish.' (Ort Gallery, 2018)



Su was delighted that, when her last course of treatment finished, she was allowed to take home the plastic mesh mask that had kept her from fidgeting when she was being administered with, as she put it, 'Chernobyl juice'. Black crosses had been drawn at various points around the mask, describing with precision how her head should be aligned with relation to their machine. But that was all over now, and they were in the taxi for the last time on the way back home from that ward, and the mask was on Su's lap, and she was stroking its contours: The nose which was a loose rendition of her own nose; the cheeks, imprecise, too puffy, a parody; and just a hint of her small ears there. The mask had started life as a sheet, had been heated in warm water to make it supple enough to mimic her face when it was draped over it, becoming more solid as it cooled.

Two weeks later she had one of her vivid, midday dreams about this mask, which, not having a drawer for other objects of its category, they had put in a wardrobe in the garage. In the dream she came home one December (the December six months hence) to find that the Christmas tree had been put up (more tinsel than tree, really—just the way Su liked it: ‘the tinsel is the thing!’); that the mask had been stuck on the wall above their fireplace, three nails holding it there; and John, humming, readying the fourth and final nail against the wall with one hand, twirling the hammer like a revolver with the other. In the dream she was not ill, not dying, but the presence of the mask made sense to her all the same. He could not talk yet, John explained, there were still the finishing touches to be added. He left the room and returned with red felt Rudolph antlers, which he fixed to the top of the mask, and a bauble, which he hung from the mesh nose, right where her nose ring had been when they first met. She had laughed hysterically in her dream, and then again when she awoke, startling Rebecca, who had fallen asleep too, who had come around to keep her company whilst John was at work. 'It's the cocktail of drugs,' Su explained. 'It’s nothing to worry about. It's a whole bunch of fun.It just means that sometimes things become other things, and I’m kinda okay with that’.

When John returned she was laughing hysterically again, holding onto the doorframe and looking about ready to fall to the floor. John did not get it, which is what she expected. 'We are not doing *that* with *that.'*

*'*Oh come on.'

'Why?'

'Why not? Is it because you don't think I'll be around come Christmas? You don't think I'll make it that far, do you?'

'Don't be stupid.'

'Why then?'

'It's just that—'

'Go on, why?'

'It's just that—'

'John, for fuck's sake.'

'It's just that—'

'What?'

'It's not very *christmassy*, is it?'

After that dream, it became normal for Su to insist that John fetched the mask from out of its wardrobe in the garage to show to guests when they came around. Their former go-to interesting object (a Skirtmarker they found in the attic when they moved into the house that sprayed chalk at a mini, midi or maxi height when you clenched a plastic pump) was never spoken about again.

'Get my death mask,' she said once, but only once.

The guests had gone looking for John, at Su's request, and found him sobbing in the garage, sat on a stepladder, his head in his hands. Embarrassed but unable to leave, not with

the situation like this, their guests had to listen as Su tried to explain that she had not meant it like that. What she had meant was that the fat mesh version of her face was like a modern art version of the Ancient Egyptian death masks, an abstracted version of those, like a stone bust constructed so as to appear unfinished for modern art's sake.

The 'death' part was just incidental, she said, an irrelevance really.

But that was no consolation to him. It was the worst thing she had ever said to him, the absolute worst thing she had ever done to him, the absolute worst thing, it took her only moments of looking at his face to realise, and Su was no angel, not by any stretch. Their guests left as soon as an opportune moment presented itself, leaving behind a couple somehow closer after all that (a couple too close to be around, actually, in each other's arms and crying and laughing and making promises) but still curious about the mask that Su had said so much about on the phone, that Su had implored them to come over to see, that had been presented as if it was the sole reason to come over. And now they would never see this strained likeness of her, this puffy and plastic face that the kids who visited liked to place over their own, and which she promised they could modify with elastic and take turns wearing come Halloween.

4AM

Su said the words over and over to herself until her mouth was dry and her tongue didn't feel like her own, slapping against the roof of her mouth like something in the breeze:

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Semantic satiation is the process by which repeating of a phrase or word causes it to temporarily lose meaning. The process is analogous to habituation, the reason why we feel someone tap our shoulder but not the feeling of our clothes on our backs all day long; why we hear our name being called out in a crowded room but become oblivious to the background hubbub.

It was something Su had figured out as a young child. A discovery, something only she could do, like tensing your eyes just so and seeing everything double, overlaid. When faced with an idea that disturbed her (that bad things happen to good people, that good people are often behind the bad things, unrepentant) she would say the idea out loud over and over in her bed at night until it was numb, only somewhat there, a hand that had been sat on for too long.

Death as an ending, a kicking of empty space, a stretching of leather. Death as an extinguishing, as closure, a non-returning. She had toyed with many iterations these last few months, but each one, even those she had judged to be most salient to her, seemed far off in this moment, unlearned, as if by saturating her brain it had closed itself off to the idea of it.

John shifted in his sleep. The slapping of her tongue, the snap of spittle, had stirred him.

Faith (1)

Su's faith or lack thereof in John's ability to more than get by, to thrive and thrive alone, mattered now, was more relevant than it could ever have been, before her illness, which meant that he would have to start doing things differently. He would need to make an effort to reassure her that everything would be okay for him without her. And so that is why he had spent two hours before work cleaning the kitchen and bathroom, putting, for example, the blackened saucepans (which could always be found on the counter, or, filled with leftovers, in the fridge, and which had never once been put into a drawer) into a drawer, having rearranged every drawer in the kitchen to make room for it; sorting their toiletries into types, and designating to each type a tile, so that each toiletry type (skin care here, teeth care there) occupied neatly its own square on the windowsill; etc.

That is why, this morning, having done all this, having set his alarm two hours earlier than normal in order to do all this, he cut up different types of salad to be eaten at work later that day, put the salad into a plastic container, wiped the table clear of whatever the salad equivalent of crumbs is, panicked, wiped the floor where the salad bits had fallen with a towel, scrunched the towel into a ball, threw it into the washing machine, scrubbed at the chopping board and salad knife, dried the chopping board, slipped it neatly into a drawer, dried the knife with a careful swipe, and slid the knife into its block.

But this got him thinking about how, when Su eventually woke and drifted into the newly organised bathroom, downstairs into their newly pristine kitchen, it would look to her as though he hadn’t prepared himself any lunch, was not getting by, was not coping at all, let alone thriving; or would feel perhaps, as she stood in a kitchen that now looked like the scene and sterile subject of a television advert, as though he hadn’t been around at all that morning, as though he had never been around at all, as if the last few years had never happened, as if they were memories only, now, of times together that had never happened. He didn't want that for her.

He didn't want that for her but had just minutes to leave if he was to be on time—seconds really, because the difference between minutes and seconds isn't so great. And so he fetched the scrunched towel from the washing machine and left it hanging off the kitchen work surface. He took the chopping board from the windowsill and left it, skew-whiff in the drying rack. He pulled the knife from its proper slot and put it into another. He took one of the blackened saucepans out of the drawer and, noticing how it shone more than it had shone in years, dirtied it with some blackness found clinging still to the underside of one of the cooker's hobs.

John turned to examine his handiwork before he left the kitchen. The light came in from multiple windows. He had no discernible shadow.

You're paying too much attention to the little things, Su told him, when he got home that evening: ‘It's your escape from the really big stuff, the really big thing that’s happening.’ And he wondered if that was merely an observation, or advice sincerely given, or both.

Rhubarb (1)

'I don't want to be humoured,' she said. 'I want honesty and that's what I'm going to get from you. Even at the very end, I want the truth. I don't want you to humour me when it comes to people who are already dead and gone, when my brain is shot and I cry out for them, in my sleep or otherwise. When I speak to people who are dead and gone already you tell me, understand? If I enquire about people who haven't been around now for years and years, since my childhood, because I know that's what can sometimes happen, you tell me and tell me straight. It's important to me, if not anyone else.'

She paused, tried to sit upright in her bed, accepted John's help after a moment's protest, and continued:

'Like my Great Gran, Nanny Rhubarb, who gave me rhubarb from her garden and sugar to dip it into when I visited. If I ask after her—which I've been feeling the urge to do sometimes when I'm half asleep, half dreaming—she's dead and has been since before we met, understand? You know who she is, now, and that she is dead, so there will be no excuses. No excuses will be accepted.'

'Okay,' John said. 'You've not spoken about her much before. She sounds nice. Do you want to talk about her now?'

'Not now, I'm tired.'

'Okay. Your choice.'

'I'm talking like I'm drunk. I'm slurring my words and forgetting the point.'

'And for once you're not drunk!'

'Hm.'

'Hm.'

'Let's get drunk one last time'

'No, I don't think so. It will make you feel worse. And besides, it wouldn't be the last time, that's stupid.'

Faith (2)

Su's thought processes became more meta, towards the end. In moments without John she became obsessed with trying to track the changing capacities and capabilities of her brain, the corresponding alterations to her mind, her self; her increasing propensity for seemingly logic-less patterns of thought, the freely associative speech that burst from her lips when she was not guarding against that kind of thing. And when she let herself think in that kind of way, it seemed, initially at least, like it was the cancer in charge. Until, that is, another thought: Patterns without logic! What a lovely oxymoron I've concocted on this crazy morning! There's life in this old dog yet.

She did not worry much, in those last weeks, about if there was an afterlife, or what its properties were, but only about if she would have the brainpower left, when it truly mattered, to convince herself that there was one.

And what kind of brainpower would that be? A power derived paradoxically from diminished capabilities; ignorance; the kind of power to think illogically, afforded by a brain shot to bits? Or the power offered by a brain given clarity and sharpness, its computational might all bunched in together, intensified and given weight, beset on two, soon-to-converge sides—the keen edges of a life cut short, nearing its pointed end?

The vicar, having visited Su in her room, having performed her duty (having been given permission by Su to perform her duty during those last few days), came out from her room not knowing—she said, all the while begging forgiveness from John for her coarseness—her arse from her elbow. Heaven from hell, John thought. Alpha from omega. He knew the feeling well. When it came to Su, it was the part and it was the parcel, it was the form and it was the content.

Su had listened intently to her, the vicar thought, but in the wrong way. Even vicars couldn't be held responsible for their words once they had left their mouths, could they? Not if the intentions were right? A great and brave and deliberate—yes, brave—confusion defined Su. She imagined saying that at Su's funeral as she was preparing the church's weekly newsletter later that evening, and she imagined the look on their faces. And then, later still, remembering again in the early hours their strange conversation, she realised that she felt envious of it, the confusion, not that confusion was the right word at all, just the first that sprang to mind. In Su, wine really could have become the blood, and bread the body, had she simply accepted certain truths from the off, been raised differently, to accept certain things as writ, and writ large. In Su, metaphors died and became real. Died in that they became, because they became—and again, the first word, not the right word—*real*:

Death as a party indeed. How ridiculous. Almost unthinkable, that a non-believer should think like that, should have such faith without whatever the equivalent of sound theological grounding would be in this instance. And with that sudden thought she forgot all about how she had, albeit briefly, considered Su brave, and she slipped into a sleep, and worried no longer, and she did not dream of the parties she had not been to, and the substances she had never—god forbid—imbibed.

Betsy Davis, artist, was 41 when she died, surrounded by friends, having taken a ‘cocktail of drugs’ which had been prescribed by her doctor. Betsy suffered from ALS, Lou Gehrig’s Disease, which attacks and ultimately renders unusable the voluntary muscles. Sufferers lose the ability to walk, eat, speak, and eventually, breath.

'I don’t want to live out my life paralyzed, eating through a tube in my stomach and communicating through a machine. I’d rather be free than entombed in my body.' (quoted in Angerholm, 2016).

'First, you are all very brave for sending me off on my journey...Thank you so much for traveling the physical and emotional distance for me. These circumstances are unlike any party you have attended before, requiring emotional stamina, centeredness, and openness. I strongly encourage you all to connect with every person at the party — this will not only benefit you but me as well.” (Ibid)

'There are no rules...Wear what you want. Speak your mind. Dance, hop, chant, sing, pray … but do not cry in front of me. Okay, one rule. But it is important to me that our last interactions in this dimension are joyful and light. If you need to cry, there will be designated crying areas … or just find a corner.'

'I AM allowed to cry' (Ibid)

Su had been to parties, held over several chemically enhanced days, that required emotional and physical stamina. In fact, in her twenties, she prided herself on going to parties that demanded those kinds of things of you, on being the first to arrive, the last to leave, stumbling into the street, into the morning, into god knows what day[87].

[87] It's not like Su fully fleshed out, explicitly, how her illness and coming passing were like a party—it just felt right to her. But had she, she may well have made a list like this:

Things that dying and parties have in common

- *Unpredictability*
- *People visiting, coming and going. Some just popping in, some lingering longer than hoped. Some dragged along, others wished, come the end, that they had let themselves be dragged*
- *Drugs*
- *The effect of these drugs.*
- *Mood swings and confusion*
- *The feeling of becoming someone else, something else—other.*
- *The phrase 'it's my party and I'll cry if I want to' applies*
- *You are at the centre of it. It is your party*
- *Gallows humour*
- *It has to end at some point*
- *People linger longer than they probably should, filibustering on the porch, because how difficult is it to leave or be made to leave (or for other people to leave) mid-sentence?*
- *The ending is vague, and quiet, tempered by chemicals*
- *Eventual sleep (the big sleep)*

The Stranger (2)

'Is he alive?'

'Yes.'

'Was he here today?'

'No, not for a long, long time.

'Are you sure?'

'You're not with him anymore, Su. He hasn't been around for years.'

'Are you sure?'

'Yes.'

'Will he ever be here while I am still here, while I am still alive?'

'You live with me. You're with me, Su. I'm yours.'[88]

[88] *Who are you*—John hoped against hope and prayed, against all he believed about the world and what came after it, that she would never say those words.

Shadows in the Grass (1)

Each day weaker, imperceptibly weaker. Su's end like a shadow cast by a tree one summer’s evening, stretching out towards him, its edges indistinct.

Shadows in the Grass (2)

Whoever first described death as darkness had themselves, had the living in mind, John realised.

The dying are with you, and then suddenly the sun has set and you can't remember them when they were not dying, can't help but imagine what it must have been like, to be that dusk, that shadow, that dying; to both creep and be crept up on like that.

'I just want a good death for her. I just hope that a good death is open to her.'

'A good death? She's not gone, John, let's not talk like that.'

'Ok.'[89]

[89] Semino et al (2014) interviewed 13 hospice managers in order to explore the 'formal and functional characteristics of "good" and "bad" deaths'. They found recurring metaphors used to describe "good" deaths, such as being 'at peace', 'free from pain', preceded by 'open' conversations with family members and the acceptance of death as the end of a journey.

In describing a 'bad' death, hospice managers try to mitigate the 'hospice team's responsibility for 'bad' deaths' whilst also trying to avoid 'overly explicit criticisms of dying patients and their relatives' (2014, p.678). As such, unsuccessful professional interventions were 'explained in terms of problems that were outside the hospice staff's control'. Honing in on one 'representative' interview in particular, Semino et al note that the hospice manager describes the attitudes and values of patients who went on have 'bad' deaths in terms of a series of battle metaphors:

'For some people their life is a struggle or a battle or a series of conflicts; there's...a lot of battling in the background' (Ibid). This sense of life being one conflict after another leads to feelings of 'intense fear' when the patients must come to terms with their own impending death. Such patients close up, and don't communicate their negative feelings, precluding the hospice staff stepping in to help with these feelings.

This fear is conceptualised metaphorically by the hospice manager as being hidden, 'in the background', in a 'sacred place' that staff are prevented from reaching into. The presence of fear, coupled with the denial of the existence of fear, is described as a 'horrible overlay' (2014, p.678).

I Will Have Always Been Here For a Time (2)

...but then I come to my senses. I imagine a whole world like that, us all going about our business like unconscious machines, and I want you to know that I *am here*, John. I have been present. I have been here, there is an *I* that has loved you, that has known what it is like to love you, that will go on knowing this until the time comes, but that will always have been here, loving you, long after that time has come. I was here, by god I was here, and by god I will have always been here for a time.

Morphine

What was once a path they both trod, half forging and half finding together, opened up in an instant into a road before him[90]. Roman and straight and certain as anything, at least for now.

And with that, in that moment, with a nod from John (with what felt in the days that followed like consent, like a thumbs down in ancient times, a telephone call to a gangster to 'sort it', but which was, John eventually corrected, a nod of understanding[91]) Nurse Jones left their bedroom to prepare the mixture, stepped back into the room, and that, just a few short minutes later, was how Su died—sedated, comforted by the morphine coursing through her veins.

'I could get a pretty penny for that,' Su had said, three days ago, pointing to end of life care box, chock full of drugs and delivered weeks ago in anticipation of these last few days. 'Get your mates round when I'm gone. You'll have a blast.'

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[90] We've already done the journey bit, John thought. We're done with it. Death as a journey, death as learning, bonding, parties and admin. God knows we have done them all, at Sue's behest. It's time for death as a release. And Su would agree, were she able. This is an afterword that no one asked for, an addendum that brings no clarity, a codicil that modifies nothing of what came before, that explains nothing, that revokes nothing. I am in a place of acceptance, aren't I?

[91] There is very little evidence to suggest that morphine hastens death when given in quantities intended to comfort an individual at the end of their life. However, since morphine is sometimes used right up until the moment of death, often just minutes before, there was always going to be one final dose, and it can feel, to the family and/or friends present, that the final dose was the ultimate cause.

Rhubarb (2)

Su died at home, John at her side. It was as good a death as she had, in more pragmatic imaginings, fixated on. Her body went to the Horizons Hospital, for research or for medical students to practice on, as per her wishes. John followed her, applying for and getting a job at as a security guard there a couple of months after she passed. He couldn't say why he did this.

In life, John would get the dustpan and brush and Su would pull a face and prod and poke until he relented and agreed to do something fun. She hated the idea of turning into dust. Itself a sign of inaction, of jobs not being done, dust was also a sign that fun was being had in lieu of dealing with the dust, and when she was alive it hung in the air illuminated in slats of light and it gathered beneath their TV stand and, where it clung to her grandad's squirreled trinkets, it was as if it took on a character of its own. Even so, she hated the idea of turning into it.

When, some years back, Su had poured her grandad's ashes into her hand, expecting them to be light and fluffy and to crumble further like a moth lifted by a wing from the windowsill, she was surprised to find that that they were gritty between her fingers, more like coarse sand or something you'd buy in bulk from a garden centre. And there was less of her grandad left than expected, too, just a few parched handfuls in the urn, his flesh and fat vaporised. She had stood in her Grandad's garden and held the ashes in her palm for some moments before letting them drop over the rhubarb patch. But for the urn in her other hand, you'd have thought from the bedroom window that she was scattering seeds or compost.

Restless as she had been in life, jumping incessantly from one idea to another, Su wanted to be useful in death, wanted her organs to be cut from her, sent here and there, as totalled cars are dismantled, their component parts more valuable and useful apart when they have ceased to function as one.

'Long live the dust,' she had said to John. 'If you have enough time to dust and clean that place properly when I'm gone then I swear it will have all been for nothing. I want gallivanting, I want failed romances and crippling hangovers. I'm not saying live in squalor, but a bit of dust along the skirting board is what we've been about here, and if that's the only legacy I leave you with, well then, I'll be happy.'

‘The dead are for the living to do with as they please’ Su had said sagely, drunk in a smoking area and twenty-six years of age. ‘After all, they have finished with themselves.’

‘...’

‘Oh god no. I don’t mean like *that.* Disgusting. I mean...you know very well what I mean.’

‘Feels like a strange thing to ask, but, how was it? The funeral I mean?’

When Su was younger, headstrong and teenaged and described by the boys who envied and secretly wanted her as ‘too much of a handful’, she was prone to ‘butting in’ when parties were reaching their peak, with song choices that were wholly inappropriate. She was prone to singing her chosen tracks with such infectious passion and gusto that no one would dare tell her that this was not her party, that she should leave or else calm down.

She would have loved her funeral.

She was terrible at choosing songs no matter what the occasion was, and her funeral and wake were no exception to this rule. There were sad songs about heartache and time wasted, anxious little atheistic acoustic numbers dovetailed with hymns of religious exaltation, but they were played because they were songs that she liked and had chosen—the words did not correspond necessarily with anything she had experienced whilst alive, whilst with John, and John knew this. Her family did not, hating the funeral for its soundtrack as much as for everything else that was tragic about that day. It was weird that they felt short changed, John thought—the vicar had protested only gently, and had, in the main, been a good sport.

It was undeniably hers, her funeral. It was very Su, like a part of her that hadn't died. She had left specific instructions about what was to be done, and, even more specifically, how she would feel if it were not done well. The general consensus amongst her family following the funeral was that her mind must have been all over the place when she made these plans, which John could not disagree with, but it *was* hers, it was *her*, and she had left specific instructions, and it's not like her family were important, not come the end, not come the logistics[92]—the brass tacks and paperwork and phone calls—of dying.

Whatever they had to say, Su had pre-empted and countered it already, to John, in private, with the resigned urgency of last, dwindling days. But still, they had things to say:

Her cousin that the whole thing had been a joke; her dad that he could not find his daughter anywhere in that service; her mother likewise; a second cousin, confusedly, eyeing John in the corner of the room from the corner of eye, that the whole thing reeked of some kind of tragically belated and misguided cry for help; and one distant relative, in a tone of voice that suggested she was speaking on behalf of the disenfranchised, that the funeral was a tragedy, truly a tragedy, a *sad* tragedy, and god rest her soul and god knows that she deserved a better send-off, poor girl.

Su had pre-empted it in this way: 'My illness is such that it is going to do very strange things to me, and when it does I've got a choice. Because, you see, I've seen how other people

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[92] ‘We are a quorum at last, and I am ready.’ Su had toyed with the idea of death, her dying, as something business-like; a series of wearying meetings, the bedside visitors her well-meaning but often mistaken advisors, the doctors a shadowy and distant—but ultimately benign—committee; and then her death as a decision reached, a final transaction, albeit a seeming one-way one, and had fancied those words, in theory twice-removed from reality at least, as rather good as parting words go, to be delivered when her dearest and favourite people had all, perhaps through snow, a freakishly perilous snow storm, made it to her bedside for the casting of ultimate legislation. *I am ready.* But in the end that was not her at all, she would never be ready. First to arrive, and last to leave, and just one more for the road, and then off into the night— alone or not it barely mattered to her—*that* was Su. That was her all over, how she wanted to be remembered. Still, an interesting thought.

in my position separate their illness from themselves, how they parse the gap. It's them vs. the illness, it's fight, fight and fight, until the end. But I've read the scientific literature, I know what it is. It's my own cells in there, in my skull, my own cells gone rogue, and, the truth is, I've got as much choice over what they do as any of my other cells, you know? So whatever it does, I'm going to embrace it: I'm going to be like, "hey, that's a new part of me, isn't that funny? A new part of me that is a little angrier, a lot more confused, bewildered by numbers, half asleep at midday, already, off to bed early, rising early to check if *you*, John, are still *you*, in my delirium, ha-ha, how strange!" And I'm not sure that's the way it usually happens with people, but I've decided that's how it's going to happen for me. It's my choice, it's my journey, it's my party, it's all manner of other things too should I decide it to be so, and I'll do as I damn well please.'

So Su had pre-empted everything that they had to say, already. She had been forward thinking like that, explained it well, in her own way. But she had done so in terms that her family could never understand, so preoccupied were they with the notion that such things should be fought, with beating the almost unnameable, this alien growth inside of her[93].

And in fact John had not understood it at all, not at first, not when she put it like that, which she did not do in one, uninterrupted stream (like above), but piecemeal, over several evenings, getting more and more frustrated with him. It had taken time, first for him to understand what she meant, and then to understand why she should think like that, and then he had accepted it, and grasped the weird sense of it. But then, how to explain that to her family? That yes, she chose that music when she was in a really, really bad way, pretty much half-asleep, actually, drugged up, but that this didn't matter, because it was her way of coping, but most importantly because Su said it didn't matter, and that's what mattered. Better not to bother.

And so John didn't bother, and commenced life without Su resented by much of her family, openly resented in some cases, for not bothering to put any effort into the funeral arrangements, for not caring enough about her to make it all right for everyone who had made the not inconsiderable effort to attend.

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[93] That Su refused to use violent language with respect to her illness was tantamount to giving up, in the eyes of her family. That, come the end, she almost seemed to regard her end as a party, just felt like an extension of this—the ultimate capitulation, for which they regarded John as guilty by proxy.

The very least she could do, after so many years estranged from them, after the countless forced phone conversations, was regard her own demise with some sense of gravitas. What they did not know and could never understand was that Su took parties, and the role in her life, seriously. Each one a gathering in of new experiences and, in her youth, new chemical excitements. Acutely aware of being the centre of her own universe, she saw life itself as a gathering in of experiences, and a series of moments that allowed this to happen. And these moments connected arbitrarily, and only then if she made a conscious effort to tell her own story, to connect the dots—much less a journey, then, than some other model. A Heliocentric one, she mused, her natural charisma and likeability and all round *joie de vivre* the gravity...but then she always stretched these thoughts until their outer edges lost the shape and clarity of their beginnings, like elasti...no. No. Enough for now. Time for sleep. Not much time left, not much Su left, and she would lose precious hours, she would lose a bit more of herself of herself as she slept, but better to choose to sleep than to have it imposed. Yes, sleep now, live out some more hours later. Sleep now, and pray for dreams as she drifted off—good or bad, it didn't matter, what mattered was experiencing, continuing to be. What mattered was—

Sleep.

John, who had been sitting on the end of their bed, allowed himself to sink down next to her. Her breath on his face, measured and alive.

Better, John felt, to not bother, and piss her family off, and be alone, comparatively, rather than to engage in any kind of obfuscation when it came to the memory of Su, wherever it could be found. If she accepted the illness as a part of her, then the words she used to describe it were a part of her too, he felt. Did that make sense? The argument was missing a step or more, a premise or ten: If then if, but *why* if then if? Did Su's memory as it existed in his mind belong to him, now? Could he do with it as he pleased? And what on earth could *belong* even mean here? What if (and now the thought felt strained in his head, shrill and cut through with static) he wrote Su down, in whatever way he pleased, reconfigured her on the page according to his needs? What if he sold these words, what if people bought them? What if the monetary recompense did not outweigh the emotional toll of writing her down—then, did that mean it was okay, that he had earned it, could keep the money? What if it did outweigh it, and how even to measure two such things against one another—the concept of weight here broke under the weakness of the analogy. He did not consider himself much of a writer, had not written in that way since school, in fact. Why, then, these thoughts?

How far off the beaten track before the argument becomes about something else entirely?

John looked again at his phone, at the messages from her family. Clipped in the extreme, they made no argument, and expressed no opinions about him. Nevertheless, they wanted nothing to do with him, was the unequivocal conclusion. He had not cared about her, had not cared enough to make her want to fight. She could have had more time, had he persuaded her to go through one more course of treatment. Quantity over quality, form over content.

Metaphor Menu

Semino et al (2017) looked at the use of violence and journey metaphors by patients with terminal cancer diagnoses on an online forum set up for discussing cancer, and forum contributions and blog entries by healthcare professionals. They found that patients used 1.8 violence metaphor words per 1000 words, compared with 1.33 for healthcare professionals. Patients used 1.46 journey metaphor words per 1000 words, compared with 0.86 for healthcare professionals. The significance of this was noted, especially considering healthcare professionals use other kinds of metaphors equally as frequently as patients.

They found that patients used violence metaphors in both disempowering and empowering ways. Whilst patients spoke of cancer as 'attacking from the inside' and 'invading', or of feeling 'such a failure that I am not winning this battle', they also described themselves as 'fighters', and praised each other for 'winning the battle' (2017, p.63).

The story was much the same for journey metaphors. Having cancer was described as 'like trying to drive a coach and horses uphill with no back wheels on the coach' as a 'reluctant journey', but journey metaphors were also used to express companionship and solidarity ('the best people to help you are the ones who've been there before or are heading there with you') or a silver lining ('My journey may not be smooth but it certainly makes me look up and take notice of the scenery!') (Ibid).

Out of 100 randomly selected metaphors from each type, 42 out of 100 violence metaphors were categorised as empowering, and 38 as disempowering. 26 out of 100 journey metaphors were categorised as empowering, and 39 as disempowering. The remainder could not be clearly categorised as either.

Semino et al note that the higher frequency of both metaphors in the patient corpora highlight their utility, their effectiveness in highlighting different facets of their experience through framing. Though violence metaphors can engender a sense of personal failure should the cancer be found to have spread, the adversarial nature of the frame can also function as a rallying cry, imbuing patients with 'purpose and a sense of pride and identity'(2017, p.64). Though journey metaphors do not accentuate the patient vs cancer aspects of the experience, and thus the problematic notion that there is a fight which the patient, as combatant, can lose, they were used by patients in ways that were far from empowering, to convey 'feelings of passivity, lack of acceptance and pessimism' (Ibid).

Metaphors for and about cancer, it is concluded, should be evaluated according to their function, rather than their source domain alone, with reference to the specific circumstance and the individual using or being subjected to the metaphor.

'We need a ‘menu’ of metaphors,” suggests Semino, “a collection of quotes with all these different metaphors: the journey ones, the fight ones, the fairgrounds, the music in nature and unwelcome lodgers, and there are others, so these can be shared with people, and people can pick the ones they want, as you do at a restaurant.”’ (Gajewski, 2015).

The below metaphors and accompanying images were lifted from *A Metaphor Menu for people living with Cancer* (Metaphor in End of Life Care(b)), a collaboration between Semino and oncologists, aimed at helping patients and doctors communicate about the end of life.

- *Imagine it a bit like a scary fairground ride – it might be scary in places, but it will eventually stop and you can get off. Be strong, be brave and we will be here to hold your hand if you need it.*

- *My journey with cancer may not be smooth but it certainly makes me look up and take notice of the scenery.*



- *Having cancer is not a fight but a relationship where I am forced to live with my disease day in, day out. Some days cancer has the upper hand, other days I do.*

- *You fight this terrible, faceless illness that has invaded every part of you. You stand and say, 'No, this is not all there is to me'. You have fought back, taken control of the things left to you. And even when you felt crap, you forced yourself to get out of bed and keep going.*



- *For me, cancer arrived as an unwelcome lodger, parking itself in the back room and demanding attention. I tried to be a courteous if unwilling host until eventually the time came to invite my cancer to leave. It has left the place in a bit of a mess, and I'm conscious that it has kept the key. Still I'm hopeful that in due course all I will be left with is the rich memory of time spent with a stranger I never expected to meet.*

- *Initially, cancer feels like an alien invasion. It is as if you want to strip off your body and get a new one. Then in time, you 'connect' with it somehow.*



- *Cancerous tissue is like a garden that has become overgrown with weeds. The weed-killer also damages the healthy plants, but you hope they will re-grow.*

- *My way of dealing with my diagnosis is to 'bend with the wind'.*



John Alone

The wallpaper has started lifting away from the wall in the living room. This, John reassured himself, is not what things look like when they begin to fall apart[94]

(Silverfish eat wallpaper paste. John learned this whilst trying to find out how to get rid of them.)

There are maggots, too, around the edge of the bin outside, and something inside it that birthed them[95]. But he is in a warm bath, chugging away at a cold beer and (as he puts it) riding it out, riding the whole thing out, all of it. Which is what he says to himself, and you can imagine how he says it: Sat there, the water up to his nipples, warm all over, and thinking about how nothing ever happens in his dreams, now, why the only thing he can remember of the night when he wakes (rather later than planned, these days) is a chill dread that endured, in those frequent, fitful, half-awake moments, almost without beginning, and as if without end.

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[94] What this falling apart looks like depends, of course, on the person.

Bed bugs in a house are regarded as a sign that its occupant is having a mental breakdown. A quick internet search does not suggest the same of silverfish—John sighed with relief.

'Besides, I think they are quite cute, I don't mind them. Kind of glittery and unthreatening, kind of like expensive jewellery, and just as fragile. That's what Su said about them.

'I've got a hoover if you need one, John. Baking soda too, I hear that gets rid of them.

'No, thanks. I have one.'

'I think it's dust that they like, and damp corners. They eat dust.'

'No, thanks all the same.'

'What I'm really asking is do you want me to come over.'

'No, I'm fine.'

'Look, what I'm saying is I'd like to come over, to see you, to see how you are.'

'Haha.'

'...'

'...'

[95] A crow died on the end of John's drive, a week or so back. Trying to manipulate it, two days ago, into a plastic bag, with plans to tie a knot in the top of the plastic bag once the job was done, second and third plastic bags serving as gloves on each of his hands, John gave in, not being able to stand the feeling of the crow, limp and a warm distance from his palms, and just dropped it in there, in the bin, not expecting or putting to the back of his mind what might come of a dead crow, open to the air, flies already circling around a bin whose lid cracked months ago. the symbolism too hackneyed to be truly affecting. Another missed bin-day later: maggots, and a boisterous, god-awful, damn near physical smell when the lid is lifted.

Just laziness, forgetfulness. Nothing to see here, just a bachelor and what you'd expect from a bachelor pad and its environs. Jump in the bath, John, a quick soak is what you need.

'What's up, John? What's with all the echoes?'

'I'm in the bath.'

'Okay, right. Why the call? Not that I mind. Are you good?'

'Do you remember when me and Su had that big argument about the towels?'

'No. Yes. Maybe. I don't know, truthfully.'

'That one about how I used to leave my towel on the radiator above the bath, and she always said I shouldn't because whenever I did the towel would fall in, and it would have to be washed again or it would go damp and smell? We went to the pub after, and you bought the first round.'

'Yeah, okay, I remember that, I think. Are you okay?'

'Well these days I've been leaving my towel on the radiator above the bath. Because, well, fuck it. It's my party now, not to sound insensitive. It's my party and no-one has turned up, but that's fine because sometimes less is more, and it's all me, it's all my music, it's all about me now.

'Are you okay?'

'And guess what? She was right, she was fucking right, it's karma I swear down it is.'

'What?'

'So I put the towel on the radiator this morning to dry. And then when I got home from work I started running my bath, and I didn't even look, and it turns out the towel had fallen in there, and of course it was soaked through. And now I'm in the bath, and you'll never guess what happened.'

'Look, are you okay?'

'It fell off *again*, because I put it on the radiator to dry it, of course, and it was sodden, and it landed on my face, and I was half asleep, and my head was tilted back and my mouth was open, and I swear for a few seconds it was like being waterboarded, it was like karma, like she was fed up of me knocking the towel off and putting it back and not washing it properly and letting it go all damp. It's like she's still here, or it's karma, or something like it.'

'You're not okay, I can tell. I'm coming over. Just make sure the door is open when I get there. John? John? Are you there? What the fuck John what the actual living fuck. Oh god, John?'

'I just dropped the phone in the bath, that's all, and then I panicked, and screamed a little bit. I'm sorry I made you worry. I'm so sorry.'

John (John thought, in the third person, which softened the thought) has stagnated. Except it wasn't stagnation, was it, not really? What had happened since Su death was that he had not taken control of his own direction. He had still been on a journey. The thing was that he had been a passenger, rather than a driver, carried wherever his grief carried him. But it was still a journey. He hadn't stagnated, he had just not taken control over his self-development. There was richness everywhere, he told himself, even in the drinking of four cans each night to numb himself—was there not a richness in that? Surely the world was rich in and of itself. To say that one needed to be in control to take anything from it seemed demeaning to the world, as if to take anything from the world you needed to be focusing your attention just so—as if it was the human spotlight which made richness of the world.

John thought this to himself, finished his sixth can, and went to bed.

Thinking about Thinking

When Su was dying, he could cope, because Su was there to help him through it. That was a weird thought to think, he thought, until even that thought, the thought about the thought, became too painful to think.

Sea Wall

In the run-up to what they both knew would be their last Christmas together, Su ordered for John a pair of thermal imaging binoculars, for a moment could not remember how to spell her own name as she entered in her bank details, forgot temporarily their address when punching it in, and wrapped them with shaking hands when they did, almost to her surprise, actually arrive. To help him see things in a different way, she said, when he held them unwrapped in his lap on Christmas day, but he had already guessed that, and laughed at the idea of it, and kissed her in the blinking light of their fibre optic decorations.

And so, February, alone now, John found himself sat on the sea wall one dark evening, the binoculars clutched bulkily to his eyes, looking out towards the surf, across the grey sand, having heard a man's teasing voice, and a woman's mock-offended response, and splashing and shrieking and laughing there.

All the while seeing heat, feeling cold.

A One-Sided Coin

Mapping and Gapping (2)

1) At the outset, I stated that metaphor theory has been appropriated in the service of literary theory, but that very little work exists that seeks to apply metaphor theory to the act of writing creatively—that is, the act which creates literature. I expressed a desire to narrow the gap between the two disciplines[96].

2) *Wallpaper* has, in its meandering way, explored the contours of metaphor theory, serving as a creative synthesis of some of its findings and implications.
3) In the following sub-chapter, I will make explicit some of the ways in which models drawn from metaphor theory can be applied to the act of creative writing.

4) *Wallpaper* will, in its final chapter, seek to use creative writing (in particular the act of writing *Wallpaper* itself) as a research tool to examine and say something new about metaphor and metaphor theory.
5) This is an aim that requires some contextualisation, some padding around it—creative writing is not often associated with the kind of rigor that research into metaphor has adopted.
6) As such, the final sub-chapter will sketch out some of the ways in which creative writing has been used as a research tool, positioning *Wallpaper* amongst other approaches, in a (very) loose tradition which seeks to use creative writing to generate knowledge about the world.

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[96] There are, as far as I am aware, no other creative texts that take metaphor theory to be their primary topic.

I will take this opportunity, then, to draw attention back to *Et in Arcadia Ego* (see page 228), the installation described in *Researching and Applying Metaphor in the Real World.* Its artist, Charlotte Jarvis, approached Hans Clevers, from the Hubrecht Institute in Utrecht, and asked him if he would grow a cancer from her cells. Charlotte was moved to create the exhibit by the death of her friend from kidney cancer. Before he died, they discussed the language of cancer; the conflict metaphors that often define it, and the unwelcome suggestion that if only a patient were to fight hard enough, they would survive; the implication that you are fighting an external agent. In this way, 'dying of cancer becomes *both* the fault of the patient *and* the result of something "other" to their bodies.' *Et in Arcadia Ego* was created to 'interrogate these metaphors, challenge the idea of cancer as "other" to us and probe [Charlotte's] relationship to mortality' (Ort Gallery, 2018).

Hans later sent Charlotte an email: 'I tell the story of our project at scientific meetings and say that you exhibit yourself with your cancer cells. Colleagues walk up to me and say that examples like these are eye openers. We do study cancer as an abstraction, but your art project drives home that the real thing is never far away' (Ibid).

'The very facts of the world *are* a poem. Light is turned to sugar...Tobacco seeds germinate when they smell smoke. Aren't those stories we should all know? Who is it who holds them?...In the twenty-first century it is often scientists who first hear them...scientists are one of their translators and carry a large responsibility for conveying their stories to the world. And yet scientists mostly convey these stories in a language that excludes readers' (Kimmer, 2013, p.83).

Metaphor Theory as Model

The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) represented an attempt, by Wittgenstein, to describe both how the world must be for language to exist, and what language can and can't say for sure about the world.

The world, Wittgenstein asserts, is a collection of facts, and language is a series of propositions which stand in relation to these facts—a proposition paints a picture of the world if it shares its structure. *John is sitting on the sea wall and Su is dead* is only a true picture of the world if its logical structure mirrors that of the world—John must be sat on the sea wall, and Su must be dead, for the proposition to be true.

1. The world is everything that is the case.
2. What is the case (a fact) is the existence of states of affairs.
3. A logical picture of facts is a thought.
4. A thought is a proposition with a sense.
5. A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself.)

Statements about value, about love, about aesthetics, then, are senseless. *I love you* is meaningless since it is not a picture of anything outside of language, and so cannot be evaluated in terms of its truth function. Such things cannot be put into words, but rather 'make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical" (Wittgenstein, 6.522).

7. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988) follows Kate, who, we are led to believe, is the last person alive. Through looping, succinct statements in the manner of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, we learn that Kate has been travelling the world alone for many years.

'Then again I am not at all certain I was mad when I drove to Mexico, before that.

Possibly before that. To visit at the grave of a child I had lost, even longer ago than all of this, named Adam.

Why have I written that his name was Adam?

Simon is what my little boy was named.

Time out of mind. Meaning that one can even momentarily forget the name of one's only child, who would be thirty by now?

I doubt thirty. Say twenty-six, or twenty-seven.

Am I fifty, then?

There is only one mirror, here in this house on this beach. Perhaps the mirror says fifty.

My hands say that. It has come to show on the backs of my hands.' (1988, p.9)

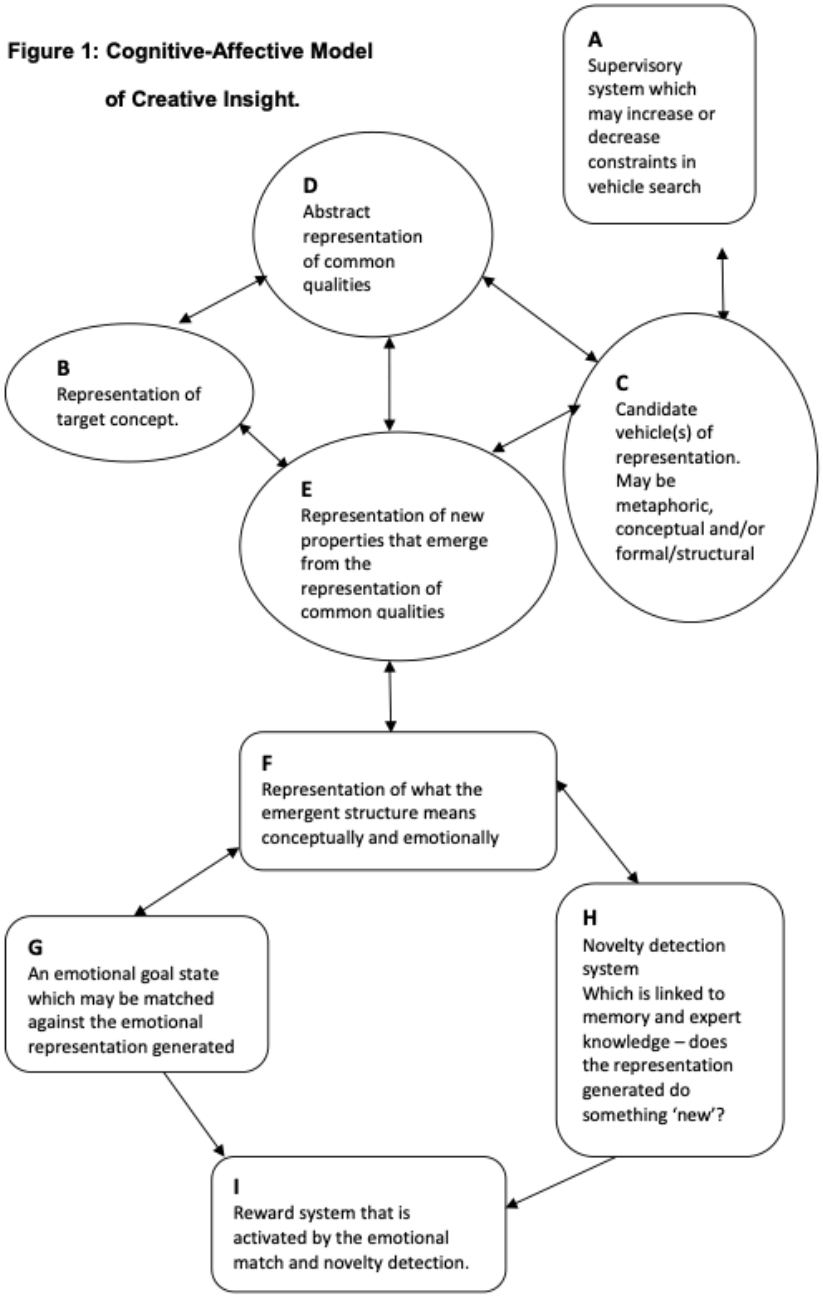
In Kate's solipsism (real or imagined), her words become the only means she has to track reality. As such, language, and its relationship with the world, is a major theme, or topic, of the novel. But the novel goes further than that, asking 'what if somebody really had to live in a Tractatusized world?'. Kate's world is this world—a collection of facts, her sentences, directed at no one, an orbiting around these facts, passing close by only to spin off again.

In terms of its sentence structures, but more importantly in terms of the world it renders, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* takes the Tractatus as its structuring principle—the world of

Wittgenstein's Mistress, the inability of language to reach beyond itself (and so the world), the linguistic solipsism it describes, is constitutive of the world of the Tractatus.

What would it look like, to use metaphor theory, and models drawn from metaphor theory, as structuring principles when writing creatively?

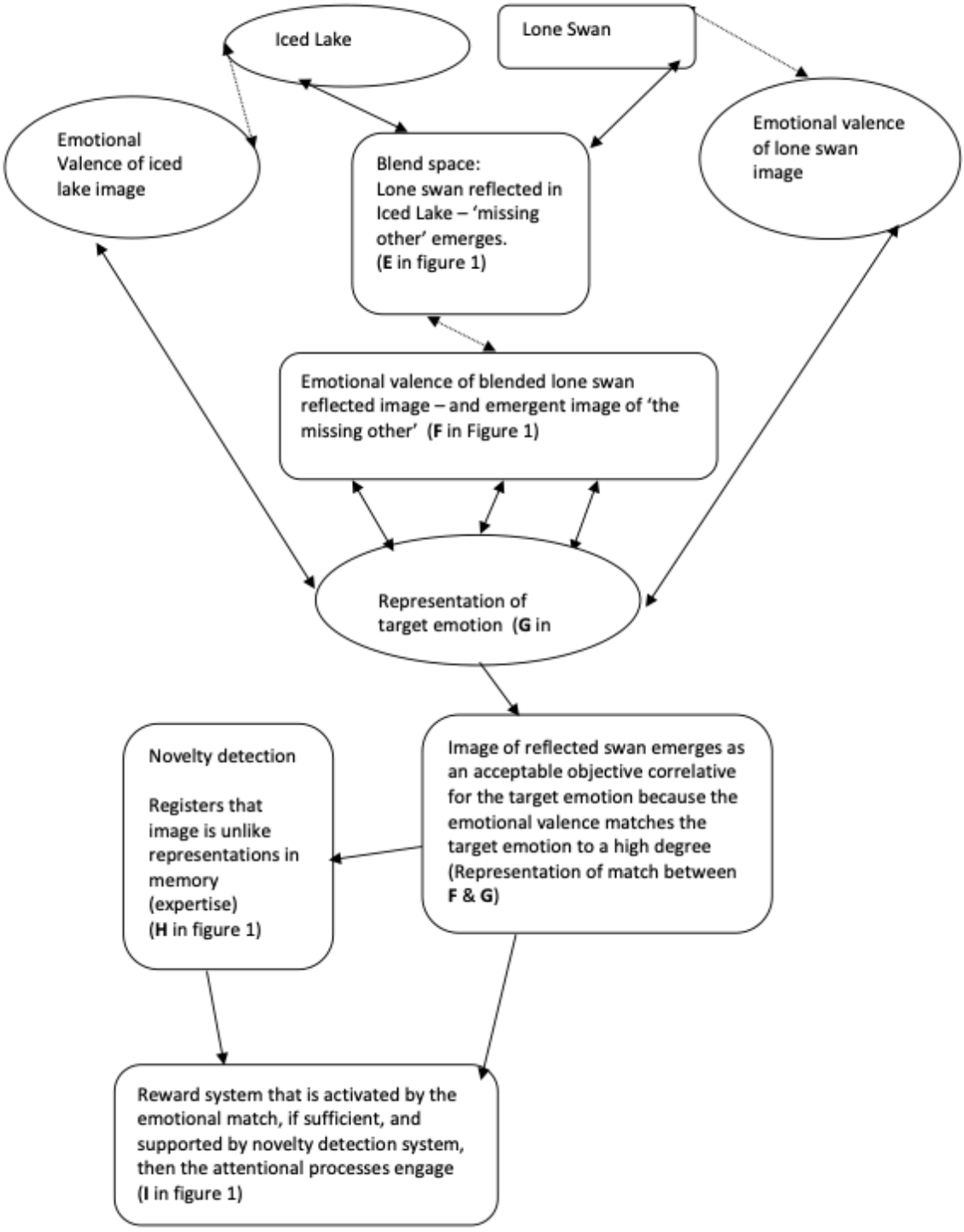
Nigel McLoughlin is a poet and academic whose research focuses on cognitive stylistic approaches to poetry. Most relevantly here, he uses blending theory to analyse poetry, but also explores 'what writers can learn from these approaches, and how they might be creatively deployed as tools for creative writing and in teaching creative writing' (University of Gloucestershire, no date). Drawing on blending theory and neuroscience, and focusing in particular on the production of metaphor, McLoughlin (2016) attempted to devise a *Cognitive Affective Model for Creativity in the Arts*, noting that that 'the model is speculative of course, but if writers can't speculate on how the creative process works, well, who can?' (2016, p.12). An example of the model in action can be seen below:



(Cognitive Affective Model of Creative Insight, McLoughlin, 2016, p.13)

Below, an example of how this model might unfold for a writer who is trying to convey the death of a loved one:

Figure 2: Example of emotional valence and image blending.



(Example of emotional valence and image blending, McLoughlin, 2016, p.16)

To begin, objective correlates are needed—images that will reliably carry the desired meaning over to the reader. In writing, one must discover these objective correlatives. As in (A), our brain works to constrain the criteria that a suitable vehicle term might have. This search may be methodical, or unconscious. The writer may then take the candidate vehicle (C), and weigh it up against the target (in this case, grief) (B) in order to ascertain if mappings exist between the two within their generic space (D), and so if a blend between the source and target is appropriate. In this case, relevant activations will be characterised by similarities in emotional valence.

In this way, the writer might happen upon two images—a lone swan, signifying loneliness, and an icy lake, signifying a life in stasis.

From the blending of these metaphoric images, emergent features and further blends might arise, as in (E). An emergent property of separate images of the swan and the frozen lake might be the swan reflected in the ice—the process of reflection is not present in either of the initial images, but arises though a combination of the two. The reflection, fortuitously, also coheres given its ability to signify the 'other half'—that which has been lost.

What this final image represents (F) resonates emotionally as a coherent combination of objective correlatives that map onto the 'emotional goal state' (G).

Alongside the need to fulfil certain objective correlations exists the need to fulfil other artistic goals (H). If both (G) and (H) are fulfilled, reward pathways are stimulated, and the image springs to the fore in consciousness as an appropriate and successful blend.

McLoughlin's approach is informed by Oatley's concept of *writingandreading,* insofar as a piece of creative writing is regarded as 'an activity undertaken by both writer and reader', a process through which an 'intersubjective, shared discourse' based on integrated structures across mental spaces Both writing and reading involve 'creating temporary and dynamic mental spaces or representations' (McLoughlin, 2021, p.14) that are lifted from the materials to hand.

Su knew what words to use. She did not hesitate. What Su wanted to convey, and what Su ended up saying, were one and the same—the later a perfect picture of the former. Fidelity, but a fidelity that disguised its workings—how on earth did she do it?

John was not like her. For fear of doing a disservice to what was in his head, he would say nothing. For fear of sounding stupid, he would say nothing. And why think something unless you are going to say it, put it out into the world?

Su gone—a certain freedom? The freedom to say how he felt now she was gone? He could say it right now, he could shout it into the cold air.

A paltry freedom, perhaps. The thin end of the wedge, he hoped.

He had been trying metaphors out more, of late. His friends wanted more of him, when they asked how he was. They were not satisfied by descriptions of what was in his fridge, where he had been, how he was filling his days. Such things felt more real than the platitudinous metaphors he could muster, but then, having uttered these platitudes, his friends left him alone sooner, and left more satisfied, nonetheless.

But what he was asking of himself now was honesty—platitudes would not cut it.

Metaphors came from the world, he knew. Did Su tell him that? It felt like something beyond him was telling him that. He stopped running. He looked about the world. The park. The pedalos, tied together over the winter months, hulls shaped like swans, the prow of each the slim neck and head, torsos hollowed out to seat four, standing motionless on the icy lake, reflected in it. His breath given form in the cold air.

Nothing seemed other than what it was. Nothing stood out to him as something against which to measure and describe his condition.

He was thinking too much. Walk. Let things come to him.

Anglerfish, he thought, because still, after all these years, he could not get them out of his mind.

And then: The frozen, shallow lake.

And then: The frozen lake at night, because, he realised, the sun was just dropping below the treeline.

And then: The lure of the female anglerfish the only light in the park, moving slowly this way and that below the ice.

And then: ...

Try as he might, it was just a strange thought, a senseless, stupid conglomeration of thoughts. It resonated, it felt like it had potential (a metaphor?), but he could not see how, or why. He could not figure out how to do anything with it, make it mean something. And what was he trying to find a metaphor *for* anyway? What he felt *about* Su now she was gone? How *he* felt without *her*? How *he* felt *now*, specifically *now,* this moment, panting in the park?

Can you have evocation without knowing what is being evoked? Can you have a metaphor without a subject?'

John shivered, walked home shivering.

A popular, folk understanding of creativity is that it is a freewheeling, unbounded thing, the antithesis of rule following, for which no models exist, and as such it cannot be taught.

Koestler claimed that the creativity, whether it is being applied scientifically or artistically, can be boiled down to the unearthing of 'hidden similarities', adding to this the notion that this unearthing is in the service of achieving certain (or perhaps uncertain) goals (1964, p.27). Defined in this way, blending theory is, in theory, capable of modelling what happens in creativity (Forceville, 2012). What is missing from blending theory, however, is an explanation of how appropriate input spaces are chosen in the first place. If the goal of a creative process is to advertise a new brand of toothpaste through a striking visual metaphor, then we have the first input space (or target)—the toothpaste. What is missing, however, are subsequent input spaces (or sources) and how these are to be selected.

Forceville offers the below process by which apt multimodal metaphors can be hit upon when developing ideas for an advert. The process draws on Koestler's notions of creativity as an outcome-driven unearthing of similarities, and on blending theory's ability to model aspects of the creative process:

1) Decide on the attributes and/or connotations of the product/service to be emphasised.
2) Find a source domain in which those attributes are saliently present.
3) Create a motivation or scenario for the co-presence of target (usually the product) and source, and emphasize dimensions of similarity between them.
4) Choose in what modes/modalities the metaphorically pertinent information (including the to-be-mapped properties/attributes) is to be cued (2012, p.7).

Forceville's creativity template takes into account blending theory's shortcomings, and attempts to plug the gap by referencing the overall goal of the blend. If the goal of the toothpaste ad, for example, is to highlight that it leaves your mouth feeling fresh and clean, then the second input space should be an object or scenario that comes pre-packaged with notions of freshness and cleanliness.

Say, for example, the idea of a spring clean is hit upon. The spring clean becomes your second input space. How to create a scenario in which a mouth and a spring clean co-exist? How can the dimensions of similarities between them be emphasised?

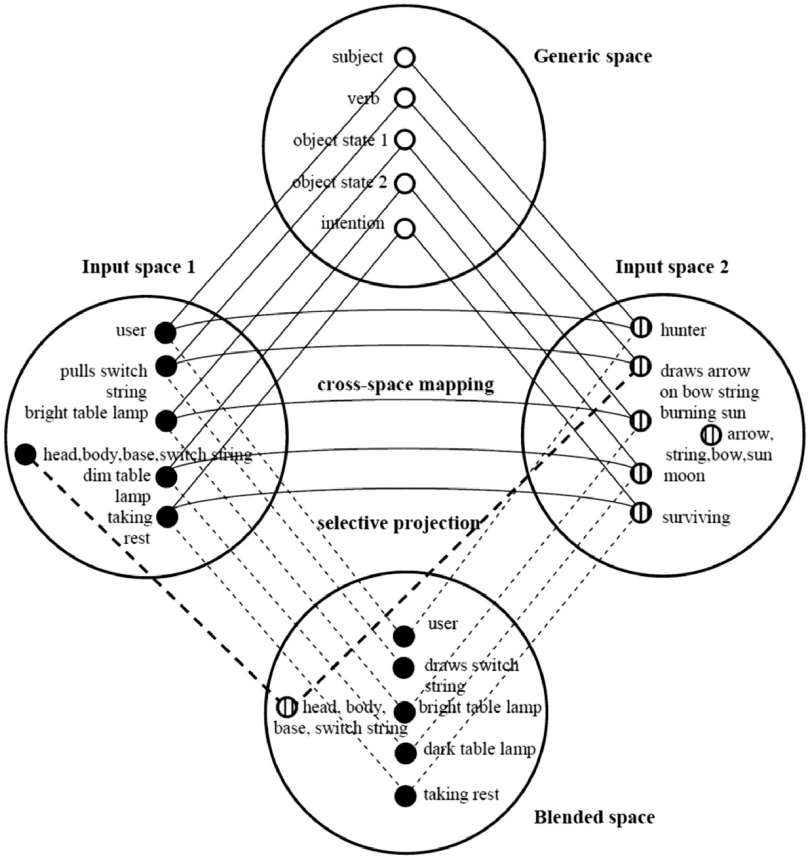
'Well, a mouth is sort of like a room, right? What if, as she brings the toothbrush to her mouth, we zoom in, and inside her mouth is a living room being cleaned by a happy couple (they are almost done—the room is sparkling. With a single lazy flick of the duster from her, and a plumping of the cushions by him, they are done, and embrace). Light is coming through the window, and there are daffodils on the windowsill. And then when we zoom back out, the woman has finished brushing her teeth and her husband comes into the shot in a shirt and tie (it's the morning and they are getting ready for work) and lo and behold, it's the same couple that were spring cleaning! And we zoom out further, moving into the living room and, of course, it's the living room in her mouth!'

There are people for whom adverts (and I mean all adverts, regardless of their purpose) are an anathema—adverts are simply not creative in the same way that writing, painting, etc. can be creative. The self-same people, in my experience, like to think of creativity as unbridled, formless, unteachable. But then an advert is successful if the product's desired attributes are successfully emphasised, if the product as a result of this sells. Likewise, a metaphor in literature, or in conversation, is successful if the reader is *sold* on it, understands it and subsequently *buys into* its effect.

Spurred on by the notion that metaphors are often used in designing creative outputs, and that amongst theories of metaphor, blending theory not only has descriptive and interpretative capabilities, but also a generative capacity, Wang (2013) directed three students of industrial design to set about designing a table lamp according to the principles of blending.

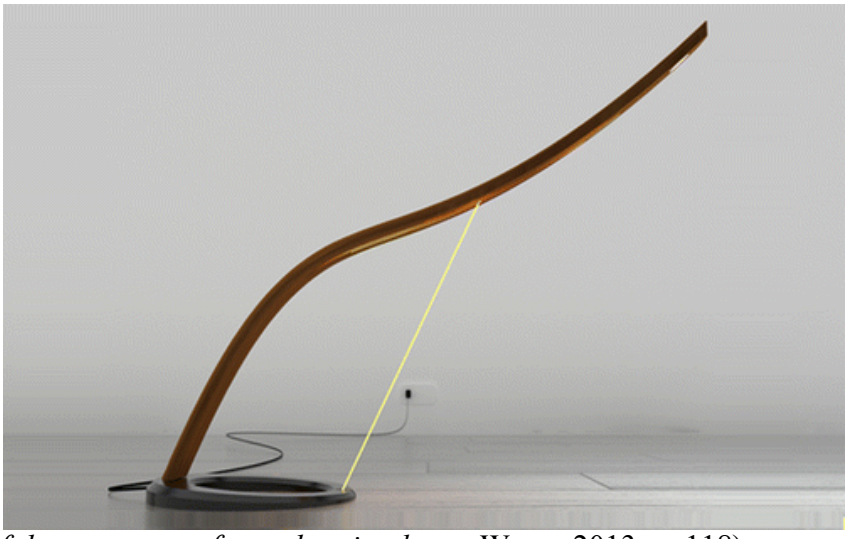
They began with the product architecture and usage as frame (*user, pull switch string, bright, dim, take a rest*) and searched for matching features in Taiwan aborigines' myths. They hit upon a Thao myth, which describes how the moon came to be—'in ancient times there was no moon, only a huge sun which caused prolonged droughts. A member of the Thao tribe decided to shoot the sun, splitting it into two parts with his bow and arrow. The lager part became the present-day sun, and the smaller one the moon' (2013, p.116).

This myth became the second input space, with matching features of *hunter, draw a bow, burning sun, moon, surviving*. This led to the below single-scope network:



(Interpreting the conceptual blending of the sun-shooting lamp, Wang, 2013, p. 117)

The resulting lamp is pictured below:



(A snapshot of the prototype of sun-shooting lamp, Wang, 2013, p. 118)

The bow string is made of optical fibre which, drawn back once, activates the dim mode (mapping onto the shooting, and so 'dimming' of the sun), at which point the string itself lights up (as pictured above). Drawn back for a second time, and the bow, an led lamp within, lights up to provide comfortable lighting suitable for 'tasks'. Drawn back for a third time and the lighting becomes muted, ambient.

Wang notes the importance of metonymic tightening in the design, through which the upper half of the bow, and the intensity of the light it produces in its three states, comes to represent the myth in its entirety, with all its entities and actions.

It is easy to see how Forceville's model might be modified so as to become a structuring agent in creative writing at every level—from individual metaphors, to an overarching, allegorical plot. The resulting text would not wear its machinations on its sleeve in the same way that Wittgenstein's Mistress bears the hallmarks of the Tractatus, but that is because blending theory is an attempt to model the creative process, rather than a model of the world.

In fact, there are a number of instances in *Wallpaper* where, retrospectively, I can pinpoint something like Forceville's model at work. The story of Steve, the mapmaker (see page 143) which serves as an analogy of The Neural Theory of Metaphor, to take one such example.

Topic (input space 1): **The Neural Theory of Metaphor**

Attributes to be emphasised:

1) The language of neural *mapping*
2) What neural circuitry looks like, magnified
3) The strengthening of commonly activated mappings
4) Opportunistic reuse of existing mappings
5) That these neural mappings influence our behaviours in external world
6) That the external world influences the neural mappings

If my memory serves, 1) and 2) suggested maps as an input space. 1) because (obviously) maps encompass the idea of *mapping.* 2) because neural circuitry does in indeed look like a map of a particularly chaotic city.

Then, 3). I was fortunate, in a way—more heavily used thoroughfares are, in general, represented by thicker lines on a map, and so the features matched in that way naturally, given the associations between thickness and strength.

Then, 4), which suggested to me someone sat, creating a map, almost automatically, in a trance, so in-tune are they with their work. This suggested a whole department of the same.

Then, 5) and 6), which were attributes to be emphasised, but they also suggested a possible motivation for the co-presence of the source and target. Of course, maps are reactive, insofar as new maps are created as new paths are trodden, but compressing the timeline (as per one of the principles of blending) here gives us a universe in which maps are plotted, and then immediately find themselves out there in the world to be utilised.

It follows (or, at least, it did in my head) that a department tasked with mapping the world would have strict policies against mapping things that aren't there. This brought to mind the idea of a mapmaker who accidentally does just that, and subsequently influences the world in such a way as to create, by his accidental mapping, a whole new city.

This idea, fortuitously, gave me the opportunity to demonstrate within the analogy that our (often unconscious) neural mappings can have unintended consequences out there, in the world. It also presented the opportunity, in the penultimate paragraph, to begin the process of unpacking the blend, of revealing, more explicitly, its input spaces—'And spidery tendrils, as if something neural, reaching out from this implied congestion.'

I am, of course, relying on memory, here. Whether it played out in quite this way is impossible (even for me, with my unparalleled insight into the workings of my own mind) to say.

If blending theory is indeed a suitable model (at least in part) of creativity, then, it could be argued, writing creatively necessitates engaging unconsciously with models drawn from metaphor theory. But what of other models of and approaches towards metaphor? Can they be appropriated as writing models in a more conscious, pointed way?

Discourse dynamics begins with a text—a transcript of a conversation, or a speech for example. The text is mined for systematicity in order to bring ideas, attitudes and values to the surface. Just as an instruction manual for putting together a piece of furniture read in reverse is an instruction manual for taking it apart, it makes sense that, set in reverse, the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor might provide a template, not for deconstructing a discourse, but for, in part, constructing one. An example of what this might look like is below:

1) Decide on the attitudes and values that two or more characters should embody.
2) Formulate potential systematic (or conceptual) metaphors that align with these ideas.
3) Devise a range of potential linguistic metaphors that might logically spring from these systematic (or conceptual) metaphors, and therefore each character.
4) Establish how these metaphors might interact in a discourse event (how they might be doubled down upon, collapse into one another, be abandoned, be revised in the face of, or build on, those associated with other characters, etc).
5) The result should be a series of potential metaphor clusters—a potential dialogic framework plotting the ebb and flow of a meeting between these characters, for example.

Such a template, informed by the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor, could be formulated no matter your starting point. For example, a writer might begin with a choice metaphorical phrase or exchange, and work backwards to discover what interacting scales and levels (phylogenetic and ontogenetic) might be feeding into that singular, compressed, microgenetic moment—to discover and create, in simple terms, a character.

The writing of the two transcripts in *Discourse Dynamics* (see pages 178 and 180) were informed by such processes, the transcript analysis I engaged in feeding back into the transcript itself, serving to highlight where there was room for greater metaphoric dynamism, and therefore character development.

For example, Su, in earlier drafts, responded to John’s characterisation of his withdrawal as absent mindedness (‘I become absent-minded at times. A part of me does do that’) with simple agreement (‘yes, he does that’).

A cluster of metaphors was developed, this cluster informed by notions of who Su was, her way with words, her propensity for metaphorical dances, but also a sense of how this propensity might lead to her building on and playing with John's existing metaphor of 'absent-minded', all the while expressing her own reality—'It’s like he lets his mind go, and it drifts beyond reality, it drifts inwards. It’s like he wants that detachment and distance. There’s no finding him'. The result was a cluster that at once appropriates John’s conventional metonym, but also, subtly, collapses it, making him whole once again, establishing his agency, and making him accountable for his actions, for his withdrawal.

Creative Writing as a Research Tool

Creative writing has been used as a research tool in a number of contexts outside of the strictly literary. Here, I present a three case studies where practice-based creative writing methodologies have been successfully deployed.

Driven by the idea that the qualitative aspect of illness is of ‘significant importance in the management of pulmonary hypertension’ (Goddard et al, 2017, p.6), creative writing was used to research the impact of pulmonary hypertension on the lives of those affected by the illness. Unstructured interviews, characterised by open-ended questions, were conducted with patients. The transcripts of these interviews were analysed subjectively and qualitatively to identify key themes running through them. This analysis was presented as sets of ‘microstories’ of 200-300 words each, the brevity of these stories reflecting the way that patients displayed 'frequent reappraisal of their illness and its impacts’ (2017, p.2)—how the way each individual portrayed their illness changed frequently over time:

> ‘Old Sophia. That’s what she wants back, Old Sophia. The person she used to be, before all this. The more relaxed one, the one that had less to worry about, the one whose days passed easily.’ (2017, p.4)

> ‘But she starts laughing again soon. Betty always laughs. Betty normally laughs at herself. Something she’s done or something she’s thought. But this is something I’ve often found when talking to people. Humour is a way of coping with things.’ (2017, p.5)

> ‘Andy smiles to himself as he sees the confused look on the doctor’s face. He knows full well that this doctor, and probably most of the people on the ward, haven’t heard of his disease, most people haven’t. And Andy knows roughly what’s about to happen next as well. There’s a few ways that it can go, but it tends to follow a certain pattern.’ (2017, p.3)

These microstories were evaluated for accuracy by the patients at their centre, their families (if the patients so chose) and a focus group of patients with pulmonary hypertension. The stories were also displayed as part of a public exhibition.

The narratives produced revealed a great deal about the subjective experience of each patient, about how their worries, and the concerns of their family, changed over time. That the stories also prompted clinical practitioners and focus group patients alike to respond with their own stories suggested a clinical use for these stories. It was proposed that a bank of these stories could help patients identify aspects of the illness which cause them anxiety, paving the way for ‘targeted discussions in clinical consultations’ (2017, p.6).

Vivienne Elizabeth wrote of the ‘self-revelatory character’ of personal writing, of a shift from 'writing as a method of recording to writing as a method of inquiry’ (2008, p.6) in the social sciences, arguing that the therapeutic nature of writing makes it well-suited for investigations into distressing experiences. Free-writing, in particular allows, ‘the writing hand to record whatever comes to mind without pause for second thoughts’, providing the researcher with ‘access to the unique, partial and situated perspectives of our participants... the discourses that circulate in their social milieu and the way in which these vie for our participants' subjectivities’ (Ibid). Writing, in this way, becomes a method of data collection. This data, Elizabeth argues, is ‘epistemologically significant’, and though it should not be regarded as

‘epistemologically privileged' (Ibid), can be supplemented with other forms of data. Such writings can also be used by researchers to ‘ponder their shifting positionalities in relation to the research question’ enabling them to ‘record, without initially censoring, their thoughts and feelings as the project unfolds over time’(Ibid).

Will Pooley, a social and cultural historian, wonders if 'making things up along the way [might] be a good way to do historical research’ characterising this idea as his 'heresy'. Pooley relates how he has 'been experimenting with writing the story of a murder that took place in 1925 with novelistic detail, based as far as possible on historical fact.’ (Pooley, 2018. He describes how, when he came to write a central scene that took place in a tavern, he hit roadblocks. He could not, with certainty, say if his characters would have ordered from the bar, or if there might have been table service. Were patrons allowed tabs? He realised he lacked sufficient historical knowledge to provide the expected novelistic details.

Creative writing, Pooley suggests, can be appropriated as a ‘tool of sustained ignorance’(Ibid), insofar as it forces researchers to confront the limits of their knowledge, inviting them to plug these gaps. Applied in this way, creative writing 'approaches an ethnography of the periods we cannot visit'—an immersive, qualitative approach that, whilst not creating 'new truths', does open up questions. 'How then could we work out what a housemaid would eat, and how she would speak? What sources would you turn to?’ (Ibid).

From Goddard's work with creative writing in clinical settings emerges a picture of creative writing that has a power to both uncover subjective experience and provide a vehicle for its arrangement in a usable format, in such a way that this subjective experience can feed into future practice.

Jonathan Crewe (2021) notes that though creative writing can result in 'unique insights, it cannot fully realise its research potential without a framework for theoretical and contextual analysis and reflection'. As in Elizabeth's use of free-writing, creative writing can itself constitute useable data to which theoretical models can be applied, providing insights into research practice and opportunities to reframe the questions that guide it. As 'researchers who use creative writing must maintain a discourse between the artefact and the exegesis, in order to exploit findings and outcomes so that a wider impact can be realized' (Crewe, 2021), Elizabeth acknowledges that free-writing is not a singular object, but evidence of competing subjectivities in the moment of writing, and provides insights when understood in these terms.

Whilst allowing for 'access to the individual', creative writing also provides the opportunity for researchers to 'go beyond the personal', in such a way that 'methods *and* theoretical ideas as paradigms may be viewed as the apparatuses, or procedures of production from which the research design emerges' (Barrett, 2010, p.138). Pooley's appropriation of creative writing to engender a state of 'sustained ignorance' sees hitherto unrecognised obliviousness, as well as knowledge, externalised. Creative writing, in this practice, informs the shape of future research, becoming an exercise in mapping and gapping that provides the apparatus and framework through which personal ignorance is made stark, can be confronted and faced down.

?=?

Creativity

Su: It's just mistakes, that's what it boils down to.
Rebecca: What does?
Su: Art. It boils down to mistakes. In its genesis, at least.
Rebecca: I need more.
Su: Maybe I'm thinking of more contemporary stuff. Maybe all art. It starts with mistakes. And then they have to justify it, the artists do.
Rebecca: The mistakes?
Su: Not the mistakes as such. It's more that they have to justify their being enamoured with the mistakes. Like Glitch art.
Rebecca: Glitch art?
Su: Yeah. Born out of mistakes. Faulty coding, magnetic fields, circuit boards bent by hand mid-computation.
Rebecca: Okay?
Su: So you have this mistake, which has this effect you find appealing, and you have to justify why you are spending time on it, on replicating it. On why you are doing that rather than getting a proper job, moving up the career ladder. Because from the outside it's just a waste of time.
Rebecca: Right.
Su: So you have to make it mean something, you have to make it mean something more than just a mistake.
Rebecca: Again, I need more. It's like you're speaking in broken English.
Su: So you move a magnet past a TV set as the news is on, and the image flickers, and suddenly it's a comment on broken social discourse, the fragmentation of our experience. And suddenly you're doing something worthwhile, with meaning.
Rebecca: The artists invented this meaning?
Su: More like found it. Or rather, half invented it, half pointed it out, maybe.
Rebecca: Found it?
Su: There are constraints on what something can mean, or rather there are tendencies. X equals something, but it can't equal *anything*. A video of a news presenter, her speech distorted and disintegrating because a magnet is passing close by, is probably not going to be about the sublimity of nature, because where are the correlations? So it's about the state of our discourse, how the world flies at us in all these shards, and how we are unsuited to the task of putting it back together. And suddenly it's not a mistake, it's a comment on something, and suddenly it's worthwhile and important and in a gallery. And all it takes is to find these links. Invent them, point them out. Whatever.
Rebecca: Is that all?
Su: Yes. Well, there's marketing, and presentation, and being in the right place at the right time. Schmoozing, because when is there not?
Rebecca: You make it sound easy.
Su: Not at all!

Anglerfish=?

In the beginning, there was no metaphor:

?=?

There was barely even an equals sign, really, just things—a multitude of things. And people. A multitude of people.

In the beginning there was a multitude of things and there was a multitude of people and therefore there was also the potential that any one of these things would be compared to another thing.

Then one thing screamed out to be understood in terms of another, a target in search of a source. Let's call it A:

A=?

And another thing offered itself up. Let's call it B:

A=B

And that was how things normally worked. And the comparison was good.

But then there were the times when it didn't quite work like this. Sometimes one of the people might see a storm. They might wonder what the storm would be a good metaphor for. Or the storm might be a silverfish. Let's call the storm, or the silverfish[97], B:

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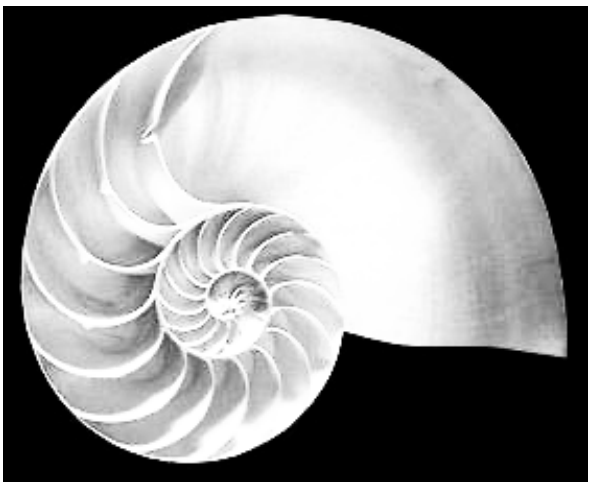
[97] Or

- The male anglerfish, who is a thousandth the size of the female anglerfish, and who attaches himself to her underbelly before becoming subsumed into it. Only the gonads remain, eventually. (The gonads were thought to be parasites, when they were first discovered—disgusting nodules fused to the underbodies of female anglerfish hauled up from the depths.)
- Finding blood in the apple you bit (it's probably nothing—gums do bleed from time to time).
- The placenta—a temporary and doomed organ. It becomes a part of you, but never like your eyes are a part of you (but not like your fingernails are a part of you, either)
- Ruin value—the idea that a structure can be built in such a way that, when it does eventually deteriorate and collapse, its ruins will be aesthetically pleasing in and of themselves, and will remain that way without intervention.
- The moment a crowd, disembarked from a train and moving pretty much automatically, almost unthinkingly, rounds a corner and becomes, just like that, a queue for the escalator.
- A Judas goat—a goat that is taught to befriend fellow livestock. The befriended livestock may then willingly follow the Judas goat into, for example, the slaughterhouse. The Judas goat's life is, of course, spared.
- That feeling you get when a very good friend of yours is better than you, for once, at some trifling thing.
- A silverfish, and whatever factual or imagined qualities you attribute to it.

?=B[98]

And so we have four basic configurations:

?=?
?=B
A=?
A=B



98 In Su's nan and grandad's house there was a cabinet full of shells. Her grandad collected them over many years, picking them up off the beach, buying them from seaside stores. Thousands of them, to be looked at and never touched, except for once a year when her nan was allowed to take them out of the cabinet to dust and polish them. He never spoke openly of why he collected them, or, even, of liking them. They were beautiful in a cold, austere way, because her nan knew to polish them well and her grandad threw out any with imperfections. Even after he passed her nan would spend one day a year taking them out of the cabinet, cleaning them with a kind of mechanical diligence.

John came home one day to find that Su had packed the shells away in cardboard boxes. All except one—one half of a nautilus shell, sliced so as to be a cross-section of its former self. In this way, its spiral could be seen to be divided up into a series of chambers. These the nautilus, in life, filled or emptied of water to regulate its buoyancy. It was the one shell that her grandad had allowed in the cabinet that was not whole and perfect.

Asked why she was keeping just this one shell (the others she had found a buyer for, she explained—it was time to get rid of them), she relayed a story her nan had told her. Her grandad, she began, he had once taken this shell to the pub with him. Asked why, he would not say, grunting as he closed the door behind him and disappearing up the road, the shell wrapped in a tea towel and tucked into his coat. He came back from the pub that evening happy, happier than normal, whistling as he opened the front door. The next morning, when her nan looked, the nautilus shell was back in its designated spot.

Later that week, her nan had bumped into one of the regulars from the pub that her grandad frequented, and asked him if he had seen the shell. He had, and laughed.

'It was strange. It obviously meant something to him, but he was too drunk to explain what. He kept talking about the chambers, and something about life, who he was. No idea what that was all about. It was all very funny. I've never seen him like that before.'

p(n,r)=

Way back in footnote 4 (see page 10) I drew attention to a number of texts that have informed my own creative-critical practice as it manifests in *Wallpaper*. Though there is much that separates these texts in terms of topic and form, they are held together by the manner in which they close the gap between topic and form, their form mirroring the contours of the topic itself. *?=?* sees this practice enriched by an understanding of how creative writing has been appropriated as a research tool in disciplines outside of the literary, by the kind of research outlined in *Creative Writing as a Research Tool*.

In footnote 9 (see page 14), I suggested that creative writing's 'limitlessness' sets it at odds with contemporary metaphor theory, with its drive to categorise and so circumscribe metaphor. It's possible that this limitlessness, this perceived shirking of taxonomies, can be applied in a productive way to say something new about metaphor, as creative writing's freedom, for Pooley, offered not just an invitation to explore and invent at granular levels, but to expose ignorance (and so recommend areas for further research) at these same levels.

Perhaps the act of constructing *Wallpaper*[99], in particular its metaphors, can be approached as an exercise in "data" collection. If a book is a building, many-roomed and standing alone, then creative writing is the digging of foundations, the slapping on of mortar. Part of what makes creative writing 'epistemologically significant' (Elizabeth, 2008, p.6) is that, as a process, it reveals the 'intellectual work that normally goes missing in translation' (Carter, 2004, p. xi). To write a text is to be intimately familiar with the processes at play in the production of that text, with what would be exposed should time be set in reverse—the wallpaper peeling away, the walls disassembling. What this "data" might reveal, then, is the subjective experience of creating the metaphors that *Wallpaper* contains. Having uncovered this subjective experience, it would of course be necessary to go 'beyond the personal' (Barrett, 2010, p.138), to explicate it with reference to theoretical constructs, to examples of creative writing beyond my own, to metaphor theory and models of metaphor.

A question presented itself to me: in the bright light of this knowledge, would these metaphor theories and models of metaphor hold water, still, or would the intimately known experience of creating these metaphors show them to be lacking in some way, as not quite fit for purpose? Would these theories and models survive contact with my own subjective reality?

There is much to recommend pieces written in a more straightforwardly critical register. Stephen Benson and Clare Connors, in *Creative Criticism: An Anthology and a Guide*, suggest that we should celebrate their 'lucidity, close attention, [and] rigour', but go on to note 'how achingly distant they seem, in their language and in their assumptions' (2014, p.2). Where traditional critical writing maintains a disjunctive relationship between its topic and itself, my hope is that, in focusing in on subjective reality, on the writerly experience of creating and deploying metaphors, the distance will be closed between the critical analysis of metaphors and the act of committing them to the page. My aim, in this final chapter, is to embrace the idea that creative-critical approaches 'can produce original insights that may remain overlooked or undiscovered by more conventional research methodologies' (Crewe, 2021), whilst keeping in mind those qualities of straightforwardly critical writing that have seen it become ubiquitous.

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[99] An act I was still very much embroiled in as I wrote this chapter.

'Ethical hacking is the practice of testing a computer system, network or application to find security vulnerabilities that could be exploited...The goal of ethical hacking is to help organisations improve their security posture by finding and fixing vulnerabilities before they can be exploited.' (IT Governance, no date)

Metaphor theory deals, by and large, with specifiable source and target domains, with A=B scenarios (LIFE IS A JOURNEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, for example). A=? or ?=B scenarios do exist, but in such cases the aim is for the '?' to resolve into a halfway nailed-down A or B. If Lakoff (2009) is to be believed, conceptual metaphor theory found its genesis in the discovery that many of the phrases we use to describe relationships draw on journeys as a source domain (see page 61). The theory developed as further source domains were discovered, as more A=? instances became A=B. Indeterminacy does feature—as with Mueller's distinguishing between TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE and TIME IS MONEY (as opposed to Lakoff and Johnson's conflating of the two—see page 170), disagreements arise regarding how source domains should be labelled, which has implications for what is inferred about their entailments.

Stockwell, a prominent figure in cognitive poetics, tells of how he heard a couple of lines from Robert Browning's 'The Lost Leader' quoted on a political analysis programme back in 1992 following Labour's electoral defeat under Neil Kinnock to the Conservative Party:

> 'Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a riband to stick in his coat' (cited in Stockwell, 2020, p.4)

'The Lost Leader' was written about William Wordsworth's shift to the right politically, and perceived betrayal of his principles. This redeployment saw Kinnock framed as a lost leader, not because of a rightwards shift, but because of an unexpected electoral defeat. Cognitive poetic analyses of metaphor in literature aim to offer a 'unified explanation of both individual interpretations as well as interpretations that are shared by a group', taking into account the 'experiences, knowledge, beliefs' of readers that have their roots in 'material existence' (Stockwell, 2020, pg.6). As such, fluidity of meaning of the kind Stockwell details here is accounted for within the cognitive poetic framework, which sees the shifting of target domains, of ?=B scenarios, as worthy of study and explication in their own right.

A sense grew, however, that a number of *Wallpaper*'s metaphors featured indeterminacies of a nature that fell outside that which cognitive linguistics worked to resolve or accounted for. Where cognitive poetics makes room for individual interpretation, the metaphors I had in mind were characterised by an indeterminacy that was baked in from the off, a feature *of* them, rather than a feature that had to wait for contact with a reader to manifest.

At the Researching and Applying Metaphor virtual conference 2021 (RaAM, 2021), I asked, in the online chat, how cognitive linguistics might account for texts where the writer had included images and situations as potential source and/ or target domains, with the intention that an engaged reader would interact with them and form metaphors from them, but did not have, themselves, a full picture of what metaphoric combinations should or could arise.

In asking this question I had *Wallpaper* in mind, but also a sense that writers other than myself might engage in such a practice. One attendee (Forceville, if my memory serves) wrote that he did not believe that such metaphors existed in literature, and anyway, he would not want to read such a text if it did indeed exist, the implication being that such texts were lazily constructed, not worthy of the moniker of 'literature'. This brief exchange (which took place moments before the workshop concluded—the opportunity for further discussion was cut short) does not exactly constitute evidence, but it did serve to strengthen my feeling that a possible blind spot existed in cognitive linguistic accounts of metaphor.

The kind of metaphors I have in mind are most obviously present in the sixth of the poems Su presents to John on scraps of paper (see page 70). The poem (insofar as it can be

understood as a poem) consists of fragments that share a common analogous structure, each depicting an opening up (metaphorical or literal), and the negative side effect of that opening up: emotionally opening up results in guilt, the opening of a hand to receive communion bread results in cramp, opening up a body for the first time results in the moment going by unappreciated, opening a new bank account results in a suspicious spouse, new businesses opening results in spending less time admiring their Victorian facades, etc.

Su presents these fragments to John to see if he will 'connect the dots, combine them in wonderful ways, make new poetry out of them'. I wrote these fragments in the knowledge that their shared structure, their analogical relationships, might recommend them as potential source and/ or target domains for each other, and so might instigate the formulation of metaphors. The reader, then, is invited to collaborate, and resolve the metaphoric indeterminacies they are presented with.

I did pause in the act of writing these fragments, once or twice, to wonder if metaphors could spring readily from combining them (could a surgeon, disappointed by the act of opening up a body, be likened to a someone disappointed by the opening of leaves in spring? Could opening up emotionally, but too much, be likened to opening your mouth to reveal a goofy, toothy grin?) but my main objective was to present *potential* source and target domains[100], this metaphoric indeterminacy performing a narrative function insofar as a reader's understanding of Su as a character should shift to accommodate her writing and presenting of such a text to John, this characterisation feeding into John's feeling that he never really knew Su when she was alive [101].

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[100] It's worth noting here that, assuming each and every fragment can enter into a metaphoric relationship with each and every other fragment, the number of possible permutations (assuming, too, that only two fragments are combined at a time) is 66:

$$p(n,r) = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!}$$

Where *n* is the number of fragments that that can be combined (12), and *r* the number of selections to be made (2).

Another relevant formula here, of course, is ?=?.

[101] The first three "poems" that Su presents John with (see pages 65-67) do not feature the same kind of indeterminacy, but rather are intended to serve as a primer, encouraging the reader (and John) to think in terms of analogical relationships, and the roles that these relationships play in metaphoric constructions (' It's all very metaphorical, you see, or it has the potential to tend that way, if you cooperate.' (page 65)). Having completed the third correctly, the reader might begin to think of daydreaming as skydiving, and dreaming as base jumping—base jumping being the more intense, unpredictable of the two activities.

The fourth poem (see page 68) also gets the reader thinking about analogical relationships. Can an analogy be drawn between knowing the answer to a difficult sum, but only because you used a calculator, and the kind of care you can muster for a terrorist attack in a far-off place in which a multitude of people die? Can an analogy be drawn between knowing that 1+2=3, and the kind of care you can muster for someone sick, who is dear to you? I would suggest that it can, and that it has something to do with immediacy of experience, with the difference between experiential and second-hand knowledge.

The fifth (see page 69) ups the ante, presenting two unknowns—two potential source and/or target domains. Su here gives hints as to what kind of relationships the items that fill the gaps must

Su's poems are examples of metaphoric indeterminacy that could be considered non-standard, pointed attempts as they are to explore how analogical relationships feed into the process of metaphor creation, into the pairing of source and target domains. Other metaphors within *Wallpaper*, however, feature indeterminacy in less pointed ways—some examples are given below.

The anglerfish leitmotif (see pages 94-96, 268, 279, 312) has specific uses within *Wallpaper*—to explore, through an imagining of what conceptual metaphors an anglerfish might use, the topic of embodiment, for one (see pages 94-96). The image recurs, however, because I feel it has, to put it in woolly, imprecise terms, metaphoric potential. The anglerfish, its life cycle, appearance and habitat are, together, evocative, but of what I cannot put my finger on. I felt that, as a striking image, readers might be compelled to do something with it, to make of it a source domain for something else within, or perhaps beyond, the text (?=B). Alternatively, I felt that the strangeness of the creature might recommend it as a target domain, as something to be understood in terms of something less enigmatic (A=?). Thinking retrospectively, as I edit this chapter, I wonder if the anglerfish's mating habits might be read as a metaphor for Su and John's relationship, or if Su and John's relationship might be read as a metaphor for the anglerfish's mating habits (I stress that neither of these possibilities announced themselves when I first decided that anglerfish would feature in *Wallpaper*). The metaphoric indeterminacy is drawn attention to in the text—when John imagines 'The lure of the female anglerfish the only light in the park, moving slowly this way and that below the ice', he too recognises the metaphoric potential, but can't 'figure out how to do anything with it, make it mean something...can you even have evocation without knowing what is being evoked? Can you have a metaphor without a subject?' (see page 268).

Silverfish, likewise, recur throughout *Wallpaper* (see pages 196, 255, 279), as well as appearing on its cover. That they are often found in the damp corners of my flat goes some way to explaining their presence (that old dictum—to 'write what you know'), but there was more to it than that. The likening of metaphor to wallpaper (see page 97), coupled with John's realisation that silverfish eat wallpaper (see page 255) suggested, to me, that something metaphorical might be going on here, that silverfish might function as a source domain in the mind of a reader, but I did not choose to put flesh on the bones of this notion (either in my mind, or on the page), instead using John to dangle (hopefully enticingly—see page 196) the fact that silverfish, unlike other such creepy crawlies, have not realised their metaphoric potential.

With John's beating of Su in a race scenario imposed by the running app, and her avatar's subsequent fading from view (see page 206), the reader is invited to imagine what this means for him, what it becomes a metaphor *for*. Her death, of course, finds an analogue

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have for the analogy problem to work, for structural alignments, and therefore metaphoric potential, to be realised.

The seventh (see page 71) ups the ante yet further. Here, two knowns are presented ('leather sofa' and 'taxidermy)' along with six unknowns that must, in their pairs, share the same relationships that a leather sofa and the practice of taxidermy do (can a leather sofa be considered as a product, in a sense, of taxidermy? It is, after all, an animal skin stuffed with soft material—an example of taxidermy that is highly abstracted, perhaps, no longer resembling the animal that it began life as, boiled down to essential properties: durability, warmth, resistance to stains). The relationships that a leather sofa and taxidermy share, then, become a kind of cypher, a guide to aid in the completion of the poem, in the formation of potential metaphors.

in her avatar's fading, but this analogue alone did not signal to me the exact nature of the target domain, of the area or areas of John's experience that his beating of Su, and her fading, should become a corresponding source domain *for*[102].

What has been revealed here, I would argue, is the 'intellectual work that normally goes missing in translation' (Carter, 2004, p. xi)—metaphorical indeterminacies baked into the text in the form of possible source domains shorn of their corresponding target domains; possible target domains shorn of their corresponding source domains. A sense persisted, then, that metaphor theory might not account for such baked-in indeterminacy, where analogical, structural alignments exist in a text between situations, concepts, objects etc, and were included intentionally, but where the full metaphoric potential was not realised in the writer's mind.

It was now necessary to find examples of such metaphoric indeterminacy in texts beyond my own. Doing so involved finding a writer who utilised metaphor in this way in their work, but who also spoke of doing so, since the kind of indeterminacy in question stems from the nature of writerly intentionality (or, rather, lack thereof) at play. Enter Agustín Fernández Mallo and his *Nocilla Trilogy*, a work which I was fortunate to be reading as I was writing *Wallpaper*, and about which Mallo has much to say, in particular regarding its metaphorical constructions.

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[102] Other such metaphorical indeterminacies pepper *Wallpaper*. Some I was aware of at the time of writing, others, however, revealed themselves to me as I reread and edited. The nautilus shell (see page 280) for instance—I have no idea what Su's grandad would have seen the shell as a metaphor for, in his life. That he was too drunk to explain this to his friends down the pub, I came to realise, was a sleight of hand on my part.

Is the Hermit a Neutrino, or is the Neutrino a Hermit?

In 2007 a conference took place, dubbed ‘New Fictioneers: The Spanish Literary Atlas.’ The writers who attended were united on two fronts. Firstly, that contemporary Spanish novels held a ‘disregard for the increasing centrality of digital media in people’s lives and a knee-jerk resistance to anything that smacked of formal experimentation’. Secondly, that though they were united in this way, they could not be said to be part of a unified movement.

Agustín Fernández Mallo, a Spanish writer, author of *The Nocilla Trilogy,* but a physicist by trade, was not present at the conference, and denied any links to those who were. Nevertheless, it did not stop him, and those present, being drawn under the banner of ‘The Nocilla Generation’, a label which stuck (Bunstead, 2019).

The *Nocilla Trilogy* is comprised of ‘discontinuous open-ended stories that share bizarre connections bordering the threshold between reality and delirium’ (LA review of books). Character sketches sit alongside scientific texts, extracts from film editing manuals, snippets of interviews with rock stars, etc. The first book in the trilogy, *Nocilla Dream,* contains 113 such chapters, or fragments. The second, *Nocilla Experience*, contains 111 (plus an epilogue). *Nocilla Lab* is split into three parts. The first, a sentence which runs for eighty pages, during which the narrator (Mallo?) describes how his ‘project’ (*The Nocilla Trilogy?)* came to be—how it was written over the course of a twenty-five-day period he spent in a hospital in Bangkok with a broken hip. The second, though split into numbered fragments like the first two books, tells a more coherent, traditionally novelistic story—the narrator continues to work on his project and travel Sardinia. The third, *Engine (Found Fragments),* begins with a series of reflections, ideas, perhaps diary entries:

‘I make web pages by hand. Paper,
Scissors, and sticks of glue.
Then I cut them up and use the small pieces
*To start a new one’ (*Mallo, 2019, p.128)

And ends with a series of comic strips:





(Mallo, 2019, pp.142-143)

If Mallo is to be believed, *Dream* was indeed written over the course of twenty-five days in a Bangkok hospital. *Experience* was written in five months.

The *Nocilla Trilogy* was originally published in Spanish, between 2006 and 2009. I will be working with Thomas Bunstead's English translation, published in 2019.

The most instructive source of information on Mallo's approach to metaphor in the *Nocilla Trilogy* is his interview with 3AM Magazine, which I will lean on heavily below. I would recommend reading it in its entirety, as there is much in it that is relevant, directly, to the cut and thrust of this chapter, and, tangentially, to a broader message about writing because of, with and about metaphor. The full interview can be found here: https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/or-on-the-novel/

Mallo describes how, where the world was, not so long ago, understood piecemeal, it is now understood as a series of interrelated networks, each with a 'concrete topology' that connects each discrete part—'an ant is connected to an elephant in the chain of being...a person is connected with his or her friends...our neurons are connected in the brain...nodes are connected in the internet' (Trefry, 2017). Rather than following a hierarchical, 'proposition, complication, then resolution' (Ibid) type structure, the *Nocilla Trilogy* instead mirrors this network logic in which everything is connected to every other thing. As such, Mallo argues, the *Nocilla Trilogy* can be understood as realist, reflecting as it does this modern conception of the world.

Mallo goes on to detail how he sees these networks, as they exist in the world and in the *Nocilla Trilogy*, as 'fully metaphorical', insofar as 'the highest level of philosophical thinking can be metaphorically connected with thinking of the lowest form of culture'. The difference with the use of metaphor in other books, Mallo argues, is the 'class and type' of metaphors he uses—'everything is connected in the network', and metaphorical connections are made without 'aesthetic prejudice', the primary consideration being that such links must be 'rich in meaning, rich in symbolism' (Ibid).

It is important here to note that metaphorical connections of this kind are not, as it stands, metaphors. Presenting two or more objects, situations or concepts side by side, though it may highlight their common structures and relational systems, does not give us a metaphor fully-formed—we are on the cusp, metaphor existing in potentia. What does Mallo mean, then, when he talks of *Nocilla Trilogy's* 'connective tissue' being 'fully metaphorical?

Across *Dream* and *Experience* we have 223 chapters (henceforth, these shall sometimes be referred to as fragments—a rhetorical choice). Given the breadth of the sources Mallo draws on, and the speed with which he wrote the trilogy, it is highly unlikely that he forged metaphors between each and every one[103]. It is far more likely that these fragments were written and chosen according to the structural and relational similarities, the

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[103] Using the same formula as in footnote 100, and assuming that each and every fragment contains one element that can enter into a metaphoric relationship, and assuming, again, that only two elements are combined at a time, the number of possible permutations is 24753.

$$p(n,r) = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!}$$

Where *n* is the number of fragments that that can be combined (223), and *r* the number of selections to be made (2).

This is a highly crude calculation. It ignores the fact that some storylines/ situations are depicted across multiple fragments, it assumes that elements that can enter into a metaphoric relationship are discrete enough to be counted, and it ascribes just the one such element to each fragment. There is much that it does not account for, but what it does do, however, in spite of this, is serve to highlight the scale of the task of forging metaphorical connections that link all fragments, if these connections were to take the form of fully-fledged metaphors.

correlations, be these pre-existing or invented[104], that they share—a much more manageable task. Under this reading, what holds the novel together, its 'connective tissue', is the potential for any one fragment to provide a source or target domain for another in the text, the metaphoric potential that sits, in the gaps between fragments, waiting to be realised. An analogy can be drawn here with the way in which primary metaphors (see page 118) arise from the correlations between abstract cognitive experiences and universal perceptual experiences that form in our infancy.

The interviewer, wondering about how intentional the sequencing chapters is across the *Nocilla Trilogy*, asks if the books would function in the same way if they existed as a 'non-linear, digital construct', noting that 'the hermit is a neutrino' is different than 'the neutrino is a hermit'[105]. Mallo answers that, if presented in this way, the trilogy would function 'not better or worse, but in a different way'—he wrote the books to be read 'in a traditional fashion' (Trefry, 2017), that is to say, in the order the pages appear. He does not comment on whether the neutrino is a hermit, or the hermit a neutrino.

Though Mallo does note that if the *Nocilla Trilogy* was published in an ergodic form it would be function differently, this is a far cry from suggesting fixed source and target domains. Rather, it speaks to a text that has a number of narratives that unfold sequentially across fragments, and that would be rendered senseless if the reader were to dip in and out of them as they pleased. The sequential construction alone does not preclude an earlier fragment from providing a source domain through which to understand a later fragment, and vice versa.

Comparing the *Nocilla Trilogy* to a collage, Warren (no date) notes that its 'original materials and materials found, salvaged, repurposed', exist as if 'thrown at a canvas and pressed down amongst the others'. The result is a text, a 'cacophony', that requires 'active input from the reader to discern [and] decipher'. Each constituent part is 'like a node in a vast network whose connective fibres must be laid anew, and in different ways, by every person who picks up either one of the novels'.

Miller (2019) suggests that the *Nocilla Trilogy* offers up its own key as to how it should be read:

> 'I thought about the messages carved into the very wall of that Azores bar and how, now, they were at the bottom of the sea, but more troubling was the thought of the

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[104] '[Mallo] sees analogies where not many will find them or he creates them with his imagination...they are insightful and intuitive, based on loosely connected associations that appear as a chaotic sequencing of thought' (Gala, 2015, p.68).

[105] It's important to note that the word neutrino occurs five times throughout the *Nocilla Trilogy*, each of these times in *Dream,* in chapters 56 (twice), 61, and 102 (also twice). These chapters trace the building of a neutron monitor, a 'very large water pond' (Mallo, 2008, p.82), watched over by a lone physicist, Chii-Teen, who hallucinates a mermaids tail in the pond, muses on the Mar Polar Lander craft (lost to space due to a miscalculation by NASA), and, in his detached home, sifts through clippings he has taken from newspapers about physics, coming across a picture of an elderly painter making vertical slashes through a canvas on the back of one clipping.

The word hermit occurs once, in *Experience* (in chapter 106). This chapter sees Josecho, having finished working for the night on his 'transpoetic project', writing to a friend to tell him that, 'in reality, he did not want to be a hermit'. Hermit-like characters, cut off from the world and caught up in their own, often highly theoretical musings, appear elsewhere, throughout the trilogy.

> paper messages… I imagined first the ink that made up the words and next the paper itself dissolving, how it was happening in that very moment, and how the words written there would make sense on reaching their final destination, the sea, and this came like a revelation… the corkboard and all the words it bore taking on a different meaning entirely, a previously unseen meaning' (Mallo, 2019, p.7).

He concludes that 'we must take the text and do what we can with it—that Nocilla has no fixed meaning, [and] rather shapes itself to the reader's needs and desires.' (Miller, 2019).

Though neither Warren nor Miller mention metaphors explicitly, their reading of the *Nocilla Trilogy* as a text that is even more open to interpretation than is usual corresponds with my reading of the trilogy as a text that is held together by metaphoric potential, by the structural alignments that exist between its fragments. It is up to the reader, then to decide if A=B, or B=A—whether the hermit is a neutrino, or the neutrino a hermit, and what it means if either of these things are deemed to be so.

Mallo talks of how his way of 'mixing materials' was inspired more by conceptual art than 'literature proper' (Trefry, 2017). That the 'championing of the idea over the material' (Dixon, 2020) is central to conceptual art suggests that Mallo sets a greater store by the connections between fragments than the content of the fragments themselves. It is the potential for '=' that the *Nocilla Trilogy* gives primacy, then, a potential that must be realised by each reader anew, drawing on the multitude of things, situations, characters, concepts and theories that Mallo proffers[106].

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[106] ?=?

Nothing is Unstable[107]

Hundreds of rooms, arranged so that there is a line of sight from every room to every other room, in a way that transcends the laws of space as they are commonly understood. A membrane wrapped around each room which allows the passage of commonalities only. By which I mean that standing in room *X* and looking into room *Y*, the membrane highlights that which room *Y* has in common with room *X,* and hides that which it does not (in much the same way that rose-tinted glasses bring rose wavelengths to the fore). In *X*, an oak table, set in one of the corners. In *Y*, a small plastic table like a child would use. The same L shape to both rooms. In both, in the corner, an ornate picture frame—in *X*'s frame a mirror, in *Y*'s frame a painting of a solitary swan.

And yet more rooms, springing up between those that are already in existence, springing up in the nothingness between them, their form and content informed by the mixing of the commonalities that are allowed to pass between membranes.

Z, one of these new rooms, the product of *X* and *Y*. L-shaped. Within, an oak table, but built as if for a child. An ornate picture frame with a painting of two swans looking to each other, or one swan reflected back at itself—it's hard to tell.

And the nothingness expands to accommodate these new rooms, and line of sight between each and every room is preserved.

And these new rooms, do they too have the same membranes? Are they equally as present, equally as real as the rooms we began with?

And does the cycle begin again—yet more rooms springing up between these second-order rooms, the nothingness again expanding to accommodate them?

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[107] In *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing* (2013) Krauss notes that one way of thinking about why there is something (anything at all) rather than nothing is that nothingness is unstable: 'In quantum gravity, universes can, and indeed always will, spontaneously appear from nothing.' (cited in Shermer, 2012)

Fragments as Inputs

Iser argues that, in reading fragmented literature, 'one's attention is almost exclusively occupied with the search for connections between the fragments' (1972, p.284). Brevity necessitates gaps, and gaps are there to be filled, to be compensated for. Writing in *Liminality and the Short Story: Boundary Crossings in American, Canadian, and British Writing*, Achilles suggests that, when reading short-form fiction a 'dynamic interaction takes place between what is presented and the attempt on the part of the reader to maintain or impose his or her own order of understanding'. This process involves the reader 'transgressing the boundaries of and in the fictional world' (2014, p.68) in their search for connections.

Allen argues that the concept of hybridity, the 'process by which two or more genres combine to form a new genre or subgenre; or by which elements of two or more genres are combined in a single work' is inadequate—it is 'essentialist' in nature, regarding genres as having fixed qualities through time and between readers. Conceptual blending, on the other hand, 'does not describe the status of a cultural artefact, but a cognitive process' (2013, pp.11-12). Unlike the mixing of pure and stable genres described by hybridity, this blending is open-ended—the hybrid text is itself a blended space, but can also function as and be the source of input spaces for further blending.

Could conceptual blending, then, be a suitable model suitable model to examine the fragmented, genre hopping nature of texts such as the *Nocilla Trilogy*, in particular the metaphorical indeterminacy on display? Understood in this way, the 'search for connections between fragments' corresponds with the formulating of a generic space that kickstarts the blending process, and the 'dynamic interaction' necessary for meaning-making is an integral part of the blending theory model. In addition, blending allows for emergent structures that go beyond the structures present in the input spaces, giving us the transgression of boundaries 'of and in the fictional world' that fragmented literature depends upon if it is to be made to mean anything. That cognitive processed are foregrounded in blending allows both the consideration of writerly intentions, and the reader's own search for sense and meaning.

One of the governing principles of blending (see page 210) is that of 'topology', which states that 'elements in the blend should participate in the same sorts of relations as their counterparts in the inputs' (Grady et al, 1999). Mallo's conception of the world, and of the *Nocilla Trilogy*, as sharing in a 'concrete topology' (Trefry, 2017) is suggestive of a work that is constructed as if to enable effective blending. Interestingly, echoes of blending theory's raison d'etre (to enable global insights through the compression of relations between inputs to a 'human scale') are found in Warren's (no date) review of the *Nocilla Trilogy*, which is described, in its presenting of both cosmic and subatomic discoveries and theories alongside narrative, as giving us 'the universe at human scale' (Warren, no date).

Three Fragments from *Nocilla Experience*

In applying the conceptual blending model to the *Nocilla Trilogy,* its fragments become input spaces, the search for connections becomes the discovery/ creation of the properties in the generic space, and the resulting meaning that the reader extracts from the text can be understood as its emergent structure.

Below, I present three full chapters (50, 56 and 59) from *Nocilla Experience*. I will be focusing on the text in bold in the third.

Fragment (input space) 1

Q: Are you still a punk?
A: Yes, I think so.

BOBBY GILLESPIE, SINGER-SONGWRITER,
PRIMAL SCREAM, INTERVIEW BY PABLO GIL

(Mallo, 2019, p.70)

Fragment (input space) 2

At Yam Festival in 1963, which took place on 9 May in New Brunswick (New Jerseyl, Wolf Vostell organized a "happening" that featured the strange, allegorical funeral of a television. For the ceremony, Vostell wrapped the television set in barbed wire and buried it "alive,' with a program still playing on the screen. "After the set was buried, the sound could still be heard for a long time...On one side there was visualization and burial, and then on the other, the purely cerebral work of imagining the object's continued but invisible operation."

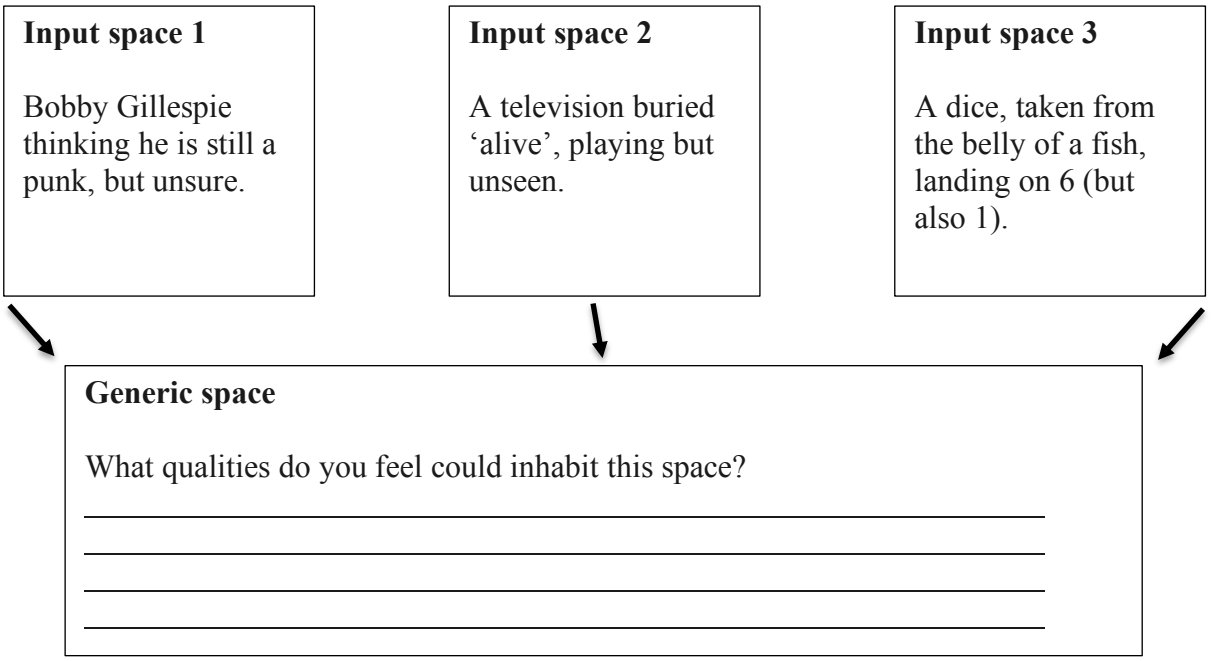
VIDEO: PRIMERA ETAPA (VIDEO: FIRST STAGE], LAURA BAIGORRI, MADRID; BRUMARIA EDITORIAL, 2005

(Mallo, 2019, p.77)

Fragment (input space) 3

End of October, Ernesto arrives at his apartment, turns on the television, mutes the sound, and sits down to put the final touches to one of his 2 most tantalizing projects: the Museum of Ruins. Convinced as he is that the future lies in the observation of endings, exhaustion, death, this building is to be constructed in such a way that the works it contains, though extremely light, might cause it to collapse at any moment. People can come by and place bets on when it will fall down, and the money they put in will be handled by the local council, in concert with a trust. The museum will have to be built from without, using specially modified cranes and suspended scaffolding that must never touch the actual building. **Looking up from the computer, he takes the pearlescent dice out of his pocket, the one that came from the belly of a fish. He throws it on the table and it lands on a 6 with the dots partially rubbed out, so that, also, he gets a 1**.

(Mallo, 2019, p.82)



The three fragments, rendered into simplified input spaces above, appear in relatively quick succession in *Nocilla Experience.* They were chosen for inclusion here because, on reading them, I experienced a subjective feeling of connection between them, a feeling that there were properties they shared, commonalities between them—that something metaphorical could be made of, or done with, them. This feeling is one that permeated the whole trilogy, with these fragments being emblematic of that feeling.

Beyond Subjective Feeling

What properties draw these fragments together? Why did Mallo choose them for inclusion? What are their structural commonalities/ what populates their generic space? Perhaps these three questions are the same question, asked from different vantage points.

In terms of the our most basic non-metaphorical concepts, as outlined in *The Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System (*Lakoff and Johnson, 1980b), Bobby Gillespie, the television and the dice all share the concept of ENTITY. Both the dice and the television have moved down in space (UP-DOWN), the television down into the ground, and the dice down into a body of water. They have both been contained (CONTAINER)—the television in the dirt, and the dice in the belly of a fish.

Change over time is a common feature across all three inputs insofar as the dice has had some of its dots rubbed off, and the TV eventually falls silent. Bobby Gillespie's change is psychological, rather than physical, but an analogous similarity exists.

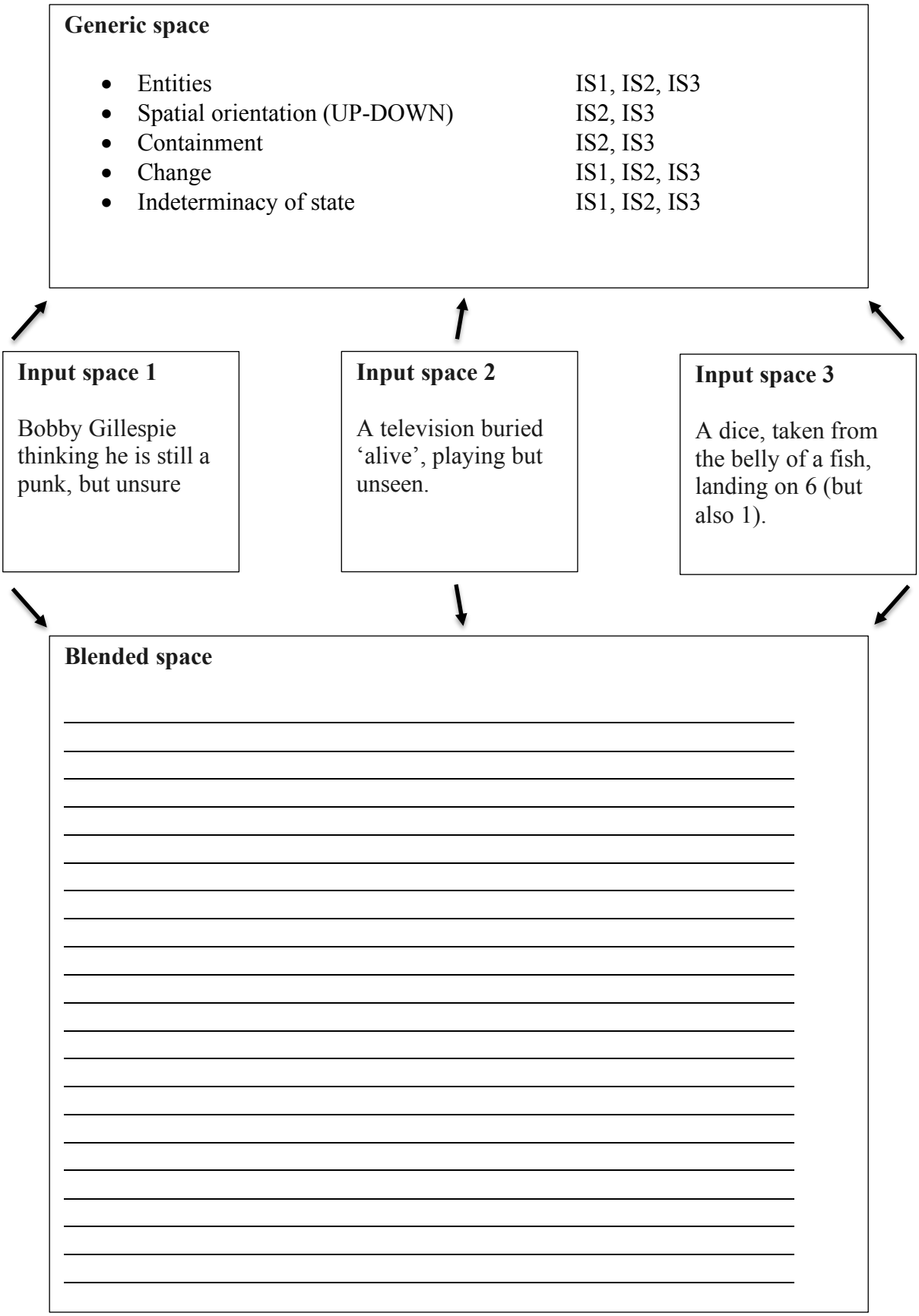
The dice lands on both a 6 and a 1—Ernesto knows it is a 6, even though only one dot remains, presumably because of a pre-existing knowledge of where numbers on a dice are placed in relation to each other. Likewise the, television is on, but this knowledge is reliant on prior knowledge—on seeing the television being buried whilst still operational. Bobby Gillespie's answer suggests that he once knew he was a punk, but isn't so sure now. *Indeterminacy of state*, then, could be said to be a common feature also.

Generic space	**Properties shared by**
• ENTITY	IS1, IS2, IS3
• Spatial orientation (UP-DOWN)	IS2, IS3
• Containment	IS2, IS3
• Change over time	IS1, IS2, IS3
• Indeterminacy of state	IS1, IS2, IS3

Gibbs wrote of the allegorical impulse—the human desire to ‘apply a metaphoric mode of understanding to situations and discourse that typically does not contain metaphorical language per se’. It is an impulse that is ‘hard to resist’ (2011, p.121). Think about every time you’ve sat watching the sea, every time you’ve stopped to rest awhile on top of a hill on a clear day, your home beyond the horizon; every time you’ve_____
_____
_____

satisfy the allegorical impulse. The onus, then, is placed on the reader do *something* with these fragments, to complete the blends, should they wish.

Should You Wish



What might a completed blend look like in the case of the three fragments above?

That Bobby Gillespie, the TV and the dice are entities encourages a blend in which these are equated. His dilemma (not knowing whether he is a punk anymore) is abstract, and so it seems natural that, in the language of conceptual metaphor, he would be the target domain, here. Unless the reader is familiar with Bobby Gillespie, it's natural to assume that the reader might substitute their own unknowing—their own experience of being unsure if the labels that applied to them in the past still apply to them now. Are they still kind? Are they still impulsive, exciting? In this way, the reader themselves, their own self-schemas, might become an input space, too. I will present this Bobby/ reader composite below as *B/RSS*.

It's important to note that the blended space presented on the next page is just one example of the kinds of blends that *could* be created from the three fragments chosen—it is not indicative of the kinds of blends that *should* be created. Rather, the intention is for it to serve as proof of concept.

Generic space/ *Elements present in one space only (in italics)*

1) Entities	IS1, IS2
2) Spatial orientation (UP-DOWN)	*IS2*
3) Containment	*IS2*
4) Change	IS1, IS2
5) Indeterminacy of state	IS1, IS2

Input space 1

1) *B/RSS*
2) .
3) .
4) Used to be a punk
5) Not sure if a punk anymore

Input space 2

1) TV
2) Underground
3) Buried
4) Was making sound, now is not
5) Not sure if playing once sound has stopped

Blended space

I was a TV buried, still playing, deep in the ground. Who was I? What channel was I on? Was I even switched on? Was anyone even listening?

Discussion: That Bobby and the TV are counterparts through their positioning as *entities* allows him to become the TV in the blended space. Spatial orientations are not present in input space 1 but, having been projected, take on a different aspect. Such spatial orientations support a number of primary metaphors when talking about subjective feeling (CONTROL is UP (or rather, in this case, its corollary, LACK OF CONTROL is DOWN), MORE is UP, GOOD is UP, etc. The introduction of a living being into the blend alongside spatial orientation provokes, through pattern completion, the use of verticality to imply a lack of control over the experience of not knowing who you are anymore.

The notion of *containment*, likewise, is not present in input space 1, but is present in the blended space that the above sentence represents. That MENTAL STATES are PLACES ('I'm in a bad/good place') allows this containment to be congruent with the idea that Bobby doesn't know who he is anymore (a mental state). This experience is, in the blended space, thrown in a negative light, whereas the snippet we are working from in input space 1 is neutral as far as we can tell.

Both B/RSS's psychological change and the change the TV undergoes are present in the blend ('Who was I', 'Was I even switched on?'). Though the nature of their change is, on the surface, different, the topology of the blend is preserved given that the elements in the blend are participating the same kind of relations as they were in the input spaces.

Indeterminacy of state, present in both input spaces, appears in the blended space. Metonymic tightening occurs—if B/RSS is to become the TV (the whole) then it follows that television channels are different aspects of his being (the constituent parts). His not knowing if he is a punk translates as him not knowing what channel he is set to. The abstract idea, then, of not know *who you are* is compressed to a more manageable and physical scale—that of a television.

The question 'was I anyone even listening' arises through elaboration, through running the blend as a simulation, imaginatively. If B/SS is a television, who has been buried underground, it follows that they might wonder if anyone is listening out for them.

Some inputs salient in the input spaces were left out, according to the Good Reason principle—it would not add to the meaning of the blend, for example, to bring in the barbed wire.

Should You Wish (2)

Generic space/ *Elements present in one space only (in italics)*

1) Entities	IS1, IS3
2) Spatial orientation (UP-DOWN)	*IS3*
3) Containment	*IS3*
4) Change	IS1, IS3
5) Indeterminacy of state	IS1, IS3

Input space 1

1) Bobby (or reader's self-schema)
2) -
3) -
4) Used to be a punk
5) Not sure if a punk anymore

Input space 2

1) Dice
2) Down in the ocean then up to dry land
3) Swallowed
4) 5 of 6 dots rubbed out
5) Landed on both a 6 and a 1

Blended space

I was a dice, weathered through the years, dots no longer visible. Thrown to the floor by a hand not my own, had I landed on a 6? a 1?'

Discussion:

Challenges for Classification and Identification

It is natural that metaphor, as a phenomenon that transgresses boundaries by its very nature, would provide challenges for classification and identification. Littlemore et al, commenting on research into metaphor use around bereavement and religious belief, notes that such 'liminal spaces', where metaphor is seen to operate in 'the spaces between life and death, personhood and non-personhood, and belief and non-belief' (2020, p.150) throw up particular challenges owing to the complexity and elusiveness of the metaphors that are produced.

It is natural, then, that a text such as the *Nocilla Trilogy*, itself a liminal space that operates in the fraught middle-ground between form and formlessness, that involves the reader moving between fiction and non-fiction at a dizzying pace, would throw up its own peculiar challenges. As we have seen with deliberate metaphor (see page 170), metaphor classification can have huge implications, bringing with it assumptions about how such metaphors are functioning in the mind, and indeed whether they are functioning as metaphors there at all. If existing models of identification and classification do not, then, in their present iterations, account for indeterminacy of source and/or target domains, will there be a claim to be made about a hitherto underspecified class of metaphor, for which new or modified explanatory models will be required? If there is, will this suggest further implications for, and beyond, metaphor theory?

My theory is that metaphoric indeterminacy, of the ilk found in the Nocilla Trilogy, is not fully accounted for metaphor theory. I will now turn to existing methods of metaphor identification and classifications of metaphor to test whether this theory, supported by my own creative-critical practice and a reading of the *Nocilla Trilogy* through the lens of blending theory, holds water. Though I refer to Mallo's metaphors/ network of metaphors throughout, this should be understood as shorthand for any such metaphors that have, as a core tenet of their deployment and reception, indeterminacy of source and/or target domain, including those found in *Wallpaper* and beyond.

Identification methods

The **MIPVU** (Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam) (Steen et al, 2010) is a model for identifying linguistic metaphors—that is, 'units that have the *potential* to be realised as metaphors in people's minds'. It is not concerned with the 'conceptual content of metaphors or the cognitive processes engendered by them' and does not provide the 'vocabulary to express how they are integrated into discourse-level conceptual structures' (Steen et al, 2010).

Such a procedure, then, falls short when it comes to identifying metaphors within Mallo's network, which are reliant on the cognitive processes of readers to complete them, and which only come about through integration across the level of the whole text.

The **DMIP** (A Method for Identifying Potentially Deliberate Metaphor in Language Use) (Steen et al 2017) similarly falls short. Though Mallo's network of metaphors is clearly deployed deliberately, and has the potential to offer 'alien or alternative perspective[s] on the topic of an utterance'(2017, p.133), to be classified as deliberate according to DMIP, a metaphor must 'not only be identified as a source-domain *word* at the linguistic level of utterance meaning and consequently as a source-domain *concept* at the conceptual level, but it also has to set up a source domain *referent* in the state of affairs designated by the utterance', where referential meaning relates to 'the persons, things, actions, or events in the (text) world that the words refer to' (2017, p.134). In other words, are the potentially

deliberate metaphorical words under analysis part of the referential meaning? Is it intended that they bring with them a new perspective? This approach, when it comes to Mallo's metaphors, is begging the question—it is only after source and target have been decided by the reader that words and phrases become referential in that way.

Littlemore (2020) draws attention to Devylder and Zlatev's (2020) definition of metaphor as

> A (simple or complex) sign in a semiotic system or combination of systems, with:
>
> a) at least two different potential interpretations;
> b) standing in an iconic relationship with each other, where
> c) one interpretation is more relevant in the communicative context, and
> d) can be understood in part by comparison with the less relevant interpretation.

This definition, Littlemore argues, allows metaphor scholars to focus on the metaphoric language that is used, rather than getting bogged down in the 'potential conceptual frameworks underpinning these metaphors' (2020, p.4).

Any definition of metaphor, however, that begins at the level of words, does not account for Mallo's metaphors—it is only through the active engagement of the reader in constructing conceptual structures that Mallo's network of metaphors is revealed, and individual words and phrases are imbued with metaphorical meaning that, until that moment, existed only in potentia.

Metaphor Classifications

Creative metaphor: It would seem obvious, on the face of it, that Mallo's metaphors could be classified, at the very least, as *creative*—the *Nocilla Trilogy* as a whole was lauded as an innovative work, that revitalised the Spanish literary landscape.

Lakoff and Turner define metaphorical creativity in literature as elaboration, extension, questioning, and combining of pre-existing, conventionalised metaphors. To this, Kövecses (2010) adds the role of context. A scene that is intended to be a source domain for a target beyond the context described, or beyond the text itself, can be described quite literally, for example. Such source domains pose the question, 'what am I for?'. The reader ultimately knows to apply such source domains to a particular target domain with reference to cues within the text. Kovecses gives the example of Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*, in which the poet describes what can be seen from a beachside house. It is only with the fourteenth line ('and bring/ the eternal note of sadness in') that it becomes clear that the scene is a metaphor for sadness.

The forms of metaphorical creativity defined by Lakoff, Turner, and Kövecses, however, take place after the fact—once source and target have been specified, either by the writer, explicitly, or ascertained by the reader with attention paid to context provided by the writer. Though contextual elements play a role in how metaphors should be extracted from *Nocilla Trilogy* (that without metaphorical connections the trilogy borders on senseless, for one, Mallo's *3AM* interview, for another) these elements do not elucidate the matter of what elements should be used as a source, or what should be used as target.

The metaphors in Mallo's network spring, ultimately, from the reader. What is to stop a reader extracting highly conventionalised metaphors from the text? Would doing so mean that Mallo's network of metaphors (the curated input spaces he proffers, the selection of potential source and target domains) should also be classified as conventional? How to judge

the creativity (or lack thereof) of such a network?

Invisible metaphor: Stockwell notes that a metaphor is 'invisible' when one of the 'metaphoric domains to be mapped', usually the target domain, 'has no explicit surface linguistic token' (Stockwell, 2015, p.60). In order to parse such metaphors, the reader must draw on their metaphoric competencies—their powers of inference, their knowledge of the text as a whole, their knowledge of the world. Invisible metaphors, whilst drawing on the reader's metaphoric competency in much the same way as Mallo's metaphors, differ in that, although the target domain is absented from the text, it has been specified in advance by the writer—it exists, just not explicitly on the page.

Megametaphor: Stockwell (2020, p.127) also writes of megametaphors. These occur when numerous micrometaphors with congruent cognitive structures are spread across a text. Stockwell gives the example of Shakespeare's *Richard II,* throughout which multiple micrometaphors occur that are built around the idea of balance. These metaphors include notions of rising up, of falling, of heat and cold, and of equal and opposite movements, and are accompanied by micrometaphors relating to moral worth, power and legitimacy. Together, this coalition of micrometaphors coalesce into the megametaphor of *political fortune is balance*, which is applied to the rise of Bolingbroke, and the fall of Richard II. Understanding these *megametaphors* depends on a readerly process of macrostructural representation.

Though Mallo's network of metaphors rely on congruence of cognitive models, on matching features across generic spaces, these do not readily coalesce into one or more designated *megametaphors,* but rather coalesce around their *potential* to be combined, given their congruence, given the generic spaces that spring up between them, into metaphors that are, ultimately, of the reader's choosing.

(Intentional) non-intentional metaphor: McGonigal notes that we should acknowledge the existence of non-intentional metaphors in the sense of 'sentences or utterances that we can intelligibly or usefully treat as if they were metaphors', giving the example of William Burroughs' fragmentary cut-up technique as a method by which writers 'can intentionally bring about such non-intentional metaphors', 'through the curation of 'often suggestive sentences' (2002, p.2).

This classification does get us closer to Mallo's network of metaphors, insofar as it captures Mallo's intention to create metaphors, but also that the final form of these metaphors is under-specified, defined by indeterminacy, and that it is through readerly operations that their final form is realised (an indeterminacy which is, I would say, distinct from, and qualitatively different to, the indeterminacy and opportunity for subjective interpretation that comes baked into all metaphors, literary or not).

McGonigal's (Intentional) non-intentional metaphors, however, do not account for the very thing that makes Mallo's sentences or fragments suggestive. That is, again, the very thing that defines them as potentially metaphoric—the generic space, which also feeds into the reader's decision making in terms of how they might be intelligibly used or treated as metaphors. As such, they do not capture the nature and extent of the intentionality on display in Mallo's network of metaphors.

Half-Built, Half-Deliberate?

Mallo's network of metaphors, along with all such metaphors that embody the same kind of indeterminacy of source and target domain, seem to fall between the cracks of existing metaphor identification procedures and classifications—what, then, are they?

I would like, here, to suggest the label of **half-built, half deliberate**. Half-built in that we are presented with a selection of input spaces, curated in such a way that generic spaces spring up in the gaps between them, and motivated to combine them, but not told what the end product, the resulting metaphor, should look like. Half-deliberate in that, as with deliberate metaphor, the reader must 'pay distinct attention to the source domain[108] as a separate domain of reference' (Steen, 2017, p.2). Half-deliberate in that lexical disambiguation processes alone, as with deliberate metaphors, do not have the power to deliver us metaphoric meaning, as they necessitate that cross-domain mappings are established. Unlike with deliberate metaphors, however, our attention is not drawn to any particular source domain referent. The reader has the freedom to choose their referent—this choice is, of course, constrained by the deliberately deployed generic spaces, and one that might not be made consciously, but it is a choice nonetheless.

One obvious objection to this new classification is that it is an anomaly. We have, in a sample size of two, Mallo's *Nocilla Trilogy* (a strange piece of work indeed) and yours truly's *Wallpaper*—a text influenced, at least a little, by the *Nocilla Trilogy* (although I hasten to add that many of the metaphors in *Wallpaper* that I draw on as evidence in this chapter were conceived of before I had begun reading it). I would suggest, however, that half built, half-deliberate metaphors are a feature of, rather than anomaly in, literature.

Mallo, of course, deploys them (without naming them as such) consciously. They are, as I have suggested, the structuring principle of the *Nocilla Trilogy*. What of less consciously deployed half built, half-deliberate metaphors, of the kind present in *Wallpaper*, and to which I draw attention page 285 and 286? It did not feel as though I was doing anything out of the ordinary, anything special, in the committing of these to page.

As McGonigal states, 'typically metaphors spring to mind with a rather vague feeling of aptness' (2002, p.10). It seems reasonable to me to assume that writers other than myself might experience this vague feeling of aptness, and subsequently commit an object, situation, or concept to page without a strong sense of what it might become a source or target domain for, what the resulting metaphor might be in its totality. Such a feeling, I would argue, comes from an almost unconscious figuring of the generic space—the structural commonalities that might be shared with aspects of the rest of the text, with its themes, characters, or argument.

It is, as I have found, difficult to find evidence of writers admitting to such a practice. Perhaps it is an example of bad writing. Either way, it is not something that is commonly spoken about, and I can see why—in exposing the half-baked nature of some of *Wallpaper's* metaphors I felt like I was offering tickets to a behind the scenes version of a magic show that had, in its standard, 'normal' iteration, struggled to entice audiences; like I had stripped back wallpaper and plaster to reveal uneven brickwork, crumbling mortar, damp slowly spreading.

An area for further investigation, perhaps, In the meantime, feel free to share your thoughts below:

---

[108] Once the source domain has been designated as such by the reader.

1) Does the notion of half-built, half deliberate metaphor reflect aspects of your experience of committing metaphor to page?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

2) If not, why not?

3) If yes, how?

Another objection would be, *so what?*

Over the following two sub-chapters, I intend to demonstrate what the implications of half-built, half-deliberate metaphors are, both for metaphor theory and its understanding/ modelling of creativity more generally, and for readers who encounter them.

A Hitherto Unmapped Source of Creativity

Fauconnier and Turner, in noting the main three ways that the blended space is developed (composition, completion and elaboration), suggest that completion and elaboration, being open-ended, are what imbue blends with creativity (2002, p.49). Composition, as a process that is dependent on its inputs, is not associated with creativity, and the generic space is likewise not regarded as a plane on which creativity occurs—it is merely the precursor to creativity, a capturing of the structure that is shared across inputs.

The existence of half-built, half deliberate metaphors calls this into question—what is creative about Mallo's metaphors, and other such half-built, half deliberate metaphors (from the perspective of the writer) is the way in which they foster a generic space that facilitates the completion of blends, the formation of complete metaphors. It is left to the reader to engage in completion and elaboration. For blending theory to fully account for half-built, half-deliberate metaphors, the formation of generic spaces, the deploying of input spaces in such a way that generic spaces spring up between them, needs to be regarded in and of itself as a potentially creative act.

If blending theory can be said to be a model of creativity, then I would suggest that half-built, half deliberate metaphors can be said to resemble the early stages of the creative process—the stage when, for a writer, for example, every environmental input, every overheard conversation, half-understood philosophical theory or fleeting thought has the potential to make it into their next work. That is certainly how I write, anyway, cutting and pasting from innumerable sources, writing a phrase here, a paragraph there, little more than a 'vague feeling of aptness' (McGonigal, 2002, p.10) connecting each fragment. The pages, in those early days, lurid with colour coding schemes dreamed up half-heartedly and abandoned, replete with snippets of this, snippets of that—fragments of fiction and non-fiction shoulder to shoulder, awkward in mismatched fonts.

That is how *Wallpaper* started life. Its shape only developed as links between these fragments, as congruent cognitive structures, were teased out, made explicit; as connective tissue grew between the fragments; as fragments folded into, and blended with, one another. I suggest that regarding the formation of generic spaces as a creative act in its own right might lead to insights into this stage of the creative process, into how generic spaces, brimming with potential and promise, form in the gaps, and into the kind of collaborations that results—into how readers, faced with seemingly disconnected inputs, engage in completion and

elaboration to extract meaning, the writer having absented themselves (or having been otherwise absented[109]), seemingly in the middle of the act of writing[110].

[109] Something about the running app, its overlaying and blending of worlds, made John turn again to Su's writings:

_____
_____ *is ~~like~~ the wind through no one's hair, an un-tousled and distant carpark.*

Nothing that John could think of was *like* this, but something had changed. Rather than representing an inability to know Su now she was gone, these gaps felt like opportunities:

*The whole thing (*_____
_____
_____
_____*)*
is like how the sun, unfathomable in scale out there,
is turned to shadow by a mere blade of grass right here.

It felt exhilarating, like discovering a new limb of Su's, alive despite the rest of her—alive with what had made her *Su*.

[110] It is beyond the scope of *Wallpaper* to flesh out how this approach might apply to forms beyond literature. I will, then, leave two words dangling—*curation* and *collage.*

Satiated by Fragments

As we have seen, Reddy (1979) argued (see page 77) that the conduit metaphor (IDEAS are OBJECTS, LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS are CONTAINERS and COMMUNICATION is SENDING) is the cause of a semantic pathology in the way we think about knowledge and information, engendering the idea that meaning and ideas exist *in* words, and disguising the role of the individual in constructing and synthesising meaning, in imposing a hierarchy. Our digital and analogue repositories of information are, minute by minute, swelling. Thinking about this information in terms of the conduit metaphor's logic (ideas can be found *in* words, which can be found *in* the library on the internet) leads us to the (perhaps mistaken) conclusion that we are more culturally informed than ever.

Echoing this sentiment, Mallo remarks that where 'we used to write from knowledge...we [now]write from information, where "knowledge" denotes hierarchically organized, strongly socialised content, which is supposed to affect individual self-consciousness. "Information" denotes non-hierarchically organized data that can be 'mined' from reality for a specific purpose, not necessarily reflecting or affecting the personality of the individuals who are using the information.' (Sierra, no date). David Foster Wallace likewise saw the modern world as existing in a state of 'total noise', our felt reality as a tsunami of facts context and spin, mediated by the sheer amount of media available to us. Successful non-fiction, he suggested, provides a framework for how this noise could be 'arranged in meaningful ways' (2007, p.2).

In *Reality Hunger*, Shields argues that, in light of this massed information, fragmentary literature better represents reality. Traditional forms, such as the novel, are no longer fulfilling their purpose—they are too 'coherent and fathomable', and as such do not embody the complexity and fragmentation of reality, of what it is like to be alive in a world which 'flies at us in bright splinters'. As a result of this, as writing strives to reflect reality, it becomes more fragmented. 'Our lives aren't prepackaged along narrative lines and, therefore, by its very nature, reality-based art—underprocessed, underproduced—splinters and explodes.' (2010, p.113). Fragmentation, then, as reflection, as honesty—as satisfying a hunger for reality that goes unsated by traditional forms. It is fitting, then that much of the academic literature on fragmented texts emphasises its capacity to reflect the modern world as it is experienced[111].

Half-built, half-deliberate metaphors, as we have seen, thrive on fragmentation—on the erasure of connective tissue, of referential signposts. What does metaphor theory tell us about what these metaphors do for the reader when deployed?

If fragmentation in literature serves to reflect a reality that is, year on year, more fractured, more fragmented, and if we consider life as a series of input spaces, then the range of possible input spaces is growing, and the need to flit between them increasing—there is just more information *out there*. In reflecting this, can we argue that half-built, half-deliberate metaphors play a part in satisfying readers' reality hunger?

In completing these metaphors (having been urged to do so by our allegorical impulse) we could argue that these fragments have been made whole—'human-scale

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[111] Fragmented literature is 'particularly suited to represent the chaos and contingency of reality (Chol, 2004, p.7), and is a symptom of 'keeping pace with these shifting times' (Bastian, 2011).

understanding' has been forged from the mess and the 'total noise' has been, for a time, tempered. We could, then, further argue that the reader, in imposing their own hierarchies and understanding on the text, has, for a time, rid themselves of the conduit metaphor's dominating semantic pathology—of the idea, engendered in the very way we talk, that knowledge is just out there to be found[112].

[112] A whole world incomplete. A world of internet tabs part-digested, of buildings never entered, of romances never completed, of…

What Su meant wasn't *in* her words. Su wasn't *in* her words.

(This struck John as revelatory at the time, obvious in retrospect.)

In fact, it wasn't even that her words in and of themselves could be synthesized, interpreted—it was bigger than that.

A whole world, all of it, incomplete. Cities seen only from the air, cities only seen from the ground.

Incomplete memories that would only tend further that way, some of them to nothing.

Su had left him with these fragments. Crumbs of herself. Intentionally incomplete poetry, half-built, or else completed and deconstructed with intentionality.

A whole, incomplete world.

(A phrase came to him—*ruin value*. Something he had read? Overheard? What did it mean?)

But in the incompleteness of Su's words—a model, a way, barely glimpsable, forward.

To completeness? No, not quite.

The potential of gaps. But it's not like you could just fill in the gaps with any old thing. There were rules, or guidelines rather—he understood that. The gaps were the guidelines, the associations that sprang up in them.

A man and a woman running the same route, years apart.

A hermit, a neutrino (why had those words come into his head?)

The potential that common characteristics across time, across *everything*, represented.

Common characteristics that, once realised, birthed newness. New insights, new constructs, new meaning.

A newness that respected its sources, could be unpacked and traced back to them, that remained, in a sense, true to them.

A newness that remained, in spite of itself, true to Sue, to who she was, to him.

And the idea didn't seem all that grand. It felt, in itself, incomplete. But that was fine, right? It didn't need to be grand, or complete. The revelations would come, maybe, just maybe, in the gaps.

Coda

So what is so great about fragmentation that its worth sacrificing immersion for 22:04

It depends on the writer I suppose 22:05

But in general I think it's a way of reflecting reality, especially in the digital age 22:05

And literary fiction often places immersion on a lower pedestal than other things 22:06

And immersion is looked down upon, as well, I think. My personal opinion is that's because scholars don't understand how it works, and so have to look down on it to justify their ignoring of it 22:07

You can list and interpret all the illusions in James Joyce, but it's much more difficult to describe how a book becomes real in your head 22:08

Beginnings

Downstairs, in Su's duplex flat, a week after John and Su had first met, the party sauntered on. Upstairs, their bodies close, closer than they had ever been, but clothed, still, bumping tentatively against each other beneath the covers, like one politeness interrupting another.

John had sat and looked at her in awe, leaning in closer as she spoke at length about language, about how the world is a different place to people who speak French, Wajarri, BSL...any language different from our own, in fact, precisely because of how much language shapes thought, our perceptions, our experience of being alive. She spoke of the jealousy she felt for people who were truly bilingual, because, as she imagined it, with a flick of a cognitive switch, they could see things as if anew, could see a different way of approaching a problem just through thinking about it in their second tongue. Did they all know that people experience time differently because of their language? That for some the past is in front, and the future behind? John did not.

'You might be in front of me now,' she said, pointing to John, who was by now sitting quite literally on the edge of his seat. And then, gesturing behind her, 'but you weren't in my past. My future?' She turned to look behind her, and shrugged. 'Who knows.'

Anglerfish, John thought, because he'd been thinking about them a lot lately, having seen a documentary about them on television, and now he was wondering what their language would be like, and so how they would think, given the brain and half an opportunity, but he bit his tongue, as he did each and every time he had strange thoughts like this. Su smiled, and winked at him (god she was beautiful), pretending to hide her face behind her drink as she did so.

But now they were alone, and her mouth tasted sweet, and his hand was under her dress and firm against her skin and moving down.

'I need to show you something,' she said. And suddenly it seemed like there was far too much at stake.

John's hand no longer firm but unsure and hovering, poised millimetres from her skin. Then lightly stroking it, then hovering, then stroking weirdly again, such was his sudden uncertainty and trembling. What did she mean she had something to show him and what did it mean for his hand and its halted trajectory? He couldn't just keep it there, trembling and brushing her skin involuntarily and creepily, but did, and hoped that what was for him a protracted moment full of tension and doubt was, for her, a fleeting thing, but then she took his hand in hers and squeezed it tight and said 'later' in a way that made him realise what the word sultry meant.

Why had she said that, and why had she said it now? She had not meant to, and she had nothing to show him, but she had said it, and already the nice boy was propping himself up against the headboard, looking truly attentive and only a little disappointed. The nice boy was hiding it well and being really and truly attentive, although nice wasn't the right word, and he'd been quietly (but oh so very obviously) insulted when she described him that way, on their first date. He *was* nice, though, but not boring in the slightest, not exactly. It just took him so long to say anything, and when he did eventually speak he spoke uncertainly, slowly, and any thought that began promisingly had a habit of trailing off, as though ashamed of its shape once transmuted into words, as though the words were themselves an undressing, a taking off of clothes in a well-lit room. Maybe he wasn't *nice*, not exactly, but she didn't know what other words applied, she didn't really know who he was or what he could be to her yet. Maybe that's why she had stopped him—she could not see how they could work together, the role that he could possibly play in her life. But, you know what? In for a penny, in for a pound, in sickness and in—fuck it.

‘Never mind. I can show you later.’

Endings

‘I’m not saying that the ground, the whole world, isn’t going to drop from under you, John. I’m not denying that. Frankly I’d be a little insulted if it didn’t. Let’s say that the ground falls from under you, the floor just drops the moment I’m gone. I get it. And so let’s say the ground drops because the foundations have crumbled, because why else would it drop? The foundations like sandcastles when the sun has baked them dry, without shape or integrity. And wouldn’t that mean that everything it’s built on, the whole damn house, is going to come down with it?’

John looked hurt. What was she doing? Where was she going with this? Even the dying had the normal responsibilities when it came to comforting their loved ones.

‘But anyway, the whole construct, the whole house, crashing down, and so the sky suddenly opening up. Not just a window of opportunity, but the whole sky, clear blue or at least it will become that way. A whole damn sky. A sunrise, actually, because why the hell not.

‘…’

‘What I’m saying is if you extend the metaphor, follow its logic…’

‘…’

‘What I’m really saying is that life goes on. You will survive without me, and my leaving is a new chapter. A fucking difficult one to piece together I’m sure, but it’s new, and that’s something.’

‘I don’t want you to die.’

‘And I don’t want to die either.’

‘I love you.’

‘And I love you.’

‘I love you so much, Su.’

‘My love will always be with you, John. I promise. Through thick and through thin.’

Poem Not Found—the Paper it was Written on Mistaken for Scrap by John and Discarded

A: *It's like*_____
_____.

B: *Yeah, it's like that. You've really nailed it, there. I couldn't put it into words, I didn't feel like I understood it at all, but I sure as hell do now. One suggestion, though.*

A: *What's that?*

B: *Drop the 'like'. It works even better as a metaphor than a simile, I think.*

C: *Hey guys, are you talking about* _____*?*

A: *No, not really. We are talking about something that is like that.*

C: *Like how* _____*?*

A: *Yes, like that.*

C: *You're coming up with Similes?*

B: *Yes, well, metaphors. We've decided to drop the 'like'.*

C: *How many have you got so far?*

B: *Just the one. This is the only one that works, so far.*

A: *It's spot on.*

B: *It really is.*

A: *So apt.*

C: *What is your simile, or metaphor or whatever, a metaphor for?*

A: *That's the rub—there isn't a word for the thing itself, and it's impossible to describe what this thing is without metaphor. And you haven't experienced this thing, and my god, we hope and pray that you never do.*

B: *And this is the only metaphor that fits.*

A: *This is the only one.*

C: *So far?*

B: *We don't know.*

A: *Perhaps.*

B: *It could be the only one.*

A: *And why would we bother thinking of any more when this one hits the nail on the head?*

B: *Why indeed.*

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