

## APTNES AND TRUTH IN VERBAL METAPHOR

### I. JULIET IS THE SUN

1. Imagine if you will (and if you can) an actual Romeo, newly in love with an actual Juliet. From a hiding place somewhere in the broad shadow of Capulet's garden wall, you overhear this actual Romeo actually mutter to himself the following words:

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.  
 But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?  
 It is the east and Juliet is the sun!  
 Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon  
 Who is already sick and pale with grief  
 That thou her maid art far more fair than she.  
 Be not her maid since she is envious,  
 Her vestal livery is but sick and green  
 And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.  
 It is my lady, O it is my love!  
 O that she knew she were!...<sup>1</sup>

*Juliet is the sun.* Suppose you grant that these particular words of Romeo's are apt and even eloquent: in at least one sense, Romeo has spoken well. You may grant me this even if you consider Romeo's words regrettable from other, weightier points of view—even if you think that by various weightier standards, Romeo has spoken ill.

Perhaps you disapprove of Romeo's words because you disapprove of the grand and sudden passion for Capulet's young daughter these words express. You may think (with Romeo himself) that love between enemies is unlucky and perilous:

Is she a Capulet?  
 O dear account. My life is my foe's debt.<sup>2</sup>

You may think (with Juliet at first) that such love has something perverse and monstrous and misbegotten about it:

Prodigious birth of love it is to me  
 That I must love a loathed enemy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: Methuen, 1980), II, ii, 1-11.

<sup>2</sup> I, v, 116-117.

<sup>3</sup> I, v, 139-140.

("Prodigious birth" being, I take it, the birth of a deformed child.) You may think (with Friar Laurence) that Romeo's affections are fickle and flighty and vain:

Holy Saint Francis! What a change is here!  
Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear,  
So soon forsaken?...<sup>4</sup>

You may think (with Plato) that Juliet is an unworthy object for such intense devotion because she is a mere human being, human beings are "nothing much," and a better, brighter, more lovable sun is available elsewhere, in the form of the Form of the Good. Or you may think (with the Nurse) that Juliet would be better off with Paris.

Whatever your attitude to the very idea of Romeo's loving Juliet, you may disapprove of Romeo's words because you disapprove of what Romeo is doing to himself, the spell he is casting over himself, by muttering these words. From the rest of his speech it would appear that Romeo is still talking himself out of his old love for what's-her-name, the fast-fading Rosaline, that "envious moon." So perhaps he is still talking himself into his new love for Juliet as well. Words like Romeo's don't merely serve to express love; they also serve to make it—confirming and transforming love's grip on the lover who dares to employ such language, even with himself. Perhaps you believe that a love one makes by submitting to a complex regimen of verbal self-hypnosis can never be made well—is bound to prove frail or deluded or insincere.<sup>5</sup>

Yet an overall disapproval of Romeo's speech is compatible with acknowledging the felicity, the appositeness, the *aptness* of Romeo's words.

2. The word "apt" needs careful stationing if it is to stably mean what I want it to mean here. It is one of our most general and versatile adjectives of assessment, only a little more specialized in its powers than "fine," "suitable," "appropriate," or that notorious jack-of-all-evaluative-trades, the word "good." When I call Romeo's utterance apt, I don't mean that it is concise and accurate and pertinent (an apt description of the girl Juliet), nor do I mean that it is candid and revealing (an apt expression of Romeo's state of mind), nor do I mean that it is an effective rhetorical means to some self-persuasive end Romeo has set for himself (an apt choice of words

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<sup>4</sup> II, iii, 61ff. See also, in reference to Juliet this time, II, vi, 16-20.

<sup>5</sup> The classic statement of this worry is Tolstoy's discussion of counterfeit art and fraudulent feeling in his *What is Art?* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1995). See esp. Tolstoy's complaints about the complex hypnosis practiced by Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony, chap. 16, 137.

on Romeo's part). Romeo's utterance may in fact *be* apt in all these other ways or senses. These other kinds of aptness may all sometimes figure in and help to constitute the kind of aptness I have in mind. Yet each of them is what it is and my kind of aptness is something else.

At this point it may seem that in calling an utterance apt I mean that the utterance is appropriate or fitting or as it should be in some extremely inclusive and colorless sense. Yet that isn't my intention. For one thing I don't think values can always be weighed against each other and aggregated with one another in the manner demanded by a unitary concept of all-things-considered appropriateness. I therefore believe there is no such thing as all-things-considered appropriateness. For another, I don't see why people who regret Romeo's remark for any of the reasons just scouted should believe that their reasons for regretting it detract from its aptness even in the slightest.

When I call Romeo's utterance apt, I mean that it possesses some degree of poetic power. Such power has many *determinants*: many different features of an utterance can make for or contribute to its poetic power in many different, perfectly comprehensible ways. Yet poetic power as I understand it is something for which there are no *standards*. You discern such power by feeling it, by being subject to it, by taking pleasure in it—not by toting up features of an utterance that automatically or reliably make for its presence. As Emily Dickinson put it:

If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold  
no fire ever can warm me,  
that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head  
were taken off, I know  
that is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way?<sup>6</sup>

In finding Romeo's words apt, we express a pleasure we take in them, a pleasure we take in their running as they do. And we commend the words to others, implying that others can and should share our pleasure in the way they run. We can be pleased by words in the manner pertinent to finding them apt without as yet knowing what it is about the words that pleases us. And the claim that others can and should share this pleasure of ours may at first be based on little more than the pleasure itself as it occurs in us. In particular, we can and sometimes do find an utterance apt without as yet knowing what's apt about it, what makes it apt.

We don't find particular people and gestures and artifacts graceful by acquiring and then applying an appropriate set of general standards for gracefulness. We do so

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<sup>6</sup> In conversation with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1870. See his "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly* 68 (1891): 444-56. An accessible abridgement is in Robert N. Linscott, ed., *Selected Poems and Letters of Emily Dickinson* (New York: Anchor, 1959), 5-24.

by cultivating and then exploiting a general susceptibility to the gracefulness of things. What this susceptibility involves is a question of some delicacy, but at its heart is a capacity to take pleasure in the gracefulness of graceful things. Aptness—what I intend to mean by the word “aptness”—is like gracefulness in these respects. Aptness is a specialized kind of beauty attaching to interpreted forms of words, and a finding of aptness is a specialized kind of aesthetic judgment. For a form of words to be apt is for it—the form of words itself, occurring where it does and meaning what it does where it occurs—to be the proper object of a certain kind of felt satisfaction on the part of the audience to which it is addressed.<sup>7</sup> We detect the proper objects of this kind of felt satisfaction by training ourselves to take it when and where it is actually called for. We detect the aptness of apt language by developing and then exploiting a general susceptibility to it, a general capacity to take pleasure in it. Is there any other way?

3. We can appreciate and enjoy the aptness of words, appreciate and enjoy words for their aptness, even if we wish the words had never been spoken. Aptness isn't everything, and it is seldom the main thing, however natural it may be to wish that there were more of it around. It is one value among others. What kind of value is it, and how does it relate to the other things we prize in human thought, human action, human speech?

In particular, how does the aptness of Romeo's words relate to their *content*? And while we're at it, what is their content? To what effect has Romeo spoken—what, if anything, has he said? If he has said something, is that something true or false or both or neither? Has Romeo spoken not just well but *truly*? Truth isn't everything, any more than aptness is. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth isn't a sensible goal of human inquiry—and inquiry isn't everything, either. We may have far more urgent and rewarding things to do with Romeo's words than assign them a truth value. But to fully understand or fully assess any use of words, we need to understand what the words, so used, amount to—we need to grasp the significance accruing to the words in question under the circumstances in question.<sup>8</sup> When words take the

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<sup>7</sup> One important consequence of this account: an admittedly valuable feature of an utterance can figure as such in the utterance's aptness only if it is one the audience for the utterance should be able to detect and should be able to prize then and there, on the spot.

<sup>8</sup> By this I mean the content the words themselves take on in a given context of use, as opposed to the content the act of using them takes on. The latter can include things the former doesn't, as is shown by the phenomenon of conversational implicature, and the former can include things the latter

form of a declarative sentence, what they amount to is commonly a matter of what the sentence, so used, manages to state. And what a declarative sentence states (when used in a particular way under particular circumstances) is a matter of what would make the sentence (used in just that way under just those circumstances) come out true. Therefore, *what would make Romeo's utterance come out true* matters deeply to us as listeners and appreciators, even when its actual truth value is neither here nor there for us.

Now the sun is one thing and Juliet is another. The former is 93 million miles away; the latter is barely out of earshot. The former is some several billions of years old; the latter will be fourteen come Lammas Eve at night.<sup>9</sup> But it is hard to feel that such commonplace observations as these dispose of the questions I just asked. As spoken by Romeo in Capulet's garden, Romeo's words don't ask us to believe that the sun deserts its place in the heavens each night to walk among us in the guise of a human girl. Nor do they ask us to believe that Juliet, like some virtuous vampire, deserts her place in the Capulet household each day before dawn because her services will soon be needed elsewhere. In brief, Romeo's words aren't to be taken *literally*.

Nevertheless, Romeo's words do manage to formulate a serious and potentially controversial thought—one you may affirm or deny, believe or refuse to believe, depending on what you happen to think of Capulet's young daughter (and, perhaps, on what you happen to think of Montague's young son). Confronted with the words "Juliet is the sun," you may seriously ask yourself: *Is she, now?* On further reflection you may seriously answer your own question: *She certainly is*, or *Like heck she is*, as the case may be. Romeo is manifestly sincere and manifestly careful in his choice of words; he shows every sign of believing and intending to assert the thought his words manage to formulate. This thought is really about Juliet in a way it isn't really about the sun. You may consider it blasphemously false and therefore bad religion, but it isn't bad astronomy. What is this thought? How else can we put it?

A companion asks you how you do take these words of Romeo's, given that you don't take them literally. You reply that you take or construe or understand them *metaphorically*, take or construe or understand them *as a metaphor*.

Pressed to be more specific, you offer a *paraphrase*, perhaps along the lines of this famous specimen by Stanley Cavell:

I understand by Romeo's words "that Juliet is the warmth of his world; that his day begins with her; that only in her nourishment can he grow. And his

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doesn't, as is shown by contexts where we are understood to be speaking loosely.

<sup>9</sup> So the Nurse tells us, at I, iii, 17.

declaration suggests that the moon, which other lovers use as an emblem of their love, is merely her reflected light, and dead in comparison; and so on.”<sup>10</sup>

Such an explanation presents itself as a partial and approximate restatement of the thought Romeo’s words formulate for us—a partial and approximate restatement of what you’d be wondering if you asked *Is she now?*, what you’d be affirming if you said *She certainly is*, what you’d be denying if you said *Like heck she is*. For the moment, two observations.

First, Cavell’s paraphrase is admittedly only partial, admittedly only approximate. As its propounder is the first to insist, it doesn’t go as far as it could, and it could be made more precise, more nuanced, more fussy even as far as it goes. Ambitious paraphrases of ambitious metaphors seldom aspire to exhaustiveness or definitiveness of any kind; they live on intimate terms with qualifiers like “roughly” and “and so on.” They present themselves (typically) as no more than suggestive *samples* of what *could* be offered by way of restatement. They thus acknowledge what Cavell, following Empson, calls “the ‘pregnancy’ of metaphors, the burgeoning of meaning in them.”<sup>11</sup>

Second, Cavell’s paraphrase isn’t a *literal* restatement of Romeo’s metaphor; it isn’t a translation from metaphorese into literalese. On the contrary, it explains Romeo’s metaphorical sun talk in terms of its own metaphorical talk of warmth and nourishment and days about to begin, hoping as it does so that its metaphors will go down more easily than Romeo’s own. If you were deaf to metaphor across the board, you’d be deaf to paraphrases such as this. Ambitious paraphrases of ambitious metaphors routinely resort to metaphors of their own, perhaps out of semantic need, perhaps out of pedagogical tact. Asked by a young man to be more explicit, Marianne Moore replied, “One can only be as explicit as one’s natural reticence allows one to be.”<sup>12</sup>

Pressed, however, to be still more specific about how you understand Romeo’s words, and overcoming your natural reticence as best you can, you have various options. Let me distinguish four of them.

You might simply continue your paraphrase past the “and so on” that brought it to a temporary halt. For instance, Ted Cohen would add “that Juliet is the brightest thing

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley Cavell, “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy,” in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 73-96. The quotation is from 78-79.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Richard Poirier, *The Performing Self: Compositions and Decompositions in the Languages of Contemporary Life* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 3.

[Romeo] knows, that everything else is lit by her presence, that [he is] inevitably drawn to her although [he] knows this to be dangerous,” and so on. Lynne Tirrell would add that Juliet is “dazzling,” “the center of Romeo’s world,” and so on.<sup>13</sup>

You might get a bit more fussy, reworking and refining the internal structure of your paraphrase. As the wider verbal context makes clear, Juliet is being likened to the rising sun. So perhaps you should be talking not about what Juliet already is but about what she promises to become. And to work out what *that* is, you might decide to meditate more systematically on what the actual sun actually does for creatures here on earth. For openers, you might recall that the sun is a source of physical comfort (think of how it warms), a source of energy and vitality (think of how it nourishes plants and awakens animals), a source of lucidity (think of how it renders things visible by bathing them in light).

I understand by Romeo’s words that Juliet is worthy to be and about to become the source of whatever emotional comfort, whatever vitality, whatever clarity Romeo’s life will contain from here on out.... and so on.

This may be more accurate than Cavell’s paraphrase, but it is also drier and less suggestive. Fussiness has its price.

You might wrap the paraphrase you’ve already offered in a commentary, indicating how and how seriously your companion should take each of its components—playing up one, playing down another, putting a special spin on a third. Such spin control is easy to manage and easy to tolerate in face-to-face conversation, but writers and their readers have a harder time with it. Being a clumsy spin doctor myself, I won’t attempt to illustrate the tactic here.

4. Finally, you might offer what I’ll call a *motivating explanation*, an account of how Romeo’s metaphor is called for—how it is both elicited and warranted—by Romeo’s circumstances at the time of utterance. By how the metaphor is elicited, I mean how Romeo came in fact to utter it. By how the metaphor is warranted, I mean what makes it an apt thing to say under the circumstances. When aptness isn’t a happy accident, the circumstances that elicit a metaphor also serve to warrant it. These circumstances typically include both facts about the utterer’s internal state of mind and facts about his external environment. Speakers express themselves in metaphors, but so do the

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<sup>13</sup> For Cohen see “Notes on Metaphor,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34 (1975-76): 249-59, esp. 250. For Tirrell, see “Reductive and Nonreductive Simile Theories of Metaphor,” *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1991): 337-58, esp. 341. Tirrell’s “center of the world” suggestion comes out anachronistic unless the term “center” is rather carefully and narrowly explained: Romeo is no Copernican.

environments of speakers. Wallace Stevens put it nicely: “The poem is the cry of its occasion.”<sup>14</sup>

A motivating explanation of Romeo’s words might go more or less as follows:

Romeo’s previous infatuation with Rosaline was marked by listlessness, solitude, an aversion to light (especially daylight), and an eagerness to suffer out loud along time-honored, rhetorically conventional lines. Romeo was collecting the obligatory pangs of unrequited love, in much the way nineteenth-century German university students collected their obligatory dueling scars. Romeo’s friends and even Romeo himself tended to picture his infatuation as a form of blindness. Once or twice there were hints that this blindness was self-inflicted; more often it was pictured as the result of Rosaline’s having struck Romeo blind. Rosaline’s beauty, her fairness, was pictured by Romeo and his friends alike as a burning, destructive brightness.

Rosaline has since been outshone, of course. Since he first laid eyes on her, Romeo has found *Juliet* incomparably beautiful or fair. And he has tended to experience *her* fairness as some kind of unsurpassed and unsurpassable brightness. So far, not so different—as Friar Laurence would be quick to point out. But as Romeo now pictures things to himself, *Juliet’s* brightness, far from blinding him, renders the world around him more richly visible than it had been before; unlike her predecessor Rosaline, Juliet sheds a fresh, vivid, instructive light on the rest of Romeo’s world. This way of imaginatively experiencing Juliet, this way of fancying her, has already found expression in a string of memorable images:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear—  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows  
As yonder lady o’er her fellows shows...<sup>15</sup>

As we move from Capulet’s ball to Capulet’s garden, Romeo’s fancies about Juliet continue to change and develop. The lights to which he likened her earlier were decorative, dispensable luxury goods (gemstones, doves, torches)—things calculated to delight and instruct a passive spectator who might nevertheless get along perfectly well without them. But the sun doesn’t just delight and instruct; it nourishes. Those it nourishes (plants, in the first instance) would promptly sicken and die without its light. And the claim that Juliet is “too rich for use, for earth too dear” has been quietly

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<sup>14</sup> “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,” *Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 465-89. Sec. xii, line 1, 473.

<sup>15</sup> I, v, 51ff.



withdrawn: now nothing is too rich for use, nothing too dear for earth. Nothing is dearer than the sun, yet sun and earth are made for each other. Nothing is richer or more splendid than the sun, yet the sun is made to be used: plants drink in, soak up, metabolize its light. In muttering to himself “Juliet is the sun,” Romeo reconceives his desire for Juliet as a need. And he prepares himself inwardly to act on this new need of his.

5. Motivating explanation undertakes to display (some part of) what makes Romeo’s metaphor apt. It does so by portraying the metaphor as the cry of its occasion. So although aptness is a kind of verbal beauty, it isn’t an intrinsic feature of the words in which we discern it; it’s a matter of how these words fit their internal and external circumstances. Fair enough: not all beauty is intrinsic. Gracefulness is a form of beauty, yet gracefulness is often a richly relational affair. (If you need to be persuaded of this, look hard at some small bit of business by Keaton or Chaplin or Jacques Tati.) If there is such a thing as intrinsic verbal beauty at all, we must look for it elsewhere, in acoustic, phonetic, and quasimusical features of Romeo’s utterance. I suspect in fact that there is no such thing.<sup>16</sup> And although motivating explanation can display and convey a particular construal of the metaphor it explains, it doesn’t state that construal in explicit propositional form. In particular, it doesn’t attempt to restate a thought about Juliet formulated for us in the first place by means of Romeo’s words.

Paraphrase, on the other hand, does attempt to do just that. This claim of mine will be controversial on several levels. Some say metaphors can’t or shouldn’t be paraphrased at all. Some say that although paraphrasing metaphors is a perfectly possible, perfectly innocent practice, it is usually futile, missing the real point and power and interest of the language it undertakes to illuminate. Some say that although paraphrasing metaphors is a possible, appropriate, helpful mode of explanation, it doesn’t really *give the meaning* of the metaphor it explains—at least, not in the straightforward sense of restating something the paraphrased metaphor already means. Numerous accounts have been given of the relations that must obtain between a metaphor and its adequate paraphrase. Indeed, one of the most revealing ways to classify the established theories of metaphor is in terms of their differing accounts of the semantic status of adequate paraphrases. My restatement account is only one of several contenders.

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<sup>16</sup> You can look at words as words only by looking through them, at the corner of the world they undertake to describe or change, attending as you do so to the difference the words are striving to make in the look of that corner of the world. So far as I can tell, this is the only sense in which words are ever transparent.

For me, a paraphrase of Romeo's utterance undertakes to restate (approximately and in part) the *metaphorical content* of Romeo's utterance, the thought about Capulet's young daughter that Romeo's words serve to formulate when these words are taken metaphorically. And for me (as for many others before me) the content of a declarative utterance is a matter of what would make the utterance come out true. For me, then, paraphrase undertakes to display (approximately and in part) what would make Romeo's metaphor, taken precisely as a metaphor, come out true—in other words, what would make it come out *metaphorically true*.

This claim of mine is and should be controversial, but the beginnings of a case for it have already emerged. A metaphor like Romeo's doesn't merely offer a verbal gesture we can approve or deplore, applaud or boo—it sets forth an eminently debatable thought we can affirm or deny or question. The manner in which we express ourselves when we affirm or deny or question this thought—*she certainly is*, *like heck she is*, *is she now?*—indicates that Romeo's language manages to sets forth the thought in question precisely by having the thought in question as its meaning. Having expressed yourself in one of these ways, ask yourself, *what is this thought?* *What claim is it that I have just now affirmed or denied or questioned?* You'll find yourself paraphrasing Romeo's metaphor.

It's worth elaborating on this briefly. Davidson is famous for denying metaphorical content, metaphorical truth, and paraphrasability:

I agree with the view that metaphors cannot be paraphrased, but I think this is not because metaphors say something too novel for literal expression but because there is nothing there to paraphrase. Paraphrase... is appropriate to what is *said*: we try, in paraphrase, to say it another way. But if I am right, a metaphor doesn't say anything beyond its literal meaning (nor does its maker say anything, in using the metaphor, beyond the literal). This is not, of course, to deny that metaphor has a point, nor that this point can be brought out by using further words.<sup>17</sup>

As for what this point might be, Davidson tells us that “a metaphor makes us attend to a likeness, often a novel or surprising likeness, between two things.”<sup>18</sup> When asked for a paraphrase of a metaphor, “we imagine there is a content to be captured when all the while we are concentrating on what the metaphor makes us notice... But in fact there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we

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<sup>17</sup> Donald Davidson, “What Metaphors Mean,” in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 245-64. The paper was originally delivered and published in 1978. The quotation is from 246.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

are caused to notice is not propositional in character.”<sup>19</sup> According to Davidson, then, when I employ a metaphor that takes the form of a declarative sentence, I assert nothing—at least, nothing over and above what I would or could assert were I to employ these same words literally.

But framers of metaphors aren’t just praised for occasioning insight and blamed for sowing confusion; they are praised for informing us and blamed for misinforming us or disinforming us about particular matters of fact. Such speakers can be agreed with, disagreed with, questioned—where agreeing with, disagreeing with, or questioning *them* looks for all the world like agreeing with, disagreeing with, or questioning *what they assert* (albeit only metaphorically) by means of the words they use. Or if *assert* seems too strong a word, let’s speak of what they suggest or insinuate or otherwise give us to understand by means of their words. It is for this reason that metaphors can occasion charges of libel, perjury, false advertising, and the like. A sheer invitation to compare two things, no matter how scurrilous and no matter how deliberately misleading it may be, can’t be objectionable in these particular ways. Yet when Ruskin characterized Whistler as “asking two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face,” Whistler sued Ruskin for libel and was eventually awarded one farthing in damages.<sup>20</sup> No doubt the proceedings were aesthetically and morally wrongheaded in all sorts of ways. But they weren’t wrongheaded *because* they took a metaphor, taken precisely as a metaphor, to be potentially libelous.

Now there is often a distinction between what *my words* say as used by me and what *I* manage to say (e.g. what *I* manage to assert) by means of these words, so used. For instance, there are the various fascinating kinds of conversational implicature studied by Grice. By saying “Mr. X is punctual and has beautiful handwriting” in a letter of recommendation, Grice may imply—and thereby, after a fashion, assert—that Mr. X is no good at philosophy. So someone might admit that I can assert a proposition by means of metaphor (e.g. that Romeo can use “Juliet is the sun” to assert what Cavell says he asserts), without conceding that the proposition so asserted gets lodged in Romeo’s words as a special metaphorical content or sense. Grice took this view of the matter himself:

Examples like *You are the cream in my coffee* characteristically involve categorical falsity, so the contradictory of what the speaker has made as if to say will, strictly speaking, be a truism; so it cannot be *that* that the speaker is trying to get across. The most likely supposition is that the speaker is

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 262-63.

<sup>20</sup> A detailed account is given in Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v Ruskin* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

attributing to his audience some feature or features in respect of which the audience resembles (more or less fancifully) the mentioned substance.<sup>21</sup>

We'll consider such proposals in detail later, proposals which relegate metaphor to the pragmatics of language use (Grice, Searle, Sperber & Wilson, etc.). But it is not too soon to press one important difficulty all such proposals face. I can certainly agree with, disagree with, or question you by agreeing with, disagreeing with, or questioning *what you use words to imply*. Yet we need to consider the specific verbal forms that agreement, disagreement, and questioning can plausibly take in different cases. In general, when I get one thing across by saying something else, my listener can't agree with, disagree with, or question *the thing I get across* by using the standard devices for assenting to, dissenting from, or challenging *the something else*—what my words actually (literally) say. If, for instance, I disagree with Grice about Mr. X's philosophical potential, I can't properly register my disagreement by countering

Mr. X is punctual and has beautiful handwriting

with

That's not so.

No he doesn't.

The heck he does.

Yet if I disagree with what one is naturally taken to assert by uttering *Juliet is the sun* or *She's the cream in my coffee*,

That's not so.

No she isn't.

The heck she is.

seem entirely in order. So it would appear that Romeo's meaning gets lodged in Romeo's words in a way that Grice's meaning (in the letter of recommendation example) never gets lodged in Grice's words. The words of Romeo's utterance, as used by him on a particular occasion, get taken so as to express a thought they wouldn't express if they were taken literally—one which may be true or false or indeterminate

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<sup>21</sup> H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," lectures given in 1967, as revised and published in his *Studies in the Ways of Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1-143. The quotation comes from 34, under heading (2a), "Cases in which the first maxim of Quality is flouted."

in its truth value, one to which we are free to respond in ways that are appropriate only to thoughts that speakers have actually put into words.

6. Whereas motivating explanation is oriented toward aptness, paraphrase is oriented toward truth. These two familiar modes of explanation address distinct yet interdependent dimensions in our understanding of metaphoric utterance. Motivating explanation explores the aesthetics of metaphor; paraphrase explores its semantics. Or so I shall contend.

Metaphor is at once fully aesthetic and fully semantic. It is fully aesthetic, in that its production calls for artistry and its understanding calls for taste. Without some minimal sensitivity to certain particular aesthetic values, we'd be deaf and dumb when it came to metaphor. Metaphor is fully semantic, in that it constitutes one of our most basic and indispensable strategies for equipping words and phrases with referents, equipping sentences with truth conditions, equipping utterances with speech act potentials, and so forth. If we were completely deaf and dumb when it came to metaphor in particular, we'd be as good as deaf and dumb across the board. Our possession of language, not just our enjoyment of it, would be disastrously compromised.

Far be it from me to endorse any simple, comforting equation between figurative beauty and figurative truth. (Don't take any wooden nickels from any Grecian Urns.) If by aesthetic success we mean something like *aptness* and by semantic success we mean something like *conveying a determinate, determinately true proposition*, then a metaphor is often an overall aesthetic success despite being an overall semantic failure, or vice versa. Barefaced lies, seductive errors, and self-deceptive muddles can stick to the mind like burrs precisely because the metaphors used to express them were so memorably, appealingly, appallingly apt. And we sometimes effectively convey a true belief by means of a metaphor that is undistinguished, uninteresting, ineffective in every other obvious respect. Nevertheless, metaphors, taken precisely as metaphors, are subject to both aesthetic assessment and semantic assessment. And these two modes of assessment are by no means independent; they refer to each other incessantly and rely on each other's results at every turn. To understand the phenomenon of metaphor, we must study the intimate, intricate ways it weaves together aptness and truth, imaginativeness and linguistic competence, value and fact.

In what follows I investigate how the phenomenon of metaphor might look once we self-consciously make the relation between aesthetic assessment and semantic assessment—the relation between *aptness and truth*—central to its study. My discussion has three principal aspects. I'll try to indicate how contemporary debates over the nature of metaphor can be made more surveyable by a renewed attention to paraphrase and metaphorical truth, once we dispel the clouds of suspicion that have

gathered over those notions in recent years. I'll point out several striking and neglected phenomena in the natural history of metaphor, in hopes of restoring the hearty appetite for recalcitrant experience, the fascination with tough and surprising special cases, that was so vividly present in the work of Empson, I.A. Richards, and their contemporaries. In hopes of keeping our powers of digestion in some kind of accord with our restored appetite, I'll propose a new account of the nature of metaphorical meaning, inspired by Cavell's thoughts about paraphrase and Kendall Walton's work on make believe in the arts.

## II. ONE THING AND ANOTHER

1. By *metaphor* I shall mean the so-called figure of speech, the familiar and distinctive way of using words. By *a metaphor* I shall mean a particular verbal construction so used, e.g. "Juliet is the sun." A metaphor is often a sentence, but it can be as long as an extended discourse or as short as a single word or phrase. Of course, just what's distinctive *about* metaphor is one of the main questions a philosophical theory of it needs to address. In any case, for me, here, metaphor is a matter of *using words metaphorically*.

2. Many thinkers and at least a few dictionaries seem ready to count all instances of self-explanatory neologism or nonce usage as instances of metaphor.<sup>22</sup> According to

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<sup>22</sup> An especially clear instance of this is the opening of Wallace Martin's "Metaphor" entry in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 760: "a trope, or figurative expression, in which a word or phrase is shifted from its normal uses to a context where it evokes new meanings." Equally inclusive formulations are common in twentieth-century continental poetics, though they ususally add that a metaphor *stands in for* or *replaces* some literal expression we might have used in the same place. Jacques Lacan proposes that metaphor is "one word for another." See "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 156. Jean-François Lyotard, finding that Lacan's formulation leaves out an element of "transgression" necessary for metaphor, proposes instead that metaphor is "substitution unlicensed by usage." See his *Discours, Figure* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1971), 254-56.

The more usual sort of dictionary definition—perhaps out of respect for the traditional idea that metaphor is a figure of similitude—requires that a transfer be either licensed by or meant to convey a *similarity* between one thing and another if it is to count as a metaphor. The OED: "The figure of speech in

these authorities, whenever circumstances are such that (i) our mastery of an expression's standard, enduring, *primary* sense induces us to assign it a nonstandard, temporary, *derived* sense instead, and (ii) we arrive at this derived sense spontaneously, without needing to have it specially explained, the expression in question is functioning metaphorically in these circumstances, and the nonstandard, temporary, derived sense it takes on there counts as a metaphorical meaning. If an expression stops performing its regular day job in the language yet continues to do intelligible semantic work for us, work informed and made possible by its faithful discharge of its regular duties on other occasions—if an expression is “moonlighting,” to use Goodman’s memorable phrase<sup>23</sup>—then the expression in question is being used metaphorically.

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which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from but analogous to, that to which it is properly applicable.” *Webster’s New International*: “the use of a word or phrase literally denoting one object or idea in place of another, by way of suggesting a likeness or similarity between them.” A survey of recent work on metaphor in linguistics and discourse theory says that any “unconventional act of reference” which is “understood on the basis of similarity, matching, or analogy involving the conventional referent” counts as metaphor. See Andrew Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 8; and 108-9. It is questionable whether such talk of likeness, similarity, or analogy really serves to tighten up the idea of motivated, self-explanatory transfer. Almost any circumstance that serves to motivate a usage or render a usage intelligible to listeners can be described as a similarity between one thing and another. And Max Black has urged that calling two things by the same name is enough to produce a similarity between them if none existed before. For Black, see “Metaphor,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, N.S. 55 (1954-55): 273-94.

On the tendency in twentieth-century poetics to count more and more figurative language as metaphorical, a tendency which isn’t confined to moonlighting theories, see Gérard Genette, “Rhetoric Restrained,” in his *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 103-26.

<sup>23</sup> “Metaphor as Moonlighting,” in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 175-80. See esp. 179-80: “By... putting old words to new work, we save enormously on vocabulary and take advantage of established habits in the process of transcending them... In metaphor, symbols moonlight.” See also *Languages of Art*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 69: “Metaphor, it seems, is a matter of teaching an old word new tricks—of applying an old label in a new way.” In fairness to Goodman it should be

Taken at face value, moonlighting views count most if not all so-called *figurative* uses of expressions as *metaphorical* uses. Metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, irony, understatement, etc., when and insofar as they impose novel temporary senses on individual words or phrases,<sup>24</sup> turn out to be so many different species of a vastly inclusive generic master trope, Metaphor. Indeed, taken at face value, moonlighting views have it that we're using the term "anemic" metaphorically when we speak of an anemic complexion, using the term "Bette Davis" metaphorically when we speak of Bette Davis eyes, using the term "red" metaphorically when we speak of a black bucket with red paint in it as the red bucket, using the term "sometime" metaphorically when we say that happiness is a sometime thing, etc. Metaphor may be ubiquitous, but surely it isn't *that* ubiquitous.

To be sure, the Greek word *metaphor* meant something like *transfer* when Aristotle brought it on board in the first place.<sup>25</sup> For all I know, Aristotle may have been willing

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pointed out that he himself never claims moonlighting is sufficient for metaphor. (Indeed, he never gives explicit sufficient conditions for *any* of the pervasive modes of symbol-functioning discussed in his later work: depiction, description, exemplification, etc.) On the other hand, the master-trope result is one Goodman himself explicitly embraces in *Languages of Art* (see 81-85). He actively discourages speculation that any uniform "mechanism" might underly all the instances of label transfer he himself count as metaphoric (see 76-77). And he never suggests any other *necessary* conditions for metaphor.

<sup>24</sup> How often they do so is itself subject to debate, of course. Some view irony as a matter of imposing temporary ironic reversals on the senses of predicates, whereby a thing counts as F ironically speaking if and only if it is literally anything but. See Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 82; Paul Henle, "Metaphor," in his *Language, Thought, and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 173-95; Ted Cohen, "Figurative Speech and Figurative Acts," *Journal of Philosophy* 71 (1975): 669-84. Nowadays it is more common to take the line that irony is a pragmatically special use of sentences whose senses may be entirely literal and straightforward. See H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," esp. 53-54 and 120; John Searle, "Metaphor," in his *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 76-116; Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "Irony and the Use-Mention Distinction," in *Radical Pragmatics*, ed. P. Cole (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 295-318; Herbert H. Clark and Richard J. Gerrig, "On the Pretense Theory of Irony," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113 (1984): 121-26; Robert J. Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), 5-23.

<sup>25</sup> *Poetics*, trans. Richard Janko (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), chap. 21, 1457b ff.; *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford



to count all the examples from my last paragraph as instances of transfer in his intended sense. But talk of metaphor long ago stopped being answerable to Aristotle's plans for the technical deployment of a certain Greek word, whatever those plans may have been.<sup>26</sup> By now the term "metaphor" is part of the English language.

To be sure, our convictions about what does and doesn't count as metaphor are likely to be firmer and more detailed in some areas than in others. Many of us aren't sure how much familiarity, contempt, and semantic forgetfulness—how much of *each*, mind—it takes to turn a "living" metaphor into a "dead" idiom. Many of us are unsure whether to count the easier and more stereotyped forms of personification—e.g., *that remark of yours wounded me*—as instances of metaphor. When Northrop Frye proposes to treat Pound's

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.<sup>27</sup>

as a special case of metaphor, metaphor without assertion, metaphor-by-adjacency we might call it, many of us will want to suspend judgment until we have perused the entire periodic table of literary experience Frye is constructing for us, a table in which Poundian metaphor by adjacency is one entry among many.<sup>28</sup>

There are famous puzzles about the relation between metaphor and simile, puzzles made harder by the lack of general agreement about what counts as simile in

University Press, 1991), book 3, chap. 2, 1405a ff. For flirtations with what looks like a moonlighting account of metaphor in later classical rhetoric, esp. in Quintilian's treatment of *translatio*, see Patricia Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis," in John Bender & David Wellbery, eds., *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 60-73.

<sup>26</sup> Proust nearly shakes my faith in this principle when he refers to "doing a cattleya," the euphemism for sexual intercourse that Swann and Odette invent and use between themselves, as a *metaphor*. See *Remembrance of Things Past*, tr. C.K. Scott-Moncrieff & Terence Killmartin (New York: Random House, 1981), 1: 253-55. I am relieved to notice that native French speakers find this as peculiar as I do. Cf. Genette, "Rhetoric Restrained," 113.

<sup>27</sup> "In a Station of the Metro," *Personae*, rev. ed., prepared by Lea Baechler & A. Walton Litz (New York: New Directions, 1990), 111.

<sup>28</sup> For this claim of Frye's see *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 122-128, esp 123. Frye's own name for this is "metaphor at the literal level," but his conception of the literal is too complex and idiosyncratic for me to delve into here.

the first place.<sup>29</sup> Should we treat metaphor and simile as distinct, alternative, non-overlapping ways of comparing two things? Should we treat a metaphor as a special kind of simile, an elliptical simile, a simile from which an explicit comparative construction has somehow been removed? On the contrary, should we regard a simile as a special kind of metaphor, one that happens to be built around an explicit comparative construction?<sup>30</sup> And in any case, what do we make of the various plain and fancy ways metaphor and simile can be combined? (I slept like a log. —Did you now? How does a log sleep?)

We tend to regard taking words metaphorically as an alternative to taking them literally. Yet expressions we must take literally sometimes invite the same kinds of open-ended interpretive effort, the same forms of paraphrase and motivating explanation, we are accustomed to bestowing on clear cases of metaphor. Are such expressions metaphors *despite* not being taken other than literally? If they are, then metaphor needn't involve departing from literal usage in any sense. The puzzle goes back to the Empson's own prime example of a pregnant use of words.<sup>31</sup> Horatio says:

I saw him once [your father]; a was a goodly king.

Young Hamlet responds:

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<sup>29</sup> For some critics, any poetically or rhetorically interesting statement built around an explicit comparative construction counts as a simile. In English the standardly recognized comparative constructions are ones involving *like* and *as*. But a strong case can be made for broadening this class substantially. Steven G. Darian, in "Similes and the Creative Process," *Language and Style* 6 (1973): 48-57, gives an especially impressive list of candidates. For some, a simile is any sensuously vivid comparison. For some, a comparison already counts as a simile if it is far-fetched in the simple sense of being an obvious overstatement: *He looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food.* —Raymond Chandler, *Farewell My Lovely* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 4. For others, however, a simile must register a figurative likeness, not a literal one, and it must invite the kind of paraphrase we regularly accord metaphors. The standard definition—"a comparison of unlike things"—is a bad joke: it makes all false comparative judgments count as similes.

<sup>30</sup> For the first of these options see Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*. For the second see the later classical rhetoricians, especially Cicero and Quintilian. For the third see Lynne Tirrell, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 321 ff. Empson's book originally appeared in 1951.

A was a man, take him for all in all;  
I shall not look upon his like again.<sup>32</sup>

Empson himself never calls these words of Hamlet's a metaphor. (He clearly thinks metaphors are pregnant in his sense, but he never says that being metaphorical is the only way of being pregnant.) Considering the question ourselves, we may be tempted to say that old Hamlet was a man not just literally but metaphorically as well. Paraphrase: he was a complete or intact specimen of humanity, equipped with the full range of characteristically human powers and virtues, which is more than can be said for anyone still living and breathing in this rotten Danish court. Motivating explanation (in Empson's words, dripping with Empson's irony): "Only the most general term may be used for King Hamlet, and the reason is that he is unique." Similarly, reading the first chapter of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we may be tempted to say that the French man-of-war is both literally and metaphorically *firing into a continent*.<sup>33</sup> There's the African continent, after all, off the port bow or whatever, and the French are literally firing into it. But don't we understand by Marlow's words that the French are (crazily) *laying siege* to Africa, attempting to *take* it as they might take a fort or a walled city, not realizing the vast and porous nature of their target, not recognizing that to possess a continent you must first be possessed by it, in the way Kurtz, for instance, is possessed by it?

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<sup>32</sup> *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982), I, ii, 185-87.

<sup>33</sup> Here is Marlow's speech: "...For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straight-forward facts; but the feeling would not last long. Something would turn up to scare it away. Once, I remember, we came upon a man-of-war anchored off the coast. There wasn't even a shed there, and she was *shelling the bush*. It appears the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts. Her ensign dropped limp like a rag; the muzzles of her long six-inch guns stuck out all over the low hull; the greasy, slimy swell swung her up lazily and let her down, swaying her thin masts. In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, *firing into a continent*. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly that there was a camp of natives—he called them enemies!—hidden out of sight somewhere." —*Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Hampson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1995), 30-31.

Yet despite all these uncertainties about what does or should count as metaphor, metaphor can't be quite as ubiquitous as moonlighting views present it as being. Moonlighting views are entirely too inclusive, entirely too indiscriminating in what they count as metaphor. They come nowhere near specifying *what's distinctive about* any distinctive way of using words deserving the name "metaphor."

3. There are three different spirits in which this objection can be taken, depending on how much life you think the term "metaphor" already has for us and how much respect you think that life deserves at the hands of philosophical theory.

(a) You may believe (as I in fact do believe) that whatever its theoretical origins, "metaphor" has long been a term of ordinary language, one of the words we live with and live by; indeed it may be the only term from classical rhetoric ever to win this kind of broad prereflective everyday acceptance. It is a member in good standing of the "common stock of words" articulate people use to mark distinctions of recurrent practical importance, whatever their individual theoretical interests and concerns. About such commonsensically acknowledged distinctions we can say, with Austin, that since people of every articulate sort in generation after generation have found these distinctions worth drawing,

[they] surely are likely to be... more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our armchairs of an afternoon—the most favored alternative method.<sup>34</sup>

Somewhat later Austin elaborates:

If a distinction works well enough for practical purposes, in ordinary life (no mean feat, since ordinary life is full of hard cases), then there is sure to be something in it, it will not mark nothing: yet this is likely enough to be not the best way of arranging things if our interests are more extensive or intellectual than the ordinary... Certainly, then, ordinary language is *not* the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded. Only remember: it is the *first* word.<sup>35</sup>

If the distinction between the metaphorical and the nonmetaphorical is an ordinary distinction in this sense, then we have firm pretheoretic convictions in many important cases about what does and doesn't count as a metaphor, even if we don't

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<sup>34</sup> J. L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," in *Philosophical Papers*, 2d ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 175-204. The quotation is from 182.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

yet know what work these convictions do for us. There are areas where we'd welcome theoretical guidance about whether to count a given use of words as metaphorical, areas where ordinary usage leaves the question unclear or unsettled—I just mentioned several such areas. And as we learn more about the work the distinction between the metaphorical and the nonmetaphorical does for us, we may find good reason to refine it, redraw it, or abandon it outright. But in areas where we have tolerably clear pretheoretic convictions, an account of metaphor should respect them where it can and offer explicit inducements for giving them up where it can't.

In that case, my contention is that *moonlighting views do neither of these things*. They come nowhere near providing sufficient conditions for metaphor as the term "metaphor" is ordinarily understood. They count far more uses of language as metaphorical than ordinary language does, without offering any clear and weighty reasons for making the change.

(b) You may deny that ordinary language includes any tolerably clear, tolerably stable distinction between the metaphorical and the nonmetaphorical. For instance, you may feel that nothing in ordinary usage either demands or forbids counting "Bette Davis eyes" as a metaphor. You suspect that there is no such thing, at least right now or so far, as *the ordinary understanding of the term "metaphor."* But you concede that common sense and literary critical practice equip us with various clear paradigms of metaphor, prototypical metaphors, particular uses of particular words that deserve to count as metaphorical if anything does—among them "Juliet is the sun." And these paradigms demand your attention as a theorist; you want to know as much as you can about what makes them tick.

In that case, I propose that you view deciding what's distinctive about metaphor as a matter of constructing a theoretically promising understanding of the term "metaphor" around our familiar paradigm cases. (By a theoretically promising understanding, I mean one that permits the framing of interestingly detailed true generalizations about metaphors as such. By constructing it around our familiar paradigms, I mean arranging to count all or most of these paradigms as genuine instances of metaphor.) There might be many different ways of constructing such an understanding, involving different tradeoffs between breadth of coverage (how many cases the term covers) and depth of coverage (how much we can say of a general kind about all cases covered by the term and in particular, how much light such general claims shed on the paradigms that fueled our curiosity in the first place). Then my contention is that *the understanding of the term "metaphor" proposed by moonlighting views isn't theoretically promising in this sense*. Such views make the tradeoff between breadth of coverage and depth of coverage in an extremely one-sided way. On the face of it, self-explanatory derived uses share precious little with one another across the board. They all owe their intelligibility *somehow* to the prior uses they exploit, but the manner in which they do so seems infinitely variable. Our familiar paradigms of metaphor, on

the other hand, share a great deal with one another that they don't share with self-explanatory derived uses in general: being more or less apt, being subject to paraphrase, etc. (In fact, by the time I'm through pointing out such commonalities, you may decide that we already have a tolerably clear distinction between metaphorical and nonmetaphorical after all.)

(c) You may deny that critical precedent and ordinary usage place any restrictions whatever on which uses of which words should count as metaphorical. You take the line that our employment of the term *metaphor* isn't answerable to past usage (since past usage was theoretically misguided), and it isn't answerable to present paradigms (since for all we know it was bad old theories and nothing else that assembled these paradigms in the first place). All it is or can be answerable to is future theoretical convenience. You are a theorist, out to describe and explain what words accomplish for us their users, out to frame powerful generalizations about how meaning or interest or import or point—*significance* in the broadest possible sense of the term—accrues to forms of words. But as yet you have little or no idea what the generalizations you're after will ultimately look like. You find an old term, "metaphor," sitting in a dumpster somewhere and decide to recycle it by putting it to fresh classificatory work. The history of the term may help to *inspire* the use you make if it, but it doesn't *constrain* the use you make of it, even in a wishy-washy defeasible manner. You're engaged, then, in a bit of a priori taxonomy building. Some uses of words will count as metaphors and others won't, once you decide how to station the term "metaphor"—but how *should* you station it, given that you hope to use it as a term in future explanatory generalizations about how significance accrues to forms of words?

So far as I can see, there are only two sensible ways of proceeding under the circumstances. Arrange that the uses you count as metaphorical possess or at least strive to possess some shared distinctively metaphorical kind of significance—achieve or at least strive to achieve some shared distinctively metaphorical effect on listeners. In that case, metaphors would constitute a *teleologically* distinctive class. Or arrange that the uses you count as metaphorical attain or at least strive to attain significance, achieve or at least strive to achieve effects on audiences, in some shared distinctively metaphorical manner. In that case, metaphors would constitute a *strategically* distinctive class. Of course you might do both these things at once; then metaphors would be distinctive both in what they (strive to) do and in how they (strive to) do it.

In that case, my contention is that taken as suggestions for the efficient recycling of abandoned terminology, *moonlighting views don't arrange in advance for either of these kinds of distinctiveness*. For suppose you do station the term as moonlighters suggest. Since no particular actual or striven-for effect on audiences differentiates self-explanatory derived uses of words and phrases from their more straightforward counterparts—the short list of moonlighting examples I've already given surely shows

that much—metaphors won't be teleologically distinctive. And metaphors won't be strategically distinctive either, *unless we humans have a unitary all-purpose method for producing and interpreting nonce uses*. That isn't quite as far-fetched as it sounds. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory attempts to derive such a method from more general principles of computational pragmatics. But at the outset the odds are surely against it: at the outset, we can't *expect* language to involve a unitary all-purpose method for deriving derived uses. So: moonlighting views station the term "metaphor" at a post where it can't be *expected* to do you (or them) any real theoretical good.

If all of this is right, what has made moonlighting views so tempting? Here's what I suspect goes on. Suppose we look at a given self-explanatory derived use, one not yet counted as metaphorical by most of us, and ask: Would we be well advised as theorists to add it to the class of what we're ready to count as metaphor? The answer is likely to be: Yes, if in doing so we wouldn't sacrifice any interesting generalizations, since the scope of those generalizations, the size of the territory they enable us to describe and understand, would be enlarged by the shift. Ordinary language is at best the first word about what should count as metaphor. By all means, let's bite off just as much as we can chew. Since we are trying to station terminology *before* any sustained effort to state these hoped-for generalizations, we can't yet see what we'd sacrifice (by way of descriptive depth) in making such a shift. But we *can* already see what we'd *gain* (by way of descriptive scope). It is all too easy to let a visible gain outweigh an invisible loss. So we claim this little parcel for the Future Kingdom of Metaphor Theory in a spirit of hope. We claim parcel after parcel in the same hopeful spirit—until it dawns on us that by this point, nobody could ever chew what we have bitten off.

4. We can start putting our anemic complexions behind us if we insist that in genuine instances of metaphor, language contrives to speak about one thing A (in this case Juliet) *as* and *in terms of* another thing B (in this case the sun). Saying outright that the one thing is the other is but one of many ways in which this can be managed. One other way would be to say, as Romeo does in fact go on to say, "*Arise fair sun.*" Still others avoid *calling* the one thing the other in so many words: "How I have grown since first she shone on me."<sup>35</sup> (Such metaphors, in which we liken one thing to

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<sup>35</sup> Cp. *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. John Wilders (London: Methuen, 1981), I, v, 55-59:  
 He was not sad, for he would *shine* on those  
 That make their looks by his; he was not merry,  
 Which seemed to tell them his remembrance lay  
 In Egypt with his joy, but between both,  
 O heavenly mingle!...

another without actually calling the one the other, are often called *implicit*.) Our use of the phrase *in terms of* suggests that the terms in which or the terms on which we already deal with the second thing B (in this case the sun) are now being appropriated or borrowed for the purpose of dealing with the first thing A (in this case Juliet). And our use of the word *as* suggests that we are dealing with the first thing (Juliet) *in the guise of* the second, *as if she were* the second (the sun).

One other idiom comes naturally here: the verb *to liken*. In metaphor, language is used to *liken* one thing A (in this case Juliet) to another thing B (in this case the sun). What if anything likening in this sense has to do with one thing's being like another or a picture's being a good likeness of its subject, how if at all likening one thing to another is related to comparing one thing with another—these are all excellent questions for a later stage in our study. We can already see, however, that likening A to B isn't a simple matter of treating A and B as alike enough in certain specific respects for certain specific purposes. For one thing, I can liken A to B without thereby likening B to A as well. (Restate things in terms of guises and the point becomes obvious.)

Useful and venerable as it is, all such “one thing and another” talk has to be taken with a few grains of salt. In this respect it resembles what I suppose to have been its parent—the useful, venerable, formerly commonplace way of speaking that portrayed judging as a matter of affirming or denying a second “thing” B (a predicate—for instance, mortality) of a first “thing” A (a subject—for instance, the man Socrates or men in general). Specifically:

(a) The second “thing” usually isn't a second individual, more often it is in the nature of a kind or stuff. Usually we are likening A to Bs or B *in general*, not to any particular B. Metaphors in which a first identified individual is likened to a second identified individual are the exception, not the rule; in this respect, at least, Romeo's metaphor is unrepresentative. The appropriate schema is *A is a B* or *A is some B* far more often than it is *A = B*.

—History, Stephen said, is *a nightmare* from which I am trying to awake.<sup>37</sup>

History is *a tangled skein* that one may take up at any point, and break when one has unraveled enough.<sup>38</sup>

History is more or less *bunk*.<sup>39</sup>

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Of course, Juliet and Antony make very different suns because Antony is a political animal and Juliet isn't.

<sup>37</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses*, corrected edition (New York: Modern Library, 1961), 34.

<sup>38</sup> *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Vintage/The Library of America, 1990), 283.



The moon was a *ghostly galleon* tossed upon cloudy seas.<sup>40</sup>

(b) The first “thing” can be in the nature of a kind or stuff as well, producing further variations in the appropriate schema (*As are B* or *As are Bs* or *any A is B*):

*Dreams* are toys.<sup>41</sup>

His *words* are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes.<sup>42</sup>

Their *memories*: a heap of tumbling stones,

Once builded stronger than a city wall.<sup>43</sup>

All *flesh* is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.<sup>44</sup>

*Money* is another kind of blood.<sup>45</sup>

(c) The two “things” may in fact be one or none. I can liken what does exist to what doesn’t, what doesn’t exist to what does, one nonexistent thing to another, or a thing to itself—indeed, I can do any of these things either knowingly or unwittingly. For instance, I can say by way of metaphor, “George is an angel” or “Martha is the Sphinx,” thereby telling you what an acquaintance of mine is actually like, even though there are in fact no such things as angels, there is in fact no such thing as the Sphinx, and you and I both know all this. Lois Lane could say by way of metaphor in a moment of gratitude, “Clark Kent is Superman.” Perhaps this is facilitated by her not knowing that Clark and Superman are one and the same. Yet one of De Gaulle’s aides could say of his boss by way of metaphor in a moment of pique, “The General is De

<sup>39</sup> Henry Ford, interview with Charles N. Wheeler, *Chicago Tribune* May 25, 1916. At the time of Ford’s remark, bunk or buncombe was political speechifying of a conspicuously empty kind. (The name derived from Buncombe County, North Carolina, which seems to have sent more than its share of bunk to Congress in the early 1800s.) Ford was likening history to such speechifying. By now, I suspect, bunk tends to mean whatever kind of rubbish Henry Ford thought history was.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred Noyes, “The Highwayman,” in his *Collected Poems in One Volume*, 2d ed. (London: John Murray, 1963), 11-14; excerpt from 11.

<sup>41</sup> *The Winter’s Tale*, ed. J.H.P. Pfafford (London: Methuen, 1963), III, iii, 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Much Ado about Nothing*, ed. A.R. Humphreys (London, Methuen, 1981), II, iii, 19-20.

<sup>43</sup> Babette Deutsch, “Old Women,” in her *Honey Out of the Rock* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925), 50-51; excerpt from 50.

<sup>44</sup> Psalm 40:6.

<sup>45</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Wealth,” *The Conduct of Life*, in *Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 1010.

Gaulle this morning.” (Think what it would mean to call *anyone* De Gaulle by way of metaphor; now imagine calling *De Gaulle* De Gaulle in just that spirit. This may not be easy, but I suspect it’s child’s play compared to working under the man in the first place.)

Forgive the contrived nature of the last few examples. They’re meant to recall the examples Frege used long ago to persuade us that despite its heuristic uses, a subject-predicate, “one thing and another” account of *literal* judging won’t finally do—even in syntactically favorable cases involving a subject *expression*, appropriate for picking out a thing to be talked about, and a predicate *expression*, appropriate for picking out something to be affirmed concerning such a thing. An expression can contribute to the formulation of a complete thought even when it doesn’t pick anything out, doesn’t refer to anything. And when it does refer, what it contributes to thoughts formulated with its help isn’t the thing it picks out but something more like the *manner in which it conceives* the thing it picks out. This so-called affair of things, “affirming one thing of another,” is really an affair of concepts or senses or modes of presentation.

What goes for affirming one thing of another goes for likening one thing to another as well. When we “liken one thing to another,” what we more fundamentally do is juxtapose to a first concept a second concept, thereby likening the thing or things (if any) falling under the first to the thing or things (if any) falling under the second. In our original example, we juxtapose to the concept of Juliet (the concept by means of which one thinks of a thing as Juliet) the concept of the sun (the concept by means of which one thinks of a thing as the sun). Whatever our terminology may suggest, juxtaposing is no mere bringing together in mental space; it has a direction to it, just as likening did and for the same reasons. Juxtaposing the concept of (a) B to the concept of (an) A is one thing; juxtaposing the concept of (an) A to the concept of (a) B would be quite another.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The very same words may serve to invoke both concepts involved in a metaphorical juxtaposition. (“Arise fair sun.”) When we juxtapose the concept of the sun to the concept of Juliet, the manner in which we entertain and use the concept of Juliet is informed, reframed, inflected—call it what you will—by the concept of the sun. And at least typically, the manner in which we entertain and use the concept of the sun is likewise informed, reframed, or inflected, albeit rather differently and perhaps only temporarily, by the concept of Juliet. These considerations led I.A. Richards to propose that metaphor was a verbally induced “interaction” of two “components” he called the *tenor* and the *vehicle*, emphasizing as he did so that these components were not words or phrases. But in “Juliet is the sun,” is the tenor a shared and relatively stable concept, the concept of Juliet? Is it a particular temporary and idiosyncratic way of entertaining and using that concept, brought into being

(d) On another way of counting heads, the two “things” or concepts may be many more than two; they may be four, six, eight, ...  $2n$  for some indefinitely large  $n$ . Romeo does not in fact utter “Juliet is the sun” and leave it at that. What he actually gives us is a sustained speech, an *extended* metaphor<sup>47</sup> which, taken as a whole, likens Juliet to the sun, her room and balcony to the east, Romeo himself to creatures dependent on the sun for warmth and light and nurturance, Rosaline to that lesser light the moon, the *sight* of Juliet to the *light* of the sun, Juliet’s *appearance* at her window as the sun’s rising in the east—and so on, more or less indefinitely. Some of these items are explicitly mentioned in Romeo’s speech, others aren’t. The longer Romeo’s speech goes on, the richer and more determinate this set of correspondences becomes. Yet even if Romeo hadn’t indulged in extended metaphor, even if he had said “Juliet is the sun” and left it at that, large portions of the set would have fallen into place for suitably prepared listeners. The framer of a metaphor isn’t simply juxtaposing two particular concepts, she’s *aligning* two extensive systems of concepts. (Aligning has a direction to it, just as likening and juxtaposing do.)

(e) It is one thing to know what is being likened to what, or what concepts are being juxtaposed to what others; it is quite another to know to *what specific propositional effect* this is being done. Being able to inventory likened things or juxtaposed concepts is one thing, being able to paraphrase the resulting metaphor is another.

5. I said that by metaphor I would mean the familiar figure of *speech*. I felt the need to say this because in our century at least two other phenomena have staked serious claims on the word *metaphor*. They too can be described as likenings of one thing to another, likenings in which one thing gets treated as and in terms of another—with qualifications parallel to those I just rehearsed.

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for the first time by Romeo’s metaphor? Or is it Juliet herself? Richards says particular things that appear to require each of these answers, and the vehicle is in a precisely parallel fix. Such terminological wavering might be harmless, if it didn’t give the impression that I can change concepts, change truth conditional meanings, change what it *takes* for something to be Juliet or what it *takes* for something to be the sun, simply by letting my concept of Juliet and my concept of the sun interact with one another in a metaphor. For Richards see his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 87-112.

<sup>47</sup> On extended metaphor generally see Eva Feder Kittay and Adrienne Lehrer, “Semantic Fields and the Structure of Metaphor,” *Studies in Language* 5 (1981): 31-63; Lynne Tirrell, “Extending: The Structure of Metaphor,” *Noûs* 23 (1989): 17-34.

One is a particular kind of cognitive brainstorming, a distinctive kind of exploratory analogical thinking, *metaphorical thinking*. In it, we conceive of one thing A as and in terms of another thing B, using relatively familiar or accessible thoughts about B as patterns and precedents in our efforts to frame, remember, or manipulate relatively unfamiliar or inaccessible thoughts about A. Thus we might conceive the gas in a piston as and in terms of a roomful of billiard balls, or the central nervous system as and in terms of a computer. Not all forms of analogical reasoning, not all forms of precedent-driven exploratory thought, not all forms of conceiving-as-and-in-terms-of, are metaphorical in this by now intuitive sense, and it would be nice to know what distinguishes the metaphorical ones from the rest. For instance, thinking of a slightly inelastic collision as and in terms of a (fictitious) perfectly elastic one is a case of idealization, not a case of metaphorical thinking. I'll call the distinctively "metaphorical" form of conceiving-as-and-in-terms-of *modeling*. Black, Kuhn, Hesse, and Boyd made it an important theme in philosophy of science; more recently it has become an important theme in the cognitive psychology of commonsense reasoning.<sup>48</sup> Cultural studies of illness as metaphor, travel as metaphor, landscape as metaphor, etc.<sup>49</sup> are centrally about the use of their topic entity as a model in thinking about other things; they're only incidentally concerned with figurative language.

The other is a particular kind of experience, frequently but not necessarily perceptual, wherein the imagination of the experiencer plays a decisive role: *metaphorical experiencing*. In it, we experience a first thing A as and in terms of a second thing B (and the second as a metaphor for the first). For instance, the notorious Philipon cartoon teaches us to experience the head of Louis Philippe as and in terms of a plump, ripe pear.<sup>50</sup> Metaphorical experiencing can be an occurrent mental episode or a standing mental condition; it can be conscious or unconscious; it can take the form of a seeing, a hearing, an experiential memory, or a mental picturing. Not all forms of imaginative experiencing—in particular, not all forms of aspect-seeing or seeing A as-and-in-terms-of B—involve metaphor in any intuitive sense, and it would be nice to know what distinguishes those that do from those that don't. For instance, seeing the duck rabbit as and in terms of a duck is a case of what

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<sup>48</sup> See Keith J. Holyoak and Paul Thagard, *Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), esp. chaps. 8 and 9, 185-235.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, combined ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1990); Georges Van Den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor: from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); and Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> *Les Poires*, from *Le Charivari*, 1834. Reproduced in E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 2d rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 344.

Wollheim calls representational seeing or seeing-in, not a case of metaphorical seeing. I'll call the distinctively metaphorical kind of experiencing-as-and-in-terms-of *fancying*. When phenomenologists map the main forms of imaginative consciousness, when Wittgensteinians map the main forms of aspect seeing or regarding-as, and when Freudians map the main forms of iconic mental states, fancying cries out for detailed cartographic attention. When aestheticians discuss visual or pictorial metaphor, what they usually have in mind is the use of visual art and other visual stimuli to deliberately induce controlled visual fancyings.<sup>51</sup>

The empirical psychological study of mental imagery is just getting underway. As yet it hasn't devoted much attention to imagining in general, let alone fancying in particular. But we get a taste of the issues such a study might reasonably take up from the work of Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard was a French historian and philosopher of science who devoted the last years of his life to essayistic explorations of what he called *material imagination*: fancy's habitual ways of dealing with the Aristotelian elements (earth, air, fire, water) and with familiar kinds of natural and artificial spatial enclosure (houses, rooms, closets, forests, shells, nests).

According to Bachelard, fire is a powerful inducer of pensive reverie and figures prominently in the content of the reverie it induces.<sup>52</sup> Here are a few of the main ways

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Virgil Aldrich, "Visual Metaphor," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 2 (1968): 73-86; David Summers, "Real Metaphor: Towards a Redefinition of the 'Conceptual' Image," in Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey, eds., *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 231-59; Arthur C. Danto, "Metaphor and Cognition," in *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in a Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1992); Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, The Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1984 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 305-55; Richard Wollheim, "Metaphor and Painting," in *Knowledge and Language, Volume III: Metaphor and Knowledge*, ed. F. R. Ankersmit and J. J. A. Mooij (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), 113-25; Noel Carroll, "Visual Metaphor," in Jaakko Hintikka, ed., *Aspects of Metaphor* (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 189-218.

<sup>52</sup> "[To] be deprived of reverie before a burning fire is to lose the first and most human use of fire. To be sure, a fire warms us and gives us comfort. But one only becomes fully aware of this comforting sensation after quite a long period of contemplation of the flames; one only receives comfort from the fire when one leans his elbows on his knees and holds his head in his hands. This attitude comes from the distant past. The child by the fire assumes it naturally. Not for nothing is it the attitude of the Thinker. It leads to a very special kind of attention which has nothing in common with the attention

a daydreaming human mind is permanently ready to play with fire. (The labels are Bachelard's, the summaries are my own.)

*The Prometheus Complex.* We tend to experience the kindling of a fire, especially when the fire is hidden and furtive, as an act of creative disobedience by means of which we surpass our elders in knowledge and skill. Working in the other direction, we tend to experience any productive rebellion against established authority as an act of illicit firestarting.

*The Empedocles Complex.* We tend to experience the burning up of a thing, especially if the thing disappears without a trace, as a sped up life span ending not in annihilation but in transfiguration. Working in the other direction, we tend to experience any dramatic curtailing of the regular course of human life by disease or destitution or despair as immersion in a refining fire.

*The Novalis Complex.* We tend to experience the warmth of a fire as a sexual excitement coaxed into being by the rubbing together of sticks or the nudging together of coals. Working in the other direction, we tend to experience sexual excitement, especially when brought on by caresses and embraces, as the warmth of a fire burning deep within the excited person's body.

Read these "complexes" in one direction and you get standing obstacles to the open-minded scientific study of heat, combustion, friction, flame, etc. Fancy tends to saddle us with empirically preposterous *models* of fire. Read them in the other direction and you get standing opportunities for the use of fire in immediately intelligible, vividly suggestive poetic utterance. Fancy lends lucidity and force—light and heat, if you will—to the fires that burn in verbal metaphor. Bachelard started out concerned with the first way of reading his complexes but became more and more preoccupied with the second; he set out to study the phenomenology of scientific error and became engrossed in phenomenological poetics.

Modeling, fancying, and verbal metaphor regularly accompany one another and elicit one another in many regions of our experience. Bachelard's work vividly reminds us of that familiar fact. Yet they are distinct phenomena all the same, and use of a single name for all three has caused more than a little confusion over the years.

I don't want to contest the claims modeling and fancying have staked on the word "metaphor." They have their own deep roots in the word's history, and they needn't

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involved in watching or observing. Very rarely is it utilized for any other kind of contemplation. When near the fire, one must be seated; one must rest without sleeping; one must engage in reverie on a specific object." —*The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, trans. Alan C.M. Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 14-15.

be viewed as rivals to my own claim. If the word “metaphor” matters so much to students of more than one subject, it should be possible to take turns with the word. After all, economists, philosophers, and popular moralists already take turns with the word “value.” Yet we need to be clear about whose turn it is at any given time. Failure to distinguish these three phenomena and hasty schemes for assimilating one to another have held back the serious study of each. In particular:

(a) We shouldn’t assume that any of the three can be defined quickly and easily in terms of any of the others.

For instance, Lakoff and his followers think that metaphor is really at bottom a conceptual affair, a matter of thinking of one thing as and in terms of another. What Lakoff calls a *conceptual metaphor* or *cross-domain mapping* (e.g. LOVE IS A JOURNEY) is a standing pervasive culture-wide disposition to conceive one fixed sort of thing (e.g. love affairs), as and in terms of another fixed sort of thing (e.g. journeys). Such a cognitive disposition sets up a standing correspondence between particular standard love-affair concepts on the one hand and particular standard journey concepts on the other, with the effect that each time the relevant conceptual metaphor is invoked (in connection, perhaps, with a new pair of lovers),

The lovers correspond to travelers.

The love relationship corresponds to the vehicle.

The lovers’ common goals correspond to their common destinations on the journey.

Difficulties in the relationship correspond to impediments to travel.<sup>53</sup>

And so on. By exploiting these correspondences, we can and do redeploy familiar, easy patterns of thinking about one sort of thing (journeys) in fresh, possibly strenuous bouts of thinking about a second sort of thing (love affairs):

The metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience, love, in terms of a very different domain of experience, journeys...<sup>54</sup>

Metaphor allows us to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete, or at least more highly structured subject matter.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> George Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, 2d ed., ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202-251. The quotation is from 207.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-45.

Over time this single cognitive disposition may manifest itself in many different verbal expressions:

Our relationship has hit a *dead-end street*... Look how far we've come. We can't turn back now. It's been a long, *bumpy road*. We're at a *crossroads*. We may have to go our *separate ways*. The relationship isn't going anywhere. We're *spinning our wheels*. Our relationship is *off the track*. This marriage is *on the rocks*. We may have to *bail out* of this relationship.<sup>56</sup>

What makes these *verbal expressions* metaphorical, apparently, is solely the fact that they are direct, conventionally straightforward puttings-into-words of metaphorical *thoughts*, thoughts formed in the first place under the supervision of the single *conceptual metaphor* LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Activate a conceptual metaphor, use it to think a metaphorical thought, put that thought into words in the usual routine manner, provided for by the usual routine meanings of the words in question, and the result thereby counts as a verbal metaphor. In effect, Lakoff *defines* verbal metaphor as the conventionally straightforward putting-into-words of a metaphorical thought. At least, this is the natural inference from his repeated assurances that the *only* theory of metaphor we need is an account of how conceptual metaphors control metaphorical thinking:

The generalizations governing poetic [and everyday] metaphorical expressions are *not in language, but in thought*... The locus of metaphor is *not in language at all*, but in the way we conceive one mental domain in terms of another.<sup>57</sup>

Later, under the heading *Metaphors are not mere words*:

What constitutes the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is not any particular word or expression... The metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The [conceptual metaphor] is primary, in that it sanctions the use of source domain language and inference patterns for source domain concepts.<sup>58</sup>

This strong form of the view that metaphor is entirely in thought and not at all in language comes into clearer focus in other works. After quoting various poems from various periods in which a lifetime is likened to a day, the infirmities of old age to twilight, and so on, Lakoff and his collaborator Mark Turner remark:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 203; my emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 208.



We have used the term *metaphor* to refer to such conceptual mappings because they are what is responsible for the phenomenon traditionally called metaphor. It is the conceptual work that lies behind the language that makes metaphor what it is. *Metaphorical language is not something special. It is the language that conventionally expresses the source-domain concept of the conceptual metaphor.* Thus, in the lines above, “twilight” conventionally denotes twilight and “night” conventionally denotes night. It is the conceptual metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY that maps twilight onto old age and night onto death. The metaphorical work is being done at the conceptual level. For this reason we have used the term metaphor to characterize the conceptual mapping that does the work...

Conventional metaphorical language is *simply a consequence* of the existence of conceptual metaphorical thought.<sup>59</sup>

The Lakoff program is to understand metaphorical language in terms of metaphorical thinking, and metaphorical thinking in terms of a relative handful of systematically interrelated conceptual metaphors that suffice to generate many different metaphorical thoughts. At the moment I’m not concerned with whether there is such a thing as conceptual metaphor in Lakoff’s sense—and if so, what role it might play in accounting for the detailed twists and turns of (first) metaphorical thinking and (then) metaphorical speaking and writing. At the moment I’m not concerned with his explanatory claims at all. I’m concerned solely with the analytic claim that verbal metaphor is metaphorical thinking, verbally expressed—the claim that verbal metaphor *just is* the sort of thing you end up with when you put a metaphorical thought into words in the routine conventional manner. This is what enables Lakoff and his followers to hold that metaphor resides solely in thought as opposed to language. It’s what enables them to hold that the metaphorical work is *all* being done at the conceptual level. It’s what enables them to hold that we’ll have a complete theory of metaphor (the verbal kind included) once we have a complete theory of metaphorical thinking.

And this particular claim is pretty clearly false. Metaphorical thinkers—modelers—can and sometimes do scrupulously avoid figurative *language* of every sort, whether out of personal stylistic preference or as a safeguard against certain kinds of mistake in reasoning. Some specialized scientific journals effectively ban ambitious verbal metaphor from their pages: too impressionistic, too idiosyncratic, too much fun to read. Yet the verbally resourceful research scientist will

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<sup>59</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 138.

find ways to formulate her heuristic strategies—*formulate* them, mind, not merely insinuate what they are—while fully respecting her own verbal temperament and scrupulously conforming to house style.

Consider a geneticist, out to tell us about regulatory processes involving (what she thinks of as) jumping genes.<sup>60</sup> She may have to call the jumps “transpositions” or some such in order to mollify external or internal editors. But if she plays her cards right, the genes that are already jumping in her head will soon be jumping in her readers’ heads as well. If the “locus of metaphor” really were solely in thought, if metaphorical writing really just were metaphorical thinking conventionally expressed, this wouldn’t be possible.

Even if conceptual metaphor is real and pervasive, even if it is at work in every instance of verbal metaphor, even if it’s the thought that counts in ever so many ways, there is something *verbally* distinctive about *verbal* metaphor. We won’t fully understand metaphor in general until we know what that is.

(b) We shouldn’t assume that any of the three—modeling, fancying, verbal metaphor—is invariably accompanied by any of the others. For instance, verbal metaphor needn’t induce or strive to induce a correspondent fancying. When complex metaphors come thick and fast, they are often understood and appreciated without any serious attempt to realize them experientially. Some metaphors actively defy imaginative realization and owe much of their interest to this very defiance:

I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.<sup>61</sup>

Nature is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.<sup>62</sup>

(c) We shouldn’t assume that modeling, fancying, and verbal metaphor are three different species of a single genus. In particular, we shouldn’t assume that they’re the

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<sup>60</sup> I take the concept, but not the phrase, to be Barbara McClintock’s. See Evelyn Fox Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1983).

<sup>61</sup> Winston Churchill, Radio Broadcast of October 1, 1939.

<sup>62</sup> Pascal’s version of a much borrowed or much reinvented figure; for the details see Jorge Luis Borges, “The Fearful Sphere of Pascal,” trans. Anthony Kerrigan, in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, augmented ed., ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), 189-92.

result of executing a single generic symbolic maneuver in three distinct symbolic media—concepts, mental images, and words, respectively.<sup>63</sup>

### III. PROSPECTS FOR A PRETENSE THEORY

1. Verbal metaphor is our theme, at least for the time being. (If we can shed any light on modeling and fancying along the way, so be it, but that's not our job at the moment.) Our task: to construct around various familiar paradigm cases an explicit positive understanding of what distinguishes metaphoric from non-metaphoric uses of language.

The understanding we construct should permit us to frame plausible, interesting generalizations about how significance accrues to words. There is no way to assure this kind of theoretical fruitfulness in advance—at least I don't know of any—but we can improve the odds if we arrange for the class of uses we count as metaphorical to be teleologically distinctive, strategically distinctive, or both. When tradeoffs between scope of coverage and depth of coverage must be made, we should make these tradeoffs as explicitly and sensibly as we can. Since there are a range of credible views about the authority of ordinary usage over what should and shouldn't count as metaphor, we should keep this diversity of opinion in mind and accommodate it as best we can at each stage in our argument. The first and most important sign that we haven't been wasting our time will be a deepened appreciation of the particular twists and turns of particular paradigm cases.

Such a task can't be hurried—believe me, I've tried. But I'd like to spend a few pages sketching, dogmatically and without much illustration, where we might go from here.

2. I committed myself early on to a kind of aestheticism and a kind of semanticism. Aestheticism, in that I implicated aptness and its appreciation in our very understanding of metaphorical utterances. Semanticism, in that I treated paraphrases as attempts to specify full-fledged truth-conditional metaphorical contents for utterances. Both commitments will be controversial, and rightly so.

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<sup>63</sup> The ramifications of this assumption for “structuralism and semiotics” are too varied and intricate for me to analyze here. But two influential accounts in which it is plainly at work are Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” in his *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 95-119; and Umberto Eco, “The Semantics of Metaphor,” in *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Innis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 247-71.

Aestheticism about metaphor is implicit in the comparisons between bringing off a metaphor and bringing off a joke we find in the work of Ted Cohen and Donald Davidson. It is implicit in Robert Frost's doctrine that metaphor is always poetry and poetry always a strenuous, risk-laden transaction beginning "with delight" and ending "in wisdom."<sup>64</sup> But the most concise and comprehensive statement of aestheticist sentiment I know of is Arnold Isenberg's:

There are three propositions to be advanced: first, that a metaphor is by its very nature an aesthetic object; second, that metaphors are always strokes, if not always works, of art; and third, that metaphor is art in the special sense of the word that is active when it—the word—is withheld from something which, although obviously a product of human contrivance, one deems positively bad or at least devoid of aesthetic value—in other words, that metaphor belongs to the sphere of what H.L. Mencken used to call *lovely letters*.<sup>65</sup>

I need to take up and defend each of Isenberg's propositions in my own way—a way designed to highlight the intricate connections between understanding and appreciation in this region of our life with language.

When we station the notion of verbal aptness in the way I recommended earlier, it turns out to be an aesthetic notion in a twofold sense. Aptness is an aesthetic value, a value the presence of which calls for pleasure in those who profess to recognize it. And findings of aptness are aesthetic judgments in a broadly Kantian sense. Such findings are or strive to be direct expressions of the judger's own pleasure or displeasure—yet they implicitly demand a similar pleasure or displeasure from similarly situated others. They are subject to discussion and debate—yet the weight that a given consideration bears for a given judger depends or ought to depend solely on the effect attending to it has actually had on the judger's own pleasure or displeasure.

All of which should be enough to make verbal aptness a form of verbal beauty. Yet verbal aptness in particular thwarts many Kant-inspired expectations about beauty in general. Utterances owe much of their aptness to complicated relations with their contexts. Far from monopolizing our attention, most apt utterances promptly return it to some corner of the outside world they undertake to describe or change. How apt we take Romeo's words to be depends profoundly on how effective we take them to be in

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<sup>64</sup> "The Figure a Poem Makes," in *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*, ed. Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 776-78.

<sup>65</sup> "On Defining Metaphor," in his *Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 105-21.

promoting various ends—some of them Romeo's, some of them our own. Sorting this out requires a close look at the cognitive and motivational structure of the felt satisfactions that find expression in aptness judgments.

Verbal aptness and its assessment take on a special urgency when it comes to understanding *metaphorical* utterances in particular, and we need to see why this is. To understand any performance, verbal or otherwise, we need to know its end or aim or purpose, and we need some rough idea of how successful it is in furthering that end or aim or purpose. So if metaphor invariably aimed at affording its listeners aesthetic pleasure, if metaphor were in that sense an ornamental use of language, the special urgency of aptness questions in this particular area would be a matter of course. But metaphor isn't always ornamental in this sense. In fact, it would appear that metaphor *as such* has no *uniform* end or aim or purpose—all the usual candidates for this status succumb to counterexamples. Metaphors don't seem to constitute a teleologically distinctive class of uses of words. We need to look for some less obvious special connection between understanding and enjoyment when it comes to metaphor in particular.

If we don't try to understand metaphors in order to enjoy them, perhaps we try to enjoy them in order to understand them. How might this work?

Metaphor at its most ambitious often strikes us as inspired or oracular. An ambitious paraphrase of an ambitious metaphor can quickly outrun *both* what the speaker could plausibly have had in mind at the outset *and* what listeners could reasonably be expected to gather from his words on the spot. Even the least ambitious metaphors have a knack for lending themselves to manifestly unintended construals.

All this would start falling into place if the actual or merely suspected presence of metaphor in an utterance enhanced the importance of various kind of prospective pleasure and various kinds of cultural precedent as controls on how we are to interpret it, while lessening the normative influence of actual or inferable speaker intentions.

In these respects metaphors would resemble ordinary intertextual allusions. The actual or merely suspected presence in one text of an allusion to earlier ones invites us to scour our cultural memories for appropriate earlier texts, our search being guided in part by how salient various earlier texts are for the community being addressed, in part by how satisfying it promises to be to read the new text in the light of this or that earlier one—with the upshot that an author may sometimes inadvertently allude to a book he's never heard of. But what's at stake in getting an ordinary intertextual allusion is often merely (some part of) *what we should gather from* someone else's words. While if I'm right about the status of paraphrase, what's at stake in getting a metaphor is *what we should understand by* the words, what we should take the words themselves to mean in this particular context, what truth-conditional content we should assign the words themselves.

This suggestion conflicts with some very entrenched strategies for thinking about language use in general and utterance meaning in particular. It conflicts with the thought that what our words mean as used by us (if anything) is something we successfully intend them to mean. It conflicts with the thought that understanding an utterance, successfully taking it in, involves computing a general purpose representation of its content then and there, on the spot. It conflicts with the thought that language use is invariably a matter of getting something across or getting something down—of communicating or recording an already formed thought.

These entrenched thoughts and strategies need revision, it seems to me, and not merely for metaphor's benefit. Thinking about metaphor can help us see how the needed revisions might go.

3. Turning now to my kind of semanticism, the first order of business is the vindication of paraphrase—defending it against the charges of impossibility, impropriety, and pointlessness that have been so common in modern philosophy, modern linguistics, and modern criticism. The heart of my defense is the empirical claim that skilled writers and speakers of every sort routinely paraphrase their own metaphors for us; interesting metaphors frequently come wrapped in or surrounded by their own authorized paraphrases. Start hunting for such authorized paraphrases in a deliberate and systematic fashion, and they turn up in the most surprising places. We fail to notice them as often as we do because we fail to distinguish as clearly as we should among three different things we can do with metaphors: *paraphrasing* them, *extending* them, and *varying* them.

The second order of business is to finish explaining and defending my restatement account of what it is that paraphrase does. Here it is important to realize that the unit of metaphor—the syntactic unit within which resort to metaphor takes place, the unit within which one particular thing is likened to another particular thing—isn't always a complete sentence. It can be a subsentential referring expression of virtually any syntactic size and shape. If there is such a thing as *extended* metaphor, metaphor which sprawls over a long sequence of sentences, there is also such a thing as *contracted* metaphor, metaphor which plays itself out in the narrow confines of a single word or phrase. A comprehensive account of metaphor needs to accommodate both.

A contracted metaphor can occur as one constituent of a sentence whose interpretation is otherwise entirely literal. Distinct contracted metaphors can occur side by side in a single sentence. They can even occur nested, one within another. And to see what a contracted metaphor contributes to even the most routine semantic evaluation of larger wholes in which it occurs, we must take the expression metaphorically and identify what it refers to, so taken. In addition to metaphorical truth values belonging to sentences; there are metaphorical references belonging to

subsential expressions. If we think of metaphorical truth values as determined by metaphorical sentence contents (metaphorical thoughts), we can think of metaphorical references as determined by metaphorical expression contents (metaphorical senses). In this fashion, metaphorical contents become full participants in the familiar recursive rigmarole of compositional semantics.

The third order of business is a dispute with my fellow defenders of metaphorical meanings, who have tended to view them as accruing to words precisely when and precisely because the words in question can't sensibly retain their regular meanings. Certain special combinations and contexts apply a "metaphorical twist"<sup>66</sup> to our words, as a result of which they lose their regular old meanings and take on special new meanings in place of the old. This is the wrong picture for two reasons:

- (i) There are cases where we can and do take one and the same remark both literally and metaphorically—with the effect, often enough, that we take it to assert two different things at once. Metaphoric construal can and does flourish in the absence of any literal incongruity whatsoever. (I call this phenomenon *twice aptness*.)
- (ii) Even in more routine cases, any particular way of *taking* the words metaphorically is built on a specific assignment of pre-metaphorical senses to the words in question. To take words metaphorically is to assign content to them twice over. In the special but standard case of a routine freestanding metaphorical assertion, we take the same set of words to express two different thoughts: a presenting thought and a presented thought. Often the presenting thought is there for the sake of the presented one in some sense or other, but this doesn't have to be the case. Often interpreters identify the presenting thought first and work out the presented thought on its basis. Yet sometimes a vague sense of what's being presented gives us a vague sense of what's doing the presenting and these two vague senses refine each other by chasing each other round and around a hermeneutic circle. (Think of poor old Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, struggling to keep up with Hamlet's subtle deployments of the verb *fret*.)

4. In this special but standard case, only the presented thought is entertained in a spirit of assertion. In what spirit is the *presenting* thought entertained, then? In what spirit do Romeo and his listeners entertain the thought (how shall I put it?) that Juliet *just plain* is the sun? The question may feel a bit strange. After all, we may still be getting used to the idea that such a thought exists.

A number of diverse lines of argument point toward the same answer: it is entertained in a spirit of *pretense*. In saying "Juliet is the sun," Romeo pretends that she just plain is exactly that. This pretense of his calls attention to allegedly real

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<sup>66</sup> The phrase is Monroe Beardsley's, the idea much older. See his "The Metaphorical Twist," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 22 (1962): 293-307.

circumstances that allegedly make it possible and allegedly make it worth engaging in. In particular, the pretense calls attention to various allegedly real features of Juliet that allegedly qualify her to play the sun's part. This is how Romeo's pretense concerning Juliet serves to say something about what Juliet is actually like. (The "allegedly" talk is ugly, I admit, but it's there for good reason: we need to be able to account for metaphorical falsity.)

To understand Romeo's words, we need a rich sense of what Romeo might be proposing to pretend and how he might be proposing to pretend it. In particular, we need a rich sense how he might be expecting the world to sustain this pretense of his. We need to interpret his words as alluding to a particular imaginative practice, a particular game of make believe,<sup>67</sup> wherein states of the world would inspire and mandate very specific imaginings in very specific ways. We are able to interpret allusions to such games because we are competent players of such games, able to interpret and act upon actual invitations to actually play them; both forms of cultural competence draw on the same interpretive resources. And among these resources, various kinds of prospective pleasure and various kinds of cultural precedent are obviously very important. Aestheticism and semanticism join hands at this point.

Metaphor is a special kind of pretense whose most immediate, distinctive, and constitutive effect is semantic. For instance, in uttering the words "Juliet is the sun," Romeo pretends that Juliet just plain is exactly that, thereby framing (and perhaps asserting) a thought to the effect, roughly, that Juliet is the warmth of his world, that his day begins with her, that only in her nourishment can he grow, and so on.

A bit more fully: metaphor is a specific sort of allusion to a specific sort of game of make-believe, culminating in a specific sort of contribution to the semantics of utterances in which it occurs. If this is on the right track, then working out the specifics will be a long and delicate job.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> In Kendall Walton's sense. See especially *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990); and "Metaphor and Prop-Oriented Make-Believe," *European Journal of Philosophy* 1 (1993), 39-57.

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