

Wallace Martin
in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics METAPHOR 863

Poetry & Poetics
(4. ed 2012)

IV. Current Debates
V. Summary

the substitution into another. In this sense, Heather McHugh uses a metalepsis in "Etymological Dirge" as she writes, "We get our danger from the lord"; the word *danger* has a root in *dominus*, but "lord" is charged substitution that stands in for this entire relative thing.

The theoretical reputation for metalepsis (and the figure of interpretive allusion" by John Hollander) is broadening as well in postmodern and contemporary critical discourse. Harold Bloom (and Hollander and Angus Fletcher in recognizing it as "indispensable term and concept," a powerful "visionary trope that is its own style and rhetoric" strategy (with Freudian defense, projection, and introjection mechanisms). In this widened sense, transumption functions in the style of R. W. Emerson, John Milton, S. T. Coleridge, and major writers whose work absorbs a tradition and transforms it.

The literary theorist Gérard Genette has applied metalepsis to narratology, when the story jumps from one voice level to another, transgressing the boundaries between "the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells," finding instances in the fiction of Laurence Sterne, Denis Diderot, Julio Cortázar, and Jorge Luis Borges among others. In theater, transumption can function in breaking "the fourth wall" (Diderot), violating the invisible barrier between the audience and the players. William Nelles draws a distinction between this and characters who view other characters, as in *Hamlet*, "properly speaking, there is no metalepsis involved in the play within a play . . . but such interplay is implicit, active in all embedded narratives."

Such transumptive strategies operate in Anne Carson's "Essay on What I Think about Most," where the poet-philologist considers how an apparent listing error from a fragment by the Greek poet Alkman ("three seasons, summer / and winter and autumn third / and fourth spring") programs a sense of surprise into the sudden appearance of the fourth. When the speaker of the verse-essay proposes "three things I like about Alkman's poem," then supplies an unannounced fourth one, a discursive strategy of transumption is in play. The effect of transumption in discursive and narratological approaches depends less on the compression demonstrated in the trope, but the effect is similar: a sudden transport between the world of the teller and the tale.

■ A. Fletcher, *Allegory* (1964); G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J. E. Lewin (1972); H. Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975); J. Hollander, *The Figure of Echo* (1981); H. Bloom, *The Breaking of the Vessels* (1982); W. Nelles, "Stories within Stories," *Narrative Dynamics*, ed. B. Richardson (2002).

K. McFADDEN

METAPHOR (Gr., "transference").

- I. Critical Views
- II. History
- III. Recent Views

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. When the ordinary meaning of a word is at odds with the context, we tend to seek relevant features of the word and the situation that will reveal the intended meaning. If there is a conceptual or material connection between the word and what it denotes—e.g., using cause for effect ("I read Shakespeare," meaning his works) or part for whole ("give me a hand," meaning physical help)—the figure usually has another name (in these examples, *metonymy and *synecdoche, respectively). To understand metaphors, one must find meanings not predetermined by language, logic, or experience. In the terminology of traditional rhet., these figures are "tropes of a word," appearing in a literal context; in "tropes of a sentence," the entire context is figurative, as in *allegory, *fable, and (according to some) *irony.

Following Richards, we can call a word or phrase that seems anomalous the "vehicle" of the trope and refer to the underlying idea that it seems to designate as the "tenor" (see TENOR AND VEHICLE). An extended metaphor, as the name implies, is one that the poet develops in some detail. A *conceit is an intricate, intellectual, or far-fetched metaphor; a diminishing metaphor, one of its types, uses a pejorative vehicle with reference to an esteemed tenor. An extreme or exaggerated conceit is a *catachresis. Mixed metaphor, traditionally derided because it jumbles disparate vehicles together, has recently found some critical acceptance. *Dead metaphor presents fossilized metaphors in ordinary usage (e.g., "he missed the point").

What Quintilian said of tropes remains true today: "This is a subject which has given rise to interminable disputes among the teachers of literature, who have quarreled no less violently with the philosophers than among themselves over the problem of the genera and species into which tropes may be divided, their number and their correct classification." To say that metaphor is any trope that cannot be classified as metonymy, *hyperbole, etc., is to provide only a negative definition. Any attempt to define metaphor positively—e.g., "the application of a word or phrase to something it does not literally denote, on the basis of a similarity between the objects or ideas involved"—will inevitably apply to other tropes.

Some critics accept this consequence and call all tropes metaphors. But even this definition begs the question of how to distinguish the figurative from the literal or at best relegates it to accepted usage. If two species are members of the same genus on the basis of similarity, are they not "like" the genus and, therefore, like each other? Extension of this argument leads to the conclusion that all figures should be understood literally. On the other hand, every object is unique: "it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations seem alike" (Walter Pater).

Perfect literalness might be achieved by giving each object a unique name. In relation to that standard, a common noun is a metaphor because it provides a name that can be applied to different entities on the basis of a likeness between them. Hence, "literal" lang. can be considered metaphorical. Some argue that metaphor can result from grammar alone, without change of word meaning (see *Grammatical Metaphor* in biblio.). For advocates of conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors are representations of mental processes that are not revealed by ling. analysis. Others claim that metaphor is neither a ling. nor a cognitive issue but one based on the intentions of people using lang. for practical purposes. Concise treatment of the burgeoning field must exclude dozens of theories; Rolf and Leezenberg treat many that are not discussed below.

Despite these arguments and attempts to create a more satisfactory classification of figures, the definitions of the major tropes have remained unchanged since the cl. period. The most innovative attempts to clarify the status of metaphor have come from philosophers, linguists, and historians, who have explored metaphor's relation to propositional truth and meaning, to the origins of lang. and myth, to worldviews, scientific models, social attitudes, and ordinary usage. For their purposes, conventional and dead metaphors provide adequate examples for analysis. Scholars and literary critics, less concerned with theory than with practice, have usually accepted the imprecise accounts of metaphor handed down by trad. and focused their attention on its effects in particular poems. To say this is not to claim that the uses of metaphor in poetry are categorically different from those in other domains of lang. use but simply to call attention to the institutionalized character of poetry. The expectations in place when one starts reading a poem differ from those active in reading a newspaper or in conversing.

Emphasis in this discussion will be on poetics and the disciplines historically associated with that topic: rhet., philosophy, and lings. Discussion of metaphor has come full circle, reviving issues forgotten for centuries, while creating possibilities for further devels. A summary of what critics have usually said about metaphor, with some account of objections to traditional views, will provide a context for a brief discussion of historically important theories of metaphor and contemp. treatments of the subject.

I. Critical Views. Aristotle's discussion of *simile in the *Rhetoric* was until recently the starting point of most treatments of metaphor. In saying that Achilles "sprang at the foe as a lion," Homer used a simile; had he said "the lion sprang at them," it would have been a metaphor. In one case, according to Aristotle, the comparison is explicit (using *like* or *as*); in the other, the word *lion* is "transferred" to Achilles, but the meaning is the same. Quintilian endorsed Aristotle's view of metaphor as a condensed simile: "in the latter we compare some object to the thing which we wish to describe, whereas in the former the object is actually substituted for the thing." What Black has called the

"comparison view" of metaphor is based on the grammatical form "A is B"; metaphor is seen as a condensed simile, meaning that A is (like) B. The "substitution view," as Black says, takes "the lion sprang" as the paradigmatic form of metaphor: rather than predicating a likeness, metaphor uses a figurative word in place of a literal one. Both these views are compatible with the reductive conception of metaphor as "saying one thing and meaning another," thus implying that the poet has gone out of the way to say something other than what was meant (perhaps in the interests of decorating an ordinary thought) and suggesting that, in reading poetry, one must dismantle metaphors to find out what the poem "really means."

A different conception of metaphor is necessary to sustain Aristotle's claim, endorsed through the centuries, that metaphor is the most significant feature of poetic style: "that alone cannot be learnt; it is the token of genius. For the right use of metaphor means an eye for resemblances." New metaphors are said to spring from the poet's heightened emotion, keen perception, or intellectual acuity; their functions are aesthetic (making expression more vivid or interesting), pragmatic (conveying meanings concisely), and cognitive (providing words to describe things that have no literal name or rendering complex abstractions easy to understand through concrete analogies). Emphasis on the value of concreteness and sensory appeal in metaphor is frequent. Some mod. critics treat metaphor under the general rubric *imagery (*Bild* has a corresponding importance in Ger. crit., as does *image* in Fr. crit.).

Opposing the comparison and substitution views, 20th-c. critics and philosophers developed more intricate accounts of the verbal and cognitive processes involved in metaphoric usage. Despite their differences, the "interaction" view (Richards, Black), "controversion theory" (Beardsley), and "fusion" view (espoused by New Critics; see NEW CRITICISM) all hold that metaphor creates meanings not readily accessible through literal lang. Rather than simply substituting one word for another or comparing two things, metaphor invokes a transaction between words and things, after which the words, things, and thoughts are not quite the same. Metaphor, from these perspectives, is not a decorative figure but a transformed literalism, meaning precisely what it says. Fusion theorists argue that it unifies the concrete and abstract, the sensual and the conceptual in a *concrete universal or symbol. An entire poem, if it is organically unified, can, therefore, be called a metaphor.

A less audacious explanation of the uniqueness of metaphor is discussed in the next section; at present, let us simply note what problems this view solves and what ones it creates. Treating all tropes as metaphors, the fusion theory frees crit. from the inconsistent classification systems handed down from antiquity. Synecdoche, as a species-genus or part-whole relation, can be imputed to any comparison whatever (everything being "like" everything else in some generic respect, or part of it, if the level of abstraction is high enough). Metonymy can be an empirically observed association

(cause-effect), a contingent re- single principle fions, one figu more tropes, a; *lorique françois* this problem a metaphor, rather categories.

This freedom loss of precisio missal or mispr of traditional d figures are con: considered a tr was in the Ret is the cause of created by tro; as imagery if it otherwise iden corded a lower *like* or *as*—a s theorist, who i scribing the na

Single-minu phor, apart fric of its realizatic ditionalists to most textboo vided are in th is not the mo. B" ("th' exper year") being 1 they encount adverbs, critic tempted to tr over to the nu speaker snarls concludes the dog or wolf Johnson's linc ing those wh shine, evapoi reference to f day), but its cludes that th of saying the

The alterr wanted to cc remains liter after all, ava grammatical demonstrati used if that that metaph reduces the a single req renderings c a range of : sion. If so, translate ev

(cause-effect), an entailment (attribute for subject), or a contingent relation (object for possessor). Since no single principle of classification governs these distinctions, one figurative expression can exemplify two or more tropes, as Antoine Foaquin observed (*La Rhétorique française* [1555]). Fusion theorists eliminate this problem and seek the new meanings released by metaphor, rather than reducing them to uninformative categories.

This freedom from pedantry can, however, entail a loss of precision leading to the neglect, if not the dismissal or misperception, of many tropes. The blurring of traditional distinctions leads to changes in the ways figures are construed. *Pale death*, which would now be considered a trite metaphor involving personification, was in the Ren. a metonymy (death, not personified, is the cause of the effect paleness). The verbal vitality created by tropes other than metaphor is categorized as Imagery if it is sensory and *style if it is not. Similes, otherwise identical to metaphors, are automatically accorded a lower status merely because they use the word *like* or *as*—a sign of timidity in the eyes of the fusion theorist, who may see in simile new possibilities for describing the nature of lang.

Single-minded emphasis on the meaning of metaphor, apart from the semantic and grammatical details of its realization, can lead both mod. theorists and traditionalists to questionable interpretive practices. In most textbooks, the only examples of metaphor provided are in the form "A is B," despite the fact that this is not the most common grammatical form, "the A of B" ("th' expense of spirit") and "the A B" ("the dying year") being more frequent (see Brooke-Rose). When they encounter metaphorical verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, critics who seek new meanings in poetry are tempted to transfer the figuration of these word classes over to the nouns with which they are associated. If a speaker snails a reply or has a green thought, the critic concludes that the poet has said that the speaker is a dog or wolf and that the thought is a plant. Samuel Johnson's line in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* describing those who gain preferment—"They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall"—may be clarified through reference to fireworks or fog and mayflies (living for a day), but its power and meaning evaporate if one concludes that the metaphorical verbs are a roundabout way of saying that the rich and famous are like insects.

The alternative assumption would be that the poet wanted to connect figurative attributes to a noun that remains literal, the nominal "A is B" equation was, after all, available to the poet, along with the other grammatical forms that create identity (apposition, demonstrative reference) and presumably would be used if that were the meaning. The tendency to think that metaphors always equate or fuse entities (nouns) reduces the varied effects of metaphor in poetry to a single register. Poets may intend their figurative renderings of process, attribute, and attitude to evoke a range of relations, from suggestiveness to total fusion. If so, they are not well served by theorists who reduce every figurative inclination into a declaration

of equivalence. The affective and aesthetic functions of metaphor, usually mentioned in traditional accounts, have been emphasized by a few mod. critics who oppose the assumption that the purpose of metaphor is to convey meanings. Forrest-Thomson argues that "the worst disservice criticism can do to poetry is to understand it too soon." Mod. poets in particular try to forestall this haste by using metaphors that do not lend themselves to assimilation by the discursive elements of the text. Thus, they try to preserve poetry from reduction to paraphrastic statement. Shklovsky goes further, asserting that the purpose of new metaphors is not to create meaning but to renew perception by "defamiliarizing" the world: unlikely comparisons retard reading and force us to reconceive objects that ordinary words allow us to pass over in haste (see DEFAMILIARIZATION).

II. History. Four approaches have dominated all attempts to improve on the account of metaphor provided by the cl. trad. Some writers propose more logical classifications of the tropes. Others undertake semantic analysis of the ways in which features of a word's meaning are activated or repressed in figurative usage. These two modes of analysis blend into each other, but they can be distinguished from treatments of metaphor that emphasize its existential entailments—its relation to reality and to hist. rather than to logic and lang. The crudity of this fourfold classification must justify the brevity of the following discussion, which touches on only those treatments of metaphor that, from a contemp. perspective, seem crucial.

For Aristotle, metaphor has two functions and two structures. In the *Poetics*, its function is to lend dignity to style, by creating an enigma that reveals a likeness or by giving a name to something that had been nameless ("the ship *plowed* the sea"). But in the *Rhetoric*, metaphor appears as a technique of persuasion, used to make a case appear better or worse than it is. Mod. critics would say that *kill*, *murder*, and *execute* have the same denotation but differ in *connotation; for Aristotle, one of the three words would be proper in relation to a particular act, and the other two would be metaphors. From its rhetorical uses, metaphor acquires its reputation as a dangerous deviation from the truth, being for that reason castigated by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and other Enlightenment philosophers.

The four kinds of metaphor distinguished by Aristotle in the *Poetics* are of two structural types. One results from substitution (of species for genus, genus for species, or species for species), the two terms having a logical or "natural" relation to each other. The other type has an analogical or equational structure: A is to B as C is to D. Although only two of the four terms need be mentioned (A and D, or B and C), we must infer the other two in order to derive the meaning: "the evening of life" enables us to reconstruct "evening is to day as X is to life." Here we find the bifurcation that will henceforth characterize discussions of tropes: one type is based on accepted conceptual relationships (here, genus-species), and the other type includes all tropes that cannot be so defined. Species-genus and species-

species relations are part of common knowledge; to cross from genus to genus, we need four terms that create what might be called a hypothetical likeness, one not given by logic or nature.

The species-genus relation is one of many that make it possible to infer the tenor from the vehicle. Identification of other such relations (e.g., cause for effect, container for contents) led to the proliferation of names for the tropes in rhet. Once they separated themselves from Aristotle's generic metaphor, it was necessary to define metaphor in such a way that it would not include the other tropes. Quintilian's solution—to say that metaphor is a substitution involving any permutation of the terms "animate" and "inanimate"—is not as unreasonable as it first appears. The dividing line between these two domains, which is a fundamental feature of lang. and culture, cannot easily be crossed by species-genus, part-whole, or subject-adjunct relations. Furthermore, animate-inanimate metaphors are strikingly frequent in poetry, as are animate-animate metaphors involving humans and nature. Analysis based on meaning later gave prominence to *personification and the *pathetic fallacy, appearance and reality, or inner and outer as the quintessential forms of metaphor.

Looking back on Quintilian from the perspectives provided by Giambattista Vico, the romantic poets, and semioticians, we can see that his untidy classification (which defines metaphor by reference to its subject matter, the other tropes by reference to "categorical" relationships) reveals something about the role of metaphor that escapes notice in any purely formal analysis. But when subject matter becomes the primary basis of classification, as it is in 19th- and 20th-c. studies such as those of Brinkmann, Konrad, and Spurgeon, the specificity of the tropes dissolves in the all-embracing category "imagery."

For the Ren., Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (pub. 1470) provided an orderly exposition of rhet. in place of the patchwork syntheses inferable from other cl. texts; Quintilian's renown made him one target of Peter Ramus's campaign to reform the curriculum. Ramus concluded that there were four basic tropes: metonymy (connection through cause, effect, or adjunct), irony ("a change in meaning from opposites to opposites"), metaphor ("a change in meaning from comparisons to comparisons"), and synecdoche (species and genus). In Vico's *Scienza nuova* (*New Science*, 1725), these four become the basis of a hist. of lang. and civilization. In the age of the gods, metonymy ruled: lightning and thunder were a great effect of unknown origin, and humankind imagined the agent Jove as the cause. The age of heroes was one of synecdoche: men who held themselves to be sons of Jove embodied his abstract attributes. The age of men is the age of metaphor, in which likenesses are taken from bodies "to signify the operation of abstract minds"; and philosophy gives rise to what we call "literal" meaning.

Ramus is the precursor of mod. attempts to reduce tropes to a rationale, and Vico occupies the same position in relation to mod. discussions of metaphor's

importance in the devel. of lang., though their successors are not always aware of this lineage. That lang. was originally metaphorical, mythic, and poetic is a common theme in *romanticism—e.g., in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, J. G. Herder, F.W.J. Schelling, and P. B. Shelley—but there is little evidence that Vico was their source (the idea can be found in Lucretius, among others). Müller, Werner, and Cassirer exemplify the Ger. thinkers who have developed this theory; Langer and Wheelwright contributed to its popularity in Am. crit. Nietzsche's contrary thesis—that lang. was originally concrete and literal in reference and that the abstract vocabulary now considered literal is, in fact, metaphorical—has recently attracted critical attention (de Man). But as Vico pointed out, it makes little sense to speak of lang. as either literal or metaphorical before it incorporates a distinction between the two. Even Gadamer's carefully worded claims about the historical and conceptual primacy of metaphor cannot escape Vico's objection.

The theories of metaphor proposed by Richards, Black, and Beardsley, which incorporate insights into the workings of lang. and meaning derived from 20th-c. analytic philosophy, provide an alternative to traditional accounts of metaphor as a substitution, comparison, or fusion of meanings. Sentences, Richards says, are neither created nor interpreted by putting together words with unique meanings. Any ordinary word has several meanings and a number of loosely associated characteristics; often it will be both noun and verb or noun and adjective. The varied traits or senses of a word's meaning are sometimes sorted into two groups—denotations (characteristics essential to a distinct sense of the word) and connotations—but in practice, this distinction is hard to maintain (see CONNOTATION AND DENOTATION). (In his precise and revealing analysis of this issue, MacCormac describes words as "fuzzy sets.") Only when placed in a context does a word take on one or more meanings, at which time some of its traits become salient and others are suppressed. It is often difficult to decide when we have crossed the line between literal and figurative usage. In the series "green dress" (dyed), "green field" (growing), "green shoot" (alive, despite color), and "green thought," connotations shift before becoming clearly metaphorical.

Richards looked on metaphor as a "transaction between contexts," in which tenor and vehicle combine in varied ways to produce meanings. Beardsley argues persuasively that metaphor is intentional: we find it in words, not in the objects to which they refer. Black's "interaction theory" contains an important distinction between the "focus" and "frame" of a metaphor (the figurative expression and the sentence in which it occurs). The focus brings with it not just connotations but a "system of associated commonplaces"—what Eco will later call "encyclopedic knowledge"—that interact with the frame to evoke knowledge shared by a speech community. To say "the lion sprang at them," meaning Achilles sprang, makes sense only because of common lore about the lion (a hunter, not an herbivore; socia-

ble with its own animal monog. The lion can't prior-map the beasts. Black's that novel metaphor proved most useful as dead metaphor: lang. and talking

||| Recent View later 20th c. ge either as the "o the very ground influential innov metaphor to r from the subst acteristic of po as romanticisr contiguity, app *realism. Thoi aries, these d (1) ling. or se ships or relatic cal or pragme tence meanin (emphasizing sense and referuistic relatio

The most ling. features ric, produced They treat all etitions, or p nemes to phi hypothetical deviates. Me sition of wor of which wi one word is for such sut as Aristotle metaphor co being either term being a or whole-pa formed whe a more flexi semantic fea terpret a m He points o metaphors directions: the brook c smiling. Alt guistic phe fourth type reality—a f phor appea Eco's semic

ble with its own kind, unlike the tiger, but not a herd animal; monogamous; a lone hunter, unlike the wolf). The lion cannot represent courage until, through a prior mapping of culture on nature, he is the king of beasts. Black emphasizes the "extensions of meaning" that novel metaphors bring to lang., but his theory has proved most useful in understanding the inherited and dead metaphors that structure a society's way of thinking and talking about itself.

III. Recent Views. Every innovative critical theory of the later 20th c. generated a new delineation of metaphor—either as the "other" of its own conceptual domain or as the very ground of its new insights. One of the most influential innovations has been Jakobson's opposition of metaphor to metonymy. In his view, metaphor results from the substitution of one term for another; it is characteristic of poetry and some literary movements, such as romanticism and symbolism. Metonymy, based on contiguity, appears more frequently in prose and typifies realism. Though they often cross disciplinary boundaries, these theories of metaphor can be classified as (1) ling. or semiotic (based on intralinguistic relationships or relations between signs of any sort); (2) rhetorical or pragmatic (involving a difference between sentence meaning and speaker meaning); (3) philosophical (emphasizing relations between words and reality or sense and reference); and (4) extended (treating nonlinguistic relationships in other disciplines).

The most ambitious semiotic attempt to identify ling. features of metaphor appears in *A General Rhetoric*, produced by Group μ of the University of Liège. They treat all unexpected suppressions, additions, repetitions, or permutations of ling. elements, from phonemes to phrases, as figures, the nonfigurative being a hypothetical "degree zero" discourse from which rhet. deviates. Metaphor results from an implicit decomposition of words into their semes (lexical features), some of which will be cancelled and others added when one word is substituted for another. The natural route for such substitutions is through species and genus, as Aristotle observed, and Group μ concludes that a metaphor consists of two synecdoches, the progression being either species-genus-species (the intermediate term being a class that includes the first and last terms) or whole-part-whole (here the central term is a class formed where the first and last overlap). Levin, using a more flexible scheme for the transfer and deletion of semantic features, shows that there are six ways to interpret a metaphor (his example is "the stone died"). He points out that the grammatical structure of many metaphors allows for the transfer of features in two directions: "the brook smiled" can either humanize the brook or add sparkle and liquidity to the idea of smiling. Although he analyzes metaphor as an intralinguistic phenomenon, Levin recognizes that Aristotle's fourth type, analogy, often depends upon reference to reality—a fact that Group μ overlooked. Thus, metaphor appears to escape formalization within a system. Eco's semiotic solution to this problem is to imagine

an encyclopedia that describes all the features of reality not included in the semanticist's dictionary. For Riffaterre (1978), mimetic reference is only a feint that the literary text makes before refocusing itself in a network of semiotic commonplaces.

Proponents of "speech act theory" are the most important representatives of rhetorical and pragmatic theories. They hold that metaphor cannot be explained through reference to relationships between words and their ling. contexts. They make a categorical distinction between "word or sentence meaning" and "speaker's utterance meaning." Metaphor, in their view, arises from a disparity between the literal meaning of the words used and what is intended by the speaker or writer. Words always retain their invariant "locutionary" definitions, but when used to make metaphors, there is something odd about them and the hearer infers unstated suggestions or meanings. Grice's theory of "conversational implicature" provides a set of rules and maxims for normal talk that, when violated, may alert us to the fact that someone is speaking figuratively. His theory, like Searle's, locates metaphor in a difference between utterance meaning and speaker meaning—the domain of pragmatics—and is subject to the same sorts of crit. that speech act theory has elicited (see Sadock in Ortony).

Searle and Grice are philosophers, but their theories entail empirical claims of relevance to linguists. In the work of Davidson and of Goodman, one finds more strictly philosophic treatments of metaphor. Meaning, in Davidson's view, involves only the relation between lang. and reality. He is willing to accept the pragmatic "distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do," but he denies the existence of metaphoric meaning: "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more." To this one might reply that if we did not realize they were patently false, we would not know they were figurative. Recognizing them as such, we may discover truths about the world, but this is not a consequence of some meaning inherent in the words. Goodman disagrees. In *Languages of Art*, he conceives of metaphor, like many other activities, as exemplification. Rather than applying a label to a thing, we use the thing as an example of the label, as when the lively appearance of the literal brook is seen as an instance of smiling. This reverses the direction of denotation: the example refers to the word, rather than vice versa, and the word may bring with it a whole schema of relationships that will be sorted anew in the metaphorical context. Goodman concludes that metaphor is "no more independent of truth or falsity than literal use."

Postponing discussion of deeper philosophical differences that divide theorists, one cannot help but note that they tend to privilege different moments in the interpretive process. At first glance, or outside time, metaphor is false (Davidson). Realizing that the creator of a metaphor means something else, one might create a theory of the difference between sentence and speaker meaning (Searle, Grice). When engaged in deciphering,

a reader enacts the interaction theory—discovering new meanings—and the falsity of metaphor is forgotten. Truth usually results from testing many examples to find one rule; in metaphor, meaning emerges from repeated consideration of a single example, uncovering all its possibilities; and a hypothesis or generalization is the product of the process, not its inception. In accordance with information theory, the low probability of a word or phrase in a particular context implies that it carries a great deal of meaning.

IV. Current Debates. Through the work of Lakoff and Johnson, understanding of dead metaphors has been transformed. Most commonplace metaphors express a connection between a concept and a realm of experience. Among their examples of these conceptual metaphors are "argument is war" and "time is money." In their terminology, the conceptual term is the target, and the concrete term is the source. Each such "A is B" is a generic schema that can generate dozens of specific tropes, based on connections between the two domains. Their examples serve as reminders that not only nouns but adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions abound in tropes. As Searle remarked, conventional metaphors spring back to life when new aspects of the analogy are evoked (e.g., "he torpedoed my argument," "his refutation was a dud"). For Lakoff and Johnson, such interactions of the abstract and concrete are not simply analogies, and "conceptual metaphors" are not provisional aspects of lang. use. They exemplify the ways that we conceptually organize experience. War and argument cannot be separated from each other.

Poetics can certainly benefit from attention to conventional metaphors, long neglected in discussions of poetry. As Turner (1987) showed, a single domain such as kinship can generate hundreds of analogies that differ in interesting ways. He and Lakoff provide examples of how basic conceptual metaphors concerning life, time, and death occur in a wide range of traditional and contemp. poems. When metaphor is seen as a form of conceptual mapping rather than verbal expression, it has implications for psychology, anthropology, neurology, and cognitive science. If rooted in bodily experience, metaphor may reveal universal conceptual patterns; those specific to particular cultures might then be correlated with different langs. or modes of understanding (Kövecses). The cohesion of specific groups within a society may be strengthened by shared conceptual metaphors. If so, the topic is important for sociology, politics, and rhetorical studies of public relations and advertising.

When these devels. are connected with neurology and cognitive science, the scope and significance of the project become clear. What is at stake is nothing less than a unified theory of human behavior, mapping a progression from embodied experience, inscribed in neural pathways, to action, thought, and expression. This change has confirmed the relevance of earlier conceptions of metaphor. Jakobson's association of metaphor and metonymy with the right and left hemispheres of the brain, mentioned earlier, has led to numerous experiments that make use of neural imaging. The idea

that abstract thought emerged from metaphor, as suggested by Vico, Rousseau, and Herder, gained support through two centuries during which philologists traced the evolution of word meanings. Metaphor is now a topic of discussion in many disciplines, treated in hundreds of articles annually. Following the ling. turn of the 20th c., the paradigmatic shift of the 21st c. may be a tropical turn.

For poetics, the emphasis on conceptual metaphor has been immensely valuable. In both crit. and pedagogy, poetry has been rescued from the modernist over-emphasis on originality and recognized as dependent on conventional cultural codes that it shares with the lyrics of popular music. The hist. of poetry suggests that innovative metaphor may be even less common than conceptual metaphor theorists suggest. They have frequently treated three examples as innovative: "man is a wolf," "that surgeon is a butcher," and "my lawyer is a shark." Dicts. and poetry anthols. confirm the impression that these have existed for centuries. The human and animal kingdoms, with the lion as the king of beasts, were mapped onto each other long ago. The names of many species—rats, snakes, skunks, foxes, weasels—have literalized meanings referring to humans. Even condensed dicts. list two literal meanings for the humans known as wolves or as sharks; a "butcher," as noun or verb, literally means a botcher or a bungler. The elaborate schemas produced to account for how we understand such usage seem beside the point, unless they are hypotheses about the neural activity of those encountering such usage for the first time or hypotheses about how we understand literal statements.

The conceptual metaphor theory of Lakoff, Johnson, Turner, and their followers treats metaphor as a cognitive, not a ling., phenomenon. The theory has prompted empirical studies of figurative lang., based on data banks such as the British National Corpus (100,000,000 words from 20th-c. pubs.). One important result of such work is evidence that metaphors commonly used in conversation and prose are quite different from those produced by theorists as examples. Often the meaning is clear even when the literal "tenor" or "target domain" is indeterminate: when a man is "gaining ground" with a woman, should we think of war, affection, or territorial encroachment? Corpus analysts conclude that there is no clear-cut boundary between literal and figurative usage. Phrases and word couplings that were once either literal or figurative are now usually or always figurative—making them, in effect, literal. E.g., "heavy blow" and "pay a high price" are rarely used literally; a search for the phrase "old fox" turns up only the (literalized) metaphorical meaning. Those who construct examples for experimental purposes sometimes mistake commonplace for original metaphors, and vice versa (Stefanowitsch, Hanks, Deignan, Hilpert). Given the lack of agreement about the difference between figurative, literalized, and literal expressions, the gap between theory and empirical studies has not been bridged.

The antithetical view of metaphor—as uncommon insight rather than an oddity reducible to literal thought and expression—has long lacked a persuasive

justification. Th Aristotle to Dav
vincing argum
the best explan
metaphor, insi
two entities in
a number of fe
list the featur
space." The tr
usually indica
emergent met
that procedur
neric space is
traits not shar
and Turner ce
ticipated mea

The title c
Beauty (a phr
provides an e
life; how can
and his scytl
"strews the l
The leaves ar
fall when the
to the natur
fulfillment c
death gives l
An entire st
and others c
multiplies t
nier are sen
other trope
ings in som
others.

V. Summa
theory, thro
tropes (as i
rative metl
whether th
from one
most logic
eral (David
not discr
and there
literal and
chological
tropes cat
phor). Rat
of accout
figures as
one can t
a norm"
in which
from oth
Figure
nese and
the Chin
(incitatio
without
imply a
tion (O

Justification. Those who have proposed this view, from Aristotle to Davidson, have not supported it with convincing arguments. Fauconnier and Turner provide the best explanation we have of connections between metaphor, insight, and ling. innovation. Each of the two entities in the traditional "A is B" metaphor has a number of features (connotations or senses). We can list the features together in a hypothetical "generic space." The traits that they share and the context will usually indicate the implied meaning. The novel or emergent metaphor does not yield its meaning through that procedure; no revealing correspondence in the generic space is evident. That leads to reconsideration of traits not shared and the creation of what Fauconnier and Turner call a "blended space," from which unanticipated meanings may emerge.

The title of Turner's book *Death Is the Mother of Beauty* (a phrase taken from a poem by Wallace Stevens) provides an example of creative metaphor. Death ends life; how can it give birth? The traditional Grim Reaper and his scythe are replaced by a maternal force that "strews the leaves / of sure obliteration on our paths." The leaves are not cut down by an untimely scythe but fall when their time has come. The lines call attention to the natural, inevitable death that makes urgent the fulfillment of desire. Paradoxically, consciousness of death gives birth—to awareness of beauty's transience. An entire stanza prompts us to make these inferences and others concerning procreation; it directs but also multiplies the potential insights. Turner and Fauconnier are sensitive to the interaction of metaphor and other tropes in contexts that limit the possible meanings in some directions but thereby expand them in others.

V. Summary. The figural use of "metaphor" in mod. theory, through which it assimilates not only all other tropes (as in Aristotle) but models, analogies, and narrative methods as well, leads back to the question of whether the literal and figurative can be distinguished from one another. The simplest and in some ways most logical answers are that ling. meaning is all literal (Davidson) or all figural (Nietzsche). Children do not discriminate between the two in lang. acquisition, and there is little evidence that adult comprehension of literal and metaphorical usage involves different psychological processes (Rummelhart). Some argue that tropes can be entirely literal (see *Grammatical Metaphor*). Rather than attempting to identify rules capable of accounting for literal usage and then explaining figures as transformations or deviations from this set, one can treat literalness "as a limiting case rather than a norm" and develop a pragmatic theory of meaning in which metaphors need not be considered different from other usage (Sperber and Wilson).

Figurative indirectness also seems prevalent in Chinese and Japanese poetry. Varieties of parallel structure, the Chinese stylistic figures of *bi* (comparison) and *xing* (incitation, affective image), and the tendency to imply without asserting a relation between mood and scene imply a reticence at odds with propositional assertion (Owen, Cheng, Cal). The 20th-c. confrontation

of truth and metaphor, based on the assumption that metaphor is an assertive predication, may have been misguided.

The analogies and metaphors that prompt insight do not have to appear in poetry. Many have emerged from our interactions with technology. Fauconnier and Turner call attention to the consequences of comparing a disruptive program in a computer to a virus in an organism. The analogy itself comes to life when one pursues its implications. Antibiotics will prove useless; the first line of defense would be to identify sources of the infection and methods of preventing it from entering the system. Determining the molecular structure (code) of the virus would be useful for the creation of feedback mechanisms that could neutralize its effects. Through the same kind of reasoning, the models used in scientific theories serve heuristic functions when familiar structures are used to map uncharted phenomena. Hesse and Kuhn extended Black's discussion of the subject in *Models and Metaphors*. Citing the work of Bachelard and Canguilhem, Derrida (1972) suggested that the function of metaphor in science is not merely heuristic. Hesse endorses Boyd's claim (in Ortony) that "metaphors are constitutive of the theories they express, rather than merely exegetical."

As the hist. of science and poetry show, metaphors and models are tools for thought that may or may not prove productive. When productive, they implant thoughts that become part of a society and culture—what we (unconsciously) think with, rather than think about. Pepper's *World Hypotheses* claims that different ways of life are based on "root metaphors" that affect every aspect of experience. For Blumenberg's philosophical anthropology, such a metaphor constitutes a worldview, a "set of institutions, customs, and expectations that maintain a life-world" and constitute its "selves" (Pavesich). The difference between creative and commonplace metaphors may be a function of the amount of consciousness they evoke.

While contributing to an understanding of its ling. features and conceptual implications, theories of metaphor show that it is not simply one critical problem among others, notable only for the number of disagreements it causes. Ricoeur finds in philosophic metaphor a potential for revealing the nature of being. But as that which lies outside the literal, normal, proper, or systematic, metaphor serves as a topic through which each theory and philosophy defines itself. Metaphor is not simply true or false but that which marks the limits of the distinctions between the two or between meaning and nonsense. As Derrida says, "Each time that a rhetoric defines metaphor, not only is a philosophy implied, but also a conceptual network in which philosophy itself has been constituted." Thus, agreement about the status of metaphor will be deferred until all other ling. and philosophic disputes have been resolved.

See FIGURATION, TROPE.

■ Anthologies: *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. M. Johnson (1981); *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (1993); *Aspects of Metaphor*, ed. J. Hintikka (1994); *Grammatical Metaphor*, ed. A.-M. Simon-Vandenberg, M. Taverniers, and L. Ravelli (2003);

Cognitive Linguistics, ed. D. Geerarts (2006); *Corpus-Based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy*, ed. A. Stefanowitsch and S. Gries (2006); *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. R. W. Gibbs Jr. (2008).

■ **History:** M. Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1862, 1865); F. Brinkmann, *Die Metaphern* (1878); H. Wetner, *Die Ursprünge der Metapher* (1919); W. B. Stanford, *Greek Metaphor* (1936); H. Konrad, *Étude sur la métaphore* (1939); E. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. S. Langer (1946); F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (1873), *Philosophy and Truth*, ed. D. Breazeale (1979); L. Doležel, *Occidental Poetics* (1990); K.W.F. Schlegel, "Dialogue on Poesy" [1799], *Theory as Practice*, ed. J. Schulte-Sasse (1997); G. Bergounioux, "La sémantique dans le champ de la linguistique francophone jusqu'à 1916" and B. Nerlich, "La métaphore et la métonymie," *Sémiotiques* 14 (1998); B. Nerlich and D. D. Clarke, "Mind, Meaning and Metaphor," *History of the Human Sciences* 14 (2001).

■ **Texts:** C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923); C. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery* (1935); G. Bachelard, *La Formation de l'esprit scientifique* (1938); S. K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942); S. Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (1942); C. Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor* (1958); M. Black, *Models and Metaphors* (1962); P. Wheelwright, *Myth and Reality* (1962); I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) (1965); V. Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" [1917], *Russian Formalist Criticism*, ed. and trans. L. Lemon and M. J. Rels (1965); M. Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (1966); H. Weinreich, "Explorations in Semantic Theory," *Current Trends in Linguistics* 3 (1966); G. Canguilhem, *Études d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences* (1968); N. Goodman, *Languages of Art* (1968); K. Burke, "Four Master Tropes," *A Grammar of Motives* ([1945] 1969); M. C. Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 22 (1962); G. Vico, *The New Science*, ed. and trans. T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch ([1744] 1970); H. White, *Metahistory* (1973); H. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (1975); H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall (1960) (1989); H. Bloom, *Wallace Stevens* (1977); P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny ([1975] 1977); D. Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," and P. de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," *Critl* 5 (1978); V. Forrest-Thomson, *Poetic Artifice* (1978); M. Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (1978); M. Black, "How Metaphors Work," and N. Goodman, "Metaphor as Moonlighting," *Critl* 6 (1979); J. Derrida, *The Archeology of the Frivolous*, trans. J. Leavy ([1973] 1980); G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980); Group μ , "White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass, ([1972] 1982); U. Eco, "The Scandal of Metaphor," *PoT* 4 (1983); M. Riffaterre, *Text Production*, trans. T. Lyons (1983); U. Eco, "Metaphor, Dictionary, and Encyclopedia," *NLH* 15 (1984); E. R. MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor* (1985); S. Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics* (1985); D. Sperber and D. Wil-

son, *Relevance* (1986); R. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," 1956, rpt. in Jakobson, v. 2; E. F. Kittay, *Metaphor* (1987); M. Turner, *Death Is the Mother of Beauty* (1987); F. Cheng, "The Reciprocity of Subject and Object in Chinese Poetic Language," *Poetics East and West*, ed. M. Doleželová-Velingerová (1988-89); H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 1975, *Studies in the Ways of Words* (1989); G. Lakoff and M. Turner, *More than Cool Reason* (1989); *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (1993)—see esp. M. Black, "More about Metaphor" (1977), R. Boyd, "Metaphor and Theory Change," T. Kuhn, "Metaphor in Science," S. Levin, "Standard Approaches to Metaphor," D. Rummelhart, "Some Problems with the Notion of Literal Meanings," J. Sadock, "Figurative Speech and Linguistics," and J. Searle, "Metaphor"; B. Indurkha, "Metaphor as Change of Representation," and E. Steinhart and E. Kittay, "Generating Metaphors from Networks," in *Aspects of Metaphor*, ed. J. Hintikka (1994); R. M. White, *The Structure of Metaphor* (1996); G. Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (1997); S. Glucksberg, *Understanding Figurative Language* (2001); M. Leezenberg, *Contexts of Metaphor* (2001); G. Fauconnier and M. Turner, *The Way We Think* (2002); Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor* (2002); A.-M. Simon-Vandenbergen, "Lexical Metaphor and Interpersonal Meaning," *Grammatical Metaphor*, ed. A.-M. Simon-Vandenbergen et al. (2003); Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture* (2005); E. Rolf, *Metaphertheorien* (2005); E. Romero and B. Soria, "Cognitive Metaphor Theory Revisited," *Journal of Literary Semantics* 34 (2005); *Corpus-Based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy*, ed. A. Stefanowitsch and S. T. Gries (2006); G. Fauconnier and M. Turner, "Conceptual Integration Networks," *Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. D. Geeraerts (2006); J. Derrida, "The Remitt of Metaphor," 1978, *Psyche*, ed. R. Kamell and E. Rottenberg (2007); *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. R. W. Gibbs Jr. (2008); V. Pavestch, "Hans Blumenberg's Philosophical Anthropology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46 (2008); Z.-Q. Cai, "Introduction," *How to Read Chinese Poetry*, ed. Z.-Q. Cai (2008).

METAPHYSICAL POETRY. A term frequently applied to the poetry written by John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, Thomas Traherne, and other 17th-century poets. Metaphysical poetry is distinguished by metaphorical ingenuity, argumentative intellectuality, and stylistic obscurity. A term much less in vogue a generation ago, *metaphysical poetry* is a label criticized by misogyny and misjudgment; that we would have abandoned it if it did not still have some claim is, moreover, a term that would have been inapplicable to those it designates.

The hist. of the term indicates the situation with which it should be used. In Donne's time

En utskrift från Dagens Nyheters nätupplaga, DN.se, 2014-05-11 22:41:37
 Artikelns ursprungsadress: <http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/metaforen-bättre-förr-om-ären/>

Metaforen - bättre förr om åren

Publicerad 2003-12-06 14:05

Varför har metaforerna försvunnit från samtidspoesin? En kollega frågade mig det i våras, och sedan dess har jag av och till gått och funderat på metaforens roll i den samtida poesin. Naturligtvis har metaforen inte "försvunnit", det är för övrigt ett uttryck som i sig rymmer en metafor, då retoriska figurer knappast kan försvinna, ta semester, kasta in handduken eller spela på Lotto - en metafor är en trop (ett litterärt grepp) som kan brukas eller inte, mer eller mindre, men låt oss ändå behålla frågan en liten stund, för resonemangets skull.

Låt oss säga att metaforen verkligen har slutat användas i samtidspoesin, det vore i så fall en stor litteraturhistorisk händelse.

Ordet metafor kommer från grekiskans metaforá som betyder överföring, närmare bestämt från sakled till bildled, och är den mest klassiska av alla troper. Vi möter den överallt, i alla former av språkliga uttryck, men framför allt inom slang, jargong, hiphop och, förstås, poesi. "Konsten att skapa metaforer", skriver redan Aristoteles i sin poetik, "kan inte lånas från andra, och endast den är diktarbegåvningsens egentliga kännetecken." (Jämför rapparen PST/Q: "klarade du ens en ordlek eller en sketen refräng, jag vet att du är liten än, ledsen för besvikelsen, men det du trodde var metaforer var ingenting annat än liknelser".) Också för en poet som Tomas Tranströmer är metaforen, och dess möjligheter till snabb steglös förflyttning, helt central.

Ändå tror jag att min kollega, som för övrigt är prosakritiker och inte alls någon utpräglad lyrikläsare, har delvis rätt i sitt påstående. Det finns en stark och utbredd metafor-kritik hos många av våra viktigaste poeter, som tar sig olika uttryck och har olika bevekelsegrunder. Kanske bör det påpekas att det inte handlar om någon enad grupp av "språkmaterialister", med gemensam poetik och likartade estetiska ideal. I kritiken av metaforen förenas så skilda poeter som Aase Berg och Gunnar D Hansson, Helena Eriksson och Johannes Heldén, Marie Silkeberg och Lars Mikael Raattamaa, Jörgen Gassilewski och Åsa Maria Kraft, Ulf Karl Olov Nilsson och Camilla Hammarström, Fredrik Nyberg och Agneta Enckell - för att nämna några.

Vad är det då hos metaforen som hotar? Vad är det man tar avstånd ifrån, var ligger kritiken? De senaste årens poesidiskussion har genererat olika svar, och varje poet visar förstås ett ställningstagande som är en individuell mix av ett flertal komponenter, men för enkelhetens skull kan man kanske dela in kritiken i fem grupper:

1. Poesins legitimeringskrås - Thomas Götsellus

En av de viktigaste texterna om samtidspoesins utveckling hittar man i Lyrikvännen nr 1-2/98. Där skriver Thomas Götsellus i essän "Dekreativ dikt" om en "transcendental princip" som han kallar för "Skapande-metaforen" och som han menar varit grundläggande för den svenska poesin fram till slutet av 80-talet. Genom historien har poeten skapat dikt i kraft av först Gud, sedan Subjektet och sedermera Språket. Den övergripande "Skapande-metaforen" fungerar som ledstjärna och förebild för den enskilda diktens specifika metaforer.

Sedan nitiotalslets början, menar Götsellus, har den transcendentala

METAFOR

"Metafor" - kommer från grekiskans metaforá som betyder "överföring". Det är en bild som grundar sig på likheten mellan två företeelser: "höstmånens röda kastrull", "hotskriftens underbara tusenfotingar". Metaforen är en av de äldsta litterära greppen inom poesin. Och ett av de mest omdiskuterade.

Redan på 350-talet före Kristus skriver Aristoteles i sin skrift om diktkonsten: "Metafor innebär att ett ting betecknas med ett ord som egentligen betecknar någonting annat". Vad är exempelvis metafor och vad är en liknelse? Man brukar säga att metaforen är djävare och mer oförmedlad än liknelsen som använder sig av ett "som" eller "liksom".

Erik Axel Karlfeldt, ur dikten "Vinterorgel" ("Hösthorn", 1927):

Det dagas ånyo, det klarar så vitt,
 det blånar så vasst.
 Det växer en värld ur förgångelsens mitt,
 en vit och fast.
 I frostiga kvällar skönjs en arkad
 med pipor av silver i glittrande rad
 nu reser vintern sitt orgelhus
 ur mörker och grus.

Tomas Tranströmer, ur dikten "Epllog" ("17 dikter", 1954):

Nu genombränner aftonstjärnan molnet.
 Träd, gårdsgårdar och hus förstoras, växer
 i mörkrets ljudlöst störtande lavin.
 Och under stjärnan framkallas allmer
 det andra, dolda landskapet som lever
 konturers liv på nattens röntgenplåt.
 En skugga drar sin kälke mellan husen.
 De väntar.

Aase Berg, ur prosadikten "I marsvinsgrottan" ("Hos rådjur", 1997):

Där låg marsvinen. Där låg marsvinen och
 väntade med blod om mun som min syster.
 Där låg marsvinen och luktade illa i grottan.
 Där låg min syster och svällde och värkte och
 bullade. Där låg marsvinen och hade ont
 överallt med benen rakt upp som skalbaggar
 och såg depraverade ut och var blå under
 ögonen som av månaders fördärv. Min syster

skaparpositionen varit tom. En frånvoro som bragt hela det poetiska spänningsfältet ur balans och utlöst en fundamental poetologisk kris, resulterande i vad Götselius kallar den "dekreativa dikten". Det vill säga en dikt som vänder sig mot sig själv och sina egna premisser, utan hopp om en sammanhängande helhet. Som exempel väljer Götselius Stig Larssons och Gunnar D Hanssons sena diktning. För metaforens del innebär detta ett slags punktering, då förutsättningen för att en metafor ska kunna fungera är en konventionell tolkningsnivå utifrån vilken det är möjligt att sända i väg en metafor. Finns ingen sådan gemensam överenskommelse mellan text och läsare (vilket det inte kan finnas hos en dikt som på allvar underminerar sina egna förutsättningar), ja då fungerar inte heller den metaforiska överföringen.

kräktes stillsamt och ligkigt, det rann sakta ut hennes slöa mun utan att hon rörde en enda nerv.

Götselius talar återkommande i sin essä i termer av tvång och kris, allt vi befinner oss i en förlustsituation som bara halvhjärtat kan kompenseras. Men kanske bör metaforikritiken också ses som något mer än bara en negativ konsekvens. Nedanstående exempel visar andra förklaringsmodeller.

2. Decentralisering och demokrati - Lars Mikael Raattamaa

"Jag ville också skriva en poesi helt utan metaforer", säger Lars Mikael Raattamaa i en intervju med Stefan Jonsson i Dagens Nyheter (26/9 i år). I samma intervju talar Raattamaa om insikten "att rasismen har sin grund i artonhundratalets språkfilosofi, i viljan att normera språket och utesluta brytningar och orenheter". Få språkliga förekomster är så normerande som den poetiska metaforen. Lite tillspetsat skulle man kunna säga att metaforen är poetens hierarkiska adelsmärke. Det är förmågan att uppfinna nya, blixtrande metaforer - och inte bara halvtaskiga liknelser, som PST/Q så riktigt påpekade - som alltsedan Aristoteles har gjort poeten till Poet. Metaforen kräver förförståelse, överenskommelser och samförstånd för att fungera, och när Raattamaa uttrycker sin längtan efter en poesi "helt utan metaforer" innebär det också en dröm om en decentraliserad maktfördelning, både vad gäller dikten själv och dess eventuella läsare.

I kritiken av metaforen ryms en vilja att röra sig mot en öppnare, mindre inställsam och mer saklig poesi. En dikt som försöker närma sig omvärlden utan krav på förvandling och transcendens. Kanske kan man kalla detta en ny form av "politisk poesi". En diktning som föredrar metonymins utbredning framför metaforens vertikallitet; en krassare, plattare, mer verklighetsnära dikt.

3. Estetiska vinster och nya möjligheter

"Om den gamla litteraturen var metaforens (som likt Eluards blå apelsin bara gjorde tanken dimmig och inte ledde någonstans), är den nya litteraturen 'den minsta avvikelsernas', och den viktigaste

modellen är Charles Reznikoffs 'Testimony: The United States' (1895-1915)', skriver Jonas (J) Magnusson i antologin "12+1 franska poeter". När Magnusson påstår att "den gamla litteraturen var metaforens" gör han det i huvudsak utifrån en estetisk horisont. Skälen till att lämna metaforen och söka nya uttrycksmedel har varken politiska eller krisrelaterade grunder, i stället pekar Magnusson på metaforens begränsade möjligheter till poetisk mening.

Resonemanget med Paul Eluards blå apelsin är lånat av den franske poeten Claude Royet-Journoud, som menar att frasen "Den bortre väggen är vilkalkad" rymmer fler tolkningsmöjligheter och meningsbärande beståndsdelar än Eluards sats "Jorden är blå som en apelsin". Paradoxalt nog kan bokstavligheten rymma en vidare potential än metaforen, då den inte är lika tydligt enkelriktad mot en förutbestämd mening.

För en poet som Ulf Karl Olov Nilsson, vars författarskap ganska drastiskt har växlat spår från en tidigare i huvudsak expressiv poetik till en numera utpräglat konceptuell diktning, tror jag att den insikten har haft stor betydelse. Fler poeter börjar upptäcka att det finns estetiska landvinningar att göra bara genom att lämna det metaforiska kraftfältet. "Formuleringar i stället för bilder", skriver således Fredrik Nyberg i sin senaste diktsamling "Ären". "Ett plastredskap, halffair, att göra invecklade frisyrier med", skriver Robert Ståhl i diktsamlingen "OM".

4. Ökad kommunikation med andra konstarter

Det finns en utbredd uppfattning bland många kritiker att det skulle råda något slags "sextiotaletsnostalgi" inom dagens poesi. Starkast förespråkare för denna tes är Åsa Beckman på föreliggande kultursida. Man talar om "konkretistiska influenser" och ett nyaktualiserat intresse för "ordknådande" och "språkmateralitet". Och visst finns det likheter med det lidiga sextiotalets entusiastiska experimentlusta, men man missar något väsentligt om man drar liknelsen för långt. Den stora skillnaden mellan sextiotalets poesin och poesin i dag, är att då kom de innovativa krafterna i huvudsak utifrån. Bildkonsten och ljudkonsten erbjöd litteraturen att vara med och leka, och det gjorde den också - ett tag, sedan gick den hem till de inkörda rutinerna igen. I dag är situationen annorlunda. Förfrågningarna kommer numera från litteraturen själv, och olika poeter hittar olika lekkamrater. Dagens poesi handlar mer om intern vidareutveckling, självförtroende, nyfikenhet och intresse än om brott mot traditionen och aggressiv polemik.

5. Jag är Jordbeckman och någon Gud finns inte - metaforikritik som religionskritik

Erik Beckman - Jordbeckman - materialistförkunnaren och verklighetsdiktaren, trodde inte på Gud. Och han betvivlade metaforen och dess förrådiska förändligande av människor och ting. Vilket inte motsäger att han var en hejdlöst bildsprakande diktare, hypermetaforisk skulle kanske någon säga, men då slår man hammaren på tummen i stället för på spiken. Beckmans metaforer lämnar egentligen aldrig sakledet, utan avtäcker det, vidgar det, gör det mer reellt än det var från början. Som Götselius uppmärksammade i sin Lyrikvännerensä var den poetiska metaforen ursprungligen riktad mot Gud; och på sätt och vis står riktningmätaren kvar i samma läge, det är en överföring som söker sig uppåt, mot det osägbara, mot andligheten, mot mystiken och epifanin. I dag ser vi en sådan metaforanvändning hos exempelvis Magnus William-Olsson eller Kristian Lundberg. Men många poeter tycks liksom Beckman värja sig mot metaforens transcendentala vertikalitet, till exempel kan man se detta hos Jörgen Gassilewski och Gunnar D Hansson.

Det finns alltså flera anledningar till att frångå metaforen, och olika poeter hittar olika lösningar. Aase Berg låter metaforerna klippa ihop så att de i stället bildar en tät i det närmaste orörlig språkmassa, Marie Silkeberg förflyttar sig genom ljudlighet, så att "rop" blir "rep", "monster" - "mönster" och "underjorden" - "underskogen" och Fredrik Nyberg slits mellan bokstavlighet och bild, mellan expression och reflektion. Johannes Heldén använder nästan inga metaforer alls, medan Camilla Hammarström använder massor - så många och intensiva att sakledet förbleknar i bakgrunden och metaforiken övergår till att bli nya sakled. Varje poet har en egen strategi. Och kanske bör man påpeka att dagens poesi inte saknar bilder, det är bara det att man inte finner dem på den metaforiska nivån. I stället framträder de som metonymer - "delen för helheten" - det vill säga. Robert Ståhls "plastredskap, hairfair, att göra invecklade frisyrer med" är inte en metafor för något annat, men det genererar en större bildsfär av associationer och betydelser.

Var har då de stackars metaforerna tagit vägen? De flesta har plockats upp av estradpoeterna och tycks där leva ett välmående liv. Andra har funnit en värdefull hemvist hos poeter som Ulf Eriksson, Marie Lundqvist eller Mats Söderlund. Men många härjar fortfarande helt fritt i vissa skribenters tidningsartiklar.

Anna Hallberg

© Detta material är skyddat enligt lagen om upphovsrätt.