I Metaphor
Between language and cognition.

for the roses
had the look of flowers that are looked at
T.S. Eliot

1 Poetic interpretation

1.1 Symbols in poetry
A poem about a rose is hardly ever about a rose. Its poetic guise has many traditional faces: the red of love, the pink of health or the white of purity. But the meanings of symbols, however traditional the image presented may be, are not fixed. The image of a rose, for instance, has a distinguished history as a poetic symbol, but what remains of that in Gertrude Stein’s ‘a rose is a rose is a rose’? If a rose really were a rose in poetry - why should she say so? Could every single mentioned rose present a different one from its history of symbolic

1 T.S. Eliot, ‘Burnt Norton’ in Four Quartet
2 Gertrude Stein, ‘Sacred Emily’ (1913) in Geography and Plays. There are several other writings by Stein in which the same phrase occurs, sometimes without the indefinite particle, and sometimes with, but capitalized, and sometimes as part of a longer sentence: ‘suppose, to suppose, suppose a rose is a rose is a rose’ The mentioned reference apparently is the first of all these occurrences. The probably most famous reference is the children’s book The World is Not Round (1939), which is about a girl called Rose.
imagining metaphors

meanings? One wonders: is this a statement about what the author wants from her readers? To stop them from thinking about what the image stands for and to read what is clearly said? Is it an enchanting formula that hinders the symbolic interpretation that we are likely to recall in poetic interpretation? Precisely in asking this, we interpret the imagery in the tautological rhythm anew. We look for the use of the words, and thereby look beyond what is stated. We take the phrase for a poetic stance, and not merely for the reassuring tautology it appears to be. And with that, Stein’s roses again become a symbol, representing all images in poetry that are interpreted as something beyond the words expressed.

The normal situation in which we encounter a poem is when we are reading a book, or maybe just a scrap of paper, or when someone is reading it out loud to us. The author is absent, and has left us to understand his text by ourselves. In the context of reading a poem, there is little fact of the matter that may help us interpret its message. Most of the time, when we converse, we understand what others mean not only through the utterances themselves, but also from the expressions on their faces or the tone of their voices, from our knowledge of their role and of their past. We anticipate what they may want to say, and look for confirmation in their words.

The lack of an immediate context of utterance is typical for any written text, but may be claimed to be so most radically for poetry. Many written texts explicitly present a context in which they are to be understood, through references, through descriptions or titles that remind us of their purpose and use. Thus, although for any text a thorough analysis may reveal implicit references to unexpected contexts, texts are often transparently situated in a context. Poetic text is different in this respect.

A poem, for lack of explicit context, can be interpreted in many ways. Schools of interpretation differ widely in what kinds of fact they claim constitute a poem’s context: knowledge of its author, analysis of its formal properties or comparison to its literary predecessors and contemporaries. But then again, poetry is often read without such knowledge at all. A poem may simply be interpreted in the very situation in which we encounter it and consider its meaning, such as when it is quoted in a text, or in the middle of some event in our own lives. Reading poetry is a private matter, and a reader need not stand corrected for his entirely personal, sentimental or anachronistic interpretations.

A poem may be interpreted in relation to our personal state of mind, rendering the poem an expression, surprising or not, of our own thoughts and feelings. Poetry is distilled from fragments of our own language. Its form meets our making of meaning: our own knowledge resonates in another man’s words; our own visions emerge from his imagery. In this sense, poetic interpretation is the great homecoming of language: when interpreting a poem, we recognize
our own perceptions and sensations, our own knowledge and memories in a form that is independent from our private minds. Poetry is meaningful through private knowledge and sensations on the one hand and through public expression and cultural conventions on the other. In poetic interpretation, we thus witness the interaction between the personal and the public. To some extent, of course, this holds for all utterances, since they all consist of a personal use of conventional means of expression. However, most utterances are embedded in a functional context, and leave little room for extensive reflection on the meanings of the words. Poetic texts, by contrast, are written for such reflection. The reader is challenged by the poetic use of words, the imagery, the typography; he is seduced to understand what this use of his language means. In the process his imagination is addressed, and his sense of language is tested.

The lack of specification of an extra-linguistic context for poetic text is captured by Jakobson’s qualification of the 'poetic function' of a text. In poetic texts many stylistic devices occur, that hinder the transparency in the text, and thereby draw the reader’s attention to the text itself. Examples of these are the use of figuration, both in the form of conventional or traditional poetic symbolism, and in the form of unconventional imagery; lack of grammaticality; unconventional use of words; or dominant use of rhyme and rhythm. With such means, the attention of the reader is drawn to the text, at the expense of its immediate comprehensibility. The use of figuration then, that is, the employment of verbal imagery, is a typical stylistic aspect of poetic language. Figurative language is characterized by vivid descriptions and metaphors; its form appeals to the imagination of the reader.

Thus, interpretation of a poetic text requires more of a reader than the faculty to partake in communication. It requires the reader to make meaningful what seems meaningful, to adapt his faculty of understanding to novel expression and unfamiliar form. Poetic interpretation, in other words, requires a creative act of understanding.

From a semantic point of view, we may ask how creative understanding relates to the understanding of conventional utterances. In what sense is it creative, and in what sense is it an employment of the same faculty? To find an answer to such questions we need to explore the relations between poetic interpretation and understanding as a more general faculty.

The present chapter focuses on an analysis of metaphoric interpretation of poetic imagery. By way of an example, I start out with a discussion of several interpretations of a poem of William Blake. This discussion serves mainly to

---

3 Cf. Jakobson[1969]
**Imagining metaphors**

raise questions about the process of interpreting poetic imagery, that is, about how a reader goes about in metaphorical interpretation.

In the following section, this question is considered from a semantic perspective on interpretation, which is, traditionally, mostly concerned with truth-value and reference. The subsequent sections are devoted to a discussion of various semantic theories on poetic metaphor, which in one way or another provide an answer to the questions raised. After that, I discuss several approaches to metaphor from a cognitive perspective, in each of which the role of imaginative representation in interpretation is described.

For each of the discussed approaches to metaphorical interpretation, its appropriateness with respect to poetic imagery will be singled out. None of the theories discussed gives rise to a full-blown account of the interpretation of poetic imagery. Thus this chapter concludes by stating the relevance of an account of imaginative representation in both poetic interpretation and linguistic understanding, to which we turn in the subsequent chapters.

### 1.2 The Sick Rose

Reading poetry, I said, is a private affair, but that does not keep people from sharing it. Reports of interpretations, guidelines for interpreting and discussions on the correctness of an interpretation are everyday phenomena. Public differences of opinion, be they methodological or on a specific interpretation, provide a chance to compare how different people approach a poem, and how different the outcome of these encounters can be. The following discussion is based on the exchange of different interpretations in a class on philosophy of language. The students were asked to interpret a well-known poem by William Blake:

*The Sick Rose*

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

---

4 Since the word 'image' can be understood in different ways, my frequent use of the word risks ambiguity. In order be as clear as possible I will use the terms 'poetic image' and 'verbal image' and corresponding verbs where I mean (the use of) figurative language; and use the term 'mental image' or 'imaginative representation' for cognitive representations; and the word 'picture' for actual pictures.

5 William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, 1789
Unsurprisingly, in their reported interpretations the students all relied on the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of some of the images described in the poem. Some students started out with a metaphorical understanding of the rose, and considered the poem as a whole in the perspective of that understanding. The metaphorical meanings attributed to the rose were varied. Some understood the rose as a symbol for love, and consequently interpreted the whole poem as an allegation against something that makes joyful love impossible. They interpreted the worm in accordance with their global interpretation as a symbol for respectively concealed homosexuality, AIDS, and syphilis. Someone saw the rose as a woman, maybe called Rose, being destroyed by pregnancy. Others started with an interpretation of the worm, as a factor more generally destroying health, like an unspecified disease, or as something destroying future life, such as environmental pollution. A more canonical interpretation was offered as well, namely that the poem was about the joys of sexual love, being destroyed by the indictment of the church that carnal love is sinful.⁶

In all of these interpretations some extra-textual fact is brought into play, and is supposed to be captured by the poem. One student for instance was convinced that Blake was a homosexual, and he understood the secret, invisible worm as the concealment of Blake’s homosexual love, which ruined its purity. The poem was interpreted as an expression of the author’s state of mind, on the basis of some alleged biographical information. Another student, who interpreted the poem as being about AIDS, by contrast, did not care about the anachronism of his interpretation. He considered the poem in relation to a contemporary dilemma.

Generally, we observed two recurring aspects in the interpretations. The first observation regards the diversity of interpretations. The poem was interpreted in a multitude of possible contexts. The resulting interpretations sometimes were not plausible to anyone but the interpreter, and even to him maybe only for a moment. In class the reported interpretations were discussed, and during the discussion, one at first generally appreciated interpretation easily made way for another if it was argued well. The open-endedness of interpretation, witnessed in these ongoing changes, was not considered a matter of defect or

---

⁶ Cf. the commentary of Geoffry Keanes in the Oxford UP edition, 1990, p 147
insufficient understanding, but rather one of considering additional bits of background knowledge, which seemed plausible enough to be related to the poem. Thus, each new bit of information altered the context of interpretation, and with that, the domain of possible symbolic references was extended or changed.

The second observation is that in the given interpretations the imagery and the narrative structure of the poem played separate roles. First meaningful references were sought, and found, for those words recognized as metaphorical (such as 'rose'). Along with the recognition of the symbols, the poem as a whole was considered as an allegory. In its interpretation, the relations expressed in the poem (such as 'destroy') were taken literally, just as most of the attributions of some property ('of ... joy', 'secret', 'invisible'); the terms indicating more concrete imagery ('rose', 'worm', 'crimson', 'bed', 'howling storm') were interpreted metaphorically as related consistently to one another within what we may call the metaphorical domain of reference. However, in this regard, some aspects of the poem were ignored (as happened to the 'night' and the 'howling storm' in most of the students' interpretations).

The interpretations thus consisted of two distinctive activities. The first is the finding of a domain of metaphorical reference on the basis of some symbolic image. The second is the building of an allegorical meaning, based on consistency of the metaphorical interpretation of the whole poem. These two activities interfered with each other. For instance, if the remainder of the poem’s imagery failed to be interpreted consistently with the initial metaphorical interpretations, this would be pointed out in the discussion, and a new interpretation would be considered. The metaphorical domain of reference, thus, was subjected to changes. However, the 'method' of transferring the narrative of the poem to such domains recurred in all of the interpretations.

These observations are not surprising, all the more since Blake’s poem is typical of a genre of 'symbolism'. It presents clear imagery and structure, and is mainly opaque with respect to the interpretation of the symbols. The resulting interpretations indeed differed mainly in this respect. Other poems employ fewer images, or less consistently so, and thus may demand something else from the reader. Nonetheless, the example shows how metaphorical interpretation can play a role in understanding poetic imagery. It shows that specific background information leads to an interpretation of references for symbolic images in the poem, and thus to some extent determines the interpretation of the poem. It also shows that upon reconsideration of this

---

7 Thus, in our class the discussion exhibited the dialectic between reading and interpreting normally known as the hermeneutic circle.
information, the symbolic references are equally reconsidered. Thus, the process of interpretation involved an on-going consideration of relevant and worthwhile bits of information that would serve as a background for interpreting.

Thus, although of course of limited value as empirical evidence, the discussion of this poem in class does indicate some aspects of poetic interpretation, and thus gives rise to some questions. How does a reader determine which knowledge is relevant for the interpretation of the poem? In the case of using alleged biographical information, the reason seems clear enough; but then, why did other students come up with entirely anachronistic interpretations (such as the worm-as-AIDS interpretation)? How can we explain such variety of interpretations, when we look for the meaning of the poem? And then there are questions on the method of interpretation. Is metaphorical interpretation the general strategy, or is it one among other ways of dealing with poetic images? The survey of perspectives on problems of interpretation, presented in the next section, identifies these questions as belonging to a semantic approach to poetic text, and shows how they have hardly been studied in that branch of theory.
Imagining metaphors

2 Semantics and literary text

2.1 Semantics

The study of poetic interpretation has a long history, and is conducted from different perspectives, and with many different goals. On one side there is the interpretation of the meaning of the individual work; on the other there is the scientific study of literary texts, that regards them as manifestations of laws external to them, e.g. laws about the psyche or society. Todorov distinguishes three different perspectives in the study of literary discourse generally. They are: semantic analysis; syntactical, or structural, analysis; and stylistic analysis. At the stylistic level, discourse can be typified through verbal aspects, such as the degree of abstraction and figuration, the number of references to other texts or discourse types and the traces of the author in the text. At the level of structural analysis, aspects such as the perspective from which it is written, the conformity to grammatical laws, the logical and temporal order in the narrative are at stake. The semantic level of analysis, finally, concerns the references of the words, the truth of the text, and its meaning in context. Stylistic devices, such as metaphorical figuration, recur in semantics from a different perspective, in which the truth and reference of the words rather than their typicality are under investigation. According to this division, the perspective I engaged in the questions on metaphorical interpretation raised above concerns a semantic level of analysis. With such a semantic perspective, it should be noted, the metaphorical interpretation of poetic text is considered from a more general standpoint, namely within a systematic approach to language. Thus, I consider poetry as one of many discourses in which use of words may give rise to metaphorical interpretation. The interpretation of poetic metaphor, then, is considered at once as exemplary of, and as limited by a more general capacity of metaphorical interpretation. Furthermore I am concerned with interpretation insofar as the text or expression allows for it, and not primarily with the actuality, relevance or justifiability of a given interpretation.

In the following section, I consider what traditional, truth conditional semantics has to say on the analysis of poetic text; and it will soon be clear that we cannot derive the tools for a satisfying analysis of metaphorical interpretation from this field. This conclusion is much in line with what many semanticists have concluded, and in the remainder of this chapter I will look

---

8 Todorov[1981] p 7
into some alternative semantic theories that are not principally concerned with a truth conditional understanding of meaning. Semantic theories of meaning are not normally concerned with non-transparent uses of language. Rather, they by and large concentrate on the analysis of formal, systematic properties of utterances, which are often absent or deformed in literary texts.

Formal semantics presents systematized accounts of topics such as quantification and inter- and intra-sentential relations, such as entailment, synonymy, and presupposition. The referential function of words is postulated in formal semantics: given certain parameters in the context (such as the speaker, the utterance-time, and previously introduced references), and given the type of referential phrase (e.g. indexical, proper name, natural kind term) a (number of) non-ambiguous interpretation(s) results. A similar approach to metaphorical interpretation of poetic text, i.e. defining an interpretation of a poetic image as relating the expression to one of a collection of possible domains of reference, seems hard, as the relation to either of these determined domains of references cannot reflect the process of interpretation as described in the previous section, nor its relevance to possible other domains of interpretation. It is then doubtful whether the choice of a single referential domain could be considered the result of such interpretation. In a sense, this problem resembles that which fictional discourse forms for formal semantics, in that the problem stems from a lack of determinate reference. Thus, in the next section, I focus on the semantic treatment of problematic referents.

Lexical semantics, as it exists, deals with the classification of the conventional use of words and their established interpretations; there is hardly any attention for the novel, unconventional use of a word or the singular imaginative interpretation of a term. As we saw, in poetic interpretation, the symbolic interpretation of a word is partly dependent on the informational background of the reader and on the context of interpretation. Hence an account of conventional word-meanings by itself cannot cover the occasional unconventional interpretations that characterize poetic texts. This justifies, I believe, that I refrain from going further into this branch of semantics below.

2.2 Reference and literary discourse

The undeniable presence of literary use of language has forced semantics to deal with this type of discourse, even if only to demarcate the boundaries of literal, truth bound language. The characterization of literary discourse in itself however presents a problem. According to Todorov's scheme mentioned
above, on each level of analysis a text may exhibit properties that are typical of literary discourse. Thus, one may recognize a text as literary, for instance, through a structural property such as a change of narrator's perspective, which is a typical narrative strategy that may serve as an indication. Another, stylistic indication is the use of figurative language, such as the employment of many metaphors. However, none of these properties are exclusive indications for literature or poetry. For instance: rhythm and rhyme appear in advertisements, prayers and hymns; narrative structures that prevail in novels may also occur in journalistic or historical writings; tropes are used in puns and political speeches as well as in poetic texts and so on.

From a semantic perspective, several properties qualify as typical for poetic discourse, albeit in the same loose manner. In prose, for instance, references to fictional characters and events are likely to occur; in poetry ambiguity of metaphorically applied predicates may be exploited. Regarding the question of truth, literary texts hardly present transparent, factual accounts that could qualify as true. Thus, the lack of truth sometimes is considered the most crucial property of literary text.

For instance Frege writes: ' Assertions in fiction are not to be taken seriously, they are only mock assertions [...]. The logician does not have to bother with mock thoughts, just as a physicist, who sets out to investigate thunder will not pay any attention to stage thunder'. Frege distinguishes three components in the interpretation of a word: Sinn, Vorstellung, and Bedeutung. Words in fiction may possess a meaning (Sinn) and they may cause ideas (Vorstellungen). However, they do not possess a reference to reality (Bedeutung), and hence sentences of fiction are not true. Poetic utterances do not aim at truth, and are therefore 'not serious'; however they are justified insofar they 'approach by way of intimation what cannot be conceptually grasped'. The Vorstellungen that poetic texts may cause do not qualify as a semantic concept of meaning, since they are entirely subjective. Taken thus, semantics has not much to say about literature, since it is all about the analysis of the expression of justifiable beliefs.

---

9 This principle, according to Todorov who quotes Riffaterre, is not so much based on the density of metaphors (i.e. quantitatively) but is the result of polyvalence of a text. That is, a text using many metaphors, or typical metaphors, refers to other, similarly figured texts, and are known to belong to literature. Cf. Todorov[1981] p 21
10 Transparency is defined by Jakobson in opposition to figurated text, which draws the attention of the reader to the words themselves, instead of to their referents. (See section 1.1, also note 2)
11 Frege[1979] p 130
12 Frege[1977a] p 9
However, Frege’s notion of Sinn, and consequently its relevance for literary meaning, has been interpreted along different lines in the literature after Frege. Generally, there are two positions on the question whether fictional use of language has sense (Sinn), dependent on how this notion is interpreted. First, if the Sinn is understood as the meaning that allows us identify the reference (Bedeutung) of the utterance, then all utterances containing fictional names are false. This interpretation follows the path that was taken by Russell, who was not satisfied with Frege’s formal logical solution of assigning the empty set as a referent to fictional terms. Thus he presented his extensional analysis of meaning, that states that every definite description necessarily presupposes the existence of its referents; if the existential presuppositions within a sentence are not fulfilled the sentence is false.

Second, the notion of sense is interpreted as meaning independent from whether there is a referent or not. Searle interprets Frege’s concept of Sinn as an independent meaning-representation, which allows us to determine the truth conditions of an utterance, rather than its truth. In this view, semantics should account for the difference between use of meaningful words in both fictional and truth-bound discourse. Previously, Strawson stated the need for a theory that allows distinguishing fiction from truth-bound discourse, in his criticism of Russell’s assumption of existential implications in definite descriptions. According to Strawson, descriptions may have existential presuppositions, but they are typical for only one kind of language-use, and they are not part of the meaning of the expression as such. Existence of referents only matters in the context of truth-bound assertions, and truth is determined pragmatically. Thus, fictional use of language has meaning but not truth-value.

So, truth conditional semantics generally considers fictional utterances as either false or devoid of truth. Nonetheless, there could be good reasons to investigate the notion of truth in literature. First, for instance, it is true in some sense that James Bond works for Her Majesty’s Secret Service; even if it is not true in another sense that he was on the paying-list of any British agency. Thus, there is a notion of fictional truth, or internal truth in fiction, that plays a role in our dealing with literature.

---

13 Gareth Evans interprets the notion of Sinn in this way, as a recipe to arrive at a reference by following a causal chain; he thus contends that fictive utterances are false, since the chain does not begin with a referent. Cf. Evans[1982].
15 Strawson[1969]
Second, there are some other notions of being 'true' that apply to fiction. We discern for instance 'verisimilitude', 'likeliness', 'plausibility', 'realism' and 'naturalism' of literary texts. Of poems we colloquially say that they are 'true' or 'right'; that they give us a better perspective on how things are; or that they just put to words 'how it is'. This points to a second 'external' type of truth of literary texts that addresses a relation between the text and reality, even if it is not the factual truth of the text.

Notions of 'naturalism' or 'plausibility' allude rather to a style of writing, and not to the referential content of the text in a strict sense, for normally in such writings the characters and events described are fictional. However, they do sometimes present a possible course of events in the real world. In what sense, then, are such texts true: is it that they describe reality as it could have been, or do they apply to reality in some other way? The question points to a counterfactual understanding of 'fictional truth', namely as a latent possibility in reality.

Another characterization of the relation of literature to reality amounts to what has been called 'metaphorical truth'. In this understanding, a literary text presents us a model of reality, which allows us in any number of ways to compare it to reality. Such a model may have different degrees of abstraction. It can be highly metaphorical; as for instance the poem of Blake allows us to allegorically understand some relations in the domain in which it is interpreted. Or a literary model can be next-to-real, such as for example Uncle Tom's Cabin or American Psycho, presenting a political and social reality drawn in fiction. The interpretation of fiction-as-model then presents yet another understanding of truth in literary discourse. Thus, truth in literature is not simply to be dismissed on account of its lack of reference to reality. And indeed, several attempts have been made to define truth in literary discourse.

Donnellan investigates the first mentioned type of internal truth in fiction, and arrives at the conclusion that we need two truth-definitions. One for 'discourse about actuality', for which he suggests a causal theory of truth modelled on Russell's account of knowledge through direct acquaintance, in which any sentence containing terms without reference (or, more precisely, with the empty set as reference) is false. Next, we need a definition of truth for fictional discourse, according to which it would be true that Bond works for Her Majesty's Secret Service. The most important property of interpretation in fictional discourse for Donnellan is that the interpretation of a term does not involve an existential presupposition regarding the referent, so that the lack of actual reference is no obstacle to fictional truth.

---

16 Cf. section 3.3 below, on Nelson Goodman
17 Donnellan[1974]
However, with this proposal the question is why, even in Donnellan's framework, we should stop at two definitions of truth. For, if we say: 'Bond’s manners present an example of male chauvinism', whose manners do we refer to, and is the sentence true in fictional discourse or in the actual world? Further, if Bond in the novel says something that would be true, if it were uttered by an actual secret agent, is it true in fictional discourse or in actuality? Would not meta-fictional sentences, and sentences about actual facts in fiction require yet more truth-definitions? Thus, along with the first type of 'fictional truth' we distinguished above we could use at least three other types of truth. But even if we would have such a number of definitions, their value would be questionable. On the verge of fiction and reality there are, for instance, historical writings, of which we aren't always able to tell which type of truth should apply. Fictional discourse pervades discourse about actuality, and vice versa: there is no clear border between the two. An attempt, despite these problems, to model a referential understanding of meaning in fiction was made by David Lewis, discussed shortly below.

There is still another argument against the characterization of fiction as language use without existential implications, and that lies in the arbitrary distinction between different works from a literary point of view. On the one hand the definition of fictional truth would apply to all types of discourse, not only literary, that contain empty references. On the other hand, a fictional story would become discourse about actuality if the story accidentally turned out to be true. Thus, a definition of truth as providing the criterion for the distinction between two types of discourse seems to miss the point of literature. Consider for instance that the novel Anna Karenina would be discovered to be about a woman who indeed experienced all the adventures described. Would there not, in the respect of truth, exist a greater similarity between the functioning of this novel and, for instance The Idiot, than between it and any arbitrary historical biography? On the other hand, with this truth-definition any text that turns out not to be about an existing referent, for instance scientific treatises about the famous inflammatory substance 'phlogiston', would become fiction, while theories about phlogiston were not at all intended as such. Thus, the definition of fictional truth in terms of the lack of actual reference is unsatisfactory. However, an alternative definition of when fictional truth pertains would equally be unsatisfactory, since it presupposes knowledge of the discourse before establishing its (truth-conditionally defined) meaning.

In view of these problems David Lewis made another attempt at a truth-definition for fiction. Lewis devises a possible-world semantics where different worlds are counterparts of each other. Amongst the possible worlds there are fictional worlds. Thus, fictional names refer to fictional entities within a world
belonging to the fictional narration. A story is then considered as a counterfactual: the fictional world presents a hypothetical account of characters and events. The relation between the actual world and a fictional world is determined through the counterpart-relation, a somewhat underdetermined relation of correspondence, but not identity, between similar inhabitants of different worlds. The actual existence of a Don Quixote or an Anna Karenina is then not relevant for truth within their respective fictional worlds.

Lewis defines fictional worlds such that whatever is true in the actual world, or rather in the 'collective belief worlds of the community of origin of the fiction', is true in the fictional world, unless there are other 'overt beliefs' presented within the fiction itself. Fictional discourse is then semantically analysed as containing an intensional operator, referring us to the fictional world. The postulation of fictional entities in a counterfactual world, instead of denying them any existence, does not add much in the way of a clarification of the interpretation of fictional discourse. Apart from the resulting ontological unclarities regarding the assumption of fictional entities, Lewis' account merely projects his model of truth in the actual world onto fiction. Fiction, then, becomes but a parasitic discourse, simply employing the referential use of language in a vacuous way. To define truth in fiction in this way is merely to recount what a story already tells us. Apart from the redundancy of such a notion of truth, it is somewhat simplistic. For fictional discourse does not always disclose a world to us so easily. There are many stylistic devices that make a text opaque with regard to what actually happens in a story. The use of different perspectives, the role of the narrator in the events described, intertextual references etc. constitute what Lamarque calls 'narrative filters', which hinder the transparency of the descriptive content of a story. Thus, to construe an account of what happens in a story often is a matter of interpretation in itself; a story has no single fictional world in which it is to be interpreted, but several possible worlds. Counterfactual truth in Lewis' account then remains a matter of interpretation; it has to be 'discovered', just like actual truth, with the disadvantage that fictional worlds are not factual.

Other understandings of truth of literature, such as its model function mentioned above, are entirely foreign to Lewis' account. The fact that fictional characters become only alive within our imagination is ignored, and thus our empathetic experiences are, as it were, deferred to another world. Lewis' account

---

18 Lewis[1978] p 44
19 This attitude towards literary discourse has explicitly been defended by John Searle, who writes that 'telling stories is a language-game [...] [which is] not on all fours with illocutionary language-games, but is parasitic on them'. (Searle[1979] p 67)
20 Cf. Lamarque[1990]
thereby suffers from what Patricia De Martelaere calls 'the fictional fallacy', that is, the assumption of a separate fictional reality, which presents personal, imaginative representations as if they were part of some distant objective reality, and not of our own, subjective, experience. Through the experiences of empathic reading, and of growing familiarity with the characters, we can explain how a story may become a relevant 'model' for our experiences of the 'actual world'.

Lewis' theory of counterfactual worlds lacks any explanatory value of such recognition; it offers no account of allegorical interpretation of a story or poem, in which its relevance for reality is explicated. The only relation between the fictional world and the actual world he presents is given by the notion of a 'counterpart' relation. This is a merely formal relation between corresponding referents in both worlds, and does not cover any structural relations between one world and another. The one advantage of this account is that notions of realism or verisimilitude can be explained as a relative high degree of correspondence between the two worlds. Such analysis however understates the literary function of the stylistic aspect of the 'true' text, namely its relevance for our perspective on the 'counterpart' in reality.

Theories of literature that focus on the semantic interpretation, that is, on the analysis of the normal truth-conditions of an expression, seem generally ill-devised to analyse the typical empathic qualities of fictional discourse. Literal interpretation of poetic text does not present meaningful discourse about reality, and thus, if it is interpreted as such, it yields mere falsehood. But such falsehood is hardly as informative as when we consider an account of factual events false: the falsehood of literature is simply irrelevant, since literature is not intended as a factual account, and is normally not interpreted as such. Thus, accounts of literal truth, and notions of 'fictional truth' based on this model, do not meaningfully characterize literature. The function of narrative ambiguities, fictional references and metaphorical insights are not captured in such an account of truth and reference. A definition of fictional truth on the model of correspondence to reality, even if such correspondence remains hypothetical, can but present literature as a mere 'as if'.

Another perspective on truth mentioned above concerns the metaphorical 'application' of the text to a domain of interpretation. The literal understanding of the text, and the truth-conditions thus disclosed, may somehow present an allegorical model, pertaining to a different interpretational domain of reference. To this end, as we saw in the discussion on Blake's Sick Rose, references in the text may be interpreted metaphorically. The construction of

21 Cf. De Martelaere[1988]
the domain of interpretation, i.e. what the metaphorical references are 'about', thus becomes an important aspect of the interpretation.

Considerations of truth of a literary text are thus directed to the use that is made of the text. The analysis of truth should then rather address the appropriateness of the model that a text could present for a given domain, rather than to the semantic properties of reference within the text. From such more pragmatically oriented analysis, a notion of the rightness of an interpretation might result. However, any analysis of 'right' interpretations would rely on an account of what a model provided by a text could be, and how it could metaphorically be brought into relation with a domain of referents.

There are quite a few accounts of metaphorical meaning and reference that present alternatives to the truth-conditional approach discussed above. In the next sections, several of these theories are discussed, in order to get a better grip on what metaphorical interpretation is.
3 Semantic perspectives on metaphorical interpretation

3.1 Tropes and texts

There is a vast literature available on metaphor, and many theories are relevant for this investigation. To pick out some, and leave others unmentioned is to some extent arbitrary. The discussion below addresses only those accounts that are explicitly concerned with the interpretation of poetic metaphors and consider the role of extra-textual knowledge in interpretation. The one exception is Aristotle's typology of metaphor from the Poetic. I discuss his account because it is the origin of Western thought on metaphor, and because in later theories his rhetorical approach is abandoned, but remains influential in all definitions of metaphor. Other theories that are mainly discussed on grounds of historical influence are the Interaction Theory of Max Black, which lies at the basis of virtually all the other theories I discuss, and the so-called 'comparison view', because it presents an interesting fallacy in the theorizing on metaphorical interpretation. Both accounts are discussed here in order to present a background to the discussion of the other, more relevant theories.

The first of these is from Nelson Goodman, who gives a general analysis of reference, other than denotation, which applies to all expression, including art. Then I proceed with the discussion of a few authors from the 'Cognitive Semantics' movement, who present an account of metaphor that emphasizes its all-pervasiveness, and analyse the role of conventional metaphors in poetry. Next, Indurkhya includes poetic metaphors in his account of creative application of proportional analogy, emphasizing the role of perception in interpretation. Finally, Ricoeur presents an account of the creation of metaphorical meaning, with an emphasis on the imaginative aspect of interpretation.

In most of these theories, a metaphor is understood as a sentence with a specific structure, such as 'Thine eyes are two cold jewels'. In poetic texts, the imagery is sometimes presented in a single word, sometimes throughout a text;

---

22 Several theories on poetic metaphors are not presented extensively, as for instance those presented by Richards, Gibbs or Hester. This is not only for reasons of space, but also because the accounts that I do present either appeal to those theories (e.g. Ricoeur appeals to Hester), or they present an approach that is somewhat comparable to, or outdated by approaches discussed, and a discussion would not add greater insight in the subject matter. Further, I concentrate on semantic literature, mainly excluding philosophical and poetical works.

23 Baudelaire: 'tes yeux sont deux bijoux froids', example and translation derived from Gineste e.a.[1997]
Imagining metaphors

it thus does not always have the recognizable 'standard' tropical form of metaphor. What I call a standard tropical metaphor and an allegorically interpreted text may be different with respect to the choice of a domain of reference. In the interpretation of a trope, the reference of the metaphor is normally derived from an available context (e.g. 'thine eyes' provide the reference for 'jewels'); in the metaphorical interpretation of a poetic text, this context of interpretation is not always available, as we saw in the interpretations of *The Sick Rose*. Nonetheless, theories on the interpretation of the former may help us explain how poetic imagery acquires an interpretation. In section 5.2, we compare the two instances of interpretation, and, consequently, we arrive at an understanding of 'metaphoricity' as a property assigned in interpretation. The syntactical form of 'standard' metaphors is there identified as a formal property that serves as one, but not the only possible indication that a metaphorical interpretation is in order.

3.2 Traditional Theories on Metaphor: Aristotle, Black

Traditional theories of metaphor distinguish two terms within a metaphor, the *target* or tenor and the *vehicle* or source. The target is the term that receives a literal interpretation; the vehicle is the metaphorical predication. In a metaphor such as Gertrud Stein's 'Rose is a rose’, the subject term 'Rose' is the literal term, and 'is a rose' is predicated metaphorically. Thus 'Rose' is the target and the predicative 'a rose' is the vehicle of this metaphor. On a theoretical level metaphors are thus characterized by the specific predicative relation between target and vehicle.

---

24 Todorov indicates the possibility of an analysis of texts as a metaphor, with text-external references (Todorov[1973] p 16). An account that, contrarily, explicitly emphasizes the tropical definition of metaphor as differing from allegory is presented in Paul Henle[1958]. He bases this difference precisely on the occurrence of both literal and metaphorical words (and hence the situation of the metaphorical reference) within a text. Below, I argue that both trope and discourse can be interpreted metaphorically, and that hence the rhetorical distinction does not reflect an entirely different strategy of interpretation, although there are differences with respect to the construction of both target and vehicle in different cases. See section 5.2.

25 The list of terms used for the distinct parts of the metaphor is much longer. Black[1962], for instance uses both 'frame' and 'focus', and 'primary' and 'auxiliary subject', and Henle[1958] indicates words with a 'figurative' or 'literal sense'. I don't discuss the subtleties of the different definitions, but translate (as far as possible) the terms back to my own use of 'target' and 'vehicle'. For a discussion on the precise meanings of all terms see e.g. Henle[1958] or Leezenberg[1995]. The latter presents a discussion of the level (i.e. semantic, referential, cognitive or pragmatic) on which metaphors are situated by any of a wide range of authors.

26 Ch.26 in Gertrude Stein's *The World is not round* (1939).
The first more extensive analysis of metaphors in Western philosophy is that of Aristotle. Aristotle writes that metaphorical predication is the result of an uncommon use of words. He specifies the categorical relations between vehicle and target, resulting in four specific types of metaphor. First, the generic word may be applied instead of the specific, as in 'my ship stands here', for 'standing' is more general than the lying attached of a ship. Second, the specific may be applied for the generic, as in 'innumerable brave deeds', for in this sentence Homer uses 'innumerable' where he means the more general 'many'. Third, the one species may be used to name the other, as Empedocles does when he interchanges the expressions 'drawing away life' and 'cutting off blood', where both mean 'taking away something'. The last case he mentions is the use of a word on the basis of analogy.

In analogy, two things A and B have the same relation to one another as two others, C and D. In the metaphor, A may be called C, or B may be called D. For example, the attribute of a cup for Dionysos is analogical to that of the shield for Ares; hence the poet may speak of 'the shield of Dionysos' or of 'the wineless cup of Ares'. In some cases there is no proper word for one of the things in the analogy; in that case there is no substituted term, and the 'uncommon' word is the only word to address the issue. Thus one can say about the sun that it 'sows' its divine fire', even if there is no proper word for the action of the sun releasing fire.

Where the first three types of metaphor are devices in which one word is replaced with another, related word, the last is of a different nature. The first difference is that an analogy involves four constituents in two pairs. As in the 'sowing sun', we saw that not all of these constituents need to be given verbally; the fourth term in the analogy (here: 'grain') may simply be suggested through the analogy itself (in the example the sun's releasing fire is suggested through the image of the sun as a farmer sowing fire instead of grain).

In contemporary understanding some of these described phenomena would not qualify as metaphors; for instance, the first two tropes could be called synecdoche, and the third may sometimes be qualified as metonyms. Oddly, in

---

27 Ch XXI Aristotle, Poetica

28 The use of the word 'uncommon' is one of different possible translations. In some translations the word 'improper' is used; other suggestions include 'not current' or 'foreign'. It seems unlikely that Aristotle held that metaphorical terms are 'improperly' used, since, in the Rhetorica he discusses the 'proper' use of metaphors. Cf. Leezenberg[1995] pp.34.

29 This is also known as a 'lexical gap' filled by a metaphorical expression; an instance, thus, of catachresis.
one view the metaphor based on analogy is excluded or at least underspecified. This view holds that all metaphors can be rendered in the form of a simile, e.g. 'The cup of Dionysos is like the shield of Ares'. An analogy however is not explicated properly in this way, since one may also understand the simile more generally: 'Cups are like shields'. In the four-place analogy indicated by 'the shield of Dionysos' the relation with the two missing terms is modelled in the relation between the two given terms, whereas in the two-placed simile the aspect of resemblance may be anything, from the material of which it is made to its shape or use.

Although the simile-analysis is too general, it does point out the comparative aspects in the interpretation of a metaphor. The analysis in the Poetic is concerned only with the structural relations between the terms in the metaphor; the properties of what these terms refer to are not considered. However, upon interpreting and valuating the metaphor the reader may compare the substituted terms to the metaphorical substitutes, and conclude that their referents have similar qualities, such as in the given example, the brilliance of the material and the shape of both cup and shield. These likenesses enhance the feeling of appropriateness of the analogy-based substitution, and make the metaphor more interesting.

The same holds for the three other types of metaphors, of which I will discuss one more.

In 'Rose is a rose' the predicative 'rose' is a specific term substituted for the generic. Roses are one of the things of beauty and joy, and so is Rose. The image of a rose however is more vivid and has more imaginative qualities than the generic 'things of beauty and joy'. Its colour, its scent, its growth and its traditional symbolic meaning represent qualities that are somehow brought into relation to Rose through the predication. Thus the stylistic choice of the word 'rose' adds something to the understanding. In fact, elsewhere, Aristotle points out this property of metaphors: they enhance the understanding of what is said, since the topic is 'brought before the eyes' by a metaphor. But the use

---

30 This view appears in the literature as the 'comparison-view'. It is apparently derived from Cicero's qualification of metaphor as a subcategory of similes. Apparently the comparison-view is the view everyone loves to hate: Black dismisses Whately and Bain as adhering the comparison view (Black[1962] pp 35-36), Leezenberg[1995] attributes it as a 'referentialist position' to Henle and Fogelin(pp 63-69), while Henle[1958] puts Middleton Murray on the spot for his viewing metaphor as a 'compressed simile' (p 182). An extensive criticism of the view that metaphors in fact are similes is given by Donald Davidson[1979]. Davidson's own view is that metaphors invite comparisons (and further thoughts) but do not mean comparisons. Although I refrain from further discussion of alleged comparison-view'ists, I do discuss Davidsons views somewhat more extensively in section 3.4.

31 Rhetorica 1411b26, quoted from Leezenberg[1995] p 40
of metaphors also has consequences for the interpretation of the sentence and its constituents, which is left unmentioned by Aristotle. The metaphorical predication 'is a rose' is not taken as a statement that Rose belongs to the class of roses, or even, on account of the substitution, to a generic class containing 'roses'. Rather it is taken as an indication that other properties of roses also belong to Rose.

In the before mentioned 'comparison-view' the copula is understood to have a different meaning in metaphor: 'is like', that is: the metaphorical 'is' indicates a simile. The meaning of 'Rose is a rose' accordingly would be: 'Rose is like a rose'. However, again, that is too general, since it implies a general likeness between Rose and roses, whereas in the metaphor, only one aspect or property may be the ground for the substitution (for instance, when in the context it is said that Emily is a lily-in-the-valley, one aspect of roses, something like 'preciousness', is emphasized). The metaphor may be interpreted as an indication of some similarity, but its meaning is not the blunt expression of a general likeness. A further argument, against the theoretical soundness of the comparison-theory, is that it does not explain metaphorical interpretation. Recognizing the copula as expressing a simile already presupposes a metaphorical interpretation of the predication.

An answer to the question how metaphorical meanings come about is that a word has more meaning to it than 'belonging to a class of somethings'. In the Interaction Theory of Max Black metaphorical interpretation is described as a process of interaction between the meanings of the vehicle and the target. A vehicle is a 'model' through which one looks at the target, like a 'smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear' through which one looks at the sun. This model is provided by a 'system of implications' associated with the vehicle. These implications 'usually consist of "commonplaces", but may, in suitable cases, consist of deviant implications established ad hoc by the writer'. As a result of the metaphorical modelling then, both target and vehicle acquire somewhat different meanings than in a non-metaphorical context.

Black gives the example of 'Man is a wolf'. In this metaphor, a system of associated commonplaces, consisting of popular beliefs and platitudes on the vehicle, whether true or not, such as that wolves prey on other wolves, are fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle and so on, is made to fit man. That is, a 'suitable hearer' will be led by this system of implications to construct a

---

32 Cf the discussion in Levinson,S[1983].
33 Black[1962] p 43
34 Black[1962] p 44
35 Black[1962] pp. 39
corresponding system of implications about man, and make him see man as preying on others, in permanent struggle and so on. But it also results in his 'humanizing' wolves, since on the part of the wolf, irrelevant properties such as having fleas in your fur, are downplayed in the metaphorical interpretation. That is, the word 'wolf' is understood within context: the metaphor does not lead us to see man as a true four-legged animal that kills true sheep.

In the former discussion, we emphasized the role of extra-textual knowledge in poetic interpretation, as well as the non-conventional interpretation of poetic images. Precisely in these respects, the Interaction Theory deviates from traditional semantics, and provides a perspective for developing a semantic theory on the interpretation of poetic imagery. Black seems to agree on this point. He devotes little thought to poetic or 'complex' metaphors; but here and there he does refer to the appropriateness of the Interaction Theory in such cases. As an alternative for the commonplace implications, for instance, an ad hoc system of implications may be presented explicitly by the writer: 'metaphors can be supported by specially constructed systems of implications; they can be made to measure and need not be reach-me-downs'.

This feature, he claims, is especially relevant in poetry, where the context of the metaphor builds the frame for the associated implications in the metaphor. However, he never explains how this is done, nor does he present an example. The nature and construction of such poetic implicational systems thus remain wholly unspecified, along with questions regarding the subjectivity of such systems, their coherence, and the possible sources on which such implications might draw.

With respect to its application to poetry, the Interaction Theory has another obstacle. According to Black the recognition of a metaphor is a matter of 'our general knowledge of what it is to be a metaphor', and of contextual judgement that the statement should be interpreted metaphorically rather than literally on account of its obvious falsehood, pointlessness or incongruity with its context.

It is unclear how such criteria apply to poetic imagery, first because, as we saw, the notion of literal truth makes little sense with regard to a poetic text and second because the occurrence of verbal imagery is characteristic of poetry, not incongruent within its context.

The idea that the meaning of a metaphor is dependent on 'associated commonplaces' brings a notion of meaning into play that is unsystematic, since it is not predictable. On the whole, metaphorical meaning remains a rather vague concept in Black's account, since he does not specify how the system of implications is related to the words it is associated with, nor how this

36 Black [1962] p 43
37 Black [1979] p 36
knowledge is revived in interpretation. He considers only the association of commonplace or implications that are 'specially constructed' in the context. However, since the notion of 'associated commonplaces' is not truth-bound or in any other way delimited, there seems no reason to stop at commonplace associations in the determination of metaphorical meanings, and leave other, more personal associations on the part of the reader out of consideration. Thus Pandora's box is open, and even more uncontrollable, unsystematic notions of meaning are luring out in the open from the Interaction Theory.

However, even if the associated implications may run wild, the method of interpreting a metaphor can be described systematically, and Black provides a start with his formulation of the principle of metaphorical modelling, i.e. the projection of vehicle-related qualities to the target of the metaphor. Following the Interaction Theory, many theories were developed, focusing on similar systematic principles governing the projective construal of metaphorical meanings.

Both the accounts of metaphor of Aristotle and of Black are important for contemporary thought, but in very different ways. Aristotle defines metaphor as a rhetorical device. With his account we are reminded of metaphor as a stylistic technique, bound by formal rules. As such it lacks explanatory value with regard to the actual interpretation of metaphor, since it is not concerned with the meanings that result from substituting terms, other than the rhetorical function of making the discourse 'vivid' and bringing the topic 'before the eyes'. In contemporary approaches to metaphor, the focus has shifted from the construction of metaphor itself to its interpretation, that is the construction of its meaning. Despite this shift in the subject of research, contemporary theories often presuppose some rhetorical definition of metaphors, visible in the terminology of 'tenor' and 'vehicle', and thus implicitly maintain the assumption that only metaphorical tropes receive a metaphorical interpretation. In the remainder of this discussion of theories on metaphor I will not pursue the issue, but only to return to it in chapter 3.

Black's account is important because it is one of the first semantic accounts that single out several aspects typical of metaphorical interpretation, even if it remains somewhat vague on the subject. He laid the foundation for any theory on 'metaphorical projection', through his understanding of the vehicle as a cognitive model for the target. This understanding by now has generally replaced the understanding of metaphors indicating a comparison of referents, or as the result of a stylistic substitution of terms. Other aspects, which Black

38Cf. for example Leezenberg[1995] who criticizes Black for not making clear whether metaphorical meaning is a pragmatic or a semantic concept.
brought to the attention anew, are the interaction of meaning, i.e. the changes in the meanings of both terms, and the emphasis on associated background-knowledge involved in metaphorical interpretation, other than knowledge of linguistic references. Keeping this in mind, we may now turn to discuss those theories that do address poetic metaphor more explicitly.

### 3.3 Metaphorical reference: Nelson Goodman

Nelson Goodman sees metaphors as classifications, just like any other predications. Consequently, a metaphorical utterance may be 'metaphorically true' just as a literal utterance may be literally true. The typical property of metaphors is that they are 'migrant' predicates, that is, predicates applied in a 'foreign' realm. Thus for Goodman a metaphor is the result of a transference of a predicate, resulting in the use of an old classification for a new realm.

Predicates normally function in a schema of oppositions and equivalences. Thus, the word 'blue' may apply to things that are blue as opposed to things that are 'not blue', but it may also be used in opposition to the words 'green' or 'near-black'. In each case, the range of objects to which 'blue' applies is different. In a metaphorical predication such a schema is applied to another realm of objects. With the metaphorical use of a predicate, the same structural oppositions and equivalence relations to other predicates hold, but the predicates acquire a different, metaphorical denotation. Hence, it is not just the single predicate that is transferred to the new realm, but a whole network of classifications: 'A label along with others constituting a schema is in effect detached from the home realm of that schema and applied for the sorting and organizing of an alien realm. Partly by thus carrying with it a reorientation of a whole network of labels does a metaphor give clues for its own development and elaboration'.

The view that any predicate is part of a network of 'labels' is crucial for Goodman's analysis of metaphorical meaning. Any predicate acquires meaning by its reference to other predicates or to objects. Goodman uses the term 'reference' for a generic relation, covering more than ordinary or even metaphorical denotation. Some of these referential relations specifically play a role in the 'development and elaboration' of a metaphorically transferred network of labels.

---

39 Goodman[1976] p 72

40 Goodman 's position is nominalist, as well as extensionalist. Consequently he speaks of 'labels', and not of properties or representations. However, since these notions according to Goodman are all translatable into his terminology, and since he sometimes colloquially does use such non-nominalist vocabulary, I prefer to use the more familiar terms.
First among these referential relations is the notion of denotation, which is what most authors mean by reference, namely a predicate referring to an object in its extension. Second, reference includes the relation of 'exemplification', which is more or less the converse of denotation. A sign (or an object) exemplifies those labels that denote the sign (or object). Goodman's standard example of exemplification is that of a tailor's swatch, which is used as a sign in order to exemplify the colour (e.g. 'red') and the material (e.g. 'woolly') of the cloth it is taken from. Exemplification is more restricted than denotation, since 'I can let anything denote red things, but I cannot let anything that is not red be a sample of redness'..

Metaphorical labels can be exemplified as well, and this makes for a third referential relation. Goodman calls metaphorical exemplification 'expression'. A work of art, for example, expresses those predicates that apply to it metaphorically. Thus, a painting expresses 'sadness' if the label 'sad' can be applied to it metaphorically and truthfully.

In the transference of a schema in metaphor both exemplification and denotation play a role. In our example 'Rose is a rose', 'a rose' exemplifies for instance the label of 'a thing of beauty and joy'. Through the metaphorical predication of 'is a rose' to 'Rose', 'Rose' comes to express such exemplified properties. Thus, the metaphor can be understood as transferring Rose (namely the denotation of the label 'Rose') into the denotation of 'things of beauty and joy'. Other properties, such as the radiant colour of a rose one has in mind, may equally be predicated of Rose through the exemplification-denotation relation.

Incidentally, Goodman's account of metaphors can be analysed as presenting all metaphors as four-place relations, as in Aristotle's analogical metaphor (even if Goodman never mentions such a model). The two pairs are formed by the labels ('Rose' and 'rose') and their respective references: the denotation (Rose) and the exemplified labels ('things of beauty and joy' etc.). The metaphor establishes a crossover between the references: 'Rose' comes to exemplify 'things of beauty and joy' etc., whereas 'rose' temporarily denotes Rose.

The subtlety of Goodman's analysis lies in the range of properties a word may exemplify, and the inherent contextual nature of reference, established by the notion of a schema of oppositions and similarities. With it, one can explain for instance that someone, who fights his way through a prickly rosebush to find a beautiful princess inside, may not be inclined to call her a rose, since the nasty labels (applying to roses at that moment) would thus be transferred to her.

In fact the labels that 'a rose' may exemplify are many more than could be characterized through classes to which roses belong, or properties that roses

---

41 Goodman[1976] p 58
have, because of the peculiar definition of exemplification that Goodman gives in an early article. Goodman there describes the set of exemplified predicates as the 'secondary extension' of a word, the primary extension being the denotation of the term.\textsuperscript{42} The secondary extension of a label 'X', i.e. what is exemplified by it, contains every label that is a description of 'X'. The theoretical function of this definition of the secondary extension lies is that it allows Goodman to remain faithful to extensionalism, while considering the meaning of fictional references. It allows him to distinguish the difference in meaning between two terms with no existing referents, such as unicorns and centaurs. For although on the primary level of extension all unicorns are identical to all centaurs (since there aren't any), on the secondary level they are quite different, since centaur-descriptions are not unicorn-descriptions.\textsuperscript{43}

The problem with these secondary extensions is that they also include such descriptions as 'last heard uttered by Speaker S at Location P'. Each single utterance of a word thus has a different secondary extension.\textsuperscript{44} Goodman cheerfully embraces this consequence, and says that indeed every 'inscription' of a label differs in meaning from another. It seems, thus, that any exemplified label can be transferred through a metaphor to anything else, not just those expressing a 'cultural commonplace' or any other 'constructed implication' as Black would have it. What is exemplified may just be some exclamation that we are reminded of.\textsuperscript{45}

However, in Languages of Art, this liberal sense of meaning is restricted, since here Goodman writes: 'I have risked the charge of making what a symbol expresses depend upon what is said about it -of leaving what a picture, for example, expresses to the accident of what terms happened to be used in describing the picture, and hence of crediting the expression achieved not to the artist but to the commentator. This, of course, is a misunderstanding. A symbol must have every property it expresses'.\textsuperscript{46} However, when he poses the question how it is possible that some metaphors do apply, while others don't, he replies that this is about the same mystery as why some literal predicates apply and others don't. Thus: 'the general explanation why things have the

\textsuperscript{42}Cf. Goodman[1972 a and b]

\textsuperscript{43}Goodman[1978b] p 178

\textsuperscript{44}Cf. the criticism in: Scheffler[1982]

\textsuperscript{45}In this context, Mary Hesse notes that Goodman maintains an implicit naturalist ontology, since the continuity of any part of the referential content of a label depends on the stability of the properties of the referents. Cf. Hesse[1983]

\textsuperscript{46}Goodman[1976] p 87
properties, literal and metaphorical, that they do have [...] is a task I am content to leave to the cosmologist.\textsuperscript{47}

Hence, what Goodman means with 'metaphorical truth', and how it is precisely related to 'literal truth' is equally deferred to the cosmologist. Because of this lack of definition, it remains a mystery how Goodman can attribute the success of a metaphor to the actual possession of the metaphorically assigned property, and thus defend his notion of metaphorical reference against the allegation of arbitrariness.

The transference of a network of labels to a 'foreign' realm in Goodman's account resembles Black's projection of the vehicle-related implications on the target. The first difference, as already noted, lies in the description of what is transferred from the one term to the other. For Black this is 'implicated knowledge', and it is not necessarily truthful but commonly assumed; in Goodman's account it is represented as a schema pertaining to exemplified labels, the only restriction being that the latter 'must apply'.

Another difference is that in Black's theory such models only come into play when literal interpretation of the metaphor leads to an obvious falsehood or incongruity. Goodman's theory requires no such falsehood. Instead, it requires that the metaphorical predicate has another, non-metaphorical application. For, if the metaphor is not 'guided by prior use', but is a novel application of the term, there is no transference of a 'foreign' schema, and hence no metaphor. Goodman fares better than Black in this respect, since certainly not all metaphors are literal falsehoods or incongruities. For instance the sentence 'Rose cannot be a rose. She doesn't have a single thorn' clearly presents a metaphor, although there is nothing literally false about it.

Although Goodman's analysis of metaphor thus solves some of the problems of the Interaction Theory, in that it does present a full-blown systematic account of meanings of metaphors and does not require metaphors to be false, it is in some ways not as insightful as the latter. With his fine-tuned description of the diversity of referential relations, Goodman presents a sophisticated form of extensionalism, that suffers from a pointed but unmotivated realist notion of truth.

This problem also obscures the application of Goodman's theory to the interpretation of poetic imagery. Goodman offers an account in which poetic imagery obtains out-of-text references: the words in a poem exemplify many literal and metaphorical classifications on the one hand, and they can freely be understood as novel denotations on the other. However, the referential relations that thus provide the set up for an interpretation are unmotivated to

\textsuperscript{47} Goodman[1976]p 78
the point of arbitrariness. Goodman tells us that in the end they consist of whatever formulations truthfully apply to the text, but refrains from telling us when a label applies truthfully.\textsuperscript{48}

Thus, although Goodman presents an account that specifies the nature of the relation between a poetic image and its interpretation (namely, as metaphorical exemplification), he presents no overt account of how such relation is meaningfully constructed. In order to find a full-blown theory of interpretation, then, we need not retort to consulting a cosmologist, but rather to find a theory that explains and motivates the creation and cognitive representation of referential relations. But in doing so, we may well keep in mind the richness of such possible referential relations between labels and objects that Goodman describes.

3.4 Another line of thought: Davidson’s insights and Rorty’s noise

A general point of criticism against the traditional theories on metaphor was brought forward by Donald Davidson. His criticism concerns the assumption of ‘metaphorical meanings’, ‘implications’, ‘systems’ and the like.\textsuperscript{49} The main argument Davidson gives against the assumption of special meanings for metaphors, alongside with ‘normal’ linguistic, literal, meanings, is that it suggests a fixed cognitive content for the metaphorical use of a word. There are several reasons, Davidson points out, why this cannot be the case. First, with it the difference between a fresh and a dead metaphor cannot be explained. If the first has a specific encoded meaning, why should it, when it dies, not retain the exact same meaning?

Second, if a metaphor has a special cognitive content, why should it be so hard to describe it? Metaphors however, according to the views Davidson criticizes, are notoriously difficult to paraphrase. These views on metaphor lead to an impasse, since ‘on the one hand, the usual view wants to hold that metaphor does something no plain prose can possibly do, and, on the other hand, it wants to explain what a metaphor does by appealing to a cognitive content—just the sort of thing plain prose is designed to express’.\textsuperscript{50}

The way out of this impasse, Davidson suggests, is to see that metaphors consist of plain language themselves, and thus have no other meaning than the ‘patent falsehoods and absurd truths’ they usually present. However, they are used in a specific way, and what is mistakenly understood as their message is,

\textsuperscript{48} This line of criticism is presented in Hesse[1983]

\textsuperscript{49} Davidson[1984]

\textsuperscript{50} Davidson[1984]p 261
in fact, their effect upon us. A metaphor 'makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires and prompts the insight'. The insights that metaphors bring to our attention are mostly not of a propositional nature, Davidson writes, and this accounts for why it is so hard to say what a metaphor means. By way of illustration, he discusses the relation between propositional knowledge and some pictorial examples. For instance, it is impossible to fully put to words what a photograph conveys, just as it is impossible to see a rabbit as a duck upon a description of Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit picture, that is, without actually seeing it. Davidson concludes: seeing-as is not seeing-that, and therefore a metaphor does not carry a message that could possibly be paraphrased. It does make sense to give interpretations of the cognitive content of a metaphor, according to Davidson, since these serve a different purpose. Explicit interpretations help the 'lazy or ignorant reader to have a vision like that of the skilled critic'; they do not so much express the meaning of a metaphor, but help an interpreter to 'see what the author of the metaphor wanted us to see and what a more sensitive or educated reader grasps'.

As a consequence of this view, it is unclear how metaphors are recognized. The form of the metaphor cannot be the reason that leads to a metaphorical 'vision': most metaphors, Davidson writes, are patently false or true, but not all. Davidson likens the effect of the poem quoted in part below, The Hippopotamus, by T.S. Eliot, to that of metaphors.

The broad-backed hippopotamus
Rests on his belly in the mud;
Although he seems so firm to us
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,
Susceptible to nervous shock;
While the True Church can never fail
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err
In compassing material ends,
While the True Church need never stir
To gather its dividends.

No resemblance between the True Church and a hippopotamus is stated. In the poem nothing happened to the words: they have no special metaphorical

---

51 Davidson[1984]p 263
52 Davidson[1984]p 264
53 Davidson[1984]p 256
meaning. Nonetheless the effect of the poem is comparable to that which the
metaphor 'The True Church is a hippopotamus' would have. Thus to have a
'metaphorical effect' puts no restrictions on the form of an utterance: simple
juxtaposition can cause it, just as a patently true or false utterance may prove to
be a metaphor.

The insistence on the plain character of metaphorical language is a strong point
in Davidson's argumentation, since so far, we saw, the proposed criteria for
special semantic properties of metaphors provide neither sufficient nor
necessary reason to interpret an utterance metaphorically.54 However, Davidson does not point to any factor at all that would lead to the
metaphorical 'effect'. Surely, if a metaphor can be used to make a suitable
reader grasp some insight, there must be more to say about the circumstances
in which the intended effect can be obtained?

Oddly then, Davidson speaks of 'what the author wanted us to see' as if there is
some fixed non-propositional content to the metaphors, dependent on the
author's intentions. The only means through which such content can be
brought to the reader's attention is through words. However, since Davidson
does not appoint any formal criterion that distinguishes metaphor, may not
every utterance give rise to such metaphorical insights?

Davidson tackles this complication with a denial of any semantic status to the
mediated metaphorical insights. Davidson situates whatever we grasp from
metaphor, and in whichever way, outside the scope of linguistic research. He
seems to view the literal or 'first' meanings of words in metaphors as an
incentive or a steppingstone, while denying that they actually express that
which is grasped through the metaphor.55 Thus, if an utterance is grasped
metaphorically, even if it is a perfectly sound literal utterance, the resulting
insights do not have any semantic content.56

Semantics, as a consequence, does not deal with language as a means of
communication, but only with some fragment in which a strict concept of
propositional meaning applies, doing away with any psychological,
sociological or other phenomena that relate to linguistic communication. Word-
meanings in semantics are then no reflection of what words mean when they
are used.

54 This point was discussed in section 3.3 above, and returns in section 5.1 below.
55 Davidson defines a first meaning as follows: 'if the occasion, the speaker, and the audience are
'normal' or 'standard' (in a sense not further explained here), then the first meaning of an utterance
will be what should be found by consulting a dictionary based on actual usage' (Davidson[1986] p
435).
56 The possibility of a metaphorical interpretation of a differently intended utterance is further
discussed in section 5.1 below.
Rorty takes up Davidson's point, and pushes it still further. In a criticism of the standpoint that metaphors have cognitive content, he writes that metaphors are *noises* that barely have a 'non-natural' meaning. 57 Live metaphors may lead to insights, but only in the way a strange noise or an absurd phrase in poetry may capture and sometimes hold the attention. As metaphors get 'picked up, banded about, and begin to die', they turn into 'increasingly predictable utterances, usefully describable in intentionalistic language'. 58 Thus, from its appearance in quotations and discussions, where it is used rather than just mentioned, a metaphor may acquire a conventional explanation over time. Just as a strange noise may become familiar, and in time may for instance be classified as the sound of a quetzal.

Noises then may acquire a 'double describability': both as noise and as language, as cause and reason. It is brought about by 'unpredictable shifts in causal relations to other noises', that is, through an unforeseeable process of familiarization. Thus, we cannot prospectively explain how a metaphor works. Both Davidson and Rorty adhere to the position that semantic analysis of non-conventional utterances is impossible. Rorty especially holds the position that 'cognitive content' implies a describable conceptual content, and that the attribution of cognitive content to metaphor thus amounts to an attempt of reducing metaphor to scientific discourse. 59 Attributing cognitive content to metaphors just shows that 'we philosophers still tend to take 'cognition' as the highest compliment we can pay to discourse'. 60 Thus according to Rorty, positivist claims are enforced rather than countered by the cognitive claims of metaphor.

The strange thing about this position is that the rationality of one type of discourse is opposed to other, 'natural' discourse. Thus a romantic conception of natural language is propagated, namely that natural language is unpredictable, unsystematic and ultimately undescribable. Language that appeals to the imagination or that intimates feeling, rather than knowledge, is thus mystified. But given this consequence, the peculiarity of Rorty's position lies mainly in the assumption of unproblematically describable language. How can anyone, understanding language as a *doppelgänger* of 'noise', take the

57 Natural meaning is a noise 'having a place in a causal network', whereas a non-natural meaning is possessed by noises 'having a place in a pattern of justification of belief' (Rorty[1987] p 295).

58 Rorty[1987]p 295

59 In the same article, Rorty does acknowledge that Hesse's work on the role of metaphor in science has 'helped us realize that metaphor is essential to scientific progress' (p 283). But then, of course, so is the first hearing of the 'noise' from the quetzal.

60 Rorty[1987]p 284
existence of 'usefully intentionalistic describable' utterances for granted? Surely, any utterance has this double describability and hence is unpredictable to the same extent?

Davidson seems to have realised the peculiarity of such position, and anticipates any criticism in the famous, heavily criticized article: 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs'. Here he does nothing less than refute that there is such a thing as a language, describable in the way philosophers and linguists have supposed. Here he takes up the theory that first meanings are what a hearer recognizes as the intended meaning of a 'normal' utterance by a 'normal' speaker. He loosely formulates three principles concerning such first meanings, with which most linguists should agree. First, first (or 'standard') meanings are systematic, and systematically organized; second they are shared by speaker and hearer; third they are governed by regularities or conventions. Following these principles linguistic competence is roughly defined as having a recursive method of combining words from a finite set by a finite set of rules. Then, Davidson discusses the real use of words, especially the occurrence of malapropisms. In normal communication, both speaker and hearer have a 'prior theory', namely how they understand first meanings. In the interpretation of an utterance, this prior theory is revised, since the utterance presents new information relevant for this particular interpretation, such as the introduction of names, malapropisms, new words or new ways to use them. Thus, in the interpretation, the interpreter transforms his 'prior theory' into a 'passing theory' accommodating all this information in order to interpret the speaker's meaning better. Thus, either theory is possibly identifiable as a systematic one, but only the passing theory is shared between speaker and hearer. The real problem with any theory of linguistic competence, then, comes with the assumption of the third principle of regularity or conventionality. Upon this principle, we should be able to discern a common core between prior and passing theories of both speaker and hearer. This core, however, cannot exist: the actual theories differ from each other, since they suit the specific idiolect of either speaker or hearer. Neither would a more abstract framework like a set of categories and rules shared between the speakers of a language qualify as a common core, for two reasons. The first is that such a framework cannot provide the interpretation of particular words and sentences as uttered by a particular speaker; the second reason is that even if such a framework is an ingredient of interpretation, it has to be rich enough to accommodate all the differences of all speakers; a single malapropism could disqualify it. Davidson writes in summary: 'what interpreter and speaker share, to the extent that communication succeeds, is not learned and so is not a language governed by rules or conventions in advance; but what the speaker and interpreter know in advance is not (necessarily) shared, and so is not a language governed by
shared rules or conventions'.

Thus: 'We may say that linguistic ability is the ability to converge on a passing theory from time to time [...] But if we do say this, then we should realize that we have abandoned not only the ordinary notion of a language, but we have erased the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world generally [...] I conclude that there is no such thing as a language, not if language is anything like what philosophers and linguists have supposed [...] We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language'.

Even if we do agree with Davidson and Rorty that the interpretation of metaphors is not analysable in formal semantics, we need not stop at the mystifying conclusion that they are not to be analysed at all. There are more understandings of cognition than presented in formal semantics, and there are more ways of systematically investigating linguistic meaning than through extensional semantics. Davidson in fact indicates where we may look for such investigation, when he emphasizes that metaphors make us see things differently.

Convention and regularities certainly occur in the field of the perceptual, but, sceptics have taught us a few centuries ago, they are not simply derived from a set of properties inherent in the object. Rather, we have a faculty of perception that allows us to recognize things as similar, or even the same, through the recognition of certain features, which our perceptual system can cope with. If it makes sense to analyse the faculty of speaking and understanding along these lines, then maybe that would allow for an understanding of speech, in which the language that is the formal object of semantics is related to natural language in the same way as, to use a metaphor derived from Frege, a carpenter's tool is related to the human hand: a tool that, although it was formed to suit a certain purpose, and to be held in a given way, may become purposeful in the most unexpected of ways, not so much because of its clever design, but simply because it happened to be available.

The authors discussed in the following sections have little in common but that they all are concerned with the relation between language and cognition and that somewhere perception and experience come in the way.

Thus, the authors discussed in the first section, in a branch of semantics that a few years ago was commonly called Cognitive Semantics (now part of the

---

61 Davidson[1986] p 445
62 Davidson[1986] p 446
63 Frege[1977b]
broader framework of Cognitive Linguistics), emphasize that language merely expresses what the mind thinks, and that what the mind thinks is based on experience. According to the cognitive semanticists, the cognitive mechanism that allows us to interpret metaphors does not stop at utterances such as 'The true church is a hippopotamus' or 'Rose is a rose'. Instead, it is recognized as the basic mechanism that makes much of language (and the world) meaningful.

Section 4.2 is devoted to the theory of Bipin Indurkhya. He analyses metaphorical interpretation as a cognitive method of projection that applies conceptual structures to perceptual representations. He analyses the relation of projective analogy in mathematical terms, therewith providing a tool for a highly systematic account of metaphor. Finally, in 4.3, the position of Paul Ricoeur is discussed. He does maintain a cognitive perspective on metaphor, and attributes great epistemic value to it as the authors just mentioned do; but he refrains from the methods and notions used by these. Instead, he draws on a Kantian understanding of imagination, and attributes to language an iconic function, that is, an imaginative representation of meaning that bears no relation to actual perception.

From the discussion on cognitive perspectives on metaphor below, it becomes clear that such allusions to perception, imagination and experience should be worked out more clearly. Thus in the remainder of this investigation, turn to accounts of cognition in a more general understanding, in order to investigate the role of imagination, such that, in the end, it may help us to describe the process of metaphorical interpretation.
4 Cognitive perspectives on metaphorical interpretation

4.1 Schematic metaphor: Cognitive Semantics

In the last decade or so, the framework developed within Cognitive Linguistics has dominated the study of metaphor. Generally, in this framework, metaphors are understood as a linguistic surfacing of a cognitive act of metaphorical projection. Since the domain of research is vast, and often belongs to psychology, neurobiology or linguistics rather than semantics, I restrict the discussion to a few publications. I first outline the general approach, as it was originally presented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, and then consider two other publications in greater detail, the one a book by George Lakoff and Marc Turner on metaphors in poetry, and the other a more philosophical approach to schematic metaphor by Mark Johnson.

In the book *Metaphors we live by* Lakoff and Johnson take a cognitive perspective on metaphors. As a result, they uproot the notion of metaphor as a rhetorical phenomenon. Instead, metaphors considered to be the result of using a familiar conceptual structuring as a model for the conceptualization of a new experience. Metaphor, then, is the result of projecting, or mapping' a conceptual scheme from one domain to another, in order to provide a conceptualization of the latter by means of our understanding of the former. Thus, it seems that Black's notion of metaphor as a model has been taken up. However, in this case, there is no doubt whether the meaning of metaphor would be semantic or cognitive, since Lakoff and Johnson claim that linguistic metaphors are the surfacing of a cognitive mechanism. There are some further differences between this approach, and Black's theory. The first is the claim that almost all language is metaphorically structured, even if it does not fall under any rhetorical definition of metaphor. That is, some uses of for example presuppositions (out of sight), or of conventional expressions (high quality) are analysed as metaphorical, since they are derived from basic metaphors (respectively: 'visual fields are containers' and 'good is up'). Second, this approach emphasizes the structural and coherent appearance of related metaphors, just as we have seen in Goodman's analysis of metaphor as the migration of a whole 'schema' of oppositions and similarities surrounding a label. However, in this case, what Goodman calls a schema, is analysed as

---

64 Cf. Indurkhya[1992], p 81
65 Lakoff and Johnson[1980] resp. p 30 and p 16
linguistic diversity in the surfacing of a single basic metaphor, which itself is understood as a 'schema' in a different, more Kantian sense. Examples of such coherent discourse structures that relate to the same basic metaphor are quoted below, namely, of the discourse that sustains the metaphor 'the balance of justice', and of metaphors surrounding our understanding of death.

The relation of projection that holds between more and less basic conceptual domains is thus structurally detectable in the semantic structure of discourse. As a result, most of the research conducted within this theoretical framework is concerned with empirical analysis. Literally hundreds and thousands of examples, that implicitly draw on conventional metaphors, have thus been analysed, in all kinds of discourse, ranging from for instance the exposure of Quran-based metaphors in Saddam Hussein's speeches, to the detection of misogynist metaphors in the notes of a Belgian Council meeting.

From an empirical point of view, then, the theory appeals to many, and if quantity would provide the standard, certainly by now we should be convinced about the rightness of this theory. However, on the theoretical side, something seems to miss. For one, a criterion with which we can detect whether a given scheme is basic or not is not explicated. Further, the understanding of projection as a one way relation between source and target seems less suitable for some cases, for instance, for the fourth kind of metaphor of Aristotle's definition, which comprises four terms, and allows for a two-way relation (i.e. yielding both *Dionysos' shield* as well as *Ares' cup* as a metaphor).66

Finally, with the presented emphasis on the conventionality of metaphor, the possibility of creative interpretation, and of subjective understanding predictably remains understated. In the discussion below, I focus on the first and the third aspect: when is a metaphor basic, and how is the subject involved.

---

66 Such criticism, as well as the directedness of the projective relation seems to have led to Fauconnier and Turner's alternative suggestion of the cognitive mechanism of 'blending' (Cf. Fauconnier and Turner[1998]). They suggest that the projective relation of mapping the source onto the target of a metaphor, is the outcome of a more fundamental mechanism, of selecting elements and partial structuring from both, and representing these in a 'blend', which then allows one to produce inferences on the target, in part using structures derived from the source, but also developed in the 'working space' that the blend forms. However, the 'blending' operation is described mainly through numerous examples, lacking a precise description of what, for instance, constitutes a 'mental space', or the representations that can enter it, while the operation of 'blending inputs' is unpredictable, since it depends on both elaboration of the 'blending space' and context. Thus, although the model provides a terminology to describe in which ways some aspects of the source and of the target remain relevant in a given interpretation of a metaphor, it hardly presents an account of interpretation generally, since it remains unclear how or why any information comes to play a role in interpretation, and what kind of information must be represented in order to be able to give an interpretation.
Mark Johnson philosophically identified the origin of such 'basic schemas' as an act of schematizing bodily experience. Our physical capacity to deal with the world around us creates schematic representations in our minds, which allows us to apply the schema in other situations. As a result of this, finally, the schema develops into a concept. One of the many examples he gives is the concept of 'balance'. I discuss the example at some length, and use more quotations than elsewhere, for fear that the philosophically trained reader who is unacquainted with the theory might attribute the raised doubts to my recount and not to the author's original.

The development of the concept 'balance', then, is taken to start with basic bodily experiences, and leads to such highly abstract concepts as, for instance, mathematical equivalence. At first we learn to maintain our own balance; that is, we learn to stand up straight. Then we visually learn to recognize how other things stand up straight through their maintaining balance. And then we learn to apply the schema that has thus been developed in a more abstract way:

'My main claim is that [...] the metaphorical projections move from bodily sense (with its emergent schema) to the mental, epistemic, or logical domains. On this hypothesis, we should be able to see how it is that our experience of bodily balance, and of the perception of balance, is connected to our understanding of balanced personalities, balanced views, balanced systems, balanced equations, the balance of power, the balance of justice, and so on'.

To give an example of how an 'emergent schema' can be detected in more abstract domains, I quote a description of the occurrence of the balance schema in the field of justice:

'The institutions of civil and criminal justice are founded upon a basic notion of balance, as symbolised quaintly by the scale of justice. As we would expect, legal arguments adopt all of the standard features of rational argument in general. The lawyers want the jury to lean in their favour, so they employ a confusing mass of facts, encourage weighty testimonies, pile one argument upon another, add the force of acknowledged authorities, and summon the weight of the legal tradition. Justice itself is conceived as the regaining of a proper balance that has been upset by an unlawful action. According to some assumed calculus, the judge must assess the weight of the damages and require a penalty somehow equal to the damages as compensation. We have linguistically encoded manifestations of this juridical metaphor, such as "an eye for an eye" and "let the punishment fit the crime"'.

67 Johnson[1987]
68 Johnson[1987] p 87
69 Johnson[1987], p 90, original italics.
The evolvement of the 'balance' schema is summarized as follows: 'In our daily lives we are constantly experiencing symmetries and asymmetries of forces relative to axes and points of various kinds. Despite the different manifestations of balance, there is a single image-schema present in all such experiences: a symmetrical arrangement of force vectors relative to an axis. It is because of this shared BALANCE schema that so many different experiences of symmetrical relations of by the same word, "balance".™

Later on, after an analysis of the 'definite internal structure' of this schema as consisting of relations of symmetry, transitivity and reflexivity, Johnson claims that 'these same relations obtain for abstract objects related by the BALANCE schema', for instance in the mathematical concept of 'equality of magnitudes'.™

Hence: 'It is no accident that the properties of the balance schema are just what mathematicians call the "equivalence relations" [...] . There is no other category of bodily experience with just that constellation of properties. Balance, therefore, appears to be the bodily basis of the mathematical notion of equivalence'.™

What is striking in the above description of the balance schema, as well in that of its internal structure, which I do not cite, is that it is almost entirely restricted to the use of mathematical notions, such as 'vectors', 'axes' or 'symmetrical arrangement'. Johnson does attempt to translate some of these terms into descriptions of bodily experience, for instance on the relation of transitivity in balancing objects, he writes:

'If A balances B, and B balances C, then A balances C. Suppose A is in the left hand and B is in the right hand, and they balance. Now suppose I replace A by C, and the balance is maintained, that is, B balances C. Then I will know immediately that A and C will balance, even though I have not performed the act of weighing one against the other'.™

I find it hard to understand what it means to say that A balances B if I have the one in my left, the other in my right hand. It reminds me of a game on television that is all about estimating the weight of some object, the only method allowed being the comparison with measured weights in the other hand. The point of the game, of course, is that this is notoriously hard to do and people make gross mistakes. Surely, such 'balancing' with right and left hand would not be allowed for when buying a lump of cheese, instead we use

---

71 Johnson[1987] p 97
72 Johnson[1987] p 97
73 Johnson[1987] p 97

38
a balance, as Wittgenstein remarks, because of the predictability of its results. Thus, I cannot follow how the presented bodily understanding of 'balancing' would explain how we come to have adopted a system of numerical measurement regarding mass, which is applied when buying lumps of cheese. But maybe other basic schemes should account for that. However, the algebraic properties of natural numbers being derived from this 'category of bodily experiences' alone, suggests that that is impossible.

From a theoretical point of view, the observation that one realm of discourse, such as the legal institution, uses words that can be related to a concept of balancing one's own body, does not entail that the conceptualization of bodily experience should be primary to either visual experience, or to linguistic expression. I extensively discuss the issue of forming abstract concepts on the basis of experience in a discussion of Barsalou's model of the conceptual system below, in chapter 3, section 3. The argument presented there suggests that any interpretation of which bodily experience should underlie an abstract concept, presupposes precisely this abstract concept. For one appeals precisely to abstract concepts when characterizing the primary, non-verbal experience verbally. Thus, with respect to retracing the meaning of abstract concepts into experience, a fundamental problem of circularity hinders any explication of experiential meaning. We cannot, in other words, separate the interpretation of our experience from the language and the concepts that we already have. In the above description of the 'balance'-schema, this fallacy is illustrated most clearly: the mathematical terms that are supposedly derived from the basic schema, function exclusively to describe it. Thus, the counter-intuitive reconstruction of the notion of 'transitivity' seems specifically motivated by theoretical need, and not by bodily experience.

Further problems I have with the present account stem from a fundamental unclarity on the generality of the resulting concepts. If concepts are derived from bodily experience, does that mean that my concepts are based on my subjective experience? Or is it an assumption about general institutions, and the development of knowledge within society or even mankind, as well as language? The question really is hazardous, and has consequences. Does Johnson's analysis entail, for instance, that a person who is lame from birth cannot have the same concept of justice as walking people? Do blind and deaf but walking persons have the ability to solve mathematical equations? Generally considerations on subjectivity, objectivity or intersubjectivity of basic concepts are left out of consideration, except when Johnson opposes an 'Objectivist' approach to language and representation. His criticism here is

---

74 Philosophische Untersuchungen, 142
aimed specifically against a truth-conditional understanding of meaning, and
given in defence of a mentalist conception of meaning. Objectivism is
characterized as follows: '[Objectivism] assumes a fixed and determinate mind-
independent reality, with arbitrary symbols that get meaning by mapping
directly onto that objective reality'.\(^7\) Johnson claims that for instance Frege’s
semantics exhibits 'the Objectivist view of meaning in its purest form', since
supposedly in Frege’s writings 'all mental processes (ideas, meanings,
imaginative projections) that might explain how it is that a sign could come to
connect up with the world, and with other signs, are excluded from
consideration'.\(^7\)\(^6\)

In opposition to grounding the meaning of signs in reality, Johnson intends to
ground concepts in the human mind, and especially in imagination. To this
end, Johnson proposes a generalization of a Kantian conception of productive
imagination. Hence he writes: 'Imagination is central to human meaning and
rationality for the simple reason that what we can experience and cognize as
meaningful, and how we can reason about it, are both dependent upon
structures of imagination that make our experience what it is'.\(^7\) One would
expect this to be followed by a discussion of the inherently subjective nature
that Kant contributes to the representations that are employed in productive
imagination. However, no such discussion is presented. The lack of a
discussion on subjectivity, and further the emphasis that this account of
schematization yields a semantic theory of meaning, suggests that Johnson
indeed means that basic conceptual structures, schematized from experience,
are shared by all. Thus, it seems that Johnson attributes basic schemata to the human mind in general, and hence should be taken as universals. Going on his reference to Kant, we could then infer that schemata are universal insofar as they are grounded in an assumed objective origin of experience, and insofar as they are the result of an assumed uniformity in the process of schematization throughout different minds.\(^7\)

This, however, gives no indication of the kind of schemata that are developed in an individual’s mind, on the basis of specific, i.e., personal bodily experience. How the postulated bodily origin of such concepts, then, should work out in the conceptual system of someone with limited or deviant physical capabilities, such as regarding the invalid’s ability to solve mathematical equations, is a question I happily leave to the reader.\(^8\)

Above I suggested that the realm of poetry is one in which private understanding meets public expression. It is then interesting to see how poetic language, as the use of language that allows best for personal interpretations, is treated in the philosophical framework of Cognitive Linguistics. In a book from Lakoff and Turner: *More than Cool Reason*, this task is undertaken.\(^9\) However, as will become clear shortly, the approach is not very relevant for my concerns here, as it focuses on finding how conventional mechanisms of interpretation can be used to understand poetry. The interest of the authors apparently did not concern the interpretation of creative use of language, but the recognition of basic metaphors in a poetic guise.

Again, the starting point of the theory is provided by the assumption of basic, cognitive metaphors. The aim of the book, then, seems to detect these basic schemes in poetry, and to explain an (existing) interpretation on the basis of these. I will briefly discuss the analysis that is presented of the following poem of Emily Dickinson.\(^10\)

---

\(^7\) Inference on the basis of Kant’s notion of ‘subjective universals’, which are thought to be possible on the basis of these two mentioned necessary rational assumptions. (Cf. the discussion on the *Critique of judgement* in the next chapter)

\(^8\) In chapter 2 Kant’s theory of imagination is discussed, especially with regard to subjective imagination. Although I do agree in some ways with Johnson’s suggestions, such as on the role of imagination in concept formation, I do certainly not agree, as will be clear from the discussion in this section, with the postulation of a set of basic conceptual schemes as derived from bodily experience in the sense intended here. On the plausibility of attributing a perceptual grounding to all conceptual content, see the discussion in chapter 3, sections 3.2-3.4

\(^9\) Lakoff and Turner[1989]

\(^10\) Quoted from Lakoff and Turner[1989] p 4
Because I could not stop for Death-
He kindly stopped for me-
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—and Immortality.

We slowly drove—He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For his Civility—

We passed the School, where children strove
At Recess—In the Ring—
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
We passed the Setting Sun—

Or rather—He passed us—
The Dews drew quivering and chill—
For only Gossamer, my Gown—
My Tippet—only Tulle—

We paused a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground—
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice in the Ground—

Since then—‘tis Centuries— and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses’ Heads
Were toward Eternity

One of the basic metaphors that Lakoff and Turner recognize in this poem is the conceptual scheme summarized by: ‘life is a journey’. In the poem it is used in relation to another, characterized as ‘death is going to a final destination’. The journey in Death’s Chariot passes through several scenes, depicting stages of life, and goes on till ‘eternity’. Thus, the third stanza is read allegorically as describing the different stages of life, employing several other basic metaphors, such as ‘people are plants’ in the image of the ‘gazing grain’, or ‘A lifetime is a day’ in the image of the setting sun. This part of the journey ends at the ‘swelling of the ground’, in the fifth stanza, interpreted as referring to the appearance of a grave. The chariot pauses a while, only to continue in the sixth stanza with the journey to eternity.

Lakoff and Johnson conclude the discussion devoted to this poem:
‘[F]ive basic metaphors for death [...] are used naturally, automatically and largely unconsciously in understanding the Dickinson poem. They are DEATH IS THE END OF LIFE’S JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE (an inference from LIFE IS BEING PRESENT HERE), DEATH IS NIGHT (from A LIFETIME IS A DAY), HUMAN DEATH IS THE DEATH OF A PLANT, such as the harvesting of grain, the falling of leaves from the
tree, and so on (from PEOPLE ARE PLANTS), and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION (an instance of CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION). Throughout the discussion, these metaphors are recognized in a similar vein in many different poems, and thus, by the majority of examples, they are held to be basic. Apart from these and other 'naturally, automatically and largely unconsciously' employed basic metaphors, it is recognized that poems may present other, less conventional metaphoric imagery; an example of which is brought in the form of a line from T.S. Eliot: 'Evening is a patient etherized upon a table'. However, the authors conclude: [This metaphor] is quite dispensable for the ways we think and for the general structure of our conceptual system. And our lives do not noticeably differ if we do not happen to have this metaphor.

Thus, the aim of the analysis is not so much to characterize the role of metaphors in the interpretation of poetry, but rather to find how poetic interpretation is an exponent of our everyday conceptual structuring, and how it makes use of metaphors that are so widespread and general that they must be basic. Taking this starting point into consideration, it is no wonder that subjective aspects of poetic interpretation, such as resulting from personal understanding, feeling, or recognition of the gentle image of death presented by Dickinson, are entirely absent in this analysis. Also, we should reconcile ourselves with the lack of consideration of what the poem actually does with such conventional metaphors as 'death is going to a final destination'. For, in view of the project of finding general cognitive structures, surely subtle alterations or emphases of these in the poem, such as presenting death as a polite travelling companion and not as a violent obducter, are of no concern. And finally, we should not look into this theory for an explanation of a poem that would contain a deliberate deformation, or an appalling use of such conventional metaphors, such as may be found in Eliot's juxtaposition of the euphemistic 'evening' with the all too concrete etherized patient. In other words, the theory is concerned with what can be recognized automatically, through a largely unconscious appeal to knowledge of conventional metaphors, and not with what is specifically expressed by a poem, or what would be its impact on a given reader.

However, Lakoff and Turner do consider the impact of the study of basic metaphor:

'Recent discoveries have shown that metaphor is anything but peripheral to the life of the mind. It is central to our understanding of our selves, our culture,'

---

83 Lakoff and Turner[1989] p 8
84 Lakoff and Turner[1989] p 56
and the world at large. Poetry exercises our minds so that we can extend our normal powers of comprehension beyond the range of the metaphors we are brought up to see the world through'.

To analyse how conventional metaphors surface in poetry, then, provides a tool for the analysis of the world we live in. It can help us expose an ideological structuring of the world by means of metaphors, for instance by revealing the conceptual schema underlying the terming of 'higher' and 'lower' social classes. In this way, in this approach some space is left open to consciously move beyond the automatic understanding in terms of conventional metaphors. Indeed, the authors remark that some poetry is recognized to be based on the conscious analysis of conventional metaphor: 'the theorists of the avant-garde, in promoting new poetic forms to create new ways of understanding the world, have been acutely aware that classical forms of poetry implicitly embody ideologies -views of man and his relation to nature, to society, and to the cosmos'. However, the questions how such an acute awareness comes about, or how the subsequent deliberate deformation of conventional metaphors takes place are not posed in the investigation.

The project undertaken by Lakoff and Turner would thus seem to be of interest especially for linguistic anthropologists, who investigate discourse structures in order to arrive at a characterization of culture, and not of individual minds. In this sense, it reminds one of the work of Benjamin Whorf, and especially his research among the Hopi, in which he considers their discourse as an expression of a general metaphysics. Indeed, just as Whorf analyses those grammatical inflections in Hopi that indicate a somewhat different conceptual relation between time and distance than in our alleged 'Western metaphysics', Lakoff and Turner mention the 'for any speaker of English (and many other languages) 'highly indispensable metaphorical scheme 'time moves'.

The origin of basic metaphors, for Lakoff and Turner, then seems to be situated elsewhere than that of basic schemes for Johnson. In view of Johnson's philosophical foundation of the notion of basic metaphor, it would appear that basic metaphors are not dependent on a given language or culture, but emerge from physical capacities. Of course, experience of the body itself is to some extent determined culturally, since taboos on exposure, matters of hygiene, and rituals surrounding nurture surely in part determine such experience.

---

85 Lakoff and Turner[1989] p 214
86 Lakoff and Turner[1989] p 211
87 Lakoff and Turner[1989] pp 203-204
88 Cf. Whorf[1956]
89 Lakoff and Turner[1989] p 56
However, once again, this issue is not pursued by any of the three mentioned authors. To be fair, all authors present an overwhelming amount of convincing examples of structurally related metaphorical use of expressions. Thus, cognitive semantics seems to present a powerful tool for discourse analysis, and as such can be highly valuable. However, it is unclear how the conceptual structures that emerge from these analyses should be understood, in part because it is unclear whether the analysis is intended to reveal universal concepts or cultural platitudes. With this unclarity the status of any possible counterexample for a basic metaphor, is unclear as well. Are we, for instance, to dismiss the 'good is up' schema as being basic on account of expressions such as 'I've had it up to here', or are we to judge them as exceptional reversals of an otherwise sound basic metaphor?

Another problem is that the authors do not present a heuristic for the method of empirically determining whether a metaphor is basic or not, even if the relation of projection defines a hierarchical relation between the origin of projection, and its destiny. To determine which of the two domains involved in metaphorical mapping is more basic than the other, we can only go by majority of appearances of one term in discourse, or else by an intuition of dimensions of concreteness, or closeness to physical experience. The role of actual perception in schematizing is hardly addressed explicitly, just as, we saw, the implicit treatment of human cognition as a single entity raises questions regarding the universality of concepts. At the bottom line, there is no clear reason why a basic schema should be derived from our own physical actions, or bodily awareness, and not, for instance, from the repeated experience of utterance situations in which a given term is used. After all, hearing an utterance is a physical experience as well, just as producing one.

4.2 Metaphorical projection and perception: Indurkhya

Bipin Indurkhya addresses the unclarities regarding the nature of metaphorical projection. In his account he does not presuppose any culturally or universally 'basic' concepts, but instead, he retains the vocabulary of the syntactic analysis of metaphor as consisting of a target and a source. His approach is again

---

90 Indurkhya uses the term 'source' for the vehicle of a metaphor. Although not by definition, in Indurkhya's account the terms 'source' and 'target' often seem to indicate a concept, rather than a predicate. Thus, in the following discussion, I will stick to his terms.
based on the Interaction Theory, and attempts to systematize the process of 'modelling' more systematically as a projective, isomorphic relation.\(^9\)

In his view a linguistic expression is represented in cognition on two levels. The first level has a high degree of abstraction, where the meaning of the expression is represented as part of a structured network of concepts. The second level is what Indurkhya calls the 'senso-motoric data set', containing perceptual information that is associated with the expression. The two levels, then, are made up by concepts and their perceived instances. In literal understanding the senso-motoric representations are not consciously evoked, that is, perceptual representations related to a concept need not become actualized when interpreting a literal predication.

Interpreting a novel metaphor requires a different use of both conceptual network and perceptual representations. In this case the conceptual network that belongs to the vehicle or source is applied to the domain of perceptual representations that belongs to the target of the metaphor.

In metaphor interpretation, the perceptual representations belonging to the target are seen as belonging to the source. Indurkhya understands this 'seeing as' as a projective relation, through which the source network is mapped onto the target domain. The target-domain is thereby 'accommodated' in the source domain. The process of accommodation results in a newly perceived, structural similarity between representations belonging to the source and to the target.

An example will help to clarify the used notions. For our example 'Rose is a rose' the present account holds that in the interpretation the perceptual representations we associate with Rose are newly structured by the concept-network belonging to the predicate 'rose'. Hence, perceptual Rose-representations are re-represented as organised by the conceptual network that belongs to the predicate 'rose'. The concept-network in which 'Rose' functioned, i.e. the network that structured the target domain (the representations of Rose) is thereby altered. It is either adjusted, or even discarded entirely: our Rose-representations retain the conceptual structuring of the concepts in the network belonging to 'Rose' insofar as it is compatible with our vision of her as a rose. Thus, for instance concepts in the network about Rose that imply that she loves to run, are downplayed for the moment, since this is hardly relevant for, or compatible with our concepts about roses. Thus, the interaction between the meanings of the vehicle and target that Black emphasizes is accounted for as a change of focus in the conceptual networks belonging to either.

The restructuring of the perceptual representations of the target is performed by way of proportional analogy. This analogy is set up as a four-place relation,

\(^9\) Indurkhya[1992]
somewhat in the manner we could construe for Goodman’s account of metaphor, namely, a relation between two pairs, both consisting of a referent and a reference. However, in this case the referential relations, as well as the entities between which they hold, are situated in cognition. The referential relation between network and domain are one of ‘association’ (where Goodman speaks of exemplification and denotation), while these associations hold between cognitive entities (Goodman’s ‘labels’), namely of conceptual structures on the one hand, and perception-based representations on the other. Indurkhya’s proportional analogy, then, is set up between two pairs consisting each of a conceptual network and a perceptual domain. The first pair consists of the target network (the conceptual network belonging to ‘Rose’) and the target domain (associated perceptual representations of Rose); the second pair consists of the source-network and source domain (i.e. respectively the conceptual network and the perceptual representations belonging to ‘rose’).

Metaphor is analysed as the projection of the source network onto the target domain; that is, with the predication ‘Rose is a rose’ the network of concepts belonging to ‘rose’ is projected onto the domain of representations of Rose.

The metaphor is thus translated into a problem with a logical form, of the kind:

\[
\text{if } T[t] \text{ and } S[s], \text{ then how to construct } S[t] \]

in which \(T\) and \(S\) are structuring functions on a domain, and \(t\) and \(s\) represent a set of elements in the domains for which the functions are defined. To solve the problem, then, we have to find out how \(S\) structures \(t\), thus, in what respect \(s\) can structurally be mapped on the domain \(t\).

The same holds for the metaphorical predication. That is, if the perceptual domains of target and source to some extent exhibit the same structural relations, then the target domain can be described by the structure of the source to this extent. In other words, insofar as the network of concepts belonging to the source may capture a structure between the representations in the target domain, the source network can be applied to the target domain. In the formal guise of the problem stated above, then, we try to determine how elements of \(s\) can be mapped onto \(t\).

To ‘solve’ the metaphor, then, means to construe a mapping of the target domain onto the source domain. We do this by considering the target with respect to any structural similarities it may have with the source domain. Thus, interpreting the metaphor involves finding a similar structure organising representations belonging to Rose, and representations belonging to roses. This is then what Indurkhya calls the accommodation of the target into the source domain: in interpretation, Rose-representations are merely considered insofar as they agree with the source network, that is, by virtue of the structural similarity to rose-representations. In other words, the metaphor becomes
meaningful to the extent that the conceptual structuring of the rose-domain can
be mapped onto the Rose-domain.
According to Indurkhya, predication may differ with respect to the degree of
conventionality of the similarities that are involved in interpretation.
If structural similarity is evident, the metaphor can easily be understood. In a
'similarity-based' metaphor, then, (part of) the mapping between \( s \) and \( t \) is
already known; hence its novelty may consist of the transfer of more of the
concepts belonging to the source network to the target domain. By contrast
'similarity creating metaphors' require the interpreter to perceive an entirely
new similarity. Since in this case there is no overlap whatsoever between
source and target concepts, the metaphor requires the interpreter to project the
source network onto the target domain 'as if the target realm were encountered
for the first time'.\(^2\) That is, the target domain is entirely reconceptualized by
means of the source network; in this process the source network remains 'more
or less invariant', while the ontology of the target realm 'is varied so that its
structure, as seen from the concept network layer, is isomorphic (as far it can
be) to the structure of the source concept network'.\(^3\) In this sense, then,
similarity-creating metaphors are 'the hallmark of a truly creative genius', and
the risk that they are not understood is very real. The presented examples of
similarity-creating metaphors are typically heuristic or poetic metaphors. I will
discuss an example of either.
Indurkhya describes a case where a group of researchers was faced with the
problem that their synthetic paintbrush did not perform as well as a natural
brush. Reconsidering the activity of brushing paint onto a surface solved the
problem. Instead of seeing a brush as a container of paint that smeared the
paint onto the surface, the brush now was seen to \textit{pump} the paint out, by the
gradual bending of the hairs in the movement of painting. On the basis of this
model, a new, more gradually bending fibre was produced with good result.
The example shows how the target, that is the putting of paint on the surface,
was reconceptualized: the structuring concept of smearing was discarded, and
the pump model was projected on the painting activity.
A poetic example Indurkhya uses is the following poem by Eavan Boland:\(^4\)

\(^2\) Indurkhya[1992] p 271
\(^3\) Indurkhya[1992] p 271
\(^4\) The poem is quoted from Indurkhya[1992] p 41.
I drove West
in the season between seasons.
I left behind suburban gardens.
Lawnmowers, small talk.

Under low skies, past splashes of coltsfoot,
I assumed
the hard shyness of Atlantic light
and the superstitious aura of hawthorne.

All I wanted then was to fill my arms with
sharp flowers,
to seem, from a distance, to be a part of
that ivory, downhill rush. But I knew,

I had always known,
the custom was
not to touch hawthorne.
Not to bring it indoors for the sake of

the luck
such constraints would forfeit-
a child might die, perhaps, or an unexplained
fever speckle heifers. So I left it

stirring on those hills
with a fluency only water has. And, like water, able
to redefine land. And free to seem to be-

for anglers,
and for travellers astray in
the unmarked lights of a May dusk-
the only language spoken in those parts.

Here first an image is described of a hill full of little white flowers, hawthorne. Then, in the last two stanzas this image is described in terms of water: the downhill rush, the fluency of water, and the anglers. According to Indurkhya's analysis the network of water-related concepts is projected onto the visualized flowery hill. Some elements of the conceptual image of the target-domain become more prominent, others recede into the background because they do not fit in nicely. For instance, the flowers as water are seen as a surface, whereby certain qualities, such as sharpness or differing DNA-structures, are ignored. Thus the domain of representations belonging to the target is accommodated to the newly projected conceptual structure.
Indurkhya treats the two examples uniformly in his account, since they both involve the creation of similarity between target and source domain. This novel
similarity is situated on a level of internally represented experiential or perceptual data, and it is motivated by a newly shared conceptual structure. However, in each example the interpretation has a different starting-point. The heuristic model is developed in order to solve a problem with a paintbrush. Hence the target (the paint-brush) is available beforehand, and in the context of this target a heuristic model (the pump) is offered. The lack of a suitable conventional explanation of the problem makes a reconceptualization of the target necessary. We could consider it a conceptual variety of catachresis, since no conventional description of a brush suits the phenomenon at hand.

In the poetic example, by contrast, the description of the target is offered along with the new, metaphorical description. The target domain is only accessible through its description, that is, it is not given in experience or by independent descriptions. This makes the function of interpretation quite different from the case where I have an experience-based representation of a paintbrush, which presented a practical problem. The 'problem' presented by the poem regards my understanding of the poem, and not a better understanding of my previous experiences of flower-covered hills.

The reader is led to visualize the hill full of flowers through the description of a water surface. Thus, that the resulting visualization resembles an image of a water surface is not surprising. It is not so much the similarity that is created, since it is presented by the text, but the perceptual representation of the target as exhibiting this similarity. It seems to me that the meaning of the presented similarity lays not so much in the act of visualizing it, but in a further, symbolic interpretation, for which clues are equally provided by the text.

The 'I' in the text leaves behind the suburbs with its lawnmowers and small talk, and finds, in the hills far away from all this, an image of freedom, which we can see from the space being 'free for anglers' and 'travellers astray'. He cannot take any of this freedom back home, since bringing the flowers, now symbolizing freedom, home might cause an accident of some sort.

This transferred symbolic meaning of the water-image is not accounted for in Indurkhya’s analysis, due to the focus in his theory on the perceptual qualities of the target representation. One could argue that the symbolic meaning of the source is transferred to the target-domain, since it is part of the conceptual network that is projected onto the target domain. Only after the accommodation of the imaginative representation, this argument would run, can such symbolic properties be transferred.

However, that is begging the question. Even if the transfer of meanings is thus explained, we still wonder how this specific symbolic meaning of the source image is picked out of all the possible concepts that apply to water. How is it that we do not imagine a little brook to compare with the flowery hills, equally
providing space for anglers or travellers astray? And why should we not stick to some perceptual representation of the flowers-as-water?

The answer seems easy, and involves the interaction of meanings as Black describes it: depending on its new application, the source-network is represented in such a way that there is some ground for the comparison, such that the imagery fits in well. That implies however that in constructing the image of the flowers-as-water there is not a uniquely directed projection from the water-related concepts to the flower-image, but also an influence in the other direction. To understand the poem as a description of the impossible longing for freedom we need the source descriptions to blend in with the target descriptions: we need the knowledge that bringing flowers home brings bad luck, and that the perception of flowers is only possible away from the suburbs and the lawnmowers. These descriptions pave the way for the symbolic understanding of water as a reference to freedom.

The interpretation of the poem is thus not the result of the application of a foreign conceptual network to an accommodated perceptual domain, rather, the description of the target domain gives a frame for the construction of the source, while at the same time the representation of the target is restructured by this source. Thus the interpretation has a circular structure, a going back and forth between the descriptions belonging to target and source. The picture Indurkhya sketches of the metaphorical interaction as a projective analogy, does not explain how the projective relation influences the projected structure.

Recalling the formal statement of the problem, the point is that the metaphorical application of $S$ is partly determined by $T$, and as a consequence itself becomes a metaphorically interpreted predicate (that is, where $S$ before the metaphorical projection is a concept network related to water, it now also stands for freedom) and thus that the metaphor is not to be stated as $S[T]$. As a result we no longer have a solvable proportional analogy: where first we had a three term-problem ($S:t$ as $S:s$) with a clear solution (find how $s$ can be mapped onto $t$) we now have more terms: $X:t$ as $S:s$, where $X$ is based on interpretations of both $S$ and $T$. Thus, in the case of this poetic metaphor, the mathematical heuristic does not state the problem of interpretation.

Indurkhya's account presents a highly systematic model of projective analogy, which he identifies with the principle of metaphorical projection as Black originally presented it. One of the merits of his theory is that the loose characterization of metaphorical projection is replaced by a clear mathematical definition. However, in the application to poetic metaphors, the limits of such a

---

95 A process, of course, which has been identified since long as the 'hermeneutical circle'.
systematic model become clear. The process of interpretation is more dynamic, and more flexible, than can be rendered in the form of a homomorphic projection of a structure on a foreign domain. Thus, his analysis accidentally reveals the flaws that remain implicit in looser understandings of metaphorical projection.

Another merit of this account, is that Indurkhya emphasizes the imaginative character of creative, unconventional interpretations. He understands creativity in interpretation as the capacity to reconceptualize some perceptual representation, thus presenting a new, perceptual understanding of the 'seeing as' in metaphors. Every author who writes on metaphorical interpretation at one time or another resorts to the use of a perceptual vocabulary, including such expressions as 'seeing as' or 'bringing before the eyes'. It is Indurkhya's achievement that he takes this vocabulary as an indication that actual perceptual processes are involved in the interpretation of poetic metaphors.

The assumption seems likely enough: reading poetry often evokes mental imagery, and in imagining what is written we may arrive at an interpretation. However, whether this kind of imagery is indeed related to previous perceptions stored in memory as a 'sensomotoric data set' as Indurkhya assumes, remains an open question. Indurkhya presents little evidence to sustain his assumption; issues such as the accurateness of the stored perceptions, their relation to concepts, and the level of conceptualization at which they may be accessed remain largely undiscussed. Thus, for a more elaborate theory on the role of perception and imagination in the interpretation of poetic imagery, we will have to turn elsewhere.\(^6\)

4.3 Metaphorical visions: Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur considers the role of imagination in interpretation from quite a different perspective. In his theory, the beginning of the process of metaphorical interpretation is similar to what we may by now call the classical interaction-model: when literal, routine interpretation simply is not possible, or would lead to an absurdity, the interpreter turns to an imaginative representation of the predicates in order to find an interpretation. Then, in the process of imaginatively relating the vehicle to the target, the meaning of the metaphor is formed. With Ricoeur, the images that are thus involved in understanding metaphors are not revived perceptions, as they are for Indurkhya. According to Ricoeur, the latter view of imagination can be

---

\(^6\) A brief discussion on the difference between percepts and mental imagery follows in chapter 3, section 3.2.
retraced to Hume's mistaken understanding of imagination as a faint impression of the senses; that is, a 'residue' of perception. What is needed is a theory of imagination which underscores 'a mode of functioning of similarity, and accordingly of imagination which is immanent [...] to the predicative process itself'. The theory of imagination he proposes is based on Kant's understanding of the productive imagination.

In the article quoted above, Ricoeur summarizes the functioning of imagination in the understanding of metaphor, following the theory he presents in *The Rule of Metaphor.* Metaphorical interpretation presents a threefold task for the imagination. Briefly, these tasks consist of the following: the first is the schematizing of a novel likeness between the terms of the metaphor; the second is the representation of this schematic resemblance in a 'depicting mode'; and the third and last is the suspending of the usual references of the terms to make way for a 'second order reference': a possibly altered view of reality. Each step then reflects the impact of metaphorical interpretation on some level of interpretation. The first act of schematization takes place on the conceptual level, resulting in a 'predicative assimilation' of the terms in a metaphor. The second takes place on the level of representation of meaning, resulting in an actual seeing of the one as the other. The third step takes place on the level of referential application, resulting in a possible new reference to reality, not just for the metaphorical terms, but also for the whole of language in which they are embedded.

Ricoeur describes these three tasks as three steps in the 'attempt to complete a semantic account of metaphor with a proper consideration of the role of imagination', and although he claims they are meant as logically discernable, theoretical moments, they reflect a chronological order in the interpretation as well.

A closer look at these different tasks of the imagination through the discussion of an example follows below. After thus expounding Ricoeur's position, I take a closer look at Ricoeur's appeal to Kant's theory of imagination and his ambition to formulate a semantic theory of imagination. An ambition, to recall section 4.1 above, that was also expressed by Mark Johnson.

---

97 Ricoeur[1978] p 145

98 Ricoeur[1993]

99 Ricoeur[1978] p 149. Incidentally, the emphasis on the nature of the ordering of these steps reminds of a controversy in the interpretation of the first Transcendental Deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the subject of which is the nature of the ordering that Kant intended in his subsequent description of the syntheses in intuition, imagination and conceptualization. See chapter 2 below.
One of the few examples Ricoeur presents is brought forward in his discussion of the first step, the schematizing of likenesses. It is the familiar example of Aristotle's proportional metaphor: 'Ares' cup' or 'Dionysos' shield'. This first step in metaphorical interpretation is that of seeing likeness through differences between the concepts expressed. The example is used to illustrate the 'instantaneous grasping of the combinatory possibilities' which are offered by the four terms of the proportional analogy. In the grasping of these combinations, a 'rapprochement between the two ratio's' occurs, which establishes the proportionality. Hence, the analogy between Ares' shield and Dionysos' cup is set up through an insight in the likenesses of the relations between the four terms. This insight has a productive character, since it establishes a previously unseen relation between the terms: a predicative assimilation. Ricoeur calls the schematized aspect of likeness between the terms an 'emerging meaning', as it were a proto-concept.

Ricoeur compares the process of predicative assimilation to Kant's description of the process of schematizing in productive imagination. Like subjective judgements in this account, for Ricoeur the grasped insights are actively produced in the imagination, and, again like subjective judgements, there is no concept available to characterize the aspect under which the terms are likened. The insight in the metaphor then is not the passive viewing of an image, nor the routine application of an existing concept, but a productive act of bringing previously unrelated terms together under an aspect of similarity.

The second step that imagination performs is the picturing of the semantic innovation. This picturing should not be understood in the manner of Hume's faint impressions. The latter amounts merely to having an image of an absent thing, and would thus remain foreign to the productive process of predicative assimilation. Rather: 'Imagining, or imagining is the concrete milieu in which and through which we see similarities. To imagine, then, is not to have a mental picture of something, but to display relations in a depicting mode. Whether this depiction concerns unsaid and unheard similarities or refers to qualities, structures, localizations, situations, attitudes, or feelings, each time the new intended connection is grasped as what the icon describes or depicts'. Thus, through the production of icons, rather than images, the schematization of the predicative assimilation is channelled as concerning a certain type of likeness,
whether this is the likeness between the use of terms, their referents or their general meanings.
The depicting mode is brought about by the 'iconic function' of the words. Ricoeour uses this notion in the definition of Paul Henle, who in turn borrowed it from Charles Peirce. An icon, according to Henle, is a sign that functions through similarity, rather than through some conventional symbolic relation. Words are conventional signs for an icon, i.e., they are not icons themselves, but 'present a formula for the construction of the icon', that is, an image that is bound to the words.104

Thus, although some image of a cup may be conventionally associated with the word 'cup', the image of a cup that is called up by the metaphorical 'Ares' cup' functions as an icon for the shield of Ares. It becomes an icon for the shield by virtue of its similarity to the shield. According to Ricoeur, the basis for this similarity was laid in the process of predicative assimilation.
The expression 'an image of...', then, is misleading. The icon in 'Ares' cup' is not the literal image of a cup, but rather a representation of the meaning of the term 'cup', presented in such a way that it resembles the representation of the meaning of the term 'shield'. An icon is the meaning of the word that is 'depicted under the features of ellipsis'; its nature balances on the border between sense and representation.
In the interpretation of the metaphor the icon is used to 'bring to concrete completion the metaphorical process'.105 The icon is 'read on the image in which it is inverted', that is, the iconic presentation of the vehicle is read on the image of the target. Thus, the target is seen as the vehicle (Ares' shield is seen as Dionysos' cup).
The concrete description of the act of 'seeing as' Ricoeur derives from Hester, who attempts to extend the concept of 'seeing as' from perception to poetic imaging.106 In the process of interpretation we create a Gestalt that encodes the aspect of similarity. Thus, if Ares' shield presents image A, and Dionysos' cup presents image C, the metaphorical meaning is constructed through first seeing A and C, and then constructing Gestalt B, that depicts the similarity between A and C. A metaphor thus presents as it were an 'ambiguous' figure which allows for diverse readings, such as Wittgenstein's duck/rabbit picture. We have the unrelated images of a duck (A) and a rabbit (C); only when we actually see the famous drawing (B), we will be capable of seeing a duck in a rabbit-image, or vice versa. Thus, by analogy to the perceptual example, the icon presented by

104 Henle[1958] p 178
105 Ricoeur[1978] p 149
the metaphor *Ares' cup*, then, presents an image of a cup that is pictured in such a manner that it can represent a shield as well. The vehicle-icon (the cup) can be seen in the image of the target, such that the target (the shield) can be seen as the vehicle. The iconic representation that does the trick is what Ricoeur calls 'picturing under feature of ellipsis'; that is, a representation of only those aspects that are relevant for both target and vehicle. In our example, for instance, these may be aspects such as having a round form, being made from metal, being carried by, and being characteristic of a God.

The last, third step in the work of the imagination is that of establishing the reference of the metaphor. Here Ricoeur refers to Jakobson’s concept of the poetic function of a text, which becomes predominant at cost of its referential function. Jakobson claims that in a poetic text the attention of the reader is drawn away from its external references, and drawn to the text itself. Ricoeur agrees, but adds that this is done only in order to establish a secondary reference: 'Poetic language is no less about reality than any other use of language but refers to it by the means of a complex strategy, which implies, as an essential component, a suspension and seemingly an abolition of the ordinary reference attached to descriptive language. This suspension, however, is only the negative condition of a second order reference, of an indirect reference built on the ruins of the direct reference'. Thus poetic language has a *split reference*; consisting of its usual reference, which is to be suspended, and a new 'second-order' reference. Of this positive aspect of poetic reference Ricoeur writes: 'it suggests, reveals, unconceals -or whatever you say- the deep structures of reality to which we are related as mortals who are born into this world and who dwell in it for a little'. Thus: 'Image as absence is the negative side of image as fiction. It is to this aspect of the image as fiction that is attached the power of symbolic systems to "remake" reality'. Thus, through the use of imagination in metaphorical interpretation, the metaphor does not acquire a new, direct reference. Rather, through the insight that the metaphor

---

107 Cf. Jakobson in Sebeok[1960]
108 Ricoeur[1978] p 151
109 This point has led commentators to criticize Ricoeur as taking a referentialist position on metaphor, namely of implying that referents acquire similarity through the process of *rapprochement*, which would really be a position akin to the comparison-view. Cf. Indurkhya[1992] p 74. According to Ricoeur, the similarities in metaphor are created in imagination, i.e. they hold not between objects but between representations of linguistic meanings. Thus, a resemblance between semantic representations is the *product* of metaphor, and not metaphor a product of an existing likeness between their referents. Thus, the criticism holds only insofar as Ricoeur identifies meaning with referent. On the unclarities in Ricoeur’s account on this subject, see the discussion in 5.1 below.
110 Ricoeur[1978] p 152
inspires, a novel perspective becomes available to the interpreter: a potential restructuring of the whole system of references.

Thus, with Ricoeur's account, finally a conception of the 'truth' of poetry, or of literature is formulated, as an alternative to the traditional semantic notion of truth discussed in section 2.2. Further, Ricoeur, like Johnson, appeals to a Kantian theory of imagination, only now the subjective aspects of imagination do not suffer from an accompanying attempt to understand all metaphorical interpretation as resulting from a general conceptual capacity to deal with bodily experience, as we saw it did in Johnson's account in section 4.1. For Ricoeur, subjective productivity is paired to the possibility of reconceptualizing a view of the world. The revelation of 'ideological structures in classical poetry' we saw in Lakoff and Turner's account therewith becomes less a matter of anthropology, and more so of subjective reflection. However, as will become clear shortly, the appeal to Kant's theory of imagination in Ricoeur's writing is in itself not unambiguous; and especially so since he refrains from stating how language is understood whenever it does not involve metaphorical interpretation. That is, it is not clear whether normal, conceptual understanding for Ricoeur may involve subjective imagination or not.

However, Ricoeur's account of the different roles of imagination in metaphorical processing suggests a parallel with the different functions of imagination recognized by Kant, namely, the reproductive and the productive imagination. Ricoeur, as we saw, establishes a difference between the schematizing and the iconic functions of the imagination. The act of predicative assimilation, the schematizing function that Ricoeur defines, is compared to the Kantian productive imagination, since it enables the creation of a (non-pictorial) schema. Imagination in this act has nothing to do (yet) with depicting representations. That is where the second, iconic, function comes in: it enables the interpreter to see the likenesses that are newly schematized. In the iconic representation of the metaphor the resemblances are represented intuitively. The iconic function then amounts to providing an image for the schematic meaning of the metaphor.

Kant's description of the schematic function in conceptual, determinate understanding is that it 'provides images for the concepts'. Imagination mediates between intuitive presentations and a unifying conceptual understanding. It thus brings past and present perceptions together under an aspect of likeness given by a concept. Hence it is called the 'reproductive imagination'.

Ricoeur[1993] p 199

A140/B180, Critique of Pure Reason
The iconic function of the imagination performs a similar, reproductive function in Ricoeur's account, where it mediates between the iconic presentation and the schematic understanding. Here imagination brings images that are bound to the words together under a unifying schematic representation. Hence: 'I do not deny that this second stage of our theory of imagination has brought us to the borderline [...] between a semantics of productive imagination and a psychology of reproductive imagination'.

In the function of bringing images to concepts then, Ricoeur's iconic depiction in metaphorical interpretation seems compatible with the Kantian reproductive imagination in conceptual understanding, while Ricoeur presents the newly schematized meaning as the result of productive imagination.

There are some obvious differences between the imaging involved in Ricoeur's iconic picturing on the one hand, and the Kantian schematization of intuition on the other. Ricoeur claims that the images in iconic depiction are not intuitive presentations; he emphasizes that they are depicted under the feature of ellipsis, and are thus half thought, half image. The iconic depiction is both concrete and imaginative. As such it is responsible for the possible concretization of 'poetic reference': a new perspective on the structuring of reality, without actual reference to reality. For this type of description of reality Ricoeur also uses the term 'heuristic fiction'. The poetic reference is opposed to the 'direct reference' of literal language, which suggests that any possible images in the literal understanding are directly related to (an unquestioned perspective on) reality. The primary candidate for mediating such 'directly referring' words to reality seems to be perception- indeed on the model of the schematization of intuitive presentations in Kant's account of conceptual understanding. In Kant's epistemology, the faculties of productive imagination and conceptual understanding are foreign to one another. For Kant, productive imagination is employed in reasoning from the particular to the universal, resulting in a creative 'subjective universal'. Concepts, by contrast, are 'objective universals', which require no creativity; their application involves a spontaneous concept-guided synthesis in reproductive imagination.

Ricoeur apparently assumes the same relation of mutual exclusion between the faculties of metaphorical and 'normal' linguistic interpretation: there is only a metaphorical interpretation after a semantic clash. The disruptive 'clash' indicates that the imaginative interpretation must be of a different nature than a more conventional conceptual processing. Thus, if Ricoeur indeed assumes a Kantian epistemology in the way indicated here, we must presume a radical difference between metaphorical and literal interpretation in his account.

---

113 Ricoeur[1978] p 149
114 Cf. Ricoeur[1991]
A parallel, then, is suggested between on the one hand the two types of judgement that Kant generally distinguishes, that involve different functions of imagination, and on the other hand Ricoeur's distinction between literal understanding and metaphorical interpretation. For Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, the parallel suggests that in productive imagination, concepts expressed literally by the predications used in metaphor are combined, and lead to newly produced 'emerging concepts'. This parallel indicates, then, that linguistic meanings involved in conceptual understanding are objective concepts, whereas the meanings that are actively produced in metaphorical interpretation can be identified as subjective concepts, which are formed on the basis of newly schematizing similarities between objective meanings.

However, this analysis goes beyond what Ricoeur claims or explicates. He refrains from a discussion on the role of imagination in literal, or conceptual understanding. He can do so, because he introduces metaphor as a linguistically, or rather, semantically defined object. For Ricoeur, we saw, metaphorical interpretation sets in as a result of a semantic clash. Thus, he assumes that the discourse that requires metaphorical interpretation is demarcated in an 'objective' sense, namely through its incomprehensibility in conceptual understanding. Having thus identified his topic of investigation, Ricoeur can elaborate his theory that here meaning is distilled through productive imagination.

I argue in the following section that the notion of a semantic clash cannot serve to define what is interpreted metaphorically. I argue that the realm of metaphorical interpretation, understood as an act of productive imagination in the way Ricoeur does, is not constituted by properties of discourse. The claim that what is recognizable as a metaphor acquires a productive interpretation, and thus involves a different type of meaning therewith becomes circular, for if the metaphorical is defined by its interpretation alone, it will indeed have a acquired a metaphorical interpretation. Hence, the distinction between metaphorical and literal understanding cannot be described in terms of the linguistic objects interpreted. The investigation of metaphorical interpretation therewith is no longer a matter of analysing discourse, but of analysing cognition.
5 Semantic versus cognitive realms of metaphor

5.1 Absurdity and interpretation: the semantic clash

Underlying Ricoeur's assumption of a semantic clash, is his more or less implicit reliance on traditional semantics- indeed that type of semantics, which Johnson dismissed as 'Objectivism in its purest form'. Ricoeur bases his understanding of semantics on Frege.\(^\text{115}\) Regarding the understanding of literal utterances, he employs Frege's distinction between 'sense' and 'reference' himself. He then assumes a similar distinction for poetic text, between the 'structure' of the work and the 'world' of the work.\(^\text{116}\) In this use of the Fregean distinction, Ricoeur assumes a parallel between poetic and 'normal' use of language.

Ricoeur does not discuss Frege's own remarks on poetic interpretation explicitly. According to Frege poetic language, insofar as it does not contain propositions, makes use of entirely subjective representations (Vorstellungen) and is therefore not part of linguistic meaning. Clearly for Ricoeur the distinction cannot be drawn in such a rigid manner, since on the one hand linguistic meanings form the starting-point of metaphorical interpretation, and on the other hand the emergence of a novel linguistic meaning may result from it. However, the opposition between the literal and the poetic is not disputed in Ricoeur's philosophy. With his appeal to the literal absurdity of metaphors, Ricoeur explains a difference between metaphorical interpretation and literal understanding. This difference in modes of interpretation is related to the different types of discourse or 'genres' as Ricoeur calls them. Thus, the 'semantic clash' that precedes metaphorical interpretation becomes the defining feature of metaphor, which brings metaphor out of the realm of propositional meanings. However, this precludes the possibility of ambiguous utterances, i.e. utterances that may receive both a literal and a metaphorical interpretation. Ricoeur's definition thus underscores a limitation in the scope of metaphorical interpretation.

The point is related to the criticism above, in section 3.3, on the usefulness of a criterion of literal falsehood or contextual incongruity. As we saw above, patent falsehood does not provide sufficient reason for the interpretation of an utterance as a metaphor, nor is it a necessary requirement for such


interpretation, since the true sentence: 'The True Church is not a hippopotamus' also qualifies as a metaphor. Let us then understand a 'semantic clash' in a less restrictive way, namely as the absurdity which a literal interpretation gives rise to, such as when an utterance does not literally make sense in the context, even if it is a semantically well-formed sentence. However, even if we require only a 'pragmatic clash', there are still some metaphorical interpretations that are not covered. Some predications are both informative and relevant, but may still be interpreted metaphorically in a given situation, by a given interpreter. In fact, relevance of the utterance taken literally may even enhance its effect as a metaphor.

The remark 'Wolves live in herds', for instance, may be a perfectly informative and relevant utterance when encountered at the Natural History Museum. Imagine the following situation, in which a group of executives from multinational companies are gathered for a party in the museum. A waiter, knowing this, on the way to the kitchen encounters a sign on which the above sentence is printed. 'Indeed!' he thinks, since the sentence presents a suitable metaphor for the gathering.

In this situation, the interpreter construes the metaphorical interpretation without being impelled to such interpretation through any absurdity of the utterance in the context. Rather, the metaphorical interpretation is prompted by the conceived *appropriateness* of the sentence encountered. The point of the example is that an interpreter can construe a metaphorical interpretation of maybe any utterance, provided he is capable of distancing himself from the literal meaning of the utterance, and has something like a suitable context for the metaphor in mind.

One may be tempted to contest the argument as follows: if the sentence is to be interpreted metaphorically, it has to be understood as referring to anything but wolves. Therefore it presupposes a conflict between the intended referent (the guests of the party) and the normal referent (wolves) and hence presupposes some falsehood or absurdity. This argument misses the point. The issue is whether all metaphorical interpretations are *triggered by* absurdity, and not whether conflicting meanings are a necessary element in the interpretation. There are more ways to construe a conflict of meanings than by passively encountering some literal absurdity in a context. The defining criterion, then, is not that the encountered text cannot be interpreted literally, but that it *is* interpreted metaphorically, involving either the active construction or the more passive recognition of an unusual, maybe 'conflicting' context of interpretation. Thus, the process of predicative assimilation that Ricoeur assumes as the first step in interpretation is not always triggered by the encounter of a conflict of meaning in an utterance presented to him. Rather, it can be the result of an
active comparison. Thus, in our example, it is his estimation of the gathering that impels our waiter to read the utterance as a description of the gathering. Hence, in Ricoeur's terms: the construction of the icon need not follow the semantic clash, and the 'rapprochement' need not involve a process of detachment, ellipsis and schematization, but may appear autonomously and instantly. But then, as remarked above, the question is how metaphorical interpretation is triggered, and furthermore, why it should replace a literal understanding.

Thus, the description of the process of metaphorical interpretation is not based on an 'objective' definition of metaphorical language. There are absurd utterances, and there are perfectly sound sentences; and to a certain interpreter, some of both present a metaphor in a specific situation, or state of mind. What counts as a metaphor to an interpreter, then, is the result of a personal act of interpretation, and not a matter of language independent from its interpretation. The implication of this conclusion, we saw earlier in the discussion of Davidson's position, is that metaphorical interpretation is not by definition restricted to the realm of utterances that are intended by their authors or analysts to be metaphorical, nor is one type of interpretation strictly tied up to one genre of discourse.

5.2 Conventions in metaphorical interpretation

The latter conclusion brings us beyond the scope of Ricoeur's theory. If there is, in the end, no formal criterion for metaphors, why should we distinguish metaphors from literal sentences? And how can we do so?

So far, we have encountered in general two features of discourse typical of what would count as a metaphor. The first was the presence of a subject/predicate structure, in which typically the subject-term is literal and the predicate is metaphorical. Crucial for the distinction between the metaphorical and the literal term was the second feature: a conflict in the interpretation, caused by the 'foreign', 'novel' or 'absurd' use of the predicative term.

This property of conflict in understanding was presented in all sorts of varieties. It appears throughout the literature as the 'semantic clash'. Ricoeur presupposes the absurdity of literal interpretation, Goodman describes it as a conflict between present and previous use, Aristotle as the substitution of 'foreign' terms, Black mentions literal falsehood and incongruity, and Davidson adds the patent truth.

Some of these descriptions, such as a general criterion of literal falsehood, were proven wrong. I argued that in some cases it is purely a matter of
interpretation whether a given sentence is a metaphor. In the interpretation, my argument was, the reader has a situation in mind in which the given sentence acquires a metaphorical appropriateness. Thus, the interpreter brings an utterance to bear on a context of interpretation, thereby turning it into a metaphor. The example was the prosaic phrase 'Wolves live in herds', which turned into a metaphorical comment on the gathering of a group of important business people. In order to do this, the sentence had to be considered apart from its literal occurrence as an informative commentary in a discourse on natural history. In a way, in doing this, the utterance was turned to fiction.

What is fictional about this interpretation, is that the utterance is freed from any context: it is considered as language proper, and is then applied to another situation than the one for which it was intended. Thus, a perfectly sound literal sentence can become, in Ricoeur's terms, a 'heuristic fiction'.

With the interpretation of poetry, something similar happens: we read the language proper, and all of a sudden we are struck by its appropriateness for some situation. That is not to say that poetry is all about something, and that reading it demands us to find a 'something' for which it is an appropriate metaphor. Poetry has much more to offer: its sound, its typography, its rhythm and the choice of words, or the images it conveys. But as far as the theory of metaphorical interpretation is relevant for poetic interpretation, it is so for the possible 'about' of a poem, as we observed in the discussion on The Sick Rose. Metaphorical interpretation thus is one strategy to make a poem relevant to us: we read the poem 'as if' it is about something, and thereby get a better understanding of the poem, and of what we think it is about. For such interpretation, some terms are taken as a vehicle, and as embedded in a structure of vehicle-related predicates, and a target may be invented, either on the basis of textual indications, or on the basis of what the interpreter deems relevant. The interpretation, then, consists of treating the poem as a model for the conceptualization of a target. As we saw in the discussion on Indurkhya's theory of metaphorical projection, the construction of such a model need not be easy, as the source, that is, the vehicle, that should serve as a model may not be clearly or unambiguously described in poetry. This, clearly, is different for metaphors of the type 'Rose is a rose', where target and source are clearly stated, and it is different from the 'wolves live in herds' type of incidental metaphors, in that in this case the vehicle is provided in the statement.

What is common to both the allegorical interpretation of poetic imagery, such as observed in the interpretation of The Sick Rose, and the incidental metaphorical interpretation of an utterance, such as that of 'wolves live in herds' above, is the interpreter's invention of the target. A sentence may be turned into a metaphor if a suitable target is provided. In a sense the
imagining metaphors

interpreter here takes on the role of both author and reader: the sentence is encountered, but its target is created. Thus, the relevant context of interpretation is brought to the 'ready made' sentence, turning it into a metaphor for the interpreter.

With the mention of 'ready made' sentences, or 'language proper', we return Jakobson's poetic function of a text, which draws the reader's attention to the text as text. Only now, in view of the former discussion, it is clear that reference of the expressions in the ordinary sense is not entirely suspended by this poetic function. On the contrary: in dealing with the text as text, one strategy of making the words meaningful is by placing them in a fabricated context, and give them a metaphorical target. I call this context 'fabricated', because it retains an aspect of speculation on a possible context that, even if it is not fictitious, is newly construed as a context for the text. Thus, I agree with Ricoeur, that the referential function of a text is not lost when the poetic function of a text is dominant.

However, Ricoeur presupposes the literal absurdity of the encountered utterances. Such absurdity, we saw, may occur, and may provide a reason to engage in metaphorical interpretation, but it is not the only possible reason, nor is it sufficient reason to conclude that metaphorical interpretation is in order. Now if metaphorical interpretation is not brought about by literal absurdity, we may ask, how is it that people recognize an utterance as a metaphor? The answer, I think, is that although metaphorical interpretation is not restricted to literally absurd utterances, such absurdity may function as a conventional sign that metaphorical interpretation is in order. Its function, then, is similar to that of the reversed noun and verb in questions in English, for instance. A question need not have the word order of a question, but when it does, its nature is clearly indicated.

A phrase such as Shakespeare's 'Juliet is the sun' presents a metaphorical image that has a common ring to it, since it reminds of such qualifications as 'shiny', 'bright' or 'sunny'. Further its literary use dates back even further than Shakespeare, since it already occurs in classical literature.\(^{(117)}\) Nevertheless the word 'sun' has not, over time, itself acquired a 'conceptual meaning' indicating its metaphorical use, as Ricoeur would have it. It is used, to the present day, as a perfectly standard example of a live metaphor.\(^{(118)}\)

\(^{(117)}\) The same image is used, for instance, in a comparison by Plautus (254-184 B.C.) in 'The Menaechmi'. It occurs in the following passage: 'a girl's head appears through the partially opened door' MENAECHMUS I: See, she's coming out herself! Just look at the sun! Compared to her bright body it's practically a shadow!' (Act I sc.3).

\(^{(118)}\) Shakespeare's epithet of Juliet is used as a standard example in e.g. Leezenberg[1995].
Still, the reader does not on every encounter of this metaphor have to go through the phase of literal interpretation, and the subsequent recognition of its literal absurdity. Instead, we can assume that the interpreter turns to a metaphorical interpretation because he recognizes it as a (familiar) metaphor. Its obvious falsehood, or in another case a patent truth, may add to its recognition, as a conventional, rhetorical indication that metaphorical interpretation is in order; thus conventionality of a metaphor need not affect the type of interpretation it receives.

This point is even more relevant in poetic interpretation. The reader may recognize a poetic text through its stylistic features, such as figurative language, a typically poetic layout, or through contextual indications, such as by a title or sub-title of a publication. Thus, there are conventional signs that for a given text a poetic interpretation is in order.

Here it is even more obvious that conventional indications that another type of interpretation is in order prevail above the experience of a 'semantic clash', since absurdity of literal interpretation is hard to come by for each and every poem. In fact, the use of plain prosaic or informative text in a poem does not normally lead to a denial of the poetic nature of the text, and hence to a literal understanding of it. Rather, the knowledge that a given text is to be considered as poetry prompts the reader to give a poetic interpretation. The conventions of the genre, then, appeal to a specific attitude of interpretation from the reader. This attitude of interpretation cannot in itself always be identified with the willingness to interpret metaphorically, for, as we already remarked, some poetry is not fit for such interpretation, and some interpreters are not inclined to interpret metaphorically.

The use of clearly non-poetic language in for instance Van Ostaayen's poem on a Singer sewing-machine, or in André Breton's list of entries of the name 'Breton' in the telephone book, as well as the tautology we discussed earlier by Gertrude Stein, deliberately do not conform to the expectations of a poetry reader who sets his mind on metaphorical interpretation. To him, these poems seem to present something like a 'pragmatic clash', because they use text which is too obviously prosaic to be poetic. Where a reader expects tropical metaphors, poetic imagery and symbolism, he now is confronted with tautology, commercial advertisement or telephone numbers.

---

119 Johan Hoorn has investigated the effect of lay out on a reader. It turns out that a text is memorized differently, when presented in a poetic layout, e.g. divided by white spaces. The readers tend to remember more of the original formulations, and less of its actual topic than when the same text is presented with the layout of a newspaper article. Further, the subjects reported more use of imagery in interpreting a poetically laid-out text (Hoorn[1997]).
Imagining metaphors

The effect of the use of such text is that the reader's expectations are turned upside down; he has the choice of adapting his expectations and hence his understanding of what poetry is, or of denying these poems their poetic nature. However the disruptive aspect of such effects wears out over time, as the by now familiar genre of the 'ready-made' in visual arts proves. After becoming familiar with the two mentioned poems, the 'pragmatic clash' of using all too prosaic language makes way for the recognition of a stylistic choice that guides the reader towards a different strategy of poetic interpretation. Van Ostaayen's poem forces the reader to consider it from typographic and phonetic angles, since its linguistic content hardly presents the occasion for poetic interpretation consisting of 'predicative assimilation'. Breton's poem can be read as a parody on conventional poetic form: the telephone book presents a typographically organized text with references to the poet; it is organized through rhythm, repetition and rhyme, and it contains autobiographical references. Thus, in these cases, the use of text belonging to a conventional genre provides a lead for the reader, who, hindered in his strategy of metaphorical interpretation, is forced into other ways of looking at the poem.

The function of rhetorical means, such as literal absurdity, and of conventional indications of genre, such as a title indicating that a publication belongs to poetry, is in this respect similar. Both function as a conventional indication that some sort of interpretation is in order. This function should not be confused with their role in the actual interpretation of the utterance. To presuppose, for instance, that the interpreter always starts out interpreting a sentence as a literal sentence, and is then redirected toward metaphorical interpretation because of a found literal absurdity, is an underestimation of both our skills of interpretation, and of the pervasiveness of metaphors in language.

The question when an utterance or text is interpreted metaphorically has now received several answers. The first instance is where tropical metaphors are concerned, i.e. of the type 'Man is a wolf', or 'Rose is a rose'. In interpretation, the literal absurdity of the predication provides a clue that the sentence is meant as a metaphor. The second instance concerned those utterances which we may call 'pragmatic metaphors', where the utterance is interpreted metaphorically on account of some pragmatic irrelevance or triviality of a literal interpretation, such as in obvious statements as 'Man is not a wolf'. The third instance was given by those sentences which may meaningfully be interpreted literally in their context, but which are incidentally interpreted as a metaphor, such as the sentence 'Wolves live in herds' in the situation sketched above. Here the interpretation is prompted by the interpreter's attitude, guided.

---

120 See the epilogue for a more extensive discussion on ready-mades in visual arts and poetry, and their (destructive) impact on metaphorical interpretation as a strategy of interpreting artworks.
by the appropriateness of the metaphorical interpretation rather than by absurdity of a literal interpretation. Finally, the metaphorical interpretation of poetic imagery can be triggered merely on the basis of knowledge of the type of discourse or genre.

The common factor in each of these situations is the engagement in an active, consciously performed, imaginative reflection on the meaning of the words. Rather than presupposing a passive reader who is forced into action by a linguistic anomaly, we may acknowledge metaphorical imaging as a regular phenomenon in language, which the reader actively recognizes or construes.

With this conclusion the metaphorical character of the interpreted utterances and texts is situated in interpretation itself. The variety in utterances that may be interpreted metaphorically shows that these need not share any syntactic or semantic features. They do share a cognitive response: the incitation of the interpreter's imaginative reflection on the meaning of the words. Thus, 'metaphoricity', be it of standard tropical metaphors or of poetic images, of accidentally encountered utterances or of construed examples, is assigned in interpretation.

5.3 Conclusion

The starting point of our discussion of metaphorical interpretation was to determine how an interpreter establishes a meaning for a given image in poetry. We found that these interpretations depended greatly on the information that the interpreter deemed relevant at the time of the interpretation. This aspect appears, more or less prominent, in the theories on metaphor discussed above, since each of the authors presents an account of background knowledge that plays a role in interpreting metaphors.

In Black's theory the extra-textual knowledge that models the interaction between target and vehicle is called background knowledge, that is, a complex of associated commonplaces and implications. He remains vague on the topic, leaving us with many questions: how background knowledge comes into play, what kind of knowledge it consists of, and through which properties of the text it is interpreted thus. Goodman's analysis presents a more determinate account of the kind of associations that may pertain between words. Words are structurally related to others, since they are on the one hand embedded in a network of equivalences and oppositions, and on the other hand in a hierarchy of exemplifications and denotations. They evoke other 'labels' as a result of these structural relations. The problem with Goodman's account was that the relations mentioned are both unmotivated and non-verifiable, which leaves the
resulting interpretations of expressed labels that 'must apply' arbitrary or purely convention-based. Lakoff and his co-authors give a general motivation for the origin of metaphors. Language, as cognition, is structured through certain basic conceptualizations. Metaphors are the result of an active projection of a 'basic' structure onto some novel bit of information. Thus, metaphors reflect a fundamental and general cognitive process. The knowledge used in conceptualizations is derived from other, basic, concepts, which are in turn derived from either cultural practice or bodily experience. The problem with this theory is that though it might explain the persistence of certain structural, conventional metaphors, it dismisses unconventional, unstable or personal interpretations, and thus misses a fundamental point belonging to poetic interpretation.

Indurkhyaa identifies metaphorical projection with the solving of a problem of proportional analogy. The understanding of both heuristic and poetic metaphors are based on a novel interpretation of previously processed perceptual data, stacked somewhere in the interpreter's mind. Novelty of interpretation amounts to a novel 'seeing' of previous perceptions. However, the status of these perceptual representations is unclear; the relation of perception to words is not explained, and the presented model of proportional analogy could not capture the dynamics of poetic interpretation.

Ricoeur provides another answer to the question where metaphorical meanings come from, in a more philosophical vein. He situates the interpretation of metaphor in the faculty of imagination. Through a schematized representation of the meanings of words we are able to construe meanings for words in novel predications. This latter understanding of metaphorical meaning has greater appeal. First, the novel meanings are the result of a representation that appends to the words; which makes the resulting interpretation a matter of semantic understanding, and not one based on unspecified cultural (as Black would have it) or subconscious perceptual knowledge (Indurkhyaa, Davidson). Second, it identifies the interpretation as belonging to the imagination of the reader, which makes it a personally motivated interpretation (as opposed to both Johnson's and Goodman's appeal to general structures that hold between respectively universal cognitive schemes or between available labels). Third it emphasizes the novel character of the interpretation; which makes the interpretation creative (in contradistinction to Lakoff and Turner's theory on metaphorical meaning in poetry). Finally, on the basis of the modelling function of metaphor, Ricoeur establishes a meaningful notion of metaphorical reference to the 'real' world, and hence a notion of justifiability of a given interpretation, which generally lacks in the other discussed accounts.
However, the objections to the theory discussed in section 5.1 remain. Summarily stated, the problem with Ricoeur’s theory is that it lacks explication of the iconic function of language in general. Ricoeur stresses the imaginative character of metaphorical interpretation to such extent, that its relation to ‘normal’ linguistic understanding becomes opaque. His theory of imagination leans on Kant’s concept of productive imagination, but lacks reference to the paired concept of reproductive imagination. Ricoeur’s account of imagination thus remains incomplete as a theory of imagination, since its work in metaphorical interpretation is not brought into relation with a positive account of other tasks of the imagination, nor with the cognitive faculty of conceptual understanding. Thus, the special status of metaphorical interpretation is not explained satisfactorily.

Another conclusion presented above, was that with Ricoeur’s description of metaphorical interpretation we do not arrive at a definition of metaphor. The semantic clash, which according to Ricoeur precedes metaphorical interpretation, may be brought about by semantic and pragmatic properties of the interpreted utterance. However, it may also actively be constructed by an interpreter upon any occasion at all. The single criterion Ricoeur gave for the starting point of metaphorical interpretation, namely the ‘semantic clash’, does not cover the varieties of utterances that are interpreted metaphorically. Hence, the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical cannot be attributed to mere semantic properties. Ricoeur thus presupposes, but fails to delimit a specific domain of discourse suited for metaphorical interpretation. The assumption of separate realms for metaphorical and literal interpretation therewith remains unmotivated.

The next chapters, then, are devoted to a discussion on the role of imagination in both metaphorical interpretation and conceptual understanding. Given the promising aspects of Ricoeur’s approach, I consider Kant’s theory of imagination in the following chapter, with the hope of finding a theory of imagination that may be used to characterize the process of metaphorical interpretation, as well from a perspective of creative interpretation, as in relation to the nature of conceptual understanding in general.