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## Questions about metaphor in literature

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Let us begin with a magnificent piece of literary metaphor:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall death brag thou wandrest in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.  
    So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare's famous Sonnet 18 is a masterful display of literary genius, not least because of the playful, almost teasing quality of the opening line. It is as if the speaking voice could have compared the addressee with equal ease to any other object, after which the self-set task in hand is executed

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977).

with superior elegance. If anything can be compared with anything, as has been pointed out by John Searle,<sup>2</sup> it is remarkable how naturally this particular exercise in metaphorical comparison is pulled off.

Shakespeare's extended metaphorical comparison has too many layers of semantic complexity to elucidate in this introduction, but attention may be drawn to a number of features:

- The first line sets up a conceptual metaphorical comparison by evoking and contrasting two distinct mental spaces, but it does not use metaphorical language to do so. The words used activate the concepts of I, THEE, COMPARE and SUMMER'S DAY, and each of these concepts has a direct role to play as referents in the evoked world of the text.
- The next seven lines use language that, as a rule, may be deemed directly expressive of their subject: line 2, of the personal characteristics of the addressee, and lines 3 through 8, of the properties of a summer's day. The lines are not metaphorical as such, but instead work as triggers for metaphorical comprehension or interpretation by eliciting comparative inferencing.
- Within those seven lines, however, there are metaphorical expressions that deviate from the locally dominant semantic field, such as 'lease' and 'date' in line 4 and 'eye' in line 5.
- There are other expressions, such as the famous 'in eternal lines' in line 12, that are potentially ambiguous between metaphorical and non-metaphorical meanings when they are first encountered, but which seem to acquire a determinate (in this case non-metaphorical) meaning upon subsequent 'textualization'.
- There are still other metaphorical expressions which allude to similar or identical expressions in other sonnets (for instance, as pointed out by Booth, 'lines' may be connected with Sonnets 15 and 16), as well as in other, non-Shakespearean texts (such as the Bible, Psalm 23, in connection with 'his shade' in line 11).

Lots of different things are happening here that could each be commented on in great depth. But our topic is not Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, but metaphor in literature. So how representative is Shakespeare's masterpiece of the more general use of metaphor in literature? Formulating this question raises the issue whether it can be answered at all.

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<sup>2</sup> John Searle, 'Metaphor', in *Metaphor and Thought: Second Edition*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979/1993), 92-123, p. 96.

### Presenting the problem

The impression that it is virtually impossible to relate the metaphors in Sonnet 18 to literature at large is partly due to the traditional ways of studying literature. Literary history and literary criticism are highly idiographic forms of investigation, which emphasize the unique quality of each text and author. Indeed, it is the main aim of many literary scholars to formulate the individual characteristics of the artistic creations of a writer, in order to facilitate their positioning and evaluation in the canon. This is why many literary scholars are averse to generalization across authors, periods, schools and genres, and why there is not much general research on metaphor in literature.

Another difficulty in aligning literary criticism with linguistic metaphor analysis is the fact that critics aim to produce interesting, novel interpretations of literary works, whereas linguists aim to produce reliable analyses and explanations. A good example of this clash in connection with literary metaphor may be found in the exchange between Bill Downes and Don Freeman concerning the latter's analysis of metaphor in *King Lear*. Freeman<sup>3</sup> applied the cognitive-linguistic theory of metaphor to the opening scene of Shakespeare's play and offered an analysis of its figurative language in terms of two postulated cognitive schemata, BALANCE and LINK. He claims that his approach offers an acceptable description and, more importantly, plausible explanation of the structure and effect of the metaphors in the text, because it is grounded in an independent theory of metaphorical language and cognition, which in turn is based in the individual embodied experience of the reader and the theater-goer. Some of Shakespeare's metaphors may be related to, and hence at least partly explained by, general patterns of metaphorical language and cognition.

This approach to literary analysis is rejected by Downes.<sup>4</sup> He disqualifies Freeman's reading as 'schematic' and 'privileged' because, in his opinion, Freeman does not do full justice to the complete text, as is the job of the critic in Downes's eyes. He writes:

..., viewed as a social practice, literary criticism ... may be the institutional exaggeration of the property of the under-determination of interpretation by literal meaning that makes the practice

<sup>3</sup> Donald C. Freeman, "'According to my bond": *King Lear* and re-cognition', *Language and Literature* 2 (1993), 1-18.

<sup>4</sup> William Downes, 'Reading the Language itself: Some Methodological Problems in D.C. Freeman's "'According to my Bond": *King Lear* and re-cognition"', *Language and Literature* 2 (1993), 121-128.

of literary reading possible. A literary text is compatible with an indefinite number of contexts yielding indefinitely many readings and re-readings.<sup>5</sup>

Somewhat later, Downes formulates the classic literary-critical stance: '...a literary text like *King Lear* is not definitively explicable.' As is also commented by Freeman,<sup>6</sup> practical criticism typically does not aim for (or has no real use for) an explanatory theory of literary discourse or aspects of it, nor does it attempt to do the empirical research required to test it.<sup>7</sup>

Another point to make in this connection is this. Many critics, in responding to the cognitive linguistic and cognitive poetic enterprise, have argued that, even if it were possible to explain aspects of Shakespeare's use of metaphor with reference to cognitive schemata that are presumably shared by all people, this still does not explain what is special about *Lear* or any other literary text or oeuvre. Literary criticism typically resists generalization and aims at capturing and reifying a unique relationship between one text and one reader.

The above comments may serve to explain why there is not much empirical research in literary studies that offers information about the general nature, use and function of metaphor in literature. However, there are exceptions to this situation. For literary critics cannot avoid making more general suggestions and statements about literature when they offer their own readings. (In fact, this is one of their favorite pastimes.) And literary critics freely draw from the theoretical statements about metaphor in poetics. Indeed, the most suggestive publication about the nature of metaphor in literature is probably still David Lodge's<sup>8</sup> elaboration of Roman Jakobson's theory of the poetic function of language,<sup>9</sup> which is grounded in the contrast between metaphor and metonymy. Lodge presents a wide-ranging discussion of a number of bold and general claims:

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Donald C. Freeman, 'Read "Reading the language itself" itself', *Language and Literature* 2 (1993), 129-134.

<sup>7</sup> But cf. Dick Schram and Gerard Steen, eds., *The Psychology and Sociology of Literature* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> Roman Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances', in *Fundamentals of Language*, eds. Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), 55-82; Roman Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 350-377.

- all literature is basically metaphoric, as opposed to all non-literary discourse, which is metonymic;<sup>10</sup>
- all poetry is basically metaphoric, as opposed to all prose, which is basically metonymic;<sup>11</sup>
- all lyrical poetry is basically metaphoric, as opposed to all non-lyrical (in particular, epic) poetry, which is metonymic.<sup>12</sup>

These are general claims that suggest that it actually *is* possible to judge how representative Shakespeare's use of metaphor in Sonnet 18 is of literary metaphor in general.

The structuralist description of the poetic function of language, pre-eminently represented by metaphor, is inevitably connected with the Russian Formalists' view of its function as foregrounding the language of the literary text *as* language. This is held to have an effect of defamiliarization of the reader's perception and cognition, and empirical work has attempted to offer support for this thesis.<sup>13</sup> Shakespeare's sonnet may serve as an apt illustration of the general tendencies discussed by Lodge and of their generally assumed foregrounding and defamiliarization effects. The special character of metaphor in literature is presumed to be explained by its cognitive function of foregrounding language and defamiliarizing the reader's cognitive process, and this, in turn, may lead to an account of why particular forms, such as extended metaphor, are typical of literature.

So despite the resistance to generalization in literary criticism, there are critics and other literary scholars who have contributed to a more general view of literary metaphor. However, they seem to have concentrated on what is specific to literature without being overly concerned with metaphor in general patterns of language use and cognition. Moreover, they have not really begun to do the linguistic research in empirically responsible ways. For instance, David Lodge discusses many excerpts from literary texts in order to illustrate his theses in persuasive fashion, but he has not produced exhaustive analyses of samples of texts in order to proceed to systematic and representative comparisons of metaphor in different classes of literary and non-literary discourse. Indeed, Lodge's discussions are typically

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<sup>10</sup> Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>13</sup> David Miall and Don Kuiken, 'What is Literariness? Three Components of Literary Reading', *Discourse Processes* 28 (1999), 121-138; Willie van Peer, *Stylistics and Psychology: Investigations of Foregrounding* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Gerard Steen, *Understanding Metaphor in Literature: An Empirical Approach* (London: Longman, 1994).

anecdotal, such that it is not always clear how far his conclusions should be generalized beyond a work, an author, and so on. This is the representative mode of writing in literary criticism.

### Hints of a solution

An example of what a more systematic and empirical study of metaphor in literature might look like may be found in linguistics. Andrew Goatly has compared metaphor use in conversation, national news reports, popular science, magazine advertising, modern novels and modern English lyric poetry.<sup>14</sup> Here are some of his most interesting findings:

- literary genres use more active metaphors than all other genres, except magazine advertising;
- apart from the high number of nominal metaphors, poetry has relatively more verbal metaphors than other genres;
- poetry has much less signalling of metaphor than novels, which seem to work more with similes, as all other non-literary genres do to an even greater extent;
- poetry (together with advertising) has the greatest amount of metaphorical extension.

Goatly's study is the only attempt at a multi-dimensional and quantitative analysis of literary and non-literary metaphor in naturally occurring discourse that we are aware of.

However, its methodology is not above reproach. Particularly problematic is the issue of reliable metaphor identification in natural discourse, which is a general issue for all linguistic research into the distribution and function of metaphor in diverging types of discourse.<sup>15</sup> Only consider how to go about identifying metaphor in Shakespeare's sonnet, and the point is crystal clear: for instance, do the words literally used in line 1 count as metaphorical or not? Does the expression 'in eternal lines' in line 12 count as metaphorical or not? Goatly may hence serve as an indication that there is a growing interest in a corpus-linguistic approach to metaphor in and outside literature, but it also signals that we are only beginning to address the difficulties of this type of research.

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Gerard Steen, 'Metaphor Identification: A Cognitive Approach', *Style* 36 (2002), 386-407.

A linguistic approach to metaphor in literature can therefore take its theoretical cue from literary-critical or poetic work such as Lodge's, but it needs to adopt a non-literary, corpus-linguistic methodology to investigate the details of the theory. In particular, generalizations about differences between genres, periods and literary versus non-literary discourse need to be turned into research questions with operational definitions of metaphor in terms of linguistic and rhetorical form and conceptual meaning for empirical investigation. A corpus-linguistic approach should then proceed to a systematic sampling of literary and non-literary texts to examine the occurrences, forms, meanings and functions of different classes of metaphor. Both general patterns and unique and special uses can be studied on the basis of such data.

The assertion that this research has to proceed by means of a corpus-linguistic approach may raise a question about the role of other methods. In particular, some metaphor research has used informants to elicit judgements about selected properties of metaphors in order to compare literary and non-literary metaphors. Thus, Katz and his colleagues collected norms from college students on 464 metaphors for ten variables, including comprehensibility, imagery and familiarity.<sup>16</sup> They found few differences in these ratings between the 204 literary and 260 non-literary metaphors in the sample. However, all of these metaphors were of the *A is B* form. And the metaphor variables that were measured were substantially correlated, possibly making up one underlying dimension of cognitive structure.

That literary and non-literary metaphor probably are different was suggested by Steen in two studies of metaphorical expressions with diverse linguistic forms, with a larger number of variables grouped into a small number of orthogonal dimensions.<sup>17</sup> Measurements of cognitive structure but also of affective value, communicative function, and personal bias showed that literary metaphors were more difficult, more positive, less polite and less biased than journalistic metaphors. Informant-based work such as that by Katz et al. hence has to be careful about sampling procedures and measurement techniques if it wishes to capture some of the experienced differences between literary and non-literary metaphor. Prior corpus-linguistic work is essential for pointing out what these differences might be, so that they can be controlled for in sampling experimental materials.

<sup>16</sup> Albert Katz, Alan Paivio, Marc Marschark, and James Clark, 'Norms for 204 Literary and 260 Nonliterary Metaphors on Psychological Dimensions', *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 3 (1988), 191-214.

<sup>17</sup> Steen, *Understanding Metaphor*.

In addition, one of the important theoretical issues that remains to be resolved is the ubiquity of metaphor. The pervasive presence of metaphor in language and thought has been extensively discussed by cognitive linguists such as Lakoff and Johnson and their followers,<sup>18</sup> including, in particular, Mark Turner,<sup>19</sup> but it still needs to be incorporated in the specifically poetic theories of metaphor in literature that are based in structuralism. For if metaphor is ubiquitous, how can literature (or poetry, or lyrical poetry) be said to be particularly metaphorical: what is special about literature? Can Jakobsonian structuralism survive these modern developments in linguistics?

In order to address the variation of metaphor between literary and non-literary discourse, a literary-critical starting point is too narrowly conceived, both in terms of its scope and method. Instead, a more general linguistic approach needs to compare metaphor between the two domains of discourse, in order to answer the question what is special about metaphor in literature, and what is not. In what follows we will sketch out some of the possibilities for doing this type of research by raising various questions about metaphor in literature.

### The linguistic framework

We shall assume that metaphor may be defined in a cognitive-linguistic fashion, as a non-literal mapping between two distinct conceptual domains. Thus, in Sonnet 18, the two domains involve a human being and a summer's day, and a number of correspondences between the two domains are entertained for reflection, such as degree of lovely and temperate nature. However, the overall comparison in Shakespeare's sonnet raises the question whether the notion of metaphor is taken to refer to a linguistic or a conceptual phenomenon. As suggested above, the sonnet's first line does not exhibit metaphorical language use, since all the words used directly evoke their referents. However, line 1 does exhibit conceptual metaphor, in the sense that the reader has to construct a cross-domain mapping. The scope of a study of 'metaphor in literature' is drastically broadened if metaphor is taken in a conceptual, discursive sense, instead of a linguistic,

<sup>18</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).



relatively formal sense. Eventually, both types of investigation will have to be carried out in order to produce a complete picture of metaphor in literature.

When linguists talk about variation in connection with language varieties or registers such as literary versus journalistic versus scientific language use, they usually think of frequencies and distributions of formal elements and structures. Their aim is to describe this type of variation and find functional accounts, usually of a cognitive, social, or cultural nature.<sup>20</sup> We have mentioned the cognitive account of the special nature of metaphor in literature by means of foregrounding and defamiliarization above. However, there are also the more general explanations of metaphor in literature which relate to its less special, more general cognitive functions of its use in language and cognition, which cannot be ignored. Both types of accounts can then be tested in experimental fashion, as the two of us have done for various aspects of metaphor in literature.<sup>21</sup>

The starting point of variationist research into metaphor lies in the notion of a language variety, or register. Different domains of discourse such as science, religion, literature, business and education exhibit their own language varieties, which can be described with reference to all dimensions of language, such as phonology, grammar, vocabulary and conventions of usage.<sup>22</sup> A number of these registers have been selected for special attention by metaphor scholars, such as science,<sup>23</sup> religion<sup>24</sup> and education.<sup>25</sup> However, none of these works have attempted large-scale

<sup>20</sup> Cf., Douglas Biber, 'An Analytical Framework for Register Studies', in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register Variation*, eds. Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 31-56; Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad, 'Register Variation: A Corpus Approach', in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi Hamilton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 175-196; Sylvie Dubois and David Sankoff, 'The Variationist Approach towards Discourse Structural Effects and Socio-Interactional Dynamics', in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi Hamilton, 282-303; cf. Kövecses, this issue.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond W. Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Steen, *Understanding Metaphor*.

<sup>22</sup> Dwight Atkinson and Douglas Biber, 'Register Variation: A Review of Empirical Research', in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register Variation*, eds. Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 351-385.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Boyd, 'Metaphor and Theory Change: What is "Metaphor" a Metaphor For?' in *Metaphor and Thought: Second Edition*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979/1993), 481-532; Dedre Gentner and Michael Jeziorski, 'The Shift from Metaphor to Analogy in Western Science', in *Metaphor and Thought: Second Edition*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 447-480; Thomas S. Kuhn, 'Metaphor in Science', in *Metaphor and Thought: Second Edition*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 533-542.

<sup>24</sup> Janet Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> Lynn Cameron, *Metaphor in Educational Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2003).

corpus studies describing patterns of distribution and variation of specific linguistic features such as nominal or verbal form, grammatical function as subject or object, rhetorical realization as metaphor or simile and so on.<sup>26</sup> It is not just literature that suffers from a lack of corpus-linguistic variationist research.

In the face of this lack of relevant distributional data, we have to resort to theoretical proposals and suggestions grounded in empirical case studies. We shall now first discuss some of the former and then conclude our article with a brief overview of some of the more interesting case studies.

### Theoretical proposals

When scholars theorize about the nature of metaphor in literature (or in other types of discourse, for that matter), they often focus on the special, either subtle or spectacular uses of metaphor that are most prominent. In our opinion, Reuven Tsur's *On Metaphoring* is the most wide-ranging account of the cognitive effects that may be exerted by the linguistic and discursive structures of metaphor in literature.<sup>27</sup> It is a goldmine of theoretical proposals, based on careful readings of poetry by a scholar who combines twentieth-century poetics with general cognitive psychology from before the rise of cognitive linguistics. Indeed, by Tsur's own account, his own version of cognitive poetics on the one hand and cognitive linguistics on the other

... are even diametrically opposed. Cognitive linguistics shows very successfully how a wide range of quite different metaphors can be reduced to the same underlying conceptual metaphor, whereas cognitive poetics makes significant distinctions between very similar metaphors, claiming that these differences make poetic expression unique.<sup>28</sup>

This gap may have to be closed by a variationist approach to be developed in the future, as it may become more precise about the frequencies,

<sup>26</sup> Gerard Steen, 'Metaphor and Discourse: Towards a Linguistic Checklist for Metaphor Analysis', in *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, eds. Lynne Cameron and Graham Low (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 81-104.

<sup>27</sup> Reuven Tsur, *On Metaphoring* (Jerusalem: Israel Science Publishers, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Reuven Tsur, 'Aspects of Cognitive Poetics', in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, eds. Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpepper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002), 279-318, p. 314.

distributions, functions and effects of both the constancies and the unique features of (classes of) literary metaphor.

Many of Tsur's insights may also be found in other, more focused and selective theoretical proposals. For instance, the possibility for metaphorical mappings between autonomous parts of a text is one special feature of literary discourse which is often invoked in such discussions.<sup>29</sup> This also holds for the manifestation of metaphorical mappings through allegory<sup>30</sup> and parable.<sup>31</sup> Another metaphorical phenomenon that is deemed to be typically literary is extended or megametaphor,<sup>32</sup> which is related to multiplied or epic simile.<sup>33</sup> Both of these are variations on the theme of metaphorical language use that is continued beyond one particular utterance into a longer stretch of text, as illustrated by a quotation from Homer's *Iliad* (13.491-95) analyzed by Ben-Porat:

– and *the people* after them  
 followed on, *as when the sheep* follow the lead-ram  
 as they leave the pasture to drink, and make proud the heart of the shepherd,  
 and *thus also the heart of Aineias* was gladdened within him  
 as he saw the swarm of the host following his own leadership

Yet another example of a typically literary use of metaphor is the phenomenon of 'realization',<sup>34</sup> which refers to the poetic device of importing the figurative frame of reference of a metaphor into the actual world of the poem, 'realizing' the source in the target domain. It is one of the more spectacular literary uses of metaphor. Goatly adds some further distinctions to the analysis of local metaphor structure, based on a close analysis of *Macbeth*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Rainbow* and six early novels by William Golding.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Margaret Freeman, 'Cognitive Mapping in Literary Analysis', *Style* 36 (2002), 466-483; Yeshayahu Shen, 'Metaphors and Global Conceptual Structure', *Poetics* 25 (1997), 1-17.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Crisp, 'Allegory: Conceptual Metaphor in History', *Language and Literature* 10 (2001), 5-19; Michael Sinding, 'Assembling Spaces: The Conceptual Structure of Allegory', *Style* 36 (2002), 503-523.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Language and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Werth, 'Extended Metaphor: A Text-World Account', *Language and Literature* 3 (1993), 79-103.

<sup>33</sup> Ziva Ben-Porat, 'Poetics of the Homeric Simile and the Theory of (Poetic) Simile', *Poetics Today* 13 (1992), 737-770.

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Hrushowski, 'Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference: With Examples from Eliot, Rilke, Mayakovsky, Mandelstam, Pound, Creeley, Amichai, and The New York Times', *Poetics Today* 5 (1984), 5-43.

<sup>35</sup> See Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors*.

It is important to note that all of these allegedly typically literary manifestations of metaphor are not restricted to literature. Automobile fan discourse<sup>36</sup> and car advertisements<sup>37</sup> are some examples of non-literary discourse studied for their use of extended metaphor. Other examples of deliberate and rhetorically prominent uses of metaphor may be found in education, politics and on the sports pages of any newspaper. So if these intentionally prominent rhetorical forms are not restricted to literature, how can they be said to be typical of metaphor in literature? Do they exhibit subtle structural or semantic particularities, as is argued by Tsur as well as Lakoff and Turner? Or is it our literary reading attitude which pays more attention to their meaning potential, as has been implied by several empirical studies of metaphor in literary text processing?<sup>38</sup> Or, finally, may both answers be correct to a limited extent? We will only be able to tell after much more research has been carried out.

Apart from the possibility that metaphorical figures may be rhetorically prominent and/or deliberately exploited by readers, there is the additional possibility that metaphor in literature may be a matter of density, which does not even have to be completely deliberate from one metaphorically used expression to another. This also moves us away from the more spectacular uses of metaphor to the more general use of metaphorical language in literary texts. The suggestive findings by Goatly reported above may be recalled here.

Another possibility, which equally applies to more and less deliberate metaphor, lies in its frequent or prominent combination with other figures of speech. For instance, it may very well be the case that American writers tend to combine metaphor with hyperbole, as seems to be the case for metaphor in American English at large.<sup>39</sup> It is important to note that metaphor may enlarge or diminish, and that, in addition, it may be used seriously or ironically, or even sarcastically. Each of these configurations

<sup>36</sup> Ingrid Piller, 'Extended Metaphor in Automobile Fan Discourse', *Poetics Today* 20 (1999), 483-498.

<sup>37</sup> Joanna Thornborrow, 'Playing Hard to Get: Metaphor and Representation in the Discourse of Car Advertisements', *Language and Literature* 7 (1998), 254-272.

<sup>38</sup> Raymond W. Gibbs, J. Kushner, and R. Mills, 'Authorial Intentions and Metaphor Comprehension', *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 20 (1991), 11-30; Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, 'Metaphor Comprehension as Problem Solving: An Online Study of the Reading Process', *Style* 36 (2002), 428-445; Miall and Kuiken, 'What is Literariness? Three Components of Literary Reading'; Steen, *Understanding Metaphor*.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Kreuz R. Roberts, B. Johnson, and E. Bertus, 'Figurative Language Occurrence and Co-Occurrence in Contemporary Literature', in *Empirical Approaches to Literature and Aesthetics*, eds. Roger Kreuz and Mary Sue MacNealy (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1996), 83-98.

may exhibit distinct patterns of distribution for literary and non-literary discourse that we do not know about today.

These questions raise the issue of a general taxonomy for metaphor. What sorts of classes of metaphor are there in the first place, so that we can examine how they are used in literary versus non-literary discourse? Let us briefly review a few contemporary proposals.

- Cognitive linguistics makes a distinction between conventional and novel metaphor; between conventional or novel metaphor in language versus in thought (conceptual metaphor or ad-hoc blending); between ontological, orientational and structural metaphor as content-oriented distinctions of conceptual metaphor, and image metaphor as a form-oriented class of metaphor.<sup>40</sup> Following up on this research, Yeshayahu Shen has investigated other cognitive properties of poetic metaphor, such as the cognitive structure of the directionality of the mapping from source to target domain.<sup>41</sup>
- Cameron makes the distinction between deliberate and unintentional metaphor (which she calls 'emergent' or 'conventionalized' metaphor).<sup>42</sup> (There is a relation with metaphor that is signalled or not, as discussed by Goatly.<sup>43</sup>) The distinction between deliberate and unintentional metaphor is orthogonal to conventional versus novel metaphor, in the sense that the latter can be both deliberate and unintentional. It may be somewhat more difficult for a novel metaphor to be unintentional, but it is certainly possible that people produce novel cross-domain mappings that are not deliberate at first, but which they interpret in retrospect as more or less intended.
- Linguists, rhetoricians and poeticsians make distinctions between various formal manifestations of metaphor, such as oxymoron, zeugma and synesthesia,<sup>44</sup> or personification, animation and objectification.<sup>45</sup>
- Literary metaphors may have typical linguistic and discursive properties that distinguish them from non-literary metaphors, such as frequent position at the end of the sentence, or at the beginning or end of a particular larger section in a discourse.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf., Yeshayahu Shen, 'Cognitive Constraints on Poetic Figures', *Cognitive Linguistics* 8 (1997), 33-71.

<sup>42</sup> Cameron, *Metaphor in Educational Discourse*.

<sup>43</sup> Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Yeshayahu Shen, 'Cognitive Constraints on Verbal Creativity: The Use of Figurative Language in Poetic Discourse', in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, eds. Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpepper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002), 211-230.

<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1969).

<sup>46</sup> Steen, 'Metaphor and discourse'.

Apart from these general taxonomies, more specific proposals about the nature of literary metaphor have also been advanced. As noted above, structuralist linguistics and poetics have proposed that the prime function of metaphor may be to foreground the code or the message for its own sake. However, this certainly does not seem to hold for the many conventional metaphors that are used less intentionally by many novelists – unless their density becomes so high as to draw the reader's attention. Cognitive linguists Lakoff and Turner have suggested that literary metaphor is special on the grounds of its extension, elaboration, questioning and composition of already available conceptual metaphors. But the phenomena discussed by Lakoff and Turner are not unique to literary metaphor: advertizing, journalism and political rhetoric also exploit conventional metaphor in these ways. So all of these have to remain undecided issues.

We have discussed some of the possible properties of literary metaphor by engaging with some of the most important theoretical proposals. These may range from specific properties of metaphors themselves, their distribution, their combination with other figures, and their combination with other general aspects of language and discourse. It is only large-scale corpus work between literary and non-literary discourse which will be able to provide an accurate and precise picture of the extent to which each of these factors plays a role in the specific nature of metaphor in literature. We shall now finally and briefly turn to a number of case studies that are suggestive of the nature of literary metaphor in more concrete ways. Since literature is not a very homogenous class of discourse,<sup>47</sup> we shall pay special attention to the relation between metaphor and genre: the novel, drama and poetry.

### Case studies

David Lodge has argued that, in terms of the metaphoric and metonymic poles of all writing, the novel has to be situated towards the metonymic pole: its discourse is forwarded by means of relations of contiguity, not similarity. The typical means for the novelist to express relations of similarity, according to Lodge, is simile, not metaphor. This should be contrasted with poetry, which is a type of discourse tending towards the metaphoric pole, since relations of similarity are constructed between many layers of the poetic text, including even between sound and mean-

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<sup>47</sup> Gerard Steen, 'Genres of Discourse and the Definition of Literature', *Discourse Processes* 28 (1999), 109-120.

ing (forms of rhyme). The figure par excellence in poetry, therefore, is not simile but metaphor. The novel should also be contrasted with non-literary narrative prose, and even prose in general, which are probably even more metonymic, and as a rule have less scope for metaphor and simile. These are well-known postulated overall tendencies, and Goatly's findings have offered initial support for them.

One example of a study, examining the role of metaphor at more than one level in a narrative text that may be seen as a precursor of the novel, is Craig Hamilton's<sup>48</sup> discussion of Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*. Hamilton shows how local metaphor, global analogy, and overall allegory are dominant and connected with each other. His study is another variation on the theme set by Lodge, that novels (or narrative texts) can be seen as more or less metaphoric (and metonymic) at various levels which may even interact with each other.

More typical examples of studies of metaphor in the novel have to do with the role of metaphor in the style of the narrator or a character. Lodge's own examples include a comparison between the mind styles of Stephen, Bloom and Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*, which can be ordered from more to less metaphorical. Elena Semino<sup>49</sup> offers a discussion of this line of research, including the fascinating debate of Golding's *The Inheritors* which has witnessed a cognitive-linguistic turn in Black.<sup>50</sup> In her more recent contribution, Semino adds a new twist to her previous study with Kate Swindlehurst<sup>51</sup> of Bromden's mind style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*:

There are ... some important differences between Bromden's and Clegg's idiosyncratic metaphorical patterns. Bromden's narrative is characterised by frequent and creative uses of *conventional* conceptual metaphors, drawing particularly from the source domain of machines. Clegg's metaphorical expression to do with butterflies, in contrast, are not related to any conventional conceptual metaphors in English, but realise an *idiosyncratic* conceptual metaphor.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Craig Hamilton, 'Conceptual Integration in Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*', in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, eds. Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpepper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002), 1-22.

<sup>49</sup> Elena Semino, 'A Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Mind Style in Narrative Fiction', in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, eds. Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpepper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002), 95-122.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Black, 'Metaphor, Simile and Cognition in William Golding's *The Inheritors*', *Language and Literature* 2 (1993), 37-48.

<sup>51</sup> Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst, 'Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*', *Style* 30 (1996), 143-166.

<sup>52</sup> Semino, 'A Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Mind Style in Narrative Fiction', p. 109.

The role of metaphor in narrator or author style may be exemplified by Popova's studies of Henry James's short story 'The Figure in the Carpet' and of Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume*.<sup>53</sup> Popova offers a description and explanation of metaphor in these works along the lines of Freeman.<sup>54</sup>

By comparison, Anne-Marie Simon-VandenBergen examines a select group of metaphors in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and discusses their thematic significance:

The stylistic quality of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* lies in the harmony between subject-matter and style. Orwell's metaphors are to a large extent conventional ones and are indeed often not striking by themselves. However, he exploits them through their distribution and frequency, by making them the basis for creative metaphors, and above all by giving them a function in the total meaning of the novel. Indeed, this harmony between the major themes and the style is in itself part of the meaning in that it helps to create the image of a society which is frightening in its perfect coherence.<sup>55</sup>

If we go beyond the oeuvre of one author, and consider how metaphor in the novel may vary according to historical and national dimensions, then we can only point to suggestions such as those made by Lodge about the difference between the realist versus the modernist versus the postmodernist novel. As noted before, these are fascinating ideas, but they still need to be researched in a controlled fashion.

Turning from the novel to drama, we have the studies by Don Freeman on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*.<sup>56</sup> The aim of these studies is to describe and explain patterns of metaphorical usage by Shakespeare with reference to the stock of conventional metaphors in English that have been independently established in cognitive linguistics. More generally, there is an opportunity for drama scholars

<sup>53</sup> Yanna Popova, 'The Figure in the Carpet: Discovery or Re-Cognition', in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, eds. Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpepper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002), 49-72; Yanna Popova, "'The Fool Sees with his Nose": Metaphoric Mappings in the Sense of Smell in Patrick Süskind's *Perfume*', *Language and Literature* 12 (2003), 135-152.

<sup>54</sup> Freeman, 'According to my bond'.

<sup>55</sup> Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenbergen, 'Speech, Music and Dehumanisation in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: A Linguistic Study of Metaphors', *Language and Literature* 2 (1993), 157-182, p. 181.

<sup>56</sup> Donald Freeman, 'According to My Bond', *ibid.*; Donald Freeman, "'Catch[ing] the Nearest Way": *Macbeth* and Cognitive Metaphor', *Journal of Pragmatics* 24 (1995), 689-708; Donald Freeman, "'The Rack Dislimns": Schema and Metaphorical Pattern in *Anthony and Cleopatra*', *Poetics Today* 20 (1999), 443-460.



to compare the use of metaphor in literature with the use of metaphor in authentic conversation. Only recently have applied linguists and conversation analysts turned to the study of metaphor,<sup>57</sup> but it is clear that there are some fascinating studies to be carried out here. A similar objective may be envisaged for the general use of metaphor in dialogue in novels.

Let us finally take a brief look at metaphor in poetry. That poetry is the metaphoric genre of literature par excellence may be demonstrated with reference to Margaret Freeman's discussion of Emily Dickinson.<sup>58</sup> She offers a reading of 'My Cocoon tightens' in terms of analogical mappings, of 'Loaded Gun' in terms of blending, and of a Dickinson forgery (by Mark Hofmann) in terms of cognitive style. To the linguist, her contribution is also an interesting case of the precarious balance between analysis and interpretation, and of the thin line between clear and less clear metaphor identification.

There are more variations on metaphor analysis in poetry than in drama. Dennis Sobolev offers an account of the macro-metaphoric structure of much of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, focusing in particular on the metaphorical mapping between the material and the transcendent in some of his most famous poems.<sup>59</sup> Craig Hamilton discusses the nature and use of personifications in the oeuvre of W.H. Auden, with special reference to 'The Mind to Body Spoke' and 'Memorial for the City'.<sup>60</sup> Poetry that is less metaphoric and more metonymic (or 'prosaic') than is prototypically assumed to be the case, is discussed by David Lodge in his chapter on Philip Larkin, where he points out the tension between the metonymic overall text and the use of local linguistic metaphor.<sup>61</sup>

Of more ambitious scope is the study by Masako Hiraga on the genre of the haiku.<sup>62</sup> She argues that a blending theory account of metaphor is particularly suited to understanding the original workings of literary metaphor in such a succinct poetic context as the haiku. A similarly broad scope is manifested by Peter Crisp's study of image metaphors in the poetic school

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. the references in Lynne Cameron and Graham Low, eds., *Researching And Applying Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Freeman, 'Poetry and the Scope of Metaphor: Toward a Cognitive Theory of Metaphor', in *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads*, ed. Antonio Barcelona (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000), 253-282.

<sup>59</sup> Dennis Sobolev, 'Hopkins's Rhetoric: Between the Material and the Transcendent', *Language and Literature* 12 (2003), 157-182.

<sup>60</sup> Craig Hamilton, 'Mapping the Mind and the Body: On W.H. Auden's Personifications', *Style* 36 (2002), 408-427.

<sup>61</sup> Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*.

<sup>62</sup> Masako Hiraga, "'Blending" and an Interpretation of Haiku: A Cognitive Approach', *Poetics Today* 20 (1999), 461-482.

of Imagism.<sup>63</sup> Crisp contrasts the image aspect of these metaphors with the conceptual emphasis on metaphor in cognitive linguistics, and manages to reconcile both aspects in one consistent account.

## Conclusion

Our discussion of metaphor in literature may be usefully summarized in a number of questions:

- What is special about metaphor in literature? Does metaphor in literature exhibit special forms, meanings, or uses – in terms of frequencies, distributions – or even as single but prominent occurrences in specific texts? Does it exhibit ordinary forms, meanings, or uses, but in a relatively extreme density?
- What is not special, but general about metaphor in literature? Which linguistic and conceptual structures of metaphor in literature may be explained by more general patterns of language use and cognition?
- Are the special and the general properties of metaphor in literature handled in special ways by language users dealing with literature? Do writers and readers employ specifically literary processing strategies or operations when encountering metaphor in literature? Do language users in other roles, such as performers, actors, editors and reviewers, do so?
- What is the variation of metaphor *within* literature? What is the variation of metaphor between genres (novel, poem, play), periods (realism, modernism, postmodernism), countries, and so on?

At the moment, none of these questions can be given a definitive answer. We believe that the various traditions of research discussed in this paper all need to co-operate to produce new findings in this exciting field of research.

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Crisp, 'Imagism's Metaphors: A Test Case', *Language and Literature* 5 (1996), 79-92.

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