The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition,
Logic and Communication

Vol. 3: *A Figure of Speech* August 2008
pages 1-22

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METAPHORICAL SINGULAR REFERENCE

The Role of Enriched Composition in Reference Resolution

ABSTRACT: It is widely accepted that, in the course of interpreting a metaphorical utterance, both literal and metaphorical interpretations of the utterance are available to the interpreter, although there may be disagreement about the order in which these interpretations are accessed. I call this the *dual availability assumption*. I argue that it does not apply in cases of metaphorical singular reference. These are cases in which proper names, complex demonstratives or definite descriptions are used metaphorically; e.g., 'That festering sore must go', referring to a derelict house. We are forced to give up dual availability in these cases because a process of predicate transfer happens in the restriction clauses of such metaphorically used definite phrases (DPs), so that a denotation-less definite concept is never constructed. A process of enriched composition yields only a metaphorical referent/denotation. I compare cases of metaphorical reference both to cases of metonymic reference and to uses of epithets of the 'That N of an N' form. Reflection on the former is helpful in getting clear about the kind of property transfer involved in referential metaphors. Such transfer happens directly at the level of properties and is not mediated via a correspondence between objects, as is the case with metonymic reference. Reflection on epithets such as 'that festering sore of a house' is helpful since these are a sort of intermediate case between cases of literal and metaphorical reference. They provide support for my claim that in cases of metaphorical reference there is only a single referent (the metaphorical one). Moreover, constraints on the use of these epithets suggest that referential metaphors are similarly constrained. In particular, I argue that referential metaphors can only be used when the implicit category restriction (e.g., *house* in the case of the example 'That festering sore must go') is highly salient, and that the evaluative information conveyed by the metaphor serves primarily to indicate the speaker's attitude towards the referent rather than being intended to help the hearer identify the referent.

1. INTRODUCTION

An issue about metaphorical language that has been at the forefront of much recent discussion in linguistics and psychology is whether or not both literal and metaphorical interpretations of an utterance are available to the interpreter and if so what the order of accessibility of these interpretations is. With respect to the latter issue, there are three possibilities:[1]

(A) The literal interpretation is accessed first.

(B) The two interpretations are entertained simultaneously (total access).

(C) The metaphorical interpretation is accessed first.

This *dual availability assumption* is nearly universal in contemporary discussions of metaphor, and for most scholars the only live issue is the one about order of accessibility. I want to challenge this dual availability assumption by examining cases of what I call *metaphorical singular reference*, some examples of which follow:[2]

(1) Mick Jagger over there wants to buy you a drink. [Said by barman to attractive female client, referring to aging hipster at the other end of the bar].

(2) That monster has to go. [Said by wife to her husband, referring to a china cabinet that he inherited from his grandmother].

(3) That festering sore needs to be dealt with soon. [Referring to a derelict house in an otherwise nice neighbourhood that is used by drug pushers and addicts].

(4) "To tackle the problems created by these multistory SUVs-without--wheels in a resource-limited world. . . " [Referring to the huge houses that are being built in suburban USA]. (From the *Free Times*, Oct 2007).

(5) The wilting violet seems like she's ready to leave. [Referring to a shy and frumpily dressed woman standing apart from others at a party].

(6) The bad news congealed into a block of ice. [Referring to the infamous Sally] (Searle, 1993, 94 ex.19).

(7) a. The brightest star in my sky has just run off with the milkman.

b. The sparkle on summer dew has just run off with the milkman. [The intended referent is the speaker's wife] (Cohen (1993), 68 ex.26).

(8) The rock is becoming brittle with age. [The intended referent is an old professor emeritus] (Morgan, 1993, 125 ex.2).

(9) My tender rosebud left me. [The intended referent is the speaker's loved one] (Morgan, 1993, 133 ex. 28).

(10) The Cinderella of that family will eventually get her due. [Loosely based on Warren 1999, 131, ex.17: , 'Mary is the Cinderella in the family'].

I will argue that, in cases such as these, what Jackendoff (2007, 7) calls "Fregean composition" – i.e., composition based on the encoded meanings of expressions and the semantic referents of any singular terms – does not determine the proposition that the speaker has expressed. This is because the only referent available is the metaphorical referent. Thus in composing/constructing an interpretation, the interpreter is necessarily engaging in Jackendoffian "enriched composition". (Jackendoff, 2002, 387-394).

2. ORDER OF ACCESSIBILITY

As I said above, an assumption of dual availability of literal and metaphorical interpretations of metaphorical language is the norm, with

people differing only with respect to which of possibilities (A) – (C) they accept.

The usual story told by those who accept possibility (A) is that, given suitable input, the modular language processor automatically engages in syntactic and semantic analysis and delivers a literal interpretation of the uttered sentence (or possibly multiple interpretations if there are any syntactic or semantic/lexical ambiguities involved) for consideration by the central cognitive processor. It is only if this literal interpretation somehow doesn't fit with background/contextual information that further pragmatic processing is called on and some other, metaphorical, interpretation is sought.[3] Recanati (1995, 211) calls this the Literal-First Serial model of processing. Within this general sort of approach there is room for a variety of stories as to what role the original, literal, interpretation plays in the recovery of the metaphorical one. It could be that the literal must be modified/modulated in some way; or it could be that the literal is needed as a cognitive bridge (e.g., in some sort of analogical reasoning process).

The usual sort of story told by those who accept possibility (B) is that bottom-up syntactico-semantic processes and top-down pragmatic processes happen simultaneously, with the net result that both literal and metaphorical interpretations will be constructed in tandem. Of course, background/contextual information may favour one over the other and it may very well be that in some cases the literal interpretation gets quickly extinguished and only the metaphorical interpretation survives to become a part of the interpreter's evolving discourse-level representation. There are also some who would insist that both literal and metaphorical interpretations *must* be simultaneously entertained, for otherwise there would not be the sort of felt "tension" that is experienced when one encounters a really strong metaphor; i.e., a resonant and emphatic metaphor, in Black's (1993, 26) sense. This seems to be the view expressed by Pinker (2007, 261-265).

The usual sort of story told by those who accept possibility (C) is that the metaphorical interpretation is directly accessed, as it is the only contextually relevant interpretation. There are two sub-versions of this account. One is basically just a version of the second account, but with the added specification that the metaphorical interpretation is more highly ranked than the literal interpretation. I will call this the

Ranked Parallel model. Basically it means that the metaphorical interpretation is favoured in some way, e.g., it starts out with a higher initial level of activation or is something like a cognitive default, so that it is the first interpretation consciously entertained. Recanati (1995, 212) makes the observation that a parallel model with a bias does not differ significantly from a serial model. The second sub-version of possibility (C) is more radical. It claims that the metaphorical interpretation is the only one that is constructed, since it is the only one supported by the context. A process of what Jackendoff (2002, 387-394) calls "enriched composition" yields the metaphorical interpretation directly. Of course, had the context been different, it is possible that the only interpretation built would have been the literal one, which would have been built by what Jackendoff (2007, 7) calls "Fregean composition".[4]

Advocates of this third possibility are likely to agree that even if the metaphorical interpretation is directly accessed, it may be that *after the fact* it is possible to recognize that an alternative interpretation is available. This is what happens when someone (either deliberately or unintentionally) fails to respond to the metaphorical interpretation that the speaker intended and instead picks up on only what is lexically encoded in the speaker's utterance. Ignoring pragmatically intended meanings in favour of literally encoded meanings is a very common way of producing humorous effects. Examples are the wise guy who responds to an indirect request 'Can you pass the salt?' by saying 'Yes I can' but failing to pass the salt; or the tramp in the Peter Sellers movie who tells Inspector Clouseau that his dog doesn't bite.[5] Similar sorts of responses are of course always possible when speakers produce metaphors. In these cases the humorist knows full well what the pragmatically intended interpretation is and that people will have accessed that interpretation. The humorous effect wouldn't be produced unless this was so.[6]

In this paper I want to argue that the second sub-version of possibility (C) is the only reasonable account to propose in cases of metaphorical singular reference. As I said, I will argue that the only referent available in these cases is the metaphorical referent. Thus in composing/constructing an interpretation, the interpreter is necessarily engaging in Jackendoffian "enriched composition". In other words, it is not the case that the interpreter first has access to a literal referent and

then has to discover some contextually relevant relation (of similarity or whatever) that gives him or her access to the metaphorical referent. Nor does it help to say that both referents are available simultaneously but that some contextually appropriate relation between them has to be determined (as arguably happens when one has to resolve an anaphoric reference by identifying the referent of an anaphor with some discourse referent already available in one's discourse-level representation). In the case of metaphorical reference, there is no literal referent, period. In order to make my case I will be taking what might at first appear to be a detour through a discussion of cases of referential metonymy (Section 3) and of epithets (Section 4). With these materials in hand, I hope to convince you of my claim about referential metaphors.

3. REFERENTIAL METONYMY

To make my case it is useful to begin with a discussion of referential metonymy. I have in mind cases such as Nunberg's well-known example of referring to a restaurant customer by means of the food item he has ordered:

(11) The ham sandwich wants his check.

Nunberg (1993) first proposed to explain cases such as these as cases of "referential transfer". One refers to the ham sandwich and since in the restaurant context there is a one-one correspondence between food orders and their orderers, the hearer understands this as a deferred reference to the ham sandwich orderer. On this understanding, (11) is very much like more standard cases of deferred reference, such as:

(12a) This is parked out back. [Holding out a car key to the parking valet at a restaurant]

Here the demonstrative expression 'this' is accompanied by a demonstration of what is clearly a car key. There is a contextually relevant relation between the demonstrated key and the car to which it belongs, so the valet understands the speaker to have informed him about the location of the parked car. Nunberg argues that in this case the key is the index of 'this' and the speaker's car is the referent. So the referring expression has a transferred or deferred reference.

One might think that something very similar is going on in (11); that 'the ham sandwich' indexes the ham sandwich but refers (in a transferred or deferred way) to the ham sandwich orderer. But in subsequent writings, Nunberg (1996, 2004) argues that in fact these cases involve what he calls *property* transfer. This is actually easier to see if we compare (12a) with an apparently very similar example:

(13a) I am parked out back. [Simultaneously handing car key to valet]

Here Nunberg (1996, 2004) thinks it is clear that we can't say that the indexical 'I' has a deferred reference to the speaker's car. One test of this is to see that number agreement on the referring term goes with the speaker, not the number of cars. If the context were such that the speaker has two cars parked out back, he could not say:

(13b) # We are parked out back.[7]

On the other hand, if the context were such that the speaker has multiple cars parked out back all controlled by a single key, the speaker could say:

(12b) These are parked out back. [Holding out the single key to the valet]

In other words, in cases of genuine deferred reference such as (12a), it is the number of the referent (the cars) that determines the form of the referring expression, not the number of the index (the single key). Another test is that in the case of deferred reference we can felicitously conjoin information about the deferred referent (the car in 12a), as in (12c) below. But such conjunction fails in the case of (13a), as indicated by the infelicity of (13c) below, suggesting that 'I' is not being used in a deferred way to refer to the speaker's car:

(12c) This is parked out back and in need of washing.

(13c) # I am parked out back and in need of washing.

Similar considerations show that (11) is not a case in which 'the ham sandwich' is being used in a deferred way to refer to the ham sandwich orderer.[8]

Well then, how are we to account for (13a)? Clearly the speaker is not literally parked out back, since 'is parked out back' is a predicate which normally (conventionally, in virtue of the rules of English) stands for a property that applies only to vehicles. Nunberg argues that in this case a process of property transfer has gone on. The same linguistic form 'is parked out back' now refers to a property of persons, namely the property that people have in virtue of being owners of cars that are parked out back. Property transfer is a productive process, and it is possible to state in a general way what the procedure governing such transfer is (Nunberg, 1996, 112-115). Basically it requires that there be some systematic relationship between two property domains and that the new property contributed by the "new" predicate (the predicate with the same phonetic or orthographic form as the conventional one) be "noteworthy" (Nunberg, 1996, 114).[9]

I do not wish to get bogged down in the details about noteworthiness, etc. For present purposes, the important point is that (11) will be accounted for in a way similar to (13a), as involving property transfer rather than reference transfer. However, with (11) we need to understand the property transfer as having occurred inside the restriction clause of the definite description 'the ham sandwich'. For expository purposes, it is useful to represent (11) as follows:

(14) [The x: x is a ham sandwich] (x wants x's check)[10]

Here it should be clear that we have a predicate 'is a ham sandwich' which normally (conventionally etc.) stands for a property of food. But in the restaurant context, there is a salient relationship between two property domains, the domain of properties of food and the domain of properties of orderers of that food. Thus property transfer can happen, and the hearer understands the speaker of (11) to have said something about the ham sandwich orderer. Moreover, what is said about the ham sandwich orderer is said *directly*. It is not said by way of saying something false of the ham sandwich. This will be crucial for my account of metaphorical reference.

Nunberg (1996) in fact discusses cases of metaphorical reference in order to contrast these with cases of metonymic reference. So consider the contrast between (11) and (15):

(11) The ham sandwich wants his check.

(15) The horseshoe is the main connective in that sentence.

In the case of (15), we have an admittedly highly conventionalized metaphorical reference to the logical symbol '⊃' that is used in some systems of logic to stand for the material conditional. Nunberg's point is that both sorts of reference involve property transfer, but in the case of metonymic reference, the transfer is mediated via objects. It is because there is a salient correspondence between food that is ordered in a restaurant and the people who order this food that properties of the food can be input into the process of property transfer, yielding a property of people that can be applied to the orderers of that food. However, in the case of (15), the transfer of properties is not mediated via any relationship between objects. There is no interesting one-one correspondence between shoes of horses and symbols of logic. The transfer happens purely at the property level and is presumably mediated via some sort of recognition of similarity between images of the shapes of shoes of horses and images of the shape of the conventional symbol for material conditionals. The metaphor is based on an image metaphor of the sort that Lakoff (1993, 229) argues underlies our comprehension of phrases like 'her hour glass waist'.

So, how does this apply to my earlier examples? Consider (3) and its slightly more regimented version (16):

(3) That festering sore has to be dealt with.

(16) [That x: x is a festering sore] (x must be dealt with)

Remember, the metaphorical reference here is to a derelict house. In this case, I claim, there is only one referent, namely the derelict building, and the speaker will be understood to have said something directly about this building. It simply is not the case that the hearer first becomes aware of some contextually salient festering sore, and then, realizing that this is not the intended referent, searches for a contextually related metaphorical referent. (3) is simply not a case of reference transfer that indexes an actual sore and refers in a deferred way to a derelict house. For example, even if all disease were to be wiped off the face of the earth, so that no one ever had any festering sores, it would still be possible to use the referential metaphor in (3).[11] Moreover, the information that can be felicitously conjoined to (3) must be information about the derelict house:

(17) That festering sore must be dealt with or housing prices in this neighbourhood will drop.

(18) # That festering sore must be dealt with or the infection might spread.[12]

In the case of (3)/(16), the property transfer occurs within the restriction clause of the definite phrase (DP), in a way similar to the ham sandwich case (11), except that the transfer is not object-mediated. Rather, similar to the horseshoe case (15), there is no interesting one-one correspondence at the object level between a sore and a derelict house that mediates the property transfer. The transfer happens purely at the property level and involves the same sorts of processes that are involved in the interpretation of predicative metaphors (such as the old favourites 'My job is a jail' or 'That surgeon is a butcher'). There is a salient relation between two property domains – the domains of diseases and of social problems. After property transfer, the predicate 'is a festering sore' comes to pick out a property that can be directly applied to the particular derelict house that the speaker has in mind.

Example (3) involves a complex demonstrative, but I would argue that similar accounts can be given of the cases of metaphorical singular reference involving definite descriptions and proper names. Consider first example (5) and its regimentation (19):

(16) The wilting violet seems like she's ready to leave.

(19) [The x: x is a wilting violet] (x is ready to leave)

Just as in the case of (3)/(16) above, the predicate in the restriction clause of the DP in (5)/(19) stands for a transferred property (i.e., one that is the result of a process of property transfer). It is the transferred property which enters into the composition process and determines the denotation/referent of the definite description in (5)/(19). This is why there is only a single referent available to the interpretive process of figuring out what the speaker has said – what proposition the speaker has expressed.

Before turning to a brief discussion of the examples involving proper names, I want to anticipate one sort of objection to my account of (5), one that is based on a commitment to a Russellian analysis of definite

descriptions. Above I was deliberately vague and talked about the denotation/referent of the definite description 'the wilting violet'. However, strict Russellians would insist on distinguishing the denotation from the referent. A definite description used attributively has only a denotation. When a description is used referentially, it also has a referent (which may or may not be identical to the denotation of the description – Donnellan famously thinks that the referent and the denotation can come apart). Now the strict Russellian will also insist that, even when a definite description 'the F' is being used referentially, the hearer has to first retrieve the existential proposition 'There is a unique F such that . . . '. Then on the basis of this existential proposition the hearer will have to figure out what the singular proposition is that the speaker is conversationally implicating. So, a strict Russellian might object to my account of (5) by saying that the hearer will first derive the existential proposition that there is a unique wilting violet who is ready to leave, and only then derive the proposition that the woman in question is ready to leave.

However, this objection misses the point. The distinction between attributive and referential uses of descriptions and the associated debate between Russellians and Strawsonians as to the correct logical form of sentences containing definite descriptions is tangential to my arguments. I happen to think that Strawson was right and that 'The F is G' is of subject-predicate form and that the definite NP 'the F' carries existence and uniqueness presuppositions.[13] But that is not what is driving my arguments. I am not saying that there is only a single referent in the case of (5) because (5) is of subject-predicate form. On the contrary, as my regimentation (19) should make clear, I am working with a representation of logical form that, if anything, favours the Russellian over the Strawsonian alternative. My argument has to do with how the predicate in the restriction clause of a DP is interpreted.

Still, a diehard Russellian might insist that when a hearer tries to interpret (5), the first interpretation arrived at will be the literal interpretation that there is a unique wilting violet that is ready to leave. Moreover, because this interpretation involves some sort of category mistake, the description will lack a denotation, and thus the hearer must search for an alternative pragmatic/metaphorical interpretation of the speaker's utterance. However, I think it is a mistake to think that any

such literal (denotation-less) interpretation is available. For one thing, I think our intuitions are that there *is* a unique thing in this context that is a wilting violet and it is the shy woman (although admittedly she is a wilting violet in a *transferred* sense; still, there may be no better, more economical way of referring to the woman). Secondly, I assume that even Russellians will allow that some sort of implicit, context-based domain restriction will be at work in the interpretation of (5).[14] When a speaker utters (5) in some very particular discourse context, there need be no actual violets around, let alone actual wilting violets. But various women and their demeanours and ways of dressing will be salient to the hearer. In this implicitly restricted domain there is no need for the hearer to entertain any thoughts involving a category mistake.[15] By the time the hearer must compose the propositional content of the speaker's utterance, the property transfer will already have been effected, and the hearer will understand the speaker to be saying of the woman that she is ready to leave. (I will come back in the final section of the paper to ask why the speaker didn't express this by uttering something like 'She is ready to leave').

So, am I denying that there is any point at which the encoded meanings of 'wilted' and 'violet' are entertained? Not at all! These encoded meanings must be accessed in order for a process of property transfer to operate. However, what I am denying is that there is a point at which a denotation-less descriptive concept is entertained. The existence and uniqueness constraints (and it is irrelevant here whether one thinks these constraints are presuppositions triggered by 'the' or are semantically encoded by the definite article) will operate in such a way that the search for a referent is constrained to things that are salient, which in this case are the women at the party, or maybe even more narrowly to the women at the party that the speaker and hearer have already been discussing. Thus the hearer will take 'wilting' and 'violet' as clues for picking out the speaker's intended referent from amongst these women and this will "coerce" the property transfer. (The interpretation of the adjective-noun compound itself calls for enriched composition, since the kind of wilting that applies to shy women is different from the kind of wilting that actual violets are susceptible to. So a literal compounding of 'wilting' and 'violet' followed by a property transfer on the compound might give the wrong result. We want separate prop-

erty transfers on 'wilting' and 'violet' and then compounding of these transferred properties.)

I turn briefly to a discussion of the cases involving proper names. These cases are related to the sorts of cases that involve predicative uses of proper names that have been fairly widely discussed by linguists and psychologists, such as Herbert Clark, Samuel Glucksberg, and Raymond Gibbs. Some examples follow:

(20) Angola is South Africa's Vietnam.

(21) He is the Elvis Presley of the Philippines.

(22) He Houdini'd himself out of that situation pretty deftly.

(23) This shows that unless we do something now – Florida is headed towards being the next Florida. (Glucksberg and Haught, 2006, 365)

In my examples of metaphorical reference with proper names, such as (1)/(24) and (10)/(25) below, I would say that the proper names are playing a predicative role in the restriction clauses of the DPs 'Mick Jagger over there' and 'the Cinderella of the family'. These are cases involving property transfer, in which the proper names are used as an economical way of referring to the transferred properties. (In the cases below, the transferred properties are a *subset* of the properties associated with the name bearer. However, I believe there could be cases where transfer takes one to a *disjoint* property domain):

(1) Mick Jagger over there wants to buy you a drink.

(10) The Cinderella of that family will eventually get her due.

(24) [The x: x is Mick Jagger (-ish) and x is over there] (x wants to buy you a drink)

(25) [That x: x is a family] [The y: y is a Cinderella] (y belongs to x and x will get her due)

Of course, which properties are relevant and will be selected depends on the discourse context. For example, the metaphorical reference in (1) is (for me) based on an image-metaphor. I have an image of a wrinkled Mick Jagger in skin-tight jeans, long scraggly hair, prancing around a stage. This visual gestalt is what is used to interpret the restriction clause of the definite NP. The real Mick Jagger has lots of other

properties, such as the properties of having been married to a fashion model (or is that two fashion models?), of having several children, of being wealthy, of having once been youthful and wrinkle-free. But these are not the properties selected in the bar context. Similar things could be said about the Cinderella example.

I agree that the cases involving proper names are not as straightforward as the cases involving complex demonstratives and definite descriptions. One might be sceptical that (1) and (10) involve property transfer. However, I think it is clear that they do not involve reference transfer. 'Mick Jagger' is not being used in a deferred way to refer to the man at the bar. In other words, the real Mick Jagger is not the index of the use of 'Mick Jagger' in (1), with the man at the bar being the (deferred) referent. So, can we make a case for property transfer here?

To get a little clearer about what sort of transfer is involved, it is useful to compare (1) with cases in which Mick Jagger's name is used metonymically to refer to his music (or to CDs containing his music). Consider:

(26a) Mick Jagger is in the sale bin.

(26b) ?? Mick Jagger is in the sale bin and is a real bargain.

(26c) ? Mick Jagger is in the sale bin and has complained to the record company about this.

(26d) The Mick Jaggers are in the sale bin.

Does (26a) behave like Nunberg's example (12a) 'This is parked out back' or like his example (13a) 'I am parked out back'? In other words, is (26a) a case of deferred reference in which we are referring to a music CD in a deferred way by indexing Mick Jagger? Or is (26a) a case in which we are referring to Mick Jagger and ascribing a transferred property to him (one he acquires in virtue of being related to the music CDs he produces)? Nunberg's two tests seem equivocal in this case. If the reference is deferred and is to the CD, (26b) should be felicitous. If the reference is to Mick Jagger then (26c) should be felicitous. To my ears (26c) is marginally better, suggesting we have a case of property transfer (mediated via a correspondence between the singer and his music CDs). On the other hand, the test of pluralisation seems to pull in the opposite direction. Remember that if the speaker of (13a) has multiple cars parked out back he cannot say 'We are parked out back'.

What if there are multiple Jagger CDs in the sale bin? I think we could utter (26d) in such a circumstance, suggesting that in (26a) we have a case of reference transfer rather than of property transfer. However, it may be that the pluralisation test is not a fair test in this case, because English proper names don't have plural forms *per se*. It is necessary to add the definite article (e.g., 'the Smiths', 'the Annes' etc.)[16] But the addition of the definite article makes a predicative use of the name salient, so that (26d) becomes more like (12b) 'These are parked out back' than like (13b) # 'We are parked out back'.

So, assuming that in the case of the metonymic use of the name 'Mick Jagger' we have property transfer, we should say that in the metaphorical case (1) we have property transfer too, although one that happens directly at the level of properties rather than being mediated via a correspondence at the level of objects. And this seems right to me. Just as there is no interesting correspondence between shoes of horses and logical symbols, there is no interesting correspondence between Mick Jagger and some aging hipster hanging out in a bar. And just as (15) 'The horseshoe is the main connective in that sentence' is based on an image metaphor that connects the shape properties of shoes of horses with the shape properties of the symbol for the material conditional, so too an image metaphor connects the visual gestalt of Mick Jagger with the visual gestalt of the aging hipster in the bar.[17]

4. EPITHETS AND REFERENTIAL METAPHORS

Reflection on referential metonymy has been helpful in building a case for my claim that the interpretation of referential metaphors involves enriched composition. I have been arguing that a process of property transfer operates on the predicates in the restriction clauses of the metaphorically used definite NPs, so that the input to the compositional process is a transferred property. Thus a denotation-less descriptive concept is never derived. It is also helpful to reflect on cases of epithets of the 'That N of an N' form. These are related to the metaphorical forms that I am interested in. They can be thought of as something like intermediate cases between cases of literal and metaphorical reference. Since it is clear in these cases that there is just a single referent, this helps to strengthen my case that in metaphorical reference there is just

a single referent too.

The sorts of cases that I have in mind are ones like the following. (All the examples with direct quotation marks come from doing a Google search on the underlined phrase. Other examples are loosely inspired by examples that came up in a Google search):

(27) That bastard of a boss of mine won't give me a raise.

(28) That idiot of a husband needs to get rid of that stinking mutt.

(29) That darling of a spaniel has such a silky coat.

(30) That hulking monster of a TV was sticking out into the room.

(31) "... and we all agreed it'd be a good idea to take a trip to Omaha to retrieve what little stuff we'd left there, since I knew that I, for certain, was never returning to that festering sore of a city to live ever again."

(32) "For a brief time in the mid 1980's I resided in that jewel of a city, Hong Kong."

These are clearly cases of singular reference in which the category of thing being referred to is made explicit (as is the speaker's attitude to the referent, something I will return to in a moment).[18] The examples (30) and (31) are especially interesting to me since they use the same adjective-noun combinations that are used in my examples of metaphorical reference (2) 'That hulking monster must go' (referring to a china cabinet) and (3) 'That festering sore must be dealt with' (referring to a derelict house). The difference is that whereas in the metaphorical reference cases the category to which the referent belongs is merely implicit, the category is made explicit in the epithet cases. Note also that the metaphor cases can in many cases be reformulated as epithets without much loss in their impact. So (2) and (3) could very well have been repackaged as 'That hulking monster of a china cabinet has to go' and 'That festering sore of a house must be dealt with' respectively. (Thanks to Ray Jackendoff for suggesting to me in conversation that referential metaphors and epithets are related to each other.)

A search of the Web throws up many examples of epithets that are related to the sorts of conventional metaphors that are much discussed by philosophers of language; e.g., epithets like 'that butcher/ shark/ pig/ toad of a man'. It may be that very creative or elaborate referential

metaphors cannot be converted into epithets. The examples in (7) from Cohen (1993, 68) don't work very well as epithets:

(33) # That brightest star in my sky of a wife has just run off with the milkman.

But many of the others do: 'That wilting violet of a woman', 'That rock of a professor', 'That tender rosebud of a wife', 'That Cinderella of a girl'. My example using the name 'Mick Jagger' may not work as an epithet for most people. But proper names of other famous people work rather well as epithets: 'That Hitler of a boss','That Einstein of a sea lion'[19], etc.

A comparison with epithets also helps to address an issue that I said I'd come back to. If referential metaphors refer directly to metaphorical referents without this reference being mediated via a literal referent (or a literal denotation), then a question arises as to why the speaker would make things more difficult for the hearer by using a metaphorical definite expression rather than a literal one. Why say 'The wilting violet is ready to leave' rather than 'She/ that woman is ready to leave'? In the case of the corresponding epithet 'That wilting violet of a woman is ready to leave', the category information (in this case *woman*) is given along with the evaluative information (*wilting violet*). Thus the evaluative information seems intended purely to indicate something about the speaker's attitude towards the woman. The speaker must be assuming that the woman is salient in the context (in the sense that the existence of the woman in question is information that is weakly familiar – that is, entailed by assumptions that are mutually manifest to speaker and hearer). So it is not unreasonable to think that, in the metaphorical case, the role of the evaluative information is also intended primarily to indicate something about the speaker's attitude towards the referent rather than being intended to help the hearer identify the referent.

If this is so, then the explanation for why the speaker does not refer to the woman in question as 'she' or 'that woman' is that the speaker wants to convey something to the hearer about his attitude towards the woman in question and believes that the most efficient way of doing this is by means of a metaphorical definite expression (rather than, say, by means of an epithet that explicitly mentions the category information *woman*). Of course, if there is no unique woman in the context who is mutually salient to speaker and hearer, the hearer could use the evaluative information *wilting violet* for purposes of identification. Here access to the referent would have to proceed via assumptions as to which woman in the context the speaker is most likely to have such a dismissive attitude towards – that is, which woman most fits the speaker's view of her as having the transferred behavioural, psychological, and physical characteristics that result from a process of property transfer taking the predicate 'is a wilting violet' as input.

Cohen (1993, 68) argues that referential metaphors only work when the metaphor is highly conventionalized. His examples given above as (7a) and (7b) are meant to illustrate his claim that the speaker can only hope to refer to his wife by means of hackneyed phrases such as 'the light of my life' or 'the brightest star in my sky', rather than with phrases like 'the sparkle on summer dew'. This is because Cohen thinks that metaphors work by cancelling semantic features. Metaphorical cancellation is imposed by the topic-expression on the comment expression whereas literal cancellation is imposed by the comment expression on the topic expression.[20] Since metaphorical cancellation is imposed by the topic, the topic must be easily identifiable. Hence really obscure, creative referential metaphors are predicted to be infelicitous by Cohen's semantic feature cancellation account of metaphor. The point of mentioning this in the present context is that Cohen's views are consonant with the claim in the previous paragraph that referential metaphors assume the ready identifiably of the intended referent, with the evaluative information intended primarily to convey information about the speaker's attitude towards the referent.

5. CONCLUSIONS

I have been arguing that cases of metaphorical singular reference are ones in which we are forced to give up the assumption of dual availability of literal and metaphorical interpretations. This is because a process of predicate transfer happens in the restriction clauses of metaphorically used DPs, so that a denotation-less definite concept is never constructed. A process of enriched composition yields only a metaphorical referent/denotation. Note also that this does not mean that the literal meanings of the terms in the restriction clause are never accessed. Of course they are. It is just that these become input to a process of prop-

erty transfer so that the literal meanings are not the elements which are combined to form the complex concept of the speaker's intended referent. I have also been arguing that it is helpful to compare cases of metaphorical reference both to cases of metonymic reference and to uses of epithets of the 'That N of an N' form. Reflection on the former is helpful in getting clear about the process of property transfer and about the kind of property transfer involved in referential metaphors. Such transfer happens directly at the level of properties and is not mediated via a correspondence between objects, as is the case with metonymic reference. Reflection on epithets such as 'that festering sore of a house' is helpful since these are a sort of intermediate case between cases of literal and metaphorical reference. They provide support for my claim that in cases of metaphorical reference there is only a single referent (the metaphorical one). Moreover, constraints on the use of these epithets suggest that referential metaphors are similarly constrained. I therefore proposed that referential metaphors can only be used when the implicit category restriction (e.g., *house* in the case of my example 'That festering sore must be dealt with') is highly salient, and that the evaluative information conveyed by the metaphor serves primarily to indicate the speaker's attitude towards the referent rather than being intended to help the hearer identify the intended referent.

Notes

[1] Of course, these three possibilities are very general. Each is compatible with a variety of more specific hypotheses about the actual time-course of processing.

[2] Some psychologists use the label "referential metaphor" more broadly than I am willing to do. For example, Noveck *et al.* (2001) compared reading times on pairs of sentences such as (i) 'All toads to the side of the pool' and (ii) 'All children to the side of the pool'. Gibbs (1990) calls 'all toads' a referential metaphor. In my view it is a mistake to call 'all toads' a referring expression. It is a universal quantifier expression. (i) is of course an imperative, but if we take a Searlian view of the matter and say that it has satisfaction conditions, we can represent its content as follows: [For all x: x is a toad] (x is at the side of the pool). It should be clear that 'is a toad' is playing a predicative role here, not a referential role.

[3] This story is a psychologized version of the story told by Searle (1993, 103, 110-111) and by those sympathetic to a Gricean implicature account of metaphor. The literal meaning must first be accessed and rejected as somehow "deviant" (i.e., either patently false, trivially true, involving a category mistake, or irrelevant) before a metaphorical interpretation will be sought.

[4] Jackendoff (2007, 7) discusses the process by which we interpret noun-noun compounds and his suggestion seems to be that we first try to interpret these by means of Fregean composition and when this does not work we then try for some sort of enriched composition. So this would be equivalent to something like a literal-first serial model of processing that is discussed in the body of the paper as possibility (A) – although applied at the phrasal rather than the sentential level. The contrast between Fregean and enriched composition mentioned in the text above should not be seen as a commitment to two separate composition mechanisms, since then interpreters would be forced to decide on the order in which these mechanisms were to be applied. Rather, the contrast should be understood as a matter of two different sorts of inputs to a single composition mechanism. Depending on the input, either a literal (minimal) or an enriched interpretation will be generated.

[5] <Inspector Clouseau>
- Does your dog bite?
- No.
(leans over, is immediately bitten by dog)
- I thought you said your dog doesn't bite!
- That is not my dog.

[6] Similar remarks apply to cases in which a speaker's utterance is reinterpreted in legal or quasi-legal contexts as "strictly and literally" having an interpretation different from the one that most people would take it to have in ordinary life.

[7] As Nunberg notes, one can of course use the form (13b) if there are several people who each have a car parked out back and each is individually handing his car key to the valet.

[8] In a context in which the customer has ordered multiple sandwiches one can't say: #'The sandwiches want their check', just as one can't say #'We are parked out back' when the speaker has multiple cars parked out back. Of course, if there are multiple orderers of multiple sandwiches, this plural form is felicitous.

[9] The noteworthiness of being a painting that it is hanging in MoMA and the non-noteworthiness of being a painting kept in a crate in the basement of MoMA explains the difference in felicity between (i) I am hanging in MoMA and (ii) # I am in a crate in the basement of MoMA, as spoken by the producer of the painting in question.

[10] Of course I realize that 'x's check' is itself a definite description, so that the representation of (11) would have to be even more complicated: [The x: x is a ham sandwich] [The y: y is a check] (y belongs to x and x wants y). But this complexity is irrelevant for present purposes.

[11] Just as we can say: 'That old dragon wants to see me in her office', referring to a headmistress who has a reputation for a 'fiery' temper and who ventures out of her 'lair' only to rebuke her pupils.

[12] Of course, the whole of (18) could be used metaphorically. This would be an extended metaphor in which the speaker is trying to convey that one derelict house may lead to other houses being taken over by drug addicts and becoming derelict in turn.

[13] Actually, the presuppositions associated with definites are weaker than some philosophers have construed them to be. They are presuppositions of what Roberts (2004) calls *weak familiarity* and *informational uniqueness*.

[14] Such domain restriction is required since otherwise almost every utterance using a definite description would turn out to be false. This is the problem that arises for so-called

incomplete definite descriptions.

[15] Even if there were actual wilting violets present, they would not be considered possible referents if the women were salient in the discourse context. The processing triggered by the definite determiner will narrow the search space in such a way as to exclude the actual violets. Frazier (2006) reports on experimental studies that show that readers are very good at narrowing down definite references. Frazier looked at the understanding of mini-discourses such as (a) 'The book fell open. The page was ripped'. Even though talk of a book should make all its pages equally salient, the definite reference to a single page in (a) is interpretable and presents readers with no processing difficulties.

[16] Of course in other languages that lack the definite article (e.g., Russian) one can say the equivalent of 'Smiths are here', meaning that the Smiths have arrived. So presumably one could say 'Mick Jaggers are in the sale bin'. I have been unable to solicit firm intuitions from my Russian informant about whether this is acceptable with the meaning that Mick Jagger has the transferred property of having multiple copies of his music CDs in the bin or whether it is unacceptable in the same way 'We are parked out back' is unacceptable in a context in which the speaker has multiple cars parked out back.

[17] Papafragou (1996) criticizes Nunberg's view of referential metonymy and metaphor and offers an alternative account of these constructions as involving interpretive use. Her critique, unfortunately, misses its mark, since it is based on Nunberg's (1993) claim that metonymy involves deferred reference, whereas Nunberg's (1996; 2004) more considered view is that it involves property transfer. However, Papafragou's alternative analysis is worth considering. She would analyze (11) 'The ham sandwich wants his check' as (11a) 'The person who in this context it is appropriate to call 'the ham sandwich' wants his check.' However, it seems to me that Papafragou is simply building into her analysis something like an instance of Nunberg's general mechanism of property transfer. I believe it is preferable to appeal to a general mechanism than to claim that the steps in the process of property transfer need to be built each time we interpret a metonymical utterance.

[18] This is not to say that all uses of this construction involve singular references. Consider the following: "In Rome, finding that jewel of a small, comfortable hotel in walking distance of everything for around $100 a night isn't as easy as it once was." (from the *New York Times*). This is a generic use of "that jewel of a small, comfortable hotel", since there is no hotel in particular that is being talked about. Rather, a certain *kind* of hotel is being talked about.

[19] "And we really can't blame the entire problem on that Einstein of a sea lion that's been chowing down at the fish ladders of the Bonneville Dam." (simplyinseason.blogspot.com)

[20] An example of literal cancellation would be a case of a loose use of 'raw' in which the semantic feature [+uncooked] is cancelled. This might happen in the context of a restaurant when a customer says to his waiter: 'This steak is raw. Please take it back to the kitchen'.

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