

Benjamin A. Foreman

**Animal Metaphors and
the People of Israel
in the Book of Jeremiah**

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht



Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

Herausgegeben von
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Preface

Animal Metaphors and the People of Israel in Jeremiah is a revised version of my doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Aberdeen in 2009. It is perhaps providential that before I began writing this volume, I did not fully understand the magnitude of the task; had I been completely aware of the difficulty of the undertaking, I may never have started in the first place. Nevertheless, the hard work has paid off, and I am delighted to take this opportunity to warmly thank those who have contributed in one way or another to the production of this work.

First and foremost I would like to thank my Ph.D. supervisor Prof. Joachim Schaper for his guidance and support in seeing this work through from start to finish. His advice to “keep writing” proved to be wise counsel, and were it not for his patience and continual encouragement this project would never have been completed. His keen eyes have spared me many embarrassments, and his critical comments have sharpened my academic skills. It goes without saying that any remaining mistakes are, of course, my own.

I would also like to thank Dr Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer and Dr Sharon Moughtin-Mumby for reading the earlier draft of this study with great care and for their very constructive feedback in my Ph.D. oral examination. Their comments were extremely helpful and this book has benefited from their input.

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A special thanks is also due to my father Howard Foreman and to my brother in law Preston Sprinkle. The three of us share a special relationship: we all were Ph.D. students together at the University of Aberdeen! With the three of us working in different areas of biblical studies (Church History, New Testament, and Hebrew Bible), we certainly had a number of interesting discussions! I am grateful not only for their constant

encouragement, but also for their willingness to read some of my work. I would also like to thank the other members of my family in Scotland, America, and Israel, for their continual support and encouragement. It is no exaggeration to say that this project could not have been possible without it. In addition, I am greatly indebted to a number of family members and friends in Israel who made generous financial contributions. Their generosity will never be forgotten.

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Benjamin A. Foreman

Jerusalem, Israel

Abbreviations

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
ANET	J. Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3rd edn
ANEP	J. Pritchard, <i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CAD	J. Ignace, et al. (ed.), <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> .
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>Dict Talm</i>	M. Jastrow, <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English Translation (the author's own)
GKC	W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, A. Cowley, <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JPS	The Jewish Publication Society's Translation of the Old Testament
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KB	L. Koehler/W. Baumgartner, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
KJV	King James Version
<i>Kt</i>	K ^c t ^b
NEB	New English Bible

NET	New English Translation
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OS	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
PEFQS	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Ps.-J	Pseudo-Jonathan
Q	Q ^{erê}
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
TB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
Tg.	Targum
TNK	Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

All translations of the biblical texts are the author's own unless explicitly stated otherwise.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Focus of the Investigation

The book of Jeremiah is a cornucopia of metaphor.¹ From the outset it is clear that in order for the reader to properly understand the message of the book, s/he will have to come to grips with its imagery. Chapter two alone contains metaphors of betrothal, first fruits, cisterns, slaves, lions, harlots, vineyards, camels, wild donkeys, thieves, the wilderness, virgins, and immoral women. According to Daniel Bourguet, the number of metaphors in Jeremiah reaches up to nearly 250.² It is not an overstatement, therefore, to say that in Jeremiah, meaning and metaphor are inseparably intertwined.

Although research on metaphor in the Hebrew Bible has blossomed in recent years, the study of metaphor in the book of Jeremiah has been neglected. Only a few book-length studies dedicated to metaphors in Jeremiah have been published in the past twenty or so years.³ Commentaries often do not pay adequate attention to the language and imagery of the metaphors and thus their analyses are often imprecise, or even incorrect. Sometimes scholars simply translate the metaphors literally into English (or another modern language), and offer little or no comment on what exactly the metaphors mean. Their analogies are also sometimes misunderstood, and the limits of the metaphor are not always clearly delineated. In short, an investigation dedicated to the interpretation of metaphors in Jeremiah is needed.

There are a number of ways in which a study of the metaphors of the book of Jeremiah might be carried out. Since the bulk of the research for this project was completed in north-east Scotland, it may be appropriate to illustrate this by comparing the book of Jeremiah to a common sight in this part of the world: a sixteenth century castle. There are an almost infinite number of features which can be admired in any particular castle.

¹ The cornucopia (“the horn of plenty”) is a common symbol of the harvest and is an emblem for abundance.

² Bourguet (1987: 64).

³ E. g. Shields (2004); Bourguet (1987).

One might choose to examine the architectural features of the structure and compare them with the architecture of other historic buildings from the same period. Others may be more interested in what is inside the castle. This could also take many shapes. Some may be fascinated by the quality and variety of the building's furniture and in what this has to say about its inhabitants. The similarities and dissimilarities of the different rooms may catch the eye of others. Still others might focus on one particular room and consider its distinguishing features in light of the castle as a whole. In short, the exploration of a castle can take many different shapes depending on one's interest. The same thing is true for the study of the imagery of the book of Jeremiah. An almost infinite number of approaches are possible, and every approach will lead to different results. It is the questions which are asked which will shape the nature of the outcome.

In this study we shall direct our attention to one particular "room" in the castle: animal imagery. Very simply put, the driving question of our study is: How is animal imagery used in the book of Jeremiah? Although a number of scholars have researched the animal images in the Psalms⁴ and other books of the Hebrew Bible,⁵ as far as I am aware, there is to date no study which is devoted exclusively to the investigation of animal imagery in the book of Jeremiah. But just as the more one looks around the room, the more one realises just how much there is to appreciate, an exhaustive investigation of all the faunal metaphors would exceed the limits of this project. As such, we will have to narrow our focus to one particular dimension of the animal imagery in the book of Jeremiah. I have identified five entities for which animals are used metaphorically in the book: enemies, individuals, foreign nations, God, and Israel. This study will focus primarily on the animal metaphors for the people of Israel, although in the introductions to the three main chapters of this book we shall also briefly survey other uses of animal imagery in Jeremiah so as to offer a fuller picture of how animals are used for other topics in the book. My decision to focus on *these* animal metaphors (rather than, say, animal metaphors for God, or foreign nations) is motivated by the fact that very few studies examine the representations of the people of Israel. In a recent collection of essays on metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, nearly all of the articles touched on metaphors for God, and metaphors for the enemies and for the self were also treated by some authors, but none of the essays focused on metaphors for Israel.⁶ This is an accurate reflection of the tendency of scholars to give preference to the study of divine metaphors. The research of metaphors relating to Yahweh's chosen nation has largely been ignored.

⁴ E.g. Riede (2000); Brown (2002: 135–66); Dell (2000: 275–91); Whitekettle (2008: 404–19).

⁵ E.g. Forti (2008); Forti (1996: 48–63).

⁶ See Van Hecke (2005a).

This is striking given the fact that the Hebrew Bible is about *Israel* and her God. Our study is an attempt to counterbalance this lop-sidedness. Thus, in this volume we shall examine in detail the language and imagery of the animal metaphors for the people of Israel and consider the contribution they make to the theology of the book. Since different interpretations have been given to many of the metaphors in question, our in-depth study of these passages also endeavours to resolve some of the difficulties regarding the meaning of these images.

Animal images are extremely important because they elucidate human behaviour in ways in which plants or inanimate objects cannot. Animals, as opposed to flora, or inorganic entities, live and move in time and space. They, like humans, breathe, eat, roam to and fro, make noises, have feelings, behave in certain ways, have relationships with other animals, and also die. In certain ways, therefore, they are very similar to humans. It is true, however, that they are also unlike us *homo sapiens* in other respects. Some of them migrate at certain times of the year, the reproductive patterns of a large number of them are very different from our own, and scores of animals live in and react to an environment which is very much unlike the one many of us reside in. But even though some (and even much) of their behaviour is different from ours, they nevertheless are not idle – as are plants and non-living entities. And for this reason, animal metaphors for the people of Israel are able to teach us certain things about Yahweh's chosen nation that plants or inanimate objects cannot. The latter, for instance, do not engage in sex, make noises, hunt for their food,⁷ or wander around in the mountains. They do not unsuspectingly fall into a hunter's trap, nor do they purposefully build a secure dwelling place to live in. Yet in the book of Jeremiah, it is these faunal manners of conduct which are highlighted in the animal metaphors, and it is these actions which inform us about the behaviour of the people of Israel. As we shall see throughout this study, the *behaviour* of the animals is what is predominantly emphasized in the faunal metaphors for the nation, and because animals – like us – *behave*, they are able to articulate certain things about the people of Israel which other vehicles are unable to express.⁸ Or put differently, whereas plants and inanimate objects often are metaphors for what will be done *to* Israel or for what Israel *looks* like, faunal metaphors are different in that what an animal actually *does* is often employed as a telling metaphor for

⁷ It is true that there are some predatorial plants, but these are the exceptions to the norm.

⁸ This is not to say that plants or inanimate objects *cannot* be used as metaphors human behavioural patterns. The high trees of Lebanon, for instance, are used as a metaphor for the pride of the people of Judah in Isa 10:33–34. Nevertheless, there is still a difference. The trees in that passage are not *behaving* prideful. It is their *appearance* (tall, stately, grand), rather, which is compared to the pride of the people of Israel. In animal metaphors, the actual behaviour of the faunae is compared to the behaviour of the people.

what Israel has actively done. In this sense, therefore, *animal* metaphors for Yahweh's chosen nation are different from other kinds of metaphors.

But before an inquiry into the use of animal metaphors in the book of Jeremiah can be made, several theoretical questions must first be answered: what exactly is a metaphor? How do we identify metaphors? How should we conceptualize the function of metaphors? How do we distinguish between metaphors and other tropes? Much ink has been spilled on some of these questions and thus we shall take a few minutes to review some of the major contributions to the subject and spell out the approach taken in this study.

Theoretical Perspectives on Metaphor

Though there is no universally agreed upon definition of metaphor, Janet Soskice's "skeleton definition" is a helpful point of departure: "Metaphor is that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another."⁹ One important thing to note about this statement is that metaphors are not individual things. In order to speak about one thing in terms which are suggestive of another, two "ideas" (or semantic fields – see below) must be present, or at the very least alluded to. Thus, for example, it would be wrong to say – as some of my university lecturers have – that "biblical history is a metaphor." Though history could be used metaphorically in the proper context, it is not in and of itself a metaphor, just as a gun or a jack-rabbit are not in and of themselves metaphors. Additionally, "seen to be suggestive" assumes that metaphors are *intentionally* created by their authors and *recognizable* by competent speakers of the language.¹⁰

While theologians and exegetes have begun to research various aspects of metaphor in the Hebrew Bible only relatively recently, literary theorists and philosophers have debated the theoretical notion of metaphor for quite some time. These scholars have produced such a vast ocean of monographs and articles dealing with metaphor that Max Black states: "The extraordinary volume of papers and books on the subject produced during the past forty years might suggest that the subject is inexhaustible."¹¹ In light of Black's comment, it is clear that we will not be able to review all, or even the majority, of the literature on the subject. We shall focus our attention just now, rather, on the major theoretical works which have had the most influence on scholars researching metaphor in the Hebrew Bible.

⁹ Soskice (1985: 15).

¹⁰ Soskice (1985: 15).

¹¹ Black (1993: 19–20).

Aristotle

The study of metaphor can be traced back to Aristotle, who noted in his *Poetics* (ca. 339 BCE) that, “Metaphor is the transference of a term from one thing to another: whether from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy.”¹² He goes on to explain what he means by saying “by analogy”: “The poet will use *d* instead of *b*, or the reverse.”¹³ In other words, he understood metaphor to be the exchange of a literal word for one which is metaphorical. Or put another way, Aristotle believed that “metaphor is something that happens to the noun.”¹⁴ What was important for Aristotle, therefore, was the literal meaning to which the metaphor pointed. Because Aristotle understood metaphor as a substitution, “John is a wolf” would merely be an alternative to saying “John is cunning,” or something similar. His understanding later came to be known as the “substitution view,” and this was the way metaphor was understood until the beginning of the twentieth century, although it has largely been abandoned by modern scholars.¹⁵

*Recent Theories of Metaphor**I. A. Richards*

In the early twentieth century scholars began to take a renewed interest in the research of metaphor. Particularly influential was Ivor Richards’ *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*.¹⁶ He asserted that a metaphor is “two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.”¹⁷ Richards called these two “thoughts” the “tenor” and the “vehicle.” In Richards’ terminology, the tenor denotes the “underlying idea or principal subject,” while the “vehicle” is the means through which the idea or principal subject is expressed.¹⁸ Prior to Richards, clumsy terms such as “the meaning” and the “metaphor,” or the “original idea” and “the borrowed one” were used.

More important than his nomenclature, however, was his disagreement with the claim that metaphor is merely an added beauty in communication. He stated that, “The vehicle is not normally a mere embellishment of

¹² Aristotle (1995: 55).

¹³ Aristotle (1995: 55).

¹⁴ Ricoeur (1977: 16). For a thorough critique of Aristotle’s view of metaphor see pp. 9–43.

¹⁵ For a summary of the changing views of metaphor from Aristotle to the twentieth century, see Sage (1997: 156–62); cf. Johnson (1981: 5–7).

¹⁶ Richards (1936).

¹⁷ Richards (1936: 93).

¹⁸ Richards (1936: 97).

a tenor which is otherwise unchanged by it, but...[the] vehicle and tenor in cooperation give a meaning of more varied powers than can be ascribed to either."¹⁹ In other words, Richards' innovation was that the interaction between the tenor and vehicle often generates a new meaning which cannot be expressed literally.²⁰ He went on to say that,

The relative importance of the contributions of vehicle and tenor to this resultant meaning varies immensely. At one extreme the vehicle may become almost a mere decoration or coloring of the tenor, at the other extreme, the tenor may become almost a mere excuse for the introduction of the vehicle, and so no longer be 'the principal subject.'²¹

His theory of metaphor later came to be known as the "Interaction Theory of Metaphor."

Max Black

Richards' "Interaction Theory of Metaphor" was developed and modified by Max Black.²² One of the important components of the interaction view of metaphor is the assertion that the vehicle (or "secondary subject") is usually a system rather than an individual thing. This is what Black refers to as a "system of associated commonplaces."²³ As an example of what he means by this, Black cites Wallace Stevens who remarked that "Society is a sea." In this metaphor, Black explains, what is emphasized here is not so much the sea as a *thing* but a system of relationships signalled by the word "sea."²⁴ These "associated commonplaces" are the things which most people hold to be true about something in a particular society. The interaction of the vehicle's associated commonplaces with the tenor is what generates meaning in a metaphor. According to Black, the tenor and vehicle (which he terms the primary and secondary subject) interact in the following ways:

- a) The presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's properties; and (b) invites him to construct a parallel implication-complex that can fit the primary subject; and (c) reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject.²⁵

¹⁹ Richards (1936: 100).

²⁰ Note that Richards says that metaphor is not *normally* decorative. Some metaphors, he asserted, *are* merely decorative. This is similar to the position of Macky, who states that the metaphor in Prov 23:23, "Buy truth and do not sell it," can be re-phrased literally: "Seek the truth diligently until you find it, and then do not forget it." Thus, "buy the truth" is merely ornamental. See Macky (1990: 2–3).

²¹ Richards (1936: 100).

²² Black (1962: esp. 38–47).

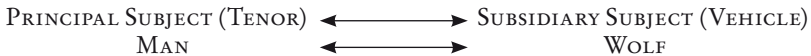
²³ Black (1962: 40).

²⁴ Black (1993: 27).

²⁵ Black (1993: 28).

As Black notes, however, not all commonplaces associated with a particular subject are interacted with in a metaphor. Though the statement “Man is a wolf” will evoke “the wolf-system of related commonplaces,” only human traits which “can without undue strain be talked about in ‘wolf-language’ will be rendered prominent, and any that cannot will be pushed into the background.”²⁶ Which of these implied assertions are interacted with will usually be determined by the context. Metaphor, therefore, is like a filter which blocks certain commonplaces not immediately relevant. Moreover, this system of associations need not necessarily be empirically accurate: “The important thing for the metaphor’s effectiveness is not that the commonplaces shall be true, but that they should be readily and freely evoked.”²⁷

Another key element in Black’s interaction theory is his belief – as he expresses in (c) – that the subsidiary subject (Richards’ “vehicle”) not only says something about the principal subject (Richards’ “tenor”), but that “the nature of the intended application helps to determine the character of the system to be applied.” Or put more simply, “If to call a man a wolf is to put him in a special light, we must not forget that the metaphor makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would.”²⁸ In other words, the interaction between the principal and the subsidiary subject is bi-directional.²⁹



Since a metaphor is an interaction of associated commonplaces, and not simply a substitution of a word, a metaphor produces a new meaning which cannot be expressed literally.

In many ways the studies of Richards and Black were the spur which renewed scholarly interest in metaphor. In nearly every field of study, from the sciences to the humanities, various aspects of metaphor have captured the attention of scholars for over thirty years. The tome edited by Andrew Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought*, for example, is a compilation of nearly thirty articles on various aspects of metaphors written by philosophers, psychologists, linguists, and educators.³⁰

²⁶ Black (1962: 41).

²⁷ Black (1962: 40).

²⁸ Black (1962: 44).

²⁹ The idea that the subsidiary subject is also reshaped by the principal subject has been criticized by a number of scholars. See Soskice (1985: 47); Lakoff and Turner (1989: 131–33); MacCormac (1985: 33 ff.). In Black (1993: 27–30), however, he appears to have abandoned this idea.

³⁰ Ortony (1998).

Lakoff, Johnson, Turner

An extremely influential (and provocative) study on metaphor is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*.³¹ In this seminal book, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphor is not only a matter of language, but is a phenomenon of thought and action (hence the name "Cognitive Theory of Metaphor"). They assert that, "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."³² For example, expressions such as

You're *wasting* my time.
This gadget will *save* you hours.
How do you *spend* your time these days?
I've *invested* a lot of time in her.

are all statements that are structured around the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY.³³ It is because of this structural metaphor, they assert, that we talk about time as something we *waste*, *save*, *spend*, or *invest*.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that concepts such as TIME IS MONEY or ARGUMENT IS WAR or THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, are *structural* metaphors: one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. However, they also assert that there are other kinds of metaphorical concepts: *orientational* metaphors and *ontological* metaphors. An orientational metaphor usually involves spatial orientation. For example, they argue that expressions such as "I'm feeling *up*," "That *boosted* my spirits," "He's really *low* these days," or "My spirits *sank*," stem from the orientational metaphor HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN.³⁴ Ontological metaphors are "ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances."³⁵ So, for example, we speak of *combating* inflation, *dealing* with inflation; we might say that inflation *makes us sick*, or that *it is lowering* our standard of living. The ontological metaphor behind these statements is INFLATION IS AN ENTITY.³⁶

According to the cognitive theory of metaphor, metaphors are concepts which reside in thoughts and not just in words. Thus, metaphor is not primarily an aspect of speech or language, but of thought – of human cognition.³⁷ Our conceptual system is structured by our experiences. Although we very rarely articulate metaphorical conceptions such as "An argument is a building" or "Ideas are food" or "Time is a moving object," conceptual

³¹ Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

³² Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3).

³³ The authors write the metaphorical concept in small caps. This convention is retained here for the sake of continuity.

³⁴ For more examples of orientational metaphors, see Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 14–21).

³⁵ Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 25).

³⁶ See further Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 25–32).

³⁷ See also Lakoff and Turner (1989), where the cognitive theory of metaphor is further explicated.

metaphors such as these structure and organize the way we think and the way we speak, although the cognitive approach to metaphor is more concerned with the role of metaphor in thought than in speech and language.

Though I do not doubt that metaphor does to a certain extent structure our thinking, this will not be our priority here.³⁸ Rather than focusing on the metaphorical concepts which may (or may not) have structured the author's thinking and writing, our study is concerned with how metaphor functions in a text, i.e. the book of Jeremiah.³⁹ Our study, therefore, is similar to Weiss', in that "language is primary."⁴⁰

Eva Kittay

In this study we have chosen Eva Kittay's "Perspectival Theory of Metaphor" as the primary theoretical basis of our understanding of metaphor, and we shall therefore take a closer look at her approach. In what follows, we shall only touch upon the aspects of her theory which are immediately relevant to the study of metaphor as it relates to the Hebrew Bible.

Kittay's theory has its roots in the "Interactive Theory of Metaphor" advocated by Richards and subsequently developed by Black. She selects the word *perspective* rather than "interaction" because the term "is more precise in regard to the sort of interaction that occurs between what Richards called tenor and vehicle."⁴¹ Metaphor produces a new perspective, or a new point of view, on the issues in hand.

Although Kittay's approach is similar to that of Richards and Black, she makes some important adjustments. First, whereas Richards referred to a "tenor" and a "vehicle," and Black spoke of a "principal" and "subsidiary" subject, she uses the terms "topic" and "vehicle" to denote the two constituent parts of the metaphor. In the statement "Man is a wolf," "man" is the topic and "wolf" is the vehicle. She prefers the term "topic" over "tenor" (Richards) because the former "suggests not an expression in a text, but rather what a text is speaking about."⁴²

A closely related point which Kittay makes is that the topic is *not* the meaning of the metaphor.⁴³ In "Man is a wolf," for instance, the meaning of the metaphorical term "wolf" is not man. This is true not only because this would reduce the metaphor to a tautology ("Man is a man"), but also because – contrary to Aristotle – metaphors are not merely the

³⁸ Though I believe metaphor does play a part in thinking, I do not agree with Lakoff and Johnson that all (or nearly) all of our thinking is metaphorical. Cf. Macky (1990: 156–61).

³⁹ Cf. Soskice (1985: 49), who asserts that metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon.

⁴⁰ Weiss (2006: 17).

⁴¹ Kittay (1987: 22).

⁴² Kittay (1987: 26). She argues that Black's "subsidiary subject" is unclear as well: does it refer to the *idea* expressed by the focal words or to the actual *term*?

⁴³ Kittay (1987: 26).

substitution of a literal term for one which is metaphorical.⁴⁴ Metaphors, rather, have a cognitive function. The vehicle of a good metaphor will shed light on the topic by forcing the hearers/readers to re-conceptualize it.⁴⁵ The meaning of a metaphor, therefore, “is the result of the perspectival juxtaposing of two ideas,”⁴⁶ and “the degree to which a metaphor is enlightening depends...on the degree to which the vehicle field is going to be productive of new meaning and new insights in the topic domain.”⁴⁷

Kittay alters Black’s theory of “associated commonplaces” by asserting that (1) the systems are not “associated commonplaces” but semantic fields, and (2) both the vehicle *and* the topic belong to systems (and not just the vehicle as Black maintained).⁴⁸ Her theory of “semantic fields” requires further explanation.⁴⁹

According to Kittay, semantic fields are content domains which are articulated by lexical fields.⁵⁰ A lexical field is a set of labels, and a label is an uninterpreted lexical item.⁵¹ A content domain, she notes, is the domain “from which we determine the interpretation of a [*sic*] element of a lexical field.”⁵² Content domains can be perceptual (e.g. colour), conceptual (e.g. scientific theories), they can have their source in cultural institutions (e.g. marriage), or can be an identifiable activity (e.g. fishing). “In short, a content domain is whatever a set of labels that have contrastive and affinitive relations may be *about*.”⁵³ Semantic fields are comprised of contrast sets. These can be further classified as simple contrast sets (sibling; brother, sister), mixed contrast sets (fishing methods: angling, trolling,

⁴⁴ For a critique of the substitution view, see Soskice (1985: 10–14).

⁴⁵ Nielsen (1989: 55) puts it this way: “[Metaphor] offers a new way of seeing reality, and thereby creates something new.”

⁴⁶ Kittay (1987: 29).

⁴⁷ Kittay (1987: 288).

⁴⁸ Kittay (1987: 31–5). She rejects Black’s “associated commonplaces” for the following reason: “When a sentence is out of context we have only commonplace associations and background knowledge to rely on, while in metaphors lodged in rich contexts the linguistic and situational environs will supplement or override background assumptions” (p. 32). In other words, she asserts that the *context* constructs the system of implications. But we must not go too far. In order to individuate the semantic field, say, of fishing, the reader must have *some* idea of what fishing entails. If s/he had never heard of fishing, then a metaphor involving fishing would be incomprehensible to him/her. Furthermore, metaphors are not always “lodged in rich contexts” and when this is the case they *do* allude to commonly assumed knowledge (otherwise the image would be meaningless). Thus, although the context does shape which elements comprise the semantic field, at least *some* background information is required – particularly when the context is not very specific.

⁴⁹ As she notes, her theory of semantic fields is an adaptation of what Goodman referred to as a “family” of labels. Cf. Goodman (1969: 71–4); see also Weinrich (1976: 283–5, 325–7).

⁵⁰ Kittay (1987: 229).

⁵¹ Kittay (1987: 224).

⁵² Kittay (1987: 225).

⁵³ Kittay (1987: 225).

harpooning, fishing with a net), or ordered contrast sets (days of the week: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday...). Labels in a semantic field may also have a paradigmatic relation of affinity (synonymy, hyponymy), or a paradigmatic contrastive relation (incompatibility, antynomous, complementary, converse).⁵⁴ The labels may also have a syntagmatic relation. She explains that, “The syntagmatic relations specify the semantic roles occupied by nominal expressions that are required, permitted, or prohibited by the verb which ‘dominates’ the field.”⁵⁵ These relationships are grammar roles, such as that of patient (object of the verb), instrument (means by which the action is carried out), agent (subject of the verb), goal, or source.⁵⁶ In summary, a semantic field is, broadly speaking, a group of terms which share some kind of a relationship.

There are very few words, if any, which belong to only one semantic field. For instance, depending on the context the word lamb could belong to the semantic field “shepherding,” “animal offspring,” or “delicacy meats.” Semantic fields, therefore, “overlap, intersect, and are imbedded in one another.”⁵⁷

At first glance this may appear to be a problem because Kittay asserts that a metaphor at the very least involves the juxtaposition of one semantic field and another distinct content domain, and often two distinct semantic fields.⁵⁸ But if semantic fields overlap and intersect, then how do we define them? Her response is worth reproducing in full:

... we should individuate [semantic fields] to the degree that is relevant to us. We may wish to individuate forests, trees within a forest, branches on a tree, leaves on a branch, or the cells which comprise the leaves of a tree. At what point we individuate these nested entities depends on our purposes. Similarly we can view semantic fields as nested and decide to individuate as we see fit for the purposes in hand, purposes which can generally be discerned from the context.⁵⁹

Briefly put, the composition of the semantic field is determined by the context. A metaphor involves the apposition of two concepts (terms or things) which are dissimilar, and “dissimilar” means belonging to distinct semantic

⁵⁴ Kittay (1987: 230–44).

⁵⁵ Kittay (1987: 247).

⁵⁶ In the sentence “John sent the news to the Congressman by telegram,” “the news” is the patient, “the Congressman” is the goal, “telegram” is the instrument, and “John” is the agent and also the source. See Kittay (1987: 244–8).

⁵⁷ Kittay (1987: 291).

⁵⁸ Kittay (1987: 291). She also notes, however, that a metaphor can involve *more* than two semantic fields. For example, in Shakespeare’s metaphor “bare ruin’d choirs, where late the sweet birds sang,” choirs are used metaphorically to speak of the autumnal boughs, which are metaphorical for the state of the speaker in the poem.

⁵⁹ Kittay (1987: 176, cf. 164–75).

fields.⁶⁰ The interesting upshot of this presentation of metaphor is that it is diametrically opposed to how metaphor has traditionally been viewed. The vehicle of a metaphor is not chosen because it is *similar* to the topic, but because it is *unlike* it in many ways. Juxtaposing two different semantic fields results in the disordering of the topic and its reordering along the lines of the vehicle. The vehicle structures the topic, and not the other way around.⁶¹

Identifying Metaphors

As linguists correctly note, any theory of metaphor is incomplete if it does not address the question of how we recognize metaphors.⁶² While it may be true that many times competent speakers of a language have little difficulty identifying metaphorical utterances, difficult cases frequently crop up. For example, is the expression “He shot himself in the foot” a metaphor? Why or why not? What are the criteria for determining metaphors from other tropes?⁶³

In attempting to answer these questions, it is important for us to remember, along with Black, that there is no infallible test for distinguishing the metaphorical from the literal.⁶⁴ Exceptions to any rule can almost always be found. Nevertheless, what are some of the necessary conditions of metaphor?

According to Kittay, every metaphor involves some kind of incongruity.⁶⁵ She utilizes componential semantics in order to recognize semantic incongruity. Robert Matthews offers a helpful summary of componential semantics and its value for studying metaphor.⁶⁶ At its most basic level, componential semantics is the breaking down of a term into sets of components which constitute its meaning.⁶⁷ “Woman,” for example,

⁶⁰ As she explains, saying that a metaphor involves two distinct semantic fields means that “fork” cannot be used metaphorically for knife, or “chair” metaphorically for table.

⁶¹ Cf. Kittay (1987: 287–8) where she examines Shelley’s poem “Bees of England” and concludes that while the metaphor of the bees may be effective rhetorically, “It lacks cognitive interest because the expressions from the vehicle field of bees are simply added on to the content of the topic field; they do not structure the content.” Such non-structuralizing vehicles can become banal and may seem contrived.

⁶² See Loewenberg (1981: 155); Beardsley (1981: 105).

⁶³ Along with Kittay (1987: 40), we are not concerned with the psychological processes involved, but with the conditions which pertain to metaphor.

⁶⁴ Black (1993: 34).

⁶⁵ Or phrased more technically: “I shall adopt the general position that in a metaphor there is some constituent of the utterance which is incongruous when that utterance is given an interpretation_{LC} [a literal, conventional sense].” Kittay (1987: 65).

⁶⁶ Matthews (1971: 413–25).

⁶⁷ A useful introduction to componential semantics can also be found in Weiss (2006: 40–7). For a much more technical explanation, see MacCormac (1985: 79–126).

may be represented as [adult] [human] [female]. Words can have semantic, syntactic, or conceptual restrictions. Thus, “to murder” has the restrictions [human agent, human victim]. When these “selectional restrictions” are violated in a sentence, then the utterance is deviant. So, if we say “Man is a wolf,” the sentence is deviant because “man” has the selectional restriction [human], whereas “wolf” is a member of the class [canine (i. e. not human)]. Similarly, the statement “Macbeth murders sleep” is deviant because “sleep” is an inanimate object whereas “murders” requires a human victim. Componential semantics is a useful tool for identifying incongruity, and thus can be used to help spot metaphors. The incongruous element of the metaphor is called the focus, while the remaining part is called the frame.⁶⁸ The frame and the focus together indicate the incongruity and comprise the metaphor.

What is fundamentally important to Kittay’s principal of incongruity, however, is her identification of the unit of discourse as the *context* rather than the sentence. She argues that “we cannot intelligibly speak of the meaning of a context-free sentence.”⁶⁹ Thus, for example, the sentence we cited above “He shot himself in the foot” cannot be meaningfully interpreted outside of its context. Appearing in a hunting magazine the phrase would take on a totally different meaning than it would if it appeared as the closing sentence to an article about a Minister of Parliament who suggested that women politicians are incompetent. The incongruity in a metaphor, she explains, can be – among other things – a semantic deviation, a conceptual anomaly, or a category mistake.⁷⁰

Because Kittay extends the unit of discourse to the context, she can use componential semantics for spotting incongruity even in sentences which, divorced of their context, do not violate any rules.⁷¹ So, to use an example from Jeremiah (which we will return to later), there is no incongruity in the statement “A swift young camel runs back and forth in her paths” (Jer 2:23). The surrounding context, however, equates the camel with the nation of Israel.⁷² Since nations have the selectional restriction [humans] and camels are members of the class [animal (i. e. not human)],

⁶⁸ Kittay (1987: 65).

⁶⁹ Kittay (1987: 55).

⁷⁰ Kittay (1987: 68).

⁷¹ Simply put, Kittay argues that sentences within a particular context are bound together by “projection rules” and must be read in light of one another if the correct sense of the context is to be understood. There are a number of features of a text which bind the sentences into a semantic whole. These cohesive elements include demonstratives, pronouns, repetition of key words, conjunctions, etc. See Kittay (1987: 55–64).

⁷² Specifically, this is accomplished through juxtaposition. In the first half of the verse Israel (depicted as a woman) is reprimanded for worshipping the Baals. Assuming that the verse is cohesive and coherent, the immediate switch to the camel image makes it clear that it is functioning as a vehicle for Israel (the topic).

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Though interest in the use of metaphor in the Hebrew Bible has gained momentum in recent years, there is, to date, no investigation which concentrates exclusively on the animal metaphors in the book of Jeremiah. In this volume Foreman brings to light this neglected area of study by examining the language and imagery of the animal metaphors for the people of Israel and argues that they express key theological themes which run through the core of the book.

Since different interpretations have been given to many of the metaphors under examination, the author resolves some of the questions regarding the meaning of these images. His in-depth study sheds new light on what these metaphors communicate, and contributes to a richer understanding of the theology of the book as a whole.

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