Black’s interaction theory of metaphor has had a formidable impact on the literature. On the positive side, his formulation has proved very enlightening in many respects, particularly in focusing the attention of linguists and philosophers on the nature of conceptual structure and the possibilities of growth in human knowledge through the expressive potential of language. On a less positive side, he could be held responsible, in part, for some of the confusion in the literature concerning what has been called ‘metaphorical meaning’.

As is well-known, Black argued very strongly against comparative, and in general substitutive theories of metaphor on the grounds that they assigned a peripheral and decorative role to this type of expression. He was, without using the pragmatic terminology available today, rebelling against the assumption that there are literal equivalents to metaphorical expressions, probably on the correct intuition that speakers only rarely engage in verbal decoration for the sake of it. For Black, paraphrases of metaphorical expressions are unsatisfactory to everyone, not because they fail to capture the expressive, emotive or suggestive element in metaphors, but because the conventional resources available in the language are not up to the job of capturing the ‘irreducible cognitive content’ that metaphors carry, which is typically new and created by the metaphor itself -at least in the case of strong, interaction metaphors. This was something that unrefined comparison theories of metaphor could not handle, for they could only deal with the transfer of attributes which are already part of the meanings of the terms involved. The widespread Aristotelian notion of the displaced sign whereby a name is applied to something that it does not conventionally designate for the purposes of shocking the audience has been somewhat out of favour lately, since Black set theoreticians after the cognitive function of this type of expression. Black’s strong creativity thesis assigned metaphor a special kind of meaning resulting from the interaction of the terms in it -or rather the implicative complexes involved- and which is:

a) new, or creative, not inferrable from the standard lexicon,
b) is not paraphrasable, at least not completely,
c) brings about conceptual innovations and therefore generates new knowledge and insight. (M. Black 1979: 23)

In his 1979 paper he goes to great lengths to show how this can be so, how "metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor’s production helps to constitute". (M. Black 1962: 39)
Now, while we do want to hold on to Black's idea of the creative power of metaphor I find endless trouble with his accounting for it in terms of a special cognitive content or meaning. As a student of metaphor my own view is that loose or careless and sometimes misguided talk of metaphorical meaning, especially by linguists, has caused much confusion in the literature. In this respect I find D. Davidson's (1980) caution against this state of affairs, highly valuable. In a blunt and provocative statement he declared that

" [...] metaphors mean what the words in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more." (D. Davidson 1980: 238)

This no doubt came as a shock for many who interpreted it in the sense that there was nothing worth studying concerning the topic of metaphor. But this is obviously a misinterpretation. If he is right, then for a sentence like (1) below, the same as for any other sentence in the language, we have its meaning specified by the set of necessary and sufficient conditions for its truth:

(1) Richard is a gorilla.

As a sentence, (1) means that a certain entity/individual is a member of the set of all gorillas, and we know its meaning when we know what the world would have to be like for the sentence to be true. That whoever uttered the sentence must have had the intention of conveying something else by this obvious flouting of Grice's maxims of conversation is something that lies outside the scope of a semantic theory. When we talk about the meaning of a metaphor this is, according to Davidson, as far as we can go. Clearly, what he is doing is simply applying the distinction between meaning and use (or sentence meaning and speaker's meaning) to the study of metaphorical utterances. The effects that the 'imaginative employment of words' have on us - he went on - need not concern, in principle, a theory of meaning. When we talk about the special meaning of a metaphor we are simply blurring this fundamental distinction. Talk of metaphors as the bearers of cognitive contents or special meanings arises from a failure to distinguish between meaning and use. Thus, while for Black the problem with paraphrases is that they "fail to give the insight that the metaphor did" (Black 1962: 46), for Davidson, if the so-called content of a metaphor cannot be put into words, then, by definition, it is not a content, it must be something else. We cannot have it both ways, Davidson seems to be saying:

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1 As is well known, this is how meaning is characterized in truth-theoretic approaches. Blakemore (1987) & Carston (1988) within the Relevance Theory framework argue quite convincingly for the necessity to draw a distinction between linguistic semantics and truth-conditional semantics, something that J. Katz had been insisting on as well, but from a slightly different position. The issue is important because pragmatic aspects are shown to play a decisive role in the latter but not in the former, since linguistic meaning is decoded and is truly context-free, while truth-conditional content is partly inferred in context. For the purposes of the point I want to make here, however, this simpler characterization will do.
"[...] the usual view wants to hold that a metaphor does something no plain prose can do, and on the other hand it wants to explain what a metaphor does by appealing to a cognitive content -just the sort of thing plain prose is designed to express." (D. Davidson 1980: 251)

From here Davidson concludes that it is not the meaning of the metaphor that we find difficult to paraphrase or grasp, for that lies on the surface, but the 'effects metaphors have on us':

"The common error is to fasten on the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes and to read these contents into the metaphor itself." (Davidson 1980: 251)

There is no denying that metaphor makes us notice aspects of reality we had not discovered before, but not by 'standing for or expressing the fact'. The paraphrase fails when we want it to capture what the metaphor brings to our attention. Because that is not finite in scope -which is just what Black was suggesting when he talked about the ambiguity and open-endedness of metaphorical interpretations- nor need it be propositional in nature. For if it were, it should be expressible in literal language. Metaphors may trigger all kinds of thoughts, impressions, suggestions, images and feelings. The number and strength of the implications one may derive, the correspondences it may invite us to draw between the terms or conceptual domains involved cannot be called the metaphor's cognitive content or special meaning. The richness of metaphorical uses of language does not lie in their semantic meaning but in their pragmatic or communicative value, and as Levinson (1983) puts it, there's nothing denigrating in approaching metaphor as a use of language and therefore as a pragmatic phenomenon. What we have to do is simply apply the 'division of labour' between semantics and pragmatics to the study of metaphor:

"A pragmatic approach will be based on the assumption that the metaphorical content of utterances will not be derived by principles of semantic interpretation; rather the semantics will just provide a characterization of the literal meaning or conventional content of the expressions involved, and from this, together with details of the context, the pragmatics will have to provide the metaphorical interpretation." (S. Levinson 1983: 156)

Metaphors are no doubt cognitively helpful. But we can only speak of the cognitive content of an utterance -as Warner (1973:368) argues- "in so far as it is a possible object of knowledge, and hence capable of being true or false". He thinks, very much in the same line as Davidson, that Black goes wrong because

"He appears to be running together the thesis that good metaphors play a distinctive and significant role in enabling us to understand ourselves and the world, with the thesis that they convey information unparaphrasable by any nonmetaphorical utterance." (M. Warner 1973: 369)
Manns (1975:360) argues against Warner that Black should be read as equating 'cognitive content' with 'insight' since in Black's own words, that is what the paraphrase cannot handle, and so,

"[...] Black's own suggestion thus points forcibly towards an interpretation of 'cognitive content' far broader than 'that which makes a truth claim'."

I agree with Manns that

"[...] 'cognitive is a term applicable to a range of phenomena far more extensive than the class of verifiable or falsifiable statements,..." (J.W. Manns 1975: 361)

but I am sure that it is not with the word 'cognitive' that Davidson found fault, but with the word 'content', that is why the rest of the quote from Manns brings us back into the same confusion:

"[...] an utterance can have cognitive content when it is employed in any of the following forms: (1) directing our attention towards a feature or features of our perceived environment; (2) aiding us to cultivate a skill or master a practical obstacle; (3) altering our way of categorizing the world [...]; (4) making a truth claim." (J.W. Manns 1975: 361)

On pain of being accused of splitting hairs I think it's safer to talk about 'cognitive' or 'communicative import' when referring to information implicitly conveyed by an utterance and differing from the propositional content of the sentence used. The word 'content' is linked to conventional meaning and semantics understood as that branch of linguistics which deals with the invariant context-free aspects of meaning the language system assigns to words, phrases and sentences.\(^2\) We gain nothing, in theoretical terms, by using the same word to refer to both the insights, thoughts etc, a certain use of an expression may trigger in a certain interpreter and to the information it invariably carries with it, even when it may not be what the speaker is primarily interested in communicating. It is not merely a terminological question that is at stake here, but a clear failure to distinguish purely semantic from pragmatic aspects of verbal communication. In his later papers (1979 and 1978/9) Black really seems to waver between an awareness of the existence of these notions and a tacit dismissal of their value: when he uses the word 'say' it encompasses the explicit as well as the implicit\(^3\); his use of the word 'meaning' is likewise totally

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\(^2\) Perhaps it could be argued that philosophers use the term 'content', in a pre-theoretical sense, as opposed to 'form' without further specification. What I am trying to show is that this kind of use becomes grossly inadequate for the purpose of explaining non-literal uses of language. See also note 1.

\(^3\) M. Black: "The author of a metaphor says something"; "[...] he [the author of the metaphor] was saying various things, many of them implicitly". (1978/9:185)
unrestricted. If the so-called change of meaning that takes place in metaphorical interpretation is not permanent, as Black recognizes, but relies on the "metaphor maker (is) attaching an altered sense to the words he is using in context" (his italics) (M. Black 1979: 29), we are clearly talking of a widespread phenomenon in linguistic communication that far exceeds the territory of the metaphorical and brings us well into the domain of utterance interpretation, where we have to find the general principles whereby sentences can be used to convey something additional or different from their literal meaning. In view of this, dissatisfaction with metaphorical paraphrasing cannot be phrased in terms of a loss of content, but has to be linked to the nature of the distinction between explicit content and implicit import. Thus, no 'translation' from the latter into the former will ever fully satisfy producers and interpreters, since the implicit typically leaves some margin -which can be very wide or very narrow- for personal variation, a margin which is not present in the case of explicit communication. But notice that dissatisfaction with paraphrase so expressed makes it difficult to maintain that what is lost is a 'cognitive content'.

Davidson's theory of meaning -if correct- need not demolish an interactive theory of metaphor. All we would have to do is reformulate what the cognitive value of metaphor consists in. Besides, our enthusiasm for the cognitive power of metaphors should not let us forget that not every interesting metaphorical utterance has the same power to restructure conceptual domains, among other things because that need not be the point of every conceivable metaphorical utterance. Analogies, models and examples also help in our growth of knowledge and are of great cognitive value; besides, they also work by forcing the interpreter to draw structural correspondences, and yet, we are not as prone to talk about their 'irreducible cognitive content' or 'special meaning', and most people are happy over their paraphrasability. Davies's example

(2) Malcom is a thief

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4 M. Black: "I use the word 'meaning' here for whatever a competent speaker may be said to have grasped when he succeeds in responding adequately to the actual or hypothetical verbal action consisting in the serious utterance of the sentence(s) in question". (1979:24) He also insists that when he talks about 'shifts of meaning' he means 'shifts in the speaker's meaning' (1979:29).

5 I think the issue over the paraphrasability of metaphor can be settled quite satisfactorily using the notions of explicit and implicit communication. If by paraphrase we understand finding a literal alternative way of wording the literal content of an expression, then sentences used metaphorically are paraphrasable to the same extent that any other sentence is. If, on the other hand, we want the paraphrase to capture what the metaphorical utterance is implicitly taken to convey in speech situations, then again, this is, in principle, equally possible or impossible to the same extent for metaphorical and nonmetaphorical utterances. A key notion here is that of the indeterminacy of implicatures, of which Grice (1975) spoke and which Sperber & Wilson give a decisive role in their pragmatics, and which has to do with the degree of speaker backing we can attach to the implicatures we derive when interpreting an utterance. Just think of a possible paraphrase for an utterance like "Mary is quite dissatisfied with your work", of which we would demand that it give us the full communicative import.
in which one is informed that a friend whom one took to be 'a pillar of probity and integrity' (Davies 1982: 75), has stolen a large sum of money is a good one to illustrate this point. Notice that (2) would have a great impact on the hearer's view of his friend and it would certainly force a reinterpretation of a great many assumptions about this Malcom, and yet, we would not want to talk about metaphor in this case.

There's the further point I mentioned before, that the openendedness and suggestive potential also found characteristic in metaphorical utterances, can be found in other forms of figurative as well as non-figurative language, and can be shown to be a matter of degree for utterances in general rather than a property exclusive to metaphorical speech. Think of a sincere reply to the question "What's your girlfriend's name?" of the form

(3) B: I don't know.

We may find this answer very suggestive, but again, it's the interaction between B's words and the assumptions A brings to bear on their interpretation that makes B's words suggestive, not just their meaning.

My proposal would be then that we first look at what the available pragmatic theories have to say on the general question of the mechanisms -linguistic as well as non-linguistic- underlying utterance interpretation in general, before we rush to label 'special' every aspect of the behaviour of metaphorical utterances.

The interest of the points Davidson makes is that they bring into the open one of the main sources of confusion in the literature on metaphor, namely, the lack of terminological and theoretical clarity and precision. There is far too much talk on the meaning of metaphor that relies on an unfortunately nonexisting agreement on the scope of the term 'meaning'. That's why Davidson's essay is a useful starting point.

What is badly needed in the literature is a rigorous application of the terminology available since Grice brought it to our attention that linguistic communication relies fundamentally on much more than the coded meanings of terms in the language. He talked about what is said -the truth-conditional aspects of the sentence uttered- and what is implicated -whatever other information is derived inferentially from the saying of x in the circumstances.

A very good therapy would be to stop talking of metaphors or metaphorical sentences and concentrate on metaphorical utterances. No sentence is a metaphor. In spite of the deeply rooted idea that there is a class of sentences that can be instantly recognized as metaphors nobody to my knowledge has been able to list the characteristics that mark off metaphorical sentences from the category mistakes of the child or the second-language learner, for example. As Black himself acknowledges, "...every criterion for a metaphor's presence, however plausible is defeasible in special circumstances" (M. Black 1979: 36). The reason for this being

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that it is speaker's intentions that make an utterance metaphorical, as M. Reddy noted already two decades ago. Some people have rejected this idea on the grounds that

"Such intentions are neither necessary nor sufficient for determining that an utterance is metaphorical. On the one hand, we may intend but fail to make metaphor -we may not be sufficiently competent in the language. On the other hand, we may interpret as metaphorical statements which were never so intended." (E.F. Kittay 1987:46)\(^7\)

This is certainly so only if we consider speaker's intentions in independence from discourse situations, that is, situations in which the speaker is 'bound', by the very nature of the form of behaviour she has engaged in, to be relevant and cannot normally afford to be misunderstood: an utterance is always the product of an ostensive intention to inform an audience of something, and the audience cannot help but take it that way. Since communication is all about the providing of evidence of intentions on the part of speakers and the recognition of those intentions on the part of hearers, (as Grice (1975) argued, and more recently Sperber & Wilson have convincingly exploited to its most interesting consequences) talk of a sentence as being meant metaphorically can only mean that the speaker assumes that her intention will be recognized by the hearer on the grounds that she has chosen the most relevant verbal stimulus at her disposal to convey the information she intended to communicate. Of course, she may go wrong and the hearer may interpret the utterance in a different way from that envisaged but that applies as much to metaphorical utterances as to any other utterance. Communication takes place at a risk, relevance theory reminds us, and that's only too true\(^8\).

The feeling that one needs neither a context nor any assumptions about the intentions of the speaker to know that a sentence like (4) below is to be interpreted metaphorically, (for -it is argued- nobody in their senses would want to produce or interpret it literally) has mistakenly reassured some theoreticians that metaphor is a semantic matter.

(4) New York City is a pressure cooker.

To the counterargument usually levelled against this line of reasoning that some sentences are undoubtedly perceived as metaphorical only against a particular context of utterance, one can always retort by arguing that literal language can also be shown to be context dependent to a large extent\(^9\).

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\(^7\) See also Ortony (1980:71), for similar views.

\(^8\) See Sperber & Wilson's *Relevance: Communication & Cognition* (1986). I'm relying throughout on their view of communication and on some of the terminology they have put forward.

\(^9\) L.J. Cohen (1979) "The semantics of metaphor" (in Ortony 1979) has used this argument in favour of a semantic theory of metaphor.
But this will not do. In the first place, as a sentence (4) has no literal range of application -it is false- because of its sortal anomaly. As an utterance it would certainly be easy to attach to it communicative value, but this is so because no linguistic information is ever interpreted in a null context -leaving aside the metalinguistic uses of linguists\textsuperscript{10}. We must distinguish our general capacity to make sense of the things around us, especially when they come -as utterances do- in the shape of ostensive stimuli, from the formal characterization of the sentences in the language system. Unlike utterances, sentences are abstract objects with only formal properties and therefore what we are doing when we claim that we can interpret (4) as a sentence, metaphorically, is simply insert it in some form of default context, and attach to it the most stereotypic assumptions accessed via the linguistic and encyclopedic information that the terms in the sentence make available -and thus we treat it as a form of purposeful behaviour. This is never difficult since as speakers of the same language -or very similar ones- we share not just linguistic information but much information that is non-linguistic. In principle there is no absolute guarantee that nothing but a metaphorical reading will do for a sentence like (4). Berg (1988:698-699) has used this example to argue, against Davidson's claim that "metaphors cannot be paraphrased, [...] because there is nothing to paraphrase," the following:

"How is Davidson's position to be reconciled with the seemingly over-whelming evidence against it? For instance, in a discussion about the quality of life in different cities someone once said to me "New York is a pressure cooker". I see no difficulty in paraphrasing his remark by saying, He told me that life in New York City is very stressful. And we can easily imagine the speaker confirming my report. How can Davidson maintain that no propositional content can thus be ascribed to the metaphorical remark?"

Firstly, the paraphrase he offers could hardly be accepted as the propositional content of (4). Rather, it qualifies as a strong implicature of (4) in the context he provides for its interpretation, that of "a discussion about the quality of life in different cities". We just need to change the context in which (4) was uttered and a different implicature comes to the front of what is being communicated. I can easily imagine a conversational situation in which what the hearer would construct as the main implicitly conveyed information would be something like (5)

(5) In New York City artistic activity is more intense than in other places.

But of course, we do not want to claim that every implicature an utterance may be taken to convey in a context -however strongly- is its propositional content, for what would be the use of such a notion?

\textsuperscript{10} This is a point that J. Searle (1979b) has made.
Another problem that so-called semantic theories of metaphor (and also Searle's) have to face is precisely their failure to reconcile two apparently contrasting views of metaphor, which we can call -following Davies- the 'proposition theories' -those who seek to capture in propositional form what the metaphor communicates- and the 'image theories'-those who see this way of going about metaphor as the rendering of what is the most precious ingredient of metaphorical speech, its richness, suggestiveness, reorganizing power, etc. The question of whether we are dealing with two different theories for two different types of metaphor can be easily overridden if we show that one and the same utterance -whatever its syntactic type- can be used to convey a certain proposition -something specific- other than that literally expressed by the sentence used, while at the same time communicate a whole range of weaker assumptions, indeterminate in number and form, i.e., while staying open-ended. This time we can have it both ways. It's important to emphasize that in both cases we are talking about implicit information, hence the indeterminacy. What differs is only the degree of speaker's commitment with the assumptions constructed or the degree of responsibility that the hearer takes in their derivation, and here a crucial notion is that of 'common ground'\textsuperscript{11} between speaker and hearer. Both Gibbs (1987) and Bergmann (1982) -outside the relevance theory framework- have seen it this way. Gibbs talks of 'deliberate ambiguity', and the example he gives is "This room is a toilet", something his father used to say to him when he was a teenager. His impressionistic line of argument is the following: "Each time he said this over the years I always felt as though I understood his intended meaning, which to me implied that he thought the room was messy and in dire need of cleaning. However, his metaphorical utterance (...) struck me differently every time he said it. (...) What I did sense each time he said "This room is a toilet" was some kind of negative association with toilets, as though toilets sometimes smelled unpleasant, or were unpleasant to look at on occasion. Each of these inferences seemed to be a part of the meaning of my father's metaphorical statements, and I always sensed that these were indeed authorized". (p.44). This seems to me to be a less distorting sort of approach to pursue in the study of metaphorical utterances.

The other two notions which one very commonly encounters in the literature on metaphorical meaning and cognitive or propositional content are those of \textit{metaphorical truth} and \textit{assertive power}.

Searle (1979a), for example, started off his analysis of metaphorical utterances by placing it neatly within the domain of pragmatics. For him, metaphorical utterances are just one special case of a more general phenomenon in language consisting in the saying of something but meaning another. He insists that there are not two kinds of meaning one literal and one metaphorical, that sentences and words have only the meaning that they have and nothing else. The work to be done consists in formulating the principles relating the literal meaning of the expression used to its metaphorical interpretation. This relationship had to be systematic and restricted, not random. It was probably this requirement of systematicity, which

\textsuperscript{11} Sperber & Wilson speak of 'mutual manifestness', a more elaborated notion.
indeed has to be met, that led him into proposing the following analysis where he clearly proves unable to maintain the basic distinctions he had started off by establishing.

First, he proposes that in analyzing metaphor we should have two sentences, one for the 'metaphorical assertion' as uttered by the speaker, the other its paraphrase, expressing 'literally' what the speaker meant by the metaphor (J. Searle 1979a: 82). This preliminary formulation which Black had criticised almost twenty years before, might not have been so unfortunate had he not rushed on to claim that

"In each case the speaker's metaphorical assertion (MET) will be true if and only if the corresponding assertion using the (PAR) sentence is true." (J. Searle 1979a: 82).

An example of this would be:

(6) (MET) Richard is a gorilla.
    (PAR) Richard is fierce, nasty and prone to violence.

Thus, unlike ordinary sentences, (6) (MET) does not have its truth-conditions and value specified by the meanings of the elements in it: "...the truth-conditions of the assertion are not determined by the truth conditions of the sentence and the general term" (J. Searle 1979a: 84-5). So, before we can decide on the truth value of (6) (MET) we need to know first what the truth value of the corresponding (PAR) sentence is.

Leaving aside the question of the particular example chosen, which considerably facilitates Searle's formulation\(^\text{12}\), I discern two confusions here, one having to do with the notion of truth and the other with that of assertion. Concerning the first we might as well insist once more that if notions like sentence meaning and truth conditions are to be of any use, then there's only one meaning and one set of truth conditions -barring ambiguity- that can be assigned to a metaphorical utterance. By assigning two different sets of truth conditions -one for the sentence as taken literally, and the other for its interpretation- Searle is clearly reducing metaphor to polysemy, for if a sentence can have two different sets of truth conditions, that sentence has two literal meanings assigned to it by the rules of the language\(^\text{13}\). If we assign truth values to speaker's meaning, how are we to distinguish it from sentence meaning?

\(^{12}\) Searle does mention at the end of his paper that there are metaphors which differ from the 'simple' (5) in that their interpretation is open-ended. However, no explanation is given for how the interpretation proceeds in such cases.

\(^{13}\) In fact some theoreticians with an interactive frame of mind such as Mac Cormack (1985) *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor*, M.I.T. Press, have made a point concerning the production of polysemy through metaphor: "Metaphors both depend on and produce polysemy" (... "for unless a word can be taken in more than one sense, metaphor is impossible". But while this may well be true, I don't think this is what Black had in mind when he talked about the cognitive content of metaphorical expressions.
As for the question of what sort of thing a 'metaphorical assertion' might be, notice firstly, that it is speakers that assert, not sentences. The intuition that metaphorical utterances are often -though not always- used to convey beliefs is correct. When we assert something, we represent ourselves as believing that a certain state of affairs is the case. But there is no necessary link between the linguistic properties of a sentence like its grammatical type or its meaning and what it is used to convey. Therefore there is nothing odd with a speaker using a certain declarative sentence like (4) or (5) above to communicate a belief or a very strong commitment on a proposition other than that literally expressed by her sentence.\footnote{See Sperber & Wilson (1986, chapter 4), especially the section on 'explicatures' and 'implicatures'.}

The hearer's task will be, one of constructing -rather than identifying- a proposition which he might represent the speaker as believing, as usual, on the evidence he'll gather from the context as well as from the literal meaning of the words used. Still, when talking of truth, we cannot make it apply to what has thus been 'metaphorically asserted', for that is not public, it never leaves the realm of representations in the speaker or hearer's mind, but it is the truth of the utterances of sentences that we are interested in in semantics, not of thoughts or other internal representations. To repeat, when a speaker utters (4) or (5) above she does not communicate a belief in the state of affairs described by the sentence used. This is typically the case with most tropes and with non-assertive speech acts. What she is after is not that the hearer represent her as believing that Richard is a gorilla or that New York City is a pressure cooker -for if she were, we would not be talking of metaphor but of madness. Whatever the proposition(s) the hearer arrives at as the one(s) the speaker intended -the assumption communicated in this way- cannot reach the status, so to speak, of the literally expressed proposition, for in so far as they are implicitly communicated, they are partly the responsibility of the hearer to a greater or lesser extent.\footnote{M. Bergmann (1982, Metaphorical assertions. Philosophical Review 91, 229-245) and I. Loewenberg (1975, Identifying metaphors. Foundations of Language 12, 315-38) both deal with the issue of metaphorical assertions and metaphorical truth. While Bergmann is right in that "a person who uses a sentence metaphorically does not use it to assert the proposition which is literally expressed by the sentence. In the case of assertive metaphor we must distinguish sentence meaning and speaker's meaning" (p.234), but wrong when she says that truth and falsehood "Should be tied to the assertion made, rather than to the sentence used" (p.238), Loewenberg (1975) argues in a completely opposite direction: metaphorical utterances are not used to make truth claims, and if they were, they would simply be false in most cases, and from this she is concludes, wrongly, that they must not be taken as assertions and that "Mets are statements without truth value" (p.338).}

I will conclude by looking at one last example of what I described at the beginning as a very muddled state of affairs concerning theories of metaphorical meaning. In her book *Metaphor Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, Kittay takes up Black's claim that metaphors are the bearers of an irreducible cognitive content. Relying on a relational theory of meaning -which sometimes she calls a "contextual conception of meaning" (E.F. Kittay 1987: 17) -following the Saussurean notion of language as a system of interconnected elements mutually dependent for their
The definition—the double semantic content of the metaphor is this time captured by her distinction between first and second-order meaning—a function of the former—which, she claims, "cuts across the semantic/pragmatic divide" (E.F. Kittay 1987: 35). First-order meaning is defined very much along the lines of Katz & Fodor's semantic theory with their semantic features, semantic combination rules and, in her case, semantic field indicators. As for second-order meaning, there are several types, depending on the function which operates on first-order meaning: indirect speech acts, irony, etc. In her approach, speaker's intentions do not have much of a role to play, and the context becomes—via the expressibility principle—"another utterance of greater complexity of which the first (the metaphorical one) is a constituent" (E.F. Kittay 1987: 78) and thus, she caters for those cases in which the 'locus of the conceptual incongruity' necessary for an utterance to qualify as a metaphor is located outside the sentence. When the semantic incongruity (conceptual anomaly or semantic deviation) she finds necessary for metaphor is not located within the sentence, there is typically "an implicit invocation" of a semantic field outside the sentence which is integrated and the procedure of tension resolution that understanding a metaphor requires in her theory proceeds in the same manner as for metaphorical utterances whose incongruity is found within the sentence. Situational contexts are thus assimilated to linguistic ones and any elements we may draw from the context in the interpretation of the metaphorical utterance are thus rendered linguistic in nature and the explanation remains semantic. This trick will not do, for the key issue in the interpretation of an utterance is precisely the inferring of relevant information from what is said in a certain context and what a theory has to account for is precisely how this is done, what criteria guide both speaker and hearer in this task. Once the selection of the relevant information has been made, the interpretation follows automatically: but a lot more than semantic mechanisms has been involved in the process.

Kittay's formulation raises some obvious questions concerning the motivation for her notion of second-order-meaning as well as for the way it operates. What is the psychological status of these second-order rules? They have been devised to capture the intuition that it is through the restructuring of one conceptual domain by another, by the projecting of one implicative system onto another—as Black put it—that utterers of this type of expression communicate. But while it may well be true that that is one of the many ways in which certain utterances can achieve communicative value—contextual effects, or simply relevance—through the perceiving and forcing of structural similarities typically unexplored and unperceived prior to the formulation of the utterance16, one must not forget that more often than not there is no widespread agreement in the case of highly poetic metaphors as to what the correct interpretations are, and one wonders why these second-order rules do not operate across speakers to yield the same sorts of interpretations. Notice as well that literary criticism shares some characteristics with ordinary linguistic exchanges, but not all. Kittay & Lehrer (1981) offer a highly elaborate interpretation of

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Methaphor, meaning, and comprehension

Shelley's *Bees of England* and other poems, over which, I'm sure, they spent a good many hours, trying to establish all conceivable connections and using all their knowledge of the authors, the literary conventions of their time and a whole lot of information that could bring out their point more clearly. Ordinary linguistic communication takes place at a much more rushed pace, even if the utterances that are being used are not being meant literally.

The real challenge lies in finding the cognitive mechanisms that tell metaphor production and interpretation apart from non-metaphorical speech once we have established that the general mechanisms of signification are the same for both -the search for relevance guiding the making manifest of intentions and their recognition- and that literal and nonliteral communication constitute the two ends of a continuum of cases. Once we get rid of the assumption that literal language is the norm in linguistic communication and apply rigorously the distinction between explicit and implicit communication, highlighting the importance of speaker's intentions over formalistic characterizations, we realize that the full import of a metaphor or any other utterance, cannot be given in independence from a communicative situation and therefore from a specific communicative intention. Interesting metaphors typically -and here I'm following Sperber & Wilson (1986)- make manifest an indefinite range of implicatures some very strongly conveyed, others only very weakly so, and of course, not necessarily the same in every situation, or for every person. But here metaphorical utterances share with other types of less fascinating types of expressions like vague and loose utterances the same property of communicating assumptions with different degrees of strength or speaker backing. When we look for the rule for the perfect paraphrase that'll give us the key to the workings of metaphorical language, we are missing the point altogether, for linguistic communication is only partly coded behaviour, and what makes it such a powerful instrument for the conveying of information is the possibility of exploiting general principles of human cognition like the attribution of purpose to the behaviour of others and relying on others similarly trying to make sense of our behaviour on the same grounds.

There are certainly many studies of metaphorical speech within a pragmatic perspective, mainly along Gricean lines. The danger here lies in relying uncritically on the assumption -a prejudice really- that literal language and the search for truth take precedence over all other requirements in verbal communication. But that should be the topic of another study.
References


