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On the Creative Use of Metonymy

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Abstract

Antonio Barcelona's work has advanced our understanding of the role played by pragmatics in the production and comprehension of metonymy. Much of his work has focused on playful uses of metonymy, which involve creative extensions of attested metonymic relationships, particularly in the pursuit of adversarial humour. Whilst there has been extensive work on the creative use of metaphor, very few studies have explored the range of ways in which metonymy is used creatively. In this chapter, I analyse creative uses of metonymy from a range of sources including film reviews, text messaging, art, advertising, cinema and literature in order to identify the different forms that creative uses of metonymy can take. In the process of analysing these different creative uses of metonymy, I address the following questions: What is the difference between 'novelty' and 'creativity' what is the relationship between them, in the context of metaphor and metonymy? To what extent and in what ways are the principles underpinning the identification of creative metonymy, analogous to those used in the identification of creative metaphor? At what level of abstraction should the creativity be identified in each case? Can and should we distinguish between 'novel' metonymy' per se, and creative *uses* of metonymy? At what point can we say that a new metonymic mapping has been created as opposed to a creative use of an existing mapping? What affordances does metonymy offer for creative use and how do these relate to the affordances that are offered by metaphor?

Keywords: metonymy, creativity, novelty.

1. Introduction

Antonio Barcelona's work has advanced our understanding of the role played by pragmatics in the production and comprehension of metonymy. Much of his work has focused on playful uses of metonymy, which involve creative extensions of attested metonymic relationships,

particularly in the pursuit of adversarial humour. For example, in his paper 'The case for a metonymic basis of pragmatic inferencing. Evidence from jokes and funny anecdotes' (Barcelona, 2003), he illustrates how in many cases the inferential work that is necessary in order to understand jokes is facilitated by pre-existing metonymic connections within cognitive frames. These metonymic connections help the hearer to achieve the 'frame adjustments' that are necessary in order to grasp the humour. He illustrates this by referring to the following exchange, which took place in 1930s Spain in a parliamentary debate between the Prime Minister and a Member of Parliament:

> Opposition M.P. (referring to the Prime Minister):
> But what can we expect, after all, of a man who wears silk underpants?
>
> Prime Minister:
> Oh. I would never have thought that the Right Honourable's wife would be so indiscreet!
>
> (Barcelona, 2003; 93).

In the first part of the exchange, Barcelona points out how the opposition M.P. attempts to compromise the Prime Minister by using the term 'wears silk underpants' metonymically to imply that he is effete and possibly homosexual. In the social climate of 1930s Spain, this might have been taken as a reference to the Prime Minister's inability to govern the country as he was not a 'real man'. In his response however, the Prime Minister uses metonymy to change the viewing frame into one of implied adultery on the part of the opposition M.P.'s wife. Only a lover could possibly know what sort of underwear he wore. By doing this he re-establishes himself as an 'alpha male' who is therefore fit to run the country, thus establishing the opposition M.P. as a cuckold who is thus 'less of a man'.

Somewhat surprisingly, with the exception of Barcelona's work and small number of other studies that I discuss below, there has been relatively little work on creative uses of metonymy. In the field of metaphor studies, a good deal of attention has focused on creativity, with several studies exploring the forms that it can take (Pérez-Sobrino, Semino, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Koller, & Olza, 2021), when and why it is used (Fuoli, Littlemore, & Turner, 2021) and how it differs from conventional metaphor (Hidalgo Downing & Kraljevic Mujic, 2020). The relatively small amount of published work on creative metonymy in comparison to metaphor is partly due to the fact that metonymy is sometimes thought to be an intrinsically less creative trope than metaphor as it does not involve bringing together unrelated domains (Brdar, 2018), and partly due to the fact that metonymy is a much less widely studied trope more generally.

The aim of this chapter is to identify the different ways in which metonymy can be used in creative ways, to ask if there such a thing as 'creative metonymy' that is analogous to 'creative metaphor', and to explore the relationship between 'creative metonymy' per se and 'creative uses' of metonymy. In the course of the discussion, I address the following questions: To what extent and in what ways are creative metonymy, and the principles underpinning its identification, analogous to creative metaphor? At what level of abstraction should the creativity be identified in each case? Can and should we distinguish between creative metonymy per se, and creative *uses* of metonymy? At what point can we say that a new metonymic mapping has been created as opposed to a creative use of an existing mapping? What affordances does metonymy offer for creative use and how do these relate to the affordances that are offered by metaphor?

2. The controversy: Is it the case that we can have a novel metaphor but not a novel metonym, and what is the difference between a 'novel' and a 'creative metonym?

In previous work (e.g. Littlemore, 2015; Littlemore & Tagg, 2018) we have suggested that people use metonymy in creative ways to perform to convey humour, irony and vagueness and that it is therefore a useful mechanism for serving a range of communicative functions, such as relationship building, mitigation, and persuasion. At this point, it is useful to consider what 'creativity' means. For an idea to be considered 'creative', it must combine 'novelty' with 'appropriateness' (Carter, 2015). In other words, it needs to have an element of originality but also serve a communicative purposes in an effective manner (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Following this definition, we identified a number of ways in which people made creative use of metonymy, including for example, extensions or elaborations of attested metonymic relationships, the juxtaposition of attested metonymic relationships, and humorous puns based on the contrast between the literal and metonymic meaning of an expression. Although there were degrees of novelty in all of our examples, we found virtually no evidence of completely new (i.e. totally 'novel') metonymic mappings.

There have been a number of empirical investigations that have focussed on 'novel' metonymy and the ways in which it contrasts with 'conventional' metonymy. Some of these studies have explored the ways in which novel metonyms are processed in the mind (e.g. Frisson & Pickering, 1999, 2007) and others have explored the development of novel metonymy comprehension in children (e.g. Van Herwegen, Dimitriou, & Rundblad, 2013). Other studies have focused on cross-linguistic variation in the degrees of acceptability that people have for novel metonyms. For example, Slabakova, Cabrelli Amaro, & Kyun Kang (2013) found differential attitudes towards novel metonymy in English, Korean and Spanish speakers, with speakers of Korean showing themselves to be more accepting of novel uses of metonymy than speakers of English or Spanish. The same research team also investigated the extent to which

acceptability judgements for novel metonymy extend into one's second language, and found that for Korean learners of English, novel metonymic shifts in meaning that are acceptable in Korea were deemed to be appropriate in English too (Slabakova, Cabrelli Amaro, & Kyun Kang, 2016). In studies such as these, the aim is to disambiguate between the ways in which respondents process lexicalised metonymic expressions, with which they are already familiar, and the ways in which they process metonymic expressions that they have never, or rarely, encountered. In the latter case a new meaning has to be created by establishing the common ground between the target and the vehicle. For example, Van Herwegen et al. (2013) cite the metonymic expression: 'the mop is coming tomorrow', which presumably means that the cleaner is coming tomorrow. Here the respondent needs to make a connection between the mop and the cleaner in order to understand the expression. This is not a difficult connection to make (as mops and cleaners are easily associated with one another), the use of the term 'mop' to refer to a cleaner is not a conventionalised expression in English. The linguistic expression is therefore likely to be 'novel' for the recipient, but it is not necessarily novel in any kinder of wider, more conceptual sense.

Examples such as this have led Brdar (2018) to call into question the ways in which 'novel' metonymy is operationalized in studies such as these. In order to illustrate his argument, Brdar critiques a number of the examples used in the studies mentioned above. For example, Slabakova et al. (2013) use the expression 'Paris is in a Huff' as an example of a novel metonym. Brdar points out that this is simply an extension of the conventional metonymic relationship whereby a city is used to represent a subset of the people who live in that city; as such it cannot be considered to be a purely 'creative' metonym per se, though the expression may have been unfamiliar to participants in the study. Similarly, he criticises their labelling of 'a good Agatha Christie' as novel metonym, as it is simply a reflection of an attested metonymic relationship in which a writer is used to refer to their work. Similarly, he argues

that the expression 'the apron burned her dinner' is simply an extension of an existing metonymic mapping where a person's clothes can refer to the person who is wearing the clothes. He goes on to argue that the so-called 'novel' metonyms that are used in these studies are simply rule governed extensions of existing metonymic mappings that have been attested in the literature on metonymy. Brdar's argument does not detract from the studies themselves as the authors of these studies are primarily interested in investigating how people respond to metonymic expression that are unfamiliar *to them*, but it does throw up some interesting questions concerning what constitutes 'novelty' and how it differs from 'creativity'. The examples used in the studies above are certainly creative in that they contain a degree of novelty and they can be made sense of, but the mappings are not completely new so they are not 100% 'novel' in the sense that Brdar understands the term.

Indeed, Brdar goes on to question whether there can be such a thing as a truly 'novel metonymy' that is analogous to creative metaphor. His principal argument is that, unlike creative metaphors, which involve completely new mappings between previously unrelated domains, even the most apparently 'novel' metonyms ultimately draw on existing metonymic relationships that have been attested in the literature, such as PLACE FOR EVENT, EFFECT FOR CAUSE, PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT and so on (see Radden & Kövecses, 1999). He therefore questions whether there can ever be such a thing as a 'novel metonym'. This is an important question, as it opens up a discussion of what it means for a metonym to be described as 'novel' and whether the criteria that we apply when identifying novel metonymy resemble those that we apply to novel metaphor.

Brdar illustrates his argument by contrasting the above examples of metonymy with novel metaphors, which he argues are different in that they involve the creation of completely new mappings. In order to make his point, he cites the following examples of creative metaphor:

1) Life is like Facebook. People will like and comment your problems, but only a few will try and solve them because everyone else is too busy trying to update their status. (Lucy Hale)
2) My mom always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get (Forrest Gump)
3) I've learned that life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes. (Andy Rooney)
4) Peanut Butter is the Miley Cyrus of spreadable edibles.
5) Is Goldman Sachs the Gwyneth Paltrow of the Banks?
6) Messi is the Mozart of football.

Brdar argues that these metaphors are novel both at the level of 'type' and at the level of 'expression' because they involve bringing together previously unrelated concepts. They therefore differ from the metonyms discussed above which are only creative at the level of expression. The comparison that Brdar is making here is an important one, but it is important at this point, to look a little more closely at the examples of novel metaphor that Brdar provides in order to understand, and to scrutinise the criteria that are used to determine whether or not a completely new mapping is being made.

I would argue that the distinction between metaphor and metonymy that Brdar is drawing here is a little less clear cut than might appear at first sight. The first three examples in the above list are certainly creative, but the novelty appears to lie more in the entailments of the metaphorical mappings, rather than in the metaphorical mappings themselves. Comparisons between Facebook and 'real life' are not uncommon, though the relationship could be perceived as being more metonymic than metaphorical as one's Facebook 'life' is a partial representation of one's real life. The novelty in this expression lies in the unusual choice of entailment: the fact that both in life and on Facebook, people often comment on other people's

problems without trying to help them with their problems. This is not the normal kind of comparison that is being made when people discuss the relationship between life and Facebook. The novelty here thus lies in the entailment, rather than in the mapping per se.

Similarly, the idea that 'life is like a box of chocolates' is a conventional metaphor in English, but comparisons between life and boxes of chocolates are usually used to refer to the fact that we have choices in life, or to show that life is or is not a 'good thing'. Again, the novelty in this example lies in the unusual entailment, which draws attention to the fact that we do not always know what kind of centre the chocolate that we select will have.

Finally, the idea of comparing a something that one does not like, or that feels has no value, to toilet paper is relatively conventional in English, as exemplified by expressions such as 'I wouldn't wipe my ass on it'[i]. This example therefore sets up an expectation that the writer is going to say something about how awful life is, but in fact he usurps expectations by commenting that the closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes. Of the three, this is arguably the most 'novel' as it refers to the fact that toilet paper is on a roll and not just to the paper itself. However, even this metaphor does not involve a completely new mapping, as it draws on an existing association between toilet paper and 'things that have little or no value'. Thus, we can see that in the first three examples, the creativity lies in the nature of the entailments that have been selected, and does not involve completely new source-target domain mappings.

Brdar's final three examples all involve what look like novel metaphorical comparisons. In the first highly sexist example, Peanut Butter is compared to Miley Cyrus because it is 'spreadable' and 'edible'. This involves a play on the senses of these two words. 'Spreadable' refers to the fact that the butter is easy to spread and that Miley Cyrus's legs are easy to spread and therefore that it is easy to have sex with her, i.e. that she is a 'slut'. However, this example (and the two that follow) also involves what Barcelona (2004) describes as a metonymic

'paragon' in which for example a 'great' composer might stand for the whole class of great composers, as in 'he's England's Picasso'. Barcelona points out that the metonymic extension of 'paragon' names relies heavily on culturally entrenched metonymic models. In the 'Miley Cyrus' example, the reference to Miley Cyrus is presumably designed to convey the idea that the author perceives Miley Cyrus to be physically attractive and would like to have sex with her, or thinks that she is 'sexually available'. Here the metonymic paragon serves as a construction within which the author then inserts a conventional double entendre. So although there is a degree of creativity, in order to understand the expression, the reader must make use of already established metonymic mapping. A similar pattern can be observed for the expression 'Is Goldman Sachs the Gwyneth Paltrow of the Banks?' Here, on the surface of things there is a novel metaphorical comparison between Goldman Sachs and Gwyneth Paltrow, which is based on the idea that both referents had their reputations built up and then destroyed by something minor. But again this comparison involves a metonymic paragon whereby Gyyneth Paltrow represents all actors to whom this has happened, so at a higher level of conceptualisation, the type of relationship is not that novel. Similarly, in the final example, the footballer Messi is compared to the composer Mozart, in what looks like a novel metaphorical; comparison, but again the use of Mozart to stand metonymically for the idea of a great composer (presumably one who pays attention to detail) is not novel.

This issue extends well beyond the examples cited by Brdar. In order to find meaning in a creative metaphor, the reader or listener will always, ultimately, need to draw on some kind of conventional mapping and/or mapping adjunct (Barnden, 2015, 2016; Barnden, et al., 2003), even if this process takes place at a very high level of abstraction. In other words, if they are to be understood, all creative products need to have a baseline of conventionality which is then manipulated in creative ways. This baseline may not be determined by the author or the creator of the product, but it needs to be perceived by the reader or the hearer at some level. For

metaphorical expressions, this conventional baseline is most likely to take the form of a conceptual metaphor. Within Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Lakoff & Turner (2009) suggest several ways in which conceptual metaphors can be used creatively. These include ‘extension’ (which involves exploiting a normally unused element of the source domain of a conventional metaphorical mapping, as we saw in the ‘box of chocolates’ example); ‘elaboration’ (which involves using the source domain of a conventional conceptual metaphor in an unusual way, as we saw with the toilet roll example above); ‘combination’ (which involves bringing together two conventional conceptual metaphors); and ‘questioning’ (which involves explicitly calling into doubt the appropriateness of a conventional conceptual metaphor). At a higher level of abstraction we have primary metaphors (Grady, 1997) and arguably, an over-arching ontological and conduit metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Completely new mappings would be impossible to understand without drawing at least in part on an existing metaphorical mapping. However, the mappings that underpin creative uses of metaphor vary according to their level of abstraction.

In order to illustrate this idea further, I would like to analyse a number of creative uses of metaphors that are cited by Pérez-Sobrino, Semino, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Koller, & Olza (2021) in their study of metaphorical creativity in public discussions of Covid 19. They draw a distinction between ‘unusual realizations of wide-scope source domains’ (which are akin to the kinds of creativity discussed by Lakoff and Turner) and ‘creative exploitations of one-off source domains’ (which are akin to the kind of creativity that Brdar argues exists in metaphor but not in metonymy). As an example of the former, they cite an Italian commentator who talked about the need to ‘reclaim the soil after the coronavirus fire’. This, they argue, involves a textual and conceptual extension of a conventional source domain fire which is often used amongst other things to talk about fast developing problems, such as inflation. This metaphor involves the extension of an existing mapping, as discussed by Lakoff and Turner.

Crucially however, when we look closely at their examples of ‘one-off source domains’, we see that these examples also draw ultimately on existing metaphorical relationships, but that the level of abstraction is somewhat higher. For example, they cite the example of a Norwegian journalist writing that if one is going to be a hero in these times of Covid, one should actually ‘act like a hedgehog, don't roar like a lion or fight like a giant but roll up in a ball and wait and hope for better times’. They point out that hedgehogs are not conventionally used as a source domain for human behaviour, and that references to hedgehog-like behaviour are likely to be unexpected in the current climate, which is characterised by references to heroic, warlike behaviour. They then go on to say that this results in a new conceptualisation of how people should behave during coronavirus, emphasising the fact that in order to beat the transmission of the virus people need to stay indoors. However, if we go further up the hierarchy in terms of abstraction, we eventually reach a conventional mapping. As they themselves point out, metaphorical comparisons between people are animals are conventional in Norwegian (as well as in other languages). Furthermore, the Chambers dictionary gives “someone whose manners keep others at a distance” and “an offensive person” as meanings of “hedgehog” (which, interestingly, is not marked as figurative). So it appears that hedgehogs are sometimes conventionally used as a source domain for human behaviour, at least in English. Thus the use of the hedgehog domain does not appear to be a “one-off” use of this domain, but rather that the use of this domain differs from conventional uses[iiiii]. So again, as with Brdar’s examples, if we consider the mapping at a more abstract level, we find a degree of conventionality that is then developed in a creative way. The creativity in this example lies more in the fact that the characteristics associated with this animal are diametrically opposed to the predominant war-like public discourse.

Another example of a ‘one-off source domain’ that they cite is the idea that ‘coronavirus is like glitter: even when you think you got rid of it, it shows up again in random places’. Again, it is

conventional in English to compare things to shiny objects, in order to draw attention to their desirability. In the case of glitter, there is an additional meaning that that one might ultimately be disappointed when one finally acquires the desired object (as illustrated by the expression 'all that glitters is not gold'). This is the kind of analogy that a reader is most likely to be expecting when they first read the sentence. However, expectations are usurped in a creative way as the reader's attention is drawn to an entailment of glitter that is not usually used in metaphorical expressions involving glitter, namely the fact that it can be very difficult to get rid of. By focusing on the noun glitter, rather than the verb or associated adjectives, the author also evokes a domestic scene involving the kind of glitter that children play with, which, like the hedgehog example, provides a refreshing contrast to the kinds of metaphors that are normally employed to discuss the Covid pandemic. There may also be an implicit comparison here to sand which has a similar consistency to glitter, and which, like glitter, has a habit of appearing in unexpected places, long after the event during which it was used or encountered (in this case, a trip to the beach).

The third example that they cite is somewhat similar. Here they discuss the metaphorical idea that 'social distancing is like asking a string section [of an orchestra] to play pianissimo: it only works if everyone does it'. The point here is that in an orchestra, if just one string player fails to play pianissimo, it undermines the efforts of all the other string players. Metaphorical comparisons between group behaviour and orchestras are not uncommon in English, but this particular entailment (which resonates with the idea of it taking only one 'bad apple' to spoil the barrel) is novel.

Thus, the creativity in these examples is closely related to the degree of specificity or abstraction involved. Whilst metaphorical comparisons involving animals, glitter and orchestras are common in English, the metaphors in Pérez-Sobrino et al's (2021) study involve references to specific kinds of animals, marginal characteristics of glitter that are not normally

used in metaphorical ways, and references to the behaviour of specific members of the orchestra that extend the idea of all members of an orchestra playing together harmoniously. What these examples show is that even with the most highly creative metaphors, if we are prepared to go high enough in terms of abstraction we eventually reach a conventional mapping. This is also true of examples of creative metaphor that I have discussed in other work. For example, in Littlemore et al. (forthcoming, 2022) we cite an extract from an interview with a British civil servant. He has just been asked how he feels about his role, and how he prioritises different tasks within it. He is frustrated with the competing demands on his time, and he replies:

> *… my role here [is]a bit like an It's a Knockout game. I'm sort of running on this soapy conveyor belt with people throwing wet sponges at me and I've got this sodding great elastic band attached to my back. […] What are the sponges? The Treasury has quite a few sponges…*

Even though the comparison that he draws between his frustration at work and the feeling of being on a 'soapy conveyor belt' is to a large extent creative, in order to understand this metaphor, we need to appeal to conventional metaphorical mappings such as the idea that making progress is moving forward in space, and the idea being humiliated is akin to having things thrown at oneself. Thus at a higher level of abstraction there are no new mappings in this example either.

In Fuoli et al. (2021) and Littlemore, et al. (forthcoming, 2022) we analysed the ways in which metaphors are used creatively in film reviews and in descriptions of experiences in the workplace. We found that creative uses of metaphor tended to involve playful uses of extending metaphorical ideas rather than brand new mappings of the type discussed by Brdar. These included, for example, introducing more detail into a conventional mapping; extending conventional mappings in a novel way; altering the valence of a conventional metaphor; introducing a new and unexpected collocation into a conventional metaphor; using a metaphor

that also works in a literal way; combining two conventional metaphors in a novel way; making use of strong and unlikely or unexpected personification; introducing dramatic contrast; and making use of recontextualization and appropriation. These strategies involved playing with both the form and meaning of a conventional metaphor. When we began our investigations, we attempted to distinguish between the pure 'creative metaphors', which involved drawing together two previously unrelated entities, and 'creative uses of metaphor', which involved playing with existing mappings. However, the issues discussed above regarding levels of abstraction, combined with the fact that there are so many ways in which one can 'play' with an existing metaphorical mapping, meant that the two categories frequently overlapped. It was ultimately impossible to distinguish between a purely 'novel metaphor' and creative 'uses' of metaphor that involve a degree of novelty. We therefore chose to talk exclusively in terms of the creative use of metaphor. I would therefore like to conclude this section by suggesting that both metaphor and metonymy can be used in creative ways and that in both cases a degree of novelty is involved, but that in order to make sense of a creative metaphor or metonym, one always needs to identify an existing relationship that is then extended or elaborated in some way. This relationship may be at a very high level in terms of schematicity, but it will always be there in some shape or form.

In the next section, I consider how metonymy compares to metaphor in this respect. As Brdar argues in his aforementioned paper, it may well be that all new metonymic mappings draw on existing conceptual metonymic mappings at some level, but as we have seen above, this is also true of metaphor. In identifying creative uses of metonymy, we need to apply the same criteria as we do to metaphor and make the decisions regarding creativity at the same level of abstraction in both cases.

3. Creative uses of metonymy

As with metaphor, there are different ways in which metonymy can be used creatively. In the remaining sections of this article, I analyse creative uses of metonymy from a range of sources including film reviews, text messaging, art, advertising, cinema and literature. This analysis leads to a taxonomy which is designed to demonstrate the different ways in which metonymy can be used in creative ways involving manipulation of meaning or form, or both. It is unlikely that this taxonomy will be exhaustive and subsequent analyses of creative uses of metonymy may yield yet further categories, but it should serve to illustrate how the creative use of metonymy (like the creative use of metaphor) need not involve a completely new mappings. Two broad categories of metonymic creativity are identified: 'meaning-based' creativity and 'form-based' creativity. However, it should be noted that these two categories are not mutually exclusive, especially given the tight-knit nature of the relationship between form and meaning. It should also be noted that in many cases, a single creative use of metonymy involved more than one of these forms of creativity.

3.1 Meaning-based creativity

There are at least five ways in which metonymy can be used creatively at the level of meaning. The first involves the juxtaposition of two established metonymic relationships, the second involves the extension or elaboration of an established metonymic relationship, the third involves 'twice true' metonymy, the fourth involves possible personification, and the fifth involves 'discourse-level' creativity.

The juxtaposition of two established metonymic relationships

I would like to begin my analysis of the creative use of metonymy by discussing the UK-based Twitter account: @PPEinPPE. This account was set up to draw attention to the fact that a disproportionately large number of people in power in the UK, including a many Prime

Ministers have all graduated from a single degree programme at the University of Oxford: Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE). The majority of students who study PPE have been privately educated, and therefore the implication is that the country is run by a privileged elite. At the same time, it also mocks the current trend for leaders who have their photographs taken in working environments, wearing personal protective equipment (also known as 'PPE') in order to create the impression that they are everyday people. The aim of the Twitter account is to assemble all of these photographs in once place in order to draw attention to their ubiquity. It seeks to mock the strong link between power and privilege and the crude attempts that are made to deny this fact by those in power. We can see an example of this in the photograph of former British Prime Minister David Cameron in a high-visibility vest and hard hat, laying bricks.

(1) *'PPE' in 'PPE'*

This Twitter account involves several creative uses of conventional metonymy. It juxtaposes the two meanings of PPE, both of which are metonymic for certain activities. On the one hand it uses the name of the degree programme to stand metonymically (via an ACTIVITY FOR PERSON metonymy) for the type of people who study that programme. This by extension refers to the privileged elite more generally. And on the other hand, it sees the wearing of the protective equipment as standing metonymically (via a UNIFORM FOR OCCUPATION metonymy) for the act of pretending to be 'one of the people'. The first use of PPE also appears in a construction that

leads people to read it as a mass noun rather than a count noun, perhaps suggesting that these people are all the same, 'uncountable' and therefore to be ridiculed even more.

At this point, it is useful to ask: are there any completely new metonymic mappings at play here, or do these examples involve creative uses of attested metonymic relationships? And does it make sense to distinguish between the two? We saw above that in creative metaphors often, if not always draw on conventional conceptual metaphors, at some level. What would the metonymic equivalent of these metaphorical mappings be? The closest metonymic equivalents to conceptual metaphors are likely to be the over-arching relationships proposed by Radden & Kövecses (1999). These fall into two broad types: 'Whole and part' relationships include 'scale' relationships such as 'end of scale for whole scale' and constituent relationships such as material for object. whereas 'part and part' relationships include 'containment metonyms (e.g. 'container for contents'), 'time' metonyms (e.g. 'time for action') and so on. A fuller list of these types of metonymic relationships is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 about here.

As we can see in Figure 1, there are three levels of hierarchy in Radden & Kövecses' (1999) model of metonymy types. The nearest equivalent to 'conceptual metaphors' in this model are the examples to the far right of the diagram (e.g. PLACE FOR INHABITANTS, POSSESSED FOR POSSESSOR, etc.), as these can be directly illustrated through the use of examples. The categories to the left of the model are more akin to over-arching conceptual metaphors such as Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) 'ontological' metaphor or the 'conduit', metaphor, and those in the middle column are arguably akin to Grady's (1997) 'primary' metaphors.

In order to analyse creative uses of metonymy in the same way as we have analysed creative uses of metaphor, it is therefore most appropriate to operate at the level of the metonymic relationships that sit in the third column in Figure 3. If we look again at the two examples of creative metonymy that were discussed above, we can see similarities with the kinds of metaphorical creativity discussed by Lakoff and Turner for metaphor.

The 'PPE in PPE' example involves the juxtaposition of two established metonymic relationships in such a way as to allow us to compare and contrast them. The first involves an ACTIVITY FOR PERSON relationship, which, as we saw above, is then extended to refer to elite people more generally and the second involves a CLOTHES FOR PERSON relationship. Previous examples of these kinds of metonyms are discussed in Littlemore (2015). Here there is an added inference in which the elite person is mocked for trying too hard to look like an 'ordinary' person. This is metonymic equivalent of Lakoff & Turner' s (2009) 'combination'. The expression 'PPE in PPE' also involves an element of formal repetition.

A second example of metonymic creativity involving the juxtaposition of two established metonymic relationships. In this example, which is taken from a review on the Internet Movie Database (IMDn) of the film '200 cigarettes', the reviewer describes one of the characters in the film in the following way:

(2) 'A jittery bundle of nerves named Monica ... all dressed up in her best Cyndi Lauper.'

Review of '200 cigarettes' (IMDb)

When using the expression 'jittery bundle of nerves', the author here is employing a TRAIT FOR PERSON metonymy to describe the way in which the character is feeling, and contrasts this with the way in which she is dressed in the 'over-confident' style of a pop singer from the 1980s. 'Cyndi Lauper' here is a POSSESSOR FOR POSSESSED metonymy, which refers metonymically to

the tacky and suggestive style of dressing that was favoured by Cyndi Lauper in the 1980s, and this in turn suggests a style of dressing that was associated with that era more generally. This second use of metonymy draws on another important concept in metonymy research which has been discussed at length by Antonio Barcelona, that of the 'metonymic chain' (Barcelona, 2008). This is a process whereby one metonymic relationship leads to another, and as Barcelona points out, the identification of meaning often involves a high degree of inferencing. Thus, through a process of juxtaposition and the use of a metonymic chain, the author of this film review is able to convey precisely (see Colston and Gibbs, 2021) a degree of nervousness that is over-compensated for by a superficially 'confident' style of dressing.

The extension or elaboration of an established metonymic relationship

Creative uses of metonymy can also involve the extension or elaboration of an established metonymic relationship. An example of this is discussed by Littlemore & Tagg (2018) in our analysis of creative uses of metonymy in a corpus of text messages:

(3) 'Any news on last week's snog?'

Text message cited in Littlemore & Tagg (2018)

Here, there is a metonymic chain linking the activity: the 'snog' (i.e. the long, passionate kiss), the person who the snog was with, and whether or not the relationship with that person has developed during the intervening week. This involves a creative extension of an attested metonymic relationship: the ACTION FOR RESULT metonymy. Again, the metonymy is creative at the lexical level but can be traced back to a conventional metonymic relationship, in much the same way as some of the creative metaphors discussed above.

A second example of the creative use of metonymy involving the extension or elaboration of an established metonymic relationship can be seen in a televised BBC debate between the

contenders for the role of Prime Minister shortly before a general election in the United Kingdom in 2019. This debate was attended by the leaders of all the main political parties in the United Kingdom, except for Boris Johnson, the leader of the conservative party, who refused to attend. One of the topics that the leaders were invited to discuss was the issue of climate change. The BBC were unhappy about Johnson's refusal to attend the debate, so to mark his absence, they decided to retain the podium at which he would have stood had he participated in the debate. However instead of Boris Johnson himself they placed a model of the world made of ice. During the debate and under the warm studio lights, the ice sculpture gradually began to melt so that by the end of the debate, the world that had been standing on the Conservative podium had literally disappeared in front of our eyes. Here we have a WHOLE-FOR-PART metonymy whereby the melting world map represents the melting icecaps. The fact that the world is melting and no one is there to look after it serves as a creative metonymic commentary on both the Conservative Party's attitude towards climate change and their contempt for the British electorate.

(4) The 'melting world'

From a televised political debate (BBC)

Figure 2 The 'melting world'

This is a rather complex example. The creativity in the 'melting world' example involves both the elaboration of an existing metonymic relationship and the juxtaposition of two metonymic relationships. There is a metonymic relationship between the model representing the world and the real world itself (see Feng, 2017 for a discussion of the metonymic nature of visual representations). Within the model of the world (which is itself metonymic) there is also a PART-WHOLE metonymic relationship between the polar icecaps and the entire world being made of ice. The two metonyms blend, and are elaborated into a single model whereby the whole world is made of ice and is therefore at risk of melting if not looked after properly. The ultimate message is that the world is being left to melt because Boris Johnson cannot be bothered to turn up and look after it. The creative conceptual blend that is being used in this example draws on pre-existing, over-arching metonymic relationships, much in the same way as some of the creative metaphors discussed above[iv].

Combination and/or juxtaposition with metaphor

Metonymy can also be used in other creative ways which, in many ways, resemble the ways in which metaphor can be used creatively (as identified by Fuoli et al., 2021). For example, some creative uses of metonymy also involve combinations of juxtapositions with other kinds of figurative language, including metaphor, as in the following example:

(5) 'It's typical of unimaginative cinema to wrap things up with a bullet.'

Review of 'L .. I .. E' (IMDb)

Here, the 'bullet' refers metonymically to the act of killing someone off at the end of the film, which is expressed metaphorically through the expression 'wrap things up'. In addition to being

juxtaposed with metaphor, metonymy can also shade into metaphor and the creativity lies in the ambiguity between the different readings.

The second example involving the 'combination/juxtaposition with metaphor also involves a kind of creative language play. Here, in an IMDb review of the film 'Ned Kelly', the author talks about how the protagonist hears voices from his dead father, his class divided country and his conscience, all telling him to get revenge:

(6) Voices from his dead father, his class-divided country, and his conscience, all telling him to get revenge'

Review of 'Ned Kelly' (IMDb)

The idea of hearing voices from a dead relative is a conventional metonymic relationship. It could refer either to the idea that he 'literally' hears his father's voice inside his head or that he is simply thinking about what his dead father might have wanted. The fact that the reality is probably somewhere between the two explains why the idea of 'hearing voices' is best described as metonymy rather than as metaphor (see, for example, Keskinen, 2002). However, the voice hearing shades into metaphor as he starts to 'hear' voices from his class divided country and from his conscience, as the ideas become increasingly abstract and the domains become increasingly disparate.

'Twice-true' metonymy

Like metaphor, metonymic meanings can be compared and contrasted with literal meanings in creative ways, as in the slogan, 'Turning red vans into green ones' which currently appears on the side of low-emission (red) post office vans in the UK:

(7) 'Turning red vans into green ones'

(Slogan on the side of a low-emission red post office van in the UK)

Here, a conventional EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy is used where the colour green to refer to the environmentally-sound nature of the vans (i.e. the fact that they produce fewer emissions). This is then juxtaposed and contrasted with the literal use of the colour red, which refers to the actual colour of the vans. This is analogous to what Genovesi (2020) refers to as a ‘twice true’ metaphor (i.e. an expression that is true both in its literal sense and in its metaphorical sense). Although it is not actually true that the vans are turning green the literal sense of the word, this is something that would be possible and the fact that they remain clearly red makes the slogan all the more striking.

A similar example can be found in Carter’s (2015) discussion of linguistic creativity. He cites a newspaper article headline that was used for a report of a shipwreck where all the sailors died:

(8) ‘All hands lost but legs saved’

(Carter, 2015)

The use of the word ‘hands’ to refer to sailors is a conventional metonym in English (e.g. ‘All hands on deck’). Here, all of the sailors died but some of their legs were found floating in the sea. So here we have a contrast between a metonymical meaning that is attached to the part of a human body, juxtaposed with the literal meaning of a different part of the body. As with the other examples of creative uses of metonymy that we have seen, this example is highly creative but there are no new metonymic mappings per se.

Possible personification

Metonymy can sometimes be understood as personification, particularly when it is used to refer to an organisation. When it is used in this way, it has strong affordances for creativity, as the personification can be literalised. We can see an example of this in the following extract from

an IMDb review of ‘Quest for Camelot’. Here the author takes a well-known metonymic relationship in which Mickey Mouse personifies the Disney Corporation, and re-literalizes the personification for humorous effect:

(9) ‘Quest for camelot’ is warner bros’ first feature-length , fully-animated attempt to steal clout from disney's cartoon empire, but the mouse has no reason to be worried. Even the magic kingdom at its most mediocre -- that'd be ‘pocahontas’ for those of you keeping score -- isn't nearly as dull as this

Review of ‘Quest for Camelot’ (IMDb)

Discourse level creativity

Also like metaphor, metonymy can be used in discourse-level creativity. This might involve using a metonym in a new context where it is not usually used, or to talk about something that it’s not usually used to talk about. It can also involve repeated references to the same or similar metonymic relationships across a stretch of text or an exchange. Examples of this are discussed in Littlemore & Tagg (2018). Some uses of metonymy which are creative at the level of discourse involve the intentional use of metonymic words or expressions that are inappropriate to the genre. We can see an example of this in Monty Python’s ‘Undertakers’, sketch which is discussed in detail in Littlemore (2015):

(10) UNDERTAKER: Where is she?

MAN: She's in this sack.

UNDERTAKER: Let's 'ave a look.

(sound of bag opening)

UNDERTAKER:	She looks quite young.
MAN:	Yes, she was.
UNDERTAKER:	Fred!
FRED:	Yea?
UNDERTAKER:	I THINK WE'VE GOT AN EATER!

Extract from Monty Python's 'Undertakers' sketch

Here two undertakers describe one of the human bodies that they have just received as an 'eater', implying that they are planning to eat the corpse. This draws on a conventional metonymic TRAIT FOR PERSON metonymy but also references a metonymic pattern that is more usually used to talk about animals (where for example an old chicken might be described as a 'stewer'). The subject matter is entirely unexpected and inappropriate both in general, but particularly given the setting in which the conversation takes place. The humour in the example lies in the contrast between the kind of script that one would normally expect to be followed in such a setting and what is actually said.

3.2 Form-based creative uses of metonymy

If we restrict our search for creativity to 'meaning-based' creativity, and do not consider form-based creativity or relationships with other kinds of figurative language, *juxtaposition* and *elaboration* appear to be the two main strategies underpinning the production of creative

metonymy. However, if we cast the net a little wider and consider form-based creativity, interactions between metonymy and other kinds of figurative language, and discourse-level creativity (as we did for metaphor in the Fuoli et al. study that is mentioned above), then we see a similar range of creativity types emerging for metonymy as we see for metaphor. Form-based metonymic creativity can involve repetition, as we saw in the 'PPE in PPE' example, or parallelism, which we saw in the 'voices' example.

It can also be seen in creative use of word play where two meanings that are metonymically related to one another are deliberately contrasted with one another, such as, for example, the line 'Mother, you had me, but I never had you…' in John Lennon's song 'Mother'.

(11) 'Mother, you had me, but I never had you…'

'Mother' by John Lennon

Here, the word 'had' refers metonymically to giving birth (in the first example) but to being emotionally available (in the second example). Therefore, in addition to form-based creativity, we also have the juxtaposition of two metonymic relationships. It is often the case that creativity uses of metonymy will combine two or more forms of creativity in this way.

Form-based creativity can also involve manipulations of the part of speech that draw on metonymic relationships. For example, in describing the office of one of the characters in his novel 'Slow Horse', Mick Herrow writes the line: lever-arch files have been *higgledy-piggled* into spaces too small.

(12) Elsewhere, lever-arch files have been *higgledy-piggled* into spaces too small

From *Slow Horses* (Mick Herrow) 2010 John Murray Publishing

Here he employs an EFFECT FOR CAUSE relationship to turn an expression that is usually used in adjectival form ‘higgledy-piggledy’ into a novel verb ‘higgledy-piggled’. Similarly, the reviewer of the film ‘Sniper’ on IMDb employs a TRAIT FOR PERSON metonymic relationship, turning what would normally be a noun phrase into an adjective, when writing that one of the characters in the film ‘is teamed with a *hot-shot-young-no-experience-never-killed-a-man* new partner to take out some drug-kingpins and military strong men in Panama’.

(13) This film is about an expert marine sniper , played by tom berenger , who is teamed with a *hot-shot-young-no-experience-never-killed-a-man* new partner to take out some drug-kingpins and military strong men in panama .

Review of ‘Sniper’ (IMDb)

Similarly, in the final example, the verb phrase ‘run-shrieking-from-the-theatre’ assumes an adjectival function via an EFFECT-FOR-CAUSE metonymic relationship:

(14) The result isn't bad in a *run-shrieking-from-the-theater* type of way.

Instead, it's merely bad in an excruciatingly boring sort of way

Review of ‘Meet the Deedles (IMDb)

This is then contrasted with the more conventional adjectival phrase: ‘excruciatingly boring’.

3.3 Summary of creative metonymy types

The different kinds of metonymic creativity, and the examples at have been used in this article to illustrate them are shown in Table 1. It should be noted that the categories within this taxonomy and the examples that are used to illustrate them are not mutually exclusive; one example may, and indeed often will, involve more than one kind of creativity.

Table 1 about here.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen examples of a wide range of creative uses of metonymy. As with the creative uses of metaphor identified in Fuoli et al., they vary both in terms of the type of creativity involved and the degree to which they are creative. Furthermore, there are no domain-internal mappings that are completely novel at the conceptual level, though there are mappings that are new at a lexical level, or that involve some kind of creative word play involving other kinds of figurative language, re-literatization, form-based creativity or discourse-level creativity.

These examples illustrate the range of ways in which creative use can be made of metonymy. Further examples of metonymic creativity can be found in Littlemore (2015) and Littlemore & Tagg (2018), and the taxonomy may not be exhaustive. However, we have seen from this brief survey that in many ways creative uses of metonymy are analogous to creative uses of metaphor, and in both cases completely 'new' mappings that do not relate to any pre-existing mapping are very difficult, if not impossible, to find. If we are prepared to operate at a high enough level of schematicity, we will always find an extant mapping upon with the new usage builds.

We have seen that, as with metaphor, there are many ways in which metonymy can be used in creative ways. There are many similarities between the two tropes in terms of the ways in which they can be used creatively. In both cases, we see examples that at first sight appear to involve entirely new mappings but where successful comprehension requires us to draw on an extant

conventional mapping even if this mapping is highly abstract. In both cases, it is therefore difficult to draw a distinction between a purely novel relationship and a creative extension of an existing relationship. For both metonymy and metaphor, creativity operates at the level of form and meaning, and the two are often interrelated. Frameworks for metaphorical creativity, such as those proposed by Lakoff & Turner (2009), (Pérez-Sobrino et al., 2021), and (Fuoli et al., 2021) also work for metonymy but with minor adaptations.

The most important observation is that for both metonymy and metaphor, even though at first sight, there do appear to be 'one-off' instantiations, they ultimately involve creative realisations of wide-scope mappings (see Pérez-Sobrino et al.) and are akin to what Lakoff and Turner would describe as 'extension' or 'elaboration' of existing conceptual metaphors or metonyms. Sometimes, two or more different metaphorical or metonymic mappings are juxtaposed, akin to what Lakoff and Turner (2009) would describe as 'combination' whereas other instances of creativity are more form-based (see Fuoli et al., 2021) or operate at the level of discourse (see Pérez-Sobrino et al., 2021). When deciding whether to label a metaphorical or a metonymic expression as 'creative' we need to establish at what level of analysis the decision is being made, and whether the rules that are being applied to metonymy are analogous to those used being applied to metaphor. In both cases, it may make sense to talk about 'the creative use of metonymy' and 'the creative use of metaphor', rather than 'creative metonymy' and 'creative metonymy' per se, as these terms may set up an (often false) expectation that there will be a completely new mapping. These guiding principles will hopefully be of use to researchers when selecting items for use in studies that are designed to investigate the ways in which creative uses of metaphor and metonymy are processed in the mind.

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[i] https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/wouldn-t-wipe-my-ass-with-it

[ii] The author would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

[iii] Thanks also to a second reviewer, who points out that the concept of a hedgehog is creatively used by Schoppenhauer in what is known as the 'hedgehog's dilemma' (also known as the 'porcupine problem').

[iv] The relationship between a model of a real-world entity and the real-world entity itself could be seen as either metonymic or metaphorical, depending on one's perspective. I have followed Feng (2017) in describing the relationship as metonymic, but it is important to note that the distinction between metaphor and metonymy is often blurred and us frequently in the eye of the beholder (Barnden, 2010)