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This is a contribution from *Conceptual Metonymy. Methodological, theoretical, and descriptive issues*.

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CHAPTER 4

Some contrast effects in metonymy

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This chapter analyses important, variegated ways in which contrast arises in metonymy. It explores, for instance, the negative evaluation of the target achieved in *de-roling*, where the source chosen is a target feature that is largely irrelevant to the target's role in a described situation, therein contrasting with other target features that would have been more appropriate. This form of contrast, amongst others, can generate irony, so that the chapter elucidates some of the complex connections between metonymy and irony. It also explores the multiple roles of contrast in transferred epithets, especially as transferred epithets can be simultaneously metonymic and metaphorical. Finally, the chapter makes contrast-related suggestions regarding the metonymy database described by Barcelona and colleagues in other chapters.

Keywords: de-personalization, evaluative effects, highlighting, irony, metaphor, transferred epithets

1. Introduction

We will be examining various roles that contrast plays in metonymy. We will be looking at various types of contrast, including but going beyond that between the source and target of a case of metonymy. It is unusual to focus on contrast as a theme in its own right when analyzing metonymy. A notable exception is the use by Herrero Ruiz (2009) of contrast as a common theme around which to discuss various figures, including metonymy, irony, metaphor and hyperbole. Otherwise, specific contrast issues have mostly arisen piece-meal in the study of other phenomena. For instance, Herrero Ruiz (2011), Littlemore (2015), Panther and Thornburg (2008), and Voßhagen (1999) have, between them, looked at antonymy as a case of metonymy, oxymoron as involving metonymy, and ironies associated with metonymy. Also, Burkhardt (2010a,b), Gradečak-Erdeljić and Milić (2011), Herrero Ruiz (2011), Littlemore (2015) and Pauwels (1999) have considered the involvement of metonymy in euphemism and dysphemism, which can be regarded as relying

on contrast. Radden (this volume) makes the interesting point that when metonymy rests on “external” contiguity it may need to be accompanied by considerable source/target dissimilarity (contrast). The notion of (contextual) incongruence discussed by Panther & Thornburg (this volume) is an important type of contrast not specifically addressed in the present chapter, though related to the issue of source/target contrast.

In a recent book, Littlemore (2015) comprehensively reviews types and functions of metonymy, and, while she does not select contrast as an explicit theme, she discerns contrast in many aspects of metonymy. The present chapter will largely use that work as a launchpad but will not represent all the ways in which contrast features there. It will instead contribute certain refinements and new angles. Also, it will address contrast in transferred epithets, which can be argued to involve metonymy. An example of a transferred epithet is “idle hill”¹ when this refers to a hill on which someone has had a major bout of idleness.

This chapter’s contributions are often to do with evaluative functions of metonymy that are related to contrast. Evaluative functions of metonymy have, as Littlemore (2015) points out, been relatively overlooked until recent years, and it is encouraging to see the attention to evaluation by Pannain (this volume) and Portero-Muñoz (this volume). The relative neglect may partially explain why contrast itself has not been addressed more explicitly and comprehensively. Also, contrast is dissimilarity, and metonymy is almost always thought not to rest on similarity, leaving metaphor to grab similarity as its turf; so, the fact that source and target in metonymy are dissimilar has been tacitly regarded as unremarkable. However, I have previously argued (Barnden 2010) that certain types of metonymy do importantly involve similarity. Accepting this then encourages one to consider also the distinctive contributions that its opposite, contrast, can make.

The work in Barnden (2010) is the start of an exploration of fundamental dimensions that underlie types of figurative expression. The guiding thesis is that it is these underlying dimensions that are scientifically important, not so much the traditional figuration types such as metaphor, metonymy, irony, hyperbole, etc. These types may just be ill-defined, fuzzy, overlapping regions in the space spanned by the dimensions. Barnden (2010) did not consider contrast, but contrast is of course fundamental to various traditional figures such as irony, antonymy and oxymoron. Contrast is also important for metaphor, as is intuitively obvious, but the point is given flesh and bite by work such as Birgisson (2012), Fass (1997) and Mac Cormac (1985) on how particular points of dissimilarity can be important for a metaphor’s effect. By adding contrast to the multi-dimensional analysis of figures,

1. In the poem *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman.

we stand to gain new insights into the way different figures relate to each other as well as into how metonymy itself works. The concern with contrast goes beyond the rich dimensional analysis that Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006) apply to metonymy, as their dimensions do not focus on contrast.

The issue of contrast in metonymy is related to but should not be confused with the question of how metonymy interacts with constructs such as domains, domain matrices, semantic fields, idealized cognitive models, etc. (see Barcelona 2002 for some of the complex issues here.) Two elements in a single cognitive domain can be of wildly different qualitative types. For example, the journey domain could be taken to contain paths, people, thoughts, speeds and times. Conversely, two very different domains could share a type of element: the love-relationship and journey domains both involve people. The question of how much and in what way two things contrast with each other goes well beyond the question of whether they are in the same domain or not.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Section 2 sets the stage by discussing the wide variation there can be in the degree of contrast between source and target in metonymy. Section 3 considers the role of contrast in some evaluative functions of metonymy. It looks at the conditions under which de-personalizing metonymy is negatively evaluative, argues that a particular sort of contrast is central to a phenomenon of “de-roling” involved in some negatively evaluative metonymy, and also shows various types of contrast in forms of irony associated with metonymy. Section 4 analyses transferred epithets as a form of contrastful metonymy and also discusses metaphorical aspects that some transferred epithets have. Section 5 summarizes the main claims and issues of the article. It also comments briefly on how the considerations in the article could possibly affect the development of the metonymy database model set forth by Barcelona (this volume), Blanco-Carrión (this volume) and Hernández-Gomariz (this volume), or could at least affect the behaviour of someone entering information into the database.

In this chapter I will usually not characterize metonymic examples as falling within particular general metonymic schemata that other researchers have identified, with a few exceptions such as PART FOR WHOLE. This is because precise classification within such schemata does not usually affect the issues in this chapter.

2. Degrees of source/target contrast in metonymy

Many important types of metonymy involve a large qualitative contrast between source item and target item, in the sense of their being intuitively very different types of thing, whereas in other cases there is much weaker contrast. The examples below give an idea of the range. There is no claim at this point in the article that

the contrasts play an important communicative function in the examples (although sometimes they do) – that is the topic of later sections. In our first example,

- (1) “I’m parked out back” (Nunberg 1995; and see Littlemore 2015: p. 57)

meaning that the speaker’s car is at the back of the car park, we have a metonymy going from a person to a car – two very different types of thing.

In

- (2) “John ate three bowls”

we are likely to have a metonymy from bowls to their contents, for example, tortilla chips. In

- (3) “England lost the [football] match”

we have a metonymy going from a country to a football team. In

- (4) “England’s bid is now worried about the impact of an investigation into FIFA by the BBC’s *Panorama*”²

we have a metonymy from a highly abstract object, a bid to host the football World Cup, to people involved in the bid. In

- (5) “Steam irons never have any trouble finding roommates. ... Stereos are a dime dozen. ... [O]ur electric typewriter got married and split ...”³

we have metonymies from inanimate physical artefacts to people who supplied those artefacts.

In some of these examples there is an obvious and large qualitative difference in type between the source and target, such as between a bid and the people preparing the bid. But the difference in some cases is not quite as straightforward as it might appear. In (3), we might think of England as largely made up of its residents, and of course a football team is (or includes) a set of people. So source and target are qualitatively similar to the extent of being partially composed of people. In (2), both chips and bowl are dry, rigid, inanimate physical objects, not very different in size, although they have different levels of fragility and only one is a foodstuff.⁴

2. Heard on BBC News at Ten, BBC1 TV channel, UK, 18 November 2010.

3. Example cited by Gibbs (1994), Warren (2006: p. 32) and others. Gibbs (1994) draws it from a humorous passage by Erma Bombeck.

4. But note: in some restaurants a bowl is fashioned from a foodstuff such as tortilla-chip material.

But, some important types of metonymy have a much lower degree of contrast. Consider first the following:

(6) “Pass me a bowl”.

Suppose that this is a command to pass a bowl of tortilla chips. We now have a metonymy going from a bowl to a *bowl-plus-tortilla-chips*, rather than *just* to the tortilla chips as in (2). Example (6) can therefore be seen as using PART FOR WHOLE metonymy. Clearly, the inclusion of the source bowl within the target bowl-plus-chips gives considerable similarity on the source and target: the bowl without the chips is similar to the bowl with the chips in that they both include a bowl, and indeed the very same bowl (see more on this type of situation in Barnden 2010). A low degree of contrast arises similarly in

(7) “The coffee break is at 11 a.m.”

This would tend to mean that the break where you can have coffee or tea or water or ... is at 11 a.m.: we have a metonymy from one type of sustenance to a broader class. It is therefore a subtype-for-type metonymy (hence synecdoche: Burkhardt 2010a, Nerlich 2010). The degree of contrast depends on how much we broaden the class: including cakes would amplify the contrast.

Fairly low contrast can arise in some forms of representational metonymy (Warren 2006: 48–49), where a representation stands for what is represented, or vice versa, as in the following two examples.

(8) “Sean Connery defeated the evil genius once again”

meaning that James Bond, played by actor Sean Connery, defeated the genius. We have a metonymy from actor to drama character.

(9) “My boss has scheduled our meeting for 9am”

meaning the speaker’s boss’s secretary has scheduled the meeting (with the boss) at 9am. Here we have a metonymy from person to controlled person.

Although of course Sean Connery and James Bond are very different types of people, the source and target items are both people at least, and furthermore Connery’s filmed behaviour is outwardly similar to Bond’s fictional behaviour. Less obviously, the boss and the secretary are also similar to the extent that both of them are people who serve particular aims of the organization in question and who (probably) work in close physical proximity to each other.

Person-to-person metonymies do not have to be representational, as shown by the following ad-hoc metonymy uttered in my academic department:

(10) “Xin Wang is actually me”.

In my department the progress of a PhD student, such as Xin Wang, is formally monitored by a member of staff different from the student’s supervisor. The speaker of (10) meant that he was Xin Wang’s monitor. So there is an ad hoc metonymy from student to monitor. (Sentence (10) included “actually” because it corrected someone else’s statement about who Xin Wang’s monitor was. The word does not suggest literal identity in this case).

Low source/target contrast arises when a current state metonymically stands for a future or potential version of the state, as in

- (11) a. “I’m out of here”
b. “Mary is the new boss”

meaning that the speaker will soon be out of the current location and Mary will soon be the new boss. (Cf. an example of ACTUAL FOR POTENTIAL in Littlemore 2015: 11).

We should also note that a perception of contrast is highly dependent on context, just as a perception of similarity is. Context affects which aspects of the two things are relevant. Also, two things of broadly the same type may be strongly contrasting in some respect. For instance, one’s friends and enemies are similar to the extent that they’re other people with some connection to oneself, but of course in many contexts there will be a large perceived contrast. This observation is relevant to an ironic statement such as “You’re a real friend” meaning that the addressee is actually an enemy in some sense.

The question now is: does the degree of (context-dependent) contrast play a significant role in its own right in metonymy, or is it purely an incidental side-effect of other factors? It might be thought that what is important is purely the type of metonymy involved – part/whole, subtype/type, representational, artist/artwork, etc. etc. – with the particular degree of contrast arising having no semantic or pragmatic significance in itself. In following sections I suggest that contrast is in fact not purely incidental. We will also see that types of contrast other than that between source and target are important.

3. Contrast and evaluation

This section’s main contrast-related contributions concern (a) “de-roling”, an important way in which metonymy can have a demeaning effect, and (b) a form of irony that de-roling provides. I will lead into de-roling via the phenomena of euphemism, dysphemism and de-personalization, and on the way make a proposal about when and why de-personalization has a negative effect.

3.1 (De-)emphasis and de-personalization

Metonymy is widely viewed as often serving to highlight, i.e. relatively emphasize, some aspect of the target (e.g. Black 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36; Panther and Thornburg 2007; Radden and Kövecses 1999; Littlemore 2015: 66–68). For instance, a sentence “The BBC believes that ...” emphasizes the actual believer’s/s’ role in the BBC. The point of such a sentence is not just to mention that certain people believe the thing in question, nor even that certain people who just happen to work for the BBC have that belief, but rather that certain people *in their capacity as qualified representatives of the BBC* have the belief (cf. similar example in Lakoff and Johnson *loc. cit.*).

This illustrates the more general point that metonymy typically keeps the source-target linkage itself as part of the meaning of the utterance. Barnden (2010), Dirven (2002), Radden and Kövecses (1999), and Warren (2006) offer different versions of this feature, which I call *link survival*. It plays a central role in Radden (this volume).

In emphasizing some aspects of the target, metonymy de-emphasizes others. This is key to some euphemisms (Burkhardt 2010a,b; Gradečak-Erdeljić and Milić 2011; Herrero Ruiz 2011; Littlemore 2015; Pauwels 1999). Littlemore gives the example of “restroom” for what we might baldly call a body-waste discarding facility. “Restroom” emphasizes the matter of having a rest from normal activities in the world, and draws the mind away from distasteful specifics. The word can be analyzed as involving a metonymy from resting to the full activity that takes place in a restroom (this is a sort of PART FOR WHOLE metonymy). Clearly, such euphemisms rely on a contrast of a certain sort between source and target. The contrast is as regards how immediately positive or negative the source and target are (cf. Littlemore 2015).

Another important special case of (de-)emphasis in metonymy is de-personalization, where the target is a person but attention is drawn away from personal qualities in general, or from the target’s particular personal qualities. This has been discussed by others, including Littlemore (2015), but the following discussion will contribute two elements: in this subsection, clarification of when and why de-personalization is negative; and in the next subsection, elucidation of a related phenomenon that I call *de-roling*. *Caveat*: in my use of the term, “de-personalization” is a neutral, technical term concerning any sort of de-emphasis of personal features, and does not imply that the speaker is necessarily adopting an unduly impersonal stance to the person in question.

De-personalization happens to varying degrees in Examples (3, 4, 5, 9, 10). In (9) and (10), the source is itself a person (the boss or the student’s monitor, respectively), so what is de-emphasized is the particular personal qualities of the target. But in (4, 5), the sources are not people, but instead a World Cup bid or inanimate

artefacts such as steam irons, so attention is, furthermore, drawn away from personal qualities in general, so that the de-personalization effect is stronger. Still strong but a little less so is (3), because here the source, a country, may be considered to include people in its very nature. In brief, many cases of de-personalization involve a thoroughly non-person source, and here the qualitative target/source contrast contributes to the de-personalization effect. Some sources can include people – so that the effect is somewhat weakened – or can even be people – so that the effect is yet weaker.

(5) arguably shows an important evaluative effect that de-personalizing metonymy can have. Warren (2006) claims the speaker has a mercenary attitude towards the people referred to. More generally, if Warren is right, we can say that those people are being demeaned – the speaker is not regarding them as rounded people in their own right, but only important insofar as they have contributed to the economy of the rented apartment.

But Warren's claim is not self-evidently correct, and perhaps the speaker holds no such mercenary attitude, or the hearer does not discern or adopt such an attitude. De-personalization is one pressure towards, but not a definitive cause of, a demeaning evaluation. I propose that a key extra feature that exerts further pressure towards such evaluation is information from discourse that suggests that the speaker *should* be regarding the target person(s) in a rounded, personal way. For instance, if (5) were uttered in a context in which the speaker was friendly with the roommates, then the metonymy would probably convey a demeaning attitude (or at least a humorous pretense of such an attitude). However, in (3, 4, 9, 10), there is no reason to expect the speaker to have, in the situation at hand, any attitude to the target people other than is attendant upon the role they serve towards the source, i.e. as players for England, assistant to a boss, etc. Hence, these examples do not come over as bearing a demeaning evaluation.

Thus, we see a new type of contrast that can be important in metonymy. The first type was the source/target contrast in cases of de-personalization. The new type is *a contrast between the attitudes (or lack of them) suggested by the speaker's choice of metonymic source and the attitudes the speaker is contextually expected to hold towards the target*. In the case of (5), when the speaker is or was friendly with, or should have been friendly with, the roommates, the contrast would be between the lack of friendly speaker-attitudes directly associated with the source and the expected friendly attitude of the speaker.

It should also be recognized that de-personalization can be positive. Littlemore (2015: 33) gives the following example of metonymy:⁵

5. The classification of the example as de-personalizing is my own, not Littlemore's.

(12) “Number 10 refused to comment”

and points out that the tradition and heritage associated with the address 10 Downing Street in London transfers, to some extent, to the particular people such as the UK Prime Minister who are based at that address.

But the phenomenon does not rely on the use of famous locations or particularly noteworthy personages. Consider:

(13) “The Daily Mirror believes it has solved the mystery [of the ‘Essex lion’], reporting that the creature was none other than a ginger cat named Tom”.⁶

Arguably, to say that “The Daily Mirror believes” causes importance and seriousness to be attached to the belief. Beliefs of random individuals should be treated with caution. In emphasizing the people’s role with regard to an important, unified entity, the newspaper, (13) gives the belief extra importance and suggests a unity of thought amongst the editors, owners, etc. of the newspaper.⁷

3.2 De-roling

In the de-personalizing cases we have been discussing, the target persons’ important roles in context (being a member of a World Cup bid team, being a provider of a steam iron, etc.) are nevertheless made prominent and are the bases of the metonymies. So at least the target people are being shown respect to that extent, even in cases where there is a demeaning attitude. However, I propose that the reason that some de-personalizing metonymy has a negative effect is an additional phenomenon of *de-roling*, where the source *de*-emphasizes the important relevant role of the target in context. De-roling can occur separately from de-personalization, but I will discuss it here as a supplement to de-personalization.

First, cases of dysphemism can be de-roling. Consider the mentions of crooked noses in the following:

(14a) “I finished school Friday ... but ms Mc Crooked nose said i have to come back until i actually walk across stage ... Yeah a bitch mad ...”.⁸

6. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19394219> (accessed on 11 August 2014).

7. Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 36) makes the point about importance, but not the point about unity of thought.

8. <https://twitter.com/Sum12mer>, accessed 21 August 2014.

- (14b) “The boy sprinted in front and spun around. ‘Take a good look, Inyenzi,’ he said. His nose veered crookedly to one side, giving his face an off-balance look. ... Six runners remained for the 800m final, including three of the four Kigali boys. Crooked Nose mouthed something to Jean Patrick that he didn’t catch. Jean Patrick looked him in the eye and laughed. Coach had instructed him to let Crooked Nose win the semifinal. It took every ounce of willpower, but he did it. Now came revenge”.⁹

Assuming that having a crooked nose is irrelevant to being a teacher or running races, the mentions of crooked noses in (14a,b) de-emphasize the significant role the person actually plays in the situation – i.e., the role of being a teacher or an important runner in the races. The de-roling amplifies to some extent the dysphemism – the negative, demeaning quality inherent in emphasizing a (potentially) negative feature of appearance.

However, a de-roling source need not be a negative feature of the target. Suppose (14b) had instead referred to one of the girl runners in the story as Pretty Nose:

- (15) “Pretty Nose mouthed something to Jean Patrick that he didn’t catch”.

We would still have de-roling and a consequent demeaning effect, even though having a pretty nose may itself be regarded positively by all concerned.

The demeaning-through-de-roling effect of Crooked Nose and Pretty Nose are arguably not very marked in (14b) and (15), because running a race is at least a physical activity, and noses are bodily features, albeit not related to running. However, suppose now (15) were about a female philosopher in a committee meeting. Here the metonymic source is entirely unrelated to the person’s role in the committee, greatly boosting the demeaning effect. A similar point applies to (14a).

Another example of de-roling is

- (16) “I don’t know what upstairs would think of that”. (Littlemore 2015: 75)

This was said by workers in a child nursery. The reference of “upstairs” is to the nursery managers, given that they have offices upstairs. Again, having an office upstairs contributes little if anything to a manager’s actual functions.

Consider now the metonymic use of the noun “suit” to mean a corporate manager, FBI agent, government official, etc. (see also Littlemore, 2015: 10, 154). Such people are stereotypically thought to be soberly dressed in suits when at work, and the “suit” metonymy is appropriate in contexts where other people are more informally dressed. For example:

9. On <http://www.runnersworld.com/rt-miscellaneous/running-rift-800m?page=single>, accessed 20 August 2014. It is an excerpt from the novel *Running the Rift: 800m* by Naomi Benaron.

- (17) “Funny this thread popped up. Today as I sat in Paradise Park with my [boy-friend] for ever just enjoying everything and relaxing, a bunch of suits walked into the planter right behind us pointing to the hidden fountains...pointing to the boxes in middle of planter...and one had a binder and in it was a map of Paradise Park with the colored sections”.¹⁰

The use of “suit” de-emphasizes the person’s salient role as some sort of official. Instead, the source chosen is something that is only an incidental, largely non-functional accompaniment to that role. The suits do not contribute to the role, other than through serving to convey the role and its status to onlookers. Thus, it is very different from saying something like “The FBI walked into the room” where the source explicitly emphasizes the relevant role of the person/people being referred to.

Because of the de-roling, it is plausible that the suit metonymy conveys negative affect such as a degree of ridicule. The speaker is refraining from according respect to the target person even with regard to their important role in the situation. There is a tinge of ridiculousness about focusing on a peripheral aspect of the people such as their clothing.

Nevertheless, “suit” can be metonymically used in situations where the wearing of a suit is indeed role-relevant. Consider

- (18) “A whole line of ‘young humourless suits’ walked into the theatre”.¹¹

Nearby, the document contains the following explanation:

Another factor that affects the quality of programming is the fact that the big networks are ... run by MBAs instead of people with creative credentials. ... [A]ctors and directors refer to these folks as ‘the suits’.

Plausibly, the actual suits, which are contextually implied to be conventional, conservative items of clothing, are regarded as symptomatic of the corporate executives’ lack of creativity. So the source item is indeed a relevant characteristic of the target, intimately tied up with the role the executives do play in the situation at hand. Thus, the negativity of the metonymy is not so much now from de-roling – through the choice of a role-*irrelevant* source – as from dysphemism consisting in emphasis on a *relevant* but negative characteristic of the people referred to.

In general, metonymy can involve some mix of dysphemism and de-roling depending on the intensity of role-relevance of the source and its degree of negativity in context. Littlemore (2015: 83) discussed the slang use of “stiff” to mean a corpse

10. <http://micechat.com/forums/disneyland-resort/136935-world-color-seating-chart-2.html>, accessed 21 August 2014.

11. <http://changingchannels.org/pages/articles/the-tv-business/corporate-suits.php>, accessed 29 July 2014.

as dysphemism. However, there is a case for saying that it is also negative because of de-roling. Stiffness is irrelevant to the person's roles as a recently-deceased member of a family and community. It would not have mattered to that role if the body had *not* been stiff.

Antonio Barcelona (p.c.) has suggested that one should consider whether extra complexity in the array of metonymic patterns is caused by the distinction implied by this chapter between (i) irrelevant properties such as "stiff" as a source, with negativity coming from the de-roling inherent in the *irrelevance*, and (ii) relevant properties such as "pea brain" as a dysphemistic source, with negativity coming from negative features of the way the source is *relevant* (namely, having a small brain supposedly causes one to be unintelligent). One could argue that while both metonymies conform to a pattern such as PROPERTY FOR ENTITY, it is useful to consider subpatterns such as, perhaps, IRRELEVANT PROPERTY FOR DE-ROLED ENTITY and RELEVANT NEGATIVE PROPERTY FOR DEVALUED ENTITY. But the alternative that this chapter advocates is to analyze the question of (ir)relevance as a contextually sensitive and graded pragmatic factor.¹²

The phenomenon of de-roling once again introduces a new type of contrast beyond source/target contrast. The new type is *a contrast as regards degree of relevance between the metonymic source chosen and the actually relevant role of the target*. In some cases, the relevant roles could have led to more appropriate sources, such as "the FBI" instead of "the suits" when referring to FBI agents.

3.3 Irony through de-roling and other means

De-roling can constitute a form of irony. Precisely because it would be normal to use a source item that was genuinely role-relevant in context, to use a role-irrelevant source item is tantamount to saying (ironically) that suits or being upstairs make a key contribution to what the FBI agents, managers or whatever actually do. An ironic contrast is drawn between the suits or being upstairs and genuinely key aspects of agents, managers, etc.

This type of irony is outside the interesting array of types of metonymy-related irony covered by Littlemore (2015). Those types of irony constitute further ways in which contrast operates in metonymy. I will now survey Littlemore's illustrations of irony. All of course involve contrast, but I attempt to go a little further by classifying the type of contrast involved. Page numbers are all implicit references to Littlemore (2015).¹³

12. Terms of a type similar to "pea brain" are analysed by Barcelona (2011) and Portero-Muñoz (this volume) in terms of metonymy and metaphor.

13. The explanations below of irony of the examples borrow heavily from Littlemore, but there may occasionally be differences of detail, or omissions of detail that she provides.

(19) “What those boys need is a good handbagging”.

(p. 12, 29; from Bank of English)

The handbagging refers metonymically to bossy women hitting people, notably men, with handbags. Plausibly there is an ironic contrast between the handbag and stereotypical instruments of violence, and between the idea of a man suffering a beating by a woman and the stereotypical idea of a man being physically superior to a woman. Thus, the irony and contrast lie *between the metonymic target scenario and normally expected scenarios*. This is different from the case of de-roling, where the contrast is between the source chosen and more role-relevant aspects of the target.

(20) “[She was] wearing Primark”.

(pp. 31–32)

This is hypothetical variant of an example found in the Bank of English: “If she had been wearing Dior and diamonds ...”. The producer name Dior is here being used metonymically to stand for clothes made by Dior, so we have an example of PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy. While this metonymic pattern can apply to any sort of producer or any sort of item, the particular template “wear + BRAND-NAME” is typically used with expensive, quality brands such as Dior. Thus, (20) could have an ironic effect, because Primark is a brand of low-cost, everyday clothing. The irony here again involves contrast between the metonymic target and something that would normally be expected. This sort of contrast arises also in:

(21a) “The artefact turned out to be a plastic Biro with the words ‘Barclays Bank’ down the side”.

(p. 32; from the Bank of English)

(21b) “No doubt the hand of God is directing her Biro as she writes the Gospel According to Eileen”.

(p. 32; from Bank of English)

Littlemore points to a (humorous or) ironic contrast between the product type, namely a cheap plastic pen, and more “serious” entities (as she puts it), such as God or the sort of things implied in context by the word “artefact”. In the case of (21b) I would say that the contrast is more exactly between the biro and the sort of writing implement one might hope that important religious documents are written with. This contrast is part of a more sweeping contrast between the type of document that Eileen is actually writing and the type of document that a God-directed Gospel would be.

(22) “That’s me all over isn’t it”. (p. 33; from the British National Corpus (BNC))

Such a statement could be made with a connotation of self-criticism, when something one has done is an illustration of a general trend in one’s behaviour. In the actual context of the example as given in the BNC, the speaker appears to be commenting critically on his having felt guilty about doing something even though he had permission to do it and therefore should not have felt guilty. The metonymy

is from “me” and to the speaker’s general behaviour. Any irony lies in how that behaviour contrasts with what one (or the speaker) would normally hope for, so again it is a metonymy-target/normal-expectation contrast.

As a further illustration, Littlemore (2015: 76) mentions the fact that pieces of music can contain short, adapted extracts of other pieces of music. She says the extracts amount to metonymic and often ironic shorthand references to the other music (or its style). So the metonymy is between the extract as source and the referenced piece or style as target. I presume that the ironic contrast is between that target and contextually appropriate forms of music. For instance, suppose a sad piece of music P contains a happy lilting tune taken from another, happy, piece Q. That tune then contrasts with the type of music that is appropriate to P – namely sad music. The allusion to Q or its style could then be perceived as ironic. Of course there is also a contrast between the happy tune and P itself, but arguably it is the contrast with sad music in general that is the important point for the irony.

Littlemore (2015: 88) discusses the claim by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that “pretty face” can be used metonymically to refer to a pretty-faced person (usually a woman). Littlemore presents evidence that the normal usage in English is in phraseology such as “she’s not just a pretty face”. The ironic element is presumably that stereotypically and prejudicially someone might take a pretty-faced woman not to be intelligent, etc. The ironic contrast is between the reality about the person mentioned and a stereotypical expectation (that some people might have) about pretty-faced people, so again we have a metonymy-target/normal-expectation contrast.

Littlemore (2015: 84–85) mentions the common usage of “our friends the” to connote that the things in question are in fact enemies or otherwise undesirable, as in saying “our friends the cockroaches”. Such usages can straightforwardly be regarded as irony (cf. “You’re a real friend”, said ironically to someone). But if Littlemore is right to say that, at the same time, a FRIENDS FOR ENEMIES metonymy is operative, then we have a case of ironic contrast between source and target of a metonymy.¹⁴

- (23) “Grrrrreen. Every Saab is green. Carbon emissions are neutral across the entire Saab range”. (p. 120)

This is from an advertisement discussed by Pérez Sobrino (2013). The advertisement shows a red car and arguably the “Grrrrreen” sounds like a roar. The redness and roaring suggest a high-performance type of car that may be thought by a fast-car aficionado to contrast with an environmentally friendly car. So there is a

14. Littlemore (2015) discusses other, non-ironic, cases of metonymy where there is a relationship of oppositeness between source and target. One is on page 82, where empty chairs round a table stand poignantly for people who used to occupy them. This involves an absence/(past-)presence contrast.

certain amount of irony targeting the attitudes of such aficionados. To the extent that the evocation of high-performance cars is a matter of metonymy, we again have a metonymic-target/normal-expectation contrast.

(24) “What are [the French army] doing in Mali?” (p. 85)

Littlemore analyses this as involving an EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy. She likens the example to the “What’s that fly doing in my soup?” joke opening, where the real question is about why on earth the fly is in the soup, rather than with the question of what observable actions the fly is taking (such as swimming around); and there is an implication that the fly should not be in the soup. So there is a metonymic jump from the actions the fly is literally “doing” to the cause of them. It is this cause that is the speaker’s actual interest. Similarly (24) can be taken to question the reasons for the French army being in Mali, with an implication that it should not be there. Those reasons (causes) are the metonymic target. So, there is a metonymic-target/normal-expectation contrast, in that the normal expectation is that the French army would not have reasons for being in Mali, or even that it would have strong reasons for not being in Mali.

However, Littlemore does not claim that this contrast is where the irony itself lies, which is instead a matter of both the literal reading of (24) (i.e., just asking neutrally what activities the army is engaged in) and the metonymic reading being possible in context. My own claim about what this amounts to is that the ironic contrast is between the two readings – or more precisely between the speaker being concerned about the source (the army’s actions) and the speaker being concerned about the target (the reasons for the actions). The speaker is ostensibly just asking neutrally about the actions, but is in fact critically asking about the reasons. This contrast between speaker-concerns about the source (the actions) and target (the reasons) is importantly different from the contrast between the source and target themselves.

(25) “It’s not rocket science” (p. 85)

This commonly used comment can serve to convey sarcastically that something is easy despite someone else (e.g. the addressee) finding it difficult. Littlemore suggests that there is a metonymy from something (rocket science) at the extreme end of the scale of things that are difficult to understand to a more central but still high part of the scale. The ironic contrast is then between that high part and the actual ease of the thing in question, so it is a metonymic-target/normal-expectation contrast.

In summary, metonymy relates in a variety of ways to irony, depending on the locus of the contrast. In de-roling, the contrast is between the target feature chosen as source and more role-relevant features that the target has. But another possibility is that it can be between the target and (normal expectations about the)

world context the target is embedded in (as in most examples above from (19) onwards). There can be ironic contrast between the metonymic source and target themselves (our friends the cockroaches). Finally, there can be contrast between being concerned about only the source and being concerned about the target (as in (24)). There may be further ways.

4. Transferred epithets

4.1 The phenomenon and its metonymic aspect

Some examples of transferred epithets are as follows:

(26) “Cozy exit ahead”.¹⁵

This is about an upcoming highway exit from which a Hampton Inn can be accessed. That hotel chain characterizes their hotels as “cozy”. Thus, the qualifier or epithet “cozy” is transferred grammatically to apply to the exit itself. But still, what is cozy is the hotel that you can reach via the exit, not the exit itself.

(27) “Tasty Thursdays is an entertainment series in the heart of Toronto that runs from mid July to late August. The event combines delicious food at great prices [from various restaurants] and free noon-hour concerts”.¹⁶

The transferred epithet here is in “Tasty Thursdays”. You cannot eat the Thursdays!

(28) “Talons in the petrified fur”.¹⁷

The owl’s talons have caught a prey animal such as a mouse. The animal, not the fur, is petrified in the sense of being very frightened.

(29) “Idle hill”.¹⁸

This concerns a hill on which someone has spent an idle time.

(30) “Female prison”.

(31) “Disabled toilet”.

15. Road sign seen by author on I-40 freeway in Oklahoma, USA, August 2011. The sign is visible on a Flickr page, http://www.flickr.com/photos/mr_quan_nguyen/1397325003/in/set-72157602053604078/. NB: “cozy” is the US alternative to British “cosy”.

16. <http://www.searchingtonto.com/tasty-thursdays>, accessed 11 August 2014.

17. In George MacBeth’s poem *Owl*.

18. From a Housman poem – see footnote 1.

Expression (30) is often used for a prison for female prisoners. When (31) is on a sign concerning a nearby toilet, it does not indicate that the toilet is itself disabled in any sense, but rather that the intended users are “disabled”.

Wang (2013)¹⁹ collects several definitions of transferred epithets, and adopts the following: “a figure of speech where a modifier (an adjective, the present and past participles, prepositional phrase, nouns or descriptive phrase) is transferred from the modified it should rightly modify to another which it should not modify or belong under the condition that the [modifier and modified] are closely associated”. I will follow this definition, but for simplicity I will mainly concentrate on adjective/noun, or possibly noun/noun, forms as in the examples above, as these appear to be the forms most commonly discussed.²⁰

Discussions of transferred epithets often relate them to metonymy. For example, Wang (2013) sketches a blending-based treatment of transferred epithets that is cast partly in terms of metonymy. Indeed, it is plausible that transferred epithets do involve metonymy. In “female prison” there is a metonymic jump from the idea of a prison to the idea of prisoners in a given prison. Similarly, in “cozy exit” there are a metonymic jump from the exit to the Hampton Inn, and in “Tasty Thursdays” from (some) Thursdays to food available then (actually one can see a metonymic chain here, from Thursdays to a certain type of event happening then, and from the events to a central feature, the food).²¹

But there is a significant difference here from the way metonymy normally works. Consider the metonymy in “British prisons play football”, when it means that teams of prisoners from British prisons play football. The teams are not only the target of the metonymy on “British prisons”, but also the referents of that noun phrase from the point of view of providing a subject for the verb “play”. But in “Female prisons are located mainly in the countryside”, even though the metonymy is from prisons (in general) to prisoners, and the referents of “prisons” are the prisoners, the referents of “female prisons” (from the point of view of providing a subject for “are located”) are the *prisons* themselves, not the prisoners. It is almost as if, after

19. This author, Xinmei Wang, is not to be confused with the Xin Wang mentioned in Example (10).

20. In “female prison” and “disabled toilet,” one could hold a debate about whether “female” and “disabled” are adjectives or nouns, given that they are frequently used as nouns. There is less pressure in the case of other examples above, even though for instance “the idle” is a possible non-elliptic noun phrase meaning idle people in general. But the issue is tangential to the present chapter.

21. A competing account is that the adjective is metonymic, not the noun. So the property of femaleness leads metonymically to some property that can apply to prisons. I believe this is ultimately a less satisfactory analysis, but will argue the case elsewhere. It would not fundamentally affect the contrast issues raised below.

taking the metonymic step from prisons-in-general to prisoners-in-general, and then selecting the female prisoners, there is a reverse metonymic step back from the female prisoners to female-containing prisons.

Clearly, other things being equal, a transferred epithet (in adjective/noun form) is the more striking the more that the adjective contrasts with the noun, i.e. the more the relevant domain of application of the adjective contrasts with the meaning of the noun. Wang (2013) analyses a transferred epithet example as achieving an artistic effect of “prominence” through contrast between adjective and noun.

In fact, Wang states that the literal meanings of the modifier and the modified must obviously conflict with each other. This is too simple. Many examples given of transferred epithets do not obey this restriction, or do so only partially or controversially; and furthermore it is not necessarily the literal meaning of the modifier that is operative in the transferred epithet in any case. A toilet can be literally disabled. The notion of petrification (biological material turning to stone in the ground) could apply literally to fur. But anyway the literal meaning of “petrified” is not the issue in the phrase “petrified fur”, but rather a conventional metaphorical meaning (being very frightened). We will discuss metaphorical uses of the modifiers below.

But contrast between adjective and noun is certainly a feature of many transferred epithets. In “tasty exit ahead” (also seen by the author on a freeway sign), it is highly implausible that a freeway exit could be literally tasty. Thus, there is very large contrast between adjective and noun (when literally interpreted). This is even more so in the case of “Tasty Thursday”. You could just about physically crouch down and lick the tarmac at an exit, but this is impossible with a Thursday. “Cozy exit ahead”, is less striking than “tasty exit ahead” in that a freeway exit could, conceivably, itself be (literally) cozy, in the way it is laid out, in having pleasant greenery, etc. And “Scenic exit” would work as a transferred epithet describing an exit leading to a scenic area, but an exit itself could be scenic. Thus, even when the intention is not to apply the adjective literally to the noun, the possibility of doing so in principle reduces the level of contrast.

A complication is that “scenic exit” could be interpreted as meaning that both the exit itself and the area that it leads to are “scenic” in the *same* sense of that word. In such a case a simpler analysis is to decline to take the noun phrase as a transferred epithet at all, and just take there to be a PART FOR WHOLE metonymy on “exit”, giving as target the exit plus the area that it leads to. Then, “scenic” just applies straightforwardly to the whole. But it is not clear that this alternative analysis would be natural for other examples, because it depends on being able naturally to regard the noun as designating a part of some relevant whole.

4.2 Metaphorical aspects of transferred epithets

We have seen that in “petrified fur” it is actually a conventional metaphorical meaning of “petrified” that applies to the implicit animal. And there seems to be no bar to non-conventional metaphorical meanings, or other sorts of non-literal meaning, to be used in this way. If someone has been metaphorically described as, say, “lemony” because of acidic things she has said, this non-conventional metaphor can then be used in the transferred epithet “lemony hill” if the person has been lemony on the hill. Nor is it just a question of metaphor. If someone is ironically described as “idle” when in fact she had a busy time on a hill, “idle hill” could be used as a transferred epithet relying on the contextually established ironic meaning.

But also, the adjective in a transferred epithet sometimes applies metaphorically to the noun as well as applying (literally or in some other way) to the noun’s metonymic target. Note that “tasty” and “cozy” have broad metaphorical application. One common metaphorical meaning of “tasty” is that the thing in question is very pleasurable or satisfying (a movie can be tasty in this sense), and a common metaphorical meaning of “cozy” is that the thing in question is very beneficial and security-providing (a job or personal relationship can be cozy in this sense). Such meanings, and also more novel metaphorical meanings of adjectives, could generate meanings for adjective-noun combinations that are alternatives to their meanings as transferred epithets. For example, a “tasty exit”, where the exit is still one off a highway, could merely be one that looks especially nice, and a “tasty Thursday” could *merely* be an especially pleasurable Thursday even when no food is involved. A “lemony” hill could be one that looks like a lemon, or gives one feelings of shocking refreshment, etc. I will use the term *direct metaphorical qualification* for an interpretation where a metaphorical meaning of the adjective is applied directly to the noun meaning (which may be of any sort, including metaphorical).

The link to this paper’s contrast theme is that typically there is considerable qualitative contrast between the source and target of a metaphor, and directly pairing two such qualitatively contrasting things can invite an attempt at metaphorical interpretation.

Sometimes we can even interpret an adjective/noun combination simultaneously as a transferred epithet and as a direct metaphorical qualification. “Tasty Thursdays” could be interpreted to say that the Thursdays in question are very pleasurable, in ways not necessarily connected to food, *as well as* being times at which tasty food may be had. Indeed, given that in Example (27) part of the attraction is free concerts, this double meaning is a plausible one. This does not mean that the two meanings are on a par with each other – arguably the message concerning the tasty food is the primary one, and is the primary reason for choosing the term “tasty”, whereas the other, directly metaphorical meaning is then just brought along for the ride.

Another case is (28). Here, it is plausible that the fur is petrified in the metaphorical sense of sticking up stiffly as well as the animal itself being very afraid. The fact that both the animal and the fur are petrified (in different senses, *both* metaphorical) where the state of the fur is the result of the fearful state of the animal gives an especially unified, rich interpretation.

Of course, a direct metaphorical qualification may not always be a plausible interpretation. The adjective “female” is used metaphorically to describe an object into which something else is snugly inserted, that something else being said to be “male”. This usage is standard in talking about connectors on electronic cables for example. But a “female prison” is in most contexts not felicitously regarded as a socket-like physical object into which things are snugly inserted (even prisoners).

5. Conclusions

Contrast is not normally singled out as a noteworthy issue in theories of metonymy, and indeed the main (if implicit) attention to it is, if anything, to minimize its importance by, for instance, claiming that metonymy works within domains rather than across domains. But this chapter lends weight to the contention that contrast is an important matter for theories of metonymy to address. Contrast is important in various aspects of metonymy in itself, and is also a useful dimension along which to analyse metonymy’s relationships to other figures, such as irony and metaphor. In this regard the chapter gives additional, detailed support to Herrero Ruiz’s use of contrast as a central theme around which to explore different figures. The contrast dimension is one of several (together with contiguity, similarity, link-survival degree, etc.) that define a multi-dimensional space into which various types of figuration can be located. While contrast is just dissimilarity and could be thought of as the negative portion of the similarity dimension, it is intuitively natural to consider it in its own right because elements of dissimilarity as well as elements of similarity can positively contribute to the meaning or pragmatic effect of a given utterance, metonymic or otherwise.

Contrast is not a simple dimension along which cases of figurative language can be graded, as there are several different types of contrast that can be important. Types that we have seen in this chapter as connected to metonymy are:

1. contrast between target and source, arising for instance in de-personalization and antonymic metonymy;
2. in negative cases of de-personalization, contrast between speaker-attitudes (or lack of them) associated with the chosen source and attitudes the speaker would be normally or contextually expected to have about the target;

3. in de-roling, contrast between the role-irrelevance of the chosen source and the greater relevance of other features of the target (which in some cases could serve as more appropriate metonymic sources for the target);
4. contrast between the chosen target and more appropriate targets that would have arisen in other circumstances (the Primark/Dior type of case, in (20));
5. and contrast between being concerned about the source and being concerned about the target (24).

We saw in particular how various types of contrast can operate to provide various types of irony.

The phenomenon of de-roling is an important way in which metonymy can connote negative evaluations, in addition to the ways covered by Littlemore (2015) and others. It often accompanies de-personalization, though it is a logically separate phenomenon.

Contrast can play an especially complex role in transferred epithets. Not only can contrast phenomena attend the metonymic link in a transferred epithet just as with any other metonymy, but also the close combination of a modifier and modified that strongly contrast with each other creates especially striking effects. In addition, the contrast can be an important aspect of an additional channel of meaning, namely the simultaneous metaphorical application of the modifier to the modified.

Finally, I comment on the relationship to the metonymy database discussed by Barcelona (this volume), Blanco-Carrión (this volume) and Hernández-Gomariz (this volume). Matters of (similarity and) contrast could at least be mentioned in the additional-remarks parts of various fields, for instance in Fields 1 and 4 because of their concern with what types of things the targets and sources are; and there may be a case for having the Field 1 and 4 instructions specifically refer to contrast, or to have a separate field concerned with contrast. Attitudinal and affective matters could be mentioned in the additional-remarks part of Field 7, because of its concern with what aspects of language are engaged by the metonymy in question. In the case of a transferred epithet, there is a case for additional remarks to be made in Field 7 because of its concern with grammar, in Field 8 because of its concern with triggers, and Field 11 because of its concern with interactions with metaphor. On the grammatical side, special mention in Field 7 should probably be made of the fact that in a transferred epithet such as “cozy exit” the target of the referential metonymy (namely, the hotel, etc., with the exit as source) does not equal the reference of the whole expression (which is the exit itself); in short, stating that a metonymy is referential is at best half of a grammatical story to be told. A more sweeping issue raised is that the instructions to users of the database entry model may need to guide them in a particular way into taking coordinated actions on various fields,

in the case of certain types of metonymy. Thus, in the case of a transferred epithet a user may need to be guided to be sure to take appropriate actions on Fields 7, 8 and 11, for example.

Acknowledgments

The research in this chapter was supported in part by Research Project Grant F/00 094/BE from the Leverhulme Trust in the UK.

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