

Uniting Irony, Hyperbole and Metaphor in an Affect-Centred, Pretence-Based Framework

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Abstract

This article makes steps towards a detailed cognitive processing model of irony, hyperbole and metaphor. The intent is not just to deal with irony, hyperbole and metaphor in a consistent way, but also to deal with intimate combinations of these types of figurative language. The model is being developed by uniting some existing models: the author's own, ATT-Meta model of metaphor, his separate, recently developing model of irony, and the hyperbole model of Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza. The irony and metaphor models are overtly of the "pretence" based style that various authors have followed. The hyperbole model can also be regarded as being in this style. The melding of the models proceeds largely by extending, into the models of hyperbole and irony, a certain major provision in the metaphor model. This is a provision for the transformation and exportation of aspects of pretended scenarios into the actual situations being addressed by the speaker. Another salient feature of the overall model is its strong affect-centredness. The model does not only pay much attention to the affective (i.e., evaluative or emotional) connotations of hyperbole, irony and metaphor. It goes yet further by often giving affect the *driving* role in deriving a contrasting value in irony (e.g., the degree of badness of the weather conveyed by an ironic "Sure, great weather!") or a scaled-down value in hyperbole (the actual rough weight of the suitcase in a hyperbolic "*This suitcase weighs a ton!*"). This approach was partly inspired by Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza's work, and opposes the traditional assumption that the central issue in irony and hyperbole is the derivation of such contrasting and scaled-down values by means separate from the affective connotations.

Keywords

Irony, hyperbole, metaphor, pretence, cognitive processing, affective processing.

1 Introduction

This article works towards a combined cognitive processing model of irony, hyperbole and metaphor within a pretence framework. According to such a framework, the speaker is non-deceptively pretending something. For instance, with an ironic “*Sure, such great weather*” she is pretending to be someone who believes that the weather is great; with a hyperbolic “*This suitcase weighs a ton*” she is pretending the suitcase weighs a ton and that’s why it’s frustratingly difficult to lift; with a metaphoric “*John’s exam marking overflowed into the weekend*” she is pretending among other things that the marking is a liquid (or something else that can physically flow, such as loose powder). Various authors (see below) have proposed pretence approaches for irony and metaphor, over many years now, and recently there has been a pretence proposal for hyperbole as well. However, pretence been applied to the three types of figuration largely separately, and not using detailed mechanisms that are consistent across all three. My aim is instead to cope with all three completely consistently, and furthermore to handle combinations of them (hyperbole-with-metaphor, hyperbole-with-irony, metaphor-with-irony, or all three together). Combinations have been much discussed at a high theoretical level and addressed to an extent in psychological and corpus-based work, but the detailed processing involved has only been addressed sketchily.

As for further, related types of figurative language such as understatement and oxymoron, I consign them to further development of the approach here. On the other hand, the remaining main type of figurative language in current research—namely metonymy—would not appear to *benefit* strongly from a pretence framework (though see Fauconnier 2009 on handling metonymy in “blending” theory, noting that that theory’s blend spaces can be seen as pretended scenarios in the sense of this article). Nevertheless, it will be important in the future to add a treatment of metonymy that somehow fits smoothly with this article’s approach.

Hyperbole is often present in irony and metaphor (Athanasiadou 2017, Brdar-Szabó & Brdar 2010, Burgers, Konijn & Stein 2016, Carston & Wearing 2015, Claridge 2011, Colston & Keller 1998, Dynel 2016, Kreuz & Roberts 1995, McCarthy & Carter 2004, Musolff 2017, Norrick 2004, Peña &

Ruiz de Mendoza 2017, Popa-Wyatt [this volume], Sperber & Wilson 1995). Indeed, irony tends to be exemplified in research papers by ironic sentences that have hyperbolic qualities. For example, as a reaction to a claim that someone is “*clever*,” ironic responses such as hyperbolic “*Yeah, he’s a genius*” are likely to be considered rather than non-hyperbolic counterparts like “*Yeah, he’s a clever person*.” The word “*genius*” ridicules not what was actually claimed but an exaggeration of it. By this means it heightens the ridicule, in a way to be explicated below. In saying metaphorically that someone is an “*angel*” the speaker is likely not to be attributing a degree of goodness, protectiveness, helpfulness, etc. as high as a traditional angel’s, so the statement is a hyperbolic metaphor, not just a metaphor.

The combination of irony and metaphor or simile (Camp 2006, Dynel 2016, Grice 1989, Katz & Lee 1993, Popa 2009, Popa-Wyatt 2017, Musolff 2017, Ritchie 2006, Stern 2000, Veale 2012) is illustrated by “*Yeah, he’s just a sloth*” used to praise an energetic person, using a stereotype of sloths as being non-energetic.

My strategy is to meld three previously separate accounts, one each for metaphor, irony and hyperbole. These are: an existing pretence-based account of metaphor understanding that I have developed (and called *ATT-Meta*: Barnden 2001, 2006a,b, 2015a, 2016, Barnden & Lee 2002; with “ATT” deriving from “attitudes”); an account of ironic pretence that I have also been developing but much more recently (Barnden 2017; to be called *ATT-Iro* here); and a recent account of hyperbole by others (Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza 2017; see also Ruiz de Mendoza 2014, 2017) . This last account can be described as pretence-based with respect to the light notion of “pretence” used in this article.

The three models all involve *correspondences (mappings)* between aspects of a pretence and aspects of the actual situation the speaker is talking about. In all three models, such correspondences support the ability to *export (or transfer)* some aspects of the pretended scenario to apply, though in possibly changed forms, to the real situation. The melding of the three models is mainly a straightforward matter of extending certain export provisions of *ATT-Meta* (the metaphor model) to hyperbolic pretence and ironic pretence. The only significant change needed is to introduce a comprehensive sort

of *potential attenuation* of the degrees to which circumstances apply in the pretence—such as the suitcase-lifter’s degree of frustration in the pretence—when they are exported to become degrees of holding of corresponding circumstances in reality—such as the lifter’s real degree of frustration. I argue that this attenuation not only serves hyperbole well but also works for irony and metaphor across the board.

Our reaching towards a consistent, combined model parallels the aim of Peña and Ruiz de Mendoza (2017), who take steps towards consistently bringing together the processing of various forms of figurative language, including irony, hyperbole and metaphor. Indeed, there are specific similarities in the efforts; for instance, the export provision in our approach is paralleled in their work by an Extended Invariance Hypothesis originally proposed largely for metaphor, and they suggest extending this to hyperbole and irony. However, there are major differences, including our more detailed and constrained approach to mappings and our addition of a focus on how degrees (see above) are managed.

A major, long-standing concern in research on irony, hyperbole and metaphor has been the *affective* connotations that these phenomena have. An ironic “*Sure, great weather*” in response to someone, Alan, who thinks the weather is good, may come with considerable criticism, mockery, ridicule, etc. of Alan, although there are other, milder possibilities. (For a variety of work on attitudes in irony, see Colston 1997, Colston & Keller 1998, Gibbs [2000] 2007, Kumon-Nakamura *et al.* [1995] 2007, Sperber & Wilson 1995, and Watling [this volume]) I will refer generically to negative attitudes by the term *criticism* for brevity. Importantly, as Dynel (2018) argues, there is some criticism even in “positive” (or “praising”) irony, as when someone says “*Sure, she’s [or: you’re] totally stupid*” of a very clever person P, in reaction to a claim that she’s stupid by a claimant C. The irony is certainly praising P, but is of course still at least mildly criticizing the claimant C for being misguided. This holds even when P and C are one and the same.

As for hyperbole, an utterance of “*This suitcase weighs a ton*” is arguably not just communicating the exceptional weight of the suitcase but also, say, frustration at the difficulty of manipulating it. (See

Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza 2017 on this example. For other types of affect in hyperbole, see Brdar-Szabó & Brdar 2010, Carston & Wearing 2015, Colston & Keller 1998, McCarthy & Carter 2004, Musolff 2017, Ruiz de Mendoza 2017.) Finally, in metaphor, affective connotations are often important (Deignan 2008, Eubanks 2005, Fainsilber & Ortony 1987, Hampe 2005, Littlemore & Low 2006, McMullen & Conway 2002, Musolff 2004, Schön, 1993, Vervaeke & Kennedy 2004). For instance, saying metaphorically that someone is Hitler is likely to communicate strong negative affect about the person.

Hence, much of this article is centred on affect. In fact, the article makes the centrality even more intense by giving affect a driving role in the derivation of types of meaning that are normally assumed to arise by other means. Examples are the derivation of a contrasting value in irony (e.g., the degree of badness of the weather conveyed by an ironic “*Sure, great weather!*”) or a scaled-down value in hyperbole (the actual rough weight of the suitcase in a hyperbolic “*This suitcase weighs a ton!*”). Such contrasting and scaled-down values are almost always assumed to be derived by some process that is not itself dependent on considerations of affect, and indeed the affective connotations are partly dependent on what the contrasting and scale-down values are. Thus, the approach in this article, which owes some of its inspiration to the involvement of affect in the work of Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017) turns some usual assumptions on their head.

The article cannot give anything like a full account of what either the speaker or hearer does in using figurative language. The model concentrates on the detailed structure and manipulation of possible pretences and how information about the real situation can be extracted by the hearer, but does not offer mechanisms whereby the hearer can use intonation, facial expressions, wording etc. as clues to ironic effect, or can conjecture that an utterance is hyperbolic or metaphorical. The model is therefore only a highly incomplete one when compared to the whole landscape of irony, hyperbole and metaphor.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the ATT-Iro irony model, largely following but slightly updating the model in Barnden (2017). Section 3 outlines the Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza

(2017) model of hyperbole, proposes significant modifications, and unites the result with ATT-Iro. Section 4 outlines some relevant aspects of the ATT-Meta metaphor model. Section 5 melds that model with the approach to irony and hyperbole resulting from Section 3, and culminates in making a start on the question of irony/metaphor combinations. Section 6 concludes.

A presentation-simplifying assumption that I make throughout is that the ironic, metaphorical and hyperbolic sentences considered are all uttered about real-world situations, rather than being embedded in stories, jokes, accounts of what some third party believes, etc. This follows common practice in most writing on figurative language. However, the treatments below are appropriate for coping with such embedding. That this is so will hopefully seem plausible to the reader but will need to be substantiated in detail in further work.

2 ATT-Iro: The Existing Model of (Possibly Hyperbolic) Irony

This section outlines and updates the irony model presented in Barnden (2017), with significant changes to some of the fine detail. The model covers various alternative purposes of verbal irony, and notably that of (a) criticizing someone who seems to have an incorrect belief about a situation, or instead that of merely (b) expressing disappointment that a situation has not measured up to what the speaker hoped for. This article will concentrate on purpose (a) for brevity and will refer to it as *critical irony*. The article will not explicitly deal with positive irony (irony that praises, expresses gladness, etc.) but the approach extends straightforwardly to it.

Cutting across the distinction between (a) and (b) is the dimension of hyperbole. Although, as hinted in the Introduction, non-hyperbolic cases of irony may be less typical and idiomatic than hyperbolic ones, we will start with a non-hyperbolic example in order to separate certain issues from each other. When we get to hyperbole, we will illustrate both *scalar* hyperbole (e.g., using “great weather” instead of “good weather” in an irony) and *fictively-elaborating* hyperbole. The term “fictively

elaborating” was introduced in Barnden (2017) and covers cases where invented qualitative details are added by the speaker, as in ironically saying that “*Sure, such good weather, what with the hot sun and balmy breeze*” in criticizing someone who has claimed that the weather is good but who has *not* claimed that the sun is hot or that there’s a balmy breeze. Many examples of this phenomenon have appeared in the literature (Athanasiadou 2017, Herrero Ruiz 2009, Kapogianni 2017, McCarthy & Carter 2004, Musolff 2017), even if not necessarily singled out and dwelt upon, and there are extreme examples of the phenomenon in the form of lengthy satires, but the phenomenon deserves much more detailed analytic attention than it has been given.

Pretence is the basis of one of the main approaches to irony. (For versions and discussion of the approach see Clark & Gerrig [1995] 2007, Currie 2006, 2010, Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg & Brown [1995] 2007, Popa-Wyatt 2014, See also Coulson 2005, Kihara 2005, and see Tobin & Israel 2012 for a similar approach based on mental spaces.) When Beth ironically says “*Sure, it’s great weather*” in response to someone, Alan, who seems to think the weather is good when it should be evident to him that the weather is bad, she is *only pretending* to be someone who claims and thinks that the weather is great. The various pretence accounts differ significantly in regard to what is pretended and also with regard to what pretence itself amounts to. The latter consideration is especially significant when the approach is compared and contrasted to others such as echoing-based approaches (Wilson 2006, Wilson & Sperber 2012, Ruiz de Mendoza 2017; for further comparison of the approaches, see also papers cited above on the pretence approach). Across all pretence approaches, however, the pretence is not of the deceptive sort as when someone pretends to be a police officer in order to kidnap someone. Rather, the hearer is meant to realize that the ironic speaker does not believe what she appears to be saying, much as when a joker pretends to be telling a real story or an actor is pretending to be a character in a play.

And indeed, pretending can be thought of as putting on an act or *[micro-]drama*. ATT-Iro develops an ironic-pretence-as-drama approach, loosely following previous suggestions in the field: Clark & Gerrig ([1984] 2007) talk of the ironist acting a role, and see Carston & Wearing (2015) and Popa-Wyatt (2014) for further references and commentary. The dramatic worlds in the present article are

reminiscent of the contexts in the pretence-based approach of Récanati (2007: 224–226) but serve a different purpose. However, ATT-Iro develops the pretence-as-drama idea in a more thorough-going and consistent way than previously.

Notice that neither the idea of pretence in general nor of acting in particular requires speakers to exhibit the same tone of voice or overall behaviour that people who were sincerely uttering the sentence would. A speaker can do things like put on a special facial expression or tone of voice to signal irony, much as actors on stage can make sidelong glances at the audience or make verbal asides to the audience to poke fun at dramatic scenarios. In fact I will shortly propose that an ironic speaker's sentence is often if not typically like an aside.

A theory of irony couched in terms of drama does not require the speaker or hearer themselves to be thinking about the communication in terms of drama. The drama view is just a heuristic for use by us as theoreticians.

2.1 Critical irony: A Non-Hyperbolic Example

Consider the following conversation segment, when the weather is bad. Moreover, Beth thinks that Alan should have noticed that the weather is bad, and so she engages in critical irony:

(1)

Alan: *"It's good weather today."*

Beth: *"Yeah, good weather."*

Beth may, but need not, say this with a sarcastic tone, or while rolling her eyes, and so forth.

ATT-Iro casts Beth's momentary pretending as her being engaged in acting a dramatic character who thinks that the weather is good. This character is part of a (micro) drama. See Figure 1, which depicts the drama and its relation to the real world as far as Beth is concerned. In the world of the drama, the weather is bad, just as it is in the real world according to Beth. The acted character is one that corresponds to Alan, and we might intuitively say that the drama therefore features Alan. But, to keep

the distinction between the dramatic character and the real-life person clear, I will give the dramatic character a different name in explaining what is going on. In Alan's case I will use "Palan," short for "Pretend-Alan."

A variant, slightly more complex treatment could have it that the acted character is not meant to be a depiction of Alan, but just of someone or other who believes that the weather is good, though still we have some weaker notion of correspondence to or similarity to Alan. The rest of this article could go through on this basis, but there does not seem to be any pressing reason to adopt it.

Note also that, in the type of example under consideration, where Beth is not commenting on anything to do with herself, she Beth does not place herself as *a character in the drama*. She is merely the actor of the Palan character. (Barnden 2017 gives examples of cases where Beth herself does appear in the drama as a character Peth, while also acting some character, which in some circumstances is Peth but in others is a different character such as Palan.) There is no need for Beth to include herself in the drama as someone, a character Peth, who endorses Palan's views—there's no need for the drama to contain two characters with the same view. Rather, the drama is presented to the intended "audience" (Alan) for contemplation, with an implied criticism by Beth (the real person) of the character Palan.

Another caveat is that the words Beth utters are not always or even typically to be considered as words uttered by the acted character to some other character in the drama. Instead, they are often if not typically best thought of as asides to the audience. The words show what propositions, etc. are being *mentally* entertained by the acted character, not what the character is saying to other characters. This point is important in view of the common phenomenon of ironic statements being uttered with special intonation etc. or starting with expressions such as "Yeah" or "Great". But the point gains added importance in a variant case such as where Alan has claimed to be clever and Beth says, "Yeah, sure, you're a genius." In the drama, it is not that Palan is addressing a character (himself?) and telling him he is a genius. Rather, "you're a genius" tells Alan, who is the "audience" of the drama that the proposition being ascribed to Palan is that he Alan (in the guise of Palan) is a genius. So Palan thinks he himself is a genius. It is a drama where the only (or main) audience member is depicted as a

character in the drama, so an aside to the audience can be effectively about that character even though not addressed within the drama to that character.¹

A final caveat is that the ironic utterance in (1) only explicitly specifies what Palan thinks, and does not specify the nature of the drama's world (= world of the drama). This implicitness is akin to what happens when an actor is improvising away from any stage, for instance in an acting workshop, or when a radio drama is conveyed entirely by the characters' utterances.

*** FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 1: A drama set-up for the speaker's (i.e. Beth's) view of irony example (1).²

Beth is implicitly criticizing Palan for having *failed to notice* that the weather is bad. By failure to notice I do not mean merely not-noticing, but rather not-noticing-something-one-should-have-noticed. The reason that, in the first place, Beth does insert a failure to notice into the drama, and criticizes Palan for it, is that she feels critical of Alan for this in the real world. So in constructing the drama setup, she first *imports* the Alan failure and her criticism of him into the drama. Note carefully here the difference between what Beth as speaker does and what a hearer needs to do. A hearer (whether Alan or an overhearer) might not know in advance of the utterance that Beth is critical of Alan, so has to somehow work this out from the utterance. But, of course, Beth herself is making her ironic utterance precisely because she already is critical—she doesn't have to work this out from inspecting her own drama! Rather, she inserts criticism into the drama as she constructs it in her mind³, based on her real-world critical stance towards Alan. Figure 1 shows reality and its relationship to the drama from Beth's point of view.

¹ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising the need to discuss this type of example.

² The label "drama's world" in this and other Figures should not be regarded as reflecting a use (or at least, not regarded as reflecting a conscious use) of the concept of drama within the speaker or hearer's own mind. The drama's world is depicted by the large oval on the left. It includes an inner oval depicting Palan. A person-oval such as this includes wording showing some of the person's mental contents, or alternatively, what the world is like according to them. (The diagram shows affect import as opposed to the export shown in comparable diagrams in Barnden, 2017. The latter's export links depicted what the speaker expected the hearer to do, whereas the present diagram shows only what the speaker does. The matter of export is shown in succeeding Figures, which are from the hearer's point of view.)

³ Such construction is not necessarily conscious. This article does not try to separate conscious from unconscious acts in the course of producing or understanding figurative language, and thus follows a general trend of work in the field, for good or ill.

Of course, Alan has a different perception of the weather in reality, so from his point of view the setup is captured by Figure 2, if he manages accurately to conjecture what Beth is doing. This Figure shows Alan's reality and Beth's reality (as construed by Alan) as different spaces. In Alan's reality space, the weather is good; in Beth's it isn't. At some point, Alan *may* (or may not) become persuaded by Beth's view of things, but for the moment at least he still believes that the weather is good.

*** FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 2: The drama setup, from Alan the hearer's point of view, for irony example (1).⁴

The model proposes a particular course of events on Alan's side, on the assumption that he first realizes that (or is at least exploring the possibility that) Beth is engaging in irony that is critical of him. He might assume (or explore) the ironic possibility because of clues such as: the mere fact that what Beth says echoes what he himself claimed; her tone of voice, which may be dry or sarcastic; her facial expression; her use of "*Yeah*"; her prior established nature as a sarcastic person; etc.

Furthermore, let us assume that Alan presumes that, if Beth is being critical of him, her criticism is indeed prompted by the claim he has just made that the weather is good (not by someone else's claim, for instance). The model does not yet cover mechanisms for these acts of realization or presumption. It has been aimed at what happens after this point.

Given those assumptions, Alan entertains the idea there is a drama in which he features, as a character we are calling Palan, and where Beth is criticizing *Palan* for thinking that the weather is good. Since Palan is being criticized for believing the weather to be good, it is reasonable for Alan to infer that, within the drama, the weather is bad but that Palan has failed to notice this (otherwise it would be strange for Beth to be criticizing him). Alan now *exports* the criticism of Palan in the drama to become criticism that applies now to Alan within (his construal of) Beth's real world. See the export arrow in Figure 2. Hence, Alan now infers that Beth is criticizing *him*, the real Alan, for failing to notice bad weather. From this he infers that, in Beth's world, the weather is bad and he, Alan, has

⁴ The affect export is a mental action by Alan (not an action by Beth as considered by Alan) aimed at conjecturing Beth's attitude to Alan. The criticism arrows show criticism that Alan conjectures that Beth feels.

failed to notice this. The export of the criticism is analogous to the fact that when a staged drama leads us to feel critical of a character in it, we tend to feel critical also of comparable or corresponding people in the real world.⁵

A drama's world can be arbitrarily much like the real world, or arbitrarily much unlike it. In the current example it is identical to it, apart from Alan being replaced by Palan, but this is a very special case. Differences can arise in other circumstances, including hyperbolic irony, to which we now turn.

2.2 Critical irony: A Hyperbolic Case

Consider now:

(2)

Alan: *"It's good weather today."*

Beth: *"Sure, such great weather, what with singing birds, warm sun and balmy breeze!"*

The drama setup is essentially the same as before, except that Palan now believes that the weather is "great" rather than just "good" and furthermore involves singing birds, warm sun and a balmy breeze. (This example is inspired by an overstatement example in Herrero Ruiz 2009 and work on elaborated pretences in Currie 2006.) See Figure 3. Thus, the contrast of Palan's belief with the weather in the surrounding drama's world is greater than before, so he merits more criticism than before.

*** FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 3: A drama setup (from Alan the hearer's point of view) for hyperbolic-irony example (2).⁶

⁵ In detailing this process of understanding, I've considered the hearer to be the addressee Alan, not some other hearer. The process another hearer would go through would be similar, except that he may not have any prior views about what the weather is like. The distinction between what such overhearers versus addressees do is nevertheless very important in irony, or indeed in language understanding in general, and is insufficiently attended to in the field, in my view.

⁶ The words "more" and "worse" are used in labels in the diagram to suggest that Alan is conjecturing levels of criticism, contrast and weather badness greater than in the example of Figure 2: the words should not be read as depicting a use by Alan of comparative terms in his own thinking.

The example involves both scalar hyperbole in virtue of the “*great*” (as opposed to “*good*”) and fictive-elaborating hyperbole in virtue of the singing birds, etc. The latter additional elements are not things that Beth thinks that Alan actually believes in. They’re entirely imaginary extras on her part. Barnden (2017) gives various examples from real discourse that contain fictively elaborating hyperbole. We combine scalar and fictive-elaborating hyperbole in one example here for brevity, but they can be treated separately but otherwise on the same lines as below.

Given that only Palan, and not Alan himself, is claimed to believe that the weather is *great* and to have those fictive extras, there is a need for the strength of exported criticism to be *potentially attenuated*, as shown in the Figure. The level of criticism that Beth feels and intends to convey, and the level that Alan understands she feels, may be higher than in the original example in section 2.1, but this does not mean it is as high as it would have been had Alan actually said “*great weather, what with singing birds, ...*”

This point is similar to one we will make below at greater length as regards a non-ironic hyperbolic sentence such as “*This suitcase weighs a ton.*” The frustration the speaker of this sentence intends to convey may be greater than if she had just given a reasonable estimate of the suitcase’s great weight, but this does not mean it is as high as it would have been had the suitcase really weighed a ton. Now, the hearer cannot necessarily come to a specific idea about how frustrated she is, so all we can say in general is that the hearer understands a level or (possibly wide) range of levels that is somewhere between high and the level suitable for a suitcase that weighs a ton.

Similarly, in our irony example, we will assume that Alan understands a level or range of levels of criticism to apply to him that is between what would be appropriate to direct at someone who thought merely that the weather was good and a level that would be appropriate for someone who thinks the weather is great and involves singing birds, etc. It could be as high as the latter level but need not be.

It is also possible that he perceives intensification of criticism if Beth has a sharper tone of voice, rolls her eyes more, etc., but it is important to account for the fact that the hyperbole by itself can provide

the potential intensification, while simultaneously allowing freedom to Alan, using whatever evidence he finds appropriate, to conjecture a level or range of levels of criticism.

2.3 Critical Irony with Another Type of Fictively Elaborating Hyperbole

Other types of fictively-elaborating hyperbole in critical irony arise not from exaggerating and elaborating the goodness of the weather in Palan's view, but rather (A) introducing a yet more criticizable relationship than failure-to-notice between Palan and the rest of the drama's world and/or (B) exaggerating the badness of the weather in the drama's world and/or (C) being fictively elaborative in detailing imaginary effects of the bad weather. All three arise in the following interchange:

(3)

Alan: "*Good day for a picnic.*"

Beth : "*Sure, it's fun to sit in the pouring rain eating soggy sandwiches!*"

See Figure 4 (where we continue to assume that Alan does correctly perceive what Beth is pretending). Palan here is not being criticized for failing to notice the bad weather and its effects on the sandwiches but, on the contrary, for noticing these things and yet, bizarrely or ridiculously, finding them *fun*. This illustrates (A). (For other examples of absurdity introduced into irony, see especially Kapogianni 2011.) We get (B) if the bad weather in Beth's view doesn't actually go so far as to involve pouring rain. We get (C) if the soggy sandwiches are an invented detail included to heap more ridicule on Palan and therefore (potentially) onto Alan himself. The bizarre and ridiculous elements in the drama further intensify Beth's criticism of Palan and hence, at least potentially of Alan.

*** FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 4: A drama setup for hyperbolic-irony example (3).⁷

⁷ In that the drama's world, Palan is sitting in the rain eating soggy sandwiches, but this is not shown in the diagram for reasons of space.

2.4 Just How Bad is Beth's Weather? — Affect-Drivenness

I will assume that hyperbole as above, whether as in section 2.2 or section 2.3, and whether of the scalar or fictively-elaborating type, has the effect of (i) intensifying the badness of the weather that Alan takes Beth to believe, as opposed to just (ii) intensifying the criticism he perceives Beth to be making of him. That effect (i) happens appears to be a general assumption across discussions of irony. But just how does the hyperbole achieve (i)?

It is tempting, and common, to think that intensification as in (i) arises from the use of some sort of opposition operator (see for instance Athanasiadou 2017, for discussion), and indeed this notion is easily prompted by the common description of irony as a matter of the speaker saying the opposite of what she wishes to convey. According to this idea, the intensification arises because an opposition operator flips positive scale points to negative points (or vice versa) in a systematic way, so that for instance *good* is mapped to *bad*, *great* is mapped to some worse point such as *very bad*, *wonderful* is mapped to something like *terrible*, and so forth (where these italicized terms denote internal meanings for the corresponding English words). However, while this might superficially sound plausible, there is difficulty in providing a principled basis for such an operator. For example, what does “*wonderful*” mean, and why should that meaning map to the meaning of “*terrible*” rather than the meaning of “*nasty*”, say? In fact, many researchers recognize that on the one hand there's often/usually no well-defined opposite for a given value, but that on the other hand if we depart from oppositeness then we have the problem of what more loosely contrasting values to consider (Burgers & Steen 2017, Colston 2017, Partington 2007).

ATT-Iro has the virtue of removing the necessity for such an opposition operator, or indeed any operator that purports to convert scale values systematically. It provides instead for (i) in an *affect-driven* way, namely that (i) is a *side-effect* of (ii). All that we required above about good and bad was that Alan presume that, if it's wrong to think something (e.g., the weather) is good, then that something is bad *to some extent*. But this does not require any systematic mapping of specific scale points to opposite, specific scale points. Rather, effect (i) drops out naturally from the way degrees of

(e.g.) criticism arise and are exported. We saw that using “*great*” rather than “*good*” naturally intensifies the criticism of Palan, because it’s all the more ridiculous that Palan should think the bad weather to be great than to think that it should merely be good. This intensified criticism is exported by Alan to become (potentially) intensified criticism of Alan himself. Recall here that criticism is potentially attenuated, where the extent of attenuation, if any, depends on many factors that Alan might bring to bear. Hence, there is a tendency (but merely a tendency) for stronger criticism of Plan to suggest stronger criticism of Alan. If Alan does infer intensified criticism in the hyperbolic case, he then infers a bigger contrast between his own belief about the weather and Beth’s belief than he does in the non-hyperbolic case—bigger criticism means presumably that there must be a bigger contrast. This implies he takes the weather to be worse in Beth’s view than he does in the non-hyperbolic case. The more extreme the hyperbole, whether through words like “*great*” or through fictive elaborations, the bigger the criticism he tends to perceive, and so the worse he tends to assume the weather-according-to-Beth is, other things being equal. Where these various points are on the weather badness scale cannot, and indeed should not, be provided by a theory of irony or hyperbole as such, but depends on the particular discourse context, including other clues that Beth might give about how bad she thinks the weather is.

Note that by this argument the weather badness will also have a tendency to be intensified if Beth just seems more critical because of a more marked sarcastic tone, eye-rolling, etc., irrespective of any hyperbolic wording. This intuitively seems to be a reasonable prediction of the theory, and renders the indirect, weather-badness intensification effect as a seamless combination of hyperbolic wording and other signals such as intonation, etc.

3 A Hyperbole Model, Some Modifications, and Melding with ATT-Iro

3.1 *The Model (PRM)*

Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017: Fig.1 and preceding text) present a model of hyperbole,⁸ which I will here call the PRM model. They do so largely by means of the following example:

(4) “*This suitcase weighs a ton.*”

The suitcase is one that the speaker herself (let’s say Beth) is trying to lift and carry. Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza seek to explain not only how the sentence conveys that the suitcase is exceptionally heavy but also how the sentence conveys Beth’s emotional reaction, for example frustration, arising from her attempts to handle the suitcase. The authors go far as to say that the meaning implications of the example are centred on such emotion. (See also Ruiz de Mendoza 2017, and Watling, this volume.)

PRM involves a mapping between an imaginary situation in which the suitcase really does weigh a ton and is therefore impossible to lift, so that Beth is (for example) frustrated in that imaginary situation, and the real situation of the suitcase being merely very heavy but still too heavy to lift, so that Beth is also frustrated in the real situation. See Figure 5.

*** FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 5: A treatment of hyperbole example (4) following Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017).⁹

This account is broadly appealing, but it is beneficial to make some significant initial adjustments to and clarifications of it, as follows.

⁸ For a sample of other work on hyperbole, see Brdar-Szabó & Brdar (2010), Carston & Wearing (2011, 2015), Claridge (2011), Herrero Ruiz (2009), McCarthy & Carter (2004), Norrick (2004), Popa-Wyatt (this volume), Walton (2017) and Watling (this volume). Also see Barnden (2018) for a development of hyperbole in an unusual direction. Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017) contains rich discussion of hyperbole aside from their presentation of the model that I am reporting.

⁹ The diagram is adapted from Figure 1 in Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017). The single mapping arrow is borrowed from their Figure, but their text implies that the arrow summarizes the mapping of the various individual aspects of the imaginary situation to the pretence situation—the suitcase itself, what it weighs, the difficulty of lifting it, Beth’s frustration. The content of the imaginary situation has been slightly adapted for presentational reasons: Peña and Ruiz de Mendoza say that in that situation the suitcase “weighs too much for [the speaker] to lift” it.

3.2 Some Adjustments and Clarifications to PRM

One adjustment is that there is to modify the assumption that Beth is, in the real situation, be completely unable to lift the suitcase. It could be simply that the suitcase's weight makes it difficult enough to lift for Beth to be frustrated, amazed, or whatever. Of course, in a specific context, it might be that Beth cannot lift the suitcase at all, and the hearer may, moreover, be able to see that she can't. But in other contexts the hearer may just get the message that the suitcase is at least very difficult to lift.

Another, related, adjustment is that we should allow for the degree of frustration to be attenuated in the move from the imaginary situation to reality. For one thing, if she merely finds it very difficult to lift rather than impossible to lift, her real frustration may well be less than with an impossible-to-lift suitcase. But also, even if she does find it impossible to lift, she still may not be as frustrated as she might be if it really weighed a ton, because she could more easily correct the situation by, say, taking things out of the suitcase than if it actually weighed a ton. The degree of frustration in reality can go up some way towards what would be appropriate for a suitcase weighing a ton, but need not go all the way. But, at the same time, there is a completely opposite point: even if in reality Beth can lift the suitcase a bit, her frustration might nevertheless be nearer or at the level appropriate to a ton-weight suitcase, perhaps because she is an abnormally irascible person. This would be a very special circumstance, but makes the point that the degree of frustration that the hearer infers for the real situation may be affected by many factors, and could be more or less than, or equal to, the level arising in the imaginary situation, but that if no special evidence is available, the degree is some high value up to that appropriate to the ton-weight suitcase in the imaginary situation.

As a clarification of PRM, it is useful in this article to place more explicit focus on other emotions Beth may have. She could be amazed or amused at the weight of the suitcase, for instance. Such emotions will play significant role below. It is also useful for us to be more explicit about some causal links in the situations. In the imaginary situation, Beth's inability to lift the suitcase is caused by its

weighing a ton, and her frustration is presumably caused by her inability to lift it and not just by its weighing a ton. Analogous causal links hold in the real situation.

3.3 Some Further Modification of PRM, and Melding with ATT-Iro

I draw inspiration from PRM because we can re-label the imaginary situation as a pretended situation, indeed a drama much like those arising in irony, and because PRM's use of mappings chimes well with ATT-Meta and ATT-Iro. Also, I borrow, adjust and extend a major insight in PRM, namely that what the hearer mainly infers about the weight of the suitcase in the real situation is that it is too heavy to lift. This is in marked contrast to the idea, which otherwise seems to be uncritically assumed in the hyperbole literature, that the hearer's main task in our example is to infer some value for the weight—whether a numerical value, range of numerical values, or a qualitative value (or range) such as *very heavy* or *exceptionally heavy*—by in some way attenuating the overt value, here “*a ton*”, by going down the weight scale from it.¹⁰

Before proceeding further, we need to distinguish certain issues that are bundled together or left implicit in Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017).

3.3.1 Separating Out Some Issues

Certain matters are obscured by the implicit first-person nature of (4), because Beth is both the speaker and the person who is seeking to handle the suitcase. We should also consider a third-person example where the speaker, Beth, is observing someone else, Bertie, trying to lift a suitcase:

(5) “*Bertie's suitcase weighs a ton.*”

Any frustration may now just be Bertie's, not Beth's, although there are circumstances in which Beth could be frustrated by the situation (e.g., if Bertie is travelling with Beth and delaying her). However,

¹⁰ For presentational reasons the instances of hyperbole in this article are all “from above,” where the hearer is invited to go down a scale from an overt value such as “*a ton*”, though still to some high value, rather than “from below” as in “*My piece of cake is infinitesimal!*,” where the hearer is invited to go up a scale from the “*infinitesimal*” overt value, though still to some very low value. Note that such from-below hyperbole should be distinguished from ironic understatement, as in the use of “*My infinitesimal piece of cake*” to convey that the piece is actually very large.

and extremely importantly, I will assume that Beth may have other affect about the weight of the suitcase, for instance amazement at it, or finding the weight ridiculous or at least remarkable.

But even (5) still conflates some issues by having a person involved in the depicted situation. It is analytically salutary to make another step, and move to a more basic, impersonal example of hyperbole, such as

(6) “*That suitcase on the carousel is about a mile long!*”

I call this impersonal on the assumption that it is clear in context that the comment is merely about the length as such, not about any practical effect that it might have on someone, such as handling difficulty, or consequent emotional effect on someone other than the speaker. Rather, the affect the speaker is conveying is her own surprise, wonder, amusement, etc. Of course, turning back now to (5), we see that Beth’s affect there should be treated much as that of the speaker of (6) is; and then turning back to (4) we see that, as it is now the speaker who is herself in the situation being hyperbolically commented on, her affect should in part be treated like the speaker affect in (5) and (6) and partly like Bertie’s affect in (5).

Now, so as to be as general as possible across affect types and degrees, I have found it convenient and productive to couch hyperbole as conveying that the value in explicit question (weight of a suitcase, or whatever) is *notably* high (or low).¹¹ The notability always implies affect, but it might merely be a weak interestingness appropriate to an exceptionally high (or low) value. In example (6), the speaker may find the suitcase length extremely notable to the extent of being ridiculous, say. Furthermore (and here I go beyond my previous work) I unpack the notability as a relationship between speaker and situation feature, for instance as Beth’s finding the suitcase’s length extremely notable, or Beth’s finding the suitcase’s length ridiculous. The precise unpacking depends on the utterance details and context.

Because of the sparseness and impersonality of the pretended scenario in (6), we have here an

¹¹ I have used notability in recent discussion of hyperbole elsewhere, e.g. in Barnden (2018). It is a development of the view of hyperbole in Barnden (2017).

extreme, degenerate form of drama, of course. There would be little reason to propose a drama based analysis for (6) if it weren't for the fact that drama is an appropriate notion for richer, personal examples of hyperbole such as (4, 5), and the fact that hyperbole can be combined with irony that is usefully given a dramatic analysis. Without such considerations, it would be enough to use more neutral notions such as pretence, fiction or imaginary situation.

Before detailing drama setups for our examples, there are some further claims and proposals, as follows.

3.3.2 The Nature of Values Derived, Why Derive a Value, and Affect-Drivenness

We need to guard against the highly implausible idea that a hearer of a hyperbolic utterance, especially one that mentions a specific value as in “*a ton*”, chooses some numerical value on a scale, such as some particular large weight less than a ton. Rather, the hearer of a hyperbolic statement may only be able to, or may only be inclined to, commit to a range of values, and possibly quite a wide one. Moreover, it may often be reasonable to suppose that the hearer just has some vague, qualitative, mental representations, analogous to linguistic phrases such as “*very heavy*” or “*very heavy up to extremely heavy*,” without having any idea of what these representations amount to in terms of numerical values. Or, the hearer may just have an embodied sense of what a very heavy suitcase feels like. These points apply not only to overtly addressed issues such as the weight of a suitcase but also analogously to implicit issues such as an attendant level of frustration.

We saw that ATT-Iro has an *affect-driven* account of the derivation of a value such as the badness of the weather, proceeding via the strength of the exported criticism. I make a similar proposal for hyperbole. While it may be that the suitcase weight, the degree of inability to lift, the level of the lifter frustration etc., and the level of the speaker's amazement etc. may be separately exported (with potential attenuation) into the real situation (and I say more on this in section 5), I claim that one important—and in many cases the most important—route to representing a weight for the suitcase is via an estimate of lifter's and/or speaker's intensity of affect. To the extent that Alan as hearer can

sense that Beth as speaker of (4) is frustrated, whether from the wording of the utterance—especially in a variant example such as “*This effing suitcase weighs a ton!*”—or from Beth’s tone of voice, etc., or from other surrounding discourse, he can surmise reasons for her frustration; and given that she mentions the weight of the suitcase, it is not difficult for him to infer that she is frustrated because she finds the suitcase difficult to lift, and that it is difficult to lift because it is suitably heavy. Thus, he has an opportunity to estimate the weight (in the sense of deriving a possibly-qualitative value range, or embodied sense) on the basis of an estimate of how difficult it is to lift it, and to derive this estimate in turn from the level of frustration. Somewhat analogous reasoning applies when Beth says (5): Alan might estimate the weight directly from the level of amazement (etc.) he senses that Beth is experiencing, possibly in concert with any information he might have about how frustrated Bertie is.

The affect-drivenness in this approach raises a further, radical, suggestion: that the hearer’s only, or main, mental representation of (say) the length of the suitcase in (6) may itself be explicitly *affectively framed*, by which I mean something on the lines of *long enough to amaze the speaker*, which explicitly describes the value in terms of the affect. Such a representation is possibly all the hearer needs to derive. Accordingly, I propose that such a value description is the main (perhaps only) one that a hyperbole theory needs to provide. Nevertheless, a hearer could have reasons to work out non-affectively framed values or value ranges (at least of the qualitative or embodied sorts above). What value or value range is arrived at is, however, not necessarily a matter for a theory of *hyperbole* as such. The most that a hyperbole theory might say in general is that hearers pick some high values or ranges of levels no higher than the imaginary, hyperbolic values (for, e.g. the suitcase weight and for the attendant affect) What “high” amounts to, or, alternatively, what “high enough to amaze the speaker” amounts to, is a matter of the hearer’s knowledge about the type of situation in question, and any knowledge he may have about the particular situation and people involved, whether from the surrounding discourse, his own perception of the situation, or general knowledge. All this is a matter of general-purpose inferencing independent of hyperbole itself.

The affect-drivenness (whether the resulting values are affectively framed or not) is very much in the spirit of the insight that PRM offers, that the weight of the suitcase in (4) is inferred to be so high as to

make it difficult for Beth to lift it. The affect-drivenness lies in the fact that the lifting difficulty can be inferred from the frustration, as noted above. But, bearing in mind our comment above that the weight itself may influence the frustration by a route other than lifting difficulty, a better suggestion would be that the hearer infers that *the suitcase is so heavy that it is very and frustratingly difficult for Beth to lift it*, which is, in part, explicitly based on affect.

This inference about the weight is consistent with direct, attenuated export of the ton value. Suppose that such export by itself suggests a value such as *extremely heavy* or a value range such as *unusually heavy up to extremely heavy*. The affect-driven route gives a more usefully constrained value, but the directly exported one does no harm.

3.3.3 Inclusion of the Overt Value

Barnden (2015b) introduced the notion that a potentially hyperbolic utterance can often be given a *liberal* interpretation, in that the overtly stated value is itself included in the value range inferred by the hearer. In effect, the literal value is kept as an option. This could for instance apply to “*Mary has hundreds of living relatives*” with the hearer deriving the meaning that *Mary has many living relatives and possibly even hundreds*. Or, bearing in mind our proposal of affectively framed values, the hearer might derive something like *Mary has amazingly many relatives and perhaps even hundreds*. It’s perfectly possible for someone to have hundreds of relatives.¹² It’s just that many contexts may happen to suggest that Mary has fewer than this, or it may be immediately obvious from the wording that the overt value is to be excluded (e.g., with “*trillions*” in place of “*hundreds*”). But in other circumstances there is no reason for a hearer to have to make a decision as to whether the overt value is included or not, let alone to have to view the utterance as ambiguous between two alternative interpretations, one literal and one narrowly hyperbolic. The hearer would just need to adopt a value range that extends up to the overt value.

This chimes well also with a point made above about the level of frustration in suitcase examples: the

¹² E.g., a person I met who claimed 200 cousins, let alone other relatives!

real level experienced by the lifter *might* be as much as he would experience for a suitcase that really weighed a ton, especially if it was so heavy that he couldn't lift it at all. There's no reason in principle for a theory of hyperbole, itself, to exclude this possibility from consideration, although particular contexts may point to its exclusion on general practical or logical grounds.

To my knowledge, liberal interpretations of (potential) hyperboles have not been discussed in the literature on hyperbole, but for this article they are central, and fit well with the nature of merely-potential attenuation of degrees in pretence-to-reality exportation in the overall model of this article, as further discussed below.

Taking everything in section 3 so far on board, we are now ready to present a drama-based treatment of the examples that is consistent with ATT-Iro.

3.3.4 *Treatment of the Examples*

We will look at (6), (5) and (4) in that order. For (6), with Beth as speaker and Alan as hearer, see Figure 6.

*** FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 6: A drama setup for hyperbole example (6).¹³

For the sake of example, I have taken Beth to find the *pretended* suitcase length ridiculous (a way of finding it to be extremely notable). In the export of this ridicule, its intensity is attenuated to some range that stretches up to ridicule, generating the inference that Beth finds the *real* length at least very notable and perhaps even ridiculous. This may then lead to an affectively framed value for the real length, such as *so long as to strike Beth as ridiculous*. This is all parallel to the export of criticism in our irony examples and the resulting driving Alan's view of how bad Beth thinks the weather is. The

¹³ "R.W." is short for "real world." As before, the oval marked as Beth's real world is actually what Alan conjectures her real world to be. The value ranges within the overall are not entertained by Beth herself, but indicate Alan's uncertainty about how things are from Beth's point of view. The yellow arrow on the right shows affect-driven inference by Alan. As in irony examples, the green arrows show export actions by Alan (not by Beth).

Figure also shows an independent attenuated export of the pretended length itself.

Turning to example (5), we have inferences and exports like those in Figure 6, especially to handle Beth's finding the weight of the suitcase to be very notable if not ridiculous; but we now need also to take care of the suitcase lifters' levels of frustration (those of Pertie in the drama and Bertie in Beth's real world). See Figure 7.

*** FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 7: A drama setup for hyperbole example (5).¹⁴

Pertie's frustration is exported by Alan to become Bertie's. Previously, for our examples of irony, and for hyperbole example (6), we just had export of the affect of a person (Beth) outside the drama. Now we are allowing exportation of the affect of within-drama characters.

There is an important difference from the type of drama we had for our particular examples of irony. Beth is presenting a drama in which there is a character corresponding to Bertie. But there is no reason to think of her as acting that character. If we wished to proceed by strict analogy with our irony treatment, we could take (5) to be analogous to "*The weather's great*" in that treatment, where there was a dramatic character Palan (defectively) observing the weather, and thus take Beth to be acting a dramatic character who is observing Pertie grappling with his suitcase. So the drama would be like that in Figure 7 but would additionally include such an observer. This would appear not to add any benefit as to what is communicated about Bertie and his suitcase, or about Beth's own attitudes. Therefore, we propose that the simpler analysis of Figure 7 is appropriate. The extra simplicity is possible because we do not have the complication that the drama needs to contain a criticizable observer such as Palan (observer of the weather, in our irony examples).

The Figure shows an affect-driven route (to the suitcase weight) that uses Beth's affect, and another

¹⁴ Structure that is directly analogous to all that in Figure 6 is to be considered to be included here, but is compressed at the top right of the diagram for reasons of space. The suitcase is replaced by Bertie's suitcase, length is replaced by weight and a ton is replaced by a mile. There is additional structure because there is now a person interacting with the suitcase. Some arrows are dotted for reasons explained in the text. All the blue, roughly-horizontal lines continue to depict potentially attenuated exportation.

one using Bertie's. However, the arrows on the Bertie route are dotted, to indicate that it is only tentatively and provisionally proposed. Although the route could be included, it is more likely that Alan can get a clear impression of Beth's type and strength of affect than of Bertie's, unless there is extra information from context. For instance, Beth's intonations and facial expressions would help Alan to estimate her affect, but would not (or not as directly) help him to estimate Bertie's.

Finally, for example (4), see Figure 8.

*** FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 8: A drama setup for hyperbole example (4).¹⁵

Here, in effect, Beth becomes one with Bertie. We have almost the same setup as for example (5), but now Beth herself appears in the drama as Peth, we moreover regard Beth as acting the role of Peth, and all her affect—her frustration as well as her finding-ridiculous—may now contribute to Alan's affect-driven view of the suitcase weight.

3.3.5 *More on Consistency with ATT-Iro*

Section 2, on irony, made no mention of “notability,” despite the discussion of hyperbole there. Nevertheless, the critical stances taken by the speaker in section 2 amount to her finding a dramatic character notably defective in some way, e.g. in failing to notice bad weather in the drama. The critical affect in section 2 just a special way of finding something notable, just as finding something to be ridiculous, amazing, etc. in the current section has been. The export of criticism in section 2 is the parallel of the export of notability in the current section.

Importantly, the way hyperbole works within irony in section 2 does not involve plugging in the current section's treatment in any simple way. For instance, if Beth's utterance “*Sure, the weather's wonderful*” is criticizing Alan for thinking the weather is (merely) good, dramatic character Palan

¹⁵ The setup is almost exactly like the one in Figure 7, but with Bertie replaced by Beth herself, and the dotted inference route in Figure 7 replaced by a more definite route.

thinks that the weather is wonderful. This is not treated as some sort of hyperbole within the drama, and would not be even if the drama went to the lengths of having Palan say “*the weather is wonderful*” rather than just thinking it. Palan in the drama really does think the weather is wonderful, not merely good. Rather, this inflated thought increases Beth’s criticism, leading to effects such as increasing the badness of the weather than Beth communicates to Alan. So, while “*the weather is wonderful*” in Beth’s utterance can felicitously be said to bear a hyperbolic relationship to Alan’s claim that “*the weather is good,*” the hyperbolic quality works in an indirect way, one that is thoroughly intertwined with the rest of the working of the irony. This is very much in line with the claim by Popa-Wyatt (this volume) that hyperbolic irony is “a single figure coloured with hyperbolic tinges,” and should not be taken to be a compounding of figures in any normal sense.

4 The Existing Metaphor Model [ATT-Meta]

The author’s ATT-Meta approach is based on pretences or fictions (see Section 5 for commentary on the term used). In this respect, it has some similarity to fiction/pretence-based work on metaphor in philosophy (Egan 2008, Hills 2017, Walton 2004/1993) and a proposed addition of meta-representations to a Relevance Theory account of metaphor (Carston & Wearing 2011). Consider the following metaphorical sentence:

(7) “*John’s exam marking overflowed into the weekend.*”

Assume that John had been marking during the traditional working week of Monday to Friday. Now, as is the case with many metaphorical terms, the phrase “*to overflow into*” applied to an activity and a time period might have an entrenched metaphorical meaning that is coded—stored in the hearer’s memory and ready for immediate use—and delivers a plausible meaning of (7). The stored meaning might be on the lines of *to continue undesirably and inadvertently at times that are later than an expected ending time and are during the mentioned time period*. Any full account of metaphor must take account of such stored meanings. However, the ATT-Meta model is, instead, more focussed on

how a hearer is to proceed in the absence of suitable stored metaphorical meanings. So, for the sake of illustration, I will assume that neither “*overflow into*” nor “*overflow*” and “*into*” separately have suitable stored meanings for a particular hearer. If it did, we could change the example to use some other more creative term such as “*splashed out into*.”

Then, according to the ATT-Meta approach, the speaker and hearer of (7) momentarily pretend that (=imagine that, = construct a fiction that) John’s exam marking was something that literally physically overflowed from the working week into the weekend. (That the literal meaning is quickly activated in cases of metaphors with—at least, but not exclusively—non-stored meaning has considerable experimental support: see, e.g., Giora 1997 and Giora, Fein, Kotler & Shuval 2015.) Henceforth, I will concentrate on what the hearer needs to do with the pretence: i.e., conducting inference within the pretence to elaborate it, and drawing information out of the pretence to say something about the real world. The hearer can infer that, in the pretended scenario, John’s marking is a body of something that can physically flow. For brevity, I will assume that he infers that it is presumably a liquid.¹⁶ Then again, since overflowing of a liquid must be from a suitable physical container into a spatial region outside it, the working week must be such a physical container and the weekend must be such a spatial region. The pretended scenario can be further elaborated by inference, based on the hearer’s common-sense knowledge about liquids, overflowing, containers, etc. It can be inferred that the marking-liquid was originally all in the working-week-container and then some of it was instead in the weekend-region.

But, importantly, the overflowing of a liquid is typically unexpected and unintended, and its results negatively valued by relevant agents. Let us assume that the hearer presumes (i.e., infers as a default) that, in the pretence, John moderately dislikes the situation of some of the marking-liquid being in the weekend-region. All these inferences are of a type that an ordinary hearer can quickly and easily make when physical overflowing occurs. With these inferences performed, the nature of the pretence (pretended scenario) is as depicted in Figure 9.

¹⁶ But the treatment can be adjusted to include other possibilities, such as a powder, or just some unspecified physical substance capable of flowing.

*** FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 9: Some initial aspects of a pretence or fiction setup in ATT-Meta, for metaphor example (7).¹⁷

The work on ATT-Meta has largely made the simplifying assumption that the speaker and hearer do not disagree on what the real world is like, at least as regards the current local interests of the discourse, so the real world in the Figure is the real world for both for the speaker and hearer. Cases of disagreement will be touched on below.

The hearer needs to export and modify information from the pretence to become information about the real-world situation of John's marking. For this purpose two types of mapping construct are used: *view specific mapping rules* and *view-neutral mapping adjuncts* (VNMA's). Both are assumed to be a pre-existing part of the long-term knowledge of a typical hearer. The only view-specific mapping rule needed in the case of (7) is one that, for a process P and a time interval T, makes *P-physically-located-within-T* in a pretence correspond to *P-temporally-occurs-during-T* in reality, in suitable circumstances. It can be expressed informally as follows:

IF
in reality: P is a process AND T is a time interval
AND
in the pretended scenario: P is a physical object AND T is a physical location

THEN
P being physically located within T in the pretended scenario
CORRESPONDS TO
P occurring in (a subinterval of) T in reality.

If we wish, this can be theoretically regarded as reflecting both the view of A TIME PERIOD AS A SPATIAL REGION and a view of A PROCESS AS A PHYSICAL OBJECT. This is because of the conditions in the IF part of the rule. The presence of such conditions explains the designation of the

¹⁷ The correspondences shown by double lines are ones that the hearer assumes the speaker stipulates on starting to engage in the pretence.

rule as “view-specific.” There may in principle be other mapping rules with similar conditions, in which case they also reflect one or both of those two views. However, these views are not reified as entities in their own right—in ATT-Meta there is no explicit bundling of view-specific mapping rules into constructs such as conceptual metaphors. Two rules that both reflect a given view, say, A PROCESS AS A PHYSICAL OBJECT, by virtue of their IF parts are not thereby formally connected. It is just that they may both be activated when a pretence contains something that is a physical object in the pretence but is a process in reality.

The above rule can be used to infer that the following correspondence exists:

a portion of John’s marking-liquid in the pretence being physically located in the weekend-region
CORRESPONDS TO
that marking portion occurring within the weekend in reality.

This is merely a correspondence between two conceivable situations, which may or may not occur. But some of the marking-liquid *is* actually in the weekend-region in the pretence, and this actuality is carried over to reality, so that it is inferred that some of John’s marking does occur during the weekend in reality. Figure 10 shows where the hearer has got to now.

*** FIGURE 10 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 10: Example (7) continued, now also showing the export of an aspect of the pretence by view-specific mapping.

Turning to view-neutral mapping adjuncts (VNMAAs), they are mapping rules that deal with certain broad types of information that strongly tend to be exported in metaphor *whatever* specific metaphorical views are in play. These types include matters such as temporal relationships, temporal qualities of processes such as intermittency and termination, causation/enablement/prevention relationships, ability, easiness/difficulty, logical operations/relations such as disjunction and implication, modal aspects such as necessity and obligation, mental qualities, mental states, affective states and degrees of holding of circumstances. VNMAAs play a role somewhat similar to that played

by the Extended Invariance Hypothesis of Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017) and by the systematicity and the transfer of higher-order relations in Structure Matching Theory (Gentner & Bowdle 2008) Importantly for example (7), and for this article as a whole, there is a VNMA that I will call here the *Within-Scenario Affect VNMA*. This leads to the export of affect that within-pretence agents have about within-pretence matters to become corresponding affect in the real situation. This VNMA can be expressed as:

IF
cognitive agent P in a pretended scenario CORRESPONDS TO cognitive agent Q in reality AND
thing or circumstance X in the pretended scenario CORRESPONDS TO Y in reality

THEN
P having affective attitude of type A towards X in the pretended scenario
CORRESPONDS TO
Q having affective attitude of type A towards Y in reality.

In our example, we can take both P and Q to be John, A to be dislike, X to be the circumstance of some portion of marking-liquid being physically located in the weekend-region and Y to be the circumstance of that marking portion occurring during the weekend. P and Q then correspond because of being identical, and the action of the above view-specific mapping rule makes X and Y correspond. So the VNMA rule provides the inference that John's dislike of X in the pretence corresponds to his dislike of Y in reality. Again, this is merely the establishment of a correspondence, not yet an inference about an actual circumstance. But, putting aside the question of degree of dislike for a moment, we see that since John, in the pretence, does actually dislike the location of the marking, he also, in reality, dislikes the marking occurring during the weekend, if, as before, we let actuality be carried across a correspondence.

In ATT-Meta as it currently stands, there is also a *Degree VNMA* that just makes the degree of holding of a circumstance in the pretence corresponds to the same degree of holding of a corresponding real circumstance if there is one. The effect is that the degree of John's dislike in reality is inferred (initially at least) to be moderately high, because the degree of the corresponding

dislike in the pretence is moderately high. With this included, the hearer derives the setup shown in Figure 11.

*** FIGURE 11 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 11: Example (7) continued, now also showing the export of affect by the Within Scenario VNMA.

Another, closely related, VNMA is one I call here the *External-Affect VNMA*. This leads to the export of affective attitudes that the speaker or hearer, rather than a within-pretence agent such as John, has towards within-pretence matters, to become affective attitudes by the speaker or hearer towards corresponding aspects of the real situation. This VNMA can be expressed as:

IF
thing or circumstance X in the pretended scenario CORRESPONDS TO Y in reality

THEN
the speaker or hearer having affective attitude of type A towards X in the pretended scenario
CORRESPONDS TO
the speaker or hearer (resp.) having affective attitude of type A towards Y in reality.

There are further long-standing VNMAs in ATT-Meta that will be significant below. There is a *Value-Judgment VNMA*, concerning judgments as to whether something is good, important, etc. There is also the *Mental-States VNMA*. This is very similar to the Within-Scenario Affect VNMA but handles any other sort of non-affective mental state, including perceptual relationships. If for instance an agent in the pretence believes something X, and Y in the real situation corresponds to X (i.e., it is X as translated by mappings that have been applied), then the VNMA leads to the default inference that a corresponding agent in reality (if there is one) believes Y. So, in example (6), if the hearer inferred within the pretence that John notices that some of his marking has come to be physically located in the weekend-region, then it will be inferred by default that in reality he notices that some of his marking occurs during the weekend. Also, from commonsense knowledge about situations where liquids overflow, the overflowing in the pretence can be inferred to be, by default, inadvertent—i.e., unintended by John—even though an action of John’s might have been a contributing cause. This likely inadvertence (lack of intention) gets carried over by the Mental-State VNMA, in conjunction

with a Logical VNMA that carries over logical operations such as negation, to become likely inadvertence of what happened in reality. This is major connotation of the sentence, although it could perhaps be defeated in a specific context.

In ATT-Meta, most inference is of a default nature. For instance, an inference that someone is annoyed about the overflow of some liquid is merely a default, and can be defeated by other sufficiently strong evidence. Equally, mapping rules, whether view-specific or view-neutral, are defaults, and actuality is only carried by default from pretence to reality across a correspondence between events. These features lend the approach a great deal of necessary flexibility. Notably, it allows the effect of attempted exports to be defeated by sufficiently well-established countervailing information about the real situation, while at the same time allowing exports to defeat sufficiently uncertain information about the real situation.

A major feature of ATT-Meta is that many aspects of metaphorical pretences have no correspondent (no parallel) in reality, or, more precisely, there is no attempt to find correspondents for them. The liquidity of the exam marking in the pretence is not made to correspond to any constitution of the marking in reality. The overflowing event itself is not made to correspond to any event in the real situation. The ATT-Meta philosophy here is that it would be a waste of time to seek such correspondences, especially as the search could well fail. There was some complex series of circumstances, no doubt, that in reality led to John not finishing his marking during the working week, but it is likely to be difficult and pointless, as regards understanding (7), to isolate a specific event that caused him to mark at the weekend. What is important is simply that it did come to be that he did some marking at the weekend, that this was probably inadvertent, and that he probably disliked doing so. In short, ATT-Meta seeks as far as possible to find metaphorical meaning just by using already known mappings, in the form of the existing view specific and view-neutral mapping rules, in concert with performing within-pretence and within-reality inferences.. There are certainly cases where new mappings need to be found, for instance by analogy invention on the lines of Structure-Matching Theory (Gentner & Bowdle 2008). Analogy invention could be added to ATT-Meta to get a more complete approach, but this has not yet been done.

Finally, ATT-Meta can cope with speaker-reality being different from hearer-reality, and can place a pretence within any type of space. The main case of this so far in ATT-Meta work has been the nesting of pretences within other pretences as a treatment of chained metaphor (Barnden 2016). But a different possibility, to be exploited in section 5.4, is sketched in Figure 12. This setup would be appropriate when the hearer does not wish to adopt, or is not in a position to adopt, what the speaker thinks is real, and furthermore, the nature of speaker's reality affects the details of what is put into the pretence or how it is elaborated. In effect, the Figure shows the hearer simulating the speaker engaging in a pretence although the hearer does not himself adopt that pretence. The mapping actions are now ones that Alan conjectures Beth intends. The resulting setup is clearly very similar to those in previous Figures for hyperbole and irony.

*** FIGURE 12 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 12: Example (7) continued. An outline of the setup when Alan the hearer explicitly represents Beth's real world.

5 Melding ATT-Meta with the Extended ATT-Iro

A central, shared feature of ATT-Meta, ATT-Iro and the above hyperbole model is the exportation of affect, sometimes within-scenario and sometimes external. Clearly, for this purpose we could augment the hyperbole model and ATT-Iro with ATT-Meta's VNMA's concerning affect. But in fact I propose that the models be more thoroughly melded by the simple expedient of letting all of ATT-Meta's VNMA's—not just the affect ones—be used in hyperbole and irony as well, though with one adjustment. This adjustment is that the Degree VNMA needs to be modified, as it does not allow for the attenuation of degrees that was a central feature of the above treatments of hyperbole and irony. This modification will be addressed in section 5.1. In the resulting overall model, pretences are variously ones for pure hyperbole, pure irony or pure metaphor, or for combinations of these as already illustrated for hyperbolic irony, and as will be illustrated below for hyperbolic metaphor and

ironic metaphor. The proposal is that the VNMAAs would apply uniformly in all cases, and the discussion below supports the validity of doing this. Note straightaway that the descriptions of the VNMAAs in section 4 do not require the pretences to be *metaphorical* ones. All that they rely on is that certain things within pretences be deemed to “correspond” to certain entities outside the pretences.

There is no danger of spreading of the *view-specific* mappings from the treatment of metaphor into the treatment of irony and hyperbole. The conditions demanded by the IF parts of view-specific mapping rules will simply not apply in pretences that are not metaphorical. So the rules can simply “sit around” in the whole model, and will automatically come into play to act upon metaphorical pretences, but not upon non-metaphorical hyperbolic or ironic pretences.

The fact that we talked in sections 2 and 3 of ironic and hyperbolic pretences as *dramas*, but did not use this term in the case of metaphor in section 4, need not detain us. The use of the notion of drama is just a theoretical heuristic, and it is not proposed that within the pretence setups of sections 2 and 3 there is any information, usable by speaker or hearer, that the pretences are dramas. Equally, the term “pretence” as used in the ATT-Meta approach means just an imaginary situation, but the term has been adopted in preference to “imaginary situation” as it has a more dynamic feel, and more intuitively suggests that the consequences of what is pretended are to be considered: the pretence is to be elaborated as much as necessary for the communicative purposes at hand. So, the spirit of the term is: let’s pretend that such and such is the case and see where it leads.

However, an alternative term I have increasingly used in discussing ATT-Meta is that the pretences are (small) “fictions,” and of course drama is a type of fiction. Fiction could be a good term for all the different types of pretence across hyperbole, irony and metaphor. The way the pretences work with respect to real life is quite similar to the way fictional stories work, and the fiction label avoids connotations raised, for some commentators, of a richer sort of pretending than I mean. The word fiction also stresses a commonality with fiction-based work on metaphor in philosophy, although the notion of “make-believe” (Walton 2004/1993, Hills 2017), which has some prominence in that discipline, might chime better with the term “pretence” or “drama”. Camp (2009), Camp

(forthcoming) and Wearing (2012) argue against casting metaphor in terms of fiction or pretence, but I cannot present my case against their claims here. Instead, see Hills (2017) for a rebuttal.

Some of the pretences needed in pure hyperbole and pure metaphor are quite “dramatic”, in involving characters who have thoughts and feelings and (try to) do things. In these cases the pretences/fictions can easily be called dramas. So, it is convenient also to view the suitcase examples in section 3 as exercises in drama. We could regard the mile-high tree example of hyperbole as an exercise in non-dramatic fiction, the metaphorical marking-overflow example (7) as an exercise in dramatic fiction (though with the speaker not acting any character), but a more impersonal metaphor example such as “*All the money has leaked out of the country*” as again an exercise in non-dramatic fiction, unless there are relevant agents other than the speaker whose view of what has happened is important in the discourse.

Although this article cannot hope to present a full explanation and vindication of the proposed way of melding the models, the following subsections suggest the idea is promising. Section 5.1 discusses hyperbolic metaphor and, as a result, makes the mentioned adjustment to ATT-Meta’s Degree VNMA. This modified version is then to be used across the whole breadth of the overall model, to help handle irony and hyperbole as well as metaphor. That this works out well will be argued in section 5.3, but section 5.2 first addresses the validity of letting all the rest of ATT-Meta’s VNMA’s be used for hyperbole and irony. Section 5.4 proposes an initial, partial treatment of utterances that combine metaphor and irony.

5.1 Hyperbole and Attenuation in Metaphor

An important feature of much metaphor is that it is inherently hyperbolic. In saying

(8) “*Albert is an archangel*”¹⁸

¹⁸ This is adapted from an example in Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017). In particular I have replaced “angel” by “archangel” to ensure that a relatively unconventional metaphor is in play, so that understanding is not a matter of simple meaning retrieval. For another novel hyperbolic metaphor, we can take “*Her eyes are an endless*”

where Albert is a human being whom the speaker considers to be exceptionally good morally, or exceptionally helpful or protective, the speaker would, presumably, rarely intend to convey that Albert is as morally good, helpful or protective as a traditional archangel. Thus the metaphor is also hyperbolic.

What we need for (8), in a pretence-based approach such as ATT-Meta, is an analysis on the lines of Figure 13.

*** FIGURE 13 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 13: The setup for hyperbolic-metaphor example (8).

Here, for simplicity, I take archangels to be maximally helpful, so there is an inference within the pretence that Albert is maximally helpful. (The setup could alternatively or additionally involve qualities of archangels other than helpfulness.) Then we need a potentially-attenuated export of the maximal-helpfulness to become something looser or lesser in reality. The attenuation proposed in the Figure is that *maximally* is loosened to the degree-interval going from *highly* up to *maximally*, in line with the comments on attenuation in section 3.2.

The Figure also shows speaker affect and its export, and consequent affect-driven influence on the strength of helpfulness ascribed to Albert, possibly leading to the affectively framed value on the lines of *so helpful as to merit the speaker's strong-to-extreme approval*.

Beth's extreme approval of the pretend Albert is, again, implicitly a matter of *notability*: she finds archangel Albert's helpfulness extremely notable in a positive way. Interestingly, discussions of examples such as (8) concentrate on features conveyed about the mentioned entity, Albert here, missing the point that (presumably) in (8) the speaker thinks it's (very) good that Albert is good in the contextually appropriate sense. This speaker approval is inferred from the point that in our culture an

flame," which Peña & Ruiz de Mendoza (2017) analyse as being hyperbolic in conveying the strong feelings of awe one would have in looking at an endless flame.

archangel is to be approved of, not regarded as an annoying goody-two-shoes or as something like a “helicoptering” parent.

The export of Albert’s helpfulness is provided by a VNMA that deals with matters of helping, enabling, causing, etc. In the present case it would make the issue of the Albert’s helpfulness in the pretence correspond to the issue of Albert’s helpfulness in reality. However, the current *Degree VNMA* would—albeit only as a default anyway—make the degrees the same, without the desired attenuation. Hence, I replace the Degree VNMA by an *Attenuated Degree VNMA* that makes any (high) pretence-side degree PretD correspond not to the same degree in reality but rather to some interval of degrees no higher than PretD (and, dually, any low degree PretD to some interval extending no lower than PretD). An initial suggestion, to be refined in future research, is something along the following lines. For definiteness, I assume that the scale of available degrees includes values such a *low* and *high* and that there is a *medium* value; extreme regions of the scale in the high direction are exceptionally high, and extreme regions in the other direction are exceptionally low. At either end the scale may be either closed or open.

- (a) If PretD is higher than *high* then the reality-side interval goes from *high* up to PretD;
- (b) otherwise, if PretD is *medium* or above then the reality-side interval goes up from *medium* up to PretD.
- (c) Analogously, if PretD is lower than *low* then the reality-side interval goes from *low* down to PretD, and
- (d) otherwise, if PretD is *medium* or below then the interval goes up from *medium* down to PretD.

Clause (a) then copes with the above attenuation of maximal helpfulness to an interval going from highly helpful up to maximally helpful. It is then a matter of common-sense inference about the particular real situation, using whatever clues are available from the discourse context, whether to hone in on a smaller interval of degrees or pick a position within the interval. If no such clues are available, then the interval is left as it is. However, if the hearer deploys knowledge that no human

being can be maximally helpful, the interval can be suitably curtailed, perhaps to something like *very helpful up to extremely helpful*.

Importantly, the proposal is that the *Attenuated Degree VNMA* be used across the board for export of graded circumstances in metaphor, not just when the hearer surmises that an utterance is hyperbolic. So, even in the case of example (7) about exam marking the export process would result in the degree of John's annoyance in the real situation being in the interval *medium to moderately high*. The hearer could refine the interval if there is further evidence.

This throwing of responsibility onto reality-side inference in all cases of graded export in metaphor, not just in clearly hyperbolic metaphor, is actually no big leap from the current ATT-Meta, which already has degrees as mere default inferences anyway, subject to possible further adjustment and to replacement by a degree derived from other evidence. All in all, the adoption of the Attenuated Degree VNMA just further consolidates a policy that a degree interval that results from export is just a guide, to be considered along with other evidence. Clear cases of hyperbolic metaphor are merely ones where it happens that there is an exceptionally high degree within the pretence and the hearer ultimately infers a degree or degree interval within the real situation that is markedly lower than that degree. If, on the other hand, he happens ultimately to infer the same degree as that which arises in the pretence, the metaphor is, in this respect, not hyperbolic at all. In line with section 3.3.3, there can also be "liberal" hyperbolic interpretations of metaphor where there a degree range is inferred and includes the extreme value in the pretence.

5.2 VNMA in Irony and Hyperbole

The External Affect VNMA is appropriate for the type of export discussed in Section 2, namely, export of Beth's criticism. This is external criticism of the dramatic character (Palan), and this within-fiction agent corresponds to the real agent Alan. Hence, Beth's criticizing Palan is made by the VNMA to correspond to her criticizing Alan. We address the question of the potential attenuation of the degree of criticism in Section 5.3.

But we need to analyse the situation more closely to check whether the VNMA's have the right effect across different examples. In (1) he is criticized because (a) he does not notice the weather's-being-bad in the drama and indeed thinks it's good, but (b) he should indeed have noticed its being bad. Now, the weather's-being-bad in the drama does correspond to the weather's-being-bad in reality, so by means of VNMA's (notably the Mental-State VNMA) we get a correspondence between Palan's not noticing the weather is bad in the drama, and instead thinking it's good, to Alan's not noticing the weather's bad in reality and instead thinking it's good. This correspondence then enables, by the External Affect VNMA, the inference of a correspondence between the criticism of Palan for not noticing the weather's bad and thinking it's good to the criticism of Alan for the same thing. Since the former criticism actually exists, the latter's actuality is inferred as well. Also, separately, the Mental-States and Logical VNMA's lead to Alan inferring that, in Beth's world, he has indeed not noticed the bad weather.

This argument does not yet deal with element (b) above, that Palan should notice the bad weather. This proposition is, of course, a crucial part of what Beth is criticizing. Now, if Beth thinks Alan himself should have noticed the bad weather, as we have presumed all along in discussing the example, then this obligation on Alan corresponds to the obligation on Palan because of the Modality VNMA briefly mentioned in section 4. The effect is that Alan ends up being criticized for exactly the same thing Palan is criticized for.

There is a considerably different story to tell about criticism when we shift to the picnic example, (3), where Palan does notice actual features or consequences of the weather in the drama (his getting wet, the sandwiches being soggy, etc.). Here the criticism is of his thinking, nevertheless, that the weather is great. It is a criticism of his bizarre way of thinking, not of a failure to notice as it was in example (1). The theoretical issue for us, though, is that the idea that Palan does notice the weather features is just a fictive elaboration: Beth does not think Alan himself notices them (and anyway they don't exist at all in reality), let alone that he thinks that they are fun. Because of this it turns out that there will be no inference by means of our VNMA's that the particular ways of thinking in drama and reality correspond to each other. Hence, the External Affect VNMA is powerless to export criticism of

Palan's particular case of bizarre thinking. Thus, we need to enrich the analysis slightly by supposing that there is a consequent, more generic criticism of him, on the lines of his having defective cognition for thinking that the weather is good. The Mental-State VNMA deals with mental qualities as well as occurrent states, so it leads to a default inference that Alan is cognitively defective in thinking the weather is good. External affect export then delivers a criticism of Alan for that defective cognition.

The extensive non-parallelism between pretence and reality that we discussed in section 4 according to ATT-Meta is helpful. The non-parallelism tendency allows an element of the pretence to be exported into reality even though its inferential supports within the pretence are not exported. So the degree of criticism of a dramatic character can be exported to apply to the real character even though the support for that degree is not exported. Palan's enjoyment of soggy sandwiches can serve to intensify Beth's criticism of his cognitive powers and hence (potentially) her criticism in reality, even though that enjoyment itself is not transferrable.

A further point to note is that there is no VNMA-based problem with the fact that Palan notices entirely fictive elements of the drama such as soggy sandwiches. These elements do not correspond to anything in reality, so there is no question of the Mental States VNMA leading to a conclusion that Alan notices soggy sandwiches. The soggy sandwiches are there purely as an excuse to intensify the criticism of Palan's cognitive deficiencies. The more this criticism is, the more scope there is for the exported criticism to be higher. This observation about the role of the soggy sandwiches is very much of a piece with the ATT-Meta approach to metaphor, where there can be a rich body of information and inferencing in the pretence that simply has no correspondence to anything in reality and exists purely to support inferencing whose conclusions do get exported.

As for the VNMAs other than those already discussed in this subsection, I propose that the correspondences they establish are just as appropriate in hyperbole and irony as they are in metaphor. A VNMA that is commonly needed for metaphor is one that handles abilities, and it seems reasonable that if an agent and an action in a pretence of any sort correspond to an agent and an action, respectively, in reality, then the matter of the agent's ability to do the pretend action corresponds to

the real agent's ability to do the real action, unless there is strong countervailing evidence in a particular case. Thus the ability VNMA, combined with one that handles logical operations (such as negation) provides for the export of Pertie's and Peth's inability to lift the suitcase in Figures 7 and 8. Also, as to the VNMA's handling causal and temporal links, it seems reasonable that if some entities in a pretence correspond to some entities in reality, then causal and temporal links between them should also correspond, unless there is strong countervailing evidence. For example, a tacit assumption about the suitcase examples in section 3 is surely that, in both pretence and reality, the difficulty of lifting is caused by the weight, and the frustration is caused by the difficulty.

5.3 Degree Attenuation Revisited

As the *Attenuated Degree VNMA* was devised in the first place to handle hyperbolic aspects of metaphor, it can also suitably handle pure hyperbole. Here we note that a ton is an exceptionally high weight for a suitcase, a mile is an exceptionally large value of height of a tree, and hundreds is an exceptionally high number of pets to have. So, the VNMA makes these degrees correspond to degree-intervals going from high up to exceptionally high. This happens provided that it is stipulated, when the pretence is set up, that the circumstance of the suitcase having a weight in the pretence corresponds to that circumstance in the real situation (similarly for tree height and pet number). This correspondence is set up by stipulation as part of the creation of the pretence in the first place.

We need also to consider the affect inferred within the pretence, e.g., the suitcase owner's frustration, and about aspects of the pretence, e.g., the speaker's amazement. Here, it is reasonable to suppose that both of these affective states have an exceptionally high degree, and then the *Attenuated Degree VNMA* provides a reasonable result that the degree of actual affect in/about the real situation is at least very high and perhaps extremely high.

As for mild hyperbole, let's look at "*Bob has dozens of pets,*" when in fact he only has, say, eight. The overtly stated number of pets (dozens) is only moderately high, and the amazement on the pretence side may only be moderately high. Thus, again by the *Attenuated Degree VNMA*, we get the

result that the real number of pets is in an interval from a medium number up to dozens, and the amazement is from medium up to moderately high.

As for irony, consider the use of, say, “*great*” instead of “*good*” in relation to weather, as in (2). Palan believes that the weather is great. But if we assume it is evident to Alan that Beth realizes that *he* thinks the weather is merely good, not great, there is no problem about what degree of goodness might result from VNMA- based export of features of Palan’s mental states to features of Alan’s mental states. The information that, in Alan’s beliefs according to Beth, the weather is merely good will override higher values that export would offer. What is important is the export of Beth’s criticism. The degree of criticism of the dramatic character (such as Palan in our examples in Section 2) can be anything from medium in, say, (1), up to exceptionally high, as in (3), where Beth ironically attributes to Palan a liking of sitting in the rain eating soggy sandwiches. The more moderate degrees get transferred with relatively little or no attenuation by the Attenuated Degree VNMA, whereas the exceptionally high degree is expanded to an interval going up from high. This seems a reasonable outcome of the theory, given that, as always, the hearer can come to a more specific judgment about the speaker’s intensity of criticism on the basis of other clues such as her demeanour in uttering the sentence or other things she has said.

5.4 Irony/Metaphor Combination

Let us turn now to a type of utterance that is illustrated by Beth’s ironic response in the following conversation:

(9)

Alan: “*This train is going fast.*”

Beth: “*Yeah, it’s a real rocket.*”

Beth's utterance in (9) is a metaphorical sentence that could be used straightforwardly to claim that a train is fast, but is here being used ironically because Beth considers the train to be slow. Thus, there is an intimate combination of metaphor and irony. Notice also in passing that there is hyperbole in the metaphor in Beth's utterance, in that rockets are stereotypically much faster than any present-day train could possibly be.

In the following, I will ignore any intensifying effect the "real" in Beth's utterance may have, and assume, for the sake of argument, that "rocket" does not have a simple stored metaphorical meaning, such as *something that goes very fast*.

Combinations of irony and metaphor have been discussed in the figurative-language literature from a number of points of view (Camp 2006, Dynel 2016, Grice 1989, Katz & Lee 1993, Popa 2009, Popa-Wyatt 2017, Musolff 2017, Ritchie 2006, Stern 2000, Veale 2012). A natural suggestion (Camp 2006, Popa 2009) is that the hearer first extracts a metaphorical meaning ignoring the irony (i.e., temporarily treating the sentence as *non-ironically* stated) and then treats this resulting meaning as something to be ironically reversed. For instance, it can be readily envisaged that Alan can first interpret Beth's utterance metaphorically (and hyperbolically) to mean that the train is very fast, and then base an ironic interpretation on this, just as if Beth had ironically but non-metaphorically said "*Yeah, it's so fast.*"

But note that it is crucial in this process that, precisely because Alan does think the train is fast, he can pursue metaphorical interpretation as he standardly would, i.e., as if the sentence were a sincere comment on reality. But things are more difficult on Beth's side. Beth cannot construct the metaphor of the train being a rocket as she would if she wasn't being ironic, precisely because *she* thinks the train is slow. Setting up a comparison between the actual train and a rocket would give a misleading and irrelevant metaphorical meaning, such as that the train makes a loud roaring sound or can fly. She must set up the metaphor either in a context where the train is not yet considered either slow or fast or a context where it is considered to be fast. Here our ATT-Iro/ATT-Meta melding suggests a natural possibility, shown in Figure 14.

*** FIGURE 14 ABOUT HERE ***

Figure 14: The setup for ironic-hyperbolic-metaphor example (9).

In the Figure 14 setup, Alan regards Beth as taking someone else to be engaging in the metaphorical pretence that the train is a rocket, rather than herself engaging in it for her own purposes. Moreover, that someone-else is Palan, a character in a drama. So the metaphorical fiction apparatus is deployed within the mind of Palan within the drama. A metaphorical meaning is extracted, within his mind, to the effect that the train is at least very fast. In the real world outside Alan's mind, and in the drama's world outside Palan's mind, the train is slow; but Palan fails to notice that the train is slow. The example thus works analogously to our criticism-irony examples about weather. The only difference is that Beth ascribes to Palan some metaphorical-fiction based reasoning about the speed of the train. If Alan successfully grasps what drama Beth is constructing, he gets the ironic metaphorical meaning of her utterance.

The Mental-State and other VNMA's operating between the drama and Beth's real world will lead to a default inference that Alan himself, in Beth's real world according to Alan, is engaging in a metaphorical fiction that the train is a rocket. This may be a harmless if incorrect inference, but in any case could (if necessary) be blocked by Alan, if he reasons that Beth is unlikely to think that he is engaging in such a fiction given that he himself doesn't use the rocket metaphor in his sentence.

6 Conclusion

This article has suggested a way of devising a partial model of consistent, combined processing of irony, hyperbole and metaphor, within a fiction-based (pretence-based, imaginary-situation-based) approach. The metaphorical aspect of the model comes from the author's long-standing ATT-Meta approach, the irony aspect from the author's recent further elaboration of the well-known, long-standing pretence approach to irony developed by others, and the hyperbolic aspect partially from a recent approach by others based on imaginary situations. It is not just that the model handles cases of

pure irony, pure hyperbole and pure metaphor along similar lines, but rather that it copes in a seamless way with hyperbolic aspects of irony and of metaphor and with at least one type of combination of irony and metaphor.

The model is (the start of) a “unified” approach to metaphor, irony and hyperbole, though of course these three figures have their own peculiarities that the model does not currently address (e.g., lexical, prosodic and contextual clues as to whether the speaker is using metaphor, irony and/or hyperbole). Moreover, the figures are not unified in the model in the sense of all being cast as variants of the same phenomenon. Their purposes remain different, relations of contrast play a special and key role in irony, and metaphorical-view-specific mappings are used for metaphor but naturally not for non-metaphorical irony or hyperbole. However, at the level of the mechanisms presented, there is extensive unification. There is no difference, mechanically, between the three figures as to the way mappings work, though the precise nature of and motivations for the mappings used may be different, and pretences are elaborated by just the same processes of inference. Affect transfer (export) is handled in the same way across the figures, and the same affect-drivenness is available.

The melding of models was performed largely by extending, to the case of irony and hyperbole, ATT-Meta’s extensive metaphorical-view-neutral mapping provision (VNMA) and that model’s tendency towards allowing extensive non-parallelism between pretence and reality. The non-parallelism allows for fictive elaborations in irony and, as a closely related point, the ability to export intensified criticism even though the basis for the intensification is not itself exported.

The developments have led to a significant but localized change to ATT-Meta, notably to its provision for the export from the pretence to reality of degrees to which circumstances hold. This provision originally kept degrees constant, but the new version of the provision allows for attenuation of degrees. This change to ATT-Meta was essentially prompted by the need to cover hyperbole, and, in particular, a hyperbolic quality that metaphor tends inherently to have, so the improvement to the approach was of pressing importance aside from any considerations about irony. A profound effect of the change is that degrees to which circumstances hold are potentially subject to attenuation across the

board in metaphor and irony, not just when there is any clear hyperbolic element. However, the attenuation is always only potential, and it is up to the hearer to use the broad “suggestions” about degrees that come from utterances in combination with other evidence from discourse context and long-term knowledge to arrive at a final degree or range of degrees.

Quite apart from putting hyperbole, irony and metaphor into consistent, combined processing model, the approach taken has recognized affect as a central concern in all three types of figuration, with processing of affect fully integrated with the rest of the model. Indeed, so central is it in the approach to irony and hyperbole that we have turned normal notions about irony and hyperbole on their head in proposing affect-drivenness. This is about how the hearer estimates, for instance, a value (range) for the badness of weather in our irony examples or a value (range) for the suitcase weight in some of hyperbole examples. In both cases, export of speaker affect (her criticalness in ironic cases, her frustration/amazement in the non-ironic hyperbolic cases) serves to provide an important route—and for irony the main or only route—to estimating the value. (This does not prevent the converse flow of influence happening as well, to the extent that there are other clues as to what the value is.) According to the proposal, it is not the case that the values are estimated by going from the overt point on some scale of values directly to a different point/region on general principles that are usually left as being rather mysterious and are in any case not dependent the hearer’s sense of the speaker’s affect. The affect-centred proposal provides a powerful, well-founded guide to value estimation, and systematically takes care of hyperbole within irony.

Affect-drivenness also leads to the even more radical suggestion that the only value a hearer might derive could be itself based on affect. We made this point in the case of hyperbole, where the value for the suitcase weight might be *heavy enough for it to be frustratingly difficult for Beth to lift*, but it applies just as much to irony, where the hearer might merely derive that the weather is *bad and noticeable enough for Beth to criticize me*. It is rarely asked in the irony and hyperbole literatures *why* we should imagine that a hearer comes up with any more specific estimates than these; and it is not emphasized that if he does do so, it’s on the basis of further reasoning that has nothing particularly to do with irony or hyperbole as such.

Affect-drivenness also applies to metaphor when there is an important affective component. For instance, in the marking-overflow example, John is inferred to experience some amount of annoyance that in the pretence, on the basis of how annoying it is in general when liquid overflows from its intended container. The amount of annoyance is exported, with potential attenuation, to reality, and this can then affect an estimate of how *much* marking had to be done during the weekend. Indeed, in line with the idea of affectively framed values, perhaps the hearer just comes up with *annoyingly much marking*. However, considerable further research is needed on these matters as well as on validating the accuracy and effectiveness of the overall model.

Finally, a word on the location of contrast relationships in the model. As the Figures show, the ones of most interest for the types of example in this article are not between the drama's world and the real world or between a pretended character's mental state and the real world—even though there is often such contrast, not explicitly marked in the Figures—but rather between the mental state of some pretended character and the drama's world and analogously between the mental state of the corresponding real person and the real world. On the other hand, in some examples in Barnden (2017) where the irony conveys the speaker's disappointment or regret about a situation rather than criticism of someone, the main contrast of interest is between the drama's world and the real world. This variegation of the location of contrast is allowed by the fact that the model does not portray irony merely as interplay between the overt meaning of an utterance and the real world, but rather as interplay between that meaning, a drama's world and the real world. The variegation of contrast location is what gives the model much of its power to address different types of irony effectively.

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