

fig. 6  
Cover Chapter Two: Metaphor(m),  
oil, acrylic and ink on wood,  
2009,  
40 x 27.5 cm / 16 in x 11 in

## CHAPTER TWO

***The Theory of Central Trope: Metaphor and Meta-Form***

Metaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action, and only derivatively a matter of language.  
—George Lakoff and Mark Johnson <sup>1</sup>

**Paint, to Paint, a Painting, Painting**

While conducting my investigation of the available theoretical landscape as outlined in the previous chapter, I realized that my survey of the literature was best conceived of using the metaphor of land surveying, a trope both artistically adaptable and one arising from my personal experience. This approach suggested a hopefully productive and enjoyable strategy: that I could frame several chapters in specific metaphors. That each would be seen within that sub-limning, yet contribute to the overriding trope wherein I use the entire dissertation to find, explain, test and explore my theory, resulting in a book and concomitant installation. This artwork is an integral part of my dissertation and the process of its creation, one which embodies the theory of central trope, while also internally reflecting the structure of the whole, by consisting of paintings as singular artworks, as surrounding wall painting and even the final book itself, all of which together will comprise a larger integrated totality as an integrated single installation artwork. Through my research, I became aware of what I was seeking: a theoretical apparatus for understanding the struggles of artists, their achievements, at once both intellectual and concrete, one that had a truth to concrete experience. Experience for me is painting. I am primarily a visual artist, one especially devoted to this discipline, whatever my "expanded" ideas and intellectual interests may be. While discussing this with my advisors, Professor Langlotz pointed out to me that the metaphor of surveying in the previous chapter also brought to his mind the act of painting as a metaphor for what I am doing here. I mentioned this to Professor Ursprung, who agreed. Perhaps this is, to an extent, the elephant in the room that I did not mention — did not even think of until my two professors mentioned it — due to it being so all-prevalent for me. My life revolves around the daily act of painting and has indeed done so since the age of 13. Thus, I may have disregarded its centrality, much as I only notice my dual cultures when they stand out against a

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<sup>1</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980; paperback, 1981), p. 153.

background of one another or of a foreign experience. I feel most American in Europe, and highly European in the US now, while each of these becomes transparent to my own perception in its own similar confines. Thus in this chapter, which is the centerpiece of my dissertation, I use the process of painting itself as the extended trope, much like a Metaphysical poet's conceit. In this case, it appears most often as a simile, due to the fact that I discuss the composition of my theory as being like the creation of a painting. To playfully outline the allusive potential of painting as a trope, my subtitle above unpacks variations on the word, all of which are parallel in English, but not so in some other languages. I mean the material, the action, the object, the activity. In German the phrase would be *Farbmittel, malen, ein Bild, die Malerei*; in Latin: *pigmentum, pingere, tabula, picture*.

What is indeed the process of painting? It is actually quite unique to each painter, although each of us, of course, thinks his or her variety is the best. A short outline is in order; elements can be added or subtracted, emphasized or diminished, systematized or extemporized, but the broad sketch remains rather similar. Artists choose their favorite medium, form of paint, (oil, acrylic, alkyd, mixed, a.o.) and support (stretched canvas, panel, wall, a.o.). Then they apply and blend paint, both on a palette and on the surface of the work. Generally, it is blended before application to some extent on a palette or in containers, then once again upon application. The most important factor is the orchestration of relationships among the various elements; therefore this is the source of the continuous changes and adjustments that are made while painting. For example, each color affects the colors near it. The whole affects each part. The haptic qualities — thick, thin, glossy, matt, glazed, scumbled, flat — must be drawn into careful accord. These are all coordinated in a give-and-take with the intentions of each artist, those aspects planned and those discovered, within the action of thinking-in-things, thinking-within-the process, a dialogue that is highly dialectic. What do I want? What can I get the materials to do? What does the evolving object want or force me to do? What can I accept and use of its efficacious energy?

This is indeed an excellent metaphor for theorization and its embodiment. In fact, painting may productively be seen as a synecdoche of the process of theorization in the service of the interpretation of experience — one particularly rich, embodied application of it. Let us make the comparison explicit. A theoretician or philosopher, or anyone acting in this way (which includes many people, from time to time, not just "professional" thinkers), begins with various givens. These are ideas one finds useful and stimulating in others thoughts,

acquired by means of reading, listening, discussing, and (most important for a visual artist such as a painter) viewing. These are the theoretical equivalent of the material tubes of paint. Undeniably, some artists chose to return to the older method of making their own paint from the base elements of pigment and binder, while, oppositely, others use whatever is readily available, perhaps even purposefully eschewing the deluxe brands, going for commonplace material, as Robert Rauschenberg did (at least in urban legend) with cans of unmarked paint bought randomly in a hardware store. Most artists mix these approaches, using what can be bought and adding various adaptations and self-made elements as needed. Analogously, the thinker will use useful ideas of preeminent philosophers, or lesser known eccentrics, also sometimes returning to earlier questions and reforming new answers in their own way. Alternately, a theorist might add several completely fresh materials to the tool kit, inventing new terminology, showing fresh acuity. One example of the importance of this last idea is Arthur Danto's "thought experiment" of the problem of artworks indiscernible from real objects.<sup>2</sup> Whatever her particular approach is to received, assembled and altered raw materials, the theorist seeks to combine these, applying them to subjects which intrigue her, attempting to apply them in insightfully fresh fashions — as a painter mixes, blends, applies and modifies paints to interpret motifs and content of his own choosing. In both cases the key is the relationships of all these formal and conceptual elements, one to another, in a dialectic of intention and discovery. In my own case, I became interested in the theoretical aspects underlying practice for several reasons. I wished to understand my own practice and those of my colleagues both contemporary and historical, to defend our practice against theories I found incorrect and dismissive. Most of all, my desire is to find a useful theory which appears to have a semblance of truth to the experience of painting, whereas so many others seem so far askew, like blind men describing photography.

While using the trope of the process of painting to describe the creation and substance of my theory, which resulted from my search outlined above, I apply my theory to Vincent van Gogh and Ernest Hemingway, a thought experiment to both discover my theory and to test it.

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981). This is the important foundation of his argument in this book.

## Metaphor and Meta-Form

Let us begin with my palette, in the sense of my range of color. These hues are the recent discoveries in understanding metaphor within the field of cognitive neuroscience, which can be used to compose a useful understanding of artistic process. In the past, two unproductive viewpoints have seen art as solely a matter of the playing out of formal invention or, contrarily, only the charming delivery of important messages. A third, more recent and grave dismissal of visuality and visual art is the "linguistic turn," which is still now predominant, although its stranglehold on the artworld appears to be loosening slightly. The phrase *linguistic turn* is actually Gustav Bergman's, given new currency by Richard Rorty.<sup>3</sup> This is the postmodern notion that there is no reality outside language, and furthermore, language is itself arbitrary and only self-referential. This idea has performed the significant work of undercutting claims of a universal standpoint from which to pass judgment on art. Nevertheless, such a conception of language has become fetishized, detached from culture, specific linguistic traditions, and performative function, while being used to dismiss the efficacy and embodiment of tropaic thought possible beyond solipsism. Indeed, it has often been difficult to perceive the central and creative role of metaphor in all cognition, including the visual, due to the omnipresence of tropaic reasoning in daily life on the one hand and the complexity of its imaginative transformation in the arts on the other. Metaphor may seem either fully transparent or opaque, when in fact it is the translucent essence of transmission, of communication, itself. How this can fade from view is illustrated by the fact that naïve viewers often discuss representational images in art as if they were the very things they depict (actually, therefore, an elision, perhaps even a form of the trope synecdoche). This is what René Magritte so skillfully and philosophically spoofed in his painting *La trahison des images* (*The Treachery of Images*) of 1928–29, depicting a pipe and the phrase "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe.)

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). The term became popular with this anthology.





fig. 7  
 René Magritte  
*La trahison des images*,  
 oil on canvas,  
 1928–29,  
 63.5 × 93.98 cm / 25 in × 37 in

For artists, the verity of images as constructed illusions is always forefront, as they craft them. Much of the talk in the past by theorists claiming that painting has been naïvely confused as a window misses this important point. The maker of any image cannot but see it as a surface upon which she has conjured a vision, whether abstract or representational, when she has sent weeks, months or more putting it together. The creator may wish that the panel be *imagined* as a metaphor for a window, or that viewers have an experience *similar* to that of peering through a window, but one would have to be utterly insane to have painstakingly made something and then mistake it for its image; even Pygmalion was yearning, not befuddled. In fact, concentration on the richness of communication's shifting degrees of opacity is what makes visual art so dense. Trope's principal industry is to dialectically integrate the misleading oppositions drawn above. Art's craft is to make the most of them.

With the materials and forms I have researched, altered and molded, I am painting my own cognitive and agonistic theory of central trope. This ties in evocatively with the fact that I, like most contemporary artists, have all but abandoned the palette as an object. In his book *Working Space*, Frank Stella writes that abandoning the palette was one of the most important events in contemporary art production. "What we failed to see is that it was the loss of the palette, not the easel, that changed the face of what we see as painting."<sup>4</sup> Most of us now use a

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Stella, *Working Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 110.

table top or similar larger surfaces, or alternately jars and cans, mixing colors in larger fluid quantities, in effect accomplishing the important mixing and combination directly on the artwork itself. This is a performative, almost existential placement of the act of mixing, making it a process of operational discovery analogous to the way I suggest artists discover and form their central trope and its extensions within the course of action of creating their work, not beforehand.

According to my depiction of metaphor(m), a vocabulary of foundational cognitive tropes (as identified by Lakoff, Johnson and Turner) is active in the formal, technical, material and stylistic aspects of the works of authors and artists.<sup>5</sup> One central trope of form is embedded in the construction, composition, syntax, vocabulary, paint-handling, color, dialogue, or other configurative elements of the work. It is hunted, recovered, and (seemingly incongruously) forged in order to allow authors and artists to express their desires. Importantly, these desired meanings include both those willed and those discovered within the central trope itself. To come to one's own tool of vision is the great creative contest. This is one's brush, yet also metonymically one's stroke. Contemporary artists have sought a wider range of tools than was traditionally used. This includes Jackson Pollock's sticks, Max Ernst's scrapers, Jack Whitten's oversized squeegees and rakes, my own ketchup bottles, sign-painters' and comic artists' equipment. Likewise, no matter what the actual instrument, contemporary creators have often pushed tropes to surprising lengths. An artist's metaphoric vehicle is based in construction, yet is also a trope; hence, it is meta-form but also metaphor, thus my neologism, *metaphor(m)*, which I will use interchangeably with the term *central trope*. Quite often, a central trope can be a complex comprised of several metaphors and their variations. That is, the core analogy is often innovatively transmuted by being made more intricate, by being extended, elaborated, composed, questioned, or criticized. These detailed applications of central trope are tools as well as content. To return to my painting metaphor, they are the choice of brush, whether sable or bristle, or stick, or squeegee; the choice of paint fluidity or density; of the paint's opacity or translucency; and so on. Such complexity, I assert,

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<sup>5</sup> Foundational metaphors (which will appear in upper-case italics) can be found in all of the works of Lakoff, Turner and Johnson. The primary source for researchers is the "Master Metaphor List" begun by Lakoff and in revision. This is the bulk of the web site at the University of California at Berkeley titled the Conceptual Metaphor Home Page (for URL and other references please see bibliography). As the metaphors repeat in these sources, they will not be individually referenced. A stimulating, complementary, and somewhat different, list of major metaphors is being compiled by John A. Barnden and his students. They are working on "reasoning about mental states," primarily as an aspect of artificial intelligence. The site is titled ATT-Meta Project: Mental States and Metaphor (for URL and other references please see bibliography).

in fact usually prevails in the works of the greatest artists. Moreover, the strongest creators apply their central tropes across the widest range of aspects of their works. A metaphor(m), or central trope, is many-in-one: a polyvalent concord based on a seminal integer of insight.

Lakoffian "foundational metaphors" are important in this portrayal of artistic creativity. They may be envisioned as the principal constitutive underpinning, as their name implies, comparable to basic compositional forms familiar to art viewers, such as the Golden Rectangle of the Renaissance, the grid in Modernist art, the sequentiality of comics, and so on—including my own notion of iconosequentiality, which I have discussed elsewhere and in a later chapter here. Yet another simile would be comparing them to the support of a painting, the stretched canvas, wall or other object underlying the work, for in these substrata themselves are embedded societal and cultural factors. A fine, short description of foundational metaphors is given in *More Than Cool Reason*, by Lakoff and Turner.

Basic conceptual metaphors are part of the common conceptual apparatus shared by members of a culture. They are systematic in that there is a fixed correspondence between the structure of the domain to be understood (e.g., death) and the structure of the domain in terms of which we are understanding it (e.g., departure). We usually understand them in terms of common experiences. They are largely unconscious, though attention may be drawn to them. Their operation in cognition is mostly automatic. And they are widely conventionalized in language, that is, there are a great number of words and idiomatic expressions in our language whose interpretations depend upon those conceptual metaphors.

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Examples of such core, or foundational, metaphors are "LIFE IS A JOURNEY," "TIME MOVES," or "PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS." On a more general level there are "GOOD IS UP," "UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING" or "EMOTIONAL IS DOWN."<sup>7</sup> These tropes permeate everyday life and culture from its mundane manifestations through to its peaks of creative expression. Lakoff and his co-thinkers postulate a limited number of these basic metaphors, forming categories of thought. They are in the process of assembling a comprehensive list which will be published as a web site. These metaphors are culturally contingent, as the title of Lakoff's book *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* displays. This title is taken from the Australian aboriginal language Dyirbal which indeed has a linguistic

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<sup>6</sup> Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> The typographical conventions of style in this paper for presenting figurative phrases, metaphors and metaphor themes are described in "Notes on Typographic Style" at the beginning of this book.



category including those members<sup>8</sup>. Within specific cultural bounds, these tropes and categories of thought form the building material of our cognition, thus of imagination and expression — including but not limited to language. Foundational metaphors are, in turn, "grounded in perception, body movement, and experience of a physical and social character."<sup>9</sup> We use these core tropes to generate specific expressions. Some particular instances of those listed above would include "I've traveled this way in love before," "Christmas is approaching," and "If you work hard at being a father, you'll get there." The more general schemes could be exemplified by "Things are looking up," "Did you catch his meaning?" or "Let's not fall to that level in our discussion." Thus these foundational metaphors ground individual thoughts, making cognition cohesive.

I would like to highlight one essential broadening of this idea. It is reasonable to assume that the foundational metaphors stipulated by Lakoff, Turner and Johnson are frequently metaphors in the strict sense, but not always. These two authors are concerned with conceptual metaphor, a thought process of making analogies, of which linguistic metaphor is only a small part. There are various forms of comparison besides metaphor, or of perceived correlation even outside trope as normally understood. As Lakoff and Johnson write "MORE IS UP is grounded in the co-occurrence of two types of experiences: adding more of a substance and seeing the level of the substance rise. Here there is no experiential similarity at all."<sup>10</sup> Metaphor(m)s, certainly run the entire trope gamut: metaphor, simile, metonymy, irony, hyperbole, catachresis, litote, synecdoche and so on, prominently including mixed forms — thus emphasizing Harold Bloom's astute valuation of metalepsis in our current time period, whether it is Late Modernism, Postmodernism or even Post-Postmodernism. The allowable supports for painting have expanded into anything imaginable or found, largely thanks to Rauschenberg. Jessica Stockholder's installations are abstract paintings upon room-filling hodgepodes of objects. Likewise, the palette as a tool of painting has not been truly abandoned, as suggested above, but rather enlarged. Beginning in the US in the post WWII period, it has merged with and become the table upon which earlier the paints were only placed, or has become a series of containers in which large batches of paint are mixed. Correspondingly, metaphor(m)s exist in elegant, direct image-mappings, yet also in

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<sup>8</sup> Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things : What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>10</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 155.

multifaceted, remarkable expansions or mixtures of tropes. I wish to emphasize the fact that tool boxes and working spaces for contemporary creators are now quite generous, both physically and conceptually, particularly for visual artists.

The highly imaginative work of discovering their metaphor(m)s is accomplished by artists through what Lakoff and Turner term an "image-mapping." However, these authors at first undervalued this discovery, describing image-mappings as "more fleeting metaphors."<sup>11</sup> They assert that "the proliferation of detail in the images limits image-mappings to highly specific cases." By contrast, they find "image-schema mappings" less detailed and more useful in reasoning."<sup>12</sup> Image schemas generally rely on an abstracted sense of space and vision, yet can also be grounded in sound, others senses or even in cross-sensory, synaesthetic perceptions. They can often be described with prepositions or simple directionality: out, inside, from, along, up-down, front-back, etc. In the arts, both these image-metaphor activities shade into one another along a vast spectrum of possibilities. Both of these authors have expanded their study of visual mapping in recent books. Notably, Lakoff has intensified his investigation of visual art in his pioneering essay "The Neuroscience of Form in Art," in the book *The Artful Mind*, edited by Mark Turner<sup>13</sup>. In his contribution, Lakoff reflects on Rudolf Arnheim, form as metaphor and presents the theory of "cogs" to explain this. Cogs are neural circuits, involving mirror neurons, which ordinarily perform motor control, but additionally can register and structure observation. Image schemas and force-dynamic schemas are presented as potential cognitive explanations of the application of cogs to reasoning.<sup>14</sup> I believe image-mappings are purposefully interwoven by artists into this structure of inferences as well. Furthermore, Turner's entire conception of cognitive integration and blending offers an excellent account of how metaphor(m)s are brought into being. The principal book on that theory is *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* by Gilles Fauconnier and Turner.<sup>15</sup>

Because of its proliferation of details, image-mapping provides a bonanza of abundance necessary for mining new metaphors, thus making it very important in literature and visual

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<sup>11</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Lakoff, "The Neuroscience of Form in Art," in *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*, ed. Mark Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 153-169.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-162.

<sup>15</sup> Gilles Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, A Perseus Book, 2003).

art, more consequential than often imagined. The operation of image-mapping is simple to describe. A mental picture is projected in the mind's eye onto another "target" image. For example, envision matching the appearance of a tree to that of a woman. Her liteness as she stands slowly moving in the breeze is dramatically foregrounded in this process, brought to the reader's attention. Creators structurally, often visually, pursue this reasoning within the confines — or better said, using the treasury of — their media and genre. They find potential meaning in either projecting an image onto a formal element or finding schemas adequate for use which are natural characteristics of a formal element. This is described more precisely in a following chapter, where the creative process of conceiving central tropes is delineated in detail. A few examples will suffice for now. Simply whether a sculptural form emphasizes verticality or horizontality is a rich source of possible image schemas or image-mappings. For instance, perhaps the piece is vertical and building-like. Therefore, it is more "up" than "down," linking it to all the foundational metaphors of "UP": "GOOD IS UP;" "HAPPY IS UP," etc. Depending on the composition, perhaps the piece is vertical, yet stresses its downward movement. This would elicit metaphors of "DOWN." Long, winding sentences could be seen as matching the experience of taking a leisurely journey. Image-mapping consists in conducting a kind of "sampling" of the world of experience. It does not, therefore, have to be only a visual one, although I believe it generally is. It might be based in one of the other senses, or as our culture becomes increasingly multimedial, it might be based on a combination of sensory impressions.

"New metaphors are mostly structural," according to Lakoff and Johnson.<sup>16</sup> For artists, the structure of form and the structure of desired meaning (i.e., content) are functions of one another. When an image-mapping is solidly rooted in structural similarity, Lakoff and Turner refer to it as "iconic."

This is, in general, what iconicity in language is: a metaphorical image-mapping in which the structure of the meaning is understood in terms of the structure of the form of the language presenting that meaning. Such mappings are possible because of the existence of image-schemas, such as schemas characterizing bounded spaces (with interiors and exteriors), paths, motions along those paths, forces, parts and wholes, centers and peripheries, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p.152.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 156-157.

Therefore, metaphor(m)s are often iconic image-mappings or image schemas raised to life- determining power, *Weltanschauungen*. To return to my chapter metaphor of painting, here I have reached what painters refer to as their *style* or *approach*. The second of these terms is often preferred by creators because in common use the term *style* has been debased, signifying nothing more than individual, characteristic forms of expression without content or thought — habitual, unconscious quirks also referred to as *tics*. True style is much more than this. The linguistic field of stylistics shows how rich the concept can be. While such study has chiefly been carried out on literature in books such as *The Concept of Style*, it has exciting implications for the visual arts as well.<sup>18</sup> Style is the distinctive, personal mode of production and expression of an artist which is visibly unique to his work: ones individualistic, intellectually and emotionally-charged mechanics of embodying meaning. In my own case, which is discussed below, this becomes more of a *modus operandi*, as the term is used by police to describe a criminal's characteristic way of committing a crime, rather than a stable series of representational choices.

Cognitive theorists have addressed this issue primarily at the level of what is commonly termed *extended metaphor* or *conceit*. The relationship of these two terms to central trope is described at the end of this chapter. In Chapter 20 of *Metaphors We Live By*, the authors succinctly outline how the shapes of sentences can embody metaphoric purpose. This chapter's title could serve as a wonderful epigraph to my theory: "How Metaphor Can Give Meaning to Form." There are many forms of tropaic reasoning by which technical aspects can be re-envisioned and pressed into service as metaphor(m)s. Lakoff and Johnson have listed a few resources for "indirect understanding" of entities, which are also often at work in central trope: entity structure, orientational structure, dimensions of experience, experiential gestalts, background, highlighting, interactional properties and prototypes.<sup>19</sup>

## The Chart

I am an inveterate lover of diagrams and charts, perhaps because I use similar structures in my art, yet I always enjoy them in theoretical essays, no matter what they are about. Thus, like all the theories I find most pleasing, mine has a chart (fig. 8). It describes the production

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<sup>18</sup> Berel Lang, ed., *The Concept of Style* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, "How Metaphor Can Give Meaning to Form," in *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 126-138.

of central tropes and is noticeably based on Fauconnier and Turner's diagrams of conceptual blending, such as that on page 46 of *The Way We Think*.<sup>20</sup>

I will lay the chart out in words. A formal element of art-making (the left-hand yellow oval, Input Space 1 in Fauconnier and Turner's terms) is seen to be (or appears to be able to be *made* to be) like an image (the right-hand light blue oval, Input Space 2). This cross-space mapping yields two cognitive spaces: first, the Generic Space in the authors' terms, above the two ovals, which I have simply titled "Space." This is an imaginary zone which contains what the two inputs have in common, one's working space. This is pictured in the diagram with a stage-like curve in green. It is that site wherein the blending becomes possible and useable. Fauconnier and Turner's charts of cognitive blending suggest an equality of the two inputs which I find especially apt for describing central metaphor in visual art. I have turned their Generic Space Oval into an embracing, stage-like form to better illustrate the way in which this space is the background, amphitheater and world of most artists. It is indeed an arena of sorts for artists, representing their art itself, their medium when particularize, and their life as artists when broadened. Most importantly, mapped onto one another, the two inputs blend to produce the metaphor(m), the green oval at bottom, the Blended Space as Fauconnier and Turner call it. This is the specific trope unique to that creator (and often reveals the reason, or drive behind the initial mapping). This trope, by generalization, is based in the foundational metaphors (the larger, darker blue oval on the right) with which we all think in the culture under question. This self discovery, or self-construction, of a metaphor(m) is delimiting in that not all core metaphors are then applicable, but is also enriching and constructive, as it permits the artist integrated access to all the related foundational tropes (thus the larger size of the blue oval, of which only a section overlaps with the image oval). This metaphor(m) can then be applied to as many aspects of an artist's process and creations as she desires, or is able to achieve, through extensions and applications of her central trope. This is represented in the chart by the cascading, overlapping ovals emanating out of the metaphor(m) oval. One goal and measure of artistic success is how completely a creator accomplishes a thorough pervasiveness of the central trope throughout the elements of creation: creating many of these offshoot ovals. The entire chain of image-mapping through trope complex to foundational metaphors is exciting to trace in the oeuvre of artists. I do it in this dissertation to several creators, sequencing Lakoffian chains of metaphorical reasoning. From my own experience, I

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<sup>20</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, p. 46.

suspect creators in their own thoughts place the weight on the initial creative discernment of seeing a trope in a technical or formal quality, for that is the vision that granted them their individual theatre of possibilities, their future. By and large, this visual and tropaic breakthrough is accomplished by artists in the process of creating works, the so called "happy accident" or "aha"-experience. This circles back on our central thesis, showing the inevitable centrality of embodiment and performative, perceptual experience to innovation.

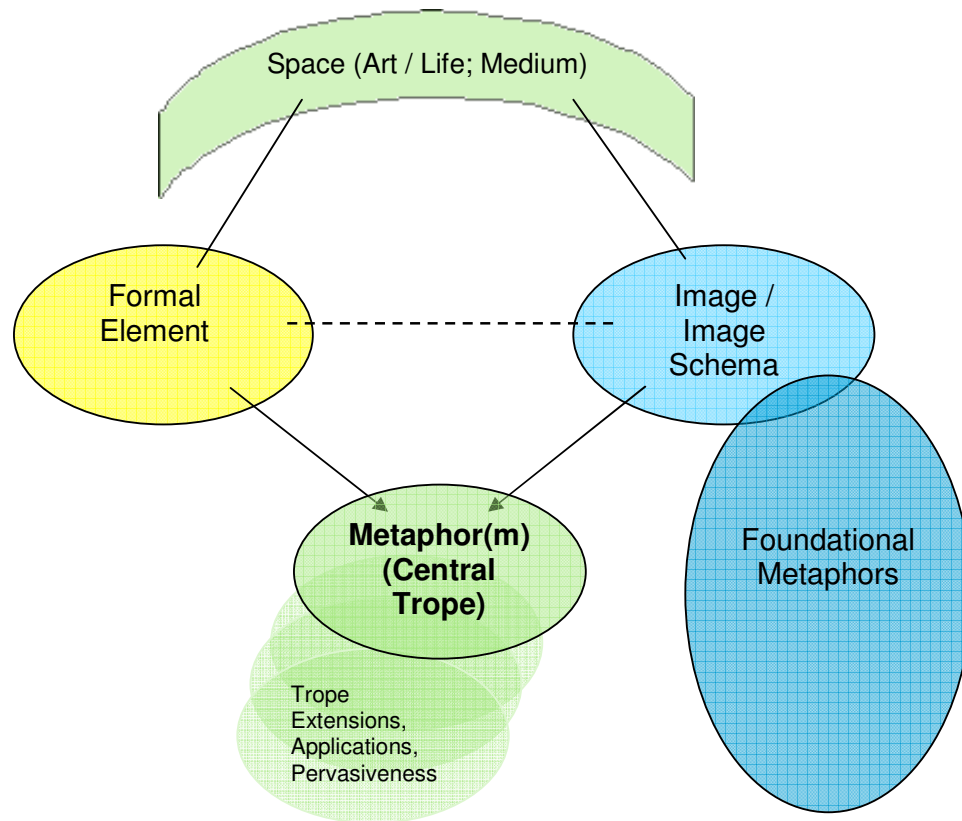


fig. 8 The Chart of Metaphor(m)

I have painted my way into a theory, one that is a doorway, though, not a corner. The proof of any hypothesis, nevertheless, is in the testing. This statement has more to do with painting than most people imagine. Artists who have chosen to be makers of objects do so because we are unrelenting believers in a world "out there" beyond a simply conceptualized world, one involving our bodies and reality exterior to us. Very few painters are crypto-Descartian dualists in the way that many Conceptualists appear to be, except for rampantly subjectivist



Expressionists (who may go as far as solipsism). Those two groups have much more in common than they would ever dare admit, both splitting the mind (whether thoughts or emotions) from the body. That is one source of the enmity between the two; they share a philosophy of mind/body split, while esteeming opposed halves and scorning the others. We who are not of those two camps believe one cannot truly think without making. This is a production which is followed by judgment of the creation, both for its internal qualities and in regard to the external experience to which it refers, which instigates alterations and adaptations, that is, additional making — further painting — and so on, until the object appears to be complete enough to be sent out on its own. This is the dialectic of the fabricated object and palpable experience. I will now carry out something similar with my theory, that is, apply it intently to two test cases.

### Vincent van Gogh

..[C]hanges in our conceptual system do change what is real for us and affect how we perceive the world and act upon those perceptions.  
—George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors* 145-146)

Two applications serve as overt trials of my theory of central trope, first to an artistic and then to a literary oeuvre. In effect, I am painting portraits of the celebrated painter Vincent van Gogh's art and the equally famous author Ernest Hemingway's writing as seen through the method of my theory, looking for the presence of metaphor(m) and the process of its creation within their works. Experimenting on these two figures, I found that they provide excellent models of metaphor(m) at work. A central trope could be demonstrated in their work concisely, yet without over-simplification, typifying the utility of the theory in clarifying the nuts-and-bolts of creative achievement, which is my goal for the employment of this concept. However, I am jumping ahead of the study itself, let me trace the inquiry from start to finish.

Van Gogh had been one of my initial inspirations for this theory. In fact, I was contemplating his paintings' technique and pondering his influences when the image of his brushstroke as a small flame struck me. This led to much of the thought already mentioned in the Preface. In contrast, I chose Hemingway as a difficult case, due to that fact that one of his chief ambitions was to avoid metaphor. While I am primarily concerned with visual art,

Hemingway was himself openly indebted to painting. Additionally, he offers a second subject for initial study who is far from van Gogh's aesthetic interests, techniques and aspirations.

As is well-known, van Gogh's self-professed goal was to bring the expression of emotion into Modernist painting. He achieved this to such an extent that, since his death, he has served as the paragon of success in the expression of passion in the arts. Granting his personal goal, how did he realize and embody this in his actual objects? How did he harmonize his influences from various forerunners, none of whom would seem to be an obvious candidate on which to ground an art of passion? This is a crucial point, as the pursuit of a central trope best begins with a close analysis of a creator's agon.

Van Gogh desired to be both Jean-François Millet and Claude Monet. His interest in Millet sprang from the empathy van Gogh felt for the earlier painter's subject matter. Millet expressed sympathy for the lives and environments of peasants. Van Gogh's painting *The Potato Eaters* of 1885 (fig. 9) is a culmination of his immersion in Millet. This work, though, in its heavy browns and greens, deep shadows and blocky brushwork reveals that the battle for his own central trope had just begun in earnest at this point. Shortly thereafter, van Gogh began to struggle with the methods of the Impressionists, following his contact with contemporary artists in Paris. At the same time, he discovered certain Japanese prints, including those of the prolific artist known in the West as Katsushika Hokusai. Fusing Millet, Monet and Hokusai into one composite predecessor figure, van Gogh applied combined elements of their techniques in attempts to convey his personal obsession with emotion. The desire to express passion was the focus of van Gogh's vision; it was the engine of his endeavors.

He struggled with Millet-like subject matter and Impressionist paint application, adding a dash of Japanese draftsmanship. From the Impressionists he seized on brilliant color and the small, dash-like paint strokes. Nevertheless, their fascination with the play of light on surfaces did not interest him. Van Gogh's misprision succeeded when he mapped the image of a flame onto the dot of Impressionist brushwork. This justified and heightened his use of sharp, glowing color and his frenzied draftsmanship. Van Gogh had antithetically become more "primitive" than Millet, while using similar subject matter, hence could envision himself to be "earlier" in a fashion. He painted more directly, less studiously than the Impressionists, again a form of imaginatively becoming prior to them. The heavy, segmented strokes of Japanese

wood-block outlines offered a thicker, more direct form of mark-making which could assume the contours of flames.

In his paintings van Gogh makes a progression employing a complex of many tropes. The metonymies "*a flame is fire*" and "*fire is hot*" lead directly to the foundational metaphor "*PASSION IS HOT*." This merges easily with "*LIFE IS FIRE*" and "*LIFE IS HEAT*." A key synecdoche plays a major role, "*the brushstroke is painting*." The artist expanded this chain of reasoning to all elements of his works, even composition, in analogous ways. "*Passion is life*" is his self-acknowledged central belief. "*Brushstroke is flame is painting is passion is life*" is his metaphor(m), his true central trope.

This can be seen mostly clearly in paintings such the intense self-portraits of 1889 and 1890 from St. Rémy, the wild sky of the world famous *Starry Night* of 1889 (fig. 10), or the flaming trees in *Cornfield and Cypress Trees* of the same year. Van Gogh had found his central trope and himself by discovering forms which palpably embody his perception of the world, which Robert Rosenblum in *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* succinctly describes as a "passionate empathy with nature, as almost a direct extension of human emotions"<sup>21</sup>. He elaborated it in varied, and highly creative, if not always "healthy" forms. In dynamic use it could elicit perception of the blazing, living, growing soul of nature as in the still lifes of *Sunflowers* from Arles. Barely restrained from swelling into a conflagration, it carries psychological richness in the *Self Portrait* of May 1890 (fig. 11). Finally, it has become a devouring holocaust in several last works, such as *Crows Over a Wheat Field* of 1890.

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p.79.



fig. 9  
Vincent van Gogh,  
*The Potato Eaters*,  
oil on canvas,  
1885,  
82 x 114 cm (32 ¼ in. x 45 in.)



fig. 10  
Vincent van Gogh,  
*Starry Night*,  
oil on canvas,  
1889,  
74 x 93 cm (29 ¼ in. x 36 ½ in.)





fig. 11  
Vincent van Gogh,  
*Self-Portrait*,  
oil on canvas,  
1889  
65 x 54 cm (25 ½ in. x 21 ¼ in.),



Even in an artist often believed to have been "spontaneous" in the sense of unpremeditated, we see how thoroughly his metaphor(m) is a function of thought and creative deliberation. It requires a highly developed intellect, focused in a very specific way. It is often the ability to think both consciously and automatically (i. e. unconsciously or subconsciously). As van Gogh wrote in a letter to Anton Ridder van Rappard

...I drew [*The Little Winter Gardens*] several times and there was no feeling in them. Then afterwards — after I had done the ones that were so stiff — came the others. It is the same with the clumsy and awkward things. HOW IT HAPPENS I CAN EXPRESS SOMETHING OF THAT KIND? Because the thing has already taken form in my mind before I start on it. The first attempts are absolutely unbearable. I say this because I want you to know that if you see something worthwhile in what I am doing, it is not by accident but because of real intention and purpose.<sup>22</sup>

To create oneself through one's works is frequently based, as metaphor(m) theory displays, on a simple discovery. *Simple* in no way means easy, or unsophisticated, but rather oh-so obvious in retrospect — yet only after-the-fact or in critical analysis, which is a scholarly form of reflection. By *simple* I mean something closer to *elegant*, but without the decorative overtones. A discovery which might even be seen as somewhat *mad*: the ability to think otherwise, prying loose an evocative tool of self-(re)cognition. These simplicities have the naked usefulness of truths. Van Gogh found, and formed, the element through which he could live. It is tempting to think that he knew this, yet perhaps did not trust it enough to have lived longer and more contentedly, but that is another story and a different conjecture. For van Gogh, this meant that his discovery of his flame-metaphor(m) allowed him to fully express his burning desire for expression, his conviction concerning the centrality of passion to existence. This is the vicious/visionary circle of the simultaneously invented and discovered central trope.

Expressing this in the chart, van Gogh's metaphor(m)al blending could be diagrammed as follows (fig. 12):

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22 Vincent van Gogh, "Letter to Anton Ridder van Rappard." In *Letters to an Artist: Vincent van Gogh to Anton Ridder van Rappard*, translated by Rela van Messel. Quoted in *The Creative Process: A Symposium*, edited by Brewster Ghiselin (New York: New American Library, A Mentor Book, 1952), pp. 54-55. Capitalization and odd syntax in original.

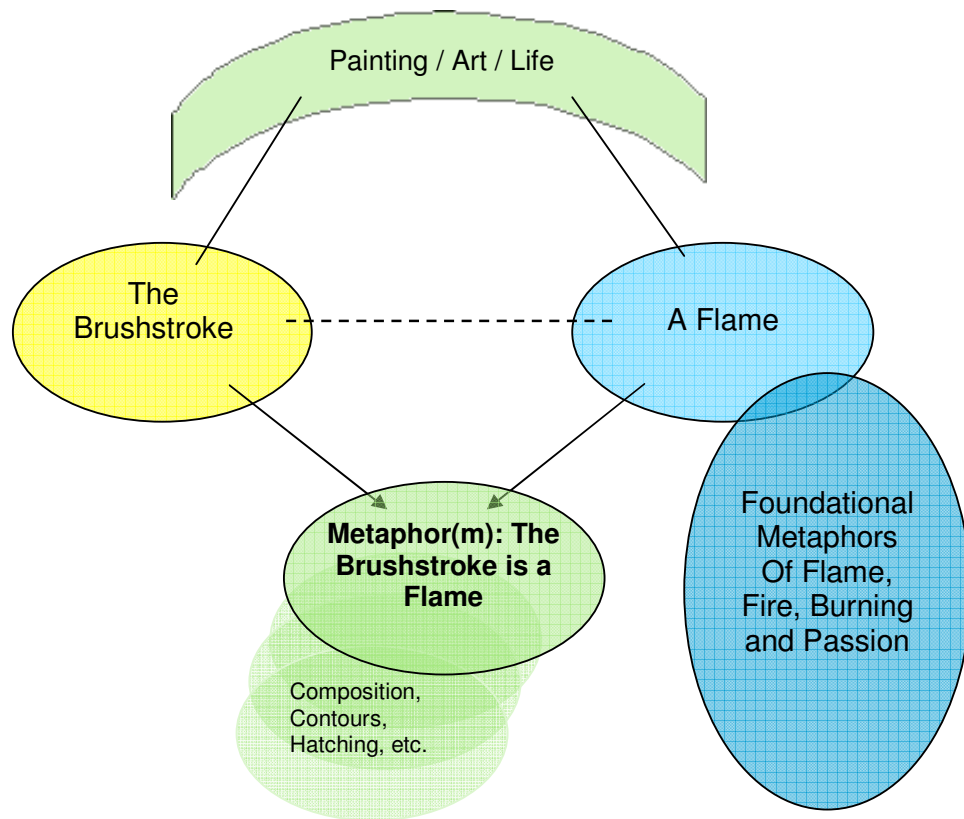


fig. 12  
The Chart of Vincent van Gogh's Metaphor(m)

## Ernest Hemingway

To Gasquet, [Cézanne] said: "While being the first to work in my way, I want to stay simple. Those who know are simple".... Hemingway had become aware that the strategies Cézanne had developed in the second half of the 19th century in order to transpose nature into art proved to be largely parallel to what the Modernists were trying to realize within literature in the nineteen-twenties. That he saw this parallel enabled him to create literary landscapes which belong to the best in twentieth century fiction.

— Thomas Hermann<sup>23</sup>

The novelist Ernest Hemingway is renowned for the apparent straightforwardness of his literary manner. While his style is clean and unornamented, this is the result of a refined yet involved metaphor(m), one not so easy to demonstrate schematically. Therefore, his work offers a rich and surprising case study. Similar to the preceding analysis of van Gogh, a pursuit of Hemingway's central trope serves well as a trial of this theory's usefulness.

In the development of his metaphor(m) Hemingway, as most other creators, had an agon, an antithetical battle with his personal precursor. This was not, as he claimed, with Steven Crane; that was purposeful misdirection, a pretense most likely largely inwardly directed. Harold Bloom asserts an important fact concerning artistic lineage. "No poet, I amend that to no strong poet, can choose his precursor, any more than any person can choose his father"<sup>24</sup>. Hemingway cannot decide to be the son of Crane, as much as he strove to avow and probably even believe this. Upon close study, it becomes obvious that his real struggle was with a conglomerate figure of a precursor composed in equal parts of Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein. Anderson represented the realist and regionalist strain of Hemingway's desire. Stein was the penultimate Modernist, avant-garde and experimental. Many critics of the period believed realism and modernism to be irreconcilable. Yet, Hemingway managed to perform this impossible blend through his struggle with these specific figures. Most of this author's remarkable achievements are complex and seemingly unattainable when considered in isolation from achieved fact. Bloom asserts that the greatest

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Hermann, *"Quite a Little About Painters": Art and Artists in Hemingway's Life and Work*, Swiss Studies in English, no. 123 (Tübingen: Francke, 1997), p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; paperback, 1980), p. 12.

American poets, which we may extend to mean authors and artists in general, "make impossible and self-contradictory demands upon both their readers and themselves."<sup>25</sup>

The painter Paul Cézanne pointed the way for this novelist. It has often been noted, and thoroughly scrutinized by Thomas Hermann, that Hemingway "wished to write like Cézanne painted."<sup>26</sup> The novelist was extremely visually oriented. Hemingway was "a man to whom the sense of vision was of the utmost importance. His writing was, from early on, influenced by paintings."<sup>27</sup> Cézanne had overcome a conflict comparable to that which faced the author. This painter took the atmospheric touch of Impressionism and created its opposite — an art of solid construction. He forged a style which is clear, simple and avant-garde by making the strokes building-block-like, by forming space purely through structured color (not a play of light as in Impressionism), and by finding geometric simplicity in the essential shapes of objects, landscapes and people. Cézanne's willful and original misprision of his Impressionist forerunners was the analogy freeing Hemingway to accomplish his own necessary interpretive contortion.

The author's tools were many, but two are most important. The first is his often discussed use of metonymy instead of metaphor.<sup>28</sup> The second is the chiasitic structuring in his prose, which is less renowned yet equally important. This later insight is a recent gift to us from Max Nänny and his students, most notably Thomas Hermann.<sup>29</sup> Metonymy emphasizes context; it is profoundly useful in realistic endeavors. It supplies an author with "natural symbols," or "context-sensitive" analogies.<sup>30</sup> Metonymy is a clear, simple, real-world oriented trope. It avoids the extravagance of metaphor, which is tainted through its propagandistic misuse by authority figures such as politicians, businessmen, religious and military leaders. Extravagant metaphor is often used in lies and romantic rabble-rousing. Here, we can think of

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<sup>25</sup> Harold Bloom, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; Oxford University Press Paperbacks, 1983), pp. 335-336.

<sup>26</sup> Hermann, *Quite a Little*, p. 134.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>28</sup> The relationship between metaphor and metonymy may be far more complex than has been assumed for many decades. Günter Radden, for example, asserts that most metaphors may actually have metonymies as their source. This is in his paper "How Metonymic are Metaphors?" in the book *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, edited by René Dirven and Ralf Pörings.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153. See also Max Nänny, "Hemingway's Architecture of Prose: Chiasitic Patterns and Their Narrative Functions," *North Dakota Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (1997): 157-176.

<sup>30</sup> Hermann, *Quite a Little*, pp. 140-143. One subsection of Chapter 10, "Hemingway and Cézanne," is titled "The Role of Context" and offers an excellent discussion of metonymy as a contextual device in Hemingway's writing.

the amplified, aggressive, ostentatious metaphors of Nazis, both neo- and historical. Considering such modern misuse of rhetoric, Hemingway was exemplary in his "fear of abstractions," a phrase Hermann borrows from Ezra Pound.<sup>31</sup> Metonymy surfaces in many elements of Hemingway's works: descriptions, vocabulary, dialogue and even characters' appellations. In *A Farewell to Arms* various figures are identified by Hemingway in this fashion, such as "the man with the garlic," or "the men of the anti-aircraft gun." In a famous passage in the same novel, the character Lt. Frederic Henry describes Hemingway's view of language.

There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.<sup>32</sup>

As exhibited in this quotation, metonymy is a "context-sensitive" tool. Because of this, Hemingway was able to use it to create "natural symbols," that is, images which can be read as naturalistic details, yet also may be imaginatively expanded by the reader to the level of metaphor.<sup>33</sup> A realistic description of Santiago sleeping in *The Old Man and the Sea* can also be interpreted as a visual image of the crucifixion, symbolically making the old fisherman a Christ-figure in his tragic, yet heroic, suffering.

Inside the shack he leaned the mast against the wall. In the dark he found a water bottle and took a drink. Then he lay down on the bed. He pulled the blanket over his shoulders and then over his back and legs and he slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up.<sup>34</sup>

Whereas metonymy is Hemingway's cardinal rhetorical figure, chiasmic structures are the principal building-blocks of his prose. A chiasmus, also termed a *chiasm*, is a patterning device in which symmetry is achieved by following the first half of a linguistic unit with a parallel of its form in reverse. This is typically described diagrammatically as *ABBA*, *1-2-3:3-2-1*, *ABCD:X:DCBA*, or the like. Most frequently this involves a repetition of words, however a chiasmus "may be manifested on any level of the text or (often) on multiple levels at once:

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<sup>31</sup> Hermann, *Quite a Little*, p. 139. Hermann cites the *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

phonological (sound-patterning), lexical or morphological (word repetition;...), syntactic (phrase- or clause-construction) or semantic/thematic."<sup>35</sup>

Chiastic patterning is one predominant formal technique in the Bible. It appears in the discussions of almost every book in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Shakespeare's works and the King James Version of the Bible are the two columns supporting any English speaker's world, whether recognized or not. The Bible is, of course, the weightier member of this pair, especially for an American, Shakespeare the more psychological. Not only is chiasmus a foundational element of sentence structure in the poetry of the Old Testament, but longer passages, whole sections, images and even underlying subtexts and meanings can be chiastic. This occurs, for example, on a grand scale in chiasmata of polarity in the first books of the Bible.

The first division in Genesis 1 was that between light and darkness. This polarity continues powerfully throughout Exodus and beyond. On its journey through the desert, Israel is protected and led by a column of smoke or a cloud during the day and a column of fire at night, as signs of God's presence. These are the virtuoso effects of the master of polarities, who has thus created a chiasm: light in darkness, darkness in light. These polarities occur at strategic points in the composition: in chapter 14, where the division between Israel and Egypt becomes definite, around and in the Red Sea (13:21-22 and 14:19-20), and also in 10:23, 19:18, and 20:18, where smoke and fire dramatize the theophany on the holy mountain; in 33:9-11a, in front of the tabernacle of the congregation, where the cloud appears only in order to screen from the people Moses' contact with God; and preeminently in the climatic moment at the conclusion of the book (40:34-38), where the full polarity, day/night = fire/cloud, appears and marks how "the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle"(v. 35b).<sup>36</sup>

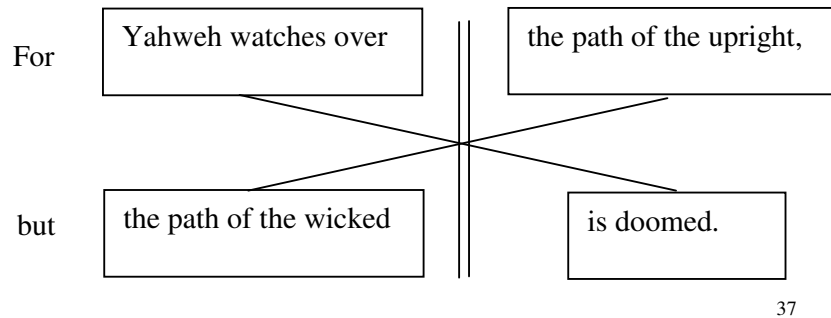
Biblical chiasmata appear quite visibly in the poetic parallelism of sentences formed by pairs of phrases. This can be displayed in Psalm 1:6, as diagrammed in *The Bible as Literature* by John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler and Anthony D. York, (fig. 13):

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<sup>35</sup> T.V.F. Brogan and Albert W. Halsal, s.v. "Chiasmus," *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan. 1993 edition.

<sup>36</sup> J. P. Fokkelman, "Exodus." In *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1987; paperback, 1990), pp. 60-61





37

fig. 13

In addition, one clause frequently makes an abstract assertion, while the other paraphrases and exemplifies it, as in Proverbs 25:11-12, from the New Jerusalem Bible.

Like apples of gold inlaid with silver  
 is a word that is aptly spoken.  
 A golden ring, an ornament of finest gold,  
 is a wise rebuke to an attentive ear.<sup>38</sup>

Any Biblical reference or literary form carries connotations of truth. Walt Whitman used an opposite style-feature of the Bible, yet for analogous metaphoric reasons. Whereas Whitman used the expansive, proclamatory, litany-based inclusiveness of Biblical structure, Hemingway contracts it, makes chiastic form firm, lean, something solid and workmanlike. He creates blocks of relations that are similar to Cézanne's strokes and geometric substructure. This hard-boiled solidity is also suggestive of simplicity and truth.

Nänny has "discovered close to a hundred such" chiasmata in Hemingway's work. He describes them as "formal, quasi poetic structurations submerged under the deceptive verbal surface of his seemingly simple, realistic prose."<sup>39</sup> In order to make the chiastic structures clear, in his article "Hemingway's Architecture of Prose: Chiastic Patterns and Their Narrative Functions," Nänny has taken what are continuous prose texts in Hemingway and broken them into diagrams with the lexical repetitions in bold-face and the semantic repetitions in bold italics. An excellent example is a passage from "Big Two-Hearted River, Part I."

<sup>37</sup> John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler and Anthony D. York, *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, 3d edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 40-

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Gabel, Wheeler and York, *The Bible as Literature*, p. 41.

<sup>39</sup> Hermann, *Quite a Little*, p. 158.

The river was there. It swirled against the log spiles of the bridge. Nick looked down into the clear, brown water, colored from the pebbly bottom, and watched the trout keeping themselves steady in the current with wavering fins. As he watched them they changed their positions by quick angles, only to hold steady in the fast water again. Nick watched them a long time.

He watched them holding themselves with their noses into the current, many trout in deep, fast moving water, slightly distorted as he watched far down through the glassy convex surface of the pool, its surface pushing and swelling smooth against the resistance of the log-driven piles of the bridge.

(...) The river was there. It swirled against

- 1 **the log *spiles* of the bridge.** Nick looked
- 2 **down** into the *clear*, brown water, colored from the pebbly  
bottom, and
- 3 **watched** the
- 4 **trout** keeping themselves steady in
- 5 **the current** with wavering fins. As he watched them they changed  
their positions by quick angles, only to
- 6 **hold** steady in the *fast water* again.
- 7 **Nick watched them** a long time.

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- 7 **He watched them**
- 6 **holding** themselves with their noses into
- 5 **the current**, many
- 4 **trout** in deep, *fast moving water*, slightly distorted as he
- 3 **watched** far
- 2 **down** through the *glassy* convex surface of the pool, its surface  
pushing and swelling smooth against the resistance of
- 1 **the log-driven *piles* of the bridge.)**<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, a segment of *In Our Time* is proven to have chiastic, "quasi-architectural symmetry."

It was a

- 1 **frightfully** hot day. We'd jammed

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<sup>40</sup> Nanny, "Architecture," pp. 169-170. Nanny takes his quotation from Ernest Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Scribner, 1966), p. 209.

- 2    **an absolutely perfect *barricade*** across the bridge. It was simply  
       priceless. A big old wrought-iron grating from the front of a house.  
       Too heavy to lift and you could
- 3    *shoot* through it and
- 4    **they** would have *to climb over it*.

— It was absolutely topping.

- 4    **They** tried *to get over it*, and we
- 3    *potted* them from forty yards. They rushed it, and officers came out  
       alone and worked on it. It was
- 2    **an absolutely perfect *obstacle***. Their officers were very fine. We were
- 1    **frightfully** put out when we heard the flank had gone, and we had  
       to fall back.<sup>41</sup>

As presented in "Hemingway's Architecture of Prose," Nänny finds several specific narrative functions for Hemingway's various applications of chiasmic structure, including "back and forth movement;" "opposition, symmetry and balance;" "framing;" and "centering." Most importantly for the theory of central trope, the novelist clearly applies this formal element as an embedded metaphor(m), using it to "mime or enact meaning."<sup>42</sup>

Hence, we come to Hemingway's central trope. This involves a double-blend, as it features two complementary mappings. Such complexity is described by Fauconnier and Turner in Chapters 14 and 15 of their book *The Way We Think*, titled respectively "Multiple Blends" and "Multiple-Scope Creativity."<sup>43</sup> The couplings are far more closely knit in Hemingway's work than several of Fauconnier and Turner's examples, such as the "Dracula and His Patients" illustration they draw from a newspaper editorial.<sup>44</sup> Hemingway's two pairings are so compactly interwoven as to be almost one blend. While I would contend that most metaphor(m)s are more akin to the iconic blend seen above in van Gogh, Hemingway gives an inkling of other, far more intricate or even convoluted possibilities. The conceptual

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<sup>41</sup> Nänny, "Architecture," p. 162. Here Nänny's quotation is from *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, p. 113.

<sup>42</sup> Nänny, "Architecture," p. 158.

<sup>43</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, Chapters 14 and 15, pp. 279-308.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279- 284.

integration of a number of mental image mappings appears to be more frequent and essential in postmodern artworks.

The image-mapping is that of *simplicity* on *trope* (*metonymy*) and *solidity* on *structure* (*chiasmus*). This, in turn, plays on the metaphors "*truth is simple*" and "*truth is solid*," both of which are viewed through the lens of the metaphor "*structure is the object*." This logical sequence yields the author's personal central belief: "writing is truth is life." His metaphor(m) is "*metonymy and chiasmus are solid and simple, are truth (about life)*." He extended this into his subject matter and many if not most of the other elements of his writing, generally by analogy. His descriptions, place names, characters' names, dialogues and syntax are among the creative particulars which bear the stamp of his metaphor(m). My point is not to celebrate the insight of literary critics such as David M. Raabe who highlighted Hemingway's metonymic play, nor the insight Nänny and Hermann offer into his chiasitic structuring, but to analyze these mechanics of his writing in a cognitive sense, thus expanding our perception of the agonistic and vital purpose they serve in his writing by seeing the significant way in which they converge in the author's central trope.<sup>45</sup>

Hemingway made linguistic form spatial and visual in an intricate and coherent complex of tropes. Foundational metaphors are extended, elaborated and composed. Telling the truth is one of the most important aspects (a synecdoche) of morality, thus truth is an elaboration of "*MORALITY IS STRAIGHTNESS*." Furthermore, straightness is a metonymy of simplicity. The writer is using many literary elements metaphorically, but most of all metonymy itself. This is an unprecedented twist resulting in a great critical metalepsis. Coherence can be an attribute or extension of truth. Two foundational metaphors active in our society are "*COHERENT IS WHOLE*" and "*COHERENCE IS ALIGNED*." A building or constructed work of art must be solid, that is, structurally sound, composed in a thorough fashion. "*THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS*" as well as "*IDEAS ARE CONSTRUCTED OBJECTS*" are operative at that point, as applied to literary ideas, most of all to his chiasitic constructions. Extend existence and you have life, one foundational metaphor is indeed "*EXISTENCE IS LIFE*," yet another is "*EXISTENCE IS HAVING FORM*." For the author this meant a very specific form — his work, his writing. Hemingway has a central trope with

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, David M. Raabe, "Hemingway's Anatomical Metonymies," *Journal of Modern Literature* 23, no. 1, (fall 1999): 159-163.

epistemological and ethical implications, a powerful and broadened rationality of amazing complexity in a writer of ostensibly astounding simplicity.

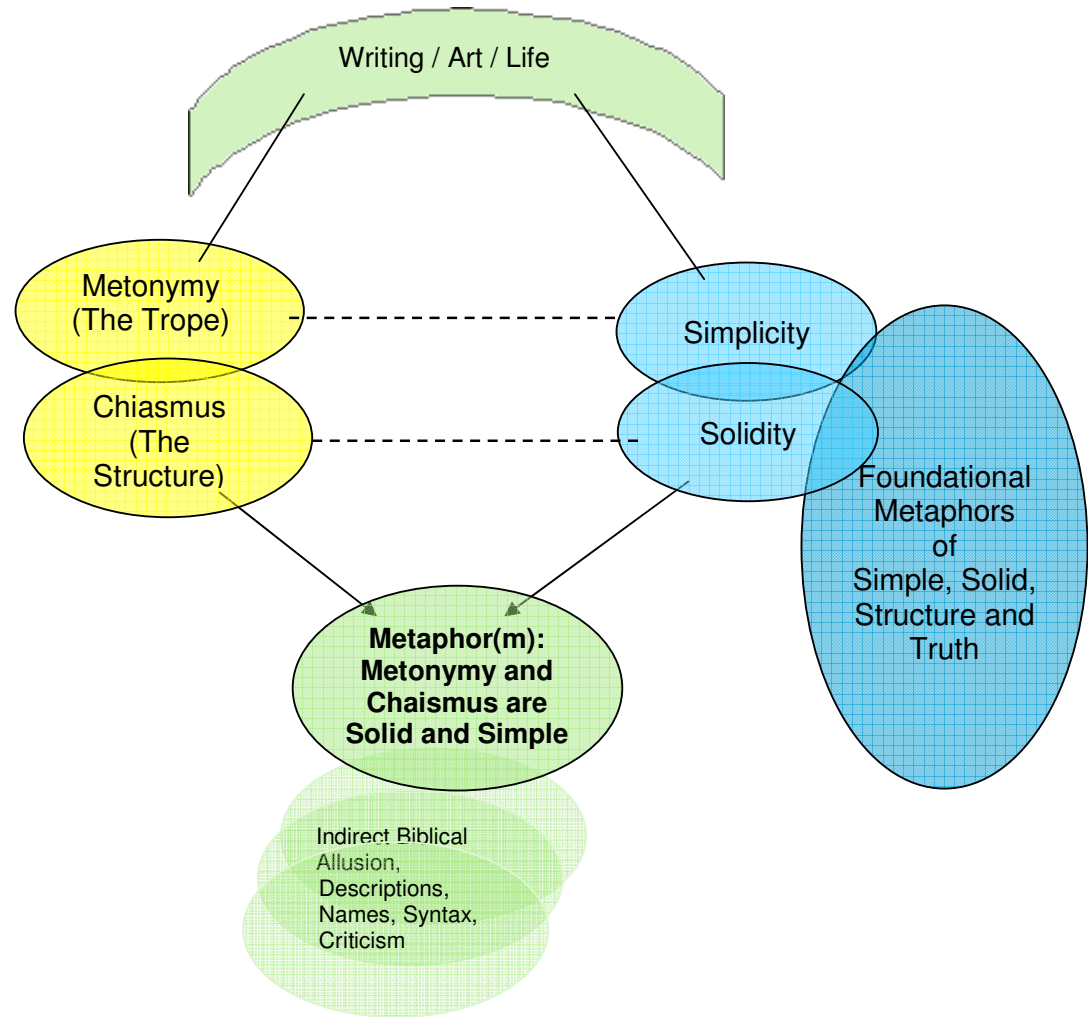


fig. 14  
The Diagram of Ernest Hemingway's Metaphor(m)

These accounts of central trope in van Gogh and Hemingway have put the theory of central trope to the test and, I believe, substantiated its utility. They also exemplify the methodic application of this theory and both propose and evoke ways in which it can be similarly employed in the following chapters to examine a choice of artworks, subjecting them to "thick" or close-analysis. The subjects include my own work and that of other artists, as well as various fields of visual art, including painting, installation, electronic media and

comic art (also termed "sequential art"). This dissertation focuses on visual art, however I analyzed the author Hemingway in order to thoroughly test and present my theory. He is a challenging case, considering his clear repudiation of (linguistic) metaphor. The section on artist Vincent van Gogh is, nevertheless, more central to my discussion. I have violated a prime technique of metaphor(m) in my discussion here. Due to the necessity to use quotations from Hemingway's works and from the scholar's analyzing him, and due to the clarity of the situation, which makes van Gogh a foremost example of my theory, I have made the section on Hemingway longer than that on van Gogh. If I had embodied their importance to my paper metaphor(m)ally in length, it should have been the other way round!

### Revisions in Light of Central Trope

Reflecting on the applications above and turning our eyes from the Lakoffian elements of my thought to Bloomian ones, it can be perceived that the pervasive use of metaphor(m) is the test of the truly forceful creator (Bloom's "strong poet," as described above). In this, we can contribute a new concept of "genius." Rather than being seen as some kind of transcendently inspired originality, genius can be correlated with the attainment of *enveloping* discernment, through the transformational power of the metaphor(m). Genius becomes the inspiration to all-pervasiveness, infusing the insight ("genie") of central trope in the entire thinking-experiential process. In a similar vein of reasoning, "pervasiveness" replaces the inadequate concept of "unity." The now thread-worn discussions of "unity in diversity" and the like were never sufficient, especially after Modernism, for the lived experience of what artists attempt in the composition of artworks. The idea of "unity" connotes something feeble, almost expended, when seen as a goal and as it is often taught in art schools, primarily in those Bauhaus-derived explanations of relational balancing. In the place of such entropy, the theory of central trope suggests a substitution: "comprehensiveness," the attempted-for omnipresence of one's guiding vision, a dynamic fullness. For example, it seems evident that Jan van Eyck's detailed rendering is not merely a new formal discovery used for its novelty alone. His style uses the dynamism of seeming opposition to energize an integrated vision of life. His realism serves to draw in viewers, suggest transcendence, and justify the individuality of persons and objects with the essence of God. His light is physical, yet does not dissolve; rather, it crystallizes visible reality, being in no way mysterious or overwhelming as in the medieval art before him. Yet the spiritual essence of God would appear to have little to do with a powerfully material world. In this, and



other elements, we see that Jan van Eyck is a highly complex painter, in whose work many seemingly contradictory elements are reconciled. His works offers a form of accord far more sophisticated than any notion of unity — and this long before Modernism. I will not deeply analyze his metaphor(m) at this point, but it revolves around his use of light as a materializing force to embrace and overcome contradiction in what he saw as theological truths and the material world. This conviction pervades and harmonizes his work by way of pervasiveness.

The search for this pervasiveness, tropaic omnipresence, explains a prime form of development and growth in artists. The discovery of one's own metaphor(m) may come in a blinding flash or in gradual steps, but learning to apply it is always a matter of slow work and hard-won experience. Some creators only progress to certain points in this maturational process, winning a few rounds but leaving off the end of the match. Thereby, they may even achieve importance, but not true strength in the Bloomian sense. The novels of James Joyce can be studied as a step-by-step realization of an ever more pervasive metaphor(m), one carried to an apex seldom reached in the history of literature or art. In an ideally consummated approach, the central trope would inhabit each and every decision by a creator. This is the never-ending lustre of the praxis of artistically maturation.<sup>46</sup>

Continuing this line of discovery, we bring to light another potential revision of a flawed conventional sentiment concerning creativity. "Reduction" has been touted at times as the sacred goal of the arts. Beyond a doubt, as creators mature their works frequently become not only allusively richer, but more concentrated. As comic artists phrase this, it consists in "learning what to leave out."<sup>47</sup> While many authors have expressed a similar perception, the truth of this is so concretely evident in illustrative (i.e. "realistic" as opposed to humorous style) comic artist's works. Many begin their careers working in tightly, often overly-detailed styles — perhaps in order to achieve renown. By the late phases of their careers, many draw with far fewer lines, yet with much richer expression. How do we retain this fine observation

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46 I am purposefully using Ralph Waldo Emerson's word *lustre* in his spelling, although it is archaic in America. An insightful comment on this concept is in Bloom's *Agon*, p. 229.

47 This assertion, or variations on it, appear quite frequently in interviews with older comic-book artists in *The Comics Journal* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books), one of the few, serious critical publications in the field. Similarly, Jim Vadeboncoeur discusses this on his website page for famous comic artist Alex Toth. He writes that comics editor Sol Harrison "was a tough task master who instilled in Toth the second part of his lifelong mantra: 'simplify, simplify, simplify.' ... Harrison insisted that Alex learn what to omit from his art. 'Wellll, Alex, ' Toth once quoted Sol Harrison as saying, 'it's all rrightt, but you still don't know what to leave out. ' "Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr, Alex Toth Homepage, <<http://www.bpib.com/illustra3/Toth/toth.html>>, 2006, last accessed 23 November, 2009.

concerning reduction, but subtract the level of self-mortification it reached in Late Modernism? Reduction must be recognized not as a goal, but as a means — to embodied metaphor(m). Reduction is redefined by the theory of central trope as an example in use of H. Paul Grice's "Maxim of Quantity" (This rule is simple: "Be as informative as is required and not more so."<sup>48</sup> Lakoff and Turner use this idea to clarify a guiding principle of the creation of new metaphors, explaining their elegance and understandability; however it also deciphers the issue of reduction in the arts. As creators develop, their use of their metaphor(m)s becomes more encompassing, as just described. Concomitantly, as pervasiveness expands, artists and authors become more aware of extraneous elements in their works, i.e. ones which do not assist, or may even be detracting from, the central trope. Hence, these are extracted from the mix. This fuller account of reduction denies subtraction for its own sake. Important is the necessary increase in abundance which it indirectly serves. Reduction is the drive to leave out what does not contribute to the metaphor(m).

### Considerations of Terminology

It might be argued that my theory is anticipated in some other terminology which is already in place in poetics, hence there is no need to create new coinage, an older one could merely be expanded. One of these existing literary terms could be broadened in purport: conceit, image, scheme, style, or extended metaphor. One of the terms of more recent coinage could be converted, such as aegis, perruque, or meme.

These varieties of other "large" tropes are occasionally quite useful, yet I find each unclear or inadequate for my purposes. A *conceit* is a complex metaphor which runs through the entire body of a single work, usually a metaphysical poem. It seldom goes further than this. Besides not being broad enough, a conceit is always conspicuously artificial and improbable, identified primarily with metaphysical poetry. It is symbolic in a lopsidedly clever fashion. It is a purposefully inorganic measure used to create an abstracted hook on which to hang a work.

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<sup>48</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 171. This idea was first espoused by H. Paul Grice in 1961 in his essay "The Causal Theory of Perception," *Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 35, 121-52. Rpt. in *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing*, ed. Robert J. Swartz (Garden City, N Y.: Doubleday--Anchor, 1965), pp. 438-72.

While *conceit* is too narrow, the term *image* encompasses far too much, making it of little use in a theory of trope. It can mean a metaphor itself, a concrete anecdotal reference, a symbol, a recurrent motif, or a specific "snapshot" of everyday experience (as in the literary poetic movement Imagism). In this paper it is used in the standard non-literary way, meaning a mental picture of something.

*Scheme* has always been difficult to nail down, being intricately intertwined in poetics with figure, trope and meter. Generally, it is used nowadays to describe a conceptual structuring of allusion which somewhat resembles the mathematical structuring of syllables called *meter*. A scheme is an applied order, perhaps a bit forced, used throughout a single work, or a section of a larger work. It has never been seen as extending throughout an entire œuvre. In short, it is a one-shot plan.

*Style* denotes a broad formal concern. It evokes notions that seem too fortuitous for theoretical use in metaphor theory. Stylistics would, of course, include the study of metaphor(m)s. However, *style* is not precise or intentional enough to be descriptively instrumental in the way I wish. It suggests the entire "package of delivery" of some content. It sounds somehow independent of meaning, yet dependent on whims of the personality. Unfortunately, the word *style* can call to mind no more than un-willed, unintentional, individual tics of expression. I do not believe this to be true of an artist's style and would not like to suggest it. A rigorously integral and achieved style is the opposite of this; it is precise in its connotations. Due to style's associations, the word has been avoided as a general term.

The phrase *extended metaphor* comes closest to metaphor(m), yet does not encompass it. An extended metaphor sits, so to speak, on top of a work, not at its root as a central trope does. An extended metaphor is generally developed in some detail by an author or artist. It is a more natural conceit. Nevertheless, it remains rather singular, persisting as a technical device used in the composition of one work. The fashion in which I have used surveying and painting as in this paper so far can be seen as either conceits or extended metaphors.

The newer term *aegis* comes from Norman Bryson. It is his attempt to expand intertextual allusion to an important trope. This is clearly influenced by Harold Bloom, who is an important source for my theorizing as well. Since we have *metalepsis* as the name for the specific trope Bloom favors, that of intertextually playing one trope off a former one, I see no

gain in rephrasing this. Additionally, such intertextuality is a small part of my theory, but not the chief one, which revolves around the formation of a central, pervasive trope based on an image scheme or mapping.<sup>49</sup>

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau presents his engaging idea of the *perruque*. This word literally is French for "wig," but is idiomatic for stealing work-time for one's own projects, e.g., such as is the situation when producers of small amateur magazines (called *xines*) photocopy their publications at their workplaces during work hours. De Certeau sees this as a trope in which the socially powerless hollow out a somewhat Kristevian loop-hole for themselves within the conditions which dominate them. This is a discerning assessment of a little-studied phenomenon, one I find very attractive, yet a tactic more than a trope, in my opinion, and one which is rather far afield of my theory of artistic central trope.<sup>50</sup> This maneuver could, however, be a fertile ground for the invention of a central trope in an individual artist's work.

The British biologist Richard Dawkins created the word *meme* in his book on evolution, *The Selfish Gene* in 1976.<sup>51</sup> Memes are considered cultural analogues to genes, therefore units of socio-cultural ideas which get passed from one person to another. The term has had little actual scientific success — no one has yet been able to clearly isolate an example nor prove its auto-transmitability. Indeed, if such an entity does exist, it resembles a virus more than a gene. *Meme* is, however, highly fashionable on internet, where it is used to describe any spread of a trendy catch-phrase or word stylization. I find it far too vogueish, vague and unproven to be of any use.

In summary, all of these standard rhetorical terms describe ideas which are ancillary to, far afield of, or even surface through central trope in the contributing components of an author or artist's vision. Many, such as conceits, schemes, style, and extended metaphors, I would claim are instances in application of metaphor(m).

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<sup>49</sup> Norman Bryson, *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>50</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>51</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

While discussing terminology, I would like to make a point concerning a way in which my chief term, *trope*, is *not* used in this dissertation: the manner in which it currently frequently appears in idiomatic use in the artworld. Far too often the word is bandied about in discussions where it is used as shorthand for referring to a technique or practice within a specific style of art, one which the speaker does not support. The person using the term is thereby in fact accusing an artist of having key elements in his work which are the result of unreflected habits and of unconscious, fallacious symbolism. For instance, Neo-Conceptualists are wont to indict Neo-Expressionists for using brushwork as "simply a trope of genius" or the like. Likewise, Neo-Expressionists will accuse Pop Art influenced artists of "making iconic tropes out of individual handwriting" and so on. Thus, in fashionable artworld abuse, trope becomes no more than a conventional lie. This is vaguely reminiscent of some of the archaic definitions of metaphor, but more importantly it is a confusion of *topos* with *trope*, a common error.

Topoi in literature are conventional themes, motifs, character-types or style elements that are common within a specific genre of literature. For instance, one topos in horror or so-called Gothic novels is the stormy night in a castle; one in hardboiled detective novels is the alcoholic yet ethical loner as chief character. Thus, what artworld users of the word *trope* are seeking is most likely *topos*. The characteristic mark of a brushstroke from the hand of an artist as an indicator of individualism was an original invention of the Action Painters, but could be now viewed as having become codified into a topos. Outsourcing, not producing one's work with one's own hands, was a new aesthetic option attempting to incorporate industrial systems into art when the Russian Constructivists first suggested it. The "found object" appeared shockingly anti-humanistic in the hands of the Dadaists. Yet, both of these have turned into very nearly obligatory procedures in Neo-Conceptualism, symbolizing the content mentioned — thus topoi.

The term *trope* is used in this paper when figurative language in general is meant, as is standard in literature; however, I am applying it to visual art. *Metaphor* is another usual term for the idea which is discussed here. Unfortunately, though, the word *metaphor* is too frequently used in two distinct applications, one general and one particular. Confusion often results from this failure to distinguish the species from the genus. *Metaphor* may mean alternately either figurative expression itself, the genus — therefore identical with *figurative*

*language* or *trope* — or that particular instance thereof, the species, usually described as follows.

A figure of speech, an implied analogy in which one thing is imaginatively compared to or identified with another, dissimilar thing. In metaphor, the qualities of something are ascribed to something else, qualities that it ordinarily does not possess.<sup>52</sup>

That is, the famous description of metaphor as a "comparison without a *like* or *as*," which is taught in high school and secondary school literature classes. Such as "*Achilles is a lion*," the metaphor most often quoted, so prevalent that its source the *Iliad* need not even be cited. Useful terminology does not allow a thing to be a species of itself. In Lakoff and his collaborators' sense of metaphor as a thought process rather than a figure of speech, I follow them and use the combination *cognitive metaphor*. Other terms bring other difficulties, all probably reflecting the various underlying philosophies of the animal under study. Various general terms include *trope*, *figure* and *figurative language*. The latter two cause problems when applied to visual art. Anything containing the word *language* is not interdisciplinary enough and *figure* in visual art is widely used to mean the human form (e. g. *figure painting*). To some extent, these terms are inadequate in reference to literature as well. They clearly reinforce views of the trope opposite to those espoused in this paper. Connotations such as figure skating or ornateness come to mind, declaring metaphor to be no more than decorative fancy. There are linked terms, such as those discussed above, as well as others including *symbol*, *rhetoric*, *poesy*, *poetics*, *analogy*, etc. Yet each expresses a particular idea somewhat askew of the intentions here. Some of these terms describe ideas which are corollaries or particular instances of metaphor(m).

In short, the problems with the term reflect erstwhile, deficient and competing theories of the thing itself. *Trope* is difficult because it is derived from *turning*, which could suggest that entities such as metaphor, metonymy or litote are merely self-indulgent twists on normal "transparent" speech. However, turning can be envisioned in other, more evocative images and analogies. As Gerald L. Bruns writes of Philo of Alexandria, the Hellenistic philosopher who amalgamated Stoicism, allegory and Jewish exegesis:

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<sup>52</sup> Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Lincolnwood, Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1996), p. 131.

Philo's word for "figurative" derives from the Greek *trepein*, 'to turn,' which means not transformation (turning one thing into another) but conversion (turning something around): when confronted with a dark saying, you can make it plain by turning it toward you, because the light it sheds is on its nether side, shining away from you. Frequently, however, what requires turning is not the saying but the one who fails to understand it. If a saying shines its light away from you, you are not standing where you should be; you need to alter your place or condition in order to situate yourself in the light of what is said.<sup>53</sup>

*Trope* and its concomitant adjectives *tropological* or, stylistically better, *tropaic* are the most promising. Therefore it will serve as the general term, *metaphor* will be chiefly used in its specific application ("no *like* or *as*" species), occasionally substituting for the general, along with the other terms mentioned, where this occurs in common use, for stylistic variety or in quotations of other writers. It is included in the title for the word play as noted, and because it remains an important keyword in any literature search of poetics.

## Synopsis

I have now finished painting a portrait of the nature of the theory of central trope. In following chapters it is tested, exemplified and systematically studied. Let me apply a concluding varnish of brief summation to the picture.

Trope as the basis of human thought, pressed into the tangible stuff and processes of creativity, constitutes metaphor(m), or the theory of central trope. The foremost struggle of strong literary and visual creators is the search for this vital, analogical tool. An important aspect of this agonism is brought about by straining against the confines established by one's artistic precursors. A further phase of this conflict is the attempt by authors or artists to manifest the discovered central trope pervasively throughout their techniques, works and total œuvre. The final result is a dialectical integration of content and form. The profile of meaning itself is understood in terms of the anatomy of its delivery – and vice versa. Francis Landy writes of the poetry of the *Song of Songs* that, independent of whether it involves two earthly erotic lovers or a symbolic love between God and his people, "lovers can communicate only

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<sup>53</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 638.

through the world, through metaphor. ... Something happens that is beyond speech, and it enters language only through displacement."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Landy, Francis, "The Song of Songs," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 305.



# The Adventures of my CHART!

