10

IMAGERY

10.1 *Imagery*

At the technical level poetry is at its best when composed with *thrift*, that is to say, when the poet expresses as much as he can in a few words as possible. To use an analogy, this would correspond to an artist drawing a sketch with a minimum of pencil strokes (Matisse, Picasso).

Of course poetry is not just economy of expression for, at the very least it would tend to be rather dry if not extremely dull. Like the painter, a poet has to infuse his word pictures with life and movement and make them appeal to the senses. The artist can use a whole range of colours while the poet has to resort to *imagery*, to evoking pictures with figurative language.

In the larger sense, poetry is imagery, but here we are more directly concerned with technique which boils down to the use of simile and metaphor. And before we can turn to these topics we must first examine the nature of the image and imagery.[1]

An *image* is 'a figure of speech expressing some similarity or analogy' and most images are metaphorical.[2] The converse is not necessarily true, though: not all metaphors or comparisons are images. Imagery must be:

1. concrete and sense-related, not based on abstract concepts:[3]

1. Much of the following is dependent on Ullmann's chapter 'The Nature of Imagery' in *Language*, 174–201.
2. Ullmann, *Language*, 177.
3. 'There can be no question of an image unless the resemblance it expresses has a concrete and sensuous quality' (Ullmann, *Language*, 178).

You tear men's skin away from them,[4]
and their flesh away from their bones,
eating my people's flesh,
flaying their skin from them,
crunching their bones,
breaking (them) as if for the pot,
or like meat within a cauldron. (Mic 3,2-3[5])

2. Further, an image should contain an element of surprise[6] as in the oracle against Jehoiakin:

They'll not bewail him with
'My poor brother,
my poor "fraternity"'.

They'll not bewail him with
'Poor Master,
Poor "His Majesty"'.

He'll be buried with an ass's burial:
dragged along and ejected
way outside Jerusalem's gates. (Jer 22,19[7])

3. And, finally, imagery is more effective if new or at least relatively unknown,[8] or at least if an old image is given a new twist; in Joel 1,6-7 the well-worn image of devouring locusts is combined with the equally hackneyed metaphor of devouring lions to give:

Their teeth are lion's teeth,
their jaws a lioness's,
making havoc of my vine,
defoliating my figs . . .[9]

Original imagery, such as that of the tomb-robber in Job 3,20-23,[10] is exceptional.

Images can be ornamental, but the expert poet will use imagery for particular functions.[11] They can express a significant theme within a corpus—the covenant-theme, for instance, in Hos 14,9:

4. There are some difficulties in the Hebrew, but the sense is clear enough.
5. See, too, Jer 50,17 for more concrete imagery.
6. Ullmann, *Language*, 178, uses the adjectives 'striking and unexpected'.
7. Also Jer 9,21; 17,11.
8. Ullmann, *Language*, 179.
9. See Mic 2,12-13.
10. As pointed out by Gibson, *SJT* 28 (1975) 264; he also mentions the sirocco imagery in Job 4,9 (265).
11. Ullmann, *Language*, 193-201.

אני כברוש רענן I am like a leafy pine-tree.[12]

'Some images and image-patterns carry strong emotional overtones and convey implicit value-judgments'[13]—often in the form of animal imagery which can be positive, as in the metaphorical use of such names for officials (see below), or negative as in Am 4,1:

Listen to this matter,
cows of Bashan.

One image can sum up a writer's philosophy—'wind' in Qoh—or form part of a portrait—Egypt as a 'heifer' in Jer 46,20.[14] The otherwise inexpressible can be conveyed by an apt image or set of images; an example is Job 28 which successfully puts across the concept of God's unfathomable wisdom.[15] Recognition of the correct image can have text-critical and philological repercussions.[16] An illustration is provided in the section WORKED EXAMPLES, on Ps 47.

For study
Ez 19,1-9; Job 32,18ff; 6,2-3.

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12. Note, incidentally, the allusion to ברית in the name of the tree.
13. Ullmann, *Language*, 195; also 147-49.
14. Also, Ez 27.
15. Craigie: 1978, mentions two further functions: the dramatic and the religious. For structuring functions of imagery, cf. Lack: 1973.
16. See Paul: 1978 for a good illustration.

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The lengthy list provided here shows imagery to be a much-studied topic in Hebrew poetry, though very little seems to have been done in the area of Mesopotamian studies and only a few titles refer directly to Ugaritic. A good model for the study of Hebrew imagery is Alonso Schökel, *Estudios*, 269-307, where he examines the imagery of water, mountains, fire, other nations as the instrument of divine punishment and the stumbling block, chiefly in connection with Isaiah.

10.2 *Simile*

The simile in general

Simile and metaphor overlap, to a certain extent: they express the same thing but in different ways. Broadly speaking, the simile is more obvious than metaphor. This is either because it is more *explicit*, or because the *ground of comparison* is actually stated. By contrast,

metaphor is more concise and at the same time, more vague.[17] So, in

Like heads of grain they wither (Job 24,24)

everything is expressed and there is no room for divergent interpretations. (However, as will be seen, similes favour the use of ellipsis.)

Similes and oral poetry

In his study of the Homeric simile, Scott concluded that 'the simile is an independent entity entering the narrative either at the beginning of the line or else beginning at one of the traditional caesurae of the line'.[18] This applies, in a limited way, to ancient Near Eastern poetry too, indicating that poets had a stock of similes which they could use at various points in their improvisation. In general, such similes (whether borrowed or invented) served a twofold purpose; one audience-oriented, the other to the poet's own advantage. Ready-made similes were suitable to sustain interest, highlight certain characters or particular aspects and to demarcate or link up the several sections of the composition. At the same time, a memorised stock of similes provided the components for improvised verse.

Types of simile

There seems little point in classifying simile according to animals, trees, precious objects and the like.[19] Such data may be of interest in determining the cultural or geographic milieu of both poet and audience; it is not directly of concern to studying poetic technique. Of its nature, the simile tends to diffuseness and extension (in contrast to the conciseness of metaphor, as mentioned briefly above). Accordingly the simile will be repeated, cumulative or extended, often occurring in series or clusters. However, similes (especially those originating in metaphor) can be brief.[20]

The simile in Akkadian

Babylonian and Assyrian literature is rich in simile, some expressions having an exact match in Hebrew,[21] other comparisons being more original. For example:

17. Leech, *Guide*, 156-57. Note especially his definition: 'Simile is an overt, and metaphor a covert comparison'.
18. Scott: 1974.
19. A catalogue of this nature is D. Marcus, 'Animal Similes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions', *Or* 46 (1977) 86-106.
20. Other types: omissible or essential; stylised; inverted, cf. Payne: 1970.
21. E.g. 'like water' on which cf. Gevirtz, *JNES* 30 (1971) 94-95.

ašnan šumma daddariš ala'ut	Grain I swallow as if it were like stinkweed.[22]

From an examination of this literary figure in Akkadian, two points emerge: first, there is *clustering* of similes (as in Ugaritic and Hebrew);[23] and, more importantly, there is a marked tendency for *extending* a simile quite beyond bounds acceptable to Western ears. In the following excerpt from *Šurpu*, for instance, the simile has been developed to such a degree that a resumptive noun phrase is necessary, which repeats the point of comparison (here: 'just like this tuft of wool'):

> As this tuft of wool is plucked and thrown into the fire, where the flames consume it so thoroughly that it does not return onto its sheep nor does it serve as ceremonial clothing, so may invocation, oath (etc.) be plucked—just like this tuft of wool—and may the flames consume it thoroughly on this very day; may it depart, that I may see the light.[24]

The simile in Ugaritic

The parallelistic nature of Ugaritic poetry creates a tendency for similes in pairs.

kirby tškn šd	Like locusts, let them settle in the field,
km ḥsn pat mdbr	like hoppers on the desert fringe.
	(*CTA* 14 ii/iii 103-105 and parallels)

This, of course, is not unexpected. Less frequent, but again not surprisingly, similes also come in threes (corresponding to the tricolon).

tṣi km rḥ npš̱ḥ	Out will go, *like a wind*, his breath,
km iṯl brlth	*like spittle* his life,
km qṭr baph	*like incense* from his nose.
	(*CTA* 18 iv 24-26[25])

22. Text: *BWL* 44:88 (= Ludlul II). Cf. 'like a thief; furtively', in *Atr* 74:19; 76:33. Note that in addition to particles such as *kīma*, 'like' there is the terminative formation with *-iš*, meaning much the same, e.g. *išātiš*, 'like fire', *ḫašikkiš*, 'like a mute', and *edāniš*, 'like a recluse' (all Ludlul I 68.71.79).

23. See Buccellati: 1976, 65-66 and the threefold simile, *BWL*, 40:42-44.

24. *Šurpu* V/VI 93-100, cited by Buccellati: 1976, 61. It follows, then, that to prune down such lengthy similes to their bare bones and to designate the remainder as 'gloss' is a procedure to be used with extreme caution. (Contrast O. Loretz, 'Vergleich und Kommentar in Amos 3,12', *BZ* 20 [1976] 121-25.)

25. The additional line, *bap mhrh*, 'from his warriors' noses' (so Gibson, *CML*, 112 and n. 9) does not appear in the parallel section, lines 36-37. Other triple similes: *CTA* 3 ii(B) 9-11; *CTA* 12 i 9-11 (as reconstructed in *TO*, 334f); *Ugar* 5 3 i 1ff.

More characteristic is the clustering of similes in these texts. The lines just quoted form part of a set of five, grouped into 2 + 3. Note, too, four similes in *CTA* 5 i 14-17.

As noted by Buccellati for Akkadian,[26] *ellipsis* (or gapping) is often a feature of the simile; not only can the comparative particle be omitted, but this can happen even in the first line:

hlk lalpm ḥḏḏ	Marching by the thousand (like) thunder,
wlrbt kmyr	and by the myriad like rain.
	(*CTA* 14 ii 92-93 etc.)

There are other examples of this use of 'double-duty' *k*.[27]

The peculiar construction *k//k//km* will be examined below for both Hebrew and Ugaritic.[28]

Certain similes of Hebrew verse already find counterparts in Ugaritic: 'to bite like a serpent' occurs as *yntkn kbṯnm*, 'they bit like serpents' (*CTA* 6 vi 19), corresponding to 'at the last it bites like a serpent' (Prov 23,32).[29]

Note the *extended simile* in *CTA* 17 vi 30-33:

kb'l kyḥwy	Like Baal, when he is revived—
y'šr ḥwy	the reviver prepares,
y'šr wyšqynh	he prepares to give him to drink,
ybd wyšr 'lh	he improvises and sings before him,
n'm [dy]'nynn	the minstrel who serves him—
ap ank aḥwy aqht ġzr	I too can revive the youth Aqhat![30]

Hebrew similes

The simile in Hebrew shares features of both Akkadian and Ugaritic poetry, but in rather more developed form. There is ellipsis, extension of the simile and similes in even longer series than those known from Ugaritic. Little is new, though, except perhaps in content and function.

Note that the particles used to introduce simile (though not always present) are *k*^{e} (and its variants, *k*^{e}*mô* etc.), *māšal*, 'to be like', *'im*,

26. Buccellati: 1976, 59ff.

27. *CTA* 15 i 5-7; 22B 16ff.

28. See the section on triple parallelism. Called by Gray the cumulative simile 'a variation of the simple simile developed under the exigency of parallelism', *Legacy*, 298f.

29. Cassuto, *Anath*, 24; cf. above on METHOD.

30. As translated by Dijkstra—De Moor, *UF* 7 (1975) 187. For a slightly different version: Gibson, *CML*, 109.

in its specialised meaning of 'like'[31] and sequences such as *kᵉ . . . kēn*, 'like . . . so (is)'.

1. *Simple similes*. All kinds of simile are to be found in Hebrew, only a sample of which can be mentioned here. Some of the more striking are: 'pour wrath like water' (Hos 5,10); 'I will press you down in your place as a cart full of sheaves presses down' (Am 2,13); 'lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth' (Joel 1,8); 'I eat ashes like bread' (Ps 102,9); 'make yourselves as bald as the vulture' (Mic 1,16). Also: 'she makes a sound like a serpent gliding away' (Jer 46,22).

2. *Paired similes*. Since so much of Hebrew verse is in parallelism, many similes come in sets of two:

> If you seek it out *like silver*,
> And *like hidden treasures* you search for it. (Prov 2,4)

> So I am *like a moth* to Ephraim
> And *like dry rot* to the house of Judah. (Hos 5,12[32])

Such paired similes can be combined with other verse-forms such as chiasmus, e.g. Hos 4,16; 2 Sm 23,4.

3. *Triple similes*. Since the tricolon is an established pattern in both Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry, sets of three similes do occur, though not very often.

> Left is Daughter Zion
> *like* a hut in a vineyard
> *like* a lodge in a cucumber field
> *like* a defended city. (Isa 1,8[33])

Other examples are 2 Sm 23,4,[34] Joel 2,5 (within a set of 2 + 3 + 0 + 2 in vv. 4-9), and Job 7,1b-2.

4. *Cumulative similes*. Similes cast in this form tend to heighten the suspense slightly by delaying the final line. It occurs in Ugaritic:

klb arḥ l'glh	Like the heart of a cow for her calf,
klb ṯat limrh	Like the heart of a ewe for her lamb,
km lb ʿnt aṯr bʿl	So is the heart of Anath towards Baal.
	(*CTA* 6 ii 6-9//28-30)

31. For bibliography on Ug. *ʿm* = Heb. *ʿim*, 'like' cf. Paul, *JNES* 31 (1972) 351, n. 2.
32. Also Isa 13,14; Am 5,24; Mic 1,4; Joel 2,7; Song 1,5cd.
33. Or perhaps 'besieged city'. Note the complete congruence of gender (all feminine), which reinforces the similes.
34. Mettinger, *SEA* 41-42 (1976-77) 152-53.

Also: (with ellipsis) *CTA* 15 i 5-7.[35] In Hebrew, the corresponding pattern uses the particles *kᵉ . . . // kᵉ . . . // kēn*.

אנוש כחציר ימיו	Man, *like* grass his days,
כציץ השדה	*like* a wild weed
כן יציץ	*so* he grows. (Ps 103,15[36])

Similarly: Pss 83,15-16; 123,2 and perhaps Isa 51,6.[37]

The cumulative simile is very probably a development of what might be termed the explicit simile:

> *As* a lily among brambles,
> *so* is my love among maidens. (Song 2,2ab)

Other examples: 2,3ab; Isa 25,5b.

5. *Similes in series*. As in Ugaritic, similes in Hebrew poetry often come in sets of four and more.

> May my teaching drop *as the rain*,
> My speech distil *as the dew*,
> *As the gentle rain* upon the tender grass,
> And *as the showers* upon the herb. (Dt 32,2-3)

Other sets of four are Isa 32,2; Joel 2,4-5; Hos 13,3. In Hos 13,7-8 there are five ('like a lion, like a leopard, like a bear robbed of her cubs, like a lion, as a wild beast'), but the sequence is interrupted; the same applies to Hos 14,5-7.

Particularly interesting is the series of eleven similes in Sir 50,6-10:

> *Like* the morning-star from between the clouds,
> And *like* the full moon between the festival days,
> And *like* the sun shining on the King's temple,
> And *like* the (rain)bow appearing in the cloud,
> *Like* a rose on its branches on festival days,
> And *like* a lily beside streams of water,
> *Like* a green shoot of Lebanon (-cedar?) in summer days,
> And *like* burning incense on the offering,
> *Like* a vessel of hammered(?) gold upon which precious stones are mounted,
> *Like* a flourishing olive full of berries,
> And *like* a cypress-tree, towering into the clouds.

35. See M.J. Dahood, 'Proverbs 28,12 and Ugaritic *bt ḫpṯ*', *PradoFS*, 163-66, for this difficult strophe.
36. So Dahood, *Psalms II*, 29.
37. Except for the text from Isaiah, cf. *RSP* I, 225 for bibliography.

6. *The extended simile*. As remarked on already, similes in ancient Near Eastern literature are liable to be drawn out to almost unbearable lengths. This is indicative, perhaps, of a certain degree of improvisation: once the simile had been established, the poet could exercise his imagination fairly freely, without the constraint of a particular verse-form. In Jer 17,7-8 the following comparison is made about the man who trusts in God:

> He is like a tree planted by the water:
> that sends out its roots by the stream,
> and does not fear when the heat comes,
> for its leaves remain green,
> and it is not anxious in the year of drought
> for it does not cease to bear fruit.

Even so, perhaps out of habit, the presence of alternating parallelism is unmistakable. See, too, Dt 32,11 (eagle); Hos 7,4.6.11 (baking); Joel 2,2 (gloomy day); and especially the long comparison in Ez 31,2-9 (cedar of Lebanon). Rather briefer is Song 3,6 (rising smoke).

Mixed forms also occur. In Song 4,1e-5c there is a set of six consecutive similes, each in extended form. In 6,5c-7b there are three, in 5,12-13b, only two.

Mixing of metaphor and simile is also to be found (e.g. Song 8,14) while in Song 7,2c-10 there is a series of similes and metaphors. However, since the prime concern of this book is to set out clear principles, such mixtures need not be considered.[38]

Ellipsis

Ellipsis in Akkadian similes has been explored by Buccellati,[39] following Schott, and its presence in Ugaritic has already been discussed. The most significant form of ellipsis in Hebrew simile is omission of the comparative particle. There is no real problem when it occurs in the first line but not in the second, as in

> צדקתך כהררי־אל Your justice is like the towering mountains,
> משפטך תהום רבה Your judgment (like) the vast abyss. (Ps 36,7[40])

38. On inverted similes, where the thing being compared comes before the comparison, cf. H.W. Wolff, *Hosea* (Philadelphia, 1974). 83, and Andersen—Freedman, *Hosea*, 360.

39. Buccellati: 1976, 59ff.

40. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 436 where Pss 48,7b-8a; 58,9; 90,4; 102,8 and 125,1-2 are also listed.

But often enough, the preposition is not used till the second or even third line:

> חצי גבור שנונים (Like) sharpened arrows of a warrior,
> עם גחלי רתמים Like glowing coals of broom. (Ps 120,4[41])

An example of an omitted k^e in the last two lines of a tricolon is 2 Sm 23,4.

Functions of the simile

The functions can be divided into two broad categories: structural and non-structural. These will be considered in turn.

1. *Structural functions of the simile*. The simile can be used to open a section or stanza (usually a speech) or to end one; it can also function as a link between sections of a poem.

opening similes

> Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard,
> transplanted by the water,
> fruitful and full of branches . . . (Ez 19,10-14)

Also Isa 54,9; Jer 22,6; 46,7-8; 50,11; Ez 31,2; Ps 11,1.[42]

closing similes

> Pain as of a woman in travail. (Jer 22,20-23)

And Isa 51,23; Jer 15,18; 18,17; 23,14b; 25,38; Ez 21,10b; Joel 2,9; Am 5,24; Hab 3,19; Job 5,26; 24,24.[43]

to both open and close

> Therefore,
> as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> Their roaring is like a lion,
> like young lions they roar. (Isa 5,24-29[44])

And Jer 50,42-43; 51,38-40.

41. So Dahood, *Psalms III*, 437 and 196-97.

42. In Ugaritic: *Ugar 5* 3 i ff.

43. Ugaritic examples: to close a speech: *CTA* 6 i 10; 12 i 9-11.30-31; to end a description: *CTA* 4 ii 42-44 (goblet); 5 vi 20-22 (mourning rite); 14 vi 291-92 (Keret's wife-to-be).

44. However, v. 30 actually e nds the poem. Note that it is difficult to tell whether the locust similes in *CTA* 14 i 92-93 (and par.) close the foregoing section or comprise the start of a new one.

linking similes

They are all adulterers,
they are *like a heated oven*,
.....
.....
For, *like an oven*
.....
..... *like a blazing fire*
All of them are *hot as an oven*. (Hos 7,4-7[45])

2. *Non-structuring functions of simile*. The simile serves to sustain interest, emphasise a motif and express vividness or emotive intent. It can also be informative or merely ornamental and provides relief, or provokes suspense.

For study
Sir 15,2; Prov 7,22. Compare Ps 133 and 1 Sm 21,4.

Cross-references
HYPERBOLE, METAPHOR, ORAL POETRY, STANZA.

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Also Cassuto, *Anath*, 24-25 and Gray, *Legacy*, 298-99 (on Ugaritic).

45. In *CTA* 6 i 10 *tšt kyn udm't*, 'she (= Anath) drank tears like wine', forms a link between two speeches.

10.3 *Metaphor*

The theory of metaphor and poetry
Metaphor belongs to the stuff of poetry, so that to understand poetry involves coming to grips with metaphor and metaphorical expressions. Accordingly, some account of metaphor is required here as in any book on poetry. However, since figurative expression forms part of the language of poetry rather than being a matter of technique (metaphor does not seem to have any structuring function, for instance) discussion need only be brief and succinct. It can also be pointed out that the theory of metaphor is still being debated in the field of modern linguistics, so that it would be premature to offer a summary of the findings so far. For a deeper analysis the reader is referred to the bibliography.

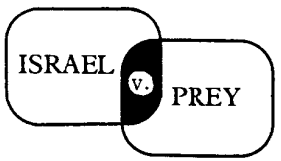
The present paragraph will present (1) two possible ways of analysing metaphor and (2) two attempts at classifying metaphor. In this way some idea of the problems involved can be gained.

1. *Analysis of metaphor: two approaches*. Metaphor is generally presented analytically as follows:

X is like Y in respect of Z
where
X: tenor
Y: vehicle
Z: ground.

For example, 'I was eyes to the blind' (Job 29,15). Here *Job* (tenor) is like *eyes* (vehicle) in respect of *seeing* (ground).

Without attempting a deep theoretical analysis[46] a metaphor can also be represented as the overlap of two word-meanings. So, in the metaphor 'Why, then, has Israel become a prey?' (Jer 2,14), the overlapping aspect of the two concepts '(the nation) Israel' and 'prey' is 'vulnerability':



(v.: vulnerability)

46. For which see J. Dubois et al., *Allgemeine Rhetorik* (Heidelberg, 1974 [original: *Rhétorique générale*, Brussels, 1970]) 176-84.

2. *Classifying metaphor*. Two main types of metaphor can be distinguished: the referential and the conceptual (or semantic).[47]

i. *referential metaphor*: such metaphors are based on what the poet can actually see or visualise. E.g.

> Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard. (Jer 12,10)

where the picture evoked is concrete. Also, 22,28; 23,19.

ii. *conceptual metaphor*: metaphors of this class are based on abstract rather than concrete imagery.

Three grades of metaphor can be established: lexicalised, conventionalised and creative.[48]

i. *lexicalised metaphor*: words (or expressions) that originally were metaphorical, but have since passed into everyday language, as 'blood of trees', meaning 'wine' (Gen 49,11).[49]

ii. *conventionalised metaphors* or clichés which may not belong to ordinary language[50] but are not new coinage. An example is the use of 'cup' to denote allotted portion or destiny (Ez 23,32-34; Ps 75,9; etc.). See also the shepherd/flock imagery to express the relationship between God and Israel, or the 'harlot' imagery for a negative version of the same relationship (Mic 1,7; etc.).

iii. *creative metaphors* are the inventions of first-class poets. An example from many is

> you who turn justice to wormwood (Am 5,7 [cf. 6,12])

A sub-set of the creative metaphor is when a worn-out expression is provided with a new twist. So, in Am 1,2 the stock representation of God as a lion becomes:[51]

> Yahweh roars from Zion,
> and shouts out from Jerusalem:

47. Dubois, *Allgemeine Rhetorik*, 181.
48. G. Kurz—T. Pelster, *Metapher. Theorie und Unterrichtsmodell* (Düsseldorf, 1976) 63.
49. See also Dt 32,14 and Ez 19,10(?). The same expression is used in Ugaritic: *dm ṣm*, *CTA* 4 iv 38 (//iii 44, restored). Note also *dm zt*, 'blood of olives' (= olive oil), *Ugar* 5 1 rev. 6.
50. Also termed 'frozen metaphors'.
51. For a similar passage in Mesopotamian literature see *BWL*, 334.

> the shepherds' pastures wither,
> Carmel's peak dries up.

Of course, a metaphor cannot be pinned down as belonging exclusively to one or other of these categories: the scale is a sliding one. What may be a totally new metaphor for a particular group of people (due to their language, social class or geographic location) may be a worn-out cliché for another.

Metaphor and the poet

Metaphor 'is a special use of words which foregrounds[52] one or more of the underlying semantic parameters by either of two devices: (1) by parametric reinforcement, or (2) by parametric neutralization'.[53] Examples will make this evident:

1. *Reinforcement of parameters*.

> Yahweh is my *rock* and my fortress,
> my God is my haven,
> my mountain where I take refuge;
> my shield and my saving horn,
> my stronghold, worthy of praise. (Ps 18,3[54])

Here the immediate context[55] shows that the positive side of this series of metaphors is intended: they reinforce the semantic parameters 'firm, solid, immovable, protective' underlying 'rock'.

2. *Neutralisation of parameters*.

> Let us destroy the *tree* with its fruit,
> let us cut him off from the land of the living,
> that his name be remembered no more. (Jer 11,19b)

Evidently the positive aspects only of a tree are in question; the concept of a tree as an object of worship (hence, to be condemned) is neutralised. Similarly, Jer 2,13 (water as beneficial, not as destructive, e.g. a flood).

Corresponding to the selection by the poet of a particular metaphor there is the correct interpretation by the listener (or reader). He can

52. Foregrounding is a technical term (coined by Mukarovsky) for the exploitation of grammatical deviation in poetry (see Leech, *Guide*, 56-72).
53. L.G. Heller—J. Macris, *Parametric Linguistics* (The Hague, 1967) 70-71.
54. Largely following the version in Dahood, *Psalms I*, 101.
55. According to Weinrich, metaphor is 'a word in a co-determining context' and is 'never a simple word, but always a piece of text, even if small'. Metaphor is not simply word-substitution, but has always to be considered in context (Weinrich: 1967).

either select those properties of the expression in focus which are relevant to the context (e.g. a lamp as light-producing in Job 21,17) or he can establish the relationship between the two concepts involved.[56]

Metaphor in Akkadian poetry

In common with most poetry, both metaphor and metaphorical expressions are to be found. As in other cultures, divine epithets tend to be metaphorical: Nergal is addressed as 'dragon', 'terrible flood' and 'furious fire', Marduk is termed 'radiant sun' and 'brilliant flame' and so on. Many expressions also occur in Ugaritic or Hebrew; curiously, the phrase 'to drink tears' is common to all three cultures.[57] Note, too, 'at the mention of your (= Ishtar's) name, the earth and sky tremble'[58] and the series of metaphors denoting peril in a prayer to Nābû:[59]

> He lies in the mass of high water and the flood bears down on him.
> The shore is far off, distant is terra firma.
>
> He has perished in a web of tricks, which cannot be cut.
> He has lain in the marsh, is held by the bog.

However, a detailed catalogue and analysis of the metaphors used in Akkadian poetry would serve no purpose here. The significance of being familiar with the figurative language used is in elucidating imagery found in Hebrew that would otherwise be obscure. The sentence

> At my terrible bellow the mountains and river dry up

corresponds to Am 1,2.[60] More significant is the veiled reference to Lamashtu in Jer 9,20:

כי־עלה מות בחלונינו	For Death has come up into our windows,
בא בארמנותינו	has entered our palatial apartments,
להכריה עולל מחוץ	to cut off infants from (ever being on) the street,
בחורים מרחבות	and young men from (ever being on) the squares.

Not only is the metaphor identifiable once it is known that according to Mesopotamian belief the baby-snatching demon called Lamashtu

56. Reinhart: 1976.
57. Cf. *tšt kyn udm't*, 'she drank tears like wine' *CTA* 14 i 30 and Pss 42,4; 80,6; 102,10 (strictly speaking, hyperbolic simile in Ugaritic).
58. Seux, *Hymnes*, 189.
59. Seux, *Hymnes*, 182.
60. Text: *BWL* 192:18; see Lambert's remarks, 334.

was thought to enter houses by the window[61]—it also becomes richer when the allusion to a passage in the Baal Cycle is recognised.[62] This brings us conveniently to the next paragraph: figurative language in the texts from Ras Shamra.

Metaphor in Ugaritic poetry

Again, there is no lack of metaphor in the literary texts from Ras Shamra. Examples are *rgm ṣ*, 'tale of trees' (*CTA* 3C iii 23-24); *ṯkmm ḥmt*, 'shoulders of the wall' (i.e. parapet, *CTA* 14 ii 75; *šnt tluan*, 'sleep overpowered him' (personification, *CTA* 14 i 33; cf. 4 v 66); and the couplet (after two similes)

d'qh ib iqni	Whose eyeballs are lapis lazuli,
ṗ'ph sp ṯrml	her eyelids, alabaster bowls.
	(*CTA* 14 iii 147-8)

And, as already mentioned, many metaphors have exact counterparts in Hebrew:[63] cf. *CTA* 6 iii 6-7 (heavens raining oil, ravines running with honey) and Gen 27,28; Ex 3,8; Job 20,17; Ez 32,14 and Joel 4,18. For instance,

km aḫt ṯrš mdw	Because you have become brother to a sick-bed,
anšt ṯrš zbln	companion to an invalid-bed.
	(*CTA* 16 vi 35-36)

and

לשחת קראתי אבי אתה	(If I) say to the pit: You are my father;
אמי ואחתי לרמה	to the maggot: My mother and my sister.
	(Job 17,14[64])

Identifying metaphors

The points to be examined here show how important it is to identify whether metaphor is present in a text, and if so, which metaphor.

61. S. Paul, 'Cuneiform Light on Jer 9,20', *Bib* 49 (1968) 373-376. See, too, 'There is no compassion when Death seizes an infant' in line 31 of Combination II of the Deir 'Alla Plaster Inscriptions, as translated by Levine, *JAOS* 101 (1981) 200.
62. Namely, *CTA* 4 vi 8-9 etc. (so Cassuto, *Anath*, 22 but contrast Gibson, *CML*, 62, n. 3 and Paul's article in note 61).
63. Animal names as metaphors are discussed below. For a convenient survey see Cassuto, *Anath*, 21-23, though not all his examples are correct.
64. Cf. Prov 7,4. Also *'nq sm dlbnn*, 'the purple necklace of Lebanon' (*CTA* 22B 19-20) and Hos 14,6-8—on which cf. J.C. de Moor, *New Year with Israelites and Canaanites* (Kampen, 1972) II, 13.

Further, the metaphor or metaphors must be interpreted in the light of the larger context in which they are used.[65]

1. *Animal names as metaphors*. 'Frequently animal names were used metaphorically as designations or titles for leaders or nobles of some sort or for warriors'[66] in both Hebrew and Ugaritic. So, in

ṣḥ šb'm ṯry	Call my seventy bulls,
ṯmnym ġbyy	my eighty gazelles,
ṯr ḫbr rbt	the bulls of greater Hubur
ḫbr ṯrrt	of lesser Hubur.
	(*CTA* 15 iv 6-9 [restored from 17-20])

the terms 'bull' and 'gazelle' in reality designate Keret's high officials. Accordingly, they have to be translated 'dukes' and 'barons' or the like.[67] The same usage in Hebrew supplies a long list (here given alphabetically):

אביר	'bull, stallion' (1 Sm 21,8; Ps 68,31; Job 24,22; etc.)
איל	'ram' (Ex 15,15; 2 Kgs 24,15; Jer 4,22; Ez 30,13; Ps 58,2; etc.)
כפיר	'young lion' (Ez 38,13; Nah 2,14)
עתוד	'he-goat' (Isa 14,9; Zech 10,3)
צבי	'gazelle' (1 Sm 1,19; Isa 23,7;[68] Ug. *ġby*)
שור	'bull' (Gen 49,6; Ug *ṯr*).[69]

Unless such animal names are identified as metaphorical for people of rank, certain Hebrew texts remain unintelligible. For instance, in

על הרעים חרה אפי	My anger is hot against the shepherds,
ועל העתודים אפקוד	And I will punish the *he-goats*. (Zech 10,3)

the term *'attûdîm* evidently denotes 'leaders'.

2. *Recognising the metaphor*. To establish which metaphor is present is to find the key to a text. The metaphor of *writing* makes sense of Job 22,22. Isa 23,7 becomes understandable once the metaphor of *paying tribute* has been identified:

65. There will be some overlap between the various sections, but (one hopes) this will not detract from clarity. On this topic cf. Loewenberg: 1975.
66. Miller: 1970, 177.
67. First recognised by H.L. Ginsberg, *The Legend of King Keret: A Canaanite Epic of the Bronze Age* (New Haven, 1946) 42. See *CTA* 14 iii 118-123 for the literal meaning of such terms.
68. See Dahood, *Bib* 50 (1959) 161-62; *Or* 44 (1975) 439-41.
69. Further examples are given by Miller: 1970, 177ff.

Can this be your joyful city?
From ancient times
her tribute they brought to her
at her feet
from a distance made to reverence.[70]

Further: 'wine' as figurative for 'love' (Song 1,2; 2,4; etc.). In the same vein, personification, once recognised, is often the clue to an obscure passage.[71]

3. *Congruity of metaphor*. Although mixed metaphors do occur, generally speaking Hebrew poets were consistent in their use of figurative language. Or, to put it the other way round, metaphors must be presumed as congruous unless the contrary cannot be ruled out.[72] So, in Isa 28,20-21, the couplet

כי קצר המצע מהשתרע	For the bed is too short to stretch out on,
והמסכה צרה כהתכנם	and the cover too narrow to wrap up in.

is not a disconnected proverbial saying, but introduces the 'bed in the Underworld' motif.[73]

Other kinds of metaphor

Under this heading come extended metaphor, metaphors in series, hyperbolic metaphor and personification. Still other forms could be discussed (e.g. metonymy) but do not need to be since they are not specific to Hebrew poetry.

1. *Extended metaphor*. Relatively often in Hebrew literature a metaphor is fully fleshed out in minute detail, the effect being to drive home a particular message. So, in Mic 3,2-3 the metaphor of cannibalism is exploited to the full with reference to the way Israel's leaders treated their subjects:

Tearing their skin from upon them,
and their flesh from their very bones,
who eat the flesh of my people,
and their skin flay off them
and break up their bones,

70. See W.G.E. Watson, 'Tribute to Tyre (Is XXIII 7)', *VT* 26 (1976) 371-74, and the corrective remarks by Auffret, *VT* 28 (1978) 106-08.
71. See below, 270.
72. M.J. Dahood, 'Congruity of Metaphors', *VTS* 16 (1967) 40-49.
73. So Irwin, *Isaiah 28-33*, 34; see 29 on Isa 2,10 and 28,15.

and chop them up as in a cauldron,
and like meat within a cooking-pot.[74]

Also: Isa 47,1-3.5 (mourning); Ez 23,32-34 (cup); 27,25-36 (Tyre: treated as a ship); 29,3-5 (Egypt as a crocodile); Ps 76 (God as a lion); (on Gen 49 see next section).

2. *Metaphors in series*. Like the simile, metaphors can come in groups. In the difficult poem Gen 49 (and to a lesser extent Dt 33) Judah is metaphorically a lion, Zebulun a harbour, Dan a serpent, Naphtali a hind, Joseph a well(?), Issachar a donkey, Benjamin a wolf, etc.[75]

3. *Hyperbolic metaphor*. Somewhat rare in Hebrew, e.g.

Like one rent and riven in the nether world
my bones are strewn at the mouth of Sheol. (Ps 141,7[76])

4. *Personification*. The metaphors of Ugaritic verse imply inanimate objects as acting like persons. To the examples given above can be added *šbt dqnk ltsrk*, 'the grey hairs of your beard instruct you' (*CTA* 4 v 66); *tbkyk ab ġr b'l*, 'weep for you, father, do the rocks of Baal' (*CTA* 16 i 6); and so on.[77] It is difficult to decide whether these are examples of animistic belief, high-flown poetic imagery or a mixture of both. According to current scholarship 'personifications replace mythical figures when rational attitudes supersede the primitive imagination'.[78] In the case of Hebrew poetry, it was largely a matter of demythologising ancient Canaanite borrowings. Not every reference of this kind was expunged; to mention Sheol is enough proof.[79]

Functions of metaphor

Two main functions can be discerned in the poetical use of metaphor. They are

1. *Representational*. The poet uses metaphor to transfer something familiar to what is less well known, though of more importance. For example,

74. For the term *qallaḥat* see Cathcart, *RSO* 47 (1973) 57-58. In the preceding line *ka'ašer* is usually emended to *kᵉśᵉ'ar*, 'like flesh'.

75. For excellent studies of Gen 49 see the articles by Gevirtz.

76. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 313 notes the overall figure of simile. 'Metaphorical hyperbole is the language of joy': so Soulen: 1967, 190.

77. Also *lḥšt abn*, 'whisper of stone' (*CTA* 3C iii 20); *tant šmm 'm arṣ*, 'sigh of sky to earth' (ibid 21; cf. 22). Note Dnil cursing town, spring and tree in *CTA* 18, or embracing and kissing stalks in *CTA* 19 ii 61ff.

78. *PEPP*, 612.

79. Isa 5,14; etc.

Your lips drip honey, bride,
honey and milk under your tongue. (Song 4,11[80])

2. *Presentational*. Here the poet simply describes something which is, in a way, made present; at the same time he mentions the main subject. What is *not* mentioned is the sensation both produce. For example,

Your eyes are pools in Heshbon (Song 7,5)

implies that the eyes of the woman have the same effect on her lover as do the cool, deep, inviting waters of Heshbon. This *juxtaposition* technique is particularly frequent in Song 4 and 7[81] and there is a certain element of overlap with simile.[82]

For study

Isa 28,15-17; Job 10,17; Sir 50,15; Isa 55,12; Prov 8; Pss 77,16; 96,11-12.

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80. As translated by Pope, *Song*, 453.

81. See the discussion by Soulen: 1967, 183-90.

82. For these two functions of metaphor, termed epiphor and diaphor respectively, see P. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Indiana, 1962) 70-91.

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