

# Metaphor and Prop Oriented Make-Believe

Kendall L. Walton

Dolls and hobby horses are valuable for their contributions to make-believe. The same is true of paintings and novels. These and other props stimulate our imaginations and provide for exciting or pleasurable or interesting engagements with fictional worlds. A doll, in itself just a bundle of rags or a piece of moulded plastic, comes alive in a game of make-believe, providing the participant with a (fictional) baby. What in real life is a mere stick enables a child fictionally to ride around on a horse, the better to chase bandits or stray cattle. Paint on canvas and print on paper lead us into exciting worlds of mystery, romance, and adventure and guide our travels through them.

But props are not always tools in the service of make-believe. Sometimes make-believe is a means for understanding props. The props themselves may be the focus of our attention, and the point of regarding them as props in (actual or potential) games of make-believe may be to provide useful or illuminating ways of describing or thinking about them. Participating in the game may not be especially fun in itself and we may have little interest in the content of the make-believe world or the subject matter of our imaginings. A game may be cooked up simply to clarify or expose features of the props, simply so we can observe their role in it. This is make-believe in the service of the cognition of props. I call it *prop oriented* make-believe, and I contrast it to *content oriented* make-believe, whose interest lies in the content of the make-believe, in the fictional world. In *Mimesis as Make-Believe* I emphasized the latter, exploring the ways in which props of various kinds contribute to make-believe activities.<sup>2</sup> I will focus now on prop oriented make-believe.

Paper airplanes, like hobby horses and toy trucks, serve as props in games of make-believe. They make it fictional, i.e. true-in-the-world-of-make-believe, that they are airplanes flying through the air, climbing, diving, landing on a runway, crashing.<sup>3</sup> But the fun of making and playing with paper airplanes does not derive entirely, maybe not even primarily, from their role in make-believe. Children who know nothing of actual airplanes and who think of what we call paper airplanes merely as folded pieces of paper that behave interestingly when thrown, might enjoy throwing them, watching them glide, experimenting with the effects of different folds on their flight, and so on. One's interest may be in the paper constructions themselves, apart from any make-believe. Frisbees suggest a game in which fictionally they are flying saucers. But most frisbee enthusiasts seem to be interested in throwing, catching, and watching the plastic disks themselves, not in fantasies about space travel.

There is nevertheless a point in calling the paper constructions *airplanes* and the plastic disks *flying saucers*. These are convenient ways of indicating, for those who know about airplanes and flying saucers, what these toys are and how they work. The make-believe looks back toward the props themselves, rather than forward to the fictional truths the props generate; it is *prop oriented*.

Paper airplanes and frisbees thus differ from such props as hobby horses, non-flying airplane models (e.g. a model of the Wright brothers' airplane), and the kind of toy trucks that a child pushes around the floor. Merely manipulating or looking at *these* things is likely not to be much fun. One's interest is in the make-believe to which they contribute, in fictionally riding a horse or observing the Wright brothers' airplane or driving a truck.<sup>4</sup> In these cases make-believe looks forward to the content of the make-believe; it is *content oriented*.

Where in Italy is the town of Crotone?, I ask. You explain that it is on the arch of the Italian boot. 'See that thundercloud over there – the big angry face near the horizon,' you say; 'it is headed this way'. Plumbers and electricians distinguish between 'male' and 'female' plumbing and electrical connections. We speak of the saddle of a mountain and the shoulder of a highway.

All of these cases are linked to make-believe. We think of Italy and the thundercloud as something like pictures. Italy (or a map of Italy) depicts a boot. The cloud is a prop which makes it fictional that there is an angry face. Male and female plumbing or electrical connections are understood to be, fictionally, male and female sexual organs. The saddle of a mountain is, fictionally, a horse's saddle. But our interest, in these instances, is not in the make-believe itself, and it is not for the sake of games of make-believe that we regard these things as props. Our participation is minimal at best.<sup>5</sup> Imagining a boot, while seeing a map of Italy or seeing it in my mind's eye, may help me to understand your explanation of the location of Crotone. But I don't contemplate the Italian boot in the way one might contemplate Van Gogh's *Pair of Shoes* or even René Magritte's *The Red Model II*. Clouds *can* support extensive participation; one might, on a dreamy summer afternoon, fictionally examine the furrows of an angry face, wonder what it is angry about, and so on. One might be caught up emotionally in the fictional world the clouds present. But such involvement is unnecessary if the purpose is to identify which cloud you mean to point out. All this requires is to recognize which cloud can best be understood to be an angry-face-picture. To do that it may be helpful to have the experience of, fictionally, recognizing an angry face, but no further participation is called for; there is no need to be caught up emotionally in the fiction. The plumbing and electrical connections invite scarcely any participation in the game in which they are understood to be props, despite its sexy subject matter. The conscientious plumber does his job without, fictionally, leering at the fixtures. (This plumbing terminology can be vaguely titillating, however, and it might cause embarrassment, especially when one comes across it for the first time. These reactions suggest that a certain perhaps implicit participation in the game may be likely, perhaps even inevitable, whether or not such participation helps the plumber to keep track of which fixtures can be connected to which others.) We may speak of saddles of

mountains and shoulders of highways without even thinking of make-believe, let alone participating in it, although no doubt such thoughts were present when these expressions were first introduced or learned.

Make-believe – recognition of the possibility of make-believe, at least – is useful in these cases, even if it is not exciting or pleasurable or edifying in ways games of dolls and games with paintings and novels are. It is useful for articulating, remembering, and communicating facts about the props – about the geography of Italy, or the identity of the storm cloud, or functional properties of plumbing and electrical fixtures, or mountain topography. It is by thinking of Italy or the thundercloud or plumbing connections as potential if not actual props that I understand where Crotona is, which cloud is the one being talked about, or whether one pipe can be connected to another. The purpose is cognitive, but what I learn is not about boots, angry faces (or anger), or sex. The subject matter of the (potential) make-believe is merely useful.

There is nothing profound about the cognitive role of make-believe in these examples. The facts it helps us to grasp and remember and communicate are mundane, and the make-believe is dispensable, a mere convenience. There are other ways of locating Crotona; we don't have to think of Italy as a boot. But make-believe, we shall see later, plays a more essential and extensive role in our understanding of props than is apparent from these examples.

Appreciation of visual and literary representations typically involves participation in prop oriented games of make-believe, especially when the appreciation includes the experience of being 'caught up in the story' or 'emotionally involved' in the fictional world. But people sometimes find it convenient to devise *ad hoc* prop oriented games, often modifications of the standard content oriented ones, in describing the props themselves, the visual or literary representations, and their surroundings.<sup>6</sup> One might remark, for instance, that the author of a forthcoming novel murdered several of his characters with a pencil; this may be a way of pointing out that the author revised the novel so as to exclude those characters. The remark indicates a (possible) game of make-believe in which revising a novel in that manner makes it fictional that one kills characters with a pencil.

If the Metropolitan Museum borrows a portrait of Napoleon from the Louvre for a special exhibit and has it shipped to New York on the *Queen Mary*, one might observe that Napoleon is a 'passenger' on the *Queen Mary*, thus invoking a (possible) game in which the presence of a portrait on a ship makes it fictional that the subject of the portrait is a passenger. I don't know whether anyone else has thought of games like this, let alone participated in them. But there is nothing exotic about them, and it takes only the remark that Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*, in a suitable context, to call the possibility of such games to mind. There is no need for anyone to explain them.

Here are some other comments that can be taken in similar ways:

'This statue isn't the original one. The Germans took the first Flaubert away in 1941, along with the railings and door-knockers. Perhaps he was processed into cap-badges.'<sup>7</sup>

'Christopher Robin had spent the morning indoors going to Africa and back [i.e. reading about Africa], and he had just got off the boat and was wondering what it was like outside, when who should come knocking at the door but Eyore.'<sup>8</sup>

'The chair behind the couch is not the stationary object it seems. I have traveled all over the world on it, and back and forth in time. Without moving from my easy seat I have met important personages and witnessed great events. But it remained for Kirk Allen to take me out of this world when he transformed the couch in my consulting room into a space ship that roved the galaxies.'<sup>9</sup>

These examples illustrate the pervasiveness of make-believe in thought and conversation, the prevalence of hints of, allusions to potential and often fragmentary games, in addition to sustained engagement with full fledged, established games when we appreciate works of art. They also illustrate how little it takes to introduce even rather novel games. The quotation from Lindner suffices to introduce an unusual game in which a patient's exotic tales of other worldly events make it fictional that the psychiatrist's chair is a space ship. We are constantly inventing new games of make-believe and communicating them to each other. This doesn't mean that we actively participate in these games. Many of them are prop rather than content oriented; our interest being not in the make-believe itself, but in the props. Thinking of the props as props in potential games of make-believe is a device for understanding them.

Many remarks that serve to suggest or imply or introduce or call to mind games of make-believe can themselves be 'moves' in the implied games, acts of verbal participation.<sup>10</sup> In saying 'Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*' I might be pretending to assert that he is; it may be fictional, in the game my remark introduces, that in saying this I am claiming that Napoleon really is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*. One may thus call attention to a game of make-believe by engaging in it oneself. But the speaker need not actually participate in the game in order to call attention to it. There are different degrees and kinds of participation, and whether a speaker on a particular occasion does participate will depend on how we choose to understand this notion. (One relevant consideration will be whether, in saying 'Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*' the speaker imagines herself to be asserting the literal truth of that sentence. But it may be none too easy to decide whether she does imagine this.) What matters is that to say 'Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*' is to say something which obviously might be said in an act of verbal participation in a game of a certain salient kind, and that in doing this one implies, suggests, introduces, calls to mind, that kind of game.

The speaker is probably genuinely asserting something as well, whether or not she is pretending to assert something. Saying 'Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*' is a colourful way of asserting that Napoleon's portrait is stowed aboard the ship. The colour consists in the utilization of make-believe as a device for asserting this to be the case; the speaker asserts it by using a sentence that might be used in pretending to assert that Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen*

*Mary*, whether or not she actually so pretends. She at least alludes to a (possible) act of pretended assertion, to an act of fictionally asserting, in the implied game of make-believe, that Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*. She is saying, in effect, that fictionally to assert this would be, fictionally, to assert something true, that circumstances are such that it is fictional that Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*. The circumstance that makes this fictional is the fact that Napoleon's portrait is aboard the ship.

So we have a way of describing the *Queen Mary* and Napoleon's portrait which depends on thinking of them as props in a game of make-believe of a certain sort. Likewise, to say 'That pipe is male' is a colourful way (a slightly off-colour way) of saying that the pipe is designed to fit inside another pipe, that it is threaded on the outside. The speaker implies a certain sort of game of make-believe in which being threaded on the outside makes it fictional that a pipe is male. She goes through the motions, at least, of fictionally asserting that the pipe in question is male, and in doing so she, in effect, claims it to be fictional that the pipe is male, i.e. she claims that it is threaded on the outside. The assertion amounts to the claim that certain circumstances obtain, namely, the circumstances that would make it fictional that she speaks truly if, fictionally, she asserts the literal truth of what she says.

Notice that the content of the assertions in these instances, as given by these glosses, includes no reference to make-believe. The speaker is simply describing features of the prop or props – features of things that are or would be props in games of the implied kind. But it is by invoking make-believe that the speaker says what she does about the props. Interest is focussed on the props themselves; the envisioned make-believe provides a way of describing them.

If, or to the extent that, statements alluding to make-believe can be paraphrased in ways not involving make-believe, make-believe is not essential to what is said. But make-believe sometimes has a more essential role in describing and understanding props than it does in the examples I have given. Even so, the make-believe may be of no particular interest in itself; it may serve merely to clarify or illuminate the props. But it may be more or less indispensable for this purpose. It may do more than simply add colour or provide conveniently memorable or vivid ways of saying what could be said otherwise.

Men's restrooms are marked by stylized pictures of men on the doors; women's rooms by pictures of women. Icons of people in wheelchairs indicate facilities designed for the use of people with physical handicaps. These pictures are used in visual games of make-believe, but ones that invite only minimal participation.<sup>11</sup> On seeing them, one imagines recognizing a woman, or a man, or a person in a wheelchair; fictionally one does so. But that's about it. And this minimal participation is not fun or pleasurable or satisfying or exciting in the way that contemplation of pictures in art galleries is. The point, of course, is to learn something about the picture itself, the prop – that it is a man-picture or a woman-picture, for instance, and hence an indicator of the men's room or the women's room. (Our interest doesn't stop at the prop, in this case; our interest

in it is instrumental. Nevertheless it is an interest in the prop apart from the make-believe world it contributes to, so the make-believe is prop oriented rather than content oriented.)

Iconic signs are usually very stylized and standardized. But I understand that the restrooms at the Orson Wells Cinema in Cambridge Massachusetts were marked by assorted stills of Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant. Let's suppose that any recognizable woman-picture or man-picture, no matter what its depictive style and no matter what posture or attitude or environment the person is depicted in, can be used for the purpose. Every women's room door sports a different woman-picture. Some are in the style of Giotto; others mimic Rubens, or Vermeer, or Degas, or Picasso. (I will suppose that these are *bad* Giottos, Rubens, Picassos, etc., ones we would have little interest in contemplating. Our objective is still simply to identify women's rooms by identifying signs on their doors as woman-pictures.) Some women's room signs depict a seated woman nursing a child; others a woman playing tennis, or giving a lecture, or bathing, or climbing a mountain, or dancing, or descending a staircase. Some depict only a woman's face in closeup; others a silhouetted female figure in a vast landscape.

The variety of *visual designs* that serve to mark women's rooms is boggling. To identify them and distinguish them from those marking men's rooms by characteristics of line and shape would be hopeless. We succeed only if we use the designs as props at least to the extent of fictionally recognizing a woman, or a man, only if we 'see' a woman or a man 'in' them. *Then* we have no trouble. It is not usually hard to identify woman-pictures in the style of Giotto or Rubens or Degas as woman-pictures and to distinguish them from man-pictures, if we engage in the appropriate make-believe. Make-believe is not merely a convenience here, as it is in the case of male and female plumbing connections. A certain minimal participation in make-believe is essential; the mere thought of potential games of make-believe doesn't suffice.

Perhaps make-believe is *in principle* dispensable even here. Perhaps there is a complicated, disjunctive way of specifying members of the class of women's room indicators in terms of lines and shapes. (To keep things simple, I ignore the fact that as styles of depiction change new combinations of shapes may come to count as woman-pictures and women's room indicators.) But none of us can expect to come close to spelling it out. It is hard enough even to say very exactly what it is about a particular design that makes it a woman-picture; this requires more artistic ability or a better eye than most of us have, and an ability to articulate what one intuitively knows which few artists possess. Moreover, even if we had the relevant line and shape specification before us, the *unity* of the class of woman-pictures, the similarity among them, would not be apparent in it. It seems appropriate to classify these varied visual designs together only when we see them as woman-pictures.<sup>12</sup>

It is arguable that the property of being a woman-picture is not identical with that of possessing the complicated disjunctively specified design property. Perhaps the former depends on, or is supervenient on, the latter. Some may

hold that being a woman-picture, like colors or moral properties or being funny, is a *response dependent* property,<sup>13</sup> the relevant response being that of seeing a woman in the design. The design property is not response dependent, or anyway it is not dependent on the same response.

By contrast, it would seem that 'saddle' (of a mountain), 'male connector' and 'on the arch of the Italian boot' are used to attribute properties having nothing essentially to do with make-believe.<sup>14</sup>

It will have been evident that some of my examples are instances of metaphor. 'Saddle' applied to mountains and 'male' applied to plumbing fixtures are metaphors in anyone's book, dead one's anyway. My other examples may be less comfortably thought of as metaphors: 'Napoleon is a passenger on the *Queen Mary*,' 'Crotone is on the arch of the Italian boot,' 'The ugly face in the sky is headed this way,' and 'There is a man' said while pointing toward a men's room sign. The ground of the distinction is unclear, however. To speak of the saddle of a mountain is to think of the topography in question as though it is a representational sculpture, but one whose make-believe is oriented to the prop. 'It has been Grand Central Station around here all day' is a metaphor that involves thinking of the household in question as a kind of unwitting theatrical portrayal of Grand Central Station; one in which, again, the make-believe is prop oriented. The cases of the Italian boot, the angry face in the sky, and the rest room inconstitutions consist in regarding something as a representational picture whose make-believe is prop oriented. If 'saddle' and 'Grand Central Station' in these contexts are metaphors, why not also 'The ugly face in the sky is headed this way' and 'There is a man' said while pointing toward a men's room sign?

I am not going to propose a theory of metaphor. This is because I am very unsure what to count as metaphors, and because I am sceptical about whether anything like the class of what people call metaphors is a unified one, whether a single account will work for any reasonable refinement of that class. But I do want to explore the applicability of the notion of make-believe to some acknowledged metaphors, and to sketch some advantages of understanding these metaphors, at least, in terms of make-believe.

Other metaphors that plausibly involve prop oriented make-believe are easy to come by. 'Argument is war' and the family of metaphors subsidiary to it, including talk of claims being indefensible, criticisms being on target, winning and losing arguments, shooting down arguments, attacking and defending positions, and so on,<sup>15</sup> suggest a game in which what people say in the course of an argument generates fictional truths about acts of war. The arguers or observers of an argument participate in the game if they take argumentative behavior to prescribe imagining acts of war, and imagine accordingly. But participation is not necessary for using and understanding the metaphors; it is enough to recognize or be aware of the game. The metaphors can work even if no one has ever participated in the game. The make-believe is prop oriented in that (or insofar as) it is the argument that one is interested in, and the make-

believe war is thought of as a device for describing or understanding the argument.

In this case a single game or kind of game crops up intermittently but persistently in many different metaphorical utterances. Other metaphors of this sort include those deriving from the thought that 'time is money,'<sup>16</sup> war metaphors applied to sports, and sports metaphors applied to war. More localized metaphors which also might be thought of as involving prop oriented make-believe include: 'Man is the cancer of the earth,' 'Politician Jones started prairie fires on his campaign trip in the midwest,' 'an orgy of eating,' and (at least before they died) 'bottle neck,' 'traffic jam,' 'waves of immigrants,' 'chair leg,' and 'mouth of a river.' (Metaphors that strike me as less plausibly amenable to this treatment include 'Time flies,' 'Her spirits are rising,' 'She always took the high road in business dealings,' 'He knows which side his bread is buttered on,' and 'Happiness is a warm puppy.' Perhaps not all of these are metaphors?)

The general idea is this: The metaphorical statement (in its context) implies or suggests or introduces or calls to mind a (possible) game of make-believe. The utterance may be an act of verbal participation in the implied game, or it may be merely the utterance of a sentence that *could* be used in participating in the game. In saying what she does, the speaker describes things that are or would be props in the implied game. It may be possible in favorable cases to paraphrase what she says about them with reasonable fidelity. Typically, the paraphrase will specify features of the props by virtue of which it would be fictional in the implied game that the speaker speaks truly, if her utterance is an act of verbal participation in it.

There are many variations on the theme, and many differences among metaphors. The example of rest room signs suggests that some metaphorical utterances are not paraphrasable, at least not in the way I mentioned, although they may still amount to descriptions of the (potential) props. Some metaphorical utterances may not be assertions at all, even if they are declarative in form. And metaphorical sentences are not always ones that might be used in acts of verbal participation in the implied games. Nevertheless, we are now in a position to clarify and explain much that has been said about metaphor. Then we can look at some of the variations.

Many have taken metaphor to involve the bringing together of two distinct *categories* or *realms* or *domains*. Nelson Goodman speaks of the (literal) use of predicates in one realm guiding their (metaphorical) application in another.<sup>17</sup> We can think of the two realms as (a) that of the props and the generating facts, and (b) that of the propositional content of the implied make-believe. The latter is the home realm of the predicates that are used metaphorically, the realm in which they have literal application (I. A. Richards' *vehicle*). The former is the new or target or foreign realm (Richards' *tenor*).

Goodman says little about how the predicates from one realm organize another. My suggestion is that (in the case of some metaphors anyway) the



mechanism involves our thinking of objects of the new realm as props, as generating the fictionality of propositions concerning the home realm. The predicates 'male' and 'female' get applied to plumbing fixtures by means of our thinking of plumbing fixtures as props which generate fictional truths about sexual identities. 'Male' applies metaphorically to plumbing connections which make it fictional, in the implied game, that they are male.

This gives some content to talk of seeing or thinking of one kind of thing 'in terms of' another, under the influence of metaphors, or of metaphors 'yoking' different kinds of things together. Richard Moran speaks of metaphors getting us to adopt a perspective, to see one thing as *framed* by another.<sup>18</sup> This framing effect of metaphors is independent of and prior to the use metaphors sometimes have in making assertions. It will be present even when the metaphor is embedded in a context in which it is not asserted, when it is merely a question rather than an assertion, and when it is denied or negated.

All of this is accounted for if we think of the new perspective, the framing effect, as consisting in the metaphor's implication or introduction or reminder of a game of make-believe. 'The health of General Motors is improving' implies a game of make-believe; it gets us to think of corporations as props in a game (even if we don't participate in the game). It also serves to assert something about General Motors. But approximately the same game of make-believe is implied equally by the following: 'If General Motors' health is improving, unemployment will drop;' 'I wonder if General Motors' health is improving.' 'Is the health of General Motors improving?,' 'General Motors' health is not improving.' All of these statements have the same 'framing effect'; all of them introduce essentially the same game of make-believe. Probably 'Caterpillar is in robust good health' and 'Xerox has a slight cold' do so as well.

This account of the framing effect of metaphors, of their capacity to get us to see one kind of thing in terms of another, contrasts with two other tempting proposals. One is that it is a matter of seeing similarities. But regarding things (or states of affairs) of one realm as generating fictional truths, as prescribing imaginings, concerning another realm, is not essentially a matter of seeing similarities. Some principles of generation<sup>19</sup> are more or less conventional, and to the extent that they are, they are likely not to depend on similarities. (For example, halos on figures in Christian art make it fictional that they are saints.) One might have thought that 'metaphors' based on conventions cannot be metaphors. Granted, if there are simply conventions that 'slide' means one thing in photographic contexts and another in connection with children's playground equipment, the conventions merely define distinct literal meanings of the terms. But if there is a convention to the effect that a ridge connecting two higher elevations makes it fictional that there is a saddle, we still have a metaphor. Calling a topographic feature a saddle is not *simply* to say that it is a ridge connecting two higher elevations. Calling it this implies the game of make-believe in which the conventional principle of generation just mentioned holds. In this sense the speaker gets us to see or think of such ridges as saddles. (Not for the first time, of course; the convention is a familiar one. But the metaphor reminds

us of the game.) The freshest, most lively metaphors may be ones that introduce games, principles of generation, that are new to us. But metaphors like *saddle* (of a mountain) are not dead in a sense that ought to make us deny that they are metaphors, so long as they invoke, remind us of, the game of make-believe, familiar though it is. So long as they do this, their use as applied to mountains is parasitic on their original literal senses, and it is their use in the home realm, their application to riding equipment, that guides their application to mountain topography.

It seems unlikely that metaphors like 'high' and 'low' pitches, and 'rising' and 'falling' melodies, are grounded in similarities between pitch relations and spatial relations, although they may be not merely conventional but in some way natural. I speculate that the association has a lot to do with the fact that more energy is usually needed to produce higher pitched sounds than lower pitched ones, just as upward movement requires more energy than downward movement. To sound a higher note on a wind or string instrument one blows harder or stretches the string tighter. But in order to understand metaphors like 'rising melodies' and 'low tones' we needn't know how they came about, how it happens that we associate pitches and spatial positions as we do. The utterance is not an assertion of a similarity or natural connection, or a pointing out of one. All that matters is that these metaphors do pick out for us a game of a certain sort. (Notice, incidentally, that, if age and familiarity are any indications, these metaphors are as dead as doornails. Yet they remain metaphors. Their make-believe is active – indeed it is content as well as prop oriented, as we shall see.)

Many metaphors are not reversible.<sup>20</sup> 'Life is hell' is very different from, 'Hell is life.' But similarity is presumably symmetrical. Life resembles hell in exactly the respects that hell resembles life. This should make us wary of construing metaphor in terms of similarity. My proposal explains this irreversibility nicely. *Generates fictional truths about* is not symmetrical. A ridge between two higher elevations makes it fictional that there is a saddle, but the reverse does not hold (not in the same game anyway).

A second tempting account of what it is to see one kind of thing in terms of another is that this is a matter of imagining things of the one kind to be of the other kind.<sup>21</sup> This is not my view. On my view it is a matter of taking things of one kind to prescribe imaginings about things of another kind, not (in general) imagining things of the first kind to be of the second. Understanding the dotted lines of a balloon in a cartoon to prescribe imagining that the words in the balloon are thought but not spoken, is not to imagine that the dotted lines have anything to do with unspoken thought; it is not to imagine anything of the dotted lines at all. The lines merely prompt and prescribe certain imaginings, imaginings about the character whose portrayal the balloon's stem points to.

Some props do prescribe and prompt imaginings about themselves, however. An actor playing Hamlet probably makes it fictional not only that a prince of Denmark hesitates, but that he himself (the actor) is a hesitating prince of

Denmark. So we are to imagine something about the actor, the prop – that he is a prince of Denmark and hesitates. It may be that the props in the plumbing case and in the case of the mountain saddle are also objects. Probably participants in the game are not merely to imagine a saddle, this imagining being prescribed by features of the mountain, but are to imagine of the ridge that it is a saddle.

It is less clear in other cases that props in games implied by metaphorical utterances are also objects. Consider 'rising melody', 'broken chord', 'moving to a new key', 'wistful melody', a 'mountain of debt', a 'healthy' (or 'sick') corporation, and 'the sea is laughing'. If one were to participate in the game implied by 'moving to a new key', what would one imagine to be moving? The piece, the musical work? Perhaps one would just imagine something's moving, an instance of something moving, as one listens to the modulation. It is not easy to see how one might imagine a corporation to be (literally) healthy or sick. (Nevertheless, the corporation is the object of *interest*. It is a prop if not an object of prop oriented make-believe.)

I should mention, again, that understanding and appreciating a metaphor need not involve any actual imagining in any case. It is enough to recognize the implied game, to be aware of prescriptions to imagine in certain ways, without actually so imagining.

The make-believe that metaphors involve is, I have suggested, prop oriented. Our interest is focussed on the props, on the alien or target realm, the tenor. The make-believe is a device to clarify or illuminate the props. This may be so even if make-believe is essential for this purpose. But sometimes we have, even in cases of metaphor, something more like an intrinsic interest in the make-believe itself. The props may serve this make-believe, and metaphors may engage their service. One might want to make prop oriented make-believe a requirement for metaphor (or for the kind of metaphors that are based on make-believe). But make-believe can look forward to the content and back to the prop at the same time. Some metaphors that are said to be *essential* are Janus-like in this way.

Talk of 'broken chords' in music usually involves simple prop oriented make-believe. A passage consisting of broken chords is one that can be understood to make it fictional that chords (simultaneously sounding pitches of a single harmony) are broken apart. The property by virtue of which the passage makes this fictional is the sequential sounding of individual pitches of a single harmony. To say that there is a 'broken chord' in the bass is to say that the bass sounds individual pitches of a given harmony sequentially. The latter property is likely to be all we are interested in. The only point in using the metaphor, in invoking the make-believe, is to indicate this feature of the bass.

Contrast metaphors like 'high' and 'low' notes, and 'rising' and 'falling' (or 'descending') melodies. Roger Scruton calls these metaphors essential. We *hear* melodies rise and fall, he says, and this is a crucial aspect of musical appreciation. 'We don't just transfer the term; we transfer the movement.'<sup>22</sup>

I have no doubt that we do hear at least some rising melodies as rising. And if we didn't, or if we heard (what we call) rising melodies as falling, our musical

experiences would be very different. By contrast, we rarely if ever hear 'broken chords' as broken. There is no hint of violence in the gently flowing arpeggios, the broken chords, of Bach's C Major Prelude from the *Well Tempered Clavier*.

What does hearing a melody as rising (or hearing a melody rise) amount to? A reasonable first stab would be that it is hearing the melody in a way that involves imagining an instance of something's rising. One certainly does this when a rising melody illustrates a vocal text describing the rising of someone's soul into heaven, or when, in the case of pure instrumental music, the listener tacks onto the music a story about, let's say, the launching of a space ship. (One might close one's eyes and visualize the launching, accompanied by the music.) But one can hear a melody (as) rising without making up much of a story or visualizing something moving upward. I suggest that one's hearing of the melody may still involve imagining (an instance of) something's rising, although this imagining is probably very inexplicit (the thought that something is moving upward doesn't go through one's mind) and also indeterminate (there is no answer to the question what sort of thing one imagines to be moving upward or, probably, how far or fast it moves, or where it arrives). Could it be that one is just aware, vaguely, of how easy or natural it would be for the melody to elicit one's imagining of something's rising?

Imagining something's rising can be construed as participation in a game implied by the metaphor, 'the melody rises'. And the listener's interest is in part focussed on this make-believe. So the orientation of the make-believe underlying this metaphor is to the content as well as to the prop.

Make-believe in this case is not essential in the way it is in the case of the rest room signs. In the rest room example, minimal imaginative participation was necessary to the prop oriented function of the make-believe; we cannot recognize mens' and women's room indicators as such without seeing men and women in the designs. But the experience of hearing melodies rise, hearing them in a way that involves imagining upward movement, is surely not necessary for recognizing (what we call) rising melodies and distinguishing them from falling ones.<sup>23</sup> Let's say that pitches with higher frequencies are *timper* than those with lower frequencies, and that the latter are *tomper* than the former. Some melodies, 'rising' ones, proceed in a *timpish* 'direction,' or better *timpishly*; others proceed *tompishly*.<sup>24</sup>

The point of the metaphors is not just to distinguish *timper* and *tomper* pitches and to identify *timpish* and *tompish* melodies; the make-believe looks forward to the content as well as back to the prop. The make-believe world in which ascendings and descendings occur is of interest in its own right. Although the metaphors are not essential to the prop oriented function their make-believe serves, they are important in pointing out and eliciting participation in the make-believe itself.

These metaphors do look back to the prop. We are interested in the props, the melodies, independently of their role in make-believe. Important structural features of music – balance, contrast, etc. – depend on *timper* and *tomper* relations of pitches and *timpish* and *tompish* qualities of melodies, apart from

the make-believe our metaphorical ways of describing these properties introduce. There is the important difference between contrary and parallel motion in counterpoint. There is the significant change when a succession of timpish melodic fragments suddenly gives way to a strikingly tompish one.

It seems to me that metaphors indicating expressive qualities of music involve make-believe which, even more obviously than 'rising melody', are content as well as prop oriented. Consider 'wistful' melodies, and 'cheerful', or 'anguished', or 'angry', or 'calm' music. We *hear* music as wistful or cheerful or angry, i.e. in hearing it we imagine something's being wistful or cheerful or angry, and thereby participate in the implied game of make-believe. And this participation is itself an important focus of interest. Such expressive properties are also important to the formal structure of a piece;<sup>25</sup> the make-believe is oriented to the prop as well as to the content. But in these cases, like that of the rest room signs, one must participate in the make-believe in order to use the metaphors in classifying music or melodies. I cannot specify wistful melodies just by their formal or acoustic properties, any more than I can recognize man-pictures by their shape properties. So the make-believe implied by 'wistful melody' is essential in *both* of the ways I mentioned. It is essential in the way the make-believe of rest room signs is, and also in the way the make-believe implied by 'rising melody' is.

Ordinarily, I think, talk of the 'shape' of a sonata movement, where this refers to its formal structure, is prop oriented only. Talk of the 'shape' of a melody is content as well as prop oriented. And so is talk of 'moving' from one key to another. Although 'descending' melody, like 'rising' melody, looks both ways, 'falling' melody is often oriented to the prop but not the content. We may describe a melody as falling, although we hear it only as descending, not as falling.

In what sense does a person, on hearing a metaphor or any utterance implying a prop oriented game of make-believe, become aware of the implied game? In what sense does the metaphor introduce one to or remind one of a game of make-believe? In the simplest cases one is made aware of and can articulate the game's principles of generation. Perhaps the game introduced by talk of mountain saddles consists entirely in the single principle that ridges connecting higher elevations make it fictional that they are saddles. Such talk may make us fully aware of this principle.

But we usually do not have such explicit knowledge even of the most standard and familiar content oriented games. I noted our inability to specify the principles of our make-believe games involving pictures, our inability to say what patterns of shape and color constitute pictures of women or pictures of men. In this instance and in many others, we do not look to the principles for guidance in our engagement in the game. We do not formulate them for ourselves, and then use them to decide what fictional truths pictures generate, what participants are to imagine. The imagining comes first. On seeing a visual design, we simply find ourselves imagining a frog (for instance) and imagining seeing a frog, and

because of this we take the design to make it fictional that there is a frog, and to be a frog-picture.<sup>26</sup> (The inference is defeasible, of course.). If one wants to spell out the principles of generation, one would have to read them off from our 'practice,' noting what sorts of designs induce what imaginings (in normal or appropriately idealized observers under normal or appropriately idealized circumstances), and generalizing.<sup>27</sup>

Although we do not bear in mind specifications of the principles concerning what sorts of designs generate what fictional truths, we do have abilities and dispositions appropriate to pictorial games. We are disposed to imagine in prescribed ways on viewing designs of relevant sorts, and to recognize what fictional truths they generate. It is in this sense that we are cognizant of the games.

Picture games (many of them anyway) need no introduction. No one needs to imply or suggest them or remind me of them for me to be cognizant of them in the above sense. It does not take someone pointing to a design in a portrait museum or on a men's room door and saying, 'That is a man,' to activate my disposition to imagine appropriately in response to pictures and to recognize what fictional truths they generate. On seeing a picture I (usually) respond automatically.<sup>28</sup>

We do need to be prodded to engage in or even to recognize many other games, however. This is what metaphorical utterances do. Even very familiar games may not automatically come to mind when I experience things that would be props in them. On observing a ridge between higher elevations, I do not always imagine a saddle, nor does it always occur to me that the ridge might be understood to make it fictional that there is a saddle – unless someone reminds me of the game by saying 'That is a saddle.' I might come across an instance of a 'weighty' argument, an 'under the table' payment, someone's coming 'out of the closet', a writing style with 'punch', or an 'unfolding' melody without the game of make-believe the metaphor implies occurring to me. I may need someone to remind me of the game by using the metaphor.

What metaphors do, in many cases, is to activate relevant dispositions or abilities, rather than to make us aware of the principles of generation. When someone describes a writing style as having punch or a melody as unfolding, I cannot say very well what characteristics of a writing style or a melody make these metaphorical attributions appropriate, which ones generate fictional truths about punches or about something's unfolding. But I may be prepared to recognize writing styles or melodies as having 'punch' or as 'unfolding.'

The dispositions that metaphors activate are often far more extensive than these, and may involve whole families of predicates, not just the one or ones originally used metaphorically. A comment that a computer remembers a phone number may prepare me to think of computers behaving so as to make it fictional that they forget things, that they calculate, make decisions, and even lose patience or complain about their handlers or give up on a task. Your describing your household as Grand Central Station might dispose me to describe mine as Coney Island, or as a cathedral on a Wednesday at midnight.

Once someone establishes the precedent of describing people as animals by calling Jones a skunk, we may think of other people as, fictionally, being other animals (a tiger, beaver, pig, mouse, dinosaur). The remark that we are all in the same boat easily leads to a recommendation that we all row in the same direction. Metaphors often function something like the stipulative launching of a (content oriented) game of make-believe, which then grows naturally beyond the original stipulation. In suggesting 'Let's let stumps be bears,' or pointing toward a stump and declaring, 'Watch out for the bear,' a child may establish a game in which the presence of the stump makes it fictional that a bear is there. But the game is bound to be far richer than this. It may be understood, more or less automatically, that larger stumps count as larger bears and smaller ones as smaller bears, that an appropriately shaped stump makes it fictional that a bear is rearing on its hind legs; seeing a stump through the undergrowth will make it fictional that one sees a bear through the undergrowth, and children can behave in obvious ways so as to make it fictional that they run away from a bear in terror, or face it bravely, or offer it a blueberry ice cream cone. Such extensions of the game the child introduced are more or less inevitable, but it took an introduction to get it started.

Metaphorical utterances, like stipulated launches of games of make-believe, enable us to *go on* in new ways, to apply the predicates used in the original metaphor to new cases, and to apply related predicates metaphorically. If possessing a concept consists in such abilities or dispositions to go on, as some have suggested, metaphorical utterances expand our repertoire of concepts. The new concepts are concepts of properties we might describe as those of being *metaphorically*  $\emptyset$  – metaphorically unfolding, or metaphorically having punch, or being metaphorically under the table.

In uttering a metaphor one may assert that some such concept applies in a certain instance. But the introduction of the concept, the metaphor's role in enabling hearers to acquire it, is independent of the assertion. It is part of, or a result of, Moran's 'framing effect,' which a given metaphor and its negation, as well as the same metaphor in nonassertive contexts, may possess equally. Insofar as we are unable to specify the features of props by virtue of which a predicate applies metaphorically to them, insofar as we just go on, we are likely to consider purported paraphrases of the assertions in terms of such features inadequate.<sup>29</sup>

Many metaphors, especially the more interesting ones, do not enable us to go on with assurance. They leave us uncertain or perplexed or in disagreement about applications of the original metaphorical predicate and others in its family. It is very unclear what games are introduced by 'Juliet is the sun,' or by the description of a musical passage as a 'rainbow.'<sup>30</sup> Not only can we not specify the principles of generation, we are not prepared to identify with any assurance which people are metaphorically the sun and which are not (no matter how well we know them), or what musical passages are rainbows. Here is another example:

Art is dead. It's present moments are not at all indications of vitality; they are not even the convulsions of agony prior to death; they are the mechanical reflex actions of a corpse submitted to a galvanic force.<sup>31</sup>

What do moments of art have to be like to be (metaphorically) reflexes of a corpse, as opposed to convulsions of a person not yet dead? We can neither say with any confidence, nor can we very well recognize which description is appropriate for the present moment of art, or for other moments of art in this or another culture. To the extent that the concept a metaphor introduces is unclear, it will be unclear what (if anything) the speaker is asserting. But that may not be the point of the metaphor. Its point may be, in part, to provoke us to think about what sorts of games along suggested lines might be reasonable or natural or intriguing.

Even if the nature of the game implied by a metaphor is fairly definite and a fairly definite assertion is made, the metaphor's interest may lie neither in the assertion, nor in the introduction of new concepts. Consider 'There was anger in the rays of the sun.'<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the game this metaphor introduces is one in which all sunlight contains anger, in which sunlight always makes it fictional that there is anger (although one might choose not to participate in or think about the game in which this is so.) If this is right, the metaphor seems not to introduce any interestingly new concept, any new way of classifying things of the sort that might serve as props in the game. And the assertion (if there is one) is trivially true. What is of interest is the game of make-believe itself, but not simply the content of the make-believe, the fictional truth(s) generated by the sun's rays (roughly, the fact that fictionally there is anger). The make-believe may be content oriented, but it is prop oriented also. And the interest lies in the combination of the two views, in the sunlight's role as a prop in the envisioned game (not just a classification of sunlight that thinking of it as a prop might enable us to make). The metaphor shows us a way of regarding sunlight – as making it fictional that there is anger.

Many other metaphors would appear to be like this one. 'The sea is laughing' seems likely to be more significant as an expression of a way of regarding the sea or some manifestations of it – regarding it as a prop in the implied game – than as introducing a way of classifying states of the sea or as asserting something about the sea on the occasion of utterance.

Metaphors thus make such things as sunlight and the sea into something like representational works of art. A Japanese brush painting of a flower may be interesting not (or not merely) because of what it makes fictional, but because of how it makes it fictional, because of the manner in which the brush strokes work to generate the fictional truths. To see how they do is to regard them in a special way, and regarding them in this special way is an important part of one's aesthetic experience of the painting. It is the *function* of pictures such as the Japanese painting to serve as props in games of make-believe. This is not in general the function of sunlight and the sea. In particular social contexts



metaphorical utterances accord them this function. Sunlight and the sea are 'found objects.' Metaphors do the finding.

Kendall Walton  
The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is the second of three Carl G. Hempel Lectures presented at Princeton University in May, 1991. I gratefully acknowledge many helpful observations by the audience on that occasion, and by David Hills and Gideon Rosen.

<sup>2</sup> Walton (1990).

<sup>3</sup> To be *fictional* is to be (as we say) true-in-a-fictional-world, the world of a game of make-believe or a representational work of art, for instance. Features of props are understood to make propositions fictional, to generate fictional truths. It is because a folded piece of paper falls to the ground that it is fictional that an airplane crashes. What is fictional in a game of make-believe is what participants in the game are to imagine to be true. Propositions that are fictional can be true as well. It is both true and fictional that something flies through the air, although it is only fictional, not true, that the flying object is an airplane. Participants in the game with the paper airplanes are to imagine that an airplane crashes, when the folded paper falls to the ground. See Walton (1990), Chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> One "fictionally rides a horse" when one behaves so as to make it fictional, true-in-the-world-of-make-believe, that one rides a horse, e.g. when one prances around the house straddling a hobby horse, imagining oneself riding a (real) horse.

<sup>5</sup> Compare *ornamental* representations, which involve thinking about a game of make-believe without participating in it. See Walton (1990), §7.6.

<sup>6</sup> I have in mind what I called "unofficial" games of make-believe, in Walton (1990), §10.4.

<sup>7</sup> Barnes (1984), p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Milne (1928), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Lindner (1954), p. 223.

<sup>10</sup> See Walton (1990), §10.2.

<sup>11</sup> See Walton (1990), p. 296.

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps with enough practice we could learn to recognize woman pictures without either seeing women in them or explicitly identifying them by line and shape characteristics; perhaps we could learn to recognize a shape gestalt which they share.

<sup>13</sup> See Johnston (1989).

<sup>14</sup> The dictionary defines 'saddle' in the relevant sense as "a ridge connecting two higher elevations," and 'male' as "designed for fitting into a corresponding hollow part." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1979.)

<sup>15</sup> Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

<sup>16</sup> Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

<sup>17</sup> Goodman (1968), pp. 74–80.

<sup>18</sup> See Lakoff & Johnson (1980), p. 36; Davidson (1984); Moran (1989), pp. 87–112.

<sup>19</sup> "Principles of generation" are principles specifying what features of props make what propositions fictional (i.e., true-in-the-fictional-world).

<sup>20</sup> As Richard Moran (1989) points out, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> I. A. Richards (1936) speaks of imagining the tenor to be the vehicle, pp. 100–101 and elsewhere. Richards seems to associate this view closely with the idea that metaphors involve resemblance.

<sup>22</sup> Scruton (1983), pp. 94–95.

<sup>23</sup> It is curious that we have no convenient way of specifying the property of the melody, the prop, which this metaphor picks out, without using some variant of the metaphor. We even speak of *higher* and *lower* frequencies. But nonmetaphorical predicates can easily be introduced. Nor is there an easy way of specifying legs of chairs without using that metaphor.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Timper’ and ‘tomper’ do have a historical connection with spatial terms; I used spatial terms in the process of introducing them. But let’s suppose that this historical connection is lost in the mists of history.

<sup>25</sup> See Kivy (1990).

<sup>26</sup> There is more to our response than this. We find ourselves not only imagining seeing a frog, but also imagining of our actual visual experience of the design that it is our perceiving of a frog. See Walton (1990), Chapter 9.

<sup>27</sup> Alternatively, we might understand the fictional truths to be generated by pictures’ propensities to elicit certain imaginings in qualified viewers, rather than by their design properties. The principles of generation might be understood to specify what propensities make what propositions fictional. (Cf. my discussion of the *acceptance rule* for dreams, Walton (1990), pp. 44–49.)

<sup>28</sup> This is not to deny that my propensity to imagine appropriately may depend on my having experienced various pictures in the past. And learning how to read new kinds of pictures – cubist ones, for instance – may require additional experience.

<sup>29</sup> The metaphorical assertion that X is  $\emptyset$  might, however, admit of a paraphrase of the following form: “X is such as to make it fictional in game G that something (possibly X itself) is  $\emptyset$ .” “Jones is a squirrel” might be paraphrased as “Jones has whatever it take to make it fictional in game G that he is a squirrel.” This paraphrase is literal, I presume. But it is not the kind of paraphrase people look for. It does not get rid of the predicates that are metaphorical in the original.

<sup>30</sup> Pablo Casals so described a passage of Beethoven’s A Major sonata for cello and piano, during a master class at Berkeley.

<sup>31</sup> Marius de Zayas (1912). Quoted in Danto (1986), p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> Mishima (1966).

## REFERENCES

- Barnes, J. (1984), *Flaubert’s Parrot*. New York: McGraw Hill.  
 Danto, A. C. (1986), *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. New York: Columbia University Press.  
 de Zayas, M. (1912), ‘The Sun Has Set’, in *Camera Work* 39: 17.  
 Davidson, D. (1984), ‘What Metaphors Mean’, in Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
 Goodman, N. (1968), *Languages of Art*. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill.  
 Johnston, M. (1989), ‘Dispositional Theories of Value’, in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 63.  
 Kivy, P. (1990), *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980), *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lindner, R. (1954), 'The Jet-Propelled Couch', in Lindner, *The Fifty Minute Hour: A Collection of True Psychoanalytic Tales*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Milne, A. A. (1928), *The House at Pooh Corner*. New York: Dutton.
- Mishima, Y. (1966), *Death in Midsummer*. New York: New Directions.
- Moran, R. (1989), 'Seeing and Believing: Metaphor, Image and Force', in *Critical Inquiry* 16.
- Richards, I. A. (1936), *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scruton, R. (1983), 'Understanding Music', in Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding: Essays in the Philosophy of Art and Culture*. London: Methuen.
- Walton, K. L. (1990), *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.