

The confinements of 'metaphor' – Putting functionality and meaning before definition in the case of metaphor

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Abstract: In recent research, metaphor is increasingly confronted in terms of a cline rather than a dichotomy. Yet the decision of whether a word or phrase is metaphoric is not as straightforward as a one-level cline suggests. The notion of 'metaphoric meaning' has further reaching implications on our language understanding and use than is commonly discussed. Metaphor is often subjective and dependent on changes in language specific to time period, genre, environment of the speakers or writers, and context. Furthermore personal experience and judgment are crucial factors in addressing and understanding meaning, whether metaphoric or literal. Approaching metaphor from a lexical stance, this research project adopts the psychological theory of lexical priming (Hoey 2005) as a way of explaining the collective linguistic patternings and associations within metaphor. The data is taken from a corpus of Nineteenth Century writings and focuses upon the single item *flame*. The focus is on a qualitative analysis of problematic cases of metaphor, which are not easily identifiable or characterized through collective primings. The research concludes that the functionality of 'metaphor' as an umbrella term is often too restrictive. Moreover the research serves to illustrate that the perspective on lexical metaphor should be re-focused on to the individual language user and the social processes that dominate our ever-changing use of language and meaning.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, lexical priming, lexicography, metaphor, semantics.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to bring to light an issue that is commonly overlooked within lexical metaphor research, concerning the extent to which we are able to effectively identify and define metaphor collectively. Research to-date often plays down the importance of the society and the individual involved in understanding and interpreting metaphor; and more critically, underestimates the changeable nature of language and more specifically word meaning. From a lexical approach to metaphor, the decision of whether a word or phrase is metaphoric is often subjective and dependent on changes in language specific to time period, genre of the text, environment of the speakers or writers, or context. This premise questions 'metaphoricity' as a static and universally agreed concept. More generally, a dichotomic yes/no criterion for metaphor ignores the lexical subtleties involved in interpreting meaning and the ways in which an individual encounters language. Despite the introduction of a cline theory within metaphor research (the view that stronger and weaker metaphors exist), disagreement still persists amongst scholars, surrounding the effectiveness of confining the complex and multi-layered meaning of a word or phrase to a single layered scale, or umbrella-term of 'metaphoricity'.

The ideas for this paper began as a development from the author's thesis on metaphor and the Lexical Priming theory, but the issue of metaphor identification has since come to manifest itself through a set of central questions. Firstly, and generally, what does it mean for language to be classed as 'metaphoric'? Secondly, from a linguistic standpoint, where do the metaphoric characteristics lie within language? And thirdly and specifically crucial to this paper, what does the term 'metaphor' make of the lexical items which sit somewhere in the middle – perhaps not recognizably metaphoric, but not unanimously literal in their meaning either? By answering each of these three questions in turn, the aim is to discuss the larger issue of metaphoricity as a concept, and whether it is effective a term for the language it defines, or rather, confines. Here the exacting nature of terminology will be tested against the awkward fuzziness of meaning, use, and functionality of language.

The paper will firstly discuss some key concerns with identifying and defining metaphor, particularly brought to light through corpus-based approaches. The intention is to illustrate how real-world data can benefit our stance towards metaphor identification, by exposing the fuzzy and multi-layered aspects, often hidden behind the clear and unambiguous examples drawn upon so often in research articles. Secondly the paper will introduce Hoey's (2005) Lexical Priming theory as an explanation for the psychological motivation behind our understanding of language and our ability to use language *meaningfully* within a given context. The theory takes into account the fluidity of meaning over time, situation, community and genre, and will be applied as a method of analysis for identifying problematic metaphor. Thirdly and finally, the paper will present a corpus study of the word *flame* to illustrate the prevalence of 'fuzzy' or 'problematic' metaphoricity in real-world data, and accordingly expose the problems theorists must address in identifying characteristics of metaphor.

2. What does it mean for language to be classed as 'metaphoric'? – Manifestations of metaphoricity in language

It is not the intention of this paper to enter into the philosophical nature of what a metaphor is or does within the language, but instead to focus upon the term linguistic 'metaphoricity' and what it means of the language specifically when a word or phrase is said to express metaphoricity. This section will outline the issues involving the umbrella term 'metaphoricity', namely in relation to semantics, grammar, and pragmatic meaning. Examples will be provided from a corpus of *flame* concordance lines. The data will be introduced in detail in the data analysis sections 3 and 4.

Part of a metaphor's inherent quality is that it overrides some major semantic and sometimes grammatical relationship. This is a main feature of 'creative' language, which "inheres in the degrees to which language use departs or deviates from expected patterns of language and thus defamiliarises the reader" (Carter 2004: 58). This notion of deviance remains central to a linguistic analysis of metaphor (Philip 2011; Hanks 2013). Leech (2008) stresses that these deviations from the accepted code in literature are unique and meaningful rather than "unmotivated aberrations"; describing them as a "semantic absurdity" (Leech 2008: 16). Thus in literature, metaphors are analysed as creative and purposeful deviations from the normal conventions of language, with the aim of creating effects upon the reader. These effects will vary in intention and purpose. Remaining in the realms of literature for a short time, the intentions of a writer using a metaphor can only be assessed if we recognize and identify the metaphor at work. Metaphoricity can be subtle in form, and not always recognizable to a reader. This may be intentional on the part of the writer in order to exploit an image or a theme. It may also be unintentional and have no impact on the understanding of the text at its most basic level. Both of these will be discussed below. Potential metaphoricity is not simply a case of a lack of understanding or a sense of ambiguity that can always be overlooked; potential or problematic metaphoricity can itself provide clues as to the linguistic nature of metaphor as a phenomenon. Below, examples are provided of potential metaphoric problems and/or ambiguity presented through a range of linguistic forms, highlighting their potential effects of purposes.

Steen (2007) states that metaphors are considered "a form of linguistic deviation at the semantic level which are used to create foregrounding effects" (Steen 2007: 87). The semantic level is altered through a variety of linguistic forms, most notably lexis and grammar. In relation to lexis, the first example below highlights the significant consideration of lexical items (bundles) as a phenomenon, when addressing metaphoric meaning:

- (1) ...the firing did not cease, to set the town **in a flame**, and cut the women and children in

pieces.¹

In this example, the metaphoricity is subtle as a result of our expectations of language norms. The conventionality of the phrase *to set (...) in a flame* allows us to recognise the meaning within its position in the larger context above, but not necessarily to recognise the fact that it is metaphoric. If broken down and understood as individual units, the phrase would develop an incongruent meaning (*to set the town inside a flame). This is not what happens because the three individual items *in a flame*, are instead taken as a single lexical item (cf. Sinclair 1991). When used alongside the collocational phrase *to set*, thus forming the colligation *to set + object + in a flame*, the phrase is acquires a non-compositional meaning different to that assigned by the combination of the three *individual* words.

The decision to identify and label the lines as 'potentially metaphoric' however, carries forward a few problems: not least it draws upon an important distinction expressed in the work of Sinclair (who would claim the phrase as a single lexical item, cf. Sinclair 1991), and conversely, metaphor theorists such as Pragglejazz (MIP, MIPVU) who claim that each word in a given text can be tested for metaphoricity (within that particular text and context), based on a criterion involving a contrast and dependency between that individual use and a more salient or common meaning of that given word (cf. Steen 2010). To illustrate, within this example *in a flame* obtains its meaning from its identity as part of a larger phrase, which to break down, would be to lose the intended meaning (to be on fire) and purpose. Thus the argument posed is this: if the example were to be taken as metaphoric, it would mean disregarding the notion of the lexical item, as the words would be treated as the same, whether forming part of a larger phrase, or analysed in isolation. This is an important consideration within the lexical analysis of metaphor and serves to illustrate the extent to which different theoretical approaches can impinge on our decision on metaphoricity. Another factor important here is frequency. The conventionality of the phrase above could lead the reader or hearer to assume that the meaning they have arrived at (the correct meaning), is the only one on offer, due to their expectation or familiarity of the phrase within the particular context, with specific collocates, or within that colligational structure, and crucially, not class it in any way as metaphoric .

Additionally, metaphoricity displayed through a semantic deviation can be used to create a sense of purposeful ambiguity on the part of the writer/speaker. This is illustrated in the example below:

- (2) The long-smouldering dissensions between the Northern and Southern States of the American Union at last **broke into flame**, and war was declared between them, in 1861. The burning question of slavery was undoubtedly at the bottom of this contest.

The phrase describes a conflict between the Northern and Southern states of America, but more literally it describes *dissension* being set *on fire*. The incongruity of an abstract concept taking part in a physical act immediately signals the presence of a metaphor. Further, the use of the singular *flame* suggests a general, abstract state (conflict) rather than a physical, concrete occurrence of fire (i.e. multiple flames). Metaphorically, *broke into flame* is describing the tumult between the groups of citizens, which inevitably turned into civil war. In this respect, the instance could be surely attributed to the clear metaphoric group of data: the phrase *broke into flame* could be replaced with the less metaphoric phrase *turned into a fight*. However there is more inferred here, which creates a sense ambiguity. The notion of war implies a fiery conflict, with the use of guns, cannons and other fire-making artillery. Thus an element of literality is maintained in the

1 Examples all taken from corpus data introduced in section 3.

reference to the nations being on fire (i.e. breaking into flames). Additionally, the nearby inclusion of *burning question* and *long-smouldering* provide a semantic relation with the metaphoric image of a nation burning, physically. Consequently, these larger semantic associations help to maintain and strengthen the image, creating textual cohesion on a semantic level. The phrase could be determined as more metaphoric than literal, but the point made here is that there is not necessarily a right or wrong, or even yes or no answer to the question of metaphoricity. The above example shows that by suggesting both literal and metaphorical elements at work, the phrase creates a stronger, perhaps more memorable image: it has a literal and real-world relationship with the image of war. This may be an ambiguity created purposefully on the part of the writer for a particular effect. Finally, no less important than the writer's intentions is the reader's interpretation of a phrase. This example brings to light the importance of interpreting clues of metaphoricity within the surrounding context as much as the single instance in question.

Secondly, grammar can also play a role in the expression of metaphor. Halliday's concept 'grammatical metaphor' identifies metaphoricity in the traditional systemic functional approach to metaphor. Whereas lexical metaphor relates to the various ways in which a particular word or item is used, within a given context, grammatical metaphor involves "comparing different ways of expressing the 'same' meaning" (Thompson 2004: 221). This means that, whilst the meaning is essentially the same, the way of structuring it, is incongruent with what would be expected. An example is shown below whereby a material process stands in for the more congruent or expected relational process:

- (3) ...his eyes were scattering fiery sparks; sulphurous **flame stood** in his mouth, he was frightfully feather-clad...

In this example, the flame is being described as doing something physical (i.e. standing in the mouth), which constitutes a MATERIAL process (*cf.* Halliday 1971). As an inanimate object, a flame would more congruently be described as being present or existing in the mouth (a RELATIONAL process), rather than carrying out an action. It is, after all, inanimate. The effect is that the phrase appears more dynamic in its description, suggesting a physical presence of a flame within the mouth. Grammatical metaphor is often discussed only within a systemic functional approach to grammar, but its effect is also relevant to a lexical-based approach to metaphor, as the semantic meaning of the language is dependent on the form. Although many theorists do not identify grammatical metaphor in the same 'umbrella' as lexical metaphor, a functional approach to metaphor, and language in general, assumes that it is not possible to separate meaning from expression. Indeed, Thompson states, "the choice of a more metaphorical wording construes a different meaning from the choice of a more congruent wording" (Thompson 2004: 223). Whilst this article will not analyse grammatical metaphor in the data, the consideration of an emergence of metaphoricity through grammatical processes is one of importance in the discussion of metaphoricity and meaning.

Developing on from these structural manifestations of metaphoricity, the concept metaphor is also heavily dependent on both our judgment of meaning (personal exposure through priming, audience, context etc.) and the ways in which a word or phrase is itself capable of expressing meaning. This is where the concept metaphoricity becomes more abstract in manner. Philip (2011) claims that this acceptance for individual experience is necessary for our understanding of meaning, because a major part, of our understanding of some figurative phrases, comes from the notion of 'secondary meaning'. This term 'secondary meaning' is often more abstract or less well defined. It relates to the abstract levels of semantic relationships, such as prosody (Sinclair 1991), connotation (Philip 2011), and pragmatic association (Hoej 2005).

Below, the fourth example serves as an illustration of how pragmatic factors play a part in the

interpretation of even more obvious forms of metaphoricity:

- (4) ...and while one part of the company is employed **feeding** the **flame**, the others drive all the cattle in the neighbourhood.

The metaphoricity again lies in the choice of animate associations with the flame. Here, however, there is another layer of interpretation in the meaning. In order to feed a flame, at the very least the flame must have some form of digestive system, it must be able to take in nutrients and then convert them to energy. This is not the case with *flame*: it is inanimate and thus the metaphoricity is created from *feed* used in conjunction with *flame*. Goatly (1997: 86) claims of metaphoric verbs "that they can indirectly evoke imagery but only by being hooked up to their conventional colligates – we cannot imagine kicking without imagining a foot". Thus it is the conventional and non-metaphoric meaning of the verb or adjective, and in particular their collocational relationship with humans or animate beings/objects, which creates the metaphoricity when used alongside an object like a flame. However, there is an ambiguity in how the meaning is derived and what that meaning is, which demonstrates the pragmatic nature involved in the interpretation of meaning. Depending on the individual reader, there are two processes happening to aid our understanding. The first is that the reader extends their understanding of *feed* to accommodate non-animate objects, and thus *flame* can be understood in this way, or, the reader extends their definition of *flame*, by assigning it a level of animacy, whereby a flame can be *fed*, or *nurtured*, or *nourished* (also found in the data). The way in which the reader or listener interprets the metaphoricity is not important at this point. Instead, it is key to acknowledge that there are two pragmatically different understandings of the phrase, and whether conscious of their own choice or not, readers decisions have the ability to colour their outlook in terms of metaphoricity.

The acknowledgment that "some meaning is unobservable and exists in the minds of language users" is something that Philip (2011: 10) claims as fundamental to the understanding of figurative phraseology, including metaphor. Amongst other such language, metaphor "generates multiple layers of meaning" (Philip 2011: 4), precisely through its ability to manifest itself in a range of linguistic characteristics. It is these 'multiple layers of meaning' and expected linguistic patterns, both those exploited and maintained, which facilitate the ambiguity (intentional or not) of the linguistic parameters operating within single metaphorical phrases that linguists have trouble labeling under the single concept of 'metaphor'. The trouble begins in trying to establish methods for identification of metaphorical language based on a set of fixed criteria.

An interesting approach to the discussion of meaning is Hanks' (2004) use of the term *meaning potential* (taken from Halliday 1971). The term is applied to the potential of words to contribute appropriately to the meaningfulness of an utterance, but Hanks (2004) goes on to extend this to mean that "although the likely interpretation of most conventional patterns of words will be indistinguishable from a certainty, it is not an absolute. There are no literal meanings, only varying degrees of probability" (Hanks 2004: 247). Both Hanks and Philip agree that it is a co-existence of semantic and pragmatic features that allows metaphorical language its flexibility in behaviour and definition.

3. Where do the metaphoric characteristics lie within language?

3.1. Patterns and tendencies in metaphor

Alongside the multiple layers of metaphoricity, lexicographers and metaphor theorists must contend with the notion of conventionality, and the extent to which metaphors are used within language. The notion of metaphorical language as a deviation or exploitation from some form of linguistic norm (Hanks 2013) remains one of central importance. Both Hanks (2004) and Hoey (2005) talk of tendencies and patterns within language use, which help us to recognize and understand meaning on

a range of levels. These patterns are manifest in grammar and lexis, but also in more secondary aspects, such as semantic association and prosody or connotation (as we saw earlier with metaphoricity). Moreover, it is these patterns or tendencies which give rise to meaning in language. These patterns involve a wider prevalence than structured rules: they are unwritten norms (Hanks 2004) or primings (Hoey 2005), encountered psychologically, and created through repetition. These norms are dependent upon a community, genre, and time, and have the ability to change.

In order to address the question of linguistic characteristics of metaphor and where they lie in the language, the theory of Lexical Priming must first be introduced. The theory explores the relationships between lexical items and grammatical patterns and argues for a psychological association of such patterns that prime the reader/listener into understanding them. According to the theory, a word is learnt through our encounters with it in speech and writing, which in turn loads it with the cumulative effects of those encounters. As a result it becomes part of our knowledge of that word that it co-occurs with other words. When we acquire a lexical item, it becomes primed for collocation, grammatical category, semantic, textual and pragmatic associations and, according to Hoey (2005), it is not properly acquired unless it has this priming. Presence of these patterns or tendencies forms our knowledge of a particular word or phrase and subsequently determines how we go on to use that word or phrase in other contexts. In support of the theory, Hoey (2005: 13) puts forward ten priming hypotheses. In summary, the hypotheses state that every word is primed to occur with other words, semantic sets, pragmatic functions and grammatical positions. Words are also primed for use in one or more grammatical roles and to participate in or avoid particular cohesive, semantic, textual or pragmatic relations. Most important to this research, Hoey claims that naturalness depends on a speaker or writer's desire to conform to the primings of the words they use (2005: 2-5).

The theory of priming has been adopted within this research, in order to expose the extent of linguistic patternings found within a range of metaphors, with the aim of highlighting the scope of 'metaphoricity' found in language. Metaphoric language, as with any other figurative or non-figurative language, has conventional and non-conventional instances. The conventional, and often-used instances are those which will have stronger primings and thus are more recognizable to a reader or listener, within the context and environment in which they are used. In contrast, types of language which are less often used, will not have such strong patternings or tendencies and thus be more flexible in how they are used.

3.2. Introduction to the study

An analysis of clear metaphors and clear non-metaphors using the word *flame* showed evidence of primings (collocational, colligational, textual and semantic association), specific to each group (Patterson 2014). The results suggested strong tendencies or preferences for particular grammatical structures, collocates, semantic associations and even pragmatic associations. These results in turn suggest evidence of primings, which the language user, conscious or unconscious, will take into consideration in forming and using metaphors consisting of the item *flame*. The research supported not only the lexical priming theory, but also the idea that the strongest metaphors (those well signaled or often used), are linguistically different from literal counterparts using the same word(s). These signals are what allow a reader or hearer to interpret something as metaphoric. Metaphoric patterns were evident in the form of colligations (e.g. frequent use *the flame* + *of* + abstract noun), collocations (e.g. *old flame*), and semantic and pragmatic associations (semantic patterns such as the recurrent depiction of movement or action of the flame, and prosody in the form of the recurrent use of *flame* to depict a human feeling, emotion or energy, often passionate or extreme). The results supported the idea that metaphoricity is recognized (at an unconscious level) linguistically through primings and recurring patterns, however the analysis did not bring to light any information about the instances of metaphoricity which are problematic or which people remain unsure of whether to

classify or label as such. Thus the remaining section of this article will detail a study into the evidence of linguistic patternings within such 'potential' metaphoricity. The aim is to show that whilst there is evidence that primings exist in the stronger and clearly identified metaphors and non-metaphors, the middle and 'unsure' group is much more problematic in its collective linguistic identity.

4. What does the term 'metaphor' make of the phrases and lexical items which sit somewhere along the middle? – A corpus study of flame

4.1. The corpus and methodology

The data has been taken from an exhaustive list of concordance lines from a corpus of 19th Century British writing. Within the corpus, there are five hundred texts in total, with a running token size of 47,241,536. The texts differ in author, length and genre. Roughly half of the token size is made up of fiction and half of non-fiction (consisting of journals, manuals, periodicals and historical accounts). The total number of concordance lines for the word *flame* amount to 1265. Firstly, any similes or repeated lines were removed from the data, bringing the total to 993 lines. These lines were then given to a random selection of five non-specialist readers who were asked to place each line in one of three categories, depending on their personal judgment: the first category if they were fully confident that *flame* was being used in a metaphoric sense, the second if they are confident *flame* was not being used in a metaphoric sense, and the third category for any unsure or disputed instances. Where there is discrepancy between the individuals, the instance has been placed directly in the 'unsure' group (henceforth Group Y). The criteria for group Y was based on three central factors: a problem of ambiguity in classification; a certain degree of conventionality within the phrase, which may make the metaphoricity difficult for a reader to identify; or a general uncertainty amongst the readers and the researcher of whether an instance displays metaphoricity. The aim of the wider research project will be to eventually analyse the linguistic characteristics of this middle 'mixed-bag' group, in relation to the clear sets of metaphors and non-metaphors, in order to determine whether aspects of a cline or various clines are present within this data. For the purposes of this paper however, the focus is only on the behaviour of *flame* classed as ambiguous (Group Y), to bring to light the problems with metaphor identification and definitions. To reiterate, the Group Y instances are those that have not been unanimously identified as metaphoric or literal by the group of readers. The concordance instances for unanimously identified metaphors amount to 336 lines (33.84 % of the data) and for unanimously identified non-metaphors 478 lines or 48.14 % of the total data. Group Y (the data to be analysed) amounted to 179 lines of data. This is outlined in the table below:

Table 1: Distributuion of *flame* concordance lines based on reader results.

| Group | No of <i>flame</i> concordance lines | % of total data |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Metaphoric | 336 | 33.84 |
| Non-metaphoric | 478 | 48.14 |
| Group Y | 179 | 18.03 |
| Total Lines | 993 | 100.00 |

Although the data size is small for a full quantitative analysis, the results will determine if patterns are visible and if so, will motivate a further, in-depth study of potential problematic metaphoricity.

3.2. Frequent clusters

In order to explore any potentially common or shared patterns occurring within this group of data, the initial step is to explore the most frequent clusters found within the dataset. These are IN A

FLAME and A BRIGHT FLAME. Out of the 179 lines of data, there are eight instances of IN A FLAME, making up almost 5% of the total concordance lines. A BRIGHT FLAME only occurs five times within the data and may not provide a particularly representative analysis of the group as a whole. The instances of IN A FLAME are listed below:

Figure 1: All instances of top frequent cluster IN A FLAME within Group Y data

1. "efore morning the greater part of the city was in a FLAME, although the first blaze had been detected in the suburbs."
2. "ned, if the firing did not cease, to set the town in a FLAME, and cut the women and children in pieces before the eye"
3. "t; in short, I am convinced the nation would be in a FLAME, and you in far less danger of any attempt to your injury t"
4. "owne walls, and kindling sparks that will act all in a FLAME from one end of the city to the other."--P. 214. And after"
5. "struck with shame, Squinted and grinned, then in a FLAME He vanished quite."" THE SPECTRE ARMY. A WEIRD TALE "
6. "herever he'd been, and that he vanished away in a FLAME of fire; but I can't 'xactly swear to that myself.'" I laugh"
7. "scended a wooded height, with the sun setting in a FLAME of gold, in front--we witnessed a rural sight, connected w"
8. "n Arabia sacrificed, And all her spicy mountains in a FLAME. So dear, so due to Heaven, shall praise descend, With he"

The screenshot shows some similarities between instances. Firstly, lines 1-3 all refer to the similar image of a city, a town, or more abstractly a nation being on fire. In these lines IN A FLAME has the same meaning, which is that of burning or being alight. Line 2 has perhaps a more extended meaning, as it refers to gunfire causing the town's fire. Whether IN A FLAME is a metaphor of the mayhem caused by the shooting, or actual fire engulfing the town as an effect of the shooting, remains unclear. Suffice to say, regardless of the level of abstractness, lines 1-3 display a similar semantic association through shared lexis. Line 4 differs because of the presence of the verb *acting* that precedes the cluster. This creates a different grammatical structure and the metaphoric meaning, is created through the notion of animacy assigned to the sparks (the sparks are acting IN A FLAME). Despite this the larger meaning of the line is also that of a city on fire.

Lines 5 and 6 differ, but both make reference to the verb *vanish* (*he vanished*). More co-text reveals that line 5 refers to a person disappearing from sight, and line 6 to a spirit disappearing. The former is taken as more metaphoric as the phrase implies a sense of speed in the characters disappearance. The latter however could be taken literally (*he vanished away in a flame of fire*), based on the assumption that the event is an apparition or an imagined vision from the phrase '*I can't 'xactly swear to that myself*'. Line 7 stands alone in that it depicts the flames of a sunset (*sun setting IN A FLAME of gold*). This is a prominent recurrence within the Group Y data, and will be discussed as a common semantic group later in the chapter. For now, it is of importance to note that the instance is more metaphoric than the others as there are no actual flames visibly present (semantic extension). Finally, line 8 also holds the same basic meaning as the rest: that of being on fire (here it is the mountains of Arabia). The line has been taken from Edward Young's nine-part poem *Night-Thoughts*, and is made up of the poet's musings on death. The co-text surrounding the above line details Young explaining how his praise of God is *more fragrant* than all of Arabia's spice fields. The phrase IN A FLAME is used as a form of exaggeration of the strength and power of the spices, and is thus largely metaphoric- the fields are described as so rich with fiery spices, that they are alight. This example is the most metaphoric of all uses of the lexical item.

The findings should be briefly discussed in relation to the other datasets 1 and 2 (metaphoric and non-metaphoric):

Table 2: Rank and frequency of the cluster IN A FLAME across all three groups of concordance lines

| Group | Cluster Rank | Cluster Frequency | Total lines in group | % Of concordance lines |
|----------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Group Y | 1 | 8 | 179 | 4.47 |
| Metaphoric | 6 | 8 | 336 | 2.38 |
| Non-metaphoric | 24 | 6 | 478 | 1.26 |

The table above shows the distribution of the cluster IN A FLAME, once all *flame* concordance data has been assigned to one of the three groups. Firstly, the cluster is ranked as the sixth most frequent in the clear metaphoric group and appears eight times in the 336 lines. In the non-metaphors it is ranked the twenty-fourth most frequent and occurs six times in the 478 lines. Thus the lexical item appears to be used most often in the middle group, and secondly the metaphoric group. This illustrates a more metaphoric tendency in the nature of the item, or the language used around it, which directly relates to *flame*.

The table below shows large differences in the clear metaphoric instances of IN A FLAME, compared with the unclear group (Y):

Figure 2: All instances of IN A FLAME within the metaphoric group data

| |
|--|
| 9. ". The laddies 'at's <u>maist</u> ill to get sometimes gangs up in a FLAME a' at <u>aince</u> , like a bit o' paper." ""Ay, <u>weel</u> , at <u>ony</u> rate Jamie" |
| 10. " <u>uriously</u> to and fro--'the rest of devils! My blood was in a FLAME; and rage, hate, despair, blew the consuming fire by turns. " |
| 11. "pictures. I flounced from room to room, with my face in a FLAME, and the people all staring at me. I came to myself again, I " |
| 12. "ad, but the bare mention of the girl seemed to set me in a FLAME. I tried to turn Armadale's attention in the direction of the " |
| 13. "-water bottles, cigar-boxes, and what not. ""I went off in a FLAME of fire last night,"" says the Colonel, ""and being cooled th" |
| 14. "flew through me. I started to my feet, with my temper in a FLAME, reckless of all consequences, desperate enough to say any" |
| 15. "an interpretation which set the University and Church in a FLAME. The cry, almost the shriek, arose that it was a new test, and " |
| 16. ""Be quiet, William!"" interrupted Lady Isabel, her face in a FLAME. ""Two great slaps upon her cheeks,"" continued the young " |

In contrast to the multiple references of towns/cities on fire in Group Y, there is only one example referring to physical location (*University and Church* in line 15). The metaphoric *flame* here refers to a conflict between the two institutions. The remaining lines can be categorized in a single semantic group: there are two instances of a face being in a flame (line 11), one of blood (line 10), one of temper (line 14), and two of people (*laddies* in line 9 and *me* in line 12). Moreover, each of these lines has a similar meaning: in each of these instances, the phrase conveys strong emotion: anger in lines 10, 13, 14 and 16; hot-headed passion in line 9; and embarrassment in lines 11 and 12). There are other semantically associated items within close proximity to the clusters (note line 10 in particular). In summary, the literal interpretation of the lines depicts a person, or part of a person (emotion or body part) being IN A FLAME. This in turn reflects an expression of anger, embarrassment, or in one instance passion, in the metaphoric interpretation.

In conclusion, it appears that IN A FLAME, whilst not specific to this middle Group Y data, is a lexical item which most often either forms a part of a clear metaphoric phrase to convey anger or strong emotion of a person, or, is used more frequently in a less metaphoric sense (Group Y) to depict a community (abstract or physical) on fire. It must be noted that there is present a varying degree of metaphoricity involved: with meanings ranging from a concrete fire to a more metaphoric representation of emotion such as unrest, or a semantic extension in the sunset example. The poetic embellishment of the spice fields in Arabia is an exception to this and instead uses a clear metaphor as a form of exaggerated comparison.

The cluster A BRIGHT FLAME appears five times out of 179 lines of Group Y data and makes up 2.79% of the data. Though it is also a frequent cluster in the non-metaphoric set, it is only ranked fifteenth and occurs just three times out of 478 (representing only 0.61% of the data). First, the instances within Group Y are shown below:

Figure 3: All instances of A BRIGHT FLAME within the Group Y data

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|--|
| 17. "we had thus ridden about half an hour perhaps, when a bright FLAME about a mile distant, as the crow flies, shot suddenly fort" |
| 18. "ord, and the sun lost that dulness on its disk and took a bright FLAME, and threw golden arrows everywhere; and the pastures w " |
| 19. "knife, and rushing towards Alizon. But at this moment a bright FLAME shot up from the beacon. Astonishment and terror seized " |
| 20. "d the candle sink into that cavernous depth, and from a bright FLAME turn into a little twinkling star, and then to a mere point" |
| 21. "I to us to make haste,"" said the Corporal, pointing to a bright FLAME which suddenly shot up on the shore of the lough. ""Put " |

Of these instances, there is a shared ambiguity as to whether the flame resembles fire or more generally light. This can at times be eliminated by reference to more co-text, for instance line 17 refers clearly to a house on fire in the distance and line 20 describes the light of a candle in a well. Therefore these are both non-metaphoric and could be removed from Group Y on this basis. However, line 17 details the flame as shooting forth, and line 20 describes the flame as turning into a twinkling flame. These could both be treated as metaphoric actions. Line 18 provides another reference to sunlight, which, as has been mentioned, expresses a form of semantic extension rather than direct metaphor. The image here however, of a bright flame throwing golden arrows, of course introduces another element of metaphoricity (a light cannot throw things). This would be a criterion for identifying the line as metaphoric. *Throw* will be discussed in relation to the level of animacy it implies later in the chapter. Finally, the meanings behind lines 19 and 21 remain somewhat uncertain. Line 19 refers to a flame on the near horizon seen by fearful witches, '*by whose light could be seen men on horseback heeding towards the place of meeting*'. This suggests the torchlights of those men, which would be flames of some form. Line 21 is less clear and describes a flame shooting out of the lough and seen from a boat. This could most likely be a flare in the sky – whether this could unanimously be referred to non-metaphorically as a flame is contentious. The description of the flame shooting up (in both line 19 and line 21) could arguably be seen as a separate lexical item, and thus its metaphoricity would have to be determined from the surrounding language. These decisions, such as identifying lexical items and interpreting 'universal' meanings, pose problems with identifying and labeling metaphoricity and will be discussed in the next section.

Finally a brief comparison can be drawn with the same cluster appearing in the non-metaphoric data:

Figure 4: All instances of A BRIGHT FLAME within the non-metaphoric dataset

- | |
|---|
| 22. "grees of Fate, till Babalatchi fanned it again into a bright FLAME. Babalatchi had blundered upon the river while in search of a " |
| 23. " from them the power of sight, except to observe a bright FLAME burning in the middle of the room. Tom darted forward, and" |
| 24. "en, emitting, during the process, intense heat and a bright FLAME. Zinc, too, when similarly acted on, will ignite in the common" |

Each of these instances refers to a physical flame: a camp-fire (line 22), a candle (line 23) and the flame of a burning element in a scientific procedure (line 24). There is no ambiguity or uncertainty, neither is there any potential metaphoricity in relation to the flame, or the behaviour or action of the flame or how it has been described. The extent to which the cluster has separate associations and

separate meanings in its non-metaphoric sense, in comparison to the rather scattered and varied uses in Group Y is indeterminate. In some Group Y instances, the only marked difference in behaviour of the cluster is the inclusion of a lexical item conveying animacy e.g. *shooting up* or *throwing*. Thus as the sometimes only marked feature between Group Y and non-metaphoric instances of *flame*, animacy should subsequently be dealt with in this analysis.

4.3. Animacy

This observation of the flame's animacy, or more generally, how the flame's behaviour has been linguistically described by a writer, is perhaps of more importance as a marker of comparison between Group Y and the more clearly defined datasets. The analysis of clusters did not reveal any characteristic of Group Y as a whole, partly because the clusters still only represent a small number of the group. A more suitable approach would be to consider the starker differences in the behaviour of the *flame*, in comparison to the other datasets. By way of a rider before moving forward, this word *behaviour* is in itself a metaphor for the writer's description of the action of the flame. Behaviour brings to mind a notion of animacy not typically associated with a physical flame and it is this notion of animacy which brings forth an important consideration in identifying metaphoricity. A brief glance at the concordance lines illustrates the variety of verbs and adjectives describing or modifying *flame* in an ambiguously animate manner; often this is a deciding factor in placing the instance in Group Y. Moreover, the overwhelming frequency of animacy within immediate co-text of this group is something to justify a discussion on it, particularly in comparison to the other groups.

Some items (as will be shown in the tables below) may be considered more metaphoric than others when associated with *flame*, for instance, *lurking*, and *shivering* may seem more metaphoric when describing a flame than *mighty* does. Cameron (1999) provides the example LOVE IS A CRYSTAL as a stronger metaphoric concept than LOVE IS AN ENTITY, however this is presumably based on the degree of specificity as well as the level of abstraction. A second just as important consideration is the fact that some of the items used in association with *flame* could be described as more animate than others, or indeed more commonly associated with animate beings; for instance *sickly*, *naked*, and *trembling* appear singularly associated with people or animals whilst *raging* can be used non-ambiguously to describe things like fire and oceans.² Further, these two factors (strength of metaphoricity and strength of animacy) can, but do not necessarily correlate. An instance associated unequivocally with living things is the ability to die; yet a *never-dying flame* may appear to some to be less metaphoric than a *writhing flame*³ (which may bring to mind a more active process of physical, animalistic suffering). The reason may simply lie with conventionality, and the fact that we commonly see or hear the word *flame* described as *dying*, but not as often *writhing*. However, as a handful of metaphor scholars have claimed in the most recent wave of lexical metaphor research, conventionality does not *always* correlate to the strength of a metaphor (by strength is meant both the cline theory, but also the reader hearer's decision of whether what they hear/read is a metaphor, and to what extent there is agreement). Finally, important to note is the formation of lexical items, whereby the association of items, due to conventionality, becomes seen as one singular item. In such cases, the new item may be regarded only as non-metaphoric, as was shown earlier with the item IN A FLAME, which is non-analysable in terms of its literal components.

It could be argued then that there are degrees of animacy involved with items associated with the behaviour of living beings. Sometimes there is a form of extension at work, where a word usually assigned only to an animate object or being, comes to be used with non-animate objects. An example would be *mighty*, whereby the word does not necessarily indicate physical or intentional

2 BNC searches for both *fire* and *ocean*

3 BNC data

might (such as a building or object). Thus a *mighty sword* would not be classed by everybody as metaphoric, as the might has been transferred from the person to the object used by the person, or implied by the association of the object alongside a person of mighty strength. Perhaps a *mighty moment*⁴ may be seen by more readers as metaphoric, because of the abstract form of a moment. Independent from this, amongst the items that do form a metaphor when used alongside certain non-animate items, there exists a conventionality (usually as an effect of frequent association). Some of these may become lexical items through strong association, but others may not, and thus often remain metaphors to many people.

These are difficult factors to grapple with in relation to metaphor. Corpus studies approach the topic in the most suitable manner, looking at what happens in real world language, but as can be seen from above, exceptions appear to overshadow the landscape, revealing that identifying metaphor, or indeed accepting metaphoricity as a singular concept involves addressing many complex issues. The following analysis of animate terms used in relation to a non-animate flame is an attempt at grappling with the subjectivity and changing nature of word meaning in relation to metaphor identification.

4.3.1. Animate adjectives

The first discussion will outline the types of adjectives used alongside *flame*, whereby there is some form of animacy attached to their usual meaning. As mentioned, these vary in strength of animacy and metaphoricity. At times, definitions from the OED will be drawn upon to aid the decision of whether there is metaphoricity present in the cluster found in the data:

Figure 5: List of animate adjectives associated with *flame* in Group Y

| Adjective |
|--|
| approaching, avenging (x2), awful, cheerful, consuming, devouring, dying, fierce (x2), fitful, darting, keen, leaping, lurking, mighty, naked, never dying, raging, + FLAME ready, shivering, solitary, sickly, subtle, trembling, with'ring, writhing |

The items can be subdivided into smaller semantic groups. Firstly, the largest semantic group is related to sickness (*dying, fitful, shivering, sickly, trembling, writhing*). *Never-dying* could also be seen here in juxtaposition to *dying*. Secondly there are those that are human or animal behaviours (*avenging, consuming, lurking, approaching, darting, leaping, writhing*⁵). With the exception of *consuming* and perhaps *avenging*, these are all associated with physical movement. Thirdly, there are items attributed to human emotions, attributes or animalistic traits (*fierce, keen, mighty, ready*⁶ *subtle*). It is perhaps this group of words that remains most problematic in terms of assigning metaphoricity.

Three terms can be removed from the data entirely, based on analysis of the adjectives modifying *flame* - primarily but nevertheless problematically, based on dictionary definitions and recorded etymology. These are *cheerful, awful, and solitary*. What follows is a brief account of each of these. According to the OED, the primary meaning of *cheerful* is attributed to people only, but a second meaning does refer to a transfer of meaning to things or objects. This sense is not stated as figurative here. Interesting to note however is that the OED examples only include abstract notions e.g. *a cheerful hour* and not concrete objects. A search of *awful* attributes three main meanings to

4 Nineteenth Century corpus data

5 *Writhing* can be placed in two categories based on its alternative meanings of either tortuous pain or a twisting and turning movement.

6 *Ready* has a figurative meaning in the OED attributed to an object or thing 'likely or liable to do something'.

the term: to cause dread; worthy of commanding respect or fear; or solemnly impressive / sublimely majestic. None of these uses appears to regard only animate or intentional objects and thus a literal meaning could also be assigned to an *awful flame*. *Terrible* is similarly defined.

Finally, the item *solitary* allows occasion for a brief discussion on diachronic change. *Solitary* has six main meanings in the OED, with the first and most common meaning referring to the absence of society or companionship of a person. A subdivision of this primary meaning states '*standing alone or by itself*', suggesting a broader encompassment of non-living things. Similarly to *cheerful* however, this extended sense only refers, in examples at least, to abstract concepts (e.g. *solitary conjecture* in 1750; *solitary argument* in 1806). Only in 1899, under a separate meaning "single, separate, not multiple" is there a reference to a concrete, non-abstract object (*a solitary bundle*). It may be noteworthy to observe that each of these four lexical items move to an extended abstract sense before being assigned to concrete objects for which the meaning has been extended, at least in the examples provided. This is a factor worth exploring: if a pattern is revealed it could contribute to the identification process of potential metaphors (i.e. those along the middle of the cline). A final point about *solitary* is that there is also a separate meaning attributed specifically to plant life (e.g. *Plants of this kind are called solitary*). Aside from this potential reference, *with'ring* appears to be the only clear adjective in the list above also assigned to plant life.

Alternatively, if one focuses on the prosodic elements, a large number of the adjectives can be grouped based on a common sense of communicating terror, whilst still retaining a sense of animacy (*avenging, awful, consuming, devouring, fierce, lurking, raging*). There are two instances of both *avenging* and *fierce*, together making up over a third of all the above items describing flames. Below are provided the instances of *avenging* and *devouring* to illustrate their prosody in relation to the co-text:

Figure 6: Instances of AVENGING *flame* in Group Y data

- | |
|---|
| <p>25. "the thunderbolt, or directing the devouring and avenging FLAME!" Bless me, <u>Copperfield!</u>- and then entered on the <u>pe</u>"</p> <p>26. "the thunderbolt, or directing the devouring and avenging FLAME in any quarter, I may be permitted to observe, in <u>passi</u>"</p> |
|---|

Figure 7: Instances of DEVOURING *flame* in Group Y data

- | |
|--|
| <p>27. "sp her sinking frame, When with the quickness of devouring FLAME, A furious wolf from out the bordering wood With eyes "</p> <p>28. "<u>nd</u> the shrieks of death, that wildly broke Through devouring FLAME and smothering smoke, Made the warrior's heart-blood"</p> |
|--|

Curiously, the parts of the line preceding *flame* in the first two instances are identical. However, the sources are different as is the remainder of the line after *flame*. Thus they can only be treated as coincidental. Disregarding this similarity, *devouring* is also present in all four lines, as are other prosodic elements including *furious, smothering, wildly* and *shrieks of death*. *Thunderbolt, sinking* and *quickness* also have the potential meanings to be included in this group of threatening terror. Furthermore, line 27 refers to behaviour of a wild animal and line 28's reference to a warrior also conjures up images of hunting and animalistic behaviours.

In summary, the adjectives fall into two main groups: sickness, and human/animal behaviour linked largely to movement. Further, the majority of all the adjectives can be attributed a sense of prosody: that of communicating terror or threat. Thus there is a sense of foreboding or threatening. This was shown in the surrounding co-text to *devouring* in particular. Finally, and perhaps just as interesting a result from this analysis, is that five lines of Group Y data could be removed and clearly identified as non-metaphors based on an exploration into the recording of word senses. Often, the decision of metaphoricity comes down to the records we have (i.e. dictionaries) of a word's usage with a particular meaning, or in a certain lexical combination. It seems to be suggested that meanings in the adjectives above have often been extended over time, through a process which

moves from animate association to abstract non-animate association, before moving to concrete objects, which would qualify *flame*. Interesting as this is, it does not answer the question of when we treat that change in meaning as an extension, and at what point it becomes metaphoric.

4.3.2. Animate verbs

The second lexical group expressing a degree of animacy alongside *flame* is verbs. The data can be grouped into two categories: where something being done to the *flame* (usually the verb precedes *flame*); where the *flame* is doing the action (usually the verb follows *flame*). The former group will be dealt with first:

Figure 8: List of animate verbs where *flame* is the object in Group Y data (all shown in the infinitive)

| Verb |
|--|
| excite, feed (x2), grow, nourish, revive + (THE/A) FLAME |

There are six different verbs and eight total instances of these verbs being used alongside *flame* in this colligation. A brief glance down the page shows that there are much fewer instances of such verbs preceding than following *flame*. A reason for this is that the research is only focusing on the metaphoricity of *flame* itself. Thus were other nouns are involved (i.e. those functioning as the subject in the above colligations), a decision needs to be made on the nature of the relationship between items and where in particular the metaphoricity is created. This is a problematic procedure and will be discussed in turn.

Whilst *excite* is associated with living beings through a level of consciousness, *feed*, *grow*, *nourish* and *revive* are more associated with the basic forms of life. These are shown below in their surrounding co-text:

Figure 9: Instances of feed, grown, nourish revive used alongside *flame* in Group Y data

- | |
|--|
| 29. " <u>rced</u> , and a quantity of scantlings and battens soon fed the FLAME. Everything indeed that could stimulate the fire was em" |
| 30. "hoes or superannuated garments in their hands to feed the FLAME; for it was esteemed needful that every villager <u>shoul</u> " |
| 31. "nt. To their astonishment, at that moment the wood <u>grew</u> a FLAME, and a hot rolling fire led on the advancing Buccaneer" |
| 32. "lit <u>flammas</u> , <u>grandior aura</u> <u>necat</u> . (A gentle wind nourishes FLAME, a stronger, extinguishes), the words, <u>grandior necat</u> ." |
| 33. " <u>nly</u> smouldering, and only a breath is needed to revive the FLAME. Every Protestant I saw, and all the intelligent and enlig" |

In each of these instances the flame is treated as a living being or object through the action being done to it. These lines also stand in contrast to the semantic group of illness or sickness associated with a proportion of the adjectives in the last section. Interestingly, these verbs invoke a sense of restoration. In each case, the flame is shown as a positive and desired occurrence. As mentioned, the verb *excite* implies a level of consciousness on the part of the flame, and thus could be considered a higher order or category of animate verb. The prosody of restoration could however, be extended to include *excite*, as it implies a positive renewal of the heat (in this case) of the flame:

- (5) ...nozzle the bellows; covering the whole with coke, and then exciting the FLAME by blowing. This mode of operating produced somewhat better results...

In terms of the pragmatic implications, there are often cases where our understanding of the

meaning of lexical items (in this case the verb and the object noun *flame*) alters the nature of the metaphoricity, or more importantly, where the metaphoricity lies. Understanding meanings takes place on the level of the individual as well as the shared linguistic community, and our exposure and use of language dictates our understanding or knowledge of a lexical item. This understanding is taken from Hoey's (2005) sense and refers to colligation, collocation, semantic, textual and pragmatic associations. Keeping within a pragmatic context, we can illustrate this idea with example 6 (line 30 from above):

- (6) '...All held old shoes or superannuated garments in their hands to feed the FLAME; for it was esteemed needful that every villager should contribute something...'

Here, a Celtic rite is described, whereby a bonfire is to be kept burning as an offering.⁷ The fire, or *flame*, is depicted as something sacred, which needs to be maintained, or *fed*. As mentioned within the initial examples of metaphoricity (see section 2), the interpretation of such a phrase depends upon pragmatic factors at the individual level of interpretation. The way in which the reader or listener interprets the metaphoricity is not important at this point. Instead, it is key to acknowledge that there are two pragmatically different understandings of the phrase, and whether conscious of their own choice or not, readers decisions have the ability to colour their outlook in terms of metaphoricity. An ambiguity exists here, which demonstrates crucially the idea that we have our own individual primings, intricately linked to our own personal use and exposure to language. Identifying grey-area metaphoricity within a cline means it is necessary to acknowledge that such subjectivity in meaning exists.

Secondly, the verbs following *flame* will be discussed. In these cases the flame functions as the subject carrying out the action. Verbs in this colligation with a degree of animacy are shown below:

Figure 10: List of animate verbs where *flame* is the subject in Group Y data (all shown in the infinitive)

| | | Verb |
|---------------|---|---|
| (THE/A) FLAME | + | announce, approach, bury, catch (x2), consume, dart, devour, die out, express, essay, expire (x4), fall (x4), favour, grow, leap, leap up (x2), lick, mingle, mount, pirouette, pour, rage and roar, rise, shoot across, shoot out, shoot overhead, shoot up (x9), shoot upward, sink, spring, spring up, stand, stream, stretch itself, struggle, throw (x3) |

This list is much longer than the former and introduces further problems in identifying the potential metaphoricity of *flame*. A large number of the verbs can be assigned to a category involving movement (*approach, catch, dart, fall, grow, leap, leap up, mount, pirouette, rise, shoot across, shoot forth, shoot out, shoot overhead, shoot up, shoot upward, sink, spring, spring up, stream, stretch itself throw*). With the exception of *fall*, and *pirouette*, all of the others express movement upwards or forwards. The second largest category could be assigned to those referring to human or animal behaviour or expression: *announce, bury, essay, express, favour, mingle, rage and roar, stretch itself, struggle, and throw*. These are all behaviours or expressions only attributed in their literal sense to living beings, to a stronger or weaker degree of sentience. *Expire* and *die out* could also be grouped here, in the most basic sense of living beings and objects. Finally, the remaining

⁷ Taken from *The Dove in The Eagle's Nest*, Charlotte Yonge.

three verbs could be grouped separately within a category of animal/human behaviour associated with eating: *consume*, *devour*, and *lick*.

Most frequent but most problematic within the table is the verb *to shoot* (13 out of 54 or 24.07 % of the above instances). Moreover, the verb often combines to form a larger lexical item. All instances of *to shoot* are detailed below:

Figure 11: All instances of *flame* + TO SHOOT in group Y data

| |
|--|
| 34. "fe, and rushing towards Alizon. But at this moment a bright FLAME shot up from the beacon. Astonishment and terror seized" |
| 35. "to us to make haste," said the Corporal, pointing to a bright FLAME which suddenly shot up on the shore of the lough. "Put " |
| 36. " turning off the gas at one of the standards when a brilliant FLAME shot across the north side of the nave, followed by a terri" |
| 37. "ate increased, and overpowered every other sound. A high FLAME presently shot up through the pillar of smoke above the " |
| 38. "ark, lying on the grass, watched to see the slight tongue of FLAME shoot up, but it did not come. Bevis stopped, tired, and " |
| 39. "t, collecting merrily round the smoky fire, with little jets of FLAME shooting up and flashing out on the six couples! Sam Wi" |
| 40. ", and then dying off in cracking echoes; and red tongues of FLAME shot out ever and anon among the trees, and clouds of su" |
| 41. "g through the air, its engines burst like shells. A hot rush of FLAME shot overhead into the darkling sky. "_Two!_" he cried, wi" |
| 42. " light to the pile of bark and fir-cones, and a bright flash of FLAME shot upward as Leif said,—"Up, lads!" in deep stern tones." |
| 43. "neas land, and Romulus ascend to the gods, the clear red FLAME shot up as the victims burned. The music of ten thousand" |
| 44. " the glare of the fire, was a figure, revealed only when the FLAME shot up from being freshly fed—Sir William Hunter on hor" |
| 45. ", and the small eyes were full of an intense despair. As the FLAME shot up feebly and flickered about she looked for somethi" |
| 46. "ded to its fury, and produced a column of exceeding white FLAME, which shot up into the air to such a prodigious height tha" |

With regards to the instances above, there are certain patterns in behaviour. Regardless of the larger lexical item involving *to shoot*, the meaning in each instance is always similar, referring to the increase in intensity of the flame. Nine of the twelve instances include *up* or *upwards* as a part of the phrase, giving the meaning of the flame rising upwards. The remaining three instances include *across*, *out*, and *overhead* to form lexical items. *Overhead* carries a similar meaning to *upward*, *across* and *out*, which suggest a movement of the flame, whilst expressing an increase in intensity or power. Seven of the instances of *flame* + *to shoot* have adjective or noun modifiers relating to the heat or light: *bright* x2, *brilliant*, *hot rush of*, *bright flash of*, *clear red*, *exceeding white*. There is also the colligational pattern *of* + *flame* + *to shoot* involving five of the twelve instances. More important perhaps, is the fact that each of the instances above is literal in their reference to the actions of a concrete, non-metaphoric flame. It is the animacy of *shoot* alone, which has projected them into Group Y. Thus, according to the data here, the colligation *flame* + *to shoot* is always used with reference to a concrete flame, depicting the movement upwards or outwards. Furthermore the phrase is usually preceded by a modifier of light, colour or heat, which again, emphasises the physicality of a concrete, non-metaphoric flame.

With regards to meanings of *shoot*, there is more difficulty in identifying metaphoricity, largely due to the wide variety of meanings attributed to the verb. The OED has "to emit swiftly and forcibly (rays and flames)" as a meaning, with uses beginning in 1480. Interesting to note is that earlier than this (1290) there is a meaning attributed to "a star or meteor. To dart across the sky". Neither meaning is classed as figurative, however the suggestion is that one meaning has come from a semantic extension of the other (candle flames from meteor trails). This is a similar pattern to *flame* used in reference to a sunset or sunrise, which will be discussed shortly in the section below.

4.3.3. Quantifiers

This final section leads on from the idea of animate associations with *flame*, and focuses upon the reason why particular quantifiers have been used alongside *flame*, and more importantly, why this creates a possible metaphoric phrase. Below is a table of all modifying nouns preceding the cluster

OF + A/THE + FLAME:

Figure 12: List of noun quantifiers directly preceding the colligation OF + THE/A + flame in Group Y

| Noun |
|--|
| body (x2), column, current, gulf, heart, jet(s) (x6), leap, rush, sheet(s) (x3), spires, stream, streamers, threads, + OF + (THE/A) + FLAME cores, tongue(s) (x6), volume, wells |

The table shows TONGUE(S) and JET(S) as the most frequent nouns used in this colligation, each representing 20.0% of the table. The concordance lines of tongue(s) are shown firstly below:

Figure 13: All instances of TONGUE(S) OF *flame* in Group Y data

| |
|---|
| 47. "ark, lying on the grass, watched to see the slight tongue of FLAME shoot up, but it did not come. <u>Bevis</u> stopped, tired, and " |
| 48. ", and then dying off in cracking echoes; and red tongues of FLAME shot out ever and anon among the trees, and clouds of s" |
| 49. "on was on fire—a broad hillside set with minute tongues of FLAME, swaying and writhing with the gusts of the dying storm," |
| 50. " <u>berator</u> of the People. The clouds of smoke, the tongues of FLAME, that now began to mingle with them, the multitude wh" |
| 51. "roaring, hilarious voice of invitation, its dancing tongues of FLAME, that called to them through the snows of that dreadful " |
| 52. "e <u>gaselier</u> , turned too high, hissed up into a long tongue of FLAME. The fire smoked feebly under a newly administered shov" |

Associated with this colligation are the modifiers *slight*, *red*, *minute*, *dancing* and *long*. With the exception of *dancing*, these instances can be semantically related to the qualities of a physical tongue in size and colour. Each instance depicts a movement of the flame – this is either preceding the cluster (lines 51 and 52), or following on from it (lines 47, 48, 49, 50). There is a suggestion of negative prosody in the inability of the flame to take a stronger form: this is hinted at in line 47 (*but it did not come*), line 49 (*swaying and writhing*), and line 52 (*the fire smoked feebly*). There is not enough data to mark the prosody as a characteristic of the colligation however. The cluster as a whole occurs often enough to make up a fifth of the data and could thus be described as a conventional phrase within Nineteenth Century writing (or one or more genres within this period). The OED definition of *tongue* aside from a body part is as "a symbolic figure or appearance as of a tongue, as those that appeared on the day of Pentecost." The first reference of tongue associated with fire is recorded from the Bible c1000 and details the Pentecost. From 1398, there is another meaning recorded in the OED, referring to "anything that resembles or suggests the human or animal tongue by its shape, position, function, or use; a tapering, projecting, or elongated object or part, esp. when mobile, or attached at one end or side". Here there is included an example of flame. Finally, in 1816 there is another extension of the meaning to refer to "a tapering jet of flame".⁸ Interesting to note is its Nineteenth Century origins in reference to a general flame (i.e. not Pentecostal). Thus the phrase appears to be conventional to this period of time and onwards only. A quick search of the BNC written, totaling 89 million words shows only six instances of *tongue* collocating with either *flame* or *fire*. From this result, the conclusion can be drawn that tongues of flame is a phrase conventional only to the Nineteenth Century.

Secondly are the concordance lines showing all instances of *jet(s) of flame* (again making up 20.0% of the colligation noun + OF +*flame*)

Figure 14: All instances of JET(S) OF *flame* in Group Y data

⁸ Worthy of note here is the use of another questionably metaphoric phrase for an OED definition. This will be dealt with below, as the second of the two most frequent nouns used in the colligation.

53. ", it is true, entertain us with fantastic and playful jets of FLAME--but then its light is full, united, and steady; the heat w"
54. "zed her arm, and made her sit down. A capricious jet of FLAME from a coal in the fire at this moment lighted up the fac"
55. "ollecting merrily round the smoky fire, with little jets of FLAME shooting up and flashing out on the six couples! Sam Wi"
56. "were left alone in the scented, fire-lit room. And a jet of FLAME suddenly showed him the girl's face turned away, convu"
57. "shed into foam by the angry reptiles; and a larger jet of FLAME than before burst from the brow of the demon statue. "E"
58. "as; it belches forth from the pipes in great flaring jets of FLAME, uncovered by any glass, and broadly illuminating the ne"

Here the modifiers of *jet(s)* are *playful*, *capricious*, *little*, *larger* and *great flaring*. As with *tongue(s)*, five of the six instances are modified: here, according to size or action of the flame. A difference with the *tongue(s)* data however, is the sense of swiftness or suddenness expressed in the flame's behaviour. Phrases such as *at this moment* (line 54), *flashing out* (line 55), *suddenly* (line 56), and *burst* (line 57). Also, with the exception of line 57, which needs mores context to determine the meaning, all instances refer to the light from the flame, illuminating an object. There is no reference to heat.

As with *tongue(s)*, the percentage of the instances above suggests *jet(s) of flame* to be a conventional phrase within the data. It appears conventional in its function of describing the fast or unexpected movement of a real, physical flame, with relation to its quality of lighting up something or someone. Thus when used in this particular colligation, the noun could arguably be described as forming part of a larger lexical item, used in a particular, non-metaphoric context. Both these examples bring to light the issue of conventionality involving metaphoric phrases. The phrases are more likely to be classed as non-metaphoric due to both their conventionality or frequency, and dictionary definitions, which refer to a meaning specific to flames, differential from the more basic name of *jet* or *tongue* when read singularly (i.e. not in a particular colligation). Thus to summarize, the colligation surrounding a word or phrase can be crucial in determining its metaphoricity.

Moving briefly to a semantic analysis of the nouns used in this colligation will determine if there is a larger pattern to the types of nouns being used alongside *flame* and the meanings conveyed. The largest semantic grouping shared by 20% of the items is to do with liquid imagery. This includes *current*, *gulf*, *rush*, *stream*, *volume* and *wells*. *Body*, *heart*, *tongue* can be grouped into body parts. A third category combining spatial imagery includes *column* and *spire*. A fourth category includes fabrics: *threads*, *sheets*, *streamers* and a fifth category includes *jets* and *leaps* which both involve movement. This leaves *cores* ungrouped. In terms of a prosodic analysis, there is a clear difference to the cluster *tongue(s) of flame*. None of the instances above suggest a feeble quality or lack of power within the flame: instead there is an overall sense of energy and influence emanating from the flame through the sudden and unexpected descriptions which are used to reveal something hidden (*broadly illuminating*; *suddenly showed*; *flashed out*; *lighted up*; *its light is full, united and steady*).

4.3.4. Descriptions of the sun as *flame*

This section has been placed towards the end of the Group Y analysis as it entails a less systematic and more qualitative approach to the data. Instances of the lines below have surfaced earlier, but the semantic aspect has not been dealt with until now. This is because their shared meaning relating to sunlight as flame groups them in no clearly defined structure, but does generate a potential characteristic related to their metaphoricity worth exploring. In total there are seven lines of data that depict a sunrise or sunset, or a more general description of the suns rays. The reason for inclusion in Group Y is that the use of *flame* to depict or describe the sun involves a form of semantic extension. The sun is "supplied with light and heat by its radiation" according to the OED, and it is the composition of the star which allows for a constant burning. In fact, the OED cites as

the very first definition of *flame*: "Vapour heated to the point of combustion; ignited gas", which would render the association of flame and sunlight as entirely congruent in a literal sense. However, whilst the sun can be described as being alight or of flame, (indeed its entire presence is only created through this process of burning), we only see the rays of light, (the effects of this process), and thus the description of flame is an extension semantically, as is the process an extension of effects.

The eight instances are shown below:

Figure 15: All instances of semantic set involving sunlight as flame in Group Y data

| |
|--|
| 59. "as we ascended a wooded height with the sun setting in a FLAME of gold, in front--we witnessed a rural sight, connected " |
| 60. " gh a great golden sunset was being enacted in purple and FLAME on the other side of the house. The child's eyes were dull" |
| 61. "ound the sun lost that dullness on its disk and took a bright FLAME, and threw golden arrows everywhere; and the pastures" |
| 62. "e I've noticed it is when the sun is going down in a blaze of FLAME, and it looks like--I don't know what." "The heavenly Jeru" |
| 63. "d the distant purple hills. The whole western sky was one FLAME of fire. Ruth forgot herself in looking at the gorgeous sig" |
| 64. "s a hundred streams unfold, At once to pillars turned that FLAME with gold; Behind his sail the peasant strives to shun The" |
| 65. "sical. The westering sun, which filled the atmosphere with FLAME throughout the day, was now wildly setting; and, as he sa" |

Firstly, within the lines, there are other lexical items associated with the sun, mostly in relation to its light, or position in the sky: *sun, gold, golden, sunset, disk, bright, Western sky, fire, westering sun, atmosphere, day, setting*. Perhaps of more interest, three instances include the lexical item *in (a) flame*, or an extension of it (lines 59, 60, 62), and each of these describe the sun setting or descending in the sky. Line 63 describes the sky as *one flame of fire*, a phrase that has also been used to depict towns or nations on fire from gunfire or war (discussed in section 2). Also, some examples are more metaphoric than others, such as the disc of the sun throwing golden arrows in line 61 or the description of the sky as one single flame of fire in line 63. More generally however, all the above examples are describing the visual effects of the sun's rays, either on another object or the landscape. Thus in terms of metaphoricity there is very little being expressed. Instead, in each case there is a direct reference to a concrete, non-metaphoric object (the sun), and the behaviour or effect caused by it, described in terms of flame(s). *Flame* here is interchangeable with the sun's rays. Finally, there are also a further four lines, which depict a natural phenomenon related to light (lightning, a shooting star, and the aurora borealis). Apart from the shooting star (created from flaming gases), the other two events are further extensions, made up only of light rays and not flames. This makes them more metaphoric in their association with flame. In summary, the instances are grouped here together, as a result of their semantic meaning. If disregarded, some instances would fall in the clear metaphoric category (namely the lightning and aurora borealis examples), but the majority would fall into the clear non-metaphors.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion to the study, there have been exposed several factors at work in both the decision of whether metaphoricity is present, and the methods used to decide upon this. The study does not provide an exhaustive account, but a small, qualitative investigation into what is found in the present data. Whilst statistical measures proved effective at identifying patterns and tendencies amongst both the metaphors and the non-metaphors, the Group Y data posed problems in such an approach, due to its amalgamated and hybrid nature. The frequent clusters and collocates showed some patterns, but unlike Group 1 and 2, the patterns were not so representative of the fuzzy group as a whole. It is hoped that the problems encountered in analysing such an amalgamated group of language will help to demonstrate the problems of metaphoricity, whilst at the same time, shed light

on possible approaches to dealing with these problems.

5.1. Summary of findings

Firstly, in terms of the two frequent clusters IN A FLAME and A BRIGHT FLAME, differences were found between the instances found in Group Y and those found in other datasets. IN A FLAME was found most commonly used in Group Y, and often with the meaning of setting a town or city on fire. There were different degrees of metaphoricity in the individual instances. The cluster was also found in the clear metaphoric data, but not as frequently used. In the metaphoric instances, the phrase related most often to emotions such as anger or embarrassment, and described a body part such as the cheeks or eyes being IN A FLAME. The cluster A BRIGHT FLAME also had specific characteristics when analysed amongst the Group Y data. It was mostly used to describe the light emitted by a flame. The metaphoricity was present in varying places, referring to stars, a sunset, and a boat's flare. Notably, there was often a degree of animacy or movement involved in the items following the cluster, such as *shooting up* or *throwing*, thus the flame itself was most often at the centre of the metaphor (i.e. its behaviour or action was not literal, or what would be expected of a literal flame) The cluster also appeared in the top frequent clusters of the non-metaphors, but only occurring three times. These each refer to the brightness or strength of a physical flame, each instance marked by surrounding associated lexis, such as a camp-fire or a candle. There was no ambiguity surrounding what the flame was referring to, as there was in some of the Group Y data.

Secondly, the animate nature of the items used alongside *flame* were analysed for potential metaphoricity. It was acknowledged that as there are degrees of metaphoricity and conventionality, there are also degrees of animacy, which can be more or less strongly associated with living beings. Often, many of the items' original meanings have undergone a form of extension to include abstract concepts, and sometimes a further extension to concrete inanimate objects, such as a flame. This discussion led on to the use of quantifiers of flame, which are not necessarily animate, but certainly debateable in their literality such as *current of*, *heart of* and *sheets of* flame. Often, the quantifiers were defined as conventional (in particular *tongues of* and *jets of* flame), which may be a reason for them not necessarily being judged as metaphoric in any unified or non-disputed sense. Most importantly, the adjectives and verbs which display a level of animacy and surround *flame*, display elements of prosody. The majority of verbs expressed a sense of positive restoration (e.g. *grow*, *nourish*, *revive*, *excite*). In each case, the flame is shown as a positive and desired occurrence, and this is backed up by the surrounding lexis. In contrast the adjectives largely displayed prosody involving animalistic, base, and savage behaviour (avenging, fierce, lurking), often portraying a sense of terror and threat. This is supported by the types of collocates and lexis elsewhere in the concordance lines, e.g. *furious*, *smothering*, *wildly* and *shrieks of death*. Subsequently, the analysis has shown that prosody has been more central within the analysis of Group Y primings than more structural forms of priming (collocation and colligation), which were characteristic of the more defined datasets 1 and 2.

5.2. Problems encountered with identifying metaphoricity

One of the crucial problems with identifying metaphoricity shown within this analysis is reliance upon dictionary definitions. Dictionaries isolate words rather than lexical items, and as was seen with IN A FLAME, focusing on a word disregards the meaning of the combined item. When consulting dictionaries, it is found in the majority of cases here that the phrase in question has entered the dictionary as a non-figurative association or reference due to a form of semantic extension. This was seen with *tongue*, first only used in reference to a Pentecostal flame, becoming accepted in relation to a more general (i.e. not religious specific) kind of flame in the 19th Century. An important consideration for any metaphor theorist is the point at which metaphoricity can and should be confined. This means addressing head on candid questions such as the degree at which

semantic extension stops and metaphoricity begins. Although Hoey's (2005) theory of Lexical Priming does not directly address such questions, taken as an approach to the analysis of lexical behaviours, the theory does address necessary aspects of meaning, which have fallen out of the metaphor discussion. Rather than focusing solely on whether a metaphor is conventional or novel for instance, the theory allows one to approach metaphor synchronically as well as diachronically, addressing the metaphoricity from a range of linguistic traits, such as collocates and prosody, in which it has been shown to manifest itself.

Finally, in terms of the methodological aspect to this research, the approach of asking individuals to judge the metaphoricity of a concordance line brings forth certain issues in need of addressing. The first issue is that of participant priming. The readers are aware that they are specifically looking for metaphors involving *flame*. This of course prepares them for the task, whereby they may identify more metaphors than in a non-test environment. Secondly, the issue of identification may also be better developed, specifically to accommodate the cline theory. Asking participants to grade the metaphoricity on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is clearly literal and 5 is clearly metaphoric, may provide a researcher with more careful grading. This still would not address the notion of multiple clines in terms of grammatical, lexical, semantic and pragmatic metaphoricity however. Thus it is intended that a full analysis of the Group Y data will need to accommodate for such linguistically varied findings. It is hoped that the study will present more support for the multiple cline argument.

As this paper aimed to highlight, the problems with current approaches to metaphor stem from their inability to explore deeply enough the variety of linguistic conventions and forms, in which metaphoricity can be manifest. For now, the focus on lexical metaphor identification appears to be centered too prominently on isolated types of metaphor, such as only heavily conventional phrases, or purely creative phrases, with no reference to both synchronic *and* diachronic differences in metaphoricity. As a response, the small study in this paper has brought to light aspects of metaphoricity which are not currently addressed; issues that have been raised such as the pragmatic aspects of metaphoricity shifting over time, or the ability of literal meaning to extend and the effect this may have on metaphoricity. There are numerous terms for identifying metaphor types (e.g. 'dead' or 'dead and buried') (cf. Goatly 1997), but these do not address the variety in *meaning* expressed through aspects of metaphoricity. To conclude, this research supports the contention that metaphor is not an effective umbrella term for something so linguistically and semantically varied. In light of the results above, the extent to which the Lexical Priming Theory (Hoey 2005) can resolve this issue is something to consider further.

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