"The Bait" and "A Valediction of Weeping": A Cognitive Literary Study of Metaphor as Conceit

Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn

The conceit has been commonly defined as "an especially elaborate simile or metaphor,"[1] in which "we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness."[2] It is, however, the oft-quoted statement by the eighteenth-century English writer and scholar Samuel Johnson, which highlights the essential problem in the process of comprehending a conceit. He writes about the English Metaphysical poets, those "men of learning . . . [allowed] to be wits":[3]

> But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in images apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature

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[1] Christopher Johnson, "Conceit," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition, ed. Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman, Clare Cavanagh, Jahan Ramazani, Paul Rouzer, Harris Feinsod, David Marno, and Alexandra Slessarve (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 289.

[2] Helen Gardner, ed., *The Metaphysical Poets* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972), p. 19.

[3] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection*, ed. Roger Lonsdale and John Mullan (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 15-16.

> and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and
> allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises;
> but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly
> bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom
> pleased.

What problem does the conceit pose for Johnson? It is not only the *violence*, in his terms, of the yoking of *heterogeneous* ideas, but also what Johnson sees (in T.S. Eliot's words) as the "failure of the conjunction, the fact that often the ideas are yoked but not united."[4]

Donne's use of the conceit has, most naturally, been of continuing interest for scholars. This use has been studied within the context of early systems of classification—Raymond Alden's distinction between "imaginative" and "logical" conceits[5] or George Williamson's distinction between "expanded" and "condensed" conceits.[6] It has been studied, as well, within the context of Rosamund Tuve's classic definition of the Metaphysical conceit as an "extended pursuit of a likeness by basing it on several logical parallels," whose effect is that of "sharp wit, since they cannot be framed without the use of multiple predicaments and are usually found from more than one of the places of invention."[7] More recent studies include that of Claudia Brodsky,[8] who discusses "the status of logic as it is brought to light by the use of imagery" in Donne's poetry, and that of Katrin Ettenhuber,[9] who locates Donne's use of the conceit in sixteenth and seventeenth century arts of discourse by

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[4] T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926, The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. Anthony Cuder and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 376.

[5] Raymond Macdonald Alden, "The Lyrical Conceits of the 'Metaphysical Poets'," *Studies in Philology* 17.2 (1920): 183-198.

[6] George Williamson, "The Nature of the Donne Tradition," *Studies in Philology* 25.4 (1928): 423.

[7] Rosemund Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1947), pp. 294 and 368.

[8] Claudia Brodsky, "The Imaging of the Logical Conceit," *ELH* 49.4 (1982): 830.

[9] Katrin Ettenhuber, "'Comparisons are Odious': Revisiting the Metaphysical Conceit in Donne," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 62.255 (2011): 393-413.

considering the complex relationship between metaphor and the early modern rhetorical figure of catachresis.

The present article proposes a complementary approach to the conceit, informed by the discussion in our book *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*.[10] This approach utilizes concepts from Cognitive—particularly Gestalt—Psychology, in order to study literary texts. Its importance to the discussion of the conceit can be illustrated by citing two seminal comments of literary scholars. Judah Stampfer has written of the Metaphysical poets that "their metaphysical or learned imagery . . . suggests not so much an arresting 'hit' or conceit, but the thinking process of an intelligent person in a jam."[11] This colloquial yet concise statement provides an appropriate introduction to our continuing study of the conceit. For in our book, we have continuously highlighted this very "thinking process," both through a critical, scholarly study of various metaphors and conceits in poetic texts, and through an empirical study that highlights the ongoing response of real readers to such texts. We therefore placed a great emphasis on delineating the potentialities of different types of readings, as comprising various solutions to the process of "problem-solving" studied in cognitive psychology.[12] On his part, K.K. Ruthven defines conceit as a "cognitive metaphor," in which there is an "emphasis on proportion and reciprocity of parts" as well as "a mode of perception."[13] These qualities indeed provided the basis for our discussion of metaphor and conceit, particularly in terms of the concept of a *gestalt*, or form, as an "integrated, articulated whole,"[14] in which (in the words of I.A. Richards) "we have

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[10] Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*, Series: *Studies and Research in the Psychology of Art*, ed. Ian Verstegen (London, UK: Routledge, 2022).

[11] Judah Stampfer, *John Donne and the Metaphysical Gesture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 28.

[12] See: Kevin Dunbar, "Problem Solving," in *A Companion to Cognitive Science*, ed. William Bechtel and George Graham (London, UK: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 289-298.

[13] K. K. Ruthven, *The Conceit*, *The Critical Idiom* (London, UK: Methuen, 1969), p. 5

[14] Michael Wertheimer, "A Gestalt Perspective on the Psychology of Thinking," in *Towards a Theory of Thinking,* ed. Britt Glatzeder, Vinod Goel and Albrecht Müller (Berlin: Springer, 2010), p. 50

two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction."[15] Furthermore, we discussed Ruthven's "mode of perception" in terms of the Gestalt psychologist Heinz Werner's concept of the physiognomic mode of perception (also understood to be a forerunner of personification),[16] which has been defined as being "characterized by the tendency to see forms as dynamic, animate, infused with affect or mood, changing rather than fixed."[17] Finally, we situated the discussion of metaphor and conceit in Metaphysical poetry within three literary traditions: Flea Poetry; the Pastoral/Piscatorial Lyric; and the Religious Sonnet. In *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*, therefore, we participated in the discipline of *Cognitive Literary Studies*, to provide an integrated approach to metaphor and the conceit.

The present article focuses on four major aspects to discuss the conceit within this discipline. Taking our cue from the title of our book, we can designate two aspects of the *Gestalt of the Mind*: *problem-solving*, specifically intended here to identify problems in the reading of the text and to suggest solutions; and the concept of *embodied cognition*, in which "Real people have embodied minds whose conceptual systems arise from, are shaped by, and are given meaning through living, human bodies."[18] Regarding the aspect of problem-solving in our study, two problem/solutions are central to the goal of providing an analysis of the conceit. One problem/solution is that of stating the poem's argument, in other words its "general outline"[19] and "text-continuum."[20] The other problem/solution is the selection of specific metaphors, such that

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[15] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 93.

[16] Heinz Werner, *Comparative Psychology of Mental Development*, Revised, Third Edition (New York, NY: International Universities Press, 1957), pp. 75-76.

[17] Margery B. Franklin, "'Museum of the Mind': An Inquiry into the Titling of Artworks," *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 3.1 (1988): 161.

[18] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), p.6.

[19] Helen Vendler, *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*, Second Edition (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins' Press, 2002), p. 134.

[20] Menakhem Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates its Meanings [with an analysis of Faulkner's 'Rose for Emily']," *Poetics Today* 1.1/2 (1979): 35-64 and 311-361.

the interrelationships among them summarize the poem's argument, and thereby sustain the meaning of the poetic text as a *gestalt*. Embodied cognition takes on two primary forms: embodied simulation and physiognomic perception. Embodied simulation occurs when "bodily metaphors . . . allow speakers directly to experience and share some bodily feelings."[21] Physiognomic perception is a tendency to see forms as dynamic—the "attribution of human form, nature, or characteristics to something."[22] Thus, in the familiar personifying metaphor "weeping willow" the tree may (in Werner's terms) "appear 'animate' and…seem to express some inner form of life."[23]

Two aspects of the *Gestalt of the Text* are *bidirectionality* as the relationship between the two subjects of a metaphor and the *grotesque*. The aspect of bidirectionality is inherent in the claim that the two terms of a metaphor entail a reciprocal, bidirectional relationship, and not just one in which the primary subject is viewed unidirectionally in terms of the secondary subject.[24] Philip Thomson views the aspect of the grotesque as an "artistic mode" in the literature and visual arts of Western culture, providing "the basic definition of the grotesque: *the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response.*"[25] More recent discussions of the grotesque in Western culture contribute further dimensions to Thomson's discussion. Justin Edwards and Rune Graulund attend to the relationship between the completed work and the grotesque, noting that it is able "to compress a host of seemingly incongruent parts into a perfectly imperfect whole."[26] Frances Connelly emphasizes the grotesque's function in eliciting "contradictory and

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[21] Valentina Cuccio, "Embodied Simulation and Metaphors: On the Role of the Body in the Interpretation of Bodily-Based Metaphors," *Epistemologia* 38 (2015): 108.

[22] *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[23] Werner, *Comparative Psychology of Mental Development*, p. 69.

[24] The terms "primary" and "secondary" subjects replace respectively the terms "tenor" and "vehicle," and are adopted from: Max Black, "Metaphor," in *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 29.

[25] Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque*, *The Critical Idiom* (London, UK: Methuen, 1972), pp, 11, 27.

[26] Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, *Grotesque*, *The New Critical Idiom* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon., UK: Routledge, 2013), p. 19.

conflicting responses as it binds together the unexpected and disparate."[27]

How do these four aspects illuminate Donne's use of the conceit? A look at the brief conceit in the concluding lines of Donne's poem "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" provides a way to begin answering this question. In this conceit, "proclaimed the epitome of Metaphysical wit,"[28] a comparison is drawn between the two semantic fields of *human* and *instrument*, specifically between the souls of two separated lovers and a drafting compass:[29]

> If they bee twoe, they are twoe soe
>   As stiff twin-compasses are twoe
> Thy soule the fixt'd foote, makes noe showe
>   To moue, but doth, if th'other doe:
> And though it in the Center sitt,
>   Yet when the other farr doth rome
> It leanes, and hearkens after it
>   And growes erect as that comes home.
> Such wilt thou bee to mee, whoe must
>   Like th'other foot obliquelie runn
> Thy firmness makes my circle Iust
>   And makes mee end, where I begun.

David Fishelov has written about the process of comprehension of this simile:[30]

> . . . the reader is first shocked by the unfamiliar juxtaposition of the elevated and "soft" notion of the two lovers' souls with the technical and "hard" compasses only to be "calmed" and reassured by the detailed elaboration of the various Gs

[27] Frances S. Connelly, *The Grotesque in Western Art and Culture: The Image at Play* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 10.

[28] Graham Roebuck, "'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning': Traditions and Problems of the Imagery," *John Donne Journal* 13.1-2 (1994): 143.

[29] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne. Volume 4. Part 2: The Songs and Sonets*, gen. ed. Jeffrey S. Johnson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2021), p. 51.

[30] David Fishelov, "Poetic and Non-Poetic Simile: Structure, Semantics, Rhetoric," *Poetics Today* 14.1 (1993): 21.

    [grounds; shared aspects] intended to persuade him or her
    that the juxtaposition is not that strange, after all.

This focus on the process of comprehension can be discussed in terms of the four aspects. The *unidirectional* feature of this simile (lovers are the legs of a compass) is a somewhat *grotesque image*, in that the lovers are being objectified as a metallic instrument. Such grotesqueness is tempered, however, by *embodied cognition* that expresses positive affect (steadfastness, sexuality, longing). Nevertheless, these qualities cannot be attributed to an instrument, and thus the *solution to the problem* lies, in fact, in two characteristics: a human being is *not* a cold metallic instrument, and therefore the overcoming of distances depends on emotional, not physical, qualities; and the circle is not simply an image of space, but is also a traditional symbol of infinite and eternal love.

    Such an emphasis on the process of comprehension of a conceit takes on an even greater significance when studied within the context of a complete poetic text. To this end, we will focus in this article on "The Bait" and "A Valediction of Weeping," both of which are constructed around the continuous development of a specific conceit. "The Bait," constructed around the conceit *courtship is fishing*, moves from the "pretty elegance"[31] of the pastoral lyric, to a "realistic description of actual fishing . . . [that] represents the necessary antithesis to the idealization of the first stanzas,"[32] and finally to an "ironic and somewhat dark finale . . . [that] turns a pastoral invitation into a form of pastoral entrapment."[33] "A Valediction of Weeping," constructed around the conceit *a tear is a technological/scientific object* (coin, cartographic globe, moon), is "an ingeniously 'conceited' poem,"[34] which demonstrates a "logic of trying to 'top' itself stanza by stanza in a series

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[31] Arthur Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008; orig. ed. 1986), p. 84.

[32] James V. Mirollo, *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 170.

[33] Kader N. Hegedüs, "'Love, Let Me Some Senseless Piece of this Place Be': Landscape, Body and the 'Creature of Place' in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*," *English: Journal of the English Association* 65.251 (2016): 301.

[34] Theodore Redpath, ed., *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne*, Second Edition (London, UK: Methuen, 1983), p. 254.

of related but expanding metaphoric conceits comparing tears holding the image of the lover's face, first to coins (stamped with the sovereign's image), then to a globe made into a spherical map of the world, finally to the moon high above the earth."[35] Discussed in tandem, these poems also reveal Donne's engagement with the vagaries of human emotion, as well as his respective concerns with both the pastoral tradition and the emerging New Science. By concomitantly looking retrospectively at our discussion of "The Bait" in *The Gestalts of Mind and Text* and prospectively towards a discussion of "A Valediction of Weeping," we can make finer distinctions about Donne's use of the conceit.

Concerned as we are with the conceit as a metaphor (rather than as a simile), two aspects of the *Gestalt of the Text*—bidirectionality and the grotesque—become prominent in our *Gestalt-Interaction Theory of Metaphor*. [36] This theory can be best illustrated by studying the metaphor "Man is a Wolf," as we develop the discussion by the philosopher Max Black:[37]

> (1) There are two potential unidirectional readings that can be realized for the metaphor, "Man is a Wolf." These readings exist separately:
>> Man is a Wolf: Preserves the linguistic form; man as a wolf preys upon others, is fierce and is hungry.
>> A Wolf is a Man: Inverts the linguistic form; a wolf as a man is a leader, and is on a mission.
>
> (2) A reading in which a blending of the two subjects of the metaphor is realized: A wolf-man, which is a wolf-like creature with superior strength, possessing senses that are of greater capabilities than what humans and wolves possess separately.
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> (3) A bidirectional reading, realized as a continued shifting between the two unidirectional readings, in which blending is prevented and the tension between the two subjects of the metaphor is preserved.

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[35] Hugh Grady, *John Donne and Baroque Allegory: The Aesthetics of Fragmentation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 123.

[36] Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*, pp. 17-19.

[37] Max Black, "Metaphor," pp. 25-47

(4) A bidirectional reading of a metaphor is sustained in two primary ways: an incompatibility between semantic fields; and a use of the grotesque.

Finally, as befits a cognitive literary study of conceit as metaphor, Joseph Glicksohn, a cognitive psychologist, designed an empirical study. He employed a method that allowed for the progressive unfolding of the poetic text before the reader on a computer screen, coupled with the generation of an online verbal protocol that was recorded on the computer and subsequently transcribed for content analysis. The following instructions were provided for the participants/readers, who were graduate and undergraduate students of English Literature:[38]

In this study you will be presented with a poetic text printed on a computer screen. As this text unfolds on the screen, you will be asked to provide a continuing verbal report of your process of comprehension. This verbal report will be taped, so you do not have to write it down. We want you to think aloud as you read the text. By this we mean that we are interested in hearing what you understand by the text in front of you, just as if you were alone in the room, reading the poem to yourself, and trying to make some sense out of it.

The poetic text will be presented in a series of segments, so that during your reading process more and more text will appear on the screen. *Previous segments will appear in italics* (like this). Please remember that we want you to continue thinking aloud as more and more segments of the text appear before you.

At certain points in the text, you will find a metaphor appearing in bold print. Please focus particularly on the process of comprehending this metaphor. As each metaphor appears, you will be given 3 questions that can serve as guidelines for you.

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[38] Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, "Metaphor Comprehension as Problem Solving: An Online Study of the Reading Process," *Style* 36.3 (2002): 433.

At certain points in the text, the reader encountered a targeted metaphor appearing in boldface print, and was prompted by three questions appearing on the screen beneath this text:[39]

> (1) How do you identify the marked phrase as being a metaphor?
> (2) What information in the text, appearing before a phrase, is of use to you in comprehending each metaphor?
> (3) Does the meaning of the metaphor change, as you continue reading the text?

The specific metaphors in each poetic text and their interrelationship will be presented in a clear diagrammatic form. This is accomplished by the construction of a flowchart for each poem; these flowcharts present the metaphors, their underlying semantic fields and the two unidirectional forms of each metaphor. The pertinent text continuum is represented on the left side of the flowchart by a series of boxes connected by arrows—designating the targeted metaphors. The process of metaphor comprehension is represented by the two alternative readings of each metaphor, depending on which of its parts is viewed as the primary and which secondary subject. The major goal of this empirical study is to provide information about the process of reading by real readers, by allowing them to reveal their various phases of understanding within the process of reading the poetic text.

"The Bait"

Four metaphors were marked in Donne's "The Bait," which together represent the rhetorical/narrative continuum of the poetic text:[40]

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[39] Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, "Metaphor Comprehension as Problem Solving," p. 434.

[40] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne. Volume 4. Part 2: The Songs and Sonets*, p. 14.

The metaphors to be discussed are marked in bold. In our empirical study, we adopted a somewhat modernized spelling of the poetic text to be read by the participants. Thus, for example: the "u" becomes "v"; and words such as "runne" and "bee" are modernized, as well as "darcknest" and "Bancks."

Come live with me, and be my Love
And we shall some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and Crystal Brooks
With silken lines, and silver hooks;

There will the River whispering run
Warmed by thy eyes more than the Sun
And there the **enamoured fish** will stay,
Begging themselves they may betray.

When thou wilt swim in that live Bath
Each fish which every Channel hath
Will **amorously** to thee **swim**
Gladder to catch thee than thou him;

If thou to be so seen beest loath
By Sun, or Moon, thou darkenest both
And if my heart have leave to see
I need not their light having thee.

Let others freeze with angling Reeds
And cut their legs with shells, and weeds
Or treacherously poor fish beset
With strangling snare, or windowy net;

Let coarse bold hands from slimy nest
The Bedded fish in Banks outwrest
Or Curious traitors, **sleeve silk flies**
Bewitch poor fishes' wandering Eyes.

For thee, thou needs no such deceit
For **thou thy self are thine own bait**
That fish that is not catched thereby
Alas is wiser far than I.

The four major aspects of our Gestalt-oriented approach to the poetic text and its metaphors will be employed in our discussion of "The Bait" (see Figure 1). The first aspect, *problem-solving*, is concerned with: (1) stating the poem's central conceit; (2) making an appropriate selection of those specific metaphors that sustain the poetic text as a *gestalt*; and (3) presenting these metaphors in a flowchart, together with
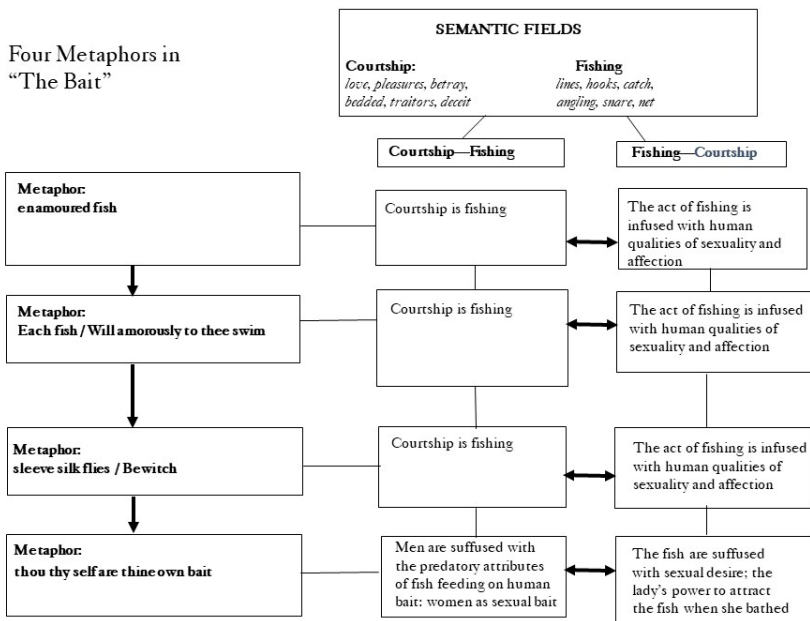
Four Metaphors in
"The Bait"

SEMANTIC FIELDS

Courtship:	**Fishing**
love, pleasures, betray,	*lines, hooks, catch,*
bedded, traitors, deceit	*angling, snare, net*

Courtship—Fishing   Fishing—Courtship

Metaphor: enamoured fish	Courtship is fishing	The act of fishing is infused with human qualities of sexuality and affection
Metaphor: Each fish / Will amorously to thee swim	Courtship is fishing	The act of fishing is infused with human qualities of sexuality and affection
Metaphor: sleeve silk flies / Bewitch	Courtship is fishing	The act of fishing is infused with human qualities of sexuality and affection
Metaphor: thou thy self are thine own bait	Men are suffused with the predatory attributes of fish feeding on human bait: women as sexual bait	The fish are suffused with sexual desire; the lady's power to attract the fish when she bathed

Figure 1

their two unidirectional forms. The central conceit of this poem is: *courtship is fishing*.[41] Four metaphors sustain this conceit: *the enamoured fish*; *Each fish / Will amorously to thee swim*; *sleeve silk flies / Bewitch / thou thy self are thine own bait*. In these metaphors the reader is being asked to participate in the creation of an imagined world, in which "human emotion" (courtship) is viewed in terms of the "pastoral" (in this instance, the piscatorial) world, while at the same time the act of fishing is infused with human qualities of sexuality and affection. There is a central problem in the poem regarding the very identities of the fish and the bait, which is brought to the fore in the fourth metaphor. For as Eva Kittay writes: "The 'beloved' cannot at once be the prey and herself the means of catching the prey."[42] There are various proposed solutions to this problem concerning such identities, which change in the move from stanza to stanza:[43] there is a fisherman; his bait is male

[41] Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 263.
[42] Kittay, p. 273.
[43] Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*, p. 77.

flattery actualized as the poem itself; and the woman is the fish (stanza 1); there is a fisherwoman, her bait is her body, and the men are the fish (stanzas 2-6); there is a confluence of the fisherwoman and bait, and the men are the fish (stanza 7).

The second aspect is that of *embodied cognition*, readily apparent in the second stanza as both physiognomic perception and personification. Thus, "the river whispering run / Warmed by thy eyes" exemplifies physiognomic perception, while "the enamoured fish" exemplifies personification. The third aspect is that of bidirectionality, manifesting within the process of metaphor comprehension when the reader strives to integrate the two unidirectional readings to result in an emergent *gestalt*—such as that characterized by blending. The first two metaphors express the characterization of the fish as being "enamoured," or inspired with ardent love. Both unidirectional readings are viable. If the beloved is objectified as a fish, then *courtship is fishing*. There is, however, a darker side to this pastorality, in that human love is viewed in terms of the predatoriness and violence of fishing. Thus, there are "silken lines," but also "silver hooks." In turn, if the fish is personified as being "enamoured," then *fishing is courtship*. Thus, physiognomic perception characterizes the first three stanzas, the landscape readily exhibiting the love expressed for the beloved, in its "golden sands," and the river "warmed by thy eyes." Indeed, the act of fishing is infused with human qualities of sexuality and affection. Again, however, there is a dark side in these human emotions, in that there is betrayal and deceit.

In striving to integrate the two unidirectional readings to result in an emergent *gestalt*, if this is an emergent *grotesque* image, blending will not be attained, and bidirectionality will be preserved. Indeed, the indications of both violence and grotesqueness in these stanzas ("hooks," "betray," "gladder to catch thee") sustain bidirectionality, further intensified in the third metaphor and its immediate context. For in "sleave silk flies bewitch," the verb is derived from the semantic field of *courtship*, indicating an act of baiting. The use of such grotesque imagery as "slimy nest" and "strangling snare" triggers embodied simulation, in which the reader can experience the bodily feeling of being violated. This indeed reflects the continuous oscillation in the process of courtship between the pastoral and the hunt, between love and seduction, between faithfulness and betrayal.

We will now look closely at one online verbal protocol, which comprises the actual response of a reader generated in our empirical study and complements our discussion of the conceit in "The Bait." This protocol was that of an undergraduate student of English Literature and a native speaker of English.[44] In the book *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*, this was one of the protocols discussed, which presented a complex reading of the conceit, *courtship is fishing*. In that previous discussion, we focused on highlighting the reader's move between a unidirectional and a bidirectional reading of this conceit; thus, s/he first adopts the form *courtship is fishing* for Metaphor 1; subsequently moves to a bidirectional reading of Metaphors 2 and 3 (*courtship is fishing* and *fishing is courtship*); and finally returns to the unidirectional reading for Metaphor 4 (*courtship is fishing*). In our present discussion, we highlight as well the entire process of metaphor comprehension. This is accomplished by looking at how this one reader responds to the three questions appearing on the computer screen, regarding in turn each of the four metaphors in the poem. The metaphor is cited first, and then the reader's verbatim response. As part of this process, we will also distinguish in greater specificity how the four aspects are manifested in this reader's response to each metaphor. Comments by the reader on the two aspects pertaining to the *Gestalt of the Mind* (problem-solving and embodied cognition) are marked in italics, while the two aspects pertaining to the *Gestalt of the Text* (unidirectionality/bidirectionality and the grotesque) are marked in bold:

> **Metaphor 1**: *enamoured fish*
>
> "How do you identify the marked phrase as being a metaphor?"
> **The mere fact that the words do not normally appear together,** *the fish would never be enamoured, you'd have an enamoured person,* **this would imply that it was a metaphor. I think it's probably because of the difference between the two words** and this comes up while you read through the two stanzas, you can understand that this is a love poem.

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[44] This student participated in a course taught by Chanita Goodblatt, but not one directly concerned with the study of Metaphor.

"What information in the text that appears before a phrase is of use to you in comprehending each metaphor?"
We're talking here about someone who's in love and therefore he's enamoured by his love. The fact that the speaker is trying to get his love, well, he's trying to reel her in, to hook her with his silver hook, he's trying to attract her, he's trying to show her that he loves her. We see it through the *river whispering, the warmth in "thy eyes* more than the sun." **He's trying to reel her in in the way you would reel in a fish and that's because he's being enamored with her, and he wants to make sure that he will stay with him.**

Embodied cognition, as an aspect of the *Gestalt of the Mind*, is manifested both as personification and as physiognomic perception, seen in the reader's noting of the fish as an "enamoured person" and in the whispering of the river and the warmth of the sun. In terms of the *Gestalt of the Text*, she adopts the unidirectional form of *courtship is fishing* for the metaphor, noting the personification of the fish as an "enamoured person"; in this instance, for the reader there is a fisherman, and the woman is the fish. Furthermore, her answer to the first question reveals that Metaphor 1 is identified as such because of personification, while her answer to the second question indicates that she understands the text as being about love ("Come live with me, and be my love"), and thus the act of love/"attracting" is described in terms of reeling in a fish. At this first stage, then, metaphor comprehension is informed by embodied cognition and unidirectionality.

Metaphor 2: *each fish amorously swim*

"Gladder to catch thee, than thou him." *Ok, so to me it now looks as if the speaker is a woman and not a man. "Come live with me and be my love," although the first part could be a woman and the second part could be a man. Other way around. The first part could be the man.* **Well, we compare this metaphor of amorously swimming and, for some reason or other I don't see this as a fish any more, this to me seems more like a sperm, on its way to fertilize the egg.** This is definitely a sexual description, it's a sexual metaphor.

"How do I identify it as being a metaphor?"
Well, part of it is connected to the previous metaphor. "The enamoured fish" and the "amorously swim," and the mere fact that the word "swim" appears together with the word "amorous" implies that here we are not talking about fish, we are not talking about men, we are not talking about anything other than sperms. **The word "amorously" implies that this is a sexual act and together with the swimming we have the picture that is drawn is more, is most definitely sexual.**

"What information in the text is of use in comprehending each metaphor?"
Well, first of all we have the whole idea of love. We have the attractions, the idea of pleasure. **And when you combine all that with the fish in the channel and being amorous, it definitely cannot be anything else than the sexual act and the sperms that are being released in the act of love.**

"Does the meaning of the metaphor change, as you continue reading the text?"
It's definitely the "enamoured fish," which for me initially was more connected with being caught. Being caught in love, being in love, being together in the act making love changes more into the actual sexual object of the erected penis because of the "amorously swim" in the channel.

One aspect of the *Gestalt of the Mind*, problem-solving, is seen in the reader's changing view regarding the identity of the poetic speaker, either as a woman or a man. In terms of the *Gestalt of the Text*, this metaphor is read bidirectionality. Thus, the reader first adopts the unidirectional *courtship is fishing* form in her noting of the image of sperm (an image mentioned as well by another reader),[45] which can be understood as grotesque in its introduction into a pastoral landscape of an incompatible act of ejaculation. Subsequently, she adopts the alternate unidirectional form *fishing is courtship*, when she notes that the

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[45] This additional reader says, with regards to Metaphor 1: "Could the river be symbolizing male ejaculation and the fish are the sperm?" The reader continues, with regards to Metaphor 2: "A woman jumping into the river and swimming around, with these sperm that are chasing her and amorously swimming to her." See: *The Gestalts of Mind and Text*, p. 86.

word "amorously" implies a sexual act. Finally, the reader's answer to the third question reveals that she now views Metaphor 1, the "enamoured fish," in line with this perception of the grotesque image of a sexual act in which the fish are the "actual sexual object" of the penis and its sperm.[46] At this second stage, then, metaphor comprehension is informed by problem-solving, recognition of a grotesque image, and the adoption of a bidirectional reading of the metaphor.

Metaphor 3: *sleeve silk flies bewitch*

The "coarse bold hands." *Could this be rape?* The "coarse bold hands" and "out-wrest" imply to *me a wrestling, a coarseness, there is an aspect of anger.* **The flies being the fisherman drives me back to the metaphor of the fish, there is a direct connection between the "enamoured fish," "amorously swim" and "flies bewitch." In all cases we have the aspect of the fisherman and of the fish,** *and in all cases an entrapment.* **The amorous swimming fish are the sperms and the bewitched flies, the flies bewitched is entrapment. So rather, this is the woman being entrapped or the man being entrapped and I'll have to do a lot more thinking before I work out which one it was.** The "sleevesilk flies" implies to me that this is the woman. **She is entrapping the man with her sexy clothing**, with her body.

"How do I identify the marked phrase as a metaphor?"
Only because, well flies don't bewitch. But it is in the previous metaphors that are so connected to this metaphor that make me aware of the fact that's it is a metaphor.

"What information in the text is of use to you in comprehending each metaphor?"

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[46] A reviewer of this article has astutely remarked: "Donne's original readers could never have read the fish as swimming sperm cells because they had no idea that such cells existed as such." As a result of our focus on real readers, we accept a wide degree of latitude in how the twenty-first century readers comprehend the text.

 Well, I've already said the golden sands, the warm eyes, together with everything that follows that **imply that the "enamorued fish" is a sexual act. What follows makes me aware of the fact that the "enamoured fish" is actually the erected male and then we get to be "amorously swimming," the whole concept of the bath, the womb, live bath being the womb, each fish being a sperm travelling up to the canal within the woman's body.** *An attraction which becomes an entrapment when we get to the freezing, the shells, the weeds, which are cutting edges. Treacherously poor fish, strangling snares, windowy net, the feeling of being held in, kept in line, prevented from moving, prevented from going away, from getting away, entrapped.*

"Does the meaning of the metaphor change, as you continue reading the text?"
When we look at it [stanza 4] in comparison to the stanza that follows, there is an aspect of anger, could even be hatred, but there's also the wanting to be free, to get away. And somehow the "bold hands" [stanza 6] could mean another attraction or it implies to me that it is a rape. So, I think it does change.

Two aspects of *Gestalt of the Mind* are manifested in the reading of this metaphor. Problem-solving is seen in in the reader's question about rape. In addition, she is engaged in attempting to determine the identity of the person being entrapped—a woman or a man. The aspect of embodied cognition as embodied simulation is manifested in her subsequent comments (developed throughout the protocol) concerning wrestling, coarseness, anger and entrapment (evident in the poem in both stanzas 5 and 6). When we consider the *Gestalt of the Text*, it can be seen that the reader exhibits a bidirectional reading of this metaphor. On the one hand, the form *courtship is fishing* is adopted, meaning that courtship is viewed in terms of the predatoriness and violence of fishing; she thus talks about the woman or man being "entrapped." On the other hand, the form *fishing is courtship* is adopted, when the reader uses personification to talk about the "bewitched flies" as a woman in "sexy clothing." Furthermore, in answering the second question, she views the act of fishing in terms of human sexuality and affection ("the enamored fish is actually the erected male"). The aspect of the grotesque in the text (such as the "coarse bold hands" and "out-wrest") sustains this bidirectionality. This is because the aroused male in the

form *fishing is courtship* could also be the rapist in the form *courtship is fishing*. In this instance, in the protocol this grotesque imagery triggers the corresponding embodied cognition (simulation) of entrapment and rape. In answer to Question 2, the reader continues with her interpretation that "enamoured fish" is the "erected penis/male," while in Question 3 she intensifies the dark side of the sexual act. Thus, metaphor comprehension at this stage of the process is one informed by problem-solving, embodied cognition, the grotesque, and the adoption of a bidirectional reading of the metaphor.

> **Metaphor 4**: *thou thy self are thine own bait*
>
> *If this is a prostitute*, is she unfaithful? Here it looks almost as if she is the one who is unfaithful.
>
> "How do I identify it as a metaphor?" Well, we got the bait, the fish, the swimming, the sea, which carries out through the entire poem. No idea as how I would identify it as a metaphor.
>
> "What information in the text is of use in comprehending the metaphor?" **So, we still have the comparison in the metaphor of fishing and reeling in the love. Reeling in your choice**. "That fish that is not catched thereby, / Alas is wiser far than I." I have been duped, I have been bewitched. It is the male talking most definitely. Your looks, your sexy body, the way you touch, "the whispering [river] runs," the way you attracted me, you are deceitful, traitorous, interested in what you can get. There is an aspect of betrayal. Love, the whole relationship is falling apart. Dejected, he's dejected, **he feels used**. I don't think she's the innocent that she seemed to be in the beginning of the poem. She was out to catch him, he was the innocent party, he's innocent, she was **calculating**.

The reader's question—"If this is a prostitute, is she unfaithful?"—introduces both an instance of problem-solving, an aspect from the *Gestalt of Mind*, and a grotesque aspect from the *Gestalt of the Text*. Her answer is that while in Metaphor 1 there is a fisherman and the woman is the fish, in this metaphor there is a fisherwoman and the man is the

fish. Given that the metaphor presents a clearly-stated paradox, how is this resolved in her reading? She does so by reverting to the original unidirectional *courtship is fishing* form for the metaphor, which was evident in her discussion of Metaphor 1. She suggests, however, in contrast to Metaphor 1, that it is not a male lover who "is trying to reel her in," but rather it is a male lover who has been betrayed. Thus, metaphor comprehension at this final stage of the process is informed by problem-solving, and by a reversion to the initial unidirectional reading of the metaphor—but with an important twist: in the current unidirectional *courtship is fishing* form for the metaphor, the reader now suggests that it is a female lover who has been trying to reel the man in, and who now reveals herself to be "calculating," while the man "feels used."

"A Valediction of Weeping"

We marked three metaphors in Donne's "A Valediction of Weeping," which together represent the rhetorical/narrative continuum of the poetic text:[47]

> Let me pour forth
> **My Tears**, before thy face, whilst I stay here,
> For **thy face coins them**, and thy stamp they bear,
> And by this Mintage, they are something worth,
> For thus they be
> Pregnant of Thee.
> Fruits of much Grief they are, Emblems of more,
> When a Tear falls, that thou falls, which it bore,
> So Thou and I are Nothing then, when on a diverse Shore.
>
> On a round Ball
> A workman that hath Copies by can lay,

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[47] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, Volume 4, Part 3: *The Songs and Sonets*, gen. ed. Jeffrey S. Johnson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2021), p. 61. The metaphors to be discussed are marked in bold. In our empirical study, we adopted a somewhat modernized spelling of the poetic text to be read by the participants. Thus, for example: u" becomes "v"; and words such as "poore" and "Embleames" are modernized, as well as "thyne" and "Copyes."

An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing all;
>
> So doth **Each Tear**
> Which Thee doth wear,

A Globe, yea world by that Impression grow,
Till thy Tears mixed with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from Thee, my heaven dissolved so.

> O more than **Moon**
Draw not up Seas, to **drown me in thy Sphere**,
Weep me not dead, in thine Armes, but forbear
To teach the Sea, what it may do too soon.
>
> Let not the Wind
> Example find,

To do me more harm, than it purposeth,
Since Thou and I sigh One Another's breath,
Who ere sighs most is cruellest, and hastes the other's Death.

Our discussion of the conceit in "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" invites a discussion of "A Valediction of Weeping." For as distinct from the pastoral/piscatorial tradition of "The Bait," both poems demonstrate an interest in technology and science. Furthermore, as Katrin Ettenhuber writes, in these two poems, "the far-fetched comparisons of the compass and the tear encourage the reader's active commitment—the sympathetic extension of the mind to the remote logical places which sustain the workings of the conceit, and of the relationship it seeks to solidify and support."[48] Donne's use in a simile of a scientific instrument in "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" transforms the lover's relationship into a powerful image capturing their strong and inviolable link, while in the successive metaphors of "A Valediction of Weeping" the tear undergoes "a series of transmutations that give it an ever-increasing scope and magnitude."[49]

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[48] Katrin Ettenhuber, "'Comparisons are Odious': Revisiting the Metaphysical Conceit in Donne," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 62.255 (2011): 410-411.
[49] G. R. Wilson, Jr., "The Interplay of Perception and Reflection: Mirror Imagery in Donne's Poetry," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 9.1 (1969): 120.
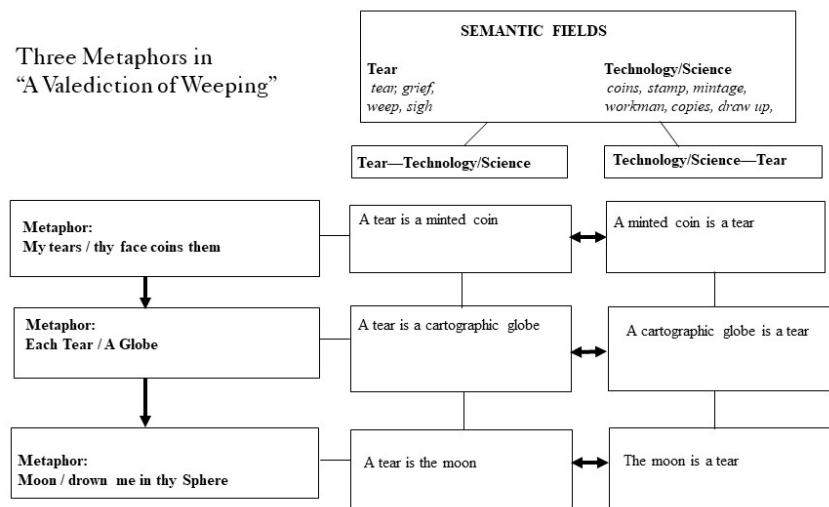
Three Metaphors in
"A Valediction of Weeping"

SEMANTIC FIELDS	
Tear *tear; grief, weep, sigh*	**Technology/Science** *coins, stamp, mintage, workman, copies, draw up,*

Tear—Technology/Science	Technology/Science—Tear

Metaphor: My tears / thy face coins them	A tear is a minted coin	A minted coin is a tear
Metaphor: Each Tear / A Globe	A tear is a cartographic globe	A cartographic globe is a tear
Metaphor: Moon / drown me in thy Sphere	A tear is the moon	The moon is a tear

Figure 2

The four major aspects of our Gestalt-oriented approach to the poetic text and its metaphors will be employed in our discussion of "A Valediction of Weeping" (see Figure 2). The first aspect, *problem-solving*, is concerned with: (1) stating the poem's central conceit; (2) making an appropriate selection of those specific metaphors that sustain the poetic text as a *gestalt*; and (3) presenting these metaphors in a flowchart, together with their two unidirectional forms. The central conceit of the poem is *a tear is a technological/scientific object*. Three metaphors sustain this, these being: *My tears / thy face coins them*; *Each Tear / A Globe*; *Moon / drown me in thy Sphere*. The basic problem of this poem has been astutely noted by T. S. Eliot, when he writes: there is "a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader . . . Here [in the second stanza] we find at least two connexions which are not implicit in the first figure, but are forced upon it by the poet: from the geographer's globe to the tear, and the tear to the deluge."[50] Eliot is very much aware of the need for problem-solving on the part of the reader, caused by what seems to be a lack of a connection—other than a continuously expanding spherical dimension—among the secondary subjects of the three metaphors (coin, globe and moon). We

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[50] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," p. 376.

propose, however, that all these secondary subjects belong to the semantic field of "technology/science," thereby solving this major problem presented by the poem. Metaphor 3, in particular, with its implication of the connection between the moon and the tides, can be understood as reflecting Donne's interest in the New Science. As William Empson comments, "Donne seemed to be anticipating the tidal theory of Newton," already proposed by Kepler in 1609.[51]

The second aspect is that of *embodied cognition*, readily apparent throughout the poem as embodied simulation—that is, as a direct experience of the bodily feelings of crying and the flow of tears. This is augmented by the images of pregnancy, as well as by the expansion of grief from a tear to overflowing and deluge, and drowning. In addition, *embodied cognition* is realized in stanza three through physiognomic perception and personification, as various elements of nature are seen as dynamic, animate entities—the moon that can "draw up" and "drown," the sea that is the subject of "teach[ing]"—and ultimately personified as the "Wind" that does not "example find." Donne thereby places in apposition the technological/scientific understanding of the natural world, with the recognition of the fearful forces of nature.

It is this very apposition that is apparent in discussing the two aspects of bidirectionality and the grotesque. In each of the three metaphors, the tear as an expression of human emotion is being concretized as successively three different spherical objects of increasing magnitude. In addition, however, we

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[51] William Empson, "Donne the Space Man," *The Kenyon Review* 19.3 (1957): 371. Mary Thomas Crane notes that Donne's interest in the New Science is particularly evident in his prose work *Ignatius His Conclave* and in his two "Anniversary" poems that commemorate the death of Elizabeth Drury. See Crane, "John Donne and the New Science," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science*, ed. Howard Marchitello and Evelyn Tribble (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 101. See also Howard Marchitello's insight, when he writes: "Donne was, after all, the early seventeenth-century English poet perhaps most keenly interested in early modern science. At the same time, both as a poet and as a thinker, Donne was deeply conflicted about the science, especially the new astronomy, that had so caught his attention and that seems so profoundly to have complicated his understanding of the world" (*The Machine in the Text: Science and Literature in the Age of Shakespeare and Galileo* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011], p. 116).

propose that in the first two metaphors, the unidirectional reading of *a tear is a technological/scientific object*, as an expression of a human emotion, is rendered grotesquely into a mechanically-produced artifact. Thus, the woman's emotional stance, which is the impetus for the production of tears by the poetic speaker/lover, can be perceived as containing feelings of manipulation, molding and calculated procedures. The grotesque aspect is continued in the third metaphor, which stresses the controlling force and power of the woman's tear (as a moon that controls the tides) and her emotional hold over her lover.

Indeed, Empson also engages with this dark side. For he perceives an ambiguity and irony in the poetic text that is directed against the beloved. Thus, Empson writes that Donne "can find no satisfaction in his hopelessness but to make as much of the actual situation of parting as possible; the language of the poem is shot through with a suspicion which for once he is too delicate or too preoccupied to state unambiguously, that when he is gone she will be unfaithful to him."[52] More recently, Barbara Correll has written,[53] "On the one hand, the poem is a *reductio ad absurdum*: tears shed and metaphorized become a literal flood of tears that threatens to overpower, drown the speaker; on the other, in its exaggerations it mocks the very threats it extravagantly projects."

The other unidirectional reading, *a technological/scientific object is a tear*, balances the first two metaphors, bestowing the emotional quality

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[52] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Second Edition (London, UK: Chatto and Windus, 1947; repr. 1949), p. 139. Empson continues and writes provocatively: "Those critics who say the poem is sincere, by the way, and therefore must have been written to poor Anne, know not what they do" (p. 139). Empson's remarks seems to be directed at Herbert J.C. Grierson, who claims that the poem "was written on the occasion of a parting from his wife, perhaps in 1612, when Donne's wife was unwilling to let him go." See: Herbert J.C. Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne, Volume II: Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 220. Empson subsequently modifies this reading, to say that this ambiguity and irony of the poem "is directed against the poetic speaker's/lover's "extravagant use of metaphor." See: William Empson, "Donne the Space Man," p. 372.

[53] Barbara Correll, "Metapoetry and the Subject of the Poem in Donne and Marvell," in *A Companion to Renaissance Poetry*, ed. Catherine Bates (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), p. 320.

expressed through the tear onto the two technological/scientific objects (coin, globe). For the image of the beloved (as "stamp" and "impression") transforms these objects into visual mementos of her presence, transmuting the literary "valediction" from a verbal to a visual medium. This unidirectional reading continues in the third metaphor. Here, this is not the moon outshone by the beloved (as in "The Bait") or the "hee Moone" in Donne's poem "An Epithalamion, or Marriage Song on the Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine,"[54] which stresses the androgynous character of the lover.[55] It is rather the moon as a traditional symbol of the feminine,[56] whose lunar waxing and waning can serve as a model for herself so she will not overcome her love with the strength of her emotions. Ultimately, then, as Barbara Estrin notes about the subsequent line "Since Thou and I sigh One Another's breath":[57]

> This interanimation, sighing each other's breath, is both a plea for balance ("don't be more than the moon") and a plea for remaining ("If you blow too hard, you will blow me away, into the fall of stanza one"). He asks her just to breathe enough to maintain the parity of mutual goodwill and the proximity of mutual support.

Stated in our terms, this is not a blending. It is rather a balance between a "dark" unidirectional reading (the tear is an object of catastrophic force) that emphasizes the beloved's emotional hold over her lover and the hopelessness of their situation, and between a more optimistic unidirectional reading (the objects of technology and science are images of human emotion) that emphasizes the lovers' interanimation and the prospect of a hopeful solution to their situation. Here indeed the

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[54] *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 176.
[55] For a discussion of this androgynous character, see: Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "John Donne and the Limitations of Androgyny," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 80.1 (1981): 25.
[56] *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, p. 176, note 85.
[57] Barbara Estrin, "Donne's Injured 'I': Defections from Petrarchan and Spenserian Poetics," *Philological Quarterly* 66.2 (1987): 191.

medium—the bidirectionality of metaphor—becomes the message—the human relationship.

We will now look closely at an online verbal protocol, generated in another empirical study, which is here presented for the first time. This protocol complements our own discussion of the conceit in "A Valediction of Weeping," and was that of a graduate student of English Literature and a native speaker of English,[58] who responds to the three questions appearing on the computer screen. As part of this process, we will also distinguish in greater specificity how the four aspects are manifested in response to each metaphor. Comments by the reader on the two aspects pertaining to the *Gestalt of the Mind* (problem-solving and embodied cognition) are marked in italics, while the two aspects pertaining to the *Gestalt of the Text* (the grotesque and unidirectionality/bidirectionality) are marked in bold.

> **Metaphor 1**: *My tears / thy face coins them*
>
> The word weeping to me, is kind of a powerful word, it shows such emotion.
>
> "How do you identify the marked phrase as being a metaphor?"
> *I guess it's not so obvious to me right away that it's a metaphor. . .* wow, it's really beautiful. **Because the tears are being made into some sort of material, that the face has power over.**
>
> "What information in the text appearing before a phrase is of use to you in comprehending the metaphor?"
> When I look at the tears, I look at the other words that would go along with it, and "pour" goes along with the word "tears," because you think of pouring water. *Then the coins and the stamp and the mintage, they're making it something worth, so that all kind of ties together.*
>
> "Does the meaning of the metaphor change as you continue?"

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[58] This student participated in a course taught by Chanita Goodblatt, but not one directly concerned with the study of Metaphor.

It's pretty obvious that the poem is written in lots of sorrow, and with the mintage and with the coins, and the tears. I think the poem is pretty clear what the author is trying to say. *It kind of makes me confused as to why they brought in the coins and the mintage, because then the second part of the stanza seems to be much more concerned with a more emotional realm.* The first part of the stanza is emotional, but not in the same way as the second part of the stanza is emotional . . . and, they're talking about tears falling about shores and **then you bring in the aspect of money or the aspect of having a stamp or mintage and it makes it seem so cheap** *and I don't like it*. But I think that overall, it's really beautiful.

Metaphor 2: *Each Tear / A Globe*

Is this the same poem? "Thy tears mixed with mine do overflow." I don't know why this is so troubling, beautiful, it's so sad.

"How do you identify the marked phrase as being a metaphor?"
I actually thought of each tear which thee doth wear a globe, *at first they're spatially apart so you don't make the connection right away*, but because they're separated by "which thee doth wear," but then when it's in bold you see that it really is each tear is a globe that he has created, and I identify it by the syntax and also by the meaning because I know that the word tear in this poem was going to have a lot of symbolic meaning and they're creating for themselves, or for the tears.

"What information in the text appearing before a phrase, is of use to you in comprehending each metaphor?
Before a phrase "which thee doth wear," it diverts the attention back to who he is addressing, the tear which thee doth wear, and then it goes back to a globe. So, I suppose that also what I said before about the syntax and also the way that he's directing it at a speaker because, like, the speaker creates his tears, the speaker as reader creates the tears. "Thy face coins them / each tear a globe," *so I know that the tears might be a metaphor*.

"Does the meaning of the metaphor change as you continue?"

It becomes more powerful as I keep reading, just because for the first time, then the tears are mixed with his, and all of their tears together create so much grief, for him and for her, and so the meaning just becomes more and more powerful. *I suppose I don't understand what the connection is to the tear and the globe, but the meaning of the metaphor changes.* **There's a positive and a negative side to each tear being a globe, in the sense that you could have a tear holding the weight of the globe and the *weight of the sadness*, but together this community of sadness could create strength, or you could have just a tear creating a globe that doesn't leave and it holds all of this and he has all the power.** I guess I didn't really read it carefully the first time that the tears are mixing and so *both the reader and the speaker are hurting but the speaker is hurting more*.

Metaphor 3: *Moon / drown me in thy Sphere*

He's saying that this fear around him, the seas, and this fear inside of him, totally encapsulates him. He's completely overtaken by him, and the drowning with the water, and the tears is a metaphor throughout.

"How do you identify the marked phrase as being a metaphor?"
I identify it as a metaphor because I know that people don't have fears that they can drown others in.

"What information in the text appearing before a phrase is of use to you in comprehending each metaphor?"
He's creating this kind of world, who he is addressing it to and in the natural world there are tides and there are floods, and each kind has its own world and its own environment. I know that the moon has to do with the tide, so the moon can control the seas.

Does the meaning of the metaphor change as you continue reading?
"Weep me not dead, in thine arms, but forbear to teach the sea," in a way you could say this is a kind of a plea to do the opposite, but this, the second part, is really powerful because it shows the inevitability of what will come or what the writer

or the speaker thinks will come, and it just becomes more powerful. *All of these commanding sentences, have this same version of a prayer call or sign*, it's like a call or sign for a priest or a congregation but maybe I'm pushing it too far, I'm not sure.

Looking first at the *Gestalt of the Mind*, we note the clear use of problem-solving for each metaphor. This extended process of problem-solving goes through three stages, each tied to the reader's attempt to understand the various metaphors. Thus, for Metaphor 1, she acknowledges that at first it is not "obvious" why this is a metaphor, and then admits to remaining "confused" regarding its meaning. Looking at Metaphor 2, she questions if this "is the same poem," while subsequently saying that "the tears might be a metaphor." Finally, in Metaphor 3, the reader finds a resolution in suggesting that the "commanding sentences" (e.g., "Drown me in thy Sphere," "Weep me not dead") possess the significance of a call to prayer. In terms of embodied cognition, the reader expresses her dislike (Metaphor 1), as well as the hurt she shares with the speaker and the "weight of the sadness" (Metaphor 2).

Turning now to the *Gestalt of the Text*, in Metaphor 1 an intensification of the reader's embodied cognition highlights a grotesque aspect of the poem. Thus, her dislike of "the aspect of money" and "stamp or mintage" highlights the grotesqueness of the image as a tear, which for this reader "makes it seem so cheap" (possibly alluding to an element of prostitution). Lastly, the reader moves between a unidirectional and a bidirectional reading. In Metaphor 1, she adopts the unidirectional reading of *a tear is a technological/scientific object*, by emphasizing the concrete materiality of the tear. Contrasting this, in Metaphor 2 she presents a bidirectional reading in which the measure of weight renders the tear into a crafted object (cartographic globe), as well as bestowing on this object the human quality of sadness (*a technological/scientific object is a tear*). This bidirectional reading continues in Metaphor 3. Here, the reader multiplies the tear into the seas controlled by the moon as an overwhelming fear from without (*a technological/scientific object is a tear*), while at the same time explaining that the overwhelming fear "inside of him" is expressed by the tear that is magnified to the size of the moon (*a tear is a technological/scientific object*). Acknowledging both options, the reader concludes by saying that the

poetic speaker is "completely overtaken" by the fear that is both without and within.

It is highly interesting to return to Empson's detailed reading of "A Valediction of Weeping," which was presented in his classic study, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. This book (first published in 1930) was originally written as part of the weekly supervision in English studies provided by I. A. Richards for Empson, in the latter's final year as an undergraduate (1928-1929) at the University of Cambridge.[59] Indeed, Richards writes of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*: "I can't think of any literary criticism written since which seems likely to have as persistent and as distinctive an influence."[60] The choice of this detailed reading, as Empson follows the poem stanza by stanza, reflects the proposal raised at a session of the 2013 MLA Conference, entitled *The Past Present, and Future of Cognitive Literary Studies* (organized by the *Division on Cognitive Approaches to Literature*). The proposal was that empirical studies of literature should be widened to include the published writings of scholars on literary text. We are pleased to have the opportunity to rise to this challenge in the present article, particularly given the insightful reading provided by William Empson.[61] As before, comments on the two aspects pertaining to the *Gestalt of the Mind* (problem-solving and embodied cognition) are marked in italics, while the two aspects pertaining to the *Gestalt of the Text* (the grotesque and unidirectionality/bidirectionality) are marked in bold.

Metaphor 1: *My tears / thy face coins them*

> The metaphor of coining is suitable at first sight only 'because our worth and your beauty are both royal,' but *other deductions from it can be made*. In that his tears will not reflect her face unless he stays here it may imply 'because it is only when I am seeing your beauty that it matters so much to me; I only shed valuable tears about you when I am at your side.'

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[59] Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. viii. "William Empson Remembers I.A. Richards," *London Review of Books* 2.11 (5 June 1980), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v02/n11/william-empson/william-empson-remembers-i.a.-richards.

[60] I.A. Richards, "A Special Note: William Empson," *Furioso* 1.3 (1940), n.p.

[61] Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, pp. 139-144.

There is a shift of the metaphor in this, brought out by line 3, from the tears as molten metal which must be stamped with her value to the tears themselves as the completed coin; 'because,' then, 'you are so fruitful of unhappiness'; and in either case, far in the background, in so far as she is not really such a queenly figure, 'because you are **public, mercenary, and illegal**.'

Metaphor 2: *Each Tear / A Globe*

The first four lines are defining the new theme, and their grammar is straightforward. Then the word **teare may be active or passive like the workeman or like the ball**…in any case, grow may either mean 'turn into' or 'grow larger.' **The globe and the world may be either the teare or thee** . . . .The other meanings of impression would be possible here. Either, then, 'In the same way each tear that wears you, who are a whole world yourself or at least the copy of one, grows into a world,' or "And so does every tear that wears you; each tear, that is, grows as to include everything, or to produce a great deal more water'; it is only this second vaguer meaning which gives a precise meaning to till, and suggests, instead of a mere heap of world-tears, **such a flood as descended upon the wickedness of the antediluvians**.

Metaphor 3: *Moon / drown me in thy Sphere*

She is Moone, with a unifying reference to the first line of the poem, because she draws up the tides of weeping both from him and from herself, a power not necessarily to her credit, but at any rate deserving adoration; the moon, too, is female, inconstant, chaste because though bright cold, and has armes in which the new moon holds the old one. Some of the lyrical release in the line may be explained as because it is **deifying her**. . . . She is more than Moone because she is more valuable to him than anything in the real world to which he is being recalled; because she has just been called either the earth or the heavens and they are larger than the moon; as controlling tides more important or more *dangerous than those of the sea; as making the world more hushed and glamorous than does moonlight*; as being more inconstant, or as being more constant, than the moon; as being able to draw tides

right up to her own sphere; as shining by her own light; and as being more powerful because closer.

    In thy spheare may be taken with me, 'don't drown me, whether with my tears or your own, now that *I am still fairly happy and up in your sphere beside you*; don't trouble to draw up the seas so high, or be so *cruel as to draw up the seas so high, that they drown me now*, since to-morrow they will drown me easily, when I am thrown down into the world'; may be taken alone, as 'your sphere of influence,' your sort of drowning, 'don't you go drowning me; I have the whole sea to drown me when I take ship to-morrow'; or may be taken with Moone, '**you, far in your sphere, high and safe from sorrow in your permanence and your power to change**, do not drown a poor mortal who is not in your sphere to whom these things matter more deeply.'

    The machinery of interpretation is becoming too cumbrous here, in that I cannot see how these meanings come to convey tenderness rather than the passion of grief which has preceded them, how they come to mark a particular change of tone, a return towards control over the situation, which makes them seem more vividly words actually spoken. It is a question of the proportions in which these meanings are accepted, and their interactions; it is not surprising that the effect should be what it is, but *I do not know that it could have been foreseen.*

    Looking first at the *Gestalt of the Mind*, Empson continuously expresses the process of problem-solving. Regarding Metaphor 1, he points to the possibility of "other deductions," while regarding Metaphor 2 he recognizes that there is the action of "defining the new theme." By way of contrast, his conclusion regarding Metaphor 3 is that he can offer no solution to the problem of reconciling the different types of affect (tenderness vs. grief). Empson's use of the phrase "machinery of interpretation" points to the world of technology and science; hence his own conception of the process of problem-solving is colored by the very conceit of the poem. Interestingly enough, in Empson's discussion of Metaphor 3, one finds the only use of embodied cognition. The first instance is in his use of the words "hushed" and "glamarous," which both reflect a physiognomic perception of the world. The second instance is in his verbose discussion of drowning (in the second paragraph), which can be seen as reflecting both embodied simulation

(as sharing this experience) and Empson's (somewhat ironic) "drowning" in his own words. The third instance is in the personification of the moon as woman, both inconstant and powerful. In his reading of "A Valediction of Weeping," Empson thus demonstrates an empathic and perceptive response, as he grapples with the inherent ambiguities of the poetic text.

In addressing the *Gestalt of the Text*, reference to the grotesque appears in Empson's comments on the first two metaphors. Regarding Metaphor 1, the description of the tears as "molten metal" introduces feelings of burning and pain. Furthermore, the beloved is described as being "public, mercenary, and illegal," debasing her into an object that can be bought and sold. Regarding Metaphor 2, Empson evokes the biblical Flood and the affiliated, grotesque notion of primitive humankind. It is important to note that the Flood and drowning as grotesque are modified in the discussion of Metaphor 3 by his focus on the deification of the beloved as a lunar goddess. Lastly, Empson consistently moves between the two unidirectional readings. He discusses Metaphor 1 in terms of the reading (*a tear is a technological/scientific object*) by stating "tears as molten metal," thereby heightening the tension between the two subjects of the metaphor. For Metaphor 2, in contrast, Empson adopts the other unidirectional reading (*a technological/scientific object is a tear*), stating that the "globe and the world may be either the teare or thee." Both these readings are evident in Empson's discussion of Metaphor 3: the first reading is that "She is Moone" (reflecting the metonymic relationship of a tear to a person); the second reading is the address to the moon, "do not drown a poor mortal who is not in your sphere." Thus, in accordance with the *Gestalt-Interaction Theory of Metaphor*, the grotesqueness of the imagery stressed by Empson sustains his own bidirectional reading.

Conclusion

What does our discussion of these two poems by Donne contribute to the discussion of the Metaphysical conceit? Discussions of the conceit have been cited earlier in terms of Johnson and Eliot's discussion of "wit" and the "the failure of conjunction," Tuve's discussion of "multiple predicaments" and Brodsky's discussions of "the status of logic." One contribution is, therefore, to have recognized

that all of these terms can be subsumed under the field of problem-solving. Kevin Dunbar concludes his review of this field by proposing that one goal of this field "is to determine how people generate new representations and problem spaces as they work on a problem."[62] As we have shown, the "problem space" of the conceit brings into juxtaposition two distinct and distant semantic fields. Thus, a second contribution is our employing of the *Gestalt-Interaction Theory of Metaphor* to investigate the nature of the relationship between these two semantic fields, their "failure of conjunction" and the plausibility of bidirectionality. A third contribution can be highlighted in reference to Herbert J.C. Grierson. For in the introduction to the 1912 edition of John Donne's poetry, he writes of "the vein of sheer ugliness which runs through his work, presenting details that seem merely and wantonly repulsive."[63] Our discussion, however, moves from a negative appraisal of such a quality of this poetry, to a utilization of the concepts of embodied cognition and the grotesque. This offers us the opportunity to investigate not only the reader's experience, but also to investigate how these two aspects impact on the comprehension of a conceit. Such finer distinctions about Donne's conceits can thereby enable scholars to "new pleasures prove."

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[62] Dunbar, "Problem Solving," p. 297.
[63] Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne*, *Volume II*, p. xx.