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# Chapter Five

# Metaphors: Cultural Perception and Persuasion

**Metaphors**, or **non-literal comparisons**, are pervasive, provocative, and permanent devices used in human communication. When reading and listening to public or mass-media messages, we quickly find computer ID material left at Internet sites called digital "crumbs," or the performance of a new business CEO characterized as his first 15 months "on the mound," or a young tennis star described as being surrounded by a protective financial and educational "cocoon," or young lookouts at a drug house called "dixie cups." How (and why) are male sports teams easily designated in tournament play as "Cinderella" teams?

You may not realize how often you use metaphors, but you've probably tried something new by "getting your feet wet," or held a "dead end" job, or perhaps contributed money to a consumer "watchdog" group. I have a standing offer to my students: in the text portion of any general interest (non-technical) publication (e.g., *Time, Details, Essence, The Washington Post*, or *YM*), if we can find fewer than a dozen metaphors in a very few pages (for most magazines in three or fewer pages; for most newspapers in one or two pages) I'll buy the student a Baskin-Robbins triple ice cream cone. The same pace of metaphor use holds true for movies, TV shows, conversations, and travel brochures—really in almost any part of life where written or verbal messages are exchanged. In this chapter we will investigate why metaphors are so common, yet so powerful. We'll start with the type of non-literal comparison most easily recognized as a metaphor; later we'll discuss three other very important types of metaphors that may be less well known to you.

Our thinking in this chapter can only reflect a selected part of a much larger research program where scholars from a number of fields (including

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Rhetoric, Communication Research, Linguistics, Psychology, English, and Cultural Studies) have sought a better understanding of use of metaphors. Ancient Western thinkers and contemporary postmodern theorists (and nearly everyone in between) have taken note of the power, potential, and impact of non-literal comparisons. Some scholars even hold that the human capacity and means for consciousness are grounded in metaphor.[1] As Lakoff and Johnson suggest:

> Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.[2]

Other cultural analysts argue that cultural phenomena—from declarations of war, to development of congregational self-image, to creation of political activism, and other practical instances—are influenced significantly by the use of specific metaphors or other non-literal comparisons.[3]

The philosophical, sociocultural, psycholinguistic, and rhetorical attention given to non-literal comparisons (especially to metaphors) in the past 20–30 years has been astounding. The insights we have gained have been substantial. We still, however, have work to do. Some scholars (e.g., philosophers of language and linguists) have contributed greatly to our understandings of cultural assumptions, structural design, generative capacity, and meaning capacity of comparisons.[4] Their discussions, however, are often dry and technical, and they often use artificial examples.

On the other hand, scholars within the Rhetorical Studies tradition have tended to investigate *real* comparisons as used within important messages (often speeches); for instance, Daughton studied the first inaugural of FDR (as we learned in Chapter 3) and Ivie speeches by President Truman.[5] These investigations have increased our understanding of pivotal examples of political and cultural communication. Rhetorical scholars Carpenter and Osborn have investigated the cultural impact of other key metaphors used over long spans of time. Carpenter, for instance, historically examined public expressions concerning America's involvement in wars from revolutionary times until the mid-1980s. He discovered a disconcerting thread of comparison-based discourse, which illicitly ties our perception of war activities together:

> Many people, particularly Americans, saw that combat [in World War I] metaphorically as an extension of our frontier experience. And after World War I that metaphor often characterized America's subsequent combat, tragically in Vietnam.[6] . . . This metaphor's tragedy is made manifest herein not only by demonstrating its lack of "truth" but also its "comparative worth" to "rival narratives." . . .[7]

Hence, Carpenter's careful research reveals in many American cultural messages a fixation that insisted on seeing the soldier as a "frontiersman." This metaphoric fixation set the stage for legislative, personal, and cultural disaster—lives lost and resources squandered.

Several examples help illustrate the depth and long use of this metaphoric imagery:

> In correspondence and speeches reaching wider audiences through newspaper publication in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and various western cities, President Theodore Roosevelt compared Filipinos in arms [in a late 1890s conflict with American troops] to "the Sioux, the Comanche, and the Apache Indians." (4)

Hence, by implication U.S. troops became the frontiersmen who were once again battling indigenous people.

Concerning World War II, Carpenter quotes John Steinbeck (of *Grapes of Wrath* fame) in a book Steinbeck wrote about bomber crews:

> . . . as springing from frontier traditions of "Kentucky hunter and the Western Indian-fighter," for when exchanging rifle for turret machine gun "the American boy simply changes the nature of his game. Instead of raiding Sioux or Apache, instead of buffalo or antelope, he lays his sights on Zero or Heinkel, on Stuka or Messerschmitt." (7)

Concerning early conflict in Vietnam Carpenter notes this observation from a book about special forces known as the Green Berets:

> By 1962, media images "crystallized into a portrayal of the Green Beret as a contemporary reincarnation of the western hero" with "wilderness skills" for any environment and superb physical conditioning. (11)

Carpenter argues that certain aspects of the "frontiersman" as a metaphoric figure became inauthentic as early as 1815 and have become even more greatly detached due to changes in warfare technology and practices since then. As we have moved into the warfare era of "Desert Shield," "Desert Storm," "Operation Infinite Justice," and "Operation Enduring Freedom," it is useful to inquire steadily as to which metaphors are acting as contemporary guideposts in our cultural talk about war and our participation in it.

Careful scholars, such as Ronald Carpenter, show us that metaphors are much more important in persuasion and language than in use as mere language decorations. Instead metaphors can become the framework within which we make life and death decisions for thousands of citizens.

Similarly, Michael Osborn has examined carefully **archetypal metaphors** that stubbornly transcend culture, time, and geography in political and cultural communication. He knows why politicians in ancient Athens as well as contemporary Washington, D.C., are likely to use images of light and dark, sickness and health, sailing and navigating, or the seasons as they try to persuade.

Osborn originally believed that archetypal metaphors had six characteristics:

1. Archetypal metaphors are selected and used more often than novel metaphors.

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2. Archetypal metaphors stay the same across time, condition, and cultures.
3. Archetypal metaphors are grounded in direct, common human experience.
4. Archetypal metaphors are often based on basic human motivations.
5. Archetypal metaphors used in a message can often reach most audience members.
6. Archetypal metaphors often show up in the most important parts of the most important messages within any society.[8]

His initial study of archetypal metaphors concentrated on the speeches of Churchill, Edmund Burke, Douglas MacArthur, and John F. Kennedy. Speeches given by these rhetors at times of deep cultural importance clearly employed archetypal metaphors concerned with light–dark, the sun, heat and cold, and the seasonal cycles.

Osborn returned to archetypal metaphors a decade later to present his discovery that, while archetypal metaphors can be used by all cultures in all times, a culture can start to diminish use of a particular archetypal metaphor. Osborn studied 56 speeches from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He discovered that technological progress, historical expansion, and a turn toward the frontier revealed a sharp decline in use of sea imagery in public speaking. However, he found clear, changed remnants of sea and ocean metaphors, which had been popular in the nineteenth century, in metaphors that addressed river life (e.g., on the Mississippi) and that addressed sea language used in landlocked form (e.g., covered wagons as "prairie schooners"). Osborn's groundbreaking work in the discovery of archetypal metaphors signals to us the importance of metaphors in human argument and decision making.

Osborn's work with this type of metaphor has encouraged others to check his notion of widespread acceptance and use of archetypal images. While it is true that archetypal metaphors stubbornly transcend culture, time, and geography in political and cultural communication, some scholars have discovered interesting changes in use of such metaphors. For instance Lois Einhorn in her study of Native American speakers has found that "American speakers use archetypal metaphors in ways that promote a binary way of thinking characteristic of Western civilization and thought. Although Native American speakers often use the archetypal metaphors identified by Osborn, they do so in ways that encourage thoughts of wholeness and oneness, ideas . . . central to their worldview."[9]

Ronald Carpenter and Michael Osborn stand as examples of scholars who have helped us better understand the long-term patterns of metaphor use by individuals and groups within our society. We will return to research related to their work a bit later in this chapter.

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By now understanding some of the focal points of interest by rhetoricians in metaphor, we are ready to move to the core of what makes a metaphor work.

## NOVEL METAPHORS

**Novel metaphors** are the language devices most easy for us to recognize *as* metaphors. If someone says: "Heather is an oak tree," we do not think the person making this claim crazy or odd. Instead, our minds quickly go to work trying to formulate meaning associated with this odd claim about Heather. We know Heather is a human being and not an oak tree, yet we do not object because we know that the person describing Heather is using a novel metaphor. In a novel metaphor we conceptually join two dissimilar items (in this case a specific person and a type of tree) that nonetheless have a specific similarity that allows new perspective on Heather.

As we develop insight and awareness of the power of novel metaphors, we will focus initially on seven components. (Chart 5.1) Let's use our novel metaphor about Heather to see these elements at work.

Notice that we would have achieved a different meaning result if we had used any of these variations: Heather is a tree. Heather is a weeping

**CHART 5.1**

| **Heather is an oak tree.** | |
|---|---|
| 1. item or person described: | Heather |
| 2. element of comparison: | oak tree |
| 3. typical aspects or characteristics of the element of comparison: | strong, sturdy, old, wood, large, roots, branches, leaves, grow, acorn, grove, deciduous |
| 4. aspects of comparison likely to carry over to the mind of an audience member due to the comparison linkage: | strong, sturdy |
| 5. expected evaluation of the element of comparison (#2): | some neutral, some approval |
| 6. evaluative component (often positive or negative) of the complete comparison (#1 and #2 combined): | to praise |
| 7. the formal linguistic element(s) key to the comparison: | an adjective (oak) + noun (tree) |

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willow. Heather is a Douglas fir. Heather is an apple tree. Each of those sentences would still have been a novel metaphor, but each would have yielded different meaning.

How about Ned? Ned is a tiger. Is Ned really a tiger? No. Why do we say he is? Well, what do we know about tigers? Tigers live in India, have fur, are meat-eaters, and have cubs. Tigers are orange and black, have claws, climb trees, and are ferocious. Tigers are mammals, have tails, have great olfactory senses, and live in packs. Tigers hunt, prowl, stalk, chase, and sleep. You can see tigers in a zoo—or as a rug on someone's floor. Tigers are endangered. Tigers have four legs, can pounce, and can run faster than people. Whew! When we say Ned is a tiger, do we intend to point to *all* those attributes of a tiger? Of course not. The magic of a non-literal comparison (in this case a novel metaphor) guides our minds to the types of things that we really want to point out about Ned. See Chart 5.2.

Again notice that we would have achieved different meaning results if we had used any of these variations: Ned is a tiger at work. Ned is an old tiger. Ned is a crouching tiger. Ned is a tiger surrounded by elephants. Each of those sentences would still have been a novel metaphor, but each would have yielded much different meaning.

**CHART 5.2**

| **Ned is a tiger.** | |
|---|---|
| 1. item or person described: | Ned |
| 2. element of comparison: | tiger |
| 3. typical aspects or characteristics of the element of comparison: | tigers live in India, fur, meat-eaters, cubs, orange and black, claws, climb trees, fierce, mammals, tail, great olfactory senses, live in packs, hunt, prowl, stalk, chase, sleep, in zoo, a rug, endangered, four legs, pounce, run fast |
| 4. aspect of comparison which is likely to carry over to the mind of an audience member due to the comparison linkage: | fierce |
| 5. expected evaluation of the element of comparison (#2): | some some approval, some neutral, some approval |
| 6. evaluative component (often positive or negative) of the complete comparison (#1 and #2 combined): | praise |
| 7. the formal linguistic element(s) key to the comparison: | a noun |

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**CHART 5.3**

| **Writing songs is like a conceptual chiropractor for me—everything in my life straightens out.** | |
|---|---|
| 1. item or person described: | impact of writing songs on Alanis' life. |
| 2. element(s) of comparison: | a chiropractor's work on a patient |
| 3. typical aspects or characteristics of the element of comparison: | pain, discomfort, out of place, spine, manipulation, treatment, change, improvement, relief, comfort, straight, straighten out |
| 4. aspects of comparison likely to carry over to the mind of an audience member due to the comparison linkage: | adjustment, straighten out, improvement |
| 5. expected evaluation of the element of comparison (#2): | mixed; non-approval of apparent discomfort and approval of the change. |
| 6. evaluative component (often positive or negative) of the complete comparison (#1 and #2 combined): | to praise. |
| 7. the formal linguistic element(s) key to the comparison: | a noun (chiropractor) + a verb phrase (straightens out). |

We've started our discussion of novel metaphors with these two quick examples. But, in using Ned and Heather, I'm guilty of using made-up examples (I earlier complained of philosophers of language doing just that). To correct this and to further enhance our understanding and mastery of non-literal comparisons, let's examine a couple of real-life examples from American mass-media messages.

We will allow this simple example of a non-literal comparison (in this case a **novel simile**) to help us through the seven elements we've learned. Singer Alanis Morissette has described songwriting as being a wonderful adjustment: "Writing songs is like a conceptual chiropractor for me—everything in my life straightens out (Chart 5.3)."[10] Let's take this example apart to better understand how all similes, metaphors, or other non-literal comparisons work.

While both ancient and modern scholars have recognized the intriguing chemistry that goes on between the item described (the number 1 component) and the element or means of the non-literal comparison (the number 2 component), few have given analytic names to all the parts and functions. Julian Jaynes, a professor at Princeton University, believed that metaphoric forms of language were at the root of how our minds understand our day-to-day worlds. He established helpful labels to aid our understanding of metaphors and other non-literal comparisons. The terms developed by Jaynes to characterize how a metaphor works are among the most insightful and helpful designations I've found. Several

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different sets of scholarly terms are used in the investigation of metaphors. Chart 5.7 lists equivalent terms in investigations of metaphors in human communication.

Jaynes sees such statements as the ones we've made about Heather and Ned, as well as the one that Alanis Morissette made about her songwriting, as working in this way: we understand the conceptual linking in the metaphor (or simile or other non-literal comparison) of two different things—the thing we wish to describe: the impact of Morissette's songwriting (Jaynes calls this a **metaphrand**) and the item we choose to create the non-literal comparison (he calls this a **metaphier**), in this case the need for, and the results of, a chiropractor's actions. Jaynes suggests that we are aware of various "associations or attributes of the metaphier which [he calls] **paraphiers.**"[11] Paraphiers for the need for, and the results of, a chiropractor's work include the items listed in number 3 in Chart 5.3. Note, however, that all paraphiers are *not* selected or joined to the metaphrand (in this case Morissette's songwriting and its results on her life). The "associations or attributes" that *are* selected or joined become what he would call paraphrands. Using these four key words allows us to see what human minds do when using metaphors or other non-literal comparisons.

Let's try using these terms with another example. Political commentator Molly Ivins once wrote: "Calling George Bush shallow is like calling a dwarf short (Chart 5.4)."[12] Note that the item described (the metaphrand)

**CHART 5.4**

| **"Calling George Bush shallow is like calling a dwarf short."** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. item or person described: | calling George Bush shallow | metaphrand |
| 2. element(s) of comparison: | calling a dwarf short | metaphier |
| 3. typical aspects of the metaphier: | obvious, unnecessary, or pointing out the apparent | paraphiers |
| 4. aspects of comparison which is likely to carry over and attach to the metaphrand in the mind of an audience member due to the comparison linkage: | obvious or unnecessary | paraphrand |
| 5. expected evaluation of the metaphier: | non-approval | |
| 6. evaluative component (often positive or negative) of the overall non-literal comparison (metaphrand + metaphier): | condemn | |
| 7. the formal linguistic element(s) key to the comparison: | verb (calling) + noun (dwarf) +adjective (short) | |

**CHART 5.5**

| **Decoding what he [Greenspan] says about the economy is like untangling a fishing line or untossing a salad.[13]** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. item or person described: | | metaphrand |
| 2. element(s) of comparison: | | metaphier |
| 3. cultural aspects attached to the metaphier: | | paraphiers |
| 4. aspects of comparison likely to carry over to the mind of an audience member: | | paraphrand |
| 5. expected evaluation of the metaphier: (circle one) | approval<br>non-approval<br>neither/neutral<br>both | |
| 6. evaluative component (often positive or negative) of the overall non-literal comparison (metaphrand + metaphier): (circle one) | condemn<br><br>praise | |
| 7. the formal linguistic element(s) key to the comparison: (circle all that apply) | noun<br>verb<br>adjective<br>adverb<br>preposition | |

is *not* George Bush; rather it is the *act of calling* the former president shallow. Our second component is the means of creating the non-literal comparison; in this case, calling a dwarf short (the metaphier). What do you suspect are the "associations or attributes" (the paraphiers) of "calling a dwarf short"? The answer of course has little to do with dwarfs *or* shortness, or even height. The paraphiers at work here are likely ideas, such as "unnecessary," "obvious," "apparent," or "evident." The most likely candidate for the paraphrand is "obvious." She *could* have said: "Calling George Bush shallow is unnecessary, because it is obviously true." But, by casting it in the terms of a non-literal comparison, Ivins provoked her readers in a much more captivating way.

With these examples we come much closer to being able to understand and use the magic of metaphors. If your mind is a bit overwhelmed right now as you try to remember the difference between a metaphrand and a paraphier, take heart. You are learning a technical vocabulary that will help you better discuss and understand one of the most important language devices ever invented. Remember that right now, medical students are studying the human circulatory system, law students are studying

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**CHART 5.6**

| **This [bar] isn't the Taj Mahal we're visiting, after all, and I don't want to sell you the place.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. item or person described: | | metaphrand |
| 2. element(s) of comparison: | | metaphier |
| 3. cultural aspects attached to the metaphier: | | paraphiers |
| 4. aspects of comparison likely to carry over to the mind of an audience member: | | paraphrand |
| 5. expected evaluation of the metaphier: (circle one) | approval<br>non-approval<br>neither<br>both | |
| 6. evaluative component (often positive or negative) of the overall non-literal comparison (metaphrand + metaphier): (circle one) | condemn<br><br>praise | |
| 7. the formal linguistic element(s) key to the comparison: (circle all that apply) | noun<br>verb<br>adjective<br>adverb<br>preposition | |

legal precedents, electrical engineers are studying load capacity—and you are studying the non-literal comparisons known as novel metaphors. Take a breath or two, sip a favorite beverage, and let's move ahead.

Use the statement made about Alan Greenspan in Chart 5.5 to test your understanding of our emerging system of analysis (in this case for a non-literal comparison known as a novel simile). Write in the appropriate entries. How did you do? Did having a double metaphier make the interpretation any different?

Now use the statement made by Stephen King about a bar he is going to write about as an example (Chart 5.6). How did you do? Did the use of a **negated metaphier** ("isn't the Taj Mahal") change your interpretation or understanding? A negated metaphier happens anytime a non-literal comparison suggests that someone or something has certain attributes by saying that the person or thing is *not* something or someone. So, someone being "no Einstein," or someone suggesting that their boss "doesn't walk on water," or someone claiming that their nurse in the hospital was "no Mother Teresa," all use a negated metaphier to make a point about a person.

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## Scrutinize exercise

If you wanted to make the following points about people and things, which negated metaphiers might you use to accomplish your meaning?

Use a negated metaphier to say that someone is very weak: Example: He's no Samson.

Use a negated metaphier to say that someone is very strong:

Use a negated metaphier to say that a train is very slow:

As we become familiar with examining novel metaphors and similes (and other similar non-literal comparisons) in greater detail, we will be able to discover many key elements to their power and persuasive potential. When we find a newspaper columnist telling us that "streetkids are the unsweepable litter of the urban landscape; theirs are the faces that stick like gum"[14] we can have a better understanding about the potential rhetorical power of such a statement. Additionally, we've begun to build a set of tools that will allow us to discover the meaning dynamics within a comparison.

If you enjoyed our discussion of novel metaphors (and similar non-literal comparisons), you will no doubt also enjoy our next stop: **systemic metaphors.**

## SYSTEMIC METAPHORS

All of the metaphors we will discuss in the rest of this chapter started their "lives" as novel metaphors. For various reasons and due to the way we have used these metaphors (or other non-literal comparisons) they have taken on important, notable, and special characteristics.

**Systemic metaphors** (as the name suggests) are metaphors that work together within a system of human thought rather than as singular language devices. Systemic metaphors are in constant use, but we don't often realize we are using a metaphor (similar to **dead** or **buried metaphors,** discusses later).

Did you know that anger is a heated liquid held under pressure in a container? You did not? Well, consider the following phrases:

"My boss blew her stack last week."

"After I heard his sorry excuse I nearly exploded."

"My Dad just hit the roof when he saw our phone bill."

"Don't worry about her, she's just blowing off some steam."

"These prices just make my blood boil."

"I couldn't control it; I just felt the anger building up inside me."

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"This argument has boiled over."

"Relax! Don't get hot under the collar."

"I was there when he flipped his lid."

Even though none of us has probably said: "Anger is a heated liquid held in a container," we often *talk* as if it is. When we have common ways of expressing the same topic (in this case how we talk about anger), we are using a systemic metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson noticed that we often talk about time as if it were an economic resource—namely money.[15] Again, listen to the manner in which we often talk about time:

> "He's just living on borrowed time."
>
> "Quit wasting your time. Get a job."
>
> "Are you using your time wisely?"
>
> "Just what we need, another time-saving device in the kitchen."
>
> "I don't have enough time to deal with that project today."
>
> "Don't you dare squander your time in the islands."
>
> "I'm just counting the minutes until I'm outta here."
>
> "We lost a bunch of time on the last leg of the trip."

Is time really money? No. Do we often think about (and talk about) time as if it is money? Yes. When we do so we use a systemic metaphor.

Systemic metaphors (i.e., systems of language use in which a metaphoric idea is central) occur then when we have a more or less standard way of characterizing one part of human experience. If we only occasionally use a certain metaphoric expression to talk about a part of life *and* if we often use a variety of other metaphoric ideas to also talk about that part of life, we *do not* have a systemic metaphor.

Michael Reddy noticed this same process when he recognized that we often talk about human communication as if it were a physical process of moving a thing from one place to another. He called this characterization the "conduit metaphor."[16]

Here are five of his examples of this systemic metaphor:

1. "It's very hard to get that idea across in a hostile atmosphere." (189)
2. "Oh come on, let me have some of your great ideas about this." (190)
3. "The passage conveys a feeling of excitement." (191)
4. "He crammed the speech with subversive ideas." (191)
5. "They tossed your thoughts back and forth for over an hour, but still could not make sense of them." (196)

In each case, ideas, statements, or writing, when used in the process of communication, are talked about as if they were *physical objects* that could

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## Scrutinize exercise

What are some of the advantages of thinking about communication as a conduit or movement of physical objects or substances from one place to another? What are some of the disadvantages?

be moved from one place to another (typically from one mind to another). Such use, if it becomes the *standard* way we think and talk about communication, results in use of a systemic metaphor.

Can you think of five additional ways in which communication is characterized as a conduit, as a means of moving a physical object or substance from one place to another? List them on a sheet of paper.

If you can think about a part of life where we use a standard, interrelated set of metaphoric images (e.g., TIME IS MONEY or COMMUNICATION IS A CONDUIT) to talk or write about it, you have likely found a systemic metaphor. Hence, if you (off the top of your head), can name 10 or a dozen short sayings or typical phrases about some part of life, you likely have discovered or recognized a systemic metaphor. If you *cannot* easily think of ten or more examples, you may have a singular novel metaphor, or even a metaphoric cluster, but *not* a systemic metaphor.

Let's try this one out for practice. See if you can quickly think of 10 ways we commonly talk about romance, love, and human relationships using this central idea as a core image.

**Romantic Relationships Are a Trip or a Journey**

1. "Our relationship has come to a fork in the road."

(List 9 additional expressions on a sheet of paper.)

You may well be able to tell that systemic metaphors are powerful, and often unrecognized, parts of our use of language. If you enjoyed thinking about systemic metaphors, you may well also enjoy a similar kind of metaphor known as an orientational metaphor.

## ORIENTATIONAL METAPHORS

Remember that systemic and orientational metaphors started their "lives" as novel metaphors. Whereas systemic metaphors become notable because we form systems of words to act as the standard way of talking about certain parts of life, **orientational metaphors** are notable because they center our perception on the way that *bodily experiences* become the metaphoric motif that allow us to express basic and interrelated ideas of human expression.

Again, a quick example will serve to introduce us to the idea:

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Would you rather buy a high quality DVD player or a low quality DVD player?

No contest (if the right money is available), yes? But, turn your attention away from the DVD player for the moment and ask why did I not pose *this* question to you:

Would you rather buy a good quality DVD player or a poor quality DVD player?

Same question, right? Essentially, yes; the questions posed above are very similar. The first question, however, uses an orientational metaphor to accomplish its meaning making. Using the terms "high" and "low" make the first question a participant in form of metaphoric meaning creation.

Orientational metaphors (as the name suggests) are different metaphors from conventional novel metaphors in that they do not strictly take two unlike items (e.g., Ned and Tiger, or Time and Money) and relate them in metaphoric connection of terms connected to each other in time and space. Instead, orientational metaphors create a system of common reference points for things being positively or negatively evaluated using imagery ideas that are not directly accurate (hence, metaphoric).

Lakoff and Johnson put it this way:

> . . . most [orientational metaphors] . . . have to do with spatial orientation: up–down, in–out, front–back, on–off, deep–shallow, central–peripheral. These spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in our physical environment. Orientational metaphors give a concept a spatial orientation[.] (14)

So, for example, Lakoff and Johnson claim that in our general way of speaking we support the claims that HAPPY IS UP and SAD IS DOWN. (15)

Let's see if you agree with them. First, consider the proposition "happy is up." Obviously this is not something that you would expect to hear in everyday conversation (in a way similar to the seldom heard statement, "Anger is a heated liquid held in a container"). You do not hear that "happy is up" or that "sad is down." Do you, however, hear statements such as these in everyday life: "I'm on *top* of my game today," "Things are really looking *up* around here," "I've just had a *mountain top* experience," "She's an *up* and coming executive," "You start this company and the *sky*'s the limit!" or "I'm going to spruce *up* my room." These common expressions suggest that happiness, satisfaction, joy, and good results are related to things *higher* rather than *lower, up* rather than *down*.[17] Hence, Lakoff and Johnson's formulation of HAPPY IS UP comes to us inductively when we recognize the number of phrases in our language that reflect this sentiment. See if you can quickly write five other statements on a sheet of paper that support the unspoken metaphoric proposition that HAPPY IS UP.

Now, can you come up with five statements that support the unspoken metaphoric proposition that SAD IS DOWN? (Hint: think of expressions that reflect or indicate "DOWN" such as "bottom," "low," "under.")

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The essence, then, of orientational metaphors is *not* a one-for-one matching of a metaphrand to a metaphier. Instead, orientational metaphors suggest an evaluative angle (typically positive or negative) associated with saying that things are located in time and space when they actually have no physical location or object that would make that so.

If you think things are looking very *up* after our stop with orientational metaphors, you will no doubt also enjoy our next stop: **dead or buried metaphors.**

## DEAD OR BURIED METAPHORS

**Dead** or **buried metaphors** have something in common with archetypal, orientational, and systemic metaphors: we don't tend to pay a great deal of attention to them. If you were to find the following three sentences in a typical week of media exposure, you would not likely pay the metaphors within them a great deal of attention:

"When I [Jon Spoelstra] started [as VP of marketing] with the New Jersey Nets, the owners recommended that I 'clean house.' "[18]

"He [Cleveland Amory] was the kind of guy who always swam upstream."[19]

"In fact, I think people are waiting for me [a person with sudden sight loss] to give them the green light to help."[20]

Chances are very great that you would automatically "get the point" of phrases such as "clean house," "swam upstream," and "give the green light." But how sharp would the point be? Metaphors such as these are *almost* dead metaphors. They have been buried under decades or centuries of language use, and are now so familiar that we hardly notice that they are metaphors at all. Obviously, these buried metaphors still serve a solid purpose in human communication. However, they are not *actual* dead metaphors because we can still recognize their metaphoric properties. If I read that Jon Spoelstra was ordered to "clean house" in his new job, I could raise the metaphor back to the level of full awareness by asking: "Should he use a broom or bleach?" If I can reestablish the metaphoric force of the metaphier (in this case by naming some of the paraphiers) by asking a silly question, I've demonstrated that a metaphor was being used in the first place. When we can raise audience member attention back to full awareness concerning a metaphor, we'll call it a buried metaphor.

If "buried" metaphors can be brought back into our awareness, then what is a "dead" metaphor? Scruples will help us answer that question.

Do you like people with scruples? Do you have scruples? If you are buying a car, would you rather deal with a scrupulous or unscrupulous salesperson? Why? Does the word "scruple" have any meaning to you other than a connection to ideas of ethics or honesty? Does the word scruple remind you of a rock? Probably not.

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Stop now and look up the word "scruple" in the dictionary.

Now, take a closer look and examine the Latin root word *scrupulus* from which we take our English word "scruple." What does your dictionary say that *scrupulus* means?

You'll see that the Latin word meant a small sharp rock or stone. How do we get from a sharp stone to matters of honesty or ethics?

Have you ever had a small pebble or sharp stone in your sandal? How did it feel? Did you leave it in your sandal? What did you do with it?

Have you ever told a lie and then had your conscience bother you? How did it feel? Did you do anything about the lie? What did you do?

You might be able to see how an ancient person would have used the word *scrupulus* in a simile: "When I lie my mind (or my conscience) bothers me like having a sharp stone (a scrupulus) in my sandal." Hundreds of years later, after the idea and connection becomes conventional, one might have said (using a metaphor): "My lies have put a scrupulus in my brain." Many hundreds of years later, one might have said: "Have you a scrupulus?" (referring to the now frequent, understood metaphor connection between a bothersome thought and a bothersome sharp stone in life situations dealing with truth or lies). Hence, in our times the metaphoric connection is lost (except to those who read dictionary entries) and we find someone able to ask: "Do you have any scruples?" without *any* recognition that the word started out as a metaphoric reference. Who among us would see matters of bothersome conscious as connected to a bothersome sharp pebble in a shoe? When this happens (as is often the case with individual words), we have a genuinely dead metaphor. Without resorting to lengthy explanation or etymological investigation, few people would ever connect our word "scruple" with a bothersome rock. Truly dead metaphors are *unrecognizable as metaphors* because the metaphoric connection has been broken or lost through long centuries of language use. Therefore, the phrase "dead metaphor" is itself *not* a dead metaphor because we realize that metaphors cannot really die. (Don't think about that one for very long—at least not on an empty stomach.)

So, when we *cannot* so raise audience awareness, such as with the word "scruple," when we ask a simple related question ("what size is the rock in your shoe?") we'll call it a **dead metaphor.**

Congratulations! You now know (or are learning about) archetypal metaphors, novel metaphors, systemic metaphors, buried metaphors, dead metaphors, and orientational metaphors. Test your new insight and see how often you can recognize each type. Also, try to formulate why certain metaphors work better than others for you or for certain audiences. Next you will find a sample journal article by Hardy-Short and Short. Read the article in preparation for the Chapter 5 workshop.

We will see if we can put new understandings of metaphors to great use as we recognize the sheer power of these language devices to alter public perception. Then we'll launch on to Chapter 6 concerning the power of narrative communication.

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# Fire, Death, and Rebirth: A Metaphoric Analysis of the 1988 Yellowstone Fire Debate

**Dayle C. Hardy-Short and C. Brant Short**

This essay analyzes the public debate concerning management of the 1988 Yellowstone forest fires. Two primary archetypal metaphors—*death* and *rebirth*—emerged. These provided a conceptual worldview which helped observers define the situation and gave advocates an inventional tool for advancing their own agenda regarding fire policy and national park management. The crisis brought two competing views of public land management to the forefront of public discussion: the *ecological* view that public lands must be managed from a holistic view of resources and the *human-centered* view that resource use should recognize the preeminence of humans in policy-making.

During the late summer of 1988, Rocky Mountain newspaper headlines charted an impending crisis. "Epic Wildfires Alter Face of Yellowstone" (Jones A1). "Residents Leaving West Yellowstone as Fire Nears" (Foster A1). "Record High Temps Worsen West's Fire Situation" (Donnelly A1). "Flames Lick at Edge of Yellowstone Towns" (A1). "Giant Wildfire: Residents Flee as Fire Nears" (A1). "Outlook Grim for Saving Towns from Forest Fire" (Foster A1). And finally, "Cool, Wet Weather Calms Western Fires" (Oatis A2).

One of the more ominous headlines that summer appeared in the *Wall Street Journal:* "Yellowstone Burns as Park Managers Play Politics." Written by Donald R. Leal of the Political Economy Research Center, a conservative research center located in Bozeman, Montana, the editorial chastised federal land managers for allowing "natural" fires to burn out of control in the national forests and park areas (10). Leal used the Yellowstone crisis as a call to rethink the ecological worldview which had guided federal public land policy since the 1960s. "If the Yellowstone fires continue, and if controversy over the 'natural regulation' policy is sufficiently severe to arouse public opinion," argued Leal, "'natural regulation' may be curtailed" (10). This editorial represented one of the opening salvos

**Source:** *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (Spring 1995), 103–25.

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in the national and regional debate that emerged during the severe fire season of 1988. Politicians, ranchers, journalists, and residents of fire-stricken areas claimed that the federal government's "natural fire" policy (called by many the "let burn" policy) was dangerous, short-sighted, and wasteful.

These claims illustrate historian Stephen Pyne's argument that fire is a "cultural phenomenon" (3). Calling the relationship between humans and fire "reciprocal," Pyne suggests that although fire alone "rarely devastate[s] a landscape," when coupled with human activity it can domesticate or ruin the land. He concludes that "fire itself takes on many particular characteristics because of the cultural environment in which it occurs" (4–5). However, only through rhetoric do these characteristics and the environment within which they occur become evident. The rhetorical construction of the (more or less) collective agreement about how humans should respond to fire allows us to describe and understand fire contextually. In the case of the Yellowstone fire controversy, an analysis of metaphor helps us understand how this agreement began to emerge.

As an organizing principle for rhetorical criticism, metaphor has enjoyed great attention in recent decades. Critics have used metaphor to investigate a number of rhetorical artifacts and in so doing have become comfortable theoretically with a broader view of metaphor than the classical Aristotelian conception of this figure of speech. "A number of theorists in various fields," writes Sonja Foss, "have helped transform the narrow view of metaphor into one in which it is seen as central to thought and to our knowledge and experience of reality" (188). In particular, Michael Osborn's work on the archetypal metaphor has been recognized by observers as important and "especially vital" (Brock, Scott, & Chesebro 286) for the practice of rhetorical criticism. Yet, only a few published studies attempt to refine and expand our understanding of the function of archetypal metaphors; most notably, these include Rickert's examination of Winston Churchill's war oratory, Perry's analysis of Hitler's rhetoric, and Jamieson's comparative study of Jerry Brown and Pope Paul.

Archetypal metaphors continue to have rhetorical power in contemporary public discourse and can offer an insightful critical tool. Moreover we agree with Robert Ivie's assumption that "metaphor is at the base of rhetorical invention" (198) and suggest that archetypal metaphors offer rhetors an inventional vehicle that is especially powerful in the context of crisis. In the following case study, we examine the debate surrounding the Yellowstone Park forest fires of 1988 and evaluate the function of archetypal metaphors in shaping public perceptions, actions and policy. Yellowstone, the first national park, is an especially important site for this kind of study because it has become the cultural yardstick against which all other set-aside areas are measured (Runte 212–214). National parks are ideological constructs and perceived in different ways than other forms of public lands. Public discussion of what happens in national parks is

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necessarily bound up in how we view ourselves and our relationship to nature—for many Americans, national parks *are* nature because they have no opportunity to experience other forms of the natural world. Our study focuses on the rhetoric of the crisis itself (from the beginning of the fires in July to their control in September 1988), and touches briefly on the aftermath of the fires in which the debate moved from the scene of the fires, the Rocky Mountain West, to the halls of Congress and the pages of scientific journals.[1]

To accomplish our goals in this study, we address three topics. Initially, we review the status of metaphor and its place as a tool for rhetorical criticism. Next, we review the rhetoric surrounding the fire debate, examining both local and national sources of public argument.[2] Finally, we draw conclusions and suggest implications for future studies of archetypal metaphor, especially in case studies dealing with environmental advocacy and natural resource rhetoric.

## METAPHOR AND RHETORICAL CRITICISM

Metaphor allows us to describe the indescribable in a way that gives it meaning and makes it understandable to others. Michael Osborn and Douglas Ehninger suggest that metaphor functions as a "communicative stimulus" because it allows the user to identify "an idea or object through a sign which generally denotes an entirely different idea or object" (226). Metaphor also functions as a "mental response" because of the "interaction" between ideas suggested by the term's "usual denotation" and its "special denotation" in the particular context (Osborn & Ehninger 226). In resolving the apparent incompatibility of a metaphor's tenor and vehicle,[3] a listener relies on "qualifiers" or "forces" which "suggest or direct how the metaphor will be understood." Qualifiers may be "contextual" (based on the situation), "communal" (based in the common knowledge of a people), "private" (based in a listener's personal or subjective knowledge), or "archetypal" (based in experiences common to peoples across time) (Osborn & Ehninger 228–230).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson suggest that within argumentation, metaphor helps to "structure our present reality." If a metaphor new to us enters our "conceptual system . . . it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to" (145). If the metaphor appears strongly enough to us, or we identify strongly enough with it, we will act on it.

Archetypal metaphors are powerful in part because of their ability to symbolize common human experiences that transcend time and culture. Because of their intrinsic connection to the human experience, archetypal metaphors may be called upon more often in crisis situations when people recall their most basic and fundamental experiences to understand a

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particular problem. Osborn explains that archetypal metaphors can be identified by their popularity in rhetorical discourse; their constancy through time and between cultures; their "ground[ing] in prominent features of experience"; their "embodiment of basic human motivations"; their universal appeal to audience members; and their appearance at "critical junctures" in discourse (116–117). In moments of "great crisis," writes Osborn, "when society is in upheaval and fashionable contemporary forms of symbolic cultural identity are swept away, the speaker must turn to the bedrock of symbolism, the archetype, which represents the unchanging essence of human identity" (120).

Several case studies have demonstrated that metaphors can be powerful sources of invention for rhetors. In her study of archetypal metaphors Jamieson finds that such metaphors "simultaneously create inventional possibilities and impose inventional constraints" (231). Ivie extends Jamieson's claim, demonstrating that identification of key metaphors helps reveal "their limits or untapped potential as sources of invention" (199). Significantly, speakers may "lose sight of alternatives when they become accustomed to routine extensions of images no longer serving their original purposes" (Ivie 199). In this way, the metaphor is literalized and becomes the essence of social reality for audiences and rhetors alike.

## DEATH AND REBIRTH

Humans attach meaning to natural processes through language, often metaphorically, which in turn allows us to label, categorize, and discuss these processes. We contend that two essentially "pure" archetypal metaphors, *death* and *rebirth,* can be found at the center of the public debate regarding the Yellowstone fires and that such metaphors reveal the depth and scope of appeals used in the debate. Viewed in a larger context, death and rebirth are part of an overarching archetype of the human life cycle.[4] In this view, birth (whenever that is defined) occurs once and begins an endless process of life, death, and rebirth. Death and rebirth are forever tied to each other, as rebirth can occur *only* after some sort of death. Too, when rebirth is the metaphor paired with death (as opposed to life or birth), the pairing suggests a belief that all life is in flux.

Ecologist Daniel Botkin observes that metaphor has long been useful in describing nature as a whole. Until very recently, humans viewed nature as organic, either "*like* a living creature" or *as* "a living creature" (emphasis in original). Organisms pass through "major life stages" from birth to death, and their future depends not only on their present but their past state of existence (Botkin 92). The "development of modern sciences," Botkin explains, led to a shift from viewing nature as organic to viewing it as a machine (103). A machine is "predictable" with parts that may "age" but can be "replaced," thus ensuring that it will not die (Botkin 102). From

this perspective, nature, left alone, would always reproduce itself; human involvement either "complete[s] the perfection of nature or . . . interfere[s] in its perfect processes" (Botkin 110). Death occurs when appropriate parts are not replaced.

Historically, the machine metaphor has been at the heart of national park and wilderness management, which mandated that responsible land managers should either prevent change or replace parts (which would also prevent change). Botkin suggests that we are now moving from a machine-like view of nature to viewing Earth as a biosphere, which is a "life-supporting and life-containing system with organic qualities" (151). This is a perspective that focuses on sustainability—or managing for change—and which combines the old organic view with a "new technological view" that understands nature as a more open than closed system (155–156). As an example of this shift, he describes how one scientist studying the Sequoia forests in the mid-1960s came to believe that change, in the form of fire, would actually be beneficial for the regeneration of the giant trees. Gradually, that belief influenced the National Park Service to allow controlled burns (Botkin 154).[5] The metaphor of rebirth is compatible with the view of Earth/nature as an open system, for while change may sufficiently alter something so that we no longer recognize it (a type of death), rebirth assumes the altering effects of change.

While we might see death and rebirth as part of a human-centered view of life, the ways in which these two metaphors were used when arguing about the Yellowstone fires places them more in opposition than such a view might suggest. When death dominates the talk, we might discover the view that things are permanent and that therefore change is value-laden, and that value can be measured only in human (and therefore economic) terms. The metaphor of rebirth *assumes* death. In cases where rebirth dominated the talk, we can find the view that life and all things in it are somehow transitory, that change is inevitable and we cannot judge it as good or bad. Rebirth suggests that the value in something can be both contemporary and delayed, and even that the greater value in something will be visible after its transformation by rebirth.

These two dominant metaphors both reflected and reinforced a conceptual worldview that helped observers define the situation and gave advocates an inventional tool for advancing specific arguments regarding fire policy and national park management. We do not suggest that advocates (of either side) consciously chose one archetype over another, but that at some point they did make conscious use of certain words that, when clustered, can be described by the archetype. At this point, language choice became strategic, and viewed largely, suggests an overall world view that allows observers to infer particular kinds of conclusions about similar uses of language in other situations.[6]

The crisis atmosphere surrounding the fire debate prompted metaphors that matched the visual images of a landscape being devoured in flames.

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Appeals that furthered the sense of "crisis" were often based upon a deeply-rooted anti-government, anti-environmentalist core of opinion. Two competing views of public land management emerged at the forefront of public discussion: the *ecological* view that public lands must be managed from a holistic view of resources and a *human-centered* view that resource use should recognize the preeminence of humans in policy-making.

In the case of the Yellowstone forest fires, there is little doubt or surprise that public discourse emerged in the midst of a public crisis.[7] Describing and understanding the Yellowstone fires through the lens of death and/or rebirth created powerful metaphorical associations for audiences concerned with scenic beauty. Archetypal metaphors were important inventional devices for advocates and observers because they allowed a conceptual vision that provided a coherent and systematic form. As the crisis deepened, the metaphors used by opponents and supporters of the "let burn" policy to describe what was happening or going to happen in Yellowstone became more fixed to the public reality of what *had* happened in Yellowstone. The reliance on archetypal metaphors to conceptualize the fires and federal policy was based on the synergistic function of a mythic force (fire) altering a national/cultural icon (Yellowstone). Some members of the public became convinced that Yellowstone had been destroyed, while others were eager to see the transformation for themselves. The metaphorical reality of death or rebirth motivated specific action from members of the public who were conscious of the situation in Yellowstone.

## NATIONAL PARKS AND FOREST FIRES

Before examining the events of 1988, it is helpful to understand the origins of the "natural fire" policy and how it evolved to become the standard mechanism for guiding federal land fire policy. In 1968, the National Park Service officially recognized the importance of fire in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.[8] By 1972, naturally-caused fires (often started by lightning) were usually allowed to burn. According to one federal study: "The purpose for this policy change was to restore fires to a more natural ecological role. 'Naturalness' is defined as those dynamic processes and components which would likely exist today, and go on functioning, if technological humankind had not altered them" (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 7).

A typical account of the benefits of fire appeared in a 1986 feature story in the Boise *Idaho Statesman*. Commenting on a 25,000 acre burn in central Idaho, a Forest Service fire management officer observed, "That's a lot of acres to have burning with nobody on them. Ten years ago that was basically unheard of in the Forest Service. . . . Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem—it is a natural part of the wilderness. It's as natural as rainfall." The author of the story, the *Idaho Statesman*'s outdoors columnist,

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extended the management officer's claim by concluding, "Fire can be a tool in wilderness to clear old-growth timber, which shades the ground and limits the growth of new plants. Wildlife needs a diversity in vegetation for food and cover." To support this point, the columnist noted that the "recovery of burn comes faster than most believe" and that "new plants start to sprout in three or four weeks" (Zimowsky E1).

In Yellowstone Park, the natural burn area was limited to 300,000 acres until 1976 when it was expanded to include nearly the entire park. Since that year, 134 natural fires have been suppressed when officials determined they posed a potential threat to public facilities or could lead to much larger fires. Under the natural burn policy, Yellowstone's worst fire season prior to 1988 was 1981, when fifty-seven fires burned 20,000 acres of land (Barker, "Flame and Blame" 11).

## 1988 FIRE SEASON

Despite the Park Service's recognition of the benefits of fire in 1968, ecologically-minded critics might argue that the decision came too late. Unspent fuel had been accumulating for decades, and the pine beetle infestation of the late 1970s and early 1980s in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming added an enormous number of dead and dying trees to the store of fuel. According to one of the co-authors of Yellowstone's 1972 fire management plan, Don Despain, "'fire is part of the system and therefore it causes no damage to the system. In fact, it is fire suppression that causes damage by destroying the natural frequency of fire in the ecosystem'" (quoted in Morrison 31). However, those who argued for preservation of the park and suppression of the fires would claim that the decision to let the fires burn in a severe drought year (coming at the end of several years of lower-than-normal precipitation) added a bad policy to a bad fuel situation. One group of advocates claimed the roots of the 1988 fire season lay in the historic policy of fire suppression, and another group suggested its roots were in the policy shift to let fires burn where they did not threaten humans and their possessions.

In 1988 the first fire near the Park started on June 25. Several fires ignited and throughout July the conditions worsened because multiple fires were burning and the weather was extremely dry. The first threat to tourists came on July 22 when fire approached the Grant Village area and the first fire evacuation occurred in the park. The fire changed course and no facilities were lost at Grant Village, although the danger prompted a visit by Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, who told *Good Morning America* on July 23, "Yellowstone is not in danger . . . We're not going to let Yellowstone be damaged by this" ("Hodel Says").

At this juncture, some fire experts believed the most severe fires were over. In a report to the park superintendent, a team of fire experts

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predicted that about 200,000 acres of the park would be burned by the end of the season. But they were wrong.

On August 20, the day many observers labeled as "Black Saturday," the fires exploded out of control. Winds of seventy to ninety miles per hour accelerated many fires and some officials believe over 165,000 new acres were set ablaze on this single day (Matthiessen 122). A crisis atmosphere gripped the region as the Montana communities of Silver Gate and Cooke City were threatened and residents of West Yellowstone saw fires on the outskirts of their community. National attention focused primarily on the threat to the historic Old Faithful Lodge and the evacuation of that area on September 8 added to the perceptions of a situation out of control. In rapid succession, President Reagan ordered over 5,000 military personnel to help fight the fires, most of the park was closed to the public after August 24, and Wyoming Senators Alan Simpson and Malcom Wallop demanded that National Park Superintendent William Mott be fired. All these factors combined to create a crisis which the public believed was caused by shortsighted and faulty management.

On September 10, a cold front approached and humid air pushed into the area. One day later rain and snow fell and the 1988 fire season was finally under control. Newspaper headlines after the snowfall reflected a lessening of crisis as Westerners began to debate the wisdom of a national "let burn" policy. "Sen. Wallop Finds Scapegoat for Tragic Yellowstone Fire" (10A). "Andrus Blasts Let-Burn Policy" (A4). "Fires Still Have Place in Forest Management, Chief Argues" (3). "Group Blasts Let-It-Burn Plan" {C1). "Environmental Groups Defend Administration's Firefighting Policies" (Darst). "Fire Policy Opens Way for Political Attacks" (A4). "Hodel Says Let-Burn Policy Must Be Changed" (LaMay C1). "Congress Will View Fire Policy" (4A). The crisis had passed, but Westerners (in particular) were deeply concerned about long-term policy affecting the national parks and forest systems.

## COMPETING METAPHORS IN THE 1988 FIRE DEBATE

In the 1960s and 1970s a national "conservation consensus" emerged that legislated an ecological worldview in developing public land policies.[9] As a result, the public lands have been managed from a holistic perspective, displacing the historic view of a human-centered universe. The "natural burn" policy formulated by the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service reaffirmed the belief that public lands are a complex and diverse ecosystem with human needs representing only one factor in policy-making.

The arguments used by supporters and critics of the "natural burn" policy centered around the images associated with the archetypal

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metaphors of death and rebirth. The crisis atmosphere of August–September 1988 provided a window of opportunity for critics of public land management whose calls for a human-centered standard of allocating natural resources had lost support following James Watt's stormy tenure as Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of the Interior. For these individuals, the crisis of a national treasure burning to the ground could only be symbolized as "death." How could humans enjoy the wonders of Yellowstone in the midst of blackened ruins? On the other hand, supporters of a "natural burn" policy needed an alternative view of the fires that was consistent with an ecological perspective and, at the same time, countered the visions of "death" advanced by critics of the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. In responding to their critics, supporters of the "natural burn" policy offered the metaphor of "rebirth."

In its most fundamental terms, the controversy over national park fire policy focused upon its proper name. The officially-designated term, "prescribed natural burn," implied a rational decision-making process that allowed some naturally-caused fires to burn while mandating that others be fought from their beginning. Opponents called the policy "let burn" management, a label used extensively by the news media, probably because of its brevity and color. In terms of public perceptions, "let burn" suggested a casual disregard toward fire and no concern for the economic ramifications of lost tourism and lost timber. Throughout the crisis phase of the fires, supporters of federal policies attempted to prove that "let burn" was a misleading label in describing the current policy.

Yellowstone officials attempted to reframe the impact of the fires beginning in August. Acknowledging that fires of "epic proportion" would "significantly alter the country's oldest national park, changing timberland into meadows," they also characterized the fire as an "ecological boon" to the Park which would result in the "first major regeneration of Yellowstone in as many as 400 years" (Jones A1). Despite their best efforts to discuss fires within an ecological framework, federal officials found themselves confronted by an increasing number of attacks as the fire crisis grew.

## Visions of Death in the Fire Debate

Critics of the "natural burn" policy argued from a view of nature in which fire was acceptable only when created and managed by humans. For instance, fire has long been used as a cleansing element in land management—farmers and ranchers still burn stubble and rangeland to prepare for the next year's planting or growth. So, it was not the idea of fire itself or the function fire can serve when controlled that disturbed fire policy critics, but it was the idea and effects of "wild" fire that drew so much ire. One observer suggested that the fires had returned "wildness" to the so-called Yellowstone "wilderness" (Morrison 116), and it was this wildness that was so overwhelming. Presumably, had humans set the fires to help clear the accumulated fuel from the forest, they would have been able to

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control the consequences. The worldview that considers fire a human tool appears to contradict the belief that fire is part of nature and can have valuable effects even when not controlled. It is easy to see how a believer in managed fires could turn to a metaphor that equated wild fires with death.

The metaphor of death appeared in public arguments in various forms. For some advocates, the death of Yellowstone was the destruction of the forest lands and the animals; for others death appeared in the form of economic hardships and social consequences. Devastation, extinction, disease, ruin, murder, and waste were all terms used to evoke the greater image of death in its most horrific forms. Certainly, being burned alive is one of the most terrible forms of death we as humans can imagine, and critics of the fire policy invoked images closed associated with that: hell, mutilation, charring, burning to ash, charcoal grilling.

The *Idaho State Journal*[10] quoted David Hays, who watched the fires approach his home near the Park: "It looks like the surface of hell in Yellowstone. The sun and moon rise and set blood red. This is more like Mars than like Island Park anymore" (Rushforth A1). Residents of other communities confronted with fire expressed their outrage over fire management through the metaphor of death. In Gardiner, Montana, a local businessman argued, "I think the people here are primarily interested in another endangered species—the local businessman," while the owner of a local motel charged, "They've killed our business" ("Park Policy Under Fire" A2). In Dubois, Wyoming, merchants formed an association with other small communities demanding federal subsidies to replace business lost by the fire. They perceived the fires to be a direct result of poor federal land management, not the forces of nature. "They're the ones who created the policy," one merchant said. "They're responsible" ("Dubois Merchants" 9).

A group of citizens in Jackson, Wyoming, circulated a petition demanding a change in federal fire policy. The idea for the petition resulted from a comment made by visitors from New York: "They drove through Yellowstone and they said they were practically crying. . . . They asked us what we were doing about it." The petition noted that the "ill-timed Park Service policy allowing natural burns in Yellowstone Park has jeopardized, for future generations, both the use and enjoyment of our greatest national park." In attacking the existing policy, the petition noted that fires were causing pollution and contributing to economic hardship in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana (Stump A16). Steve Fuller, who had lived near Yellowstone since 1972 observed "The desolation caused by this fire . . . it's a mutilation that I have never considered before. . . . My whole attitude on fire is changing. What I feel is gut-wrenching fear" (Wilkinson 11).

The death metaphor was pervasive in the editorial sections of Western newspapers. Attacking the "natural fire" policy, the *Jackson Hole [WY]*

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*News*[11] claimed, "The immediate effects of the fires are clear and monumental. Homes were destroyed, lives threatened, businesses and local economies damaged, tons of pollutants thrown into the skies, hundreds of acres of forest blackened" ("Congress Should Investigate" A4). Writing in the *Salt Lake Tribune,* K. E. Grubbs attacked both the fire policy and the public information campaign to explain the benefits of fire:

> As we motored through acres of charred desolation to the orange skies surrounding the geyser basin—a scene that might have been described by Dante—the official perked up long enough to tell us how great it was to be alive now and to witness this magnificent event, the torching of Yellowstone. Never mind the human habitats and enterprises that have been ruined along with half of Yellowstone. And forget that goofy propaganda about how it will all be back to normal next year. It won't; not for years and years. Strike up the Twilight Zone theme. {Grubbs A21)

Some Westerners, particularly those in states bordering Yellowstone, reacted personally to the loss, claiming that the fires felt "like a death in the family" (Jones & Secter 1). And the Billings, Montana newspaper editorialized that "intellectually, of course, we know that Yellowstone is a national park. But deeper, we believe it is ours, these outsider experts have gambled with our treasure—and lost" (Jones & Secter 1, 15).

Various critics of the policy saw fire as a disease that had to be controlled to prevent death. "If forest fires are Nature's way of keeping balance, then is not disease similarly Nature's way of keeping population under control?" one editorialist wrote. "Should man, out of respect for Nature, decline to heal humans?" The writer concluded ominously, "If man lets Nature have its way, there soon may not be any Nature left" ("Fires Ravage West" 1016). Dave Flitner, a rancher and president of the Wyoming Farm Bureau, claimed that before "we invented vaccines to control historically-devastating diseases, nature destroyed humans in much the same manner as it destroyed trees. Surely environmentalists would not stretch their *c'est la vie* attitude toward nature to include man's 'unnatural' healing methods. Would they?" (Flitner A8).

In a guest editorial, a retired forester from Montana also used the fire as a vehicle to indict federal wilderness policies. Del Radtke attacked the Forest Service for being too closely aligned with environmental groups. Additionally, Radtke claimed that the problem with fire experts "is that they sometimes massage each other's egos to such an extent that they lose common sense." In a striking conclusion to his call for better land management, Radtke invoked the death—or murder—of an important symbol in previous fire publicity: "Like Smoky [sic] Bear said to children for years, before he was killed, 'Don't play with fire—you might burn a lot more than you figured'!" (5).

In the *Salt Lake Tribune,* nationally-syndicated columnist Joan Beck claimed that the "raging storms of fire" that turned Yellowstone Park to "acrid ashes" had also "scorched the National Park Service's ideological

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plan to let natural forest fires burn without interference." Attacking the rationale that fires promote growth and in fact support a healthy ecosystem, Beck concluded: "By the 23rd or 24th century, perhaps, those in charge of preserving our great national-park heritage will have figured out a more sensible way to protect and renew our national forests than by letting them burn down. However fascinating this untidy, blazing, spectacular climax of a forest cycle is, it is still extravagantly wasteful, dangerous and achingly sad" (13A). In a television interview, Wyoming Senator Malcom Wallop called for the resignation of National Park Service Director Mott because Mott "continues to find some reason to celebrate this event [the fires] while all the rest of us are suffering" ("Sen. Wallop Finds" 10A). Even sources who acknowledged the benefits of fire questioned the impact of allowing fires to burn large areas. The *Jackson Hole [WY] Guide* editorialized, "The damage is not permanent, but for some it might as well be. Regrowth will occur, but the long-term effects—impossible to measure—nonetheless are disturbing in their scope" ("Congress Should Investigate" A4).

Editorials in the national press also found more death than life in the fires. Most argued that, while there might be some merit in the let-burn policy, in certain years it should be abandoned, because, as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* claimed, "the danger is so great that fires will spread out of control, threatening property and lives and livelihoods" ("Fires Ravage West" 1017). Some, while admitting the overall wisdom of the policy, mourned the "charred disfigurement of Yellowstone National Park" (*Roanoke [VA] Times & World News* in "Fires Ravage West" 1015). The *Omaha World-Herald* suggested that "much of the park lies in ruin. Homes and businesses have been destroyed," and attacked the "defenders of the let-'em-burn policy" for allowing a "federal policy [to go] out of control, destroying millions of trees, leaving much of a major national park in ruin and fouling the air for hundreds of miles" ("Fires Ravage West" 1014). The *Billings [MT] Gazette* questioned why Yellowstone Park Superintendent Robert Barbee "blindly rode a dead policy into hell" ("Fires Ravage West" 1012). Perhaps one of the most vivid images came from the *Richmond [VA] News Leader:* "If you want to see the world's largest charcoal grill, just visit Yellowstone. Be sure to say, 'Thank you, environmentalists.' " The editorialist admitted that "Fires are Nature's way of dealing with thick forests, its way of thinning trees," but added that "Nature sometimes goes too far. While forests need periodic thinning, they don't need to be burned to ash" ("Fires Ravage West" 1016).

The tone of most of the editorials which appeared to reject the let-burn policy was "yes, but. . . ." In other words, most editorialists accepted the argument that regeneration would come from fire, but under certain weather conditions in certain years, the policy should be abandoned in order to avoid excessive damage—and nonabandonment was a mark of irresponsibility and lack of concern for humans *and* nature.

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## Visions of Rebirth in the Fire Debate

Supporters of the natural fire policy appealed to a metaphor of regeneration and rebirth, although the support was often tempered by the recommendation that the policy should be rethought for extreme drought years. Various natural resource-affiliated federal employees, environmentalists, and research biologists were especially prominent in using terms such as rebirth, renewal, greening, cycles, process, creation. Interestingly, consistent with the assumption of death within rebirth, many advocates used the image of a dead or dying forest in order to explain the effects of fire as rebirth, whereas opponents of the fire policy had spoken almost exclusively only of death. Forestry officials consistently argued that fires "prompt rebirth in the wilderness, clearing away the old, dead and overgrown while making way for new vegetation and new wildlife habitats" ("Park Policy Under Fire" A2). In fact, the *Jackson Hole Guide* reported on September 7 that "areas that burned a few weeks ago already have green shoots" (Kessler A1). This was *before* the snow fell.

Even during the most intense days of the fire Yellowstone Park officials were attempting to replace the death metaphor with that of rebirth. On September 4, the Idaho Falls *Post-Register*[12] reported that the Park Service had "launched an information blitz. It is trying to assure people that the fires will help the forest renew itself" (Huegel B1). The park had various displays created for tourist consumption, including a short film, "The Yellowstone Fires" which had been updated four times through September 4. Commenting on the ongoing fires, one ranger told the newspaper, "We're really hoping to use this as a way to teach the natural cycles of the forest" (Huegel B1).

The *Post-Register* suggested that because of the combination of severe drought and the pine beetle infestation which had devastated many Rocky Mountain forests from the late 1970s through the mid 1980s, "the forest was highly vulnerable to a devastating forest fire," so there was "no assurance that the fires could have been stopped, no matter what the policy." The editorial writer admitted that as a result of the fires, "the wildlife habitat in and around the park" might improve. The wisest course would be to study the policy further and, in the meantime, allow the professional forest managers to make decisions "based on available research, rather than impulsive reaction from critics or politicians" ("Natural Fire Policy" A4). The *Salt Lake Tribune* agreed that "fire is a natural process necessary for a healthy ecosystem in the park," and added that "natural forces sometimes conspire to create problems that, quite simply, are beyond the control of man" ("Sen. Wallop Finds" 10A). A Wyoming columnist put it more vividly. "The Yellowstone fires are a natural phenomenon akin to a flood or earthquake," Andrew Melnykovych wrote, "staggering in their scope and fundamentally beyond human control" (A8). Even some of those who appeared to oppose the policy admitted that fire was part of the natural

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process. An editorial in the *Idaho State Journal* argued that "in extreme drought years, the 'let it burn' policy ought to be abandoned," and then added, "even though such fires often bring regeneration and improve wildlife habitat in burned-out areas" ("What Have We Learned?" A4).

Scientists and their surrogates in environmental groups spent considerable time building the rebirth argument in the regional press. Lawson LaGate of the Sierra Club told the *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Ultimately, what is happening is going to be good for the park and the ecosystem. . . . From a wildlife standpoint, it will be a real boon for the elk. Frankly, I get very angry when I hear a congressman from Wyoming, in total ignorance, say these fires have sterilized everything" (Wharton 6B). Another environmentalist, Ed Lewis of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, claimed that local economies would also be regenerated by the fires: "You may have a tremendous number of people coming to the park to see it after the fires. . . . Many people who have seen Yellowstone and have no reason to return are now looking forward to a different experience" (Wharton 6B). Donna Pinsof and Ralph Maughn of the Eastern Idaho chapter of the Sierra Club presented their chapter's views in an *Idaho State Journal* editorial:

> Of course, TV and press photos usually showed the public the worst, since that's more impressive. Nevertheless, new grass is already several inches high in many place burned in July. Next summer will bring an explosion of wildflowers amid the standing burned trees. . . . In a decade, new trees will hide most of the still standing snags. In a generation we think many will find the Park much more beautiful than before the fire with its dead trees and log-covered forest floor. (A5)

A group of five scientists from the University of Wyoming issued a press release on September 13 challenging the opponents of the natural fire policy. Calling Yellowstone a "living and dynamic entity," the scientists claimed that changes are inevitable, including those changes brought by fire. The report also noted that Yellowstone is "in no danger of being 'destroyed' by the fires since 'dead trees do not equate directly to dead forests'." The Wyoming scientists argued that economic losses of one summer season must be judged against the enormous economic benefits generated by communities being located near the park for so many years. Moreover, tourists would benefit ultimately from the fires because the newly opened meadows will allow greater opportunity to see wildlife in the park ("U.W. Scientists Say"). Two biologists from Idaho State University (Pocatello) also used local media to advance the ecological benefits of fire. Jay Anderson claimed that "most people seem unaware of the scientific evidence suggesting forests need fire to encourage new plant growth and create wildlife habitat." According to Wayne Minshall, another biologist at Idaho State, "We've oversown the Smokey the Bear syndrome and it's finally caught up to us" (Englert, "Environmentalists" A1).

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Park officials were also quick to report the latest results of the fires. The *Riverton [WY] Ranger* reported the animals of the park actually preferred the burned out areas for food. One researcher noted that elk had migrated to the burned areas in search of ash, which had the attraction of a salt lick. The researcher also claimed that the fish population in the park would probably increase as the "nutrients left behind by the fires work their way into the streams and lakes and serve as a type of fertilizer for the food chain" ("Animals Prefer" 12). A park information officer told of animals grazing while fires blazed around them. "This is not a Bambi situation here," reported Jeff Selleck. "Even while the fire was burning, the animals seemed fairly serene" (McCabe 6A). An Associated Press report of September 19 illustrates the concerted effort of officials to report the park's rebirth: "During the three months Yellowstone National Park has burned, firefighters have struggled heroically, politicians have pointed fingers and the park has quietly gone about healing itself." The report noted that "just eight weeks after flames roared past the Grant Village complex . . . wildflowers already have sprouted from the blackened soil" ("Park Rebirth" A2).

In the national press, reports of the park's rebirth also appeared during the crisis stage. Jay Mathews of the *Washington Post* reported on September 12 that the "park has begun a remarkable regeneration. This surprising turnabout stems both from the natural cycle of fire and regrowth that renews all pine forests and from the destruction's stunning irregularity, of which the public remains largely unaware" (A1). A September 14 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* focused totally on the power of nature to regenerate itself after the fires. In describing a typical burned forest, the article listed the multiple benefits of fire for micro-organisms; plants, grasses, and trees; fish; and small and large mammals (Schierholz 1).

To help put the Yellowstone fires in perspective, some advocates reviewed the impact of other recent fires in the West. Recalling a 50,000 acre fire in the Boise National Forest in 1987, ranger Frank Carroll noted, "It 'a natural mosaic now, with open meadows and stands of timber. . . . A forest that was just getting older and deader has now been beautifully revived" ("Officials Cite Idaho Fire" A1). Tracey Trent of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game also emphasized the important benefits of fire: "When fire goes through an area and turns those trees into ash, one of the things that happens is that the minerals the tree has captured during its life are returned to the soil" ("Officials Cite Idaho Fire" A1–2).

Refuting the critics of the natural fire policy and their images of death and destruction, the *Los Angeles Times* observed:

> such complaints can fuel a Bambi syndrome among members of the public who see dramatic fire walls and smoke clouds on television news. They can envision helpless creatures of the forest fleeing the firestorms. They read of massive acreages 'destroyed' without understanding that fire is a necessary cog in the life cycle of a healthy forest, or that not every acre has been scorched. ("Fires Ravage West" 1010)

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Other newspapers used similar visions of rebirth in supporting federal policy. The *Seattle Times* noted that when a forest is "aging, disease-ridden, insect-riddled and dry, it is ripe for natural fires that consume old, dead growth and make room for new plants and trees" ("Fires Ravage West" 1011). In a striking use of the rebirth metaphor, the *Burlington [VT] Free Press* observed:

> Fire is one of the midwives of life in the wilderness. The tight ranks of lodgepole pine that dominated Yellowstone shut out other species and provided a poor environment for wild animals. Fire swept them away, making room for a riotous variety of flowers, shrubs, and trees. ("Fires Ravage West" 1011)

In these editorials as well as others, the conception of fire as a means of achieving new life had been accepted as a fundamental part of national park and national forest policy.

## LINKING THE METAPHORS PERMANENTLY

As the snows fell, the debate cooled and focused not on abandonment of the policy, but on revision of the policy to meet special circumstances, such as those present during acutely dry summers. Dale Robertson, chief of the U.S. Forest Service, argued that "natural fires should remain a part of national forest policy," but admitted that "'we're going to have to sharpen up our criteria on when it's applied and under what conditions'" ("Fires Still Have Place" 3). After touring Yellowstone, Interior Secretary Hodel promised "a new policy . . . before the beginning of the next fire year" (LaMay 10) . . . although major environmental groups such as the Wilderness Society and the National Parks and Conservation Association characterized the existing policy as "sound, flexible and scientifically based" (Darst). The Sierra Club claimed that "what is happening is going to be good for the park and the ecosystem" (Wharton 6B).

As snows continued to fall in 1988, newspaper articles began appearing which charted recovery of/in Yellowstone, and compared the fires in Yellowstone to earlier fires which had led to forest rebirth—as forest managers had been claiming. Headlines such as "What Fires? Large Animals in Yellowstone Grazed Serenely as Park Went Up in Smoke" (McCabe 6A); "Biologists Disagree on Fire Impact on Wildlife" (Kessler A1); "Animals 'Prefer Burned-Out'" (12); "Park Rebirth After Fire: Wildflowers Sprout from Blackened Soil" (A2); and "Analysts Begin Search Into Wildfires' Effects" (Nussbaum 10A); attest to the controversy surrounding effects of the fire but clearly juxtapose the metaphors of death and rebirth—perhaps giving the public the impression that death and rebirth might be inextricably linked. One article concerned the first fire to occur after the Forest Service natural fire policy had been adopted. The author described renewal of vegetation, new animals which had moved into the area, animals

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which had left and been replaced by others during the fourteen years since the fire, as well as the support for the policy which had grown after the fire had died (Thuermer 4). Timing the article for mid-September added support for the claim that the "let burn" policy was environmentally sound, and offered evidence that out of death could come new life.

During the "crisis aftermath" period, from early October to June 1989, the rebirth/regeneration argument assumed preeminence in public discussions of the fires. Removed from the daily televised images of flames, Army helicopters, and blackened areas, the rebirth metaphor could more rationally be coupled with scientific and ecological appeals. On October 5, for example, the *Jackson Hole Guide* reported that Wyoming Senators Simpson and Wallop had dropped their calls for the firing of National Park Superintendent Mott. In fact, Wallop called the existing fire policy "reasonable on its face" and said the government's task "was simply to discover what went wrong with the policy and make improvements" (Piccoli A1). In mid-October, Interior Secretary Hodel sent copies of a letter thanking firefighters for their efforts to newspaper editors in which he claimed "we are anticipating a great influx of tourists interested in seeing the extent of the damage and the progress of regrowth," and added "nature recovers from these events by rebirth of the old-growth forests and rejuvenation of forage and wildlife" ("Interior Secretary Hodel Praises"). In an editorial printed in both the *Jackson Hole Guide* and the *Salt Lake Tribune,* George Frampton, then President of the Wilderness Society, argued that the nation would marvel at the new life in Yellowstone: "Grass and brilliant wildflowers will spring up. Underrepresented, fast-growing aspen will take root. Birds that need dead-tree cavities for nests will colonize burned areas" (A5). At a forum in Idaho, sponsored by the League of Women Voters and a local Audubon chapter, two biologists stressed the benefits of fire and the worth of the "natural fire" policy. "If plant diversity and the patchwork pattern created by fire is any indicator," concluded one, "then the future of wildlife in Yellowstone is very bright" (Englert, "ISU Biologist Doubts" B1).[13]

In 1992, evidence of Yellowstone's ecological health continued to be reported. Observing that the fire had generated a huge increase in lodgepole pine seedlings, Dr. Jay Anderson found that in moderate-burn areas, from four to twenty-eight times as many seedlings were found. "In 10 to 20 years, Yellowstone will again have pretty, healthy forests as a result of the 1988 fires," concluded Anderson. Yellowstone's pristine condition before the fires, he concluded, "really was a consequence of previous fires." The biologist claimed that the lesson from the Yellowstone fires was simple: "when areas are ready to burn, they're going to. When the conditions are ripe, there isn't anything we can do about it" ("Thousands of Lodgepole" B3). Also in 1992 national park officials approved a new plan that allowed some natural fires to continue to burn and even permitted park officials to start fires for management purposes. The plan requires that park officials

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certify daily that "adequate firefighting sources are available to prevent [natural fires] from going out of control in the next 24 hours" (Barker, "Yellowstone OKs" D1).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Although fires appear similar in power and scope to hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, in fact fires are fundamentally different from other natural forces because of their mythic and cultural connotations. Noting that a fire environment is "as much cultural as natural," Pyne emphasizes the importance of human values in discussing fires:

> One can accurately speak about fire only in conjunction with something else—fire and flora, fire and fauna, fire and earth, fire and water. As an agency, fire can be as effective by its absence as by its applications. For this reason one is inevitably led back to that most fundamental of all associations with fire, the relationship between fire and man. (530)

Much of the debate over the Yellowstone fires reflects humankind's inherently dichotomous view of fire; while fire destroys and can be as devastating as any natural force, fire can also create, empower, and be managed. Because of its great power to create and destroy, Pyne explains, fire "had to be assimilated, explained, regulated. Time and again fire origin myths depict [us] as human only after [we have] acquired fire" (531). This duality may indicate why forest fire policy and public reaction to fire is so strained. Fifty years of Smokey Bear telling us that only *we* can prevent forest fires is one of the most deeply embedded messages in American culture.

The Yellowstone fire debate reveals that archetypal metaphors remain prominent in contemporary public discourse; that such metaphors have an inventional quality that provides observers a lens for describing and interpreting reality and gives advocates a foundation for rhetorical appeals; and that archetypal metaphors are especially powerful rhetorical devices in the context of a perceived crisis. Archetypal metaphors may be chosen less strategically than other rhetorical forms, but may be more intrinsic to a particular world view; analysis of such metaphors helps the critic to discover ways in which they reflect and/or reinforce one's world view. Jamieson's claim that archetypal metaphors have the ability to constrain rhetorical choices is also reflected by the choice of death versus rebirth in the fire debate. Advocates who perceived public land management from a *human-centered* perspective could only discuss fire in terms that related to human values and characteristics: fire destroys life if not managed; charred, blackened ruins can only be a sign of death, both literally and figuratively. On the other hand, those proponents of "natural fires" who saw the world from an *ecological* perspective, believing that all life forms live in a complex cycle of interdependence, found the archetypal metaphor of

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rebirth most meaningful from their world view. They could understand a world in which death was an essential step in the life-cycle and that ultimately fire would yield new life, regardless of its immediate consequences. This use of archetypal metaphors typify the human capacity—or need—to reconstruct chaotic images in fundamentally human terms. Environmental crises may be prone to archetypal imagery for this reason.

It appears that the archetypal metaphor of death pervaded media reports of the fires, both in reporter commentary and individuals selected to represent residents and tourists. In his study of media accounts of the Yellowstone fires, Conrad Smith found that cultural assumptions about forest fires inhibited accurate reporting. For example, he observed that the urban world view that fire "destroys" and leaves "victims" had a profound effect upon how the media reported the Yellowstone fires. We believe that such language choices, which emerge from a master metaphor of death, reinforced already powerful cultural assumptions and in turn helped construct a rhetorical climate of crisis. Smith reported that television crews consistently asked one question of park officials: "Where can I find reliable flames?" (50). In their quest to find an appropriate verbal symbol to match the visual images of flames, reporters could easily turn to the death metaphor. Out-of-control flames destroy, rather than create.

As the policy debate continued, it became clear that supporters of the prescribed natural burn policy were able to convince much of the public that "death" should be subsumed within "rebirth." This perspective of a life-cycle in which organisms are born, die, and are re-born—sometimes in different forms—appealed to members of the public who were sympathetic to an environmental perspective in which humans are part of nature, rather than to the perspective which suggests that humans are the center of nature. Acceptance of the rebirth metaphor created a picture of reality which allowed preservation of the natural fire management policy, despite the fact that the Interior Department chose to suppress all 1989 and 1990 fires. Had a significant number of members of the public and policy-makers embraced the death metaphor alone, inescapable pressure would have been exerted to return to the "Smokey the Bear" policy that *all* fires are bad. The perspective that prevailed was that, although parts of the policy may need to be more flexible in times of severe drought, "for the forests as a whole, the fires represent part of a cycle of death and renewal that occurred for many centuries until it was interrupted by man less than 100 years ago" (Melnykovych A8).

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## Reading Endnotes

1. For an extensive and highly critical account of the non-public discussion about the worthiness of the natural fire policy in Yellowstone, see Micah Morrison's *Fire in Paradise: The Yellowstone Fires and the Politics of Environmentalism.* Morrison examined the progress of each major fire in and around the Park, using diaries and interviews with many of the principals involved in the decision-making.
2. To facilitate this study, we examined approximately 150 newspaper articles in the Rocky Mountain region (Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming) that were printed during the "crisis" period of late-August to late-September 1988. We also reviewed articles in the "crisis aftermath" period of October 1988 to June 1989.
3. Osborn and Ehninger describe the stimulus-response process created by metaphor as "error, puzzlement-recoil, and resolution." When we encounter a metaphor, our first impulse is to use the literal meaning for the terms (error). When we realize that the two terms are "inconsistent" (puzzlement-recoil), we search for a way to reconcile the two terms (resolution) (226–227).
4. We wish to acknowledge a *WSJ* reviewer for suggesting the concept of a dominant organic metaphor that includes death and rebirth.
5. See Alfred Runte, especially chapter 10, for a more lengthy discussion of the role the Sequoias played in development of the prescribed natural burn policy. See Pyne for a similar discussion, as well as a longer history of fire policy in federal agencies, especially pp. 260–326.
6. Edwin Black suggested, similarly, that when a speaker uses a single term associated with a particular ideology, the critic is "justified in suspecting that a general attitude—more, a whole set of general attitudes were being summoned" (112–113).
7. Crises are distinguished from other events, writes Dennis Gouran, by the "unexpectedness and sense of urgency their threatening qualities create for a speedy resolution" (174). A crisis situation, he continues, has three components: threat, time restrictions, and surprise. As will become evident in this study, national and regional audiences perceived all three features in the 1988 forest fires and reacted accordingly in their rhetoric.
8. An "ecosystem" can be thought of as "a set of interacting species and their local, nonbiological environment, functioning together to sustain life" (Botkin 230).
9. In *Ronald Reagan and the Public Lands,* Brant Short discusses evolution of the "conservation consensus." As is often the case with social movements, two factions of the conservation movement, one devoted to "orderly public land development" and the other committed to "preserving the wilderness intact," tried to dictate how the public ought to see the movement. Gradually, preservationist rhetoric and actions gained prominence and out of these roots grew the ecological movement (and worldview) with which we are more familiar today.

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Although grounded in the same movement, in contemporary terms, "conservation" and "ecology" (or environmentalism) have acquired bi-polar meanings and are generally viewed as opposing movements. See especially ch. 1. In contrast with what we argue is the current domination by an environmental (or preservation) worldview Christine Oravec examines competing claims of conservationists and preservationists in her study of the Hetch-Hetchy dam controversy shortly after the turn of this century. She concludes that, as Short also points out, the preservationist view dominated public discussion about land management until recently.

10. The *Journal* is Pocatello's newspaper; Pocatello is located about three hours from Yellowstone.
11. Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is the southern entrance to Teton National Park, which borders Yellowstone at the south.
12. Idaho Falls is about two and a half hours away from Yellowstone.
13. In December 1988, a joint Agriculture and Interior Department Review Committee issued its final report regarding the "natural fire" policy and the Yellowstone fires. In answer to the question, "Is the policy allowing fire to play its natural ecological role in parks and wilderness under certain conditions flawed or inappropriate?", the report concluded that while there were some flaws in the implementation of the policy, it endorsed the concept of "natural fire" management and cited the benefits of fire (1–2, i). The report recommended a moratorium on the let-burn policy until the overall recommendations (including interagency cooperation, contingency plans for different categories of fires, use of planned burns, better fire personnel training, increase of public involvement, and more research on weather and fire behavior—see report, page ii) had been met (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 16).

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# Workshop

## Power of Metaphor

In this Chapter 5 workshop, we will probe in focused workshop exercises many of the concepts you discovered in this chapter. Work at a pace by assignment, or by choice, that allows these various insights to "sink in" at an even deeper level for you.

As part of this Chapter 5 workshop, we will continue to probe several of the ways you can recognize and use the "gold" of academic, rhetorical criticism. Do you worry about forest fires? Some people are required by their jobs to do so. Moreover, reasonable people in our culture disagree—harshly—about how we should deal with forest fires. We can even see the issue pop up in popular entertainment; an episode of the hit TV drama *The West Wing* had Martin Sheen as President Josiah Bartlet in a dispute with a fictional governor of Wyoming about whether or not to allow an out of control forest fire to burn in his state.[21]

Dayle C. Hardy-Short and C. Brant Short have written an important and interesting study about an erupting public dispute over how to handle forest fires in Yellowstone National Park. Their deep understanding of archetypal metaphors should give governmental policymakers, journalists, and interested citizens pause when they think (as they should) about how language can guide and control a public debate and actions about vital issues.

You have already read the rhetorical criticism of public debate about forest fires in Yellowstone National Park by Hardy-Short and Short starting on page 146. Take careful notes on the justification for study (JFS), justification for artifact (JFA), method, and research question (RQ) items (about which you learned in Chapter 3) that Hardy-Short and Short use to establish the need for their research.

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**FINDING THE ANALYSIS SET-UP ITEMS**

Find the various claims that serve as a JFS in this article.

Example:

Hardy-Short, Dayle C. and Brant C. Short. "Fire, Death, and Rebirth: A Metaphoric Analysis of the 1988 Yellowstone Fire Debate." *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 103–125.

(Page numbers in brackets indicate pages reprinted in this textbook.)

| JFS | Page | Internal or External? |
|---|---|---|
| "Politicians, ranchers, journalists, and residents of fire-stricken areas claimed that the federal government's 'natural fire' policy (called by many the 'let burn' policy) was dangerous, short-sighted, and wasteful." | 104 [147] | External |
| "Yet, only a few published studies attempt to refine and expand our understanding of the function of archetypal metaphors[.]" | 104 [147] | Internal |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**FINDING THE ANALYSIS SET-UP ITEMS**

Find the various claims that serve as a JFA in this article.

Example:

Hardy-Short, Dayle C. and Brant C. Short. "Fire, Death, and Rebirth: A Metaphoric Analysis of the 1988 Yellowstone Fire Debate." *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 103–125.

| JFA | Page | Internal or External? |
|---|---|---|
| "This editorial [in the *Wall Street Journal* about federal forest fire policy] represented one of the opening salvos in the national and regional debate that emerged during the severe fire season of 1988." | 103–104 [146–147] | External |
| "Next, we review the rhetoric surrounding the fire debate, examining both local and national sources of public argument." | 105 [148] | External |
| "To facilitate this study, we examined approximately 150 newspaper articles in the Rocky Mountain region (Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming) that were printed during the 'crisis' period of late-August to late-September 1988. We also reviewed articles in the 'crisis aftermath' period of October 1988 to June 1989. | (endnote 2 on page 121) [165] | External |
| | | |
| | | |

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**FINDING THE GOLD**

Next, re-read the chart on this page. See if you can notice how we moved from the original claim, insight, or discovery to the resulting "translations."

Next, use the blank chart on the following page to find more nuggets of "gold" in the article from your own reading. Be sure to keep track of the page on which you find the quotation and think about how you can best translate the insight or discovery to a practical translation you could use in preparing a message.

**Discovering Application Ideas and Knowledge in Metaphoric Analysis Articles**

Example:

Hardy-Short, Dayle C. and Brant C. Short. "Fire, Death, and Rebirth: A Metaphoric Analysis of the 1988 Yellowstone Fire Debate." *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 103–125.

| Quotation | Page | Translated Idea or Insight |
|---|---|---|
| "Because of their intrinsic connection to the human experience, archetypal metaphors may be called upon more often in crisis situations when people recall their most basic and fundamental experiences to understand a particular problem." | 105 [148–149] | Crisis situations should produce the use of archetypal metaphors in public messages about the crisis. |
| "We do not suggest that advocates (of either side) consciously chose one archetype over another, but that at some point they did make conscious use of certain words that, when clustered, can be described the archetype." | 107 [150] | Rhetors often automatically choose metaphors without thinking.<br><br>Selected words in a public dispute can be part of an archetypal metaphor without participants fully recognizing that they are using metaphors. |
| "Editorials in the national press also found more death than life in the fires." | 114 [157] | National media messages may use different metaphors than do local or regional media messages concerning a public controversy. |
| | | |

Use the chart on the next page to find, identify, and chart the potential advantage of other observations on metaphors and public policy that Hardy-Short and Short make in their analysis.

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| Quotation | Page | Translated Idea or Insight |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
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## CREATING IMPLIED NON-LITERAL COMPARISONS

Implied metaphors can be very powerful rhetorical tools. Below you'll find several quick instances in which a metaphier is indicated by implication (i.e., indirectly) by using a specified paraphier to get an audience member to think of the metaphier. Once you get the idea, try to create your own specified paraphiers that will allow the creation of an implied non-literal comparison.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Indicate that you are shooting or aiming at someone or something: | "in the crosshairs" | |
| Indicate that someone or something is a dangerous spider: | "get caught in his deadly web" | |
| Indicate that someone or something is a dangerous jungle cat: | | |
| Indicate that someone or something is a messy puppy: | | |
| Indicate that a business is going down in quicksand: | | |
| Indicate that a new law will do as much damage as a severe storm: | | |

# Workshop



**ARCHETYPAL METAPHORS**

Use the following archetypal metaphor types and create a series of specific metaphors that describe the success, or lack of success, of a favorite sports team.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| House | "The foundation of the Tigers defense is crumbling." | |
| Weather | "The Eagles will roar into Dempsey stadium tomorrow like a series of twisters." | |
| Human Body | | |
| Illness | | |
| Seasons | | |
| Food | | |

**NOVEL METAPHORS**

Examine the following three novel metaphors. Each one specifies or gives emphasis to a specific paraphier or set of paraphiers. Does this make the metaphor more effective? Why?

1. "The rush hour traffic is bleeding steadily out of all the city's major arteries this afternoon. Somebody better call a road doctor." [Without paraphier specification: Rush hour traffic is moving on the major arteries this afternoon.]
2. "Nothing great has happened in my life; if life is a roller coaster, then mine belongs in kiddieland." [Without paraphier specification: My life is a roller coaster.]
3. Sen. Wendell Ford (D-Kentucky): "If the Senate really wants a circus, we have all the ingredients right here, including the clowns." [Without paraphier specification: The Senate is a circus.]

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## Equivalent Key Terms Used in Metaphor Analysis

Chart 5.7 shows some of the central terms you have learned in this chapter. Listed with those terms are other equivalent terms that other rhetorical critics have used when doing metaphor analysis.

**CHART 5.7**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Metaphrand** | Tenor | Target domain |
| **Metaphier** | Vehicle | Source domain |
| **Paraphier** | Entailment | Entailment |
| **Paraphrand** | Entailment | Entailment |

## Key Words

metaphor, *130–132*
novel simile, *136*
non-literal comparison, *130–132*
metaphrand, *137–139*
metaphier, *137–139*
paraphier, *137–139*
paraphrand, *137–139*
archetypal metaphor, *132–133*
novel metaphor, *134–140*
negated metaphier, *139–140*
systemic metaphor, *140–142*
orientational metaphor, *142–144*
buried metaphor, *144–145*
dead metaphor, *144–145*

## Metaphor Analysis Articles

Below you will find a sample of rhetorical and cultural analysis articles that have investigated the power of metaphor in public messages.

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## Endnotes

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2. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 3.
3. Robert L. Ivie, "The Metaphor of Force in Prowar Discourse: The Case of 1812," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 240–253; Michael

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P. Graves, "Functions of Key Metaphors in Early Quaker Sermons, 1671–1700," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 364–378; Jane Blankenship, "The Search for the 1972 Democratic Nomination: A Metaphorical Perspective," *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism,* 2nd ed. Eds. Bernard Brock and Robert L. Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980) 321–345.

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6. Ronald H. Carpenter, "America's Tragic Metaphor: Our Twentieth-Century Combatants as Frontiersmen," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 1.
7. Carpenter, 2.
8. Michael M. Osborn, "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967): 116.
9. Einhorn, Lois J. *The Native American Oral Tradition: Voices of the Spirit and Soul.* Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000, 33. For an excellent examination of archetypal metaphors from Native American culture and nations see pages 32–54 of her book.
10. "Alanis is Cleaning House." *Newsweek* 4 March 2001. 60.
11. Jaynes, 56.
12. Molly Ivins, "Mimic Men," *Mother Jones* March 1990: 8. Remember that she was describing George Herbert Walker Bush (the former president), not necessarily his son (the current president).
13. Linton Weeks and John M. Berry. "The Fed's Alan Greenspan," *Washington Post* [Weekly Edition] 31 March 1997: 6.
14. Jonathon Nicholas, "The Faces That Stick Like Gum," *Oregonian* 8 Sept. 1991: L-2.
15. 1980. 7–9.
16. Michael Reddy, "The Conduit Metaphor," *Metaphor and Thought* 2nd ed. Ortony, Andrew, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 164–201.
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below, often seem to express symbolically man's quest for power." Michael M. Osborn, "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967): 116.

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