



# Metaphtonymies we die by: the influence of the interactions between metaphor and metonymy on the Xphemistic conceptualization of DEATH

Adeline Terry

## ► To cite this version:

Adeline Terry. Metaphtonymies we die by: the influence of the interactions between metaphor and metonymy on the Xphemistic conceptualization of DEATH. *Lexis. Journal in English Lexicology*, 2020. hal-03173014

**HAL Id: hal-03173014**

**<https://univ-lyon3.hal.science/hal-03173014>**

Submitted on 24 May 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

---

# Metaphtonymies We Die by: the Influence of the Interactions between Metaphor and Metonymy on Semantic Change in X-phemistic Conceptualisations of DEATH

Adeline Terry

---

**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lexis/4558>

DOI: 10.4000/lexis.4558

ISSN: 1951-6215

**Publisher**

Université Jean Moulin - Lyon 3

Brought to you by BU de l'Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3

**Electronic reference**

Adeline Terry, "Metaphtonymies We Die by: the Influence of the Interactions between Metaphor and Metonymy on Semantic Change in X-phemistic Conceptualisations of DEATH", *Lexis* [Online], 16 | 2020, Online since 17 December 2020, connection on 13 September 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lexis/4558> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.4558>

---

This text was automatically generated on 13 September 2021.



Lexis is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

---

# Metaphonymies We Die by<sup>1</sup>: the Influence of the Interactions between Metaphor and Metonymy on Semantic Change in X-phemistic Conceptualisations of DEATH

Adeline Terry

---

## Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> Metaphor is recognised as a prominent mechanism of lexical semantic change and is a particularly productive tool to create new euphemisms to mention taboo topics (Crespo Fernández [2006]). The term “X-phemism”, mentioned in the title of the present article, is a hyperonym for “euphemism”, “dysphemism”, “orthophemism” and all the in-between cases; those terms were extensively defined by Allan & Burridge [1991], [2006], and Crespo Fernández [2008: 96] reminds us what euphemism and dysphemism, the ends of the continuum, refer to:

This power of taboo keeps language users from avoiding the forbidden concept and compels them to preserve or violate it. To this end, they resort respectively either to euphemism (i.e. the semantic or formal process by which the taboo is stripped of its most explicit or obscene overtones) or to dysphemism (i.e. the process whereby the most pejorative traits of the taboo are highlighted with an offensive aim to the addressee or to the concept itself).

- <sup>2</sup> As for orthophemisms, they are the “direct or neutral expressions that are not sweet-sounding, evasive or overly polite (euphemistic), nor harsh, blunt or offensive (dysphemistic)” (Allan & Burridge [2006: 29]). As Burridge [2012: 66] argues, X-phemisms have to be studied “within the particular context in which they are uttered. [...] There is never ‘Everyman’s euphemism’ or ‘Everyman’s dysphemism’.” Therefore,

each metaphor for a taboo topic has an X-phemistic potential (Terry [2019a]) and can be more or less euphemistic or dysphemistic depending on the context of utterance.

- 3 This paper focuses on DEATH metaphors, and more specifically on the possible influence of the interactions between metaphor and metonymy on the X-phemistic potential of DEATH metaphors and on their continuous euphemistic use in the English language. Death is a taboo topic which gives rise to many X-phemisms, as it cannot be “discussed without linguistic safeguards” (Crespo Fernández [2006: 101]). According to Allan & Burridge [1991: 153], it is motivated by the following fears:

- (1) Fear of the loss of the loved ones;
- (2) Fear of the corruption and disintegration of the body – the body with which one has so long been familiar in life is suddenly to become abhorrent;
- (3) Death is the end of life, and there is fear of what follows – there can be no first-hand experience of death for the living;
- (4) Fear of malevolent spirits, or of the souls of the dead.

- 4 To this list, they add “(5) the fear of meaningless death” (Allan & Burridge [1991: 159]). Allan & Burridge [1991: 157], Gross [1985: 203] or Keyes [2010: 144] all agree on the fact that death has replaced sex as the ultimate taboo in our contemporary Western societies. Speakers are indeed reluctant to mention the subject for both cultural reasons, because it is tabooed and decorum and politeness defend it, and personal reasons, because they do not want to be tactless, or because they feel the subject is too personal or too sensitive when it comes to the loss of a loved one. However, Goror [1965: 173] also notices that there is a paradox regarding death: speakers are reluctant to mention it freely, but it is overrepresented in novels, films and TV series.

- 5 This is one of the reasons that led me to use a corpus of TV series. I conducted an earlier study (Terry [2019b]) on the metaphors of taboo topics (namely death, disease and sex) in a TV series corpus. Following studies by Quaglio [2009], [2016], which showed there were similarities between TV dialogue and naturally occurring conversation, it was concluded that the metaphors in the TV series corpus were quite representative of those found in naturally occurring conversation. Using a TV series corpus enabled me to study more occurrences as death is more freely mentioned in TV series than in naturally occurring conversation. Having many occurrences proves particularly interesting when conducting a diachronic study on the X-phemistic metaphors for a taboo topic, as euphemisms tend to be quickly contaminated and renewed. This phenomenon is referred to as “euphemism treadmill” by Pinker [1994] or as “verbal carousel” by Keyes [2010: 13], who argues:

Euphemisms are like a verbal carousel: some words hop on, others jump off, still others stay put for the entire ride and sometimes lose their euphemistic status in the process. Those that do their job capably, with minimal fuss, slip easily into vernacular and stay there. Sleep with has been a euphemism for sex for centuries; pass away for dying since the Middle Ages. Cemetery – from the Greek “sleeping place” – was initially a euphemism for the more ominous “graveyard” but proved so functional that it became our standard term for this setting.

- 6 However, for death euphemisms, the euphemism treadmill seems to be slower than for other taboo topics such as sex or death. The hypothesis is that this can be partly explained by the overwhelming presence of metaphonymies (a combination of metaphors and metonymies) in DEATH metaphors and that it is closely related to the religious origin of many DEATH metaphors.

- 7 Part 1 of the article will define the theoretical framework and will briefly go over existing studies on the interaction between metaphor and metonymy. Part 2 presents the corpus, the methodology and the results. Part 3 consists in an analysis of the occurrences of the corpus and tries to focus on the ways metaphor and metonymy can interact in DEATH metaphors and to determine whether these interactions have an influence on the X-phemistic potential of metaphorical occurrences.

## 1. On the interaction between metaphor and metonymy

- 8 The general theoretical framework that will mainly be resorted to in this article is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was first developed by Lakoff and Johnson [1980] and later by many linguists (such as Kövecses [2002], [2008]; Sweetser [1990]; Steen & Gibbs [1997]; Barcelona [2000]; Ortony [1993]; Giora [1997], and Gibbs [1994], to name a few). Cognitivists define metaphor as a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system, as summarised by Kövecses [2002: 4]:

[I]n the cognitive linguistics view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain.

[...]

A convenient short-hand way of capturing this view of metaphor is the following: CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (A) IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (B), which is what is called a conceptual metaphor. A conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. A conceptual domain is a coherent organization of experience.

[...]

We thus need to distinguish conceptual metaphor from metaphorical linguistic expressions. That latter are words or other linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of a more concrete conceptual domain (i.e., domain B).

- 9 Metaphor can therefore be defined as a relationship of analogy, whereas metonymy can be defined as a relationship of contiguity, or of correlation, as Dancygier & Sweetser [2014: 5] argue:

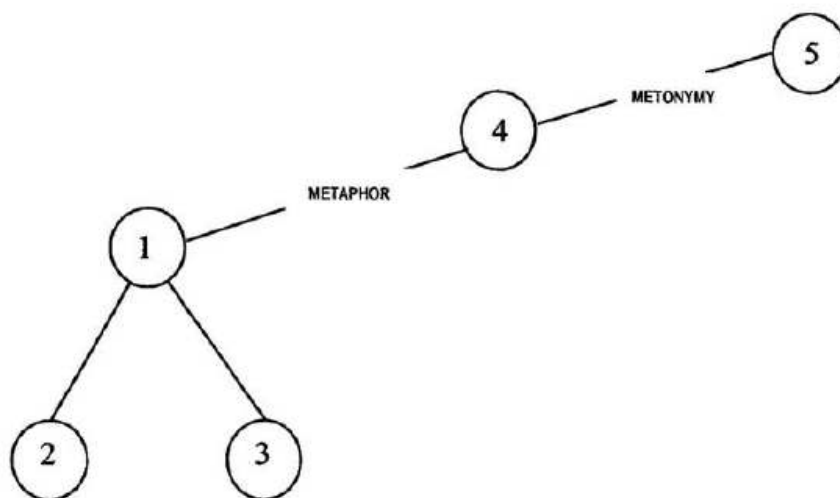
Metonymy is about relationships of correlations – things that occur together in experience, so that we associate them and can use the word for one to evoke the other. Salient parts do evoke their wholes, and salient subcategories evoke the larger categories of which they are parts.

- 10 In other words, with metaphor, correspondences are established between two different domains (or frames, for some linguists), while with metonymy, the correspondences are established within the same frame. Nevertheless, many linguists such as Radden [2000: 93-94] believe that metaphor and metonymy shouldn't be separated because there are many in-between cases, and that they should be seen as prototypical categories at the endpoints of a metaphor-metonymy continuum. He also proposes to introduce the notion of "metonymy-based metaphor", a concept that was developed in more details by several other linguists whose theories will be detailed in the rest of this section.
- 11 Geeraerts [1995] also recognises that there is a continuum between metaphor and metonymy and that, therefore, there are in-between expressions that are not fully metaphorical or fully metonymic. His approach is not incorporated within the

framework of cognitive linguistics; he describes the way metaphor and metonymy can interact along the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic axes in the meanings of idioms and compounds. The paradigmatic dimension of idioms refers to the relationship between the original meaning of the idiom and the derived meaning, while the syntagmatic dimension of idioms refers to the relationship between the constituent parts of the idiom. Geeraerts [1995: 454] distinguishes three different cases, which he illustrates with examples:

- cases in which metaphor and metonymy occur consecutively
  - cases in which metaphor and metonymy occur in parallel
  - cases in which metaphor and metonymy occur interchangeably
- 12 Metaphor and metonymy can occur consecutively “when one of the motivational links in the semantics of the composite expression involves a sequence of two semantic extensions” (Geeraerts [1995: 455]), as in the following example taken from Dutch *schapenkop* “sheep’s head”:

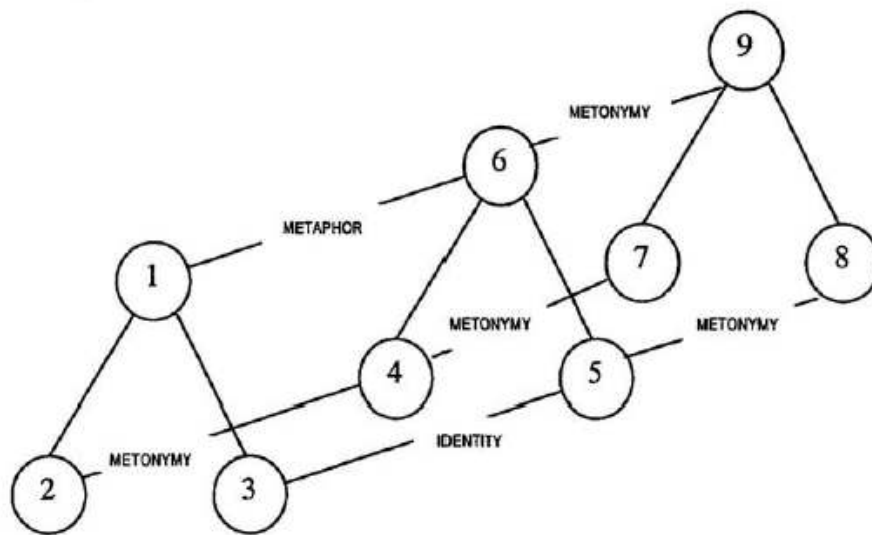
Figure 1. Consecutive sequence for *sheep’s head* (Geeraerts [1995: 456])



1. Sheep’s head; 2. Sheep; 3. Head; 4. (Human) head like that of a sheep; 5. Stupid person

Figure 2. Consecutive sequence for *sheep’s head*

- 13 Metaphor and metonymy can also be present in parallel “when there is a difference in type among the different motivational links that occurs in the semantics of a composite expression” [Geeraerts 1995: 457], as in the following example:

Figure 2. Parallel sequence for *sheep's head* (Geeraerts [1995: 457])

1. Sheep's head; 2. Sheep; 3. Head; 4. Sheep-like; 5 Head; 6. (Human) head like that of a sheep; 7. Stupid; 8. Person; 9. Stupid person.

Figure 3. Parallel sequence for *sheep's head*

- 14 He finally argues that metaphor/metonymy analyses can sometimes be construed for the same expression and can therefore be interchangeable.
- 15 Goossens [1995] also described the interactions between metaphor and metonymy, a phenomenon he refers to as “metaphtonymy” – a term that was borrowed for the title of this article. Goossens [1995: 350-352] argues that metaphor and metonymy are two distinct cognitive processes which are however not mutually exclusive. He posits the existence of “complex domains built up by the combination of other domains” (Goossens [1995: 352]), which may either be complex or basic; one of the reasons why metaphor and metonymy can interpenetrate is that the boundary lines between domains are often fuzzy. He distinguishes four different cases:
- Metaphor from metonymy (Goossens [1995: 361]), as in *say something with one's tongue in one's cheek*; in this case, the source domain and the target domain are joined together naturally in one complex scene, in which they produce a metonymy. In other words, the experiential basis for the metaphor is a metonym (Goossens [1995: 370]).
  - Metonymy within metaphor (Goossens [1995: 363]), as in *bite one's tongue off*; this case is less frequent than metaphor from metonymy and occurs when a metonymy is embedded in a (complex) metaphorical expression. The metonymy functions within the target domain.
- 16 These are the two most frequent cases; Goossens also mentions two other cases, which are far less frequent as he only collected only one occurrence of each:
- Demetonymisation inside a metaphor, as in *pay lip service to* (Goossens [1995: 365]).
  - Metaphor within metonymy (Goossens [1995: 363]), as in *be/get up on one's hind leg*.
- 17 Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011: 10] disagree with the examples provided by Goossens and rely on the framework of the CMT to argue that metaphor and metonymy can interact in four different ways:

In sum, all examples of Goossens's metaphtonymy are essentially metonymic developments of a situational metaphoric source. However, there are other ways in which metaphor and metonymy interact. Basically, metonymy is subsidiary to – and

thus part of – metaphor. Since there are two basic metonymic schemas (part-for-whole (source-in-target) and whole-for-part (target-in-source), this yields four basic interactional patterns:

- Metonymic expansion of a metaphoric source
- Metonymic reduction of a metaphoric source
- Metonymic expansion of a metaphoric target
- Metonymic reduction of a metaphoric target

- 18 Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011] also provide examples which they sum up in the following figures for each of the four interactional patterns:

Figure 3. Example of metonymic expansion of metaphoric source (Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011: 11])

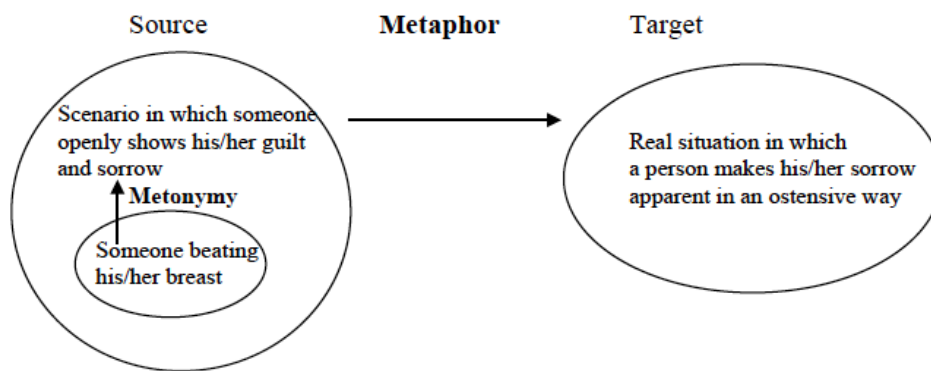


Figure 1. *To beat one's breast.*

2

Figure 4. Example of metonymic expansion of metaphoric target (Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011: 12])

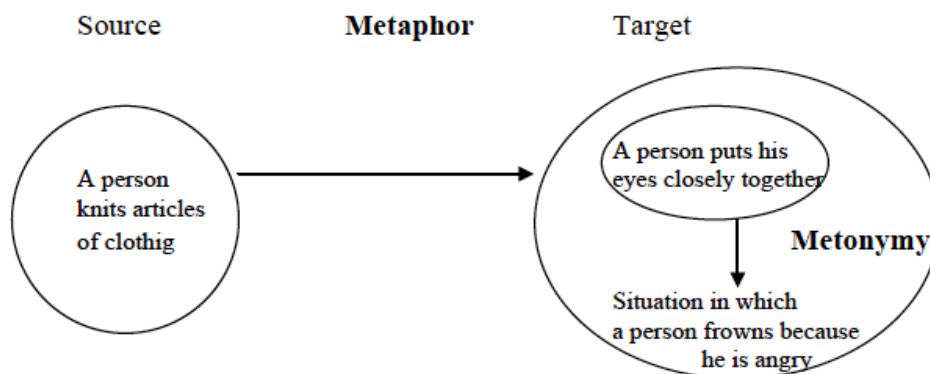


Figure 2. *To knit one's eyebrows.*



Figure 5. Example of metonymic reduction of metaphoric source (Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011: 12])

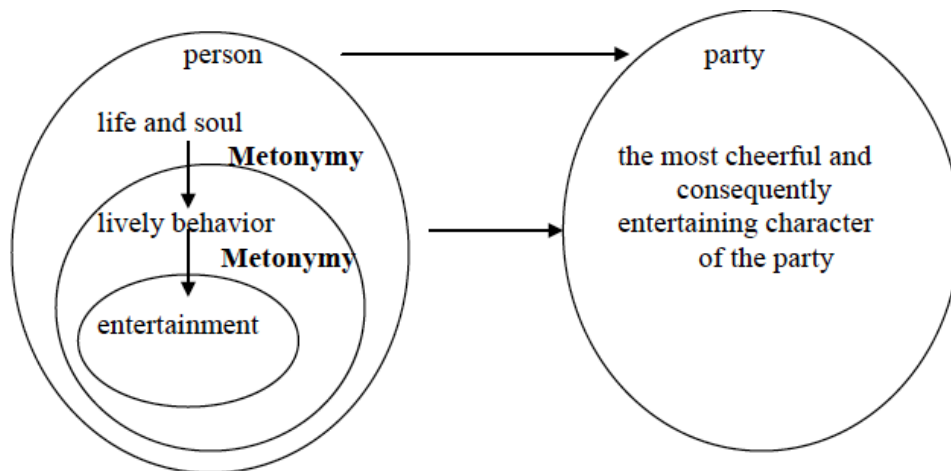


Figure 3. *The life and soul of the party.*

Figure 6. Example of metonymic reduction of metaphoric source (Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011: 13])

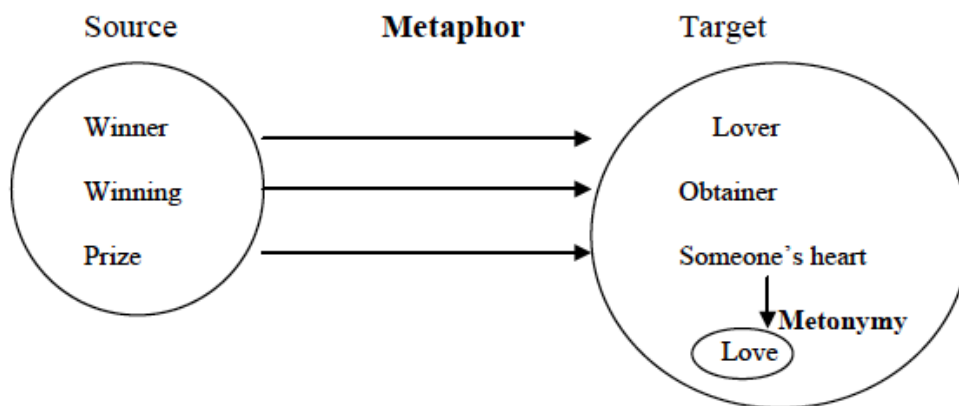


Figure 5. *Win someone's heart.*

- 19 Similar visual representations will be used in part 3 of this article as they seem clearer than Geeraert's prismatic model and borrow from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and frame semantics. They are also closer to the approach adopted by Kövecses [2013: 78]:

The cases where metaphor and metonymy are difficult to distinguish are those where it is not clear whether we deal with one domain, or frame, or two [...]. My suggestion is that in order to be able to resolve the dilemma, we have to take into account the larger structure of the conceptual system; namely, the structure consisting of both thematic hierarchies and frames, as well as the cognitive operations of generalization (schematization) and specialization (elaboration).

- 20 The interactions between metaphor and metonymy are quite frequent and there are various ways in which metaphor and metonymy can co-exist or be dependent upon one another; the fact that different studies disagree on the different ways in which they can interact suggests that there might be more possible forms of interaction and that each case should be studied separately.

## 2. Corpus and methodology<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1. Description of the corpus

- 21 The corpus used in this study is constituted of the first two seasons of three different American TV series, which all entirely or partly focus on the taboo domain of DEATH with relative realism, meaning that TV series which belonged to genres such as fantasy or science fiction were not taken into account. They were taken from commercial networks as well as cable networks, on which there is supposed to be less censorship, in order to have varied data. Two of the TV series in the corpus are medical shows: *House, M.D.* (2004-2012, Fox), which focuses on the practice of medicine and is quite sarcastic, and *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-..., ABC), which is more sentimental and similar to a soap on some aspects. The choice to include those two medical dramas was made because it allowed having a variety of points of view (those of the patients, of the doctors, and of the families). The third TV series that was selected is *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005, HBO), which provided metaphors from the point of view of people who work in a funeral home.

### 2.2. Extraction of the data and results

- 22 As explained in Terry [2019a] and Terry [2019b], the metaphors were identified in the corpus manually thanks to both videos and scripts that can be found on the Internet. This method considerably limits the size of the corpus as it is quite time-consuming, but as Crespo Fernández [2017: 15], who worked on SEX and DEATH metaphors, argues, “it allows for a comprehensive search and considerably reduces the risk of missing significant cases of metaphorical language used in the sample consulted”. Additionally, as the metaphors I wanted to analyse were metaphors related to the conceptual taboo domain DEATH, at least a number of occurrences were likely to be creative and therefore, there are a lot of isolated cases – most of them context-related – that would have been missed had I used a corpus linguistics software. Therefore, this method appeared to be the most reliable one, especially by using the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure), which was established by the Pragglejaz group (Crisp, Gibbs, Deignan, Low, Steen, Cameron, Semino, Grady, Cienki, Kövecses) [2007: 3]:

The MIP is as follows:

1. Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse
3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.
- (b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be
  - More concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.
  - Related to bodily action.
  - More precise (as opposed to vague)
  - Historically older.

Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current-contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

4. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

- 23 A few criteria were added to the MIP. Firstly, only DEATH metaphors were taken into account, which means that all other metaphors were eliminated from the corpus. Secondly, following Crespo Fernández [2017: 7], dead/lexicalised metaphors were taken into account, which was only described as a possibility by the Pragglejaz group. As this study is a diachronic study whose aim is to try and determine criteria to explain which metaphors tend to remain euphemisms over time, it seemed essential to take historical metaphors into account when they performed an X-phemistic function, even if the metaphorical origin is not perceived any longer. Historical metaphors are metaphorical expressions for which the literal meaning no longer exists (Deignan [2005: 42]), as in *pass away*. Therefore, occurrences such as the one below were taken into account:

(1) REBECCA: “My mother **passed away** three years ago. She had a heart attack, and my father broke his back doing construction.” (*House 1x01*)<sup>4</sup>

- 24 *Pass away* is a historical metaphor as the only meaning recorded in dictionaries is “die”, but it is still a euphemism and the underlying conceptual metaphor, DEATH IS A JOURNEY, is still perceptible. These historical metaphors, as well as dead metaphors such as *go* for “die” (it could be argued that *go* is no longer really metaphorical but “die” is just one of its many meanings), are deeply entrenched in our conceptual system and allow us to understand new, non-conventional DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors (Lakoff & Turner [1989: 128-131]). Thirdly, all extended metaphors, which are quite numerous and generally creative in the corpus, were counted as one occurrence of a metaphor, as it is essential to take the context of utterance into account when analysing X-phemisms. Fourthly, metaphorical comparisons and similes were taken into account when the source domain was clearly identifiable and was a known source domain, following the recommendations of Semino *et al.* [2017: 60] and the MIPVU, an extended version of the MIP developed by Steen *et al.* in 2010.
- 25 A total of 122 metaphorical expressions were retrieved in the corpus. They were then gathered according to the source domain with which correspondences are established, although this classification cannot always be completely objective, as specified by the Pragglejaz group. I relied as much as possible on existing studies so as to identify known conceptual metaphors in the corpus. I also tried to gather as many metaphorical occurrences as possible under one conceptual metaphor or source domain, although this was not always possible as there are seven isolated occurrences. The results are displayed in Figure 7.

**Figure 7. Distribution of metaphorical expressions for DEATH according to their source domains in the TV series corpus**

Source domain	Number of occurrences in the corpus
JOURNEY / TRAVEL	40
LOSS	22

FOOD	18
THE END	14
MACHINE / OBJECT	9
LIGHT	7
REST / SLEEP	5
Miscellaneous	7
Total	122

- 26 The next section is dedicated to the analysis of the occurrences, which are gathered by source domain. The first aim is to determine whether they are rather euphemistic or dysphemistic, taking into account both the correspondences between the source and the target and the context of utterance. Indeed, DEATH metaphors are not euphemistic or dysphemistic *per se*, although it can be argued that they have an X-phemistic potential which can be fulfilled or not according to four main criteria: (1) the form of the locution, (2) the correspondences established between the two domains during conceptualisation, (3) the intention of the speaker, and (4) the interpretation that is made by the co-speaker (Terry [2019a]). The etymologies of the occurrences of the corpus were systematically verified in the OED3 to attest which ones have existed for a long time and which ones are rather creative and unlikely to become lexicalised. The hypothesis is that the interactions between metaphor and metonymy in a majority of occurrences can partly explain why some metaphors do not undergo the process known as the “euphemism treadmill” (Pinker [2007]).

### 3. Analysis of the interactions between metaphor and metonymy in the corpus<sup>5</sup>

#### 3.1. JOURNEY / TRAVEL

- 27 JOURNEY / TRAVEL is the most productive source domain in the corpus as there are 40 occurrences. A large majority of occurrences are similar to one another and have been lexicalised as euphemisms for a long time. All the metaphorical expressions that derive from the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY have a high euphemistic potential, at least in the corpus. One of the most convincing examples is *pass away*, as in the following occurrences:

(2) FATHER JACK: “His father served as a deacon for over a decade. He just recently **passed away**.” (SFU 1x05)

(3) DAVID: “This is Paul Kovitch. His brother, Victor, just **passed away**.” (SFU 1x07)

- 28 *Pass away* has been a euphemism for *die* since 1300, according to the OED3<sup>6</sup>, in which the following elements are mentioned: “In early use: (of a person’s soul or life) to depart

from the body. Later: (of a person) to die.” There are also 15 occurrences of *go* used as a euphemism for *die* in the occurrences retrieved from the corpus:

- (4) BURKE: “What the hell are you two doing?”  
 CRISTINA: “We lost pulse.”  
 BURKE: “Let her **go**.” (GA 1x04)  
 (5) PARAMEDIC: “We’ve been doing CPR for about 20 minutes. It took fire 20 minutes to get him out of the car. He’s pretty much **gone**.”  
 BAILEY: “Uh, he’s not gone until we say he’s **gone**. Keep coding.” (GA 2x02)  
 (6) RUTH: “David, I’d like it if you’d come with me to church every once in a while, now that your father’s **gone**. I shouldn’t have to go alone.” (SFU 1x04)

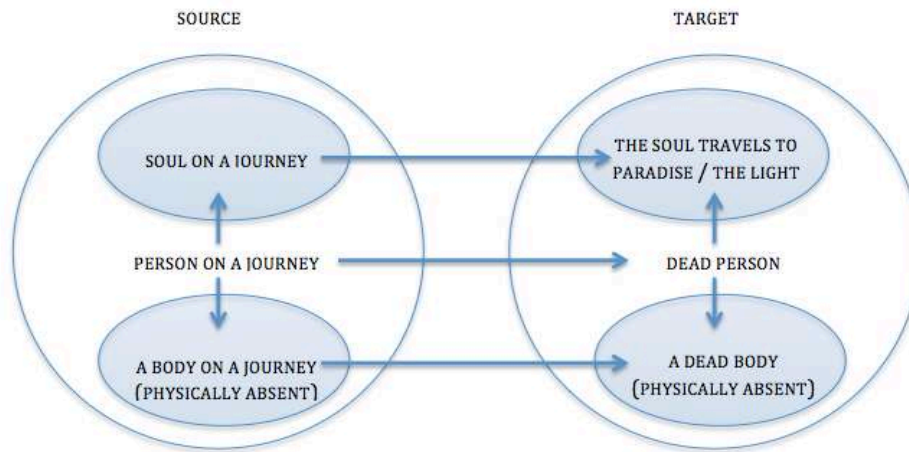
- 29 Similarly, according to the OED<sup>37</sup>, *go* has been used as a euphemism for *die* or *to depart from life* since 1393. In both cases, the idea that the soul departs the body and/or life prevails and is deeply anchored in the Christian tradition, and in religion more generally, as many religious denominations consider death as the passage between life on earth and eternal life. Therefore, the status of these occurrences might be more complex than anticipated and all of them might not be considered as only metaphorical, as Christians literally believe that the soul travels to a better world after leaving its corporeal envelope. This is made explicit in the following two examples, both taken from funeral scenes in *Six Feet Under*:

- (7) MINISTER: “Eileen asked that I close with a reading from Michael’s favorite poet: Walt Whitman. ‘What do you think is become of the young and old men? And what do you think is become of the women and children? They are **alive and well somewhere**. The smallest sprout shows there is really no death. And, if ever there was, it **led forward life**, and does not wait at the end to arrest it and cease the moment life appeared. **All goes onward and outward**. Nothing collapses. And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier.’ Let us pray.” (SFU 2x03)  
 (8) NATE: “I just saw Mr. Srisai’s brother-in-law put \$20 in the casket.”  
 DAVID: “It’s **traveling money for his journey**. Apparently, unlike the rest of us, Buddhists can take it with them.” (SFU 2x10)

- 30 It can hence be argued that these metaphors have a strong cultural basis, but they also have a strong experiential basis, as Bultinck [2009: 32] suggests: “Death implies a shift from presence to absence. This is the most concrete, material experiential basis for the expressions that belong here.” DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors are therefore based on metonymies that allow speakers to conceptualise the absence of the dead person instead of the fact that they are dead; interestingly, the living are described as being left behind (for example in SFU 2x11) and are allowed to “say goodbye (SFU 1x11).
- 31 In sum, DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors are based on the underlying assumptions that a dead person is a person on a journey and that there is a dichotomy between the person’s body and soul, which can be perceived as a PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymy. In the source domain, the person on a journey can metonymically be conceptualised as a soul on a journey and as a body on a journey, and these are projected onto the target domain, in which the dead person is metonymically conceptualised as a soul traveling to a better place<sup>8</sup> and the dead body as being physically absent. These metaphors remain euphemistic for two main reasons: conceptualising the soul as traveling to a better place allows speakers to conceptualise death as a positive concept, and it also allows them to conceal the reality of the dead body by only conceptualising the fact

that it is absent (thanks to a metonymy, once again). This is what cognitivists refer to as the “highlighting-hiding concept” (see for example Kövecses [2002: 80]). The interactions between metaphor and metonymy are complex, and there might even be other ways to explain the interactions between and inside domains in DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors, but the interactions described above are summarised in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Interactions between metaphor and metonymy in DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors



- 32 This may also explain why non-lexicalised, creative metaphorical expressions deriving from DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors also tend to be rather euphemistic and successfully so for so long, although they can have a slightly more humorous dimension, as in the following occurrence:

(9) NATE: “Is Father Jack doing your service?”  
 DAVID: “No, but that’s just because I don’t want to give him the wrong idea.”  
 NATE: “What kind of idea is he going to get when you’re dead?”  
 DAVID: “I don’t know, I just don’t want him **cruising me in the afterlife.**” (SFU 2x13)

- 33 It also explains why occurrence (10) is dysphemistic:

(10) JOHN GERSON: “Shouldn’t Mr. Buchbinder be in the refrigerator?”  
 NATE: “I’m just about to take him to the crematorium.”  
 JOHN GERSON: “Really? It looks to me like you’ve got yourself a **no-vacancy situation at the fridge motel.**” (SFU 2x13)

- 34 In this particular case, the conceptual domain used as a source domain is TOURISM rather than JOURNEY / TRAVEL, and emphasis is explicitly laid on the dead body, which entails a crude, dysphemistic depiction of death. Nevertheless, such metaphors can also be used to downgrade what speakers cannot cope with thanks to humour, which is often used as a means of coming to terms with the less happy aspects of our existence. Therefore, this metaphor is also potentially euphemistic.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2. LOSS

- 35 There are 22 occurrences of DEATH IS A LOSS metaphors in the corpus, but the conceptual domain does not seem to be very productive as all 22 occurrences are the noun *loss* or

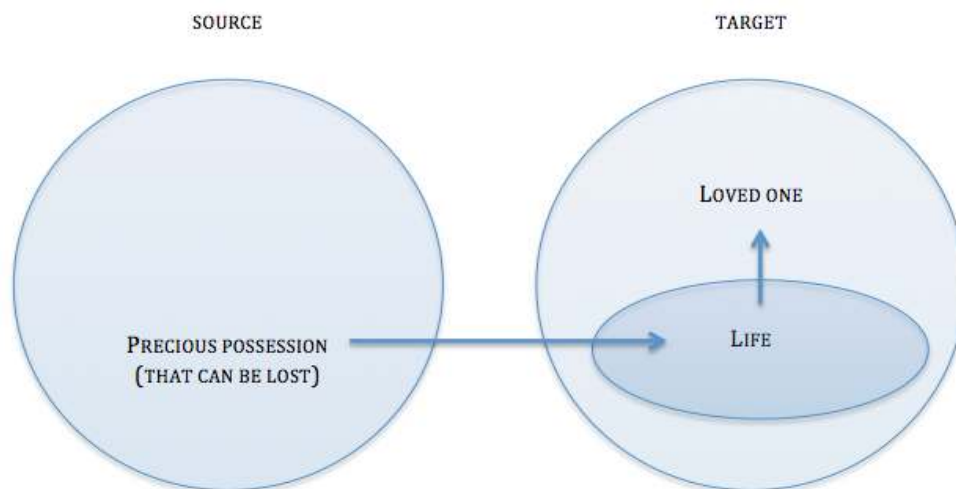
the verb *lose*; unlike the source domain JOURNEY, LOSS does not seem to allow the creation of new metaphorical expressions. According to the *OED3*, *lose* acquired the meaning *perish* as early as 888, while the meaning “to be deprived of a relative, friend, servant, etc. by death” probably emerged before 1200; *lose* and *loss* are consequently lexicalised and have been euphemisms for centuries. These metaphors are also ritualised and tend to be used during burials (11) or to offer someone your condolences (12):

(11) ARI: “You may be seated. We are here today to mourn the **loss** of Jeffrey Marc Shapiro.” (SFU 2x07)

(12) DAVID: “Bette and Phil Srisai. I’m David Fisher. I spoke to you on the phone yesterday. I’m so sorry for your **loss**.” (SFU 2x10)

- 36 Bultinck [2009: 44] suggests that this metaphor is linked to LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION as a loved one is conceptualised as something precious that is lost (there is a metonymic transfer between LIFE and LOVED ONE). This could be summarised in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Representation of A LOVED ONE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION metaphors



- 37 Bultinck [2009: 44] also suggests that this metaphor is – and therefore potentially remained – euphemistic because it shifts the focus from the dead to the living. To a certain extent, it also allows speakers to conceptualise DEATH as a form of absence and to avoid mentioning or having a mental picture of the dead body, which contributes to its euphemistic force.

### 3.3. FOOD / WASTE

- 38 In the corpus, there are 18 occurrences in which DEATH is conceptualised by means of the domain FOOD; more specifically, all the occurrences derive from the conceptual metaphor A DEAD BODY IS FOOD. Needless to say that these metaphorical expressions tend to have a high dysphemistic potential, which makes their very existence difficult to justify. Unsurprisingly, most of them are not lexicalised or are very recent, meaning that the euphemism treadmill is probably very quick for A DEAD BODY IS FOOD metaphors.
- 39 Part of the occurrences conceptualise the human body or a part of the human body as food that can be cooked. Consider the following examples:



(13) DEREK: “Karev, it’s over! It’s done. You screwed up. Mr. Martin’s fried. You **fried his brain**.” (GA 2x11)

(14) AARON BUCHBINDER: “So, tell me everything. What does **the human Frymaster** look like?”

NATE: “The crematory? It’s a big steel thing in a big room.” (SFU 2x11)

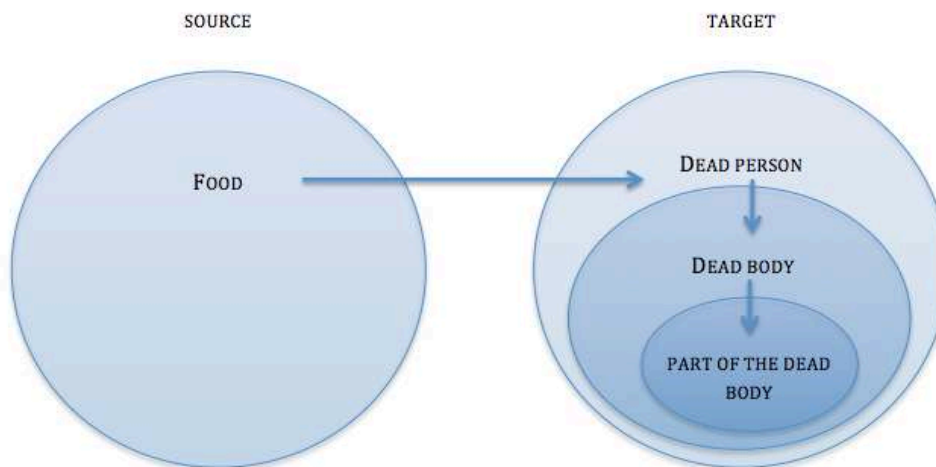
- 40 Example (13) is lexicalised and the *OED3*<sup>10</sup> indicates its use was first attested in 1971; it is also labelled as *slang*, which implies that it is rather dysphemistic. The contextual examples provided by the *OED3* are not euphemistic either, which suggests that *fry someone’s brain* was never used as a euphemism. “The human Frymaster”, on the other hand, is creative: it is not mentioned in the *OED3* and is composed of a proper noun, “Frymaster”, and the adjective “human”, which clarifies the metaphor. It is nevertheless also rather dysphemistic, as Nate’s reaction testifies: he needs to reformulate his sentence to make sure he understood the metaphor properly and seems ill-at-ease. It is however rather humorous for the viewers, who are at a distance. Other occurrences more specifically conceptualise the dead body as dead meat, creating an analogy between men and animals and explicitly emphasising the dichotomy between the body and the soul:

(15) NATHANIEL, SR.: “Well, there’s a **big chunk of dead meat in a cheapo box** that’s still here. But you really believe that’s him? The essence of who he was? The part of him that hoped and dreamed and all that other crap?” (SFU 2x03)

- 41 According to the *OED3*<sup>11</sup>, the use of “dead meat” was attested as early as 1849 and is described as “*slang*”, which once again points to rather dysphemistic uses; in example (15), this is reinforced by the re-elaboration of the expression in “a big chunk of dead meat in a cheapo box”. *Dead meat* was probably never used euphemistically as it includes the adjective *dead* and relies on a metonymy which allows to focus exclusively on the dead body.
- 42 The interactions between metaphor and metonymy in THE DEAD BODY IS FOOD metaphors can be described as a projection of the characteristics of FOOD onto the DEAD PERSON target domain, domain in which the dead person is conceptualised as a dead body through a PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymy. In some cases, there is a second PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymy which allows speakers to conceptualise only part of the dead body. This is summarised in Figure 10.



Figure 10. Interactions between metaphor and metonymy in THE DEAD BODY IS FOOD metaphors



- 43 The characteristics of FOOD which are projected onto the target domain are not characteristics of sophisticated, appetizing food. In some more elaborated creative occurrences, they are conceptualised as processed food:

(16) NATE: "So, in the end, we're all just **Human McNuggets**." (SFU 1x03)

(17) MARC: "Oh, God, I look like something **Chef Boyardee** makes!" (SFU 1x12)

- 44 In example (16), the bodies are also conceptualised as industrial food whose aim is to make funeral houses richer, while in example (17) a tumid face is compared to canned ravioli. Both examples are particularly dysphemistic because instead of concealing the most offensive aspects of death, they focus on the dead body and emphasise its most unpleasing characteristics. Occurrences (16) and (17) are culture-related metaphorical expressions which may however stem from a more general THE HUMAN BODY IS MEAT conceptual metaphor.<sup>12</sup> This can also be observed in conventional (18) or creative (19) metaphorical expressions in which the dead body is conceptualised as ROTTING FOOD or WASTE:

(18) ALEX: "Hey, Nurse Ratchet, there's a dead guy stinking up Room 4125. Do something about it before he **rots!**" (GA 2x03)

(19) AARON BUCHBINDER: "How does it work exactly?"

NATE: "The container is placed on these chrome rollers. Then a small door raises and the body goes through."

AARON BUCHBINDER: "Like how **your tray disappears through that thing in the cafeteria?**"

NATE: "Yeah. Actually, it's just like that." (SFU 2x11)

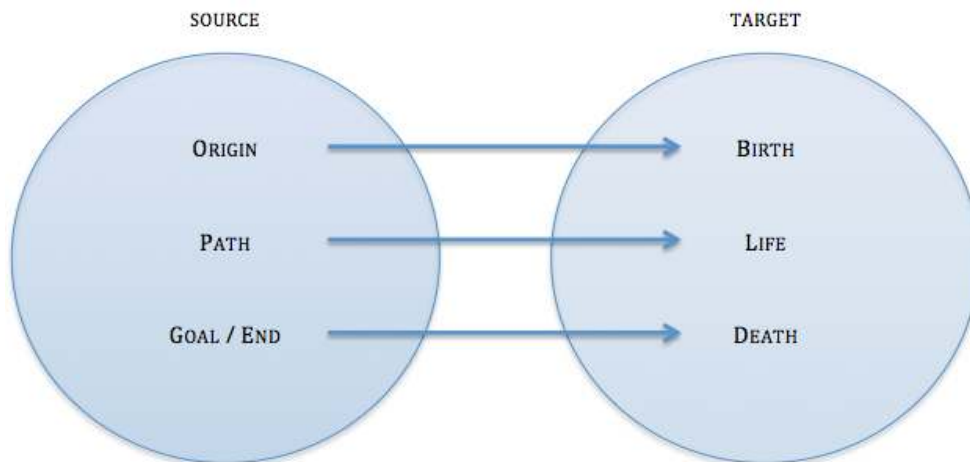
- 45 Although in example (18), the status of *rot* as a metaphor for rotting food is debatable (the first definition given by the OED<sup>13</sup> is "of the dead body, flesh, or bones of a person or animal: to undergo natural decomposition" and already existed in Old English), it is associated to a WHOLE-FOR-PART metonymy in "dead guy", which equates the dead person with a dead body and is therefore dysphemistic. In the metaphorical comparison in example (19), several correspondences are established between the source domain and the target domain: the tray is the coffin, the waste is the dead body, and the kitchen is the crematory oven.

- 46 Contrary to the metaphors mentioned in 3.1., 3.2. and 3.3., THE BODY IS FOOD metaphors have a strong dysphemistic potential and are mostly creative (using different correspondences), which can be explained by the fact that they are so dysphemistic that they never really become lexicalised. Their dysphemistic nature is accounted for by the fact that they rely on a metonymy that shifts the focus to the dead body and by the nature of the source domain, WASTE.

### 3.4. THE END

- 47 There are 14 occurrences of metaphorical expressions deriving from DEATH IS THE END in the corpus. This conceptualisation conflicts with the DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphor, which tends to produce euphemistic metaphors. The DEATH IS THE END metaphor is actually closely linked to the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor and hereby to the ORIGIN-PATH-GOAL image-schema, as exemplified in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Correspondences in DEATH IS THE END metaphors



- 48 Below are a few examples of the occurrences that can be found in the corpus:

(20) ADDISON: "It's hard to accept **the end** when you're too close." (GA 2x04)

(21) IZZIE: "What is it?"

MR. DUFF: "It's me. I think it's about to **be over**." (GA 1x08)

(22) ANDREW PEREZ: "Yeah, thank you so much. It **was her time**. She lived a full life." (SFU 2x12)

- 49 According to the OED3<sup>14</sup>, "the end" has been used in the meaning "the death of person" since around 1305 and it seems to have kept a rather euphemistic potential. The same thing can be argued about *time* used with a possessive; the OED3 indicates that the death-related meaning goes back as early as 1200. Interestingly, it is also used to refer to childbirth, which means that it can be used either for the beginning or the end of life. There are no entries for *be over* (4 occurrences in the corpus) but it can be assumed that they are not creative euphemisms and that they have been used for a long time.
- 50 Although these metaphors are not dysphemistic as there is no metonymic focus on the dead body, they are more negative than DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors, for they provide

no hope for the soul to survive. However, they tend to be more euphemistic than dysphemistic because they hide the unpleasant connotations of DEATH by shifting the focus from the dead body.

### 3.5. MACHINE / OBJECT

- 51 There are 9 occurrences in which the dead body is conceptualised as a broken machine or a broken object. In some of them, mostly in the medical TV series, the machine cannot be repaired because once a person dies, the body stops functioning and becomes useless:

(23) ADDISON: "He's **shutting down**." (GA 2x04)

(24) MEREDITH: "It's an urban myth that suicide rates spike at the holidays. Turns out they actually go down. Experts think that people are less inclined to **off** themselves when surrounded by family." (GA 2x12)

- 52 According to the OED3<sup>15</sup>, *off* for "to kill" or "to commit suicide" has been used in the US since 1967, so it is fairly recent and it is described as "slang", which leads us to think that it cannot be euphemistic. Uses of *shut down* with mention of an organ is not recorded in the OED3, but it is not entirely creative as there are several occurrences in the corpus and it can be assumed to be fairly recent as well as the meaning "to stop or switch off (a device or a machine); to stop working or running" was attested in 1895. Neither of these metaphors is likely to retain its euphemistic potential.

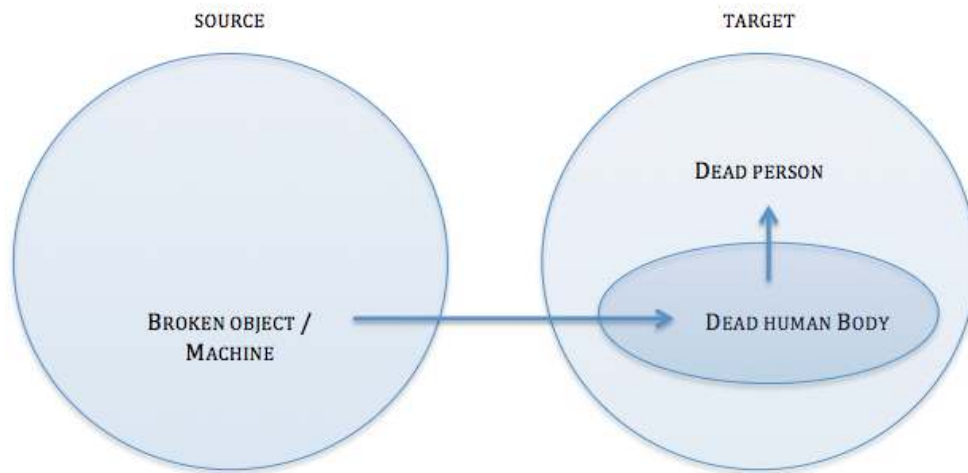
- 53 In *Six Feet Under*, which takes place in a funeral home, the body is a machine that can and should be fixed for the funeral, at least to be more presentable:

(25) IRINA: "No. You who lost your husband. You work for Niki. You used to **fix** dead people." (SFU 1x10)

(26) FREDERICO: "1500 a **restoration**." (SFU 1x08)

- 54 This meaning of *fix* is not recorded in the OED3, although the meaning "to mend, repair" has existed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As for "restoration", the OED3 does not indicate that it can refer to funeral services, but it probably comes from "The action of restoring a person to health, consciousness, or vigour" (first attested 1638) or "The action, process, or result of restoring something (esp. a work of art or literature) to an unimpaired or perfect condition; renovation or reconstruction intended to restore something to its (supposed) original condition" (first attested 1765).

Figure 12. Interactions between metaphor and metonymy in A DEAD PERSON IS A BROKEN MACHINE metaphors



- 55 These metaphors are orthophemistic rather than euphemistic or dysphemistic. Indeed, they are used throughout the series to represent the jargon used by doctors (in examples (23) and (24)) or by funeral employees (in examples (25) and (26)) and to show the distance they have towards death. They objectify human bodies, which makes it difficult to consider them as pure euphemisms, but no character is ever shown as being offended by the use of these metaphors. Therefore, their dysphemistic potential is not fulfilled, possibly in part because there is a WHOLE-FOR-PART metonymy in the target domain: in example (23), the personal pronoun *he* stands for the organs and the patient's body, in example (24), patients off *themselves*, not their bodies, and in example (25), funeral employees fix dead *people*, not dead *bodies*. It could be argued that precise medical jargon can sometimes be euphemistic when it is part of a strategy to create distance from something which is distressing to both patient and doctor.

### 3.6. LIGHT

- 56 There are two different conceptual metaphors which resort to the source domain LIGHT in the corpus. Firstly, they can be closely linked to DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors and to religious beliefs (see Figure 8). In this case, the goal of the journey is the light, which can either metonymically stand for God or for Heaven. There are 7 occurrences of these in the corpus, a few of which are completely ritualised:

(27) POWERFUL: "Merciful Jesus, please bring rest and peace to our fallen brother, son, friend, Manuel Paco Bolin. May he **live with you forever in your light and truth**, Almighty Father. Amen." (SFU 1x04)

- 57 Such occurrences have existed for centuries as the meaning "often with spiritual reference (said of the brightness of Heaven [...])" was attested in 971, while the meaning "applied to God as the source of divine light" was attested around 1000. They are euphemistic and tend to bring comfort to the loved ones as the dead person is conceptualised as alive and traveling to the light, which is a very positive concept, even when it does not stand for God. As for DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors, their euphemistic potential chiefly comes from the fact that they are closely linked to religious beliefs

and not considered as metaphors by religious people; this can partly explain why they retained their euphemistic potential over centuries. In some rare cases, when resorted to ironically, they can be euphemistic dysphemisms as the conceptualisation remains euphemistic but the intention is not (see Allan & Burridge [2006: 39]), as in the following example:

(28) CRISTINA: “Wish he’d just **go into the light already**, so I can get on another case.” (GA 1x03)

- 58 Speakers can also resort to LIGHT as a source domain in DEATH AS LIGHT GONE OUT, a metaphor which is mentioned by Bultinck [2009: 51] and of which there is one occurrence in the corpus:

(29) NATHANIEL, SR.: “Sure, it’s possible that we go on after we die. It’s also possible that, **once the light goes out, it stays out**. You’ll never know, buddy boy, until it’s your turn.” (SFU 2x03)

- 59 This metaphor has a strong metonymic basis as the light “goes out” when a person closes their eyes; closing one’s eyes (forever) also stands for dying by analogy with sleeping, and this metaphor is therefore also closely linked to DEATH IS REST/SLEEP. Its euphemistic potential is not as high as that of metaphors in which the light is God and death is conceptualised as a journey because it is a rather negative vision of death. It could also be partially linked to DEATH IS THE END as the light could stand for “life” here, or to the fact that it is generally believed that when someone dies, the light goes out of their eyes. There is no mention of such occurrences in the OED3 so further investigation would be needed to know for how long it has been used, but it is definitely not a creative metaphor.

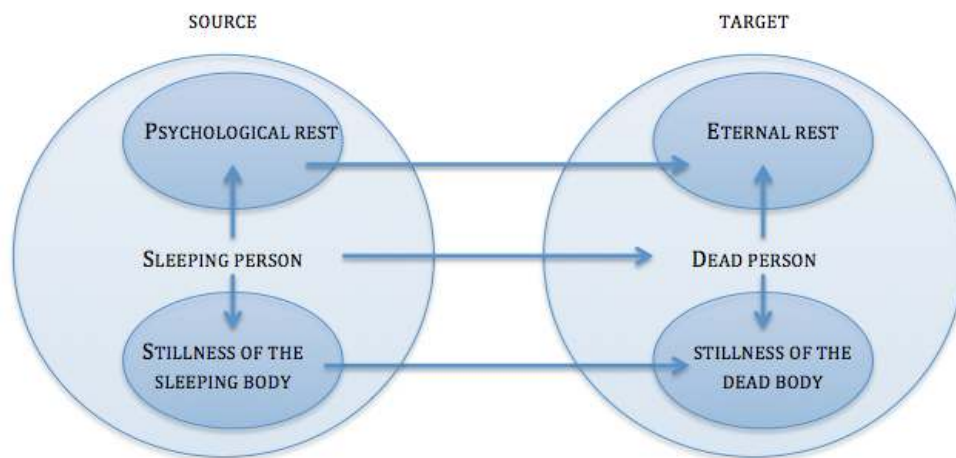
### 3.7. REST / SLEEP

- 60 There are 5 occurrences of DEATH IS REST/SLEEP in the corpus. This metaphor also finds part of its origins in religion as in the Christian tradition, death is considered as a well-deserved rest after life on earth. This is why, in the corpus, occurrences may be found in representations of religious ceremonies such as burials:

(30) FATHER JACK: “Dear friends, it was our Lord Jesus Himself who said, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you **rest**.” Let us pray, then, for our brother, Dwight Garrison, that he may **rest** from his labors and enter into...” (2x09)

- 61 Nevertheless, as Bultinck [2009: 42] notices, “the resemblances between a sleeping person and a dead person suffice to explain the metaphorical mapping: the person has his eyes closed, is unconscious, lies still, etc.”. Therefore, there is once again a dichotomy between the body and the soul in DEATH IS REST/SLEEP metaphors: after death, the soul can rest eternally as the mind rests when we sleep; the dead body, on the other hand, is equated with a sleeping body – a living body – as there is a focus on the similar physiological effects of death and sleep. This is presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Interactions between metaphor and metonymy in A DEATH IS SLEEP metaphors



- 62 However, in uses of *rest* or *sleep* in discourse, the origins of the metaphor are not explicit and hence the focus on the body and the focus on the soul are blended, which may participate in the creation of the euphemistic potential of these metaphors. Uses of *rest* for “the state of bliss or spiritual peace after death; the freedom from earthly toil or cares enjoyed by the dead” already existed in Old English, according to the *OED*<sup>16</sup>, and the same goes for uses of *sleep* for “the repose of death”<sup>17</sup>. Their euphemistic potential has not decreased for centuries.

### 3.8. Miscellaneous

- 63 There are a few isolated occurrences in the corpus. There are for example two personifications of death, “the Angel of Death”, who is a biblical character whose name has been used as a metaphor for death from 1565<sup>18</sup>, in *GA 1x02*, and “the Grim Reaper” whose first known use dates back to 1847<sup>19</sup>, in *SFU 2x01*. According to Kövecses [2002: 269-270], the Grim Reaper derives from two conceptual metaphors, *PEOPLE ARE PLANTS* and *EVENTS ARE ACTIONS*: human beings are plants ready to be reaped while death, an event, is conceptualised as an action, reaping.
- 64 There are also two occurrences of *kick off*, which has been US slang for “die” since 1921<sup>20</sup>, and which is dysphemistic rather than euphemistic, especially given House’s apparent contempt for social rules, as shown in example (31):

(31) HOUSE: “I, Margo Davis have been informed of the risks which may arise from my refusal of advised medical care. I hereby release...”  
 MOM: “Who are you?”  
 HOUSE: “... the Princeton Plainsboro Teaching Hospital, its employees, agents, and otherwise from any adverse medical conditions resulting from my refusal. It is not the hospital’s fault if my son **kicks off**.”  
 MOM: “**Kicks off?**” (*House 1x08*)<sup>21</sup>

- 65 The other four occurrences are utterly creative, they do not seem to derive from any known conceptual metaphor and they do not focus on the dichotomy between the mind and the body, which bestows little interest on them in the context of this study.

(32) LLOYD: "Because **dying is a get-out-of-jail-free card**. I can be as bold as I want, and there's nothing anybody can say about it. So I flirt. Haven't you ever been attracted to someone you know you couldn't have?" (GA 1x03)

(33) FUNERAL DIRECTOR: "Let's think of this as a celebration of your uncle's life. Now, the Titan is an excellent choice for a distinguished gentleman. It's solid mahogany, it's hand-finished, burl wood and nickel accents. And Grace Field... Grace Field is a lovely place for **internment**. It's serene, it's pastoral." (SFU 1x09)

(34) FREDERICO: "Oooh, boy! OK, **Cinderella**, we're gonna have to work overtime to get you ready for the **ball**." (SFU 1x12)

(35) FREDERICO: "I was supposed to take the kids to dinner last night so Vanessa could have the night off. But, instead, I was here. Until 9 o'clock last night. The **skin was friggin' pouring off** that woman's face! So I get all this shit from Vanessa, and I wasn't even able to restore the fucking poor lady! Nobody could have."

NATE: "Rico..."

FREDERICO: "But, here... You think you can do it? Here's some tools. I want to watch you **swim** in that skin, go ahead!" (SFU 2x05)

- 66 Occurrences (32) and (33) allow to conceptualise death in opposite ways: freedom or internment. Occurrence (34) conceptualises a funeral as a ball and occurrence (35) conceptualises the dead body as water.
- 67 The conceptual metaphors analysed in this section are not the only metaphors used to conceptualise DEATH; for example, Lakoff & Turner [1989: 7-56] also list DEAD PEOPLE ARE DEAD PLANTS, DEATH IS WINTER, or DEATH IS A LOSS OF FLUID, just to name a few.

## Conclusion

- 68 The analysis of the occurrences of DEATH metaphors in the corpus showed that most euphemistic metaphors have existed for a very long time as some of them date back to Old English; the proportion of conventional metaphors is quite significant, and conceptual metaphors such as DEATH IS A LOSS are not productive at all and do not give rise to new metaphorical expressions nowadays, although existing ones have retained their euphemistic potential. Creative metaphors in the corpus seem unlikely to remain euphemistic in the long term, if they ever were. Indeed, with DEATH metaphors, conceptual metaphors tend to produce either euphemisms (DEATH IS A JOURNEY, for example) or dysphemisms (THE DEAD BODY IS FOOD, for example). It seems that the basic X-phemistic potential of DEATH metaphors can be understood from the study of the interactions between metaphor and metonymy and allows us to understand why some metaphors remain euphemistic and why some do not.
- 69 Euphemistic metaphors are – for a majority of them – based on metonymic relationships which rely on a dichotomy between the soul and the body of human beings. Metaphonymies once allowed speakers to create euphemisms which are still very efficient as they have retained their euphemistic potential overtime, because they allow speakers to highlight the positive aspects of death (dream of an afterlife with God, rest, etc.) and to hide its negative aspects (the rotting body). Most of these also derive from religious beliefs that soften the fear of death as they conceptualise it as a new life. This is the case of DEATH IS A JOURNEY and DEATH IS REST, for example, as well as metaphors that rely on the source domain LIGHT. These metaphors also tend to be very



euphemistic because they are not used metaphorically by religious people, who have a literal understanding of death as a journey; DEATH metaphors are therefore often linked to the frame Religion. They are also extremely ritualised and have become the only acceptable ways to mention death without threatening the face of the co-speaker (see Brown and Levinson [1978]).

- 70 DEATH IS A LOSS or DEATH IS THE END metaphors do not derive from religion but also shift the focus from the dead body, which is why they may be able to retain their euphemistic potential. However, in occurrences in which the dead body is conceptualised as a broken machine, the euphemistic potential is weak, and those metaphors tend to be used by professionals, not as euphemisms. As for THE DEAD BODY IS FOOD metaphorical expressions, they never really have a euphemistic potential to start with, which can explain why they tend to be creative and to disappear quickly.
- 71 The mappings in DEATH metaphors are often complex because of the interaction between different conceptual domains (JOURNEY and LIGHT for example) and different frames (Religion), between metaphor and metonymy, between cultural elements (which rely on religion) and image schemas (such as the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image-schema). These interactions allow us to hide the unpleasant aspects of DEATH to be able to mention it, but also to build a concept we do not know thanks to things we do know, because in the end, we know nothing about death but its physiological effects.
- 72 More broadly, it seems that metaphor and metonymy can interact in many different ways and it seems difficult to suggest a classification, as Geeraerts or Goosens did; I believe that each metaphorical expression or conceptual metaphor has to be examined on its own as several metonymic and metaphoric transfers can take place within one metaphtonymy. Moreover, even when trying to be as thorough in the methodology as possible, defining conceptual domains and conceptual metaphors remains at least partly subjective and arbitrary, and I am convinced that, should anyone else have described the interactions between metaphor and metonymy in the occurrences extracted from the same corpus, the analysis could have been slightly different.
- 73 Metaphors and the interactions between metaphor and metonymy should be studied in context, especially when they are related to taboo domains: the X-phemistic nature of metaphors cannot be accounted for by the type of interaction between metaphor and metonymy: metaphor from metonymy does not produce more euphemisms than other kinds of interaction, for instance. PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymies, which are supposed to produce dysphemisms rather than euphemisms, allow speakers to focus on the “positive” aspects of death or on the soul and to really conceal its most unpleasant aspects such as the dead body, and they can thereby be euphemistic. Studying the mechanisms in each metaphor can help account for the euphemistic or dysphemistic nature of each metaphor and partly explain why some of them tend to retain their euphemistic potential over time, and the distinction between euphemisms and dysphemisms may play a role in long-term or short-term diachronic paths.



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALLAN Keith & BURRIDGE Kate, 1991, *Euphemism & Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- ALLAN Keith & BURRIDGE Kate, 2006, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BARCELONA Antonio (Ed.), 2000, *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads. A Cognitive Perspective*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- BROWN Penelope & LEVINSON Stephen C., 1987 (1978), *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BULTINCK Bert, 1998, *Metaphors we Die by: Conceptualizations of Death in English and their Implications for the Theory of Metaphor*, Antwerp: Antwerp papers in Linguistics n.94.
- BURRIDGE Kate, 2012, "Euphemism and language change: the sixth and seventh ages", *Lexis* 7: *Euphemism as word-formation process*: <https://journals.openedition.org/lexis/355>.
- CRESPO FERNÁNDEZ Eliecer, 2006, "The language of death: euphemism and conceptual metaphorization in Victorian obituaries", *SKY Journal of Linguistics* 19(3), 101-130.
- CRESPO FERNÁNDEZ Eliecer, 2008, "Sex-related euphemism and dysphemism: an analysis in terms of conceptual metaphor theory", *Atlantis, Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 30(2), 95-110.
- CRESPO FERNÁNDEZ Eliecer, 2017 (2015), *Sex in Language: Euphemistic and Dysphemistic Metaphors in Internet Forums*, London & New York: Bloomsbury.
- DANCYGIER Barbara & SWEETSER Eve, 2014, *Figurative Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DEIGNAN Alice, 2005, *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- GEERAERTS Dirk, 2002 (1995), "The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in composite expressions", *Metaphor and metonymy in comparison and contrast* 20.
- GIBBS Raymond W., 1999 (1994), *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GIORA Rachel, 1997, "Understanding figurative and literal language: the graded salience hypothesis", *Cognitive Linguistics* 8-3, 183-206.
- GOOSSENS Louis, 2002 (1995), "Metaphtonymy: The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in expressions for linguistic", *Metaphor and metonymy in comparison and contrast* 20.
- GORER Geoffrey, 1965, *Death, Grief, and Mourning*, New York: Doubleday.
- GROSS John, 1985, "Intimations of mortality", in ENRIGHT Dennis J. (Ed.), *Fair of Speech: The Uses of Euphemism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 203-219.
- KEYES Ralph, 2010, *Euphemia: our Love Affair with Euphemisms*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

- KÖVECSES Zoltán, 2002, *Metaphor. A Practical Introduction*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- KÖVECSES Zoltán, 2008, "Conceptual metaphor theory: some criticisms and alternative proposals", *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 6, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 168-184.
- KÖVECSES Zoltán, 2013, "The metaphor-metonymy relationship: correlation metaphors are based on metonymy", *Metaphor and Symbol* 28(2), 75-88.
- LAKOFF George & JOHNSON Mark, 1980, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- LAKOFF George & TURNER Mark, 1989, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- ORTONY Andrew, 1979, *Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PINKER Steven, 1994, "The Name of the Game", *The New York Times*, 3 April 1994.
- PRAGGLEJAZ GROUP, 2007, "MIP: a method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse", *Metaphor and Symbol* 22(1), 1-39.
- QUAGLIO Paul, 2009, *Television Dialogue: the Sitcom Friends vs. Natural Conversation*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- QUAGLIO Paul, 2016, "The one based on 738,032 words: language use in the *Friends*-corpus", in BEERS FÄGERSTEN Kristy (Ed.), *Watching TV with a Linguist*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 307-334.
- RADDEN Günter, 2000, "How Metonymic Are Metaphors?", in BARCELONA Antonio (Ed.), *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: a Cognitive Perspective*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 93-108.
- RUIZ DE MENDOZA IBÁÑEZ Francisco José & GALERA-MASEGOSA Alicia, 2011, "Going beyond metaphtonymy: metaphoric and metonymic complexes in phrasal verb interpretation", *Language Value* 3(1) 1: 1-29.
- SEMINO Elena, DEMJÉN Zsófia, HARDIE Andrew, PAYNE Sheila & RAYSON Paul, 2018, *Metaphor, Cancer and the End of Life: a Corpus-Based Study*, London: Routledge.
- STEEN Gerard & GIBBS Raymond W., 1999 (1997), "Introduction", in GIBBS Raymond W. & STEEN Gerard J., *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics, Selected Papers from the Fifth International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Amsterdam, 1997*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- STEEN Gerard J. et al., 2010, *A Method for Linguistic Metaphor Identification: from MIP to MIPVU*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- SWEETSER Eve, 1990, *From Etymology to Pragmatics, Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- TERRY Adeline, 2019a, *L'expression métaphorique des sujets tabous : entre euphémisme et dysphémisme. Étude linguistique d'un corpus de séries télévisées américaines*, unpublished PhD dissertation, under the supervision of Prof. Denis Jamet, University of Lyon, defended on 24 June 2019.
- TERRY Adeline, 2019b, "The representativeness of the metaphors of death, disease, and sex in a TV series corpus", *CogniTextes* [Online], Volume 19, online on 17 June 2019, last accessed on 22 June 2020: <http://journals.openedition.org/cognitextes/1730>.

## Corpus

*Grey's Anatomy: The Complete Series*. 2005-... Created by Shonda Rhymes. ABC. DVD.

*House, M.D.: The Complete Series*. 2004-2012. Created by David Shore. Fox. DVD.

*Six Feet Under: The Complete Series*. 2001-2005. Created by Alan Ball. HBO. DVD.

## Dictionaries

*The Oxford English Dictionary*: <http://www.oed.com/>.

## NOTES

1. "Metaphonymy" is a term coined by Goossens [1995] to refer to the combination of metaphor and metonymy. "Metaphonymies we die by" is a reference to *Metaphors We Die By* [Bultinck 1998], the latter being a reference to *Metaphor We Live By* [Lakoff & Johnson 1980].
2. Figure 4 was taken directly from Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011: 12]; there is a typo in the first circle (*cloting* (sic) instead of *clothing*).
3. The corpus and methodology used for the extraction of the data are the same as described in Terry [2019a] and Terry [2019b].
4. The TV series are referred to as *House* for *House, M.D.*, *GA* for *Grey's Anatomy* and *SFU* for *Six Feet Under*. The first number is the number of the season, followed by an x and by the number of the episode.
5. Part of the analyses developed in this section had already been partly developed in Terry [2019a].
6. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/138429?redirectedFrom=pass&away#eid31648431>. a1400 (►?c1300) *Lay Folks Mass Bk.* (Royal) (1879) 112 (MED) Graunt..rest & pese..to cristen soules passed away.
7. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/79544?rskey=YORXDV&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid.►a1393> J. Gower *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) i. l. 87 Wherof the world ensample fette Mai after this, whan I am go.
8. Interestingly, the "better place" is quite undefined; it is referred to as "the great beyond" (GA 2x16 and 2x17), "a much better place" (SFU 1x01), or admittedly unknown ("So, where do you think he is now?" in SFU 2x03).
9. As pointed out by one of the anonymous reviewers.
10. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/75166?rskey=WdTyhF&result=3&isAdvanced=false#eid>. 1971 *Alleged Drug Abuse in Armed Services* (U.S. House Comm. on Armed Services) 1881 He often has hallucinations... As one authority put it, speed really fries your brain.
11. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/47615?rskey=DUNvSb&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid7509280>. 1849 E. Bennett *Leni-Leoti* viii. 43/1 'O the infarnals!' sez Ben, jumpin up and showin blood on his noddle. 'I'm dead meat, sartin. But I'll hev company along,' sez he.
12. As pointed out by one of the anonymous reviewers.
13. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/254475?rskey=cCHIjM&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid>. OE Byrhtferð *Enchiridion* (Ashm.) (1995) i. i. 16 Mid þam [sc. myrran] man smyrað ricra manna lic þæt hig rotian ne magon.
14. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/61863?rskey=oghHLY&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. c1305 *Edmund Conf.* 590 in *South-Eng. Leg.* (1887) 448 Þe more is bodi ipined was: þe ner he was þen ende.

15. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/130562?rskey=sp8E0n&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. 1967 P. Thomas *Down these Mean Streets* xx. 198 If he lays a hand on me again, I'm gonna off him.
  16. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/163890?rskey=e74JOo&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. OE *Vercelli Homilies* (1992) iv. 94 Ða þe her swincap swiðost for Godes naman, þa lædað þa englas on ece reste.
  17. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/181603?rskey=agFQqz&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. OE *Crist III* 890 Weccað of deaðe dryhtgumena bearn, eall monna cynn, to meotudsceaft egeslic of þære ealdan moldan, hatað hy upp astandan sneome of slæpe þy fæstan.
  18. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/7458?redirectedFrom=angel+of+death#eid264113081>. 1565 W. Alley Πτωχομυσσεῖον ii. iii. f.50 The Aungell of death came to kyll hym.
  19. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/81477?redirectedFrom=grim+reaper#eid115666232>. 1847 *Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) Whig* 1 Apr. 1/4 Famine, the grim reaper, is gathering a horrible human harvest.
  20. <https://www-oed-com.acces.bibliotheque-diderot.fr/view/Entry/103264?rskey=SnAeFz&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid1262423261>. 1725 *New Canting Dict.* Kick'd, gone, fled, departed.
  21. As pointed out by one of the reviewers, *Kick off* could also be related to sport in the sense of starting a new phase of existence.
- 

## ABSTRACTS

Metaphor is recognised as a prominent mechanism of lexical semantic change and is a particularly productive tool to create new euphemisms to mention taboo topics (Crespo Fernández [2006]). This paper focuses on DEATH metaphors, and more specifically on the possible influence of the interactions between metaphor and metonymy on the X-phemistic nature (Allan & Burridge [1991], [2006]) of DEATH metaphors and their continuous euphemistic use in the English language. It relies on 122 metaphorical occurrences drawn from 3 different TV series (*Six Feet Under*, *House, M.D.*, and *Grey's Anatomy*), collected following the recommendations of the Pragglejaz group [2007]. A significant amount of DEATH metaphorical occurrences (mostly those using source domains such as JOURNEY, LOSS or REST, for example) tend to be conventionalised and rather euphemistic, which seems to confirm what was indicated or suggested in previous works (see Allan & Burridge [1991], [2006], Bultinck [1998] or Crespo Fernández [2006]). I argue that the interactions between metonymy and metaphor (see Goossens [2002], Geeraerts [2002], Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011], Kövecses [2013]) partly account for the euphemistic nature of those metaphors: because of the pervasiveness of the mind-body dichotomy in Western religions and cultures, DEATH metaphors are often combined to metonymies in which a dead person is either conceptualised as a dead body or as a soul. The former tend to be dysphemistic (as in realizations of THE DEAD BODY IS ROTTING FOOD metaphors) while the latter tend to be euphemistic (as in realizations of DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphors). I also focus on the diachronic dimension of X-phemisms as some occurrences were first attested over 8 centuries ago; I suggest that the euphemism treadmill (which could be defined as the phenomenon of lexical change

resulting from the semantic evolution of existing euphemisms) seems to be slower for DEATH metaphors, which tend to be combined to metonymies (such as A PERSON IS A SOUL), than for metaphors used to mention other taboo domains.

La métaphore est reconnue comme un mécanisme important de changement lexical et sémantique et est un outil particulièrement productif pour créer de nouveaux euphémismes afin de mentionner des sujets tabous (Crespo Fernández [2006]). Cet article se concentre sur les métaphores de la mort, et plus particulièrement sur l'influence possible qu'ont les interactions entre la métaphore et la métonymie sur la nature X-phémistique (Allan & Burridge [1991], [2006]) des métaphores de la mort et sur leur utilisation euphémistique continue en langue anglaise. Il s'appuie sur 122 occurrences métaphoriques tirées de trois séries télévisées différentes (*Six Feet Under*, *House, M.D.* et *Grey's Anatomy*), recueillies selon les recommandations du groupe Praggeljaz [2007]. Un nombre important d'occurrences de métaphores de la mort (principalement celles utilisant des domaines sources tels que JOURNEY, LOSS, ou REST, par exemple) ont tendance à être figées et plutôt euphémiques, ce qui semble confirmer ce qui était indiqué ou suggéré dans des travaux antérieurs (voir Allan & Burridge [1991], [2006], Bultinck [1998] ou Crespo Fernández [2006]). Il semble que les interactions entre métonymie et métaphore (voir Goossens [2002], Geeraerts [2002], Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera-Masegosa [2011], Kövecses [2013]) expliquent en partie la nature euphémique de ces métaphores : en raison de l'omniprésence de la dichotomie corps-esprit dans les religions et les cultures occidentales, les métaphores de la mort sont souvent combinées à des métonymies dans lesquelles une personne décédée est soit conceptualisée comme un corps mort, soit comme une âme. Les conceptualisations du corps mort ont tendance à être dysphémiques (comme dans les réalisations des métaphores A DEAD BODY IS ROTTING FOOD) tandis que les conceptualisations de l'âme du défunt ont tendance à être euphémiques (comme dans les réalisations des métaphores DEATH IS A JOURNEY). Il s'agit également de prendre en compte la dimension diachronique des X-phémismes dans la mesure où certains emplois sont attestés depuis le XIIe siècle ; le processus d'usure de l'euphémisme (qui pourrait être défini comme le phénomène de changement lexical résultant de l'évolution sémantique des euphémismes existants) semble être plus lent pour les métaphores de la mort, qui ont tendance à être combinées à des métonymies (comme A PERSON IS A SOUL), que pour les métaphores d'autres domaines tabous.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** métaphore, métonymie, métaphtonymie, X-phémisme, usure de l'euphémisme, mort

**Keywords:** metaphor, metonymy, metaphtonymy, X-phemism, euphemism treadmill, death

## AUTHOR

**ADELIN TERRY**

University of Lyon (Jean Moulin Lyon 3) & Centre d'Études Linguistiques – Corpus, Discours et Sociétés (EA 1663)

adelin.terry@univ-lyon3.fr