Metaphoric / Metonymic Discourse in Jorie Graham's Poetry

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Abstract

The paper investigates why Jorie Graham's poetic discourse is predominantly metonymical, that is, how one topic or concept leads to another on the basis of their contiguity and closeness, and much less than on the basis of similarity of concepts through comparison, which is more conducive to metaphoric language structures. I apply Roman Jakobson's theory of the two processes of discourse formation, the metonymic and the metaphoric, bearing in mind his warning that one can never exclude the other, as both are present in any language behavior. The predominance of metonymy over metaphor in Graham's poetry is examined at the level of (i) individual tropes and (ii) as a structure of poetic discourse developed on the basis of the two processes: either metonymic combination or metaphoric selection and comparison. It is important to note that although prevalent, the metonymic structure does not exclude metaphors as tropes and metaphoric structures are imbedded in particular sections of Graham's longer poems, especially the fragmentary and symbolic parts. Thus, Graham's poetics of discovery, the unending and unfinished process which the poems capture, are conducive to metonymic verbal structures, while her symbolic (metaphoric) discourse operates, according to Jakobson's paradigmatic vertical axis, by selecting and comparing similar linguistic units, an operation which is invisible in language.

Keywords: metonymic, metaphoric, discourse, Roman Jakobson, poetry, Jorie Graham

Jorie Graham'ın Şiirinde Metaforik / Metonik Söylem

Özet

Makale, Jorie Graham'ın şiirsel söyleminin ağırlıklı olarak metonimsel olduğunu, yani bir konunun ya da kavramın birbirine zıtlık ve yakınlık temelinde bir diğerine nasıl yol açtığını ve metaforik dil yapılarına daha uyumlu olan karşılaştırma yoluyla kavramların benzerliğinden çok daha azını araştırmaktadır. Jakobson'un, her iki dil davranışında olduğu gibi, diğerini asla dışlayamayacağına dair uyarısını akılda tutarak, söylem oluşturma, metonimik ve metaforik iki süreç teorisini uyguluyorum. Graham'ın şiirindeki metafor üzerine metoninin egemenliği, (i) bireysel tropiler ve (ii) iki süreç temelinde geliştirilen şiirsel söylemin bir yapısı olarak incelenir: metonimik kombinasyon veya metaforik seçim ve karşılaştırma. Yaygın olmasına rağmen, metonimik yapının metaforları metaforlar olarak dışlamadığı ve Graham'ın daha uzun şiirlerinin, özellikle de parçalara ayrılmış ve sembolik kısımların özel bölümlerine gömülü olduğu unutulmamalıdır. Bu nedenle, Graham'ın şiirleri, bitmeyen ve bitmemiş süreç, konvansiyonel, mecazi ve zarif yapılar iken, Jakobson'un paradigmatik düşey eksenine göre sembolik (metaforik) söylem etkinliği, dilde görünmeyen bir işlem olan benzer dilbilimsel birimleri ifade eder

Anahtar kelimeler: metonim, metaforik, söylem, Roman Jokobson, şiir, Jorie Graham

1   Introduction

Any overview of the critical work on Graham's poetry demonstrates that her poetic motifs, concepts and philosophy have been analyzed in greater detail than her formal and stylistic features. This is not peculiar since Graham has always targeted the deep and complex matter of things and the derivate of the crucial ideas from our cultural history. Criticizing the tendency in modern culture for speedy and superficial readings, this is precisely how she defines the role of poetry: "Of course, it is poetry's job to try to provide the very opposite—to re-complicate the oversimplified thing" (Gardner, 2003). Critics, therefore, have discerned, categorized and mapped out almost all references in her work to external sources such as Greco-Latin myths, philosophy, science, Judeo-Christian religious traditions, Buddhism, Hinduism, and linguistics.

However, most critics agree that she has developed a very idiosyncratic language throughout her long writing and publishing career, which accommodates her various philosophical interests and the experiential and discursive qualities of her poetics. Thus, Graham's specific discourse has been extensively analyzed in terms of its main concepts to the extent that certain critics, such as Bedient (2005), have developed a poetic lexicon for Graham ("Toward a Jorie Graham Lexicon"). In regards to the more formal aspects of her poetry, critics have done justice to her specific rhythm, analyzing it as a result of congruence or incongruence between her long lines and her long sentences, or the interchange between her long and short lines. Her syntax has been analytically examined by critics such as Vendler (1995) in relation to her trilingualism, and the radical change in her style that occurred with the publication of The End of Beauty".

However, the structure of her poetic discourse has not been analyzed from the stylistic perspective of the main language tropes such as metonymy and metaphor, and the structures they generate. In this paper I want to address why her poetic discourse is predominantly metonymical, that is, how one topic or concept leads to another on the basis of their contiguity and closeness, and much less than on the basis of similarity of concepts through comparison, which is more conducive to metaphoric language

structures. I will apply Jakobson's theory of the two processes of discourse formation, the metonymic and the metaphoric, bearing in mind his warning that one can never exclude the other, as both are present in any language behavior. The question is, he stresses, the predominance of one over the other:

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either thorough their similarity or their contiguity. The metaphorical way would be the more appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively. . . .

In normal verbal behavior both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other (Jakobson, 1976, p. 76).

The predominance of metonymy over metaphor in Graham's poetry will be examined at the level of (i) individual tropes and (ii) as a structure of poetic discourse developed on the basis of the two processes: either metonymic combination or metaphoric selection and comparison. It is important to note that although prevalent, the metonymic structure does not exclude metaphors as tropes and metaphoric structures are imbedded in particular sections of Graham's longer poems, especially the fragmentary and symbolic parts. I will also argue that the sections of Graham's longer poems create among themselves either metonymic or metaphoric relationships, with predominance given to the latter. Since the act of substitution of the sections in longer poems is not present as it is in metaphoric constructions, the resultant relationships are more simile-like metaphorical. This is what David Lodge says about the verbal constructions which have metaphorical force of comparison but lack the substitution of comparable elements than:

These are of course similes, not metaphors proper. Although Jakobson does not comment on simile as such it must belong on the metaphorical side of his bipolar scheme since it is generated by the perception of similarity, but it does not involve substitution in the same radical sense as metaphor. For this reason, it is more easily assimilated into metonymic modes of writing (Lodge, 1997, p. 97).

Graham's poetics of discovery, the unending and unfinished process which the poems capture, are conducive to metonymic verbal structures, as with other experiential poets. On the one hand, her much examined scientific-like discourse and her experiential frames constructed to situate meditative and speculative thoughts are developed by the process of combining adjacent and contiguous poetic "material" that belongs to the same contexts. The immediate result is a prose-like discourse of linear, causal and sequential syntagms, which operates according to Jakobson's "horizontal axes of language". The symbolic (metaphoric) discourse, on the other hand, operates according to Jakobson's paradigmatic vertical axis by selecting and comparing similar linguistic units, an operation which is invisible in language. In order to explain how Jakobson's theory is used in this analysis, I draw from Roger Fowler's graphic presentation of Jakobson's model of horizontal and vertical axes, and their corresponding syntagms and paradigms in any language formation (Fowler, 2009, p. 98-99):

		S Y N T A G M	
P	The	child	sleeps.
A	a	kid	dozes.
R	some	youngster	nods.
A	etc.	tot	naps.
D		infant	wakes.
I		boy	dreams.
G		woman	etc.
M		etc.	

We can see from these graphically presented language operations that a sentence results from two operative principles, the mind selecting from the paradigmatic column of words to fill in the places in the syntagms of combined linguistic units. The former is invisible since they are the codes of language, *langue*, the latter are visible in language as the message, *parole*. Each linguistic unit in the syntagm can be substituted with a new word from the corresponding paradigmatic group. For example, "the child" can be replaced with "kid", "youngster" or "woman", as long as each belongs to the paradigmatic group of nouns that can play the role of subject in the sentence. The more congruent or contiguous the new word is to the context of the sentence/discourse, the more metonymic the structure of the sentence, and contrary to this, the more incongruent or non-contiguous the new word to the context of the sentence, the more metaphorical the structure. In other words, the bigger the discrepancy between the tenor (the produced meaning) and the vehicle (the actual word) of metaphor, the stronger the metaphor as a trope, and the more symbolic and metaphoric the structure. However, metaphoric and metonymic structures in a text are never exclusive, as David Lodge explains:

Furthermore, it must always be remembered that we are not discussing a distinction between two mutually exclusive types of discourse, but a distinction based on dominance. The metaphoric work cannot totally neglect metonymic continuity if it is to be intelligible at all. Correspondingly, the metonymic text cannot eliminate all signs that it is available for metaphorical interpretation (Lodge, 1997, p. 111).

The descriptive and narrative structures, especially of the scientific-like discourse and the experiential frames are naturally more metonymic. It is so since the operation of combining (adjacent and contiguous elements) corresponds to the process of describing and narrating characteristics and elements of an object or a scene. Accordingly, language moves from one characteristic, element or percept to the next contiguous one, combining them in descriptive or narrative syntagmatic chains. The result is metonymic, prose-like discourse, which intrinsically consists of relationships such as cause-effects, parts-whole or attributes-whole. It is important to add here that in the formation of metonymy proper, there is an invisible mental process of deleting one of the elements of metonymy. For example, instead of saying "Two men's heads are better than one", we have the metonymic expression: "Two heads are better than one", in which "heads" stands alone for the deleted "men's heads". The trope is produced when the more inclusive element, the whole, is deleted and the less inclusive element, the part, functions as the whole. The same deletion of "the whole" is present in metonymic structures, except here more parts stand for, that is, represent the whole.

The following excerpt illustrates the use of metonymy as a trope to portray the personalities of the protagonists by foregrounding a single characteristic they all share:

This is the sugar
      you are stealing
from the nurses, filling
      your pillow
with something
      for nothing,
filling my pockets
      till I'm some kind
of sandman
      you can still
. . . .
Out there,
      deep in the sleight
of hand

is where you whipped
      my mother
for a stolen pencil box
      till they thought
she was dead. And there
      is her sister,
the one who's never cut
      her hair,
and there the one who died leaving
      a freezer full

of meals twenty years old
      or more. Maybe (Graham, 1983, p. 24-25)

The quoted stanzas from the poem "The Long Island Geriatric Home", develop a common attribute which describes the "grandfather", the "mother" and the "two aunts" stealing and hoarding things. They are described by this attribute as a part that stands for the whole, or as an effect that represents the cause. This habit, the compulsion of the grandfather to hoard and appropriate things ("This is the sugar / you are stealing / from the nurses, filling / your pillow"), stands for him as a whole character. However, at this stage of the poem, this portrayal resembles a caricature, which is also a metonymic process of exaggerating a single attribute or characteristic to portray a distorted version of the whole person, as Simpson says (2004, p. 44). Next, the poem metonymically depicts the psychological effects of this personal trait upon one of his daughters: he beats her up for stealing a pencil box, probably trying to beat out his weakness in his child. The mania for hoarding and not letting go has an effect upon his other two daughters ("the aunts"): one has never cut her hair and the other stocks up twenty-year-old food in the refrigerator. They too are portrayed through the same metonymic procedure of one element standing for and describing their whole personalities and their entire life stories. This attribute, the petty theft and subsequent hoarding, is not selected as a concept from a distant context to compare the protagonists with, which would be the metaphoric procedure. To the contrary, it is contiguous to the protagonists and belongs to the same context of their lives, which is the metonymic manner of constructing the discourse.

As the poem's structure becomes more complex, the language becomes more metaphoric, and we realize that the grandfather's quotidian "sin" lies at the core of his philosophy of life and his understanding of how the world of nature and people functions: the tree steals its sap from the parent rocks and soil, he explains to his granddaughter, the narrator of the poem. Also,

this worldview fits into the context of his Jewish culture of survival and pragmatism, which he has obviously embraced. According to his "doctrine" of circular movement, all matter is intrinsically self-feeding and self-sustainable by the act of "stealing", taking and hoarding, from the source. Thus, "stealing/taking" inevitably becomes the principle of survival for everything during its short stay, its "delay" in the circle which begins and returns to "the fountain", the source:

> . . .You showed me how
>   only a tree
> can steal (through sap
>   and leaves)
> the minerals of parent rock
>   and feed them
> (by the leafrot) to
>   the soil.
> How that delay (you drew
>   a fountain
> in the dirt) is all
>   we ever
> are. Who wants a handout
>   anyhow,
> you say. Family hours (Graham, 1983, p. 25-6)

From this point on, "stealing" acquires deeper meanings, evolving into a pivotal point of the general structure. The protagonist remembers taking a branch from her grandfather's orchard, from the source and locus of his vegetal philosophy, which has the metonymic force of a part standing for the whole, an effect stemming from the cause which has affected the other family members. The language here shifts gradually toward the metaphoric pole, creating a simile, the branch is shaped like a woman running away who, as the poem tells us, "looks like she could outrun anything, although, of course she's stuck". There are good reasons to see the branch as a metaphor for the protagonist's mother, who unlike the other two sisters, tried to break away from the "parent" tree. The discourse becomes even more metaphorical when the running "woman-branch" reminds the protagonist of the fleeing Daphne chased by the god Apollo. The severed branch-mother is thus compared to a character from a very distant and remote context of discourse, the mythological and symbolic, which belongs to the metaphoric way of structuring discourse. The general metonymic structure of the poem grows out from a single metonymy as a trope, petty theft and hording, to its general structure, the grandfather's philosophy, while the individual metaphors and the metaphoric structures, are just parts of it.

The poem "Steering Wheel" (Graham, 1993) also demonstrates the operation of metonymy at two levels. In the first stanza it operates at the level of a trope, the human being represented by one of its objects, a "hat":

> Then a hat from someone down the block
> blown off, rolling—tossing—across the empty macadam,
> an open mouth, with no face round it,
> O and O and O and O—
> "we have to regain the moral pleasure
> of experiencing the distance between subject and object", (Graham, 1993, p. 5)

The experiential frame of this poem is the protagonist backing up into her driveway and speculating about the sudden uplifts of autumn leaves caused by the change of wind, and the similar effects this has on her and the surrounding trees. These scenes initiate her meditation on the physical laws which govern and affect both inanimate and animate worlds, leading her to the phenomenological speculations of subject-object relations:

> In the rear-view mirror I saw the veil of leaves
> suctioned up by a change in current
> and how they stayed up, for the allotted time,
> in absolute fidelity to the force behind,
> magenta, hovering, a thing that happens,
> slowly up swirling above the driveway
> I was preparing to back clear out of—
> and three young pine trees at the end of that view (Graham, 1993, p. 5)

At one point, a human object, a "hat", enters the scene, brought by the same current of wind. The "hat" becomes a metonymy for the human being, the subject "thrown" among the speechless objects, elements and forces of nature. The man-made "hat" is

not introduced on the basis of its similarity with the human being, but rather as an object which belongs to the human being, that is, as an element which is contiguous to the context. Sometimes, this kind of metonymy acquires metaphoric force and can function as what David Lodge calls "metaphorical metonymy, or as we more commonly say, a symbol" (1997, p. 100). He draws this conclusion analyzing the description of London in a muddy November day from Dickens' Bleak House. He characterizes it as "prose pushed much further towards the metaphoric pole" because the contiguous items of the text—nineteenth-century London, its streets, landmarks and financial institutions—are "elaborated metaphorically rather than represented metonymically". Yet, the recurrent presence of "mud" in the text acquires the status of a "metonymic metaphor" as it is not only a contiguous attribute of London but also an attribute of the "dirty" financial institutions which cause poverty, as Lodge explains. Thus, the "mud" becomes a symbol of crookedness and the general moral "mire" in the text (p. 99-100).

In Graham's poem, the shape of the "hat" reminds the observer of an open mouth pronouncing "O" sounds as in human pain or wonder. Although the "hat" is contiguous to the context of a street where people live, it still acquires the symbolic power and becomes a "metaphorical metonymy" by standing for any human being endowed with emotions and the capacities of speech to express them:

> —me now slowly backing up
> the dusty driveway into the law
> composed of updraft, downdraft, weight of these dried
> mid-winter leaves,
> light figured-in too, I'm sure, the weight of light,
> and angle of vision, dust, gravity, solitude,
> and the part of the law which in the world's waiting,
> and the part of the law which is my waiting, (1993, p. 5)

As this excerpt demonstrates, the poem continues with a chain of metonymies representing the whole, the material world, the object/nature versus the subject/man. This is a paratactic list which creates the scene, the whole which consists of a human being (the protagonist as an observer), leaves, dust, light, force of gravity and speechlessness. They all are governed by the same physical laws, although they are affected in different ways.

This poem is a good example of the meditative and descriptive discourses developed by the same metonymic verbal agency. On the one hand, we have the descriptive discourse of the scene of "backing up" with all its details of leaves and wind swirls joined by a human "hat". On the other hand, we have the meditative discourse initiated by the same scene and its particulars, which leads the protagonist to speculate on the universal material laws and subject-object relations ("we have to regain the moral pleasure in experiencing the distance between subject and object" [p. 5]). Both discourses are developed by metonymic combinations of the present, contiguous and contextual details, and particulars, which all stand for and represent the whole— the material world, including the human being.

Graham's poetry, as we have seen, approaches experience as a process of spontaneous speculation without premeditation, or more precisely, it creates an artistic illusion of such spontaneity. Therefore, its poetic discourse predominantly develops and moves forward by associating unpremeditated, contagious conceptual elements in chains of linguistic units. This is a process, or progressive verbal act, in which one element or topic leads to a next contiguous one in the sequence of a speculative and meditative thought. Consequently, the metonymic structure proves more conducive to capturing thought in process than the metaphoric which presupposes premeditation. In order to compare and substitute concept with another on the basis of their similarity, these concepts must be known, preselected and defined a-priori. However, the speculative thought in progress identifies and defines its concepts through the actual process itself, without premeditation or a-priori definition, which is a tendency of combining concepts in language, thus closer to the metonymic pole.

The typical metonymic structures of the process-poems reflect the basic relationship of parts and whole in which the parts represent the whole. Individual poems define this whole differently, as, but not limited to, god, spirit, body, matter, beauty, story, etc. These poems approach the world as an essentially unknown whole for which only the parts speak, but in encoded messages. Thus, "History" (Graham, 1993) speaks about a world in which it is difficult to discern cause from effect or a part from whole in order to be able to read the encoded message:

> So that I had to look up just now to see them
> sinking—black storks—
> sky disappearing as they ease down,
> each body like a prey the wings have seized . . .
> Something that was a whole story once,
> unparaphrased by shadows,
>
> something that was whole cloth floating in a wide
> sky

> rippling, studded with wingbeats,
> something like light grazing on the back of light,
>
>   now getting sucked back down
> into the watching eye, flapping, black
> hysterical applause,
>   claws out now looking for foothold (p. 144)

The poem engages with the idea of parts and whole from the very beginning, when the big black "storks" are seen as carrying their bodies in their wings as prey, that is, their parts (the wings) are carrying their whole (the bodies). It is a viable and common image when storks feed, which the poem hurries to tell us is the "whole story" of which this scene, happening "now", is only a part. Their movements, the screeching and flapping of their wings, are like black "applause" when landing "fast-forward into the labyrinth" of the present moment. The observer wonders if the "storks", landing on the tree where she is standing, are some kind of "knowledge", or a part of something bigger and more meaningful to be discerned in the segment of this partially narrated story. She asks herself what kind of voice or a messenger they are:

> Voice of what. Seems to say what.
> This is newness? This is the messenger? Screeching. (p. 145)

On a semantic level, the important notion of parts and whole illustrates the protagonist's attempt to read the speechless but intriguing parts of the implied, unknown whole. While on a linguistic level, the same notion demonstrates how the overall metonymic structure of the poem is composed of parts that are contiguous and contextual to the whole scene or event, watching storks land on a tree and meditating upon passing time in the present moment. At the same time, it constructs what I call here the overall experiential frame of the poem, that is, an event. However, the symbolic and figurative parts imbedded in the overall metonymic discourse pull toward the metaphoric pole of language. They are visible in the lines which paradigmatically introduce in the syntagms concepts such as "story", "cloth" and "monks", which do not belong to the context of the scene, but occur on the basis of their similarity in the process of comparing. The concept "story", often used in this poetry to refer to the world, or the "amazing creation" (as Graham implies in her interviews), has lost its full metaphoric strength and is more a symbol and a significant, contiguous part in Graham's philosophical lexicon.

After the "storks" land and cast their shadows, interrupting a previous "story" in the sky, the ongoing story gets complicated by the presence of the protagonist, watching and paraphrasing it, and what she calls "x", most likely her dog. The meditation continues further, the language moving toward the metaphorical pole, when their flying is compared with "cloth", "something that was the whole cloth floating in a wide sky". The word "cloth", as a man-made object belongs to an entirely opposite context to the present, natural one. Introduced in the context of nature, it has more metaphorical strength than "story". Their flying is like a "cloth" which covers the entire tree with "knowledge" when they land. Symbolically, it becomes the "tree of knowledge", metaphorically echoing the biblical tree, which she needs to ponder. Thus, the contiguous items "tree" and "storks" are "metaphorically elaborated", as Lodge puts it, with the symbolic "cloth and "story" and become the intriguing "knowledge".

Whether a poetic discourse becomes more metonymic or more metaphoric will depend on the distance between the vehicle and the tenor of the metaphor used in the text. Since the vehicles of the metaphor here are "the tree" and "the storks", the contiguous elements to the context, the created tenor—the biblical tree of knowledge—is still close to the context and does not interrupt its realistic semantic flow. Thus, the language of these sections does not bend too much towards the metaphoric pole. Here is Lodge's explanation of metaphor's roles in metonymic, realistic contexts:

> . . . [I]t is that, in the metonymic text, metaphorical substitution is in a highly sensitive relation to context or contiguity. The greater the distance (existentially, conceptually, affectively) between the tenor (which is part of the context) and the vehicle of the metaphor, the more powerful will be the semantic effect of the metaphor, but the greater, also, will be the disturbance to the relationships of contiguity between items in the discourse and therefore to realistic illusion. (Lodge, 1997, p. 112)

What these embedded metaphoric structures, or "local" metaphors, do to the metonymic "environment" in Graham's poetry, is also visible in the purely meditative section of the poem. The protagonist speculates on her being "here" and "now" at the present moment and the relation to the common, geological pre-history:

> Forget what we used to be, doubled, in the dark
> age where half of us is cast
>   in and down, all the way,
> nto the silt,
>   roiled under,

saved in there with all other slaughtered bits,
    dark thick fabric of the underneath,
sinking, sifting.

It is four o'clock. I have an appointment.
The tree above me. The river not flowing. Now: (p. 145)

In addition to this example, the rest of the purely meditative and discursive parts of the poem seem to abandon its general context and create metaphoric structures by introducing non-contiguous concepts from other contexts (e.g. "the dark age"). However, the protagonist abruptly snaps back to the actual time of the poem: "It is four o'clock. I have an appointment". If we consider that in the next stanza the poem introduces "the dredger parked into the river-house", then the previously "alien" concepts of the geological past become contiguous. Here both the metonymic combination of the contiguous elements (tree, storks, river, dredger) and the metaphoric selection of paradigmatic elements (geological times, past events, existential thoughts, decisions, etc.), all constitute the experiential frame of the event. They generate the immanence, that is, the presence of a whole experience.

The poem uses several similes, which have striking metaphoric power, to compare similar concepts which belong to entirely dissimilar contexts:

If the x is on a chain, licking its bone,
making the sounds now of monks
        copying the texts out,
muttering to themselves, (p. 146-7)

The protagonist sees the same "story" of different modes of existence narrated in the smacking sounds "x" (the dog) is making gnawing a bone, "whole long stories which are its gentle gnawing". These sounds are then compared to the similar sounds produced by "monks copying texts", thus bridging two entirely remote and distant contexts. It is as if the poem is saying that in the general interconnectedness of everything, the dog's gnawing as its way of telling its story is as relevant as any other's including the "monks'" or the "storks'" stories. The simile retains the metaphoric comparison and selection by similarity, but it also retains the link between the two contexts— "is like", showing the leap of the mind in different realms, searching for the right way to capture the knowledge in the parts of the whole. Thus, the simile here is in service of the metonymic semantic and linguistic structure.

Another point worth examining is the metonymic and metaphoric relationship produced by the scenes/sections of the longer poems, revealing the associative leaps between different meditative foci of thought in progress. Again, we come to similar results depending on how close the context of the next scene is to the previous. The more contiguous the context, the more metonymic the relationship, while the more dissimilar the context, the more metaphoric the relationship. In metaphoric relationships between the scenes, the relationships become simile-like, since the act of substituting one for the other does not occur. Thus, the scenes are like the compared concepts in a simile—both parts remain in the language revealing the link between them. Also, the important themes or concepts, recurrent in individual scenes of these poems, function as connective tissues in the overall metonymic structure. For example, in "Noli Me Tangere", concepts such as "entering", "delay" and "gap" between the material and the spiritual world are like the motions of the birds in the garden; in "What the End is For" the alienation and violence of the military airfield is like, or similar to, the estrangement that occurs in loving or marital relationships, while in "Imperialism", the mortality of the body and the alienation from others experienced by the river Ganges are similar to the feelings in a strained relationship. Discussing the "metaphoric disturbance" of a realistic context, David Lodge also proposes simile as a more realistic figurative device:

This disturbance can to some extent be muted by using simile rather than metaphor proper, for simile, although it creates a relationship of similarity between dissimilars, spreads itself along the line of combination which metaphor, by its radical strategy of substitution, tends to disrupt. Metaphor, it is sometimes said, asserts identity, simile merely likeness, and perhaps on this account the former trope is usually considered the more 'poetic.' (Lodge, 1997, p. 112)

A good example of a metaphorical leap from one scene to another from an entirely different context is "Notes on the Reality of the Self" (Materialism). The scene of a man in prayer prior to cutting a loaf of bread with the knife in front of him, leaps into a scene of a fallen birch tree in the woods he left the night before. This sudden leap happens in a single line, from the context of the bakeshop to the context of the woods. This is made on the basis of the similarity of the predicate: cutting bread and cutting a tree, the same action in two entirely different contexts:

In the bakeshop, at one of the tables,
there is a man about to eat his morning's slice,
who sits, hands folded eyes closed,
above the loaf still entire, and speaks inwardly

huge strange thoughts of thanks.
The knife, a felled birch left overnight
for tomorrow's work on which the moonlight,
in the eyes of no one, plays gleaming, the knifes
its awaiting the emptiness it will make appear (p. 12)

This leap has a strong metaphorical force because it initiates a whole succession of leaps backward and forward between these two different scenes. It also reflects the meditative stream of thoughts the observer, or protagonist, experiences in the bakeshop. The entirely distant scenes become constantly merged, thus establishing firm metaphoric relations, or more precisely, similes with metaphoric force: cutting the loaf is like cutting the tree. Thus, they metaphorically become the same symbolic "landmarks", sacramental acts, in his meditative thought about his identity, his presence at that very moment in the bakeshop and in the woods at the same time, and of their intersection:

. . . His weight is on his elbows, and carried through
onto the imitation–woodgrain tabletop.
Nothing distracts. The loaf is a crucial landmark
in the small landscape which is his place—
a way to find the road back to the felled
tree, even in moonlight, even if strong rains intervene
and no moon or sunshine can get through. For days (p. 12)

"Breakdancing" (Graham, 1987, p. 53) is a poem with a complex structure whose main scene, or event, is the protagonist changing TV channels and reflecting on the various forms of violence. This scene generates a series of metonymic sub-scenes, which are then metaphorically juxtaposed to the scenes of Saint Teresa, who tortured her body and had strong visions of Christ in his resurrected bodily form. All TV scenes stand in metonymic relationships to one other, being different parts of the whole, that is, violent America on TV. The poem begins with a large metonymy—the breakdancing—and each sub-scene that follows depicts a different form of violence in the present day, secularized, materialistic, commercialized and economically polarized America. Either individually or in conjunction, they also establish metaphoric relationships with the meditative scenes of Saint Teresa. Therefore, the present day violent acts committed against the human body are compared to similar acts in remote and alien contexts and discourses of sixteenth-century Medieval Spain. America producing radioactive waste and constantly "needing bodies", is a self-injury as the exaggerated Medieval Christian, faith-induced infliction and annihilation of the body over the mind. This simile relationship with metaphoric force compares various forms of modern day infliction, such as wars, pollution, and materialistic greed to the medieval, religious and fanatic attitude towards the annihilation and torture of the human body. Thus, the story repeats itself in time.

The opening scene – a boy doing a breakdance—captures the sociological stereotype of the poor, black, street boys, dancing to earn money or attention, "staying alive" as the poem says. The movements of the dance are described as controlled, yet seemingly spasmodic and painful, while as a means of making a living, they become a form of violence and torture against the body:

Staying alive the boy on the screen is doing it,
    the secret nobody knows like a rapture through his limbs,
the secret, the robot-like succession of joint isolations
    that simulate a body's reactions to
electric shock.
    This is how it tells itself: pops, ticks, waves and the

float. What
is poverty for, (p. 53)

. . . .

. . . Don't push me the limbs are whispering, don't push
'cause I'm close to the edge of the footwork is whispering
    down onto the sidewalk that won't give in won't go some other (p. 53)

This TV scene is contiguous to the next showing the American flag fluttering and the ironic comment "the greatest democracy on earth". It is followed by the protagonist's thoughts on the various forms of corporate and military violence:

like a muttering passing through a crowd and coming out an
  anthem,
    string of words on its search
  and destroy
    needing bodies, bodies. . . .
  I'm listening to where she must choke. I'm listening
    to where he must not be betrayed. I'm trying (p. 53)

The last two lines of the quoted stanza mark the point of transition between the two parts of the poem: the first, the protagonist watching violence on TV, and the second—thinking about Saint Teresa's words about the body. Her words come after long periods of self-inflicted torture and the temptation to transform her body, to make it more "spiritual" and worthy to carry Christ, despite his words of warning to her: "Don't try / to hold me in yourself (the air, hissing) but try to hold yourself / in me" (p. 54).

However, the present and the "historical" scenes are best merged with the metaphor "blowzy story" in the following line: "in the story that flutters blowzy over the body of the land". Saint Teresa's whispers to Christ to show her the ways to welcome him in her, which is essentially her corporal self-annulment, is the same "blowzy story" as our modern times ramming "radioactive waste into" in the body of earth. The adjective "blowzy" is phonetically close to "blouse", a piece of garment. This produces the aural association of a dirty blouse fluttering "over the body of the land". The story of violence therefore becomes a dirty garment which constantly covers the body of the earth:

 (whispering Lord, what will you have me
   do?) for his corporal
appearance
   in the light of the sixteenth century, in the story that flutters
blowzy over the body of the land
   we must now some how ram
the radioactive waste

   into. He (p. 54)

The final section of the poem brings together all the references to bodily violence and physical pain from the previous scenes and discourses—the TV scenes, Saint Theresa's quotes and the protagonist's speculations. The poem ends with another TV scene—jackpots and "silver dollars exploding" as another form of happiness or pain.

Section Six of the often anthologized poem, "The Dream of the Unified Field" (Materialism, 1993), develops the same idea of parts metonymically representing the whole, a cause representing its effects and vice versa, all in an attempt to capture the most elusive experience of all, "the reality of the self". The section quoted below makes reference to the instances and experiences captured in the five previous sections. Standing in the midst of a snow storm, the protagonist tries to arrange these sections together in order to understand, that is, appropriate them ("to make it mine"), and settle down "the storm" in her thinking:

The storm: I close my eyes and,
standing in it, try to make it mine. An inside
thing. Once I was. . . . once, once.
It settles, in my head, the wavering white
sleep, the instances—they stick, accrue,
grip up, connect, they do not melt,
I will not let them melt, they build, cloud and cloud,
I feel myself weak, I feel the thinking muscle-up—
outside, the talk-talk of the birds—outside,
strings and their roots, leaves inside the limbs, (p. 85)

There are many parts, causes and effects to ponder and connect the meaning of her life now; the relationship with her daughter practicing ballet as she did when young, the clues of the scene with her old ballet teacher, "Madame Sakaroff", all in black and gazing strangely in the mirrors of the dancehall. The urge to put all these parts together and to understand their connection becomes similar to the act of the ballet teacher gazing at herself in the mirrors in order to comprehend the reality of herself. It is the Self of a Russian émigré from Stalingrad made to exclaim after some news brought to her by a compatriot: "No one must believe in God again". The protagonist's past and present experiences ("the instances") are the contiguous elements, the parts which she is aware can stand for her whole Self, although not quite as she is struggling to put them together, and thus grasp the elusive whole. The experiences captured in the scenes of the poem all become tropes, multiple metonymies representing a Self,

which is difficult to see as one. The main trope though is the forgotten "leotard" which initiates the experience captured in the poem, its experiential frame. First of all, it stands for and defines the ballet and the mother-daughter relationship in which she, the mother, wonders "what should I know / to save you that I do not know". Thus, the "leotard", the primary metonymy, connects the present and the past scenes as contiguous elements on the metonymic string that produce the main structure of the poem.

It is interesting how each scene on this metonymic string melts into the next one. Walking in the snow and taking the forgotten "leotard" to her daughter, consequently moves into walking back home in the same scenery (or the same context) of falling snow and her watching a flock of starlings, their limbs and their blackness. This scene overlaps into the adjacent scenery of a "crow" with all the meanings it stirs in the "early evening snowlit scene". Finally, these two "black bird scenes" and the leotard scene, bring back the memory of the past scene of her childhood ballet lessons and the crucial instant of Madame Sakaroff in black, like a black bird, tying to "see" herself. The contiguous scenes do not move the discourse forward through comparisons, but through combinations of the parts of the whole. Thus, all the scenes establish metonymic relationships among themselves as parts of the same whole, the protagonist's life and her Self.

The snow storm also unites all the parts together, including the snowy day when Columbus appropriated San Nicolas Bay in the final, Seventh Section of the poem. Since the snow builds the experiential context of all scenes / parts of the poem, excluding Section Five, it somewhat loses its metaphoric force as a mental "storm", going on inside the protagonist's mind, and becomes a dead metaphor.

> anchored by these footsteps, now and now,
> the footstepping—now and now—carrying its vast
> white sleeping geography—mapped—
> not a lease—possession—"At the hour of vespers
> in a sudden blinding snow,
> they entered the harbor and he named it Puerto de
>
> 7
>
> San Nicolas and at its entrance he imagined he (p. 86)

The last part of Section Six and the entirety of Section Seven form a transitional relationship between the protagonist trying to grasp the sense of herself, and the Columbus scene. She ponders her presence "here" and "now", occupying and possessing a place within the universal geography and history of being ("Like a runner my body, my tiny piece of the century—minutes, houses going by", p. 86). Her possession of the spot "now and now" is compared to Columbus' expropriation and possession of a part of the American continent. Accordingly, the scenes which belong to completely dissimilar contexts—the life of a present day woman and Columbus' explorations and occupations—are metaphorically joined and compared. The simile with the force of metaphor is in service here of the expansion and occupation of new meditative and creative territories in the structure of the poem.

2   Conclusion

Analyzing these multifaceted poems, the focus of attention has been on some of their stylistic features and their tropological make-up. The analysis has been centered on two main principles of language construction, defined by Jakobson as selection from paradigmatic groups and combination into syntagmatic chains of linguistic entities, which are operative and therefore generate metaphoric or metonymic structures, respectively. In an immanentist and experiential poetry such as Graham's, everything begins, happens and ends within the frame of an immanent, particularized experience which happens to an individualized, particularized agent (here the protagonist). Therefore, the metonymic principle that produces causal, linear and prose-like discourse by combining contiguous linguistic units is congruent to the experiential and referential structures of Graham's events or occasions. These situate the discursive operations in concrete temporal and spatial frameworks.

In this experiential poetry, the protagonist discovers concepts, ideas, premises, and knowledge empirically, that is, during the ongoing process which the poem captures. These process-poems create an artistic illusion of operating without apriority of concepts, ideas or topics, as their identification and definition happens in the process of experiencing them. Again, the metonymic principle of combining of subsequent, that is, closest and contiguous points of focus or reference, corresponds more to the process-like discoveries of Graham's meditative and speculative thought in progress. The metaphoric selection and substitution of paradigmatically similar concepts from dissimilar and remote contexts and realms of discourse, presupposes and requires first identification and then definition of concepts for their comparison to be possible. Graham's spontaneous-like, and consequently, unpremeditated experiential discovery of concepts is directly opposed to the premeditated and conceptualized process of metaphoric selection and comparison.

However, the predominant principle of metonymy operating in this poetry does not exclude metaphoric structures and metaphors as tropes. The metaphoric, symbolic discourse is present in the more discursive, fragmentary and symbolic parts of the meditations. In addition, the parts of the longer poems most often stand in metaphoric or simile-like relationships with metaphoric

force. The results are links based on similarity, tokens of expansion of discourse in remotest realms, since simile, as Lodge says, "lends itself more readily than metaphor to the empiricist philosophical assumptions that historically underpin realism as literary mode" (p. 112). Graham's experiential poetry takes a tentative step in this direction.

One of the resulting features is immanence of the experience which this paper locates in Graham's "deeply" reflective voice from the meditations and the speculations, that is, in the discursive quality of her poetry. In its engagement with the discovery of answers about matter, God, time, beauty, physical laws and spirituality, this voice resorts to scientific-like observations and descriptions/narrations of sensory data and, consequently, to philosophical-like speculations and meditations on the same issues. These reflective occasions, as we have seen, generate different poetic discourses which resemble scientific, philosophical and spiritual ones. Yet, the presence of the human consciousness trying to reveal the visible and the invisible layers of matter and phenomena is not a general poetic voice but a concrete protagonist in a concrete experience. In this poetry, this concrete experience can be referred to as an *experiential frame of reference* or an *occasion*. Even the most speculative poems rarely appear outside of empirical frames of reference or experiential scenes which, by their details, construct the protagonist's concrete "identity". The result is, thus, immanentist and experiential poetry.

The presence of the concrete protagonist is felt even more deeply in the poems which communicate with the implied reader in a shared "actual", or "real", time. The result is primarily an ongoing process, captured as if happening in the "here" and "now", marked by various stylistic deictic devices. The poetic "project" of capturing process, as I have argued, also reiterates Graham's recurrent themes. Among these, the phenomenon of *passing time* and the constant changes it generates in the intersections of the material and human worlds, which if it is not for poetry, remains "unrecorded" by any history.

These important questions captured as processes lived through, generate metonymic linguistic structures. I have argued that the descriptions, narrations and gradual process-like discoveries, are intrinsically susceptible to metonymic structures since the same process of combining the congruent, contiguous concepts in what Jakobson calls "syntagmatic chains", is at work. Metaphoric structures, generated by comparing similar concepts from dissimilar and remote contexts, are present and remain imbedded parts in the predominantly metonymic poetic structures of Graham's poetry.

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