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# METAPHORS OF A CONFLICTED SELF IN THE SMITH JOURNAL OF SYLVIA PLATH

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents some of the results of a study that aims to investigate how mental states can be conveyed linguistically in texts of a personal nature. Figurative language, in particular metaphor and metonymy, are generally understood to play an important role in the expression of such complex phenomena (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Kövecses, 2000; Meier and Robinson, 2005). The study therefore looks at the metaphors used to convey mental states in the *Smith Journal* of 'The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath'. *Mental state* here refers to various aspects of cognitive functioning, but the focus, in particular, is on mental states of affect i.e. those mental states that are intrinsically valenced (Ortony and Turner, 1990). Sylvia Plath's journal provides particularly rich data due to the writer's linguistic creativity and documented mental health issues, the experience of which she continually explores. Specifically then, this paper focuses on metaphors of motion (or lack thereof) and so called *split self* metaphors.

Both manual intensive analysis and automated corpus methodologies are employed in the investigation: the Wmatrix corpus tool (Rayson, 2009) is used to identify semantic fields that are potential source and target domains in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of metaphor use. In depth analysis is then conducted manually on a sample of journal entries. The MIP procedure (Pragglejaz, 2007) is used for metaphor identification, and interpretations draw on research in other fields, especially psychology, on representations of affect. Metaphors of mental state are analyzed in terms of their implications for conveying a sense of intensity, valency and creativity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*I am afraid I am not solid, but hollow. I feel behind my eyes a numb, paralyzed cavern, a pit of hell, a mimicking nothingness* (Entry 154).

Certain sections of Sylvia Plath's journals are riddled with sentences like the one above. The phenomenological experience of highly subjective phenomena such as emotions, perceptions, sensations are difficult to describe using language. The most common way of doing so is by using metaphors. Ortony (1975) suggests that metaphors are necessary for communication because of the distinction between the discreteness of language as a set of symbols and the continuity/fluidity of experience which is what needs to be conveyed. Metaphors are necessary because they can compactly and efficiently convey a lot of information very vividly – information that is inexpressible literally. As a result even in psychology it is recognized that 'people often do not convey how they feel through plain emotion words, but rather through metaphor' (Junghaenel et al., 2008: 51). This paper explores some of the ways in which metaphorical expressions can convey the experience of such highly subjective phenomena, collectively termed *mental states*.

*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (Kukil, 2000) is an interesting text for two reasons. Firstly, the diary as a genre is particularly appropriate for an investigation of the linguistic manifestation of mental states, since they are by nature concerned with the self, and the self's private thoughts and emotions. Additionally, it is well-documented that Plath suffered from depression for most of her life (e.g. Brian, 2001; Cooper, 2003) and that she tried to commit suicide at least twice. She writes about these experiences in her diaries. Secondly, Plath's diary can be seen as an especially rich source of metaphorical language due to her budding talents as a writer and poet. For these reasons, it was assumed that her journals are fruitful grounds for the investigation of metaphors of mental states.

The focus of this paper is the first journal published in the collection (henceforth Smith Journal), as it has internal coherence and can be seen as a comprehensive representation of the time it covers. It begins in 1950, at the time Plath leaves home to go to university and ends just before her first suicide attempt in August 1953.

This paper aims to present a small part of the results of a larger investigation into the kinds of metaphorical expressions (representative of the self<sup>f</sup> or mental states) that are present in the Smith Journal. In particular it will focus on metaphors of motion (or lack thereof) and metaphors of a 'split self' (in a broad sense). The way in which metaphorical expressions and their patterning can convey various aspects of mental states (such as valency, intensity, control etc.) will also be touched upon briefly. In the process, some comments will be made on some of the methodological issues encountered during the investigation and the theoretical notions that were useful in circumventing them.

This investigation makes use of both manual intensive analysis and automated corpus approaches. Corpus tools (the Wmatrix software of Rayson, 2009) are used to examine the complete Smith Journal and highlight semantic fields that potentially carry relevant

metaphorical content. In addition, Wmatrix is also used to explore in detail the key terms and semantic domains identified in the manual analysis. The manual intensive approach aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the way metaphors pattern, combine and interact in a sample of 18 entries in the Smith Journal.

After discussing some key terminology, this paper will look at a preliminary extended example from the data to illustrate some of its overall characteristics. It will briefly touch upon some of the theoretical frameworks that can be useful in dealing with texts of this nature. The paper will then examine two groups of metaphors in more detail: motion metaphors and split self metaphors. A final section will briefly consider the wider implications of these findings.

### 1.1. KEY NOTIONS

At this stage it is necessary to clarify the approach and some of the key terminology that this paper will adopt. 'Mental state', for instance, is notoriously difficult to define. However, for the purposes of this paper it is to be understood as various aspects of cognitive functioning (e.g. making decisions, thinking, remembering etc.), but the focus, in particular, will be on mental states of affect i.e. those mental states that are intrinsically valenced (Ortony and Turner, 1990) i.e. are either positive or negative in their experience.

The approach to metaphor that this paper takes is based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1982) conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and accepts (with some reservations) that systematic linguistic patterns are representative of patterns of thought. The linguistic metaphors identified will be grouped into quasi-conceptual metaphors. However, although this is a CMT-style analysis, the homogeneity of the data requires that any patterns are seen as *systematic metaphors* (Cameron, 2008) rather than conceptual ones. According to Cameron (2008) systematic metaphor can be seen as a discourse alternative to conceptual metaphor and allows the researcher to remain relatively close to the linguistic examples in the description of patterns.

Metaphor itself will be defined as an instance of language use where the contextual meaning of a word or phrase is different from and to be understood in comparison to the basic meaning of the same word or phrase (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). For example, in the sentence *For years, Sonia Gandhi has struggled to convince Indians that she is fit to wear the mantle of the political dynasty into which she married, let alone to become premier* there are several metaphorically used lexical items. Focusing on *mantle*, the Pragglejaz Group (2007) explains that it is metaphorical because in context it 'refers to the role that the Ghandi [sic] family has played in the political leadership of India' (2007:9). The basic sense however would be in reference to a piece of outer clothing usually worn as a symbol of power. These two meanings are different, but they can be understood in comparison with one another: 'We can understand the role of political leadership that someone may take on in a democracy after other members of their family in terms of the garment that is traditionally worn by a monarch' (ibid.).

Metaphor identification, then, is based on MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and makes the following coding decision: firstly, one lexical unit of metaphor is to be understood as one word

or multi-word unit (e.g. auxiliary + main verb, personal names, phrasal verbs, fixed collocations and idioms). Secondly, the focus is only on lexical words rather than function words, but prepositional adverbs, such as *up*, *down*, *back*, *forward* are also considered. Finally, delexicalized/grammaticalized words such as *have*, *do*, *give*, *take*, *make*, *get*, *put*, *like* (Deignan 2005) are excluded. The basic meanings are identified with the help of the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary (<https://www.oed.com>).

Some of these decisions reflect an interest in the more unusual metaphorical expressions. I am using *unusual* purposefully in order to avoid the more common and theoretically loaded terms of *(un)conventional*, *novel* and *creative*. The interest in more unusual metaphorical expressions comes from the focus on metaphors of mental states. It is my assumption that highly conventional metaphorical expressions of mental states such *I am in love* reflect the way language functions more than they reflect the mental state of love, for example. On the other hand, more unusual metaphors may reflect the characteristics of the mental state more than the characteristic of the language.

## 1.2. A PRELIMINARY EXAMPLE

The nature of the data at hand is best introduced by means of an example. This example will be useful in illustrating some of the methodological issues that surfaced during the investigation and in briefly commenting on how metaphorical expressions can convey various aspects of mental states.

Example 1 was written on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1952 during Plath's second year at Smith College. The entry shows frustration, despair and fear, and begins with a phrase that can be seen as a culmination of these feelings: *God, if ever I have come close to wanting to commit suicide, it is now*. There is little indication of cause of the negative mental state, but Plath alludes to the burden of duties, the uncertainty of the future and the unfulfilled need to talk to somebody. In the extended entry, Plath does eventually recognize that she is in fact privileged and has no rational reason for feeling the way she does. She decides to at least pretend to be happy. In the excerpt, the metaphorical expressions relating to mental states or the self are underlined.

### EXAMPLE 1

- i I am afraid I am not solid, but hollow. I feel behind my eyes a numb,  
ii paralyzed cavern, a pit of hell, a mimicking nothingness. I never thought, I  
iii never wrote, I never suffered. I want to kill myself, to escape from  
iv responsibility, to crawl back abjectly into the womb. I do not know who I am,  
v where I am going — and I am the one who has to decide the answers to  
vi these hideous questions. I long for a noble escape from freedom — I am  
vii weak, tired, in revolt from the strong constructive humanitarian faith which  
presupposes a healthy, active intellect and will. There is no where to go.  
(from Entry 154)

In terms of metaphorical expressions, the first aspect to note is textual complexity. Take the notion of emptiness or hollowness for example: firstly, it is textually repeated (Semino, 2008) using the near synonyms *not solid*, *hollow*, *cavern*, *pit*, *nothingness* (these expressions can all

be subsumed under the broad source domain of EMPTY CONTAINER). The textual repetition can express increased intensity of a mental state. Secondly, the EMPTY CONTAINER metaphor is conceptually elaborated (Lakoff and Turner, 1989) as something that is localized behind the eyes; it is specified as *hell* and conceptually extended (Lakoff and Turner, 1989) as *mimicking*. An alternative way of looking at *mimicking*, is to think of it as an example of compounding (Goatly, 1997): a metaphorical expression (*nothingness* - an example of the BODY IS A CONTAINER METAPHOR - to refer to a mental state) is referred to metaphorically again by means of personification. More specifically, in this case there is a scenario in which THE BODY IS AN EMPTY CONTAINER and that EMPTY CONTAINER stands for the mental state. This is then also animated/personified with the ability to interact.

Aside from textual repetition and conceptual elaboration, Example 1 also contains a textual cluster (Semino, 2008) of metaphors. In lines i-ii for example, the source domains of EMPTINESS, RELIGION (*hell*), LACK OF SENSATION (*numb, paralysed*), and LACK OF MOTION metaphors (*paralyzed*) can all be found. The various source domains in the cluster interact to create a more comprehensive idea of the mental state and also help to express valency. For example, the source domains of HELL and PARALYSIS carry strong negative connotations that are transferred onto the target domain. *Paralyzed* can additionally be seen as an example of a *nested metaphor* (Charteris-Black and Musolff, 2003). 'Nesting' is the idea that one linguistic token can evoke more than one source domain. In the case of *paralyzed*, at least three source domains are evoked: the inability to move, a physical illness, and lack of sensation.

It is also worth noting the interaction between the literal (albeit potentially hyperbolic) and metaphorical expressions as in line iii for example. First of all, *I want to kill myself* helps to specify the target domain for the subsequent metaphorical expressions (*escape, crawl back, womb*), which would otherwise have to be generically described as a 'negative mental state'. Instead, in this case it can be described with some certainty as suicidality. It also helps in setting up a scenario that surrounding metaphorical expressions can be attracted into (Cameron and Low, 2004). For example, *womb* is not normally associated with anything negative (or a mental state for that matter), rather it is seen as nurturing, warm and a place of comfort. However, in the present scenario, it represents the consequence or end point of suicide.

Example 1 also demonstrates how a variety of metaphors create complex scenarios ('mini-narratives' – Musolff, 2006) of mental states. In the 'scenario' described above, initially the only human participant is Plath. However, her own mental state becomes a participant when it takes on the role of *mimicking*. In addition, Plath's mental state is conceptualized as *hell*. This in itself could be seen as a mini-scenario involving sinners, torture, heat etc. which are mapped onto the target domain of the mental state. In this sense, although the various linguistic metaphors can be linked to different source domains, the way they are combined has its own coherence.

As indicated by some of the references so far, there are a number of theoretical frameworks that are useful in accounting for the various types of complexity embedded in the data. Kövecses' (2000) collection of conceptual metaphors of emotion, as well as Stefanowitsch's

(2006) extension on those, can be used as a quasi comparative norm and an anchor for the systematic metaphors in the text. Additionally, Semino's (2008) notions of textual patterning (in particular, repetition, recurrence, clustering, and (textual) extension) can account for creativity on the textual level; while Lakoff and Turner's (1989) extension, elaboration, and combination, in particular, are useful in describing the creativity on the conceptual level. I would like to echo Semino (2010) in stating that both the conceptual and textual levels are necessary in adequately accounting for metaphorical patterns in any given text.

## 2. METAPHORS OF MOTION (OR LACK THEREOF)

The analysis of metaphorical expressions in Sylvia Plath's journals produced a number of interesting potential patterns. For example, it appears that inner conflict (or negative mental states) tends to be expressed with a higher number of and more complex metaphorical expressions than positive ones. In addition, negative mental states are often conceptualized as physical states (e.g. as a physical illness) or as opponents (some of these will be discussed below). However, there are two particularly interesting patterns of systematic metaphors that I would like to focus on here. These are the conceptualizations of negative mental states as either stagnation, or movement in a direction that is undesirable (c.f. traditional life is a JOURNEY metaphor); and conceptualizations of negative mental states as a divisive inner conflict leading to split self metaphors. In the following examples, metaphorical expressions referring to mental states are underlined. The metaphorical expressions to focus on for each example are also in bold.

Various metaphors of motion (or lack thereof) account for about 21% of the metaphorical expressions of mental states that were identified in the manual intensive analysis. Linguistic manifestations of the various subcategories of these motion metaphors can be seen in Example 2, Example 3 and Example 4.

### EXAMPLE 2 LACK OF MOVEMENT METAPHORS<sup>ii</sup>

- i. to feel his mind soaring, reaching, and mine **caged**... (154)
- ii. don't ignore all the people you could know, **shutting** yourself **up** in a numb defensive vacuum (July 6)
- iii. Your room is not your **prison**. You are. (July 6)
- iv. look at the hell I am wallowing in, nerves **paralyzed**, **action nullified** (154)
- v. you are **paralyzed**, **shocked**, thrown into a nausea, a **stasis**. (July 6)

Admittedly, some of the expressions in Example 2 (especially *caged*) are difficult to conceive of as motion metaphors. Perhaps a more accurate description would be to say that all these expressions involve the impossibility to move. However, motion metaphor is to be understood as an umbrella term here. The linguistic expressions in bold in Example 2, can be seen as different versions of the lack of movement metaphor that frequently occurs in the Smith Journal. Movement in this sense can be interpreted as part of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY METAPHOR, where progress in life is conceptualized as movement forward. In fact, this conceptual metaphor can be seen as an interpretational basis for all movement metaphors discussed

here. Lines i-iii in Example 2 could be grouped under a narrower source domain of EXTERNAL PHYSICAL RESTRICTION for example, that limits movement, such as a cage or a prison. The linguistic examples in these three lines, conceptualize the mental state as being a container that encompasses and limits the self (or the mind as in Example 2i). These could be interpreted as a subversion of Kövecses' (2000) EMOTION<sup>iii</sup> IS SOMETHING IN A CONTAINER. Instead of the mental state being something inside something else (usually the body), it is the container itself. Although this type of metaphor is not usually noted in the literature on metaphors of emotions, it has been noted in a slightly different form by McMullen and Conway (2002). They state that depression in particular is often conceptualized as a space that is difficult to get out of. What is also somewhat unusual in i and ii is that the external restriction is conceptualized as self-imposed. Most literature on depression and similar mental states notes that there is often a lack of agency on the part of the sufferer – they do not attribute responsibility to themselves for the way that they are feeling. Yet the linguistic examples here suggest some element of acknowledged responsibility.

Lines iv and v in Example 2 are also examples of the LACK OF MOVEMENT source domain. However, in these cases the restriction is an internal physical one. Although, as noted in the discussion of the preliminary example, *paralysis* is an example of a nested metaphor and can carry the meanings of more than one source domain, in this case, the meaning of lack of motion seems to dominate. This is probably due its attraction into the lack of motion scenario by the repetition of similar expressions that do not have multiple meanings (e.g. *action nullified, stasis*). In the context of the other lack of movement metaphors, what I find particularly interesting about the idea of a physical inability to move is that it seems even more difficult to overcome than an externally imposed restriction. In this sense, McMullen and Conway's (2002) comment about the difficulty of overcoming depression as expressed in spatial metaphors seems particularly appropriate.

Aside from metaphors that suggest a complete lack of movement, there are examples of motion metaphors where although there is movement, it is not of the productive kind.

#### EXAMPLE 3 UNPRODUCTIVE MOVEMENT METAPHORS

- i. I am submerged in circling ego (117)
- ii. I am spinning in a temporary vacuum (36)
- iii. look at the hell I am wallowing in (154)

In Example 3 there is some motion in each case, a circular motion in fact. However, in terms the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor again, these can be interpreted as examples of unproductive movement. The circular motion described in these examples does not progress forwards, but remains in stationary. The circular movement in these examples (an additional linguistic manifestation from elsewhere in the Smith Journal is *whirlpool*), can be compared to a 'vicious cycle' – it is fast, circular movement outside the person's control. It also carries the implication of being difficult to get out of. In addition, in Example 3iii (as in *whirlpool*), there is an entailment of downward motion. In iii this is due to the presence of *hell* which combines with the idea of movement to create a more comprehensive sense of the mental state. McMullen



and Conway (2002) among others have pointed out the connection between DOWNWARD MOVEMENT metaphors and depression in particular, but circularity has not been discussed extensively.

The final group of metaphors that I would like to include here I will discuss in a slightly different way to the previous ones. Example 4 includes references to actions that involve movement: *escape*, *withdraw* and *retreat* are of particular interest at this point. These expressions themselves entail movement away from something unpleasant – a struggle for example and they could also be interpreted as examples of movement backwards in the sense of LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

EXAMPLE 4 METAPHORS OF MOVEMENT 'IN THE WRONG DIRECTION'

- i. I want to kill myself, to **escape from responsibility**, to **crawl back** abjectly into the **womb**. I do not know who I am, where I am going — and I am the one who has to decide the answers to these hideous questions. I long for a **noble escape from freedom** (154)
- ii. begging for sleep, **withdrawing into the dark, warm, fetid escape from action** (154)
- iii. Perverse desire to **retreat into not caring**. (July 14)

However, in addition to the metaphorical expressions, in these examples I have highlighted the 'origins' and 'destinations' of the relevant movements. Escape is away from responsibility, freedom and action, while withdraw and retreat is into escape and not caring. There seems to be an interesting pattern emerging from these examples, so the relevant key words were explored in the whole of the Smith Journal, using Wmatrix (Rayson, 2009). Concordance 1 and Concordance 2 below, show all occurrences of the words *escape* and *retreat* in the Smith Journal.

CONCORDANCE 1 ALL OCCURENCES OF 'ESCAPE' IN THE SMITH JOURNAL

|  |
|--|
| girlfriend ) and yet to escape the subtle feminine snare and be free of the  |
| e is probably trying to escape from . He would then be selfish admitting als |
| ly , as I was trying to escape from something ) I wanted to withdraw from a  |
| prehension of war , of escape , deep rooted your graceful athletic build ,   |
| e to procrastinate , to escape from the rigid cage of study routine I have r |
| ow . Another device of escape . It seems that every year I wince and grove   |
| the dark , warm , fetid escape from action , from responsibility . No good   |
| ant to kill myself , to escape from responsibility , to crawl back abjectly  |
| ns . I long for a noble escape from freedom I am weak , tired , in revolt fr |
| sure whether it is an escape or a refreshing cure from cooping yourself in   |
| s , the leg has been an escape . All the pamperings given to the tuberculos  |
| higher education as an escape from responsibility , but I feel there is so   |

## CONCORDANCE 2 ALL INSTANCES OF 'RETREAT' IN THE SMITH JOURNAL

```
me , speed of time , I retreat into non-thought merely into Epicurean sens  
get sick , go mad , or retreat , like a child into blubbering on someone e  
en withdrawing' into a retreat of numbness : it is so much safer not to fe  
e of my burdens , so I retreat , in a numb womb of purposeless business wi  
my own . and then , I retreat and revel in poetry and literature where th  
ccept , affirm and not retreat into a masochistic mental hell where jealou  
sal desire to escape , retreat , not talk to anybody . Thesis panic lack o  
e . Perverse desire to retreat into not caring . I am incapable of loving
```

What these two concordances show (and what the exploration of other relevant terms such as withdraw and crawl back corroborate), is that *retreat* is always into a different place, e.g. non-thought, blubbering, numbness, womb, masochistic mental hell, not caring. *Escape*, on the other hand, is always *away from* somewhere e.g. myself, something, rigid cage of routine, action, responsibility, freedom. The interesting thing about these two patterns is that Plath seems to want to retreat to places that, most people would agree, should be avoided, while she wants to escape from things that most people would consider normal parts of everyday life. In this sense there seems to be a conflict between 'normal' perceptions and how reality is perceived by Plath.

### 3. CONFLICTED SELF METAPHORS

At this stage I would like to turn to metaphors where the idea of conflict is more fully explored with examples of metaphors of explicit inner conflict. I shall tentatively use the umbrella term *conflicted* or *split self* metaphors to denote these examples. There are instances in the Journal where Plath tends to write about different selves within her. She seems to separate out various parts of her and write about them as if they were independent. This effect does not always come about solely through metaphors. For example, in *My stubborn unimagined self cannot conceive of him* (117) and *But my honest self revolted at this, hated me for doing this* (155), *self* is potentially used metonymically (as it refers only to a part of the whole)<sup>iv</sup>. However, the sense of split is achieved more by the fact that a part of the self is being contrasted via the adjectives with another part of the self. There is added metaphoricity in that the part of the self is also personified in these examples by *conceive*, *revolted* and *hated*.

Finding examples of such references to a split self using corpus methods is not difficult. The best indicator or key word is *self*. In fact, a search for precisely that lexical item produced 20 concordance lines (Concordance 3) of which 8 were instances of the metonymical use of *self*. The frequency (8/20) suggests that this is a very common way of indicating a distinction between selves.

CONCORDANCE 3 ALL INSTANCES OF 'SELF' IN THE SMITH JOURNAL

suous haze . Sure , marriage is self expression , but if only my art  
comes from a vague core of the self - - like a disease of the blood  
y , war , economics , death and self . What a pathetic blighting of  
m I ? My stubborn unimaginative self can not conceive of him as a f  
s , a miscellaneous crowding of self and activities and a brief nome  
happy with my newfound selfless self . Or I could devote myself to  
've got to feel emancipated and self important somehow . God Forbid  
ttle ambitions for my conceited self , but shall be content in serv  
I can only love ( if that means self denial or does it mean self fu  
ans self denial or does it mean self fulfillment ? Or both ? ) by g  
oth ? ) by giving up my love of self and ambitions why , why , why .  
being quite only concerned for self alone , but mostly so . An eas  
w . Next year I will not be the self of this year now And that is w  
re not the wiseguy in your best self , but so much more - fine and s  
world touch one . But my honest self revolted at this , hated me for  
. My seventeen-year-old radical self would perhaps be horrified at  
cision , but the freeing of the self is part of this , too . I must  
can counter my vibrant dynamic self : sexual and intellectual . and  
reate & love people & give of self like mad . go outward in love  
t force beyond your own limited self . God , god , god : where are

Split selves have been discussed in detail by, most notably, Emmott (2002), but also by Lakoff (1996). While I will refer to these authors, my notion of split selves needs to be understood as a wider umbrella term. Additionally, here I will mainly be discussing more explicitly metaphorical examples.

As these metaphors deal with the idea of 'self', I find it useful to work with a definition of sorts to specify the ways in which a self can split. Ramachandran (2003) proposes that the self should be understood as consisting of four interconnected characteristics: continuity of time (a sense of past, present and future), unity or coherence (sense of completeness), embodiment or ownership, and agency (Ramachandran, 2003). Based on this definition, a 'split' in the self can occur at least at the first three levels (also see Emmott, 2002<sup>v</sup>).

In terms of continuity, there can be a split between the selves at a Time A and Time B. Because people inevitably change over time, the fact that someone feels like a different person (in the everyday sense) at the present from ten years earlier does not automatically constitute a split in the sense that I am using the term. What I would consider a split in the self are cases where the old self and the new self are not reconcilable. In the same way, there can be a split in terms of unity when two irreconcilable or very clearly distinguishable parts or even complete selves are present at the same point in time. The irreconcilability can be manifested in overt conflict or disagreement between the various selves or self parts. Another common form of split is that between the mind and body, which falls under embodiment. A mild or temporary discrepancy between the mind and the body is quite a common experience (the body is tired, but the mind is alert for example), but a split occurs when either of the components develops a will or agency of its own. This is also the case if the split occurs not between the mind and the body, but between two body parts for example. A split of both embodiment and unity

could occur in the case of what Barnden (1997b) calls MIND PARTS AS PERSONS metaphors. ‘Under this metaphor a person’s mind is viewed as having “parts” that are themselves people – or at least complete minds – having their own thoughts, hopes, emotions, and so forth. [...] Different inner persons can have conflicting mental states, or a mental state held by one can be failed to be held by another’ (Barden, 1997b:4).

The main examples of split self in the Smith Journal are splits in unity and/or embodiment and account for about 10% of the metaphors of mental states examined in the manual intensive analysis. Example 5 is a collection of these types of metaphors (note that some elements of Example 5iii were discussed above).

#### EXAMPLE 5 SPLIT SELF METAPHORS

- i. to feel his mind soaring, reaching, and mine caged, crying impotent, self-reviling an imposter (154)
- ii. it was good to let go let the tight mask fall off, and the bewildered, chaotic fragments pour out (155)
- iii. My world falls apart crumbles. "The center does not hold." There is no integrating force (154)

There is a strong sense of conflict in Example 5i. Firstly, the example suggests a split of embodiment, in the sense that the mind is caged (as discussed above) separately from the body. Secondly, the mind is endowed with a personality of its own, suggesting a split in unity. This is similar to Barnden’s (1997a) MIND PARTS AS PERSONS OR OTHER ANIMATE BEINGS metaphor, with the exception that the whole mind is conceptualized as a separate person. There is not only conflict (*crying*, *self-reviling*) between the selves in Example 5i, but also a sense of desperation. This is evoked by *impotent*, which can be seen as another nested metaphor (belonging both to the source domain of physical illness and lack of movement). Additionally, *imposter* (aside from being another form of personification) has connotations of subversion and intentional deceit.

Lines ii and iii in Example 5 are perhaps more marginal cases of the documented split self metaphors. In fact they could also be called ‘fragmentation’ or ‘coming apart’ metaphors – there is clear reference to the falling apart, or disintegration of either the self or the surroundings. However, the disintegration refers to the sense of unity – of being one coherent being. In these examples the sense of unity disappears, creating another form of the split self metaphor. What is particularly interesting about these examples, is that there is an equal and opposite pattern of metaphors of positive mental states. Positive mental states are sometimes referred to as *self-integrity* or as being *integrated*. Although the fragmentation metaphor is not particularly well documented in the psychology literature, Goatly et al. (2002-2005) do include examples of the MENTAL DISTURBANCE IS DIVISION/INCOMPLETENESS metaphor in his Metalude databank. It seems that these examples fall into that category. In addition, *mask* in Example 5ii is a more explicitly metaphorical manifestation of the self metaphors discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999). It could be seen as a distinction between an inner and an outer self (or a private and public self).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have discussed some of the metaphorical expressions of mental states that are present in the Smith Journal of Sylvia Plath. I briefly mentioned the systematic metaphors such as MENTAL STATES ARE PHYSICAL STATES and NEGATIVE MENTAL STATE ARE OPPONENTS, but I mainly focused on metaphors of MOTION and SPLIT SELF. Metaphors of MOTION accounted for 21% of metaphors of mental states in the Smith Journal and had three main types: lack of motion, unproductive motion, and motion in the 'wrong' direction. SPLIT SELF metaphors were about half as frequent in the Smith Journal but were interesting for their expression of inner conflict.

I also briefly touched upon the way in which metaphorical expressions can convey a sense of intensity or valency. It was argued that a sense of intensity (of the mental state) in the Smith Journal can also be created by textual patterning (mainly repetition), as well as interaction with literal and hyperbolic references. Other aspects of mental states are most often conveyed through the interaction of various source domains in textual clusters and through the (sometimes multiple) entailments of vehicle terms. In this process, the usefulness of some corpus methods was also commented on.

In terms of a real life application, these results could be useful in the context of psychotherapy. McMullen and Conway (2002) recommend that therapists focus more closely on the types of metaphors that their patients use and their potential implications. Focusing on the metaphors discussed in the present paper then, one could perhaps address the sense of 'being stuck' that is evident in the motion metaphors by helping patients recognize patterns of language (and thought), develop different patterns of conceptualization and 'move beyond' unproductive patterns. Similarly, where metaphors of split selves persist, therapy could be targeted at reintegrating or at least reconciling the multiple selves. Future research should focus on describing the patterns of different mental states (perhaps assessed through psychological tests) in order to create a typology of metaphors associated with them. These could then have wider application in psychotherapy.

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## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> I have included 'the self' in this specification as people's view of themselves is connected to their mental state. As such, descriptions of the self can be indicative of mental states.

<sup>ii</sup> Although some of the pronouns in these examples, are second person pronouns, they do still refer to Sylvia Plath, making the metaphors expressions of her mental state. The change in pronoun use is explained by the fact that some of the entries in the Smith Journal were written using *you* to designate Plath.

<sup>iii</sup> Although 'emotion' is a narrower concept than 'mental state' for the purposes of the comparison of their metaphors the two will be treated as synonymous.

<sup>iv</sup> It should be noted that very similar examples have been analyzed as metaphorical by Lakoff (1996) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999). They are supposedly common and the various 'selves' are associated with different social or professional roles for example (e.g. someone can be a mother as well as a daughter; someone can *speak professionally*), or can consist of the distinction between a public and a private persona.

<sup>v</sup> Although Emmott (2002) discusses similar types of split selves, it should be noted that my own definition is somewhat different from (and broader than) Emmott's. For Emmott, "cases of a character or real life individual being divided and/or duplicated in any way" (2002:154) are considered split selves. My own understanding includes all of these as well, but additionally includes a fragmentation of identity.