Metaphor, metonymy and polysemy

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The relationship between polysemy and conventional metaphor and metonymy is well-known. Metaphor and metonymy are generally acknowledged as important and frequent triggers for semantic change (see, for example, Traugott 2012); in some cases, a metaphorical or metonymical sense can become dominant and lead to the loss of a literal sense, but more commonly it becomes an additional sense. A single lexeme may develop multiple metaphorical and metonymical senses over time. For example, among the meanings of the adjective *green*, are the metaphorical senses 'ill', 'inexperienced' and 'jealous', and the metonymical sense 'unripe', while the related noun has many metonymical senses including 'area of grass' and, in the plural, 'vegetables' (discussed in more detail in Kay and Allan 2015).

However, the conventional metaphorical and metonymical senses of individual lexemes cannot always be neatly separated from their other senses, and these senses often interact and influence one another in complex ways. To date, relatively little work on metaphor and metonymy examines individual semantic histories in detail, but overlooking historical developments risks oversimplifying the way that metaphorical and metonymical meanings become established. For example, many loanwords have been borrowed into English with only the metaphorical senses that are found in their donor languages, so that it is questionable whether the meaning of the English form can accurately be described as metaphorical; *pedigree* and *muscle* are clear examples of this process (Allan 2014; Allan 2015). Furthermore, ignoring the histories of lexemes within a language risks erroneous conclusions about their semantics. Geeraerts (2015) considers the metaphorical senses of *antenna*, and refers to the synchronic 'misreading' of a metaphorical sense as the 'dominant reading only' fallacy. Another example is explored by Hough (2004), who argues convincingly that *understand* 'comprehend' does not relate to the posture sense of *stand*, but derives from Old English *stand* meaning 'shine', and is therefore a light metaphor.

In this study I consider the complex semantic histories of lexemes including *dull*, which develops metaphorical meanings that do not appear to represent the kind of straightforward A>B mapping that might be assumed. I argue that polysemy can be an important factor in the emergence of conventional metaphorical and metonymical senses, and needs to be acknowledged more prominently in standard accounts.

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