

Bears, Pelicans and Pigs

In this kasina I am mentally at Cannon Beach, Oregon watching the pelicans feeding in the surf before sunset. They dip and scoop until their beak pouches overflow like wallets at a philanthropist's fair. When the light is right, the zone of glazed beach between ocean and dry sand reflects a high cloud cover giving the illusion that one is walking on hard glass through a sandwich of clouds. The fishing birds making brackets with themselves appear to be birds fishing for light. Can anyone ever get enough? It is a perfect passage into a passage about metaphor.

There are three lines, three figures in the air, I want to follow into the use of metaphor in designing. The first I'll describe as recognition and friendship. The second, which I call construction, composition and deconstruction, introduces the idea of first, second and higher order metaphoric junctions. The third line is interwoven with the other two and explores the role of metaphor as a gatekeeper in environmental information systems. I use the poem Language Я Toys as

Language Я Toys

Pelicans are pigs. [literally untrue]
 Pelicans are pigs. [metaphorically true]
 Pelicans Я pigs. [coastal, commercial humor]
 Toys Я Us.© [Ad symbol & metaphor]

Decon series:

(1) RUN:

10. Us Я Toys [Reverse order → meaningchange.]
 20. Us Toys Я [What? goldfish? ABCD goldfish?OSM Я]
 30. Us Я ...Toys Я [intransitive, predicate challenged, SubjectObjectGate]
 40. Us Я ? or Я Us? [Usy, hUssy,Hussar, horses arse: need some R & Я , Я !! & ahRRR!! are n'are,] Return:
 50. Toys Я or Я Toys? [order/spaces count] Speak:
 60. Toys' Я Us [try replacing/ shifting emphasis]
 70. Toys' Я 'Us' [requires' equal' emphasis'; resists'tinkering']

(2) RUNDONE: Metaphors Я malleable. [not!]
 Is love ever inermis? [prick! blood]

Я we serious?

We Я ? Я Wee?

Fun = nuF [an ≠ sandwich]

Metaphor is not a palindrome.

Ursa Major is not Major Ursa.

Ursa Major is a bear.

Major Ursa is a pig.

a means for discovering and pursuing my thoughts about these subjects in what Joseph Epstein has called “the crucible of composition.” Making the poem helps me think about what I am thinking about. The simple principles it illustrates I find surprisingly applicable to environmental planning and design.

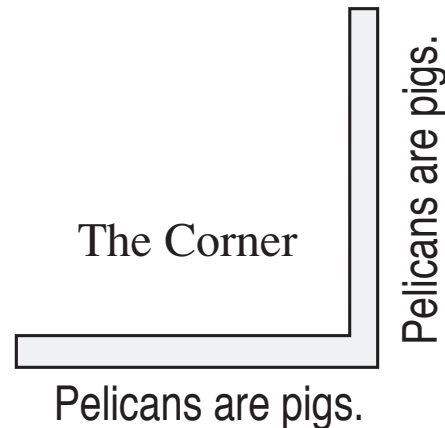
Three additional figures are woven into the narrative, *The Corner*; *The Metaphoric Wall*; and the *Young/Old Woman*. In a manner of speaking, it will be necessary to make it around the corner, over the wall and come to a more complex understanding of your relationship to the women that you meet.

Friendship

The poem begins with two lines that are exactly the same, but have distinctly different meanings. The first is untrue, the second is true. How could that be? If the words are exactly the same and their order hasn't changed, then something else must have happened between the lines. My explanation is that both writer and reader have mentally gone around a very special corner. They have purposefully and quite naturally altered their valuing relationship to the poem through an actual, not metaphoric, change in their state of mind.

In the first line of the poem I am the good comparative anatomist concluding

that the key characteristics of the two organisms, at least at a gross level, are not adequately congruent. But then I continue, because I want to draw a comparison between two living systems that expresses an idea, makes a point and furthers a purpose *other* than factual description. Turning this corner is such a commonplace and occurs so normally that



it is easy to overlook. The poem makes a point, if you will, of this shift into metaphoric thinking.

Derrida has written that the Western tradition of privileging speech over writing (phonocentrism over logocentrism) has had a profound influence on Western philosophy. Modernity's insistence on dividing reality into separate realms of fact and value has had at least as much influence. Without thinking we continue to privilege the former over the latter, and it is thought obvious that the realm

of fact is the home of truth.

Pelicans are pigs has to do with factual truth. Pelicans are pigs also to do with what I will call the truth of value. How can both be truth if only one is real? If they are both a form of truth, then we have learned something very important about truth and about ourselves. An important often overlooked facet of reality is always just around *The Corner*.

Friendship has to do with knowing something about metaphors and how they work. Fairly recent writings, such as Lakoff and Johnson's *More Than Cool Reason*, expertly move us beyond our modernistic biases and make a strong case for the centrality of metaphor in human language and experience. Their research is a treasure unearthed from the common experience we all share.

Metaphor, they tell us, is something more than an amusing way to embellish facts, something more than a rhetorical device to fancy up plain speaking. It all begins when we begin to see (*to see is to understand*) one thing (our source, e.g., pelican) in terms of another (our target - pig). We only compare the target's parts that are relevant to our purpose (they just can't get enough). And metaphors only map one way. Pigs are pelicans, we readily acknowledge, does seem a bit of a stretch. We are *in love* because of the basic metaphor, *emotional states are locations*, and it is our common experience to be spatially

in or out of somewhere. Metaphor allows us to make such intangible things as ideas or emotional states tangible. And much, much more. Since poets and designers are heavily invested in the business of making the intangible tangible, a deeper acquaintance and partnership with metaphor seems well advised.

Objectivist's take note: if there is commonality in human valuing and metaphor is grounded in experience, then perhaps all is not lost.

2. Construction, Composition, Deconstruction?

Places are poems - literally untrue.
 Places are poems - metaphorically true.
 The relational overlap I see is their common use of metaphoric complexity and density and that both are intentionally composed. Poems make their living from metaphoric density. They are a purposefully patterned mixture of associations and allusions, typically squeezed into an economical space. Environmental places metaphorically appear even denser and more complex. I need to return to the poem to explain what I mean by metaphoric complexity.

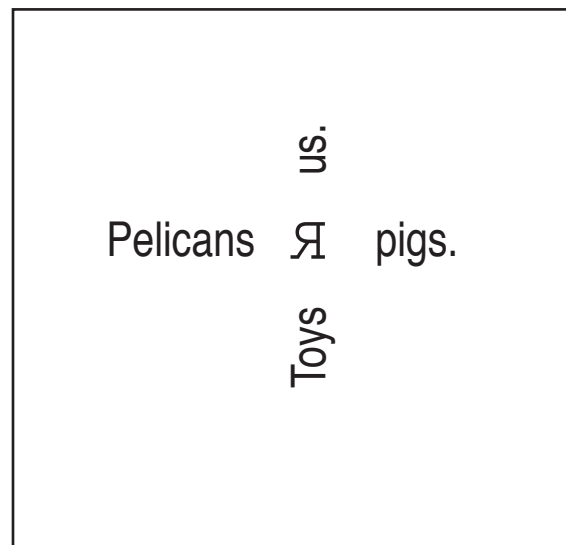
Pelicans are pigs.

After the initial theme, I begin an as-

sociation with a second metaphor which becomes the target of the first. I explicitly overlay the backward R which so succinctly and poignantly portrays the state of being in childhood. Yes, pelicans are playful. Soaring and swooping from a human perspective may be work but looks like great fun and calls up memories of everything from ski slopes to water slides. This is a second order metaphor.

I can write this second order metaphor in another way if I am willing to leave the linotype order of the poem and construct an image. If I make an overlay with a 90° twist I have created a metaphoric junction, two metaphors wrapped around an ontological are. Ahrrr!, I say like an old pirate who has discovered treasure.

Are there such things then as third order metaphors, one might wonder in the



spirit of those who filled in the periodic table of elements? Fourth order...?

It then occurs to me that the commercial and copyrighte R

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is a similar piece of metaphoric overlay and a very good design. Its impact comes from its triple meaning which connects humanity's identity with its toys, the place that sells them and the memory of childhood.

The Moth and the Moon appears to also be a good candidate for a third order variety. I intend it as the intersection of three primary relationships which when related make the full point. Fullness (the state of being full) is the intersection with, 1. a moon which is full of phase; 2. a fullness of valuing (which is meaning); and 3. a fullness of becoming (which is formative fruition). It is again easier to conceptualize in the form of a diagram.

The poem momentarily dodges the question of four-ness and more-ness because at this point I begin to wonder about the relationship between metaphors and deconstruction and decide to test the thought.

Meaningful deconstruction (is this an oxymoron?) has become an expert process we are told. One learns how to look for the weak point in a text in order to start the unraveling of signs and the slipping of significations. Since the process is fun-

damentally anti-metaphysical, I decide to write an algorithm in Basic language (10, 20, 30...Return) in the spirit of the backward R. Aren't places also ironic? Before long I am awash in association, order and emphasis (ABCD goldfish? LMNO goldfish! OSMR golden fish the pelicans are after. Are and R & Ahrr!). Return:

One thing seems clear. Metaphors are an open door to connotative meaning and to ambiguity. It's fair to wonder whether I mean pigs or cops or breakfast sausage or all three. Is Major Ursa a cop, a bear of a cop, a porcine jerk or some combination? It is the nature of a poem to be more like the pelican whose pouch can hold more meaning than pigs can swallow ("than its belly can." O. Nash).

A second order metaphor like,

⌘ Pelicanspigs,

begins to seem more stable. It's overlapping construction narrows and helps to focus the intended meaning within a diminished range of possible associations. I wonder if there is a good way to destabilize this relationship and then recall the primary, invisible and always forgotten element in its construction - my active interest. I realize that if this interest is too personal, just idiosyncratic, the fastest way to deconstruct is for me to turn my attention to something ⌘ lse.

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however, with its national audience and



universal experience is another matter. Even with the most elaborate instructions ("Oh easy for Leonardo.") it is difficult to take apart. There is no easy way to decouple this third order construction from its widely held appreciation. In the poem I also take notice of the importance of its triple stress pattern. Doesn't this pattern of equal emphasis also add to both its stability and its impact? Isn't the way that it is mentally heard and spoken of central import to more than the prosodic painter?

At this point I want to offer up four observations of the middle distance intended as points for further meditation:

1. Metaphoric constructions seem more stable when they are of higher order and normatively held, i.e., when they belong to groups as opposed to being personal and ephemeral;
2. Deconstruction may be good therapy for the factually challenged - those who never made it around the corner;
3. One needn't leave important facts or good ecological science behind, but this will happen unless one can turn the corner and still remember where they've been.
4. Even normatively held metaphors and metaphoric constructions eventually pass out of interest, attention and lose their meaning.

Next I want to return to higher order metaphors and focus more directly on their use in designing.

It all begins with what I'll call seeing as..., and leads to higher order metaphors through a process I'll call mapping as.... I've already demonstrated this constructive process in language. Now I want to apply it to making something as physical as a simple wall. Seeing as... is short for seeing x as though it were y. Mapping as... is a means of making metaphoric patterns, processes and systems visible by making them spatial. In designing, it involves overlaying at least one and usually many metaphoric patterns in search of higher order metaphoric junctions.

Imagine that the demonstration wall I've constructed for this example is made of brick and is a special shade of red that only pulses through the clays and kilns of the southern Willamette Valley. Since I have contributed all the labor and the materials are recycled, the cost was not prohibitive. My first purpose in building this wall is to make a barrier so visible and tangible that one must consciously climb back and forth between its two sides. One day when this function of the

wall has outlived its purpose we may all agree to knock it down. The second purpose is to show how choices and changes on both sides of the wall affect the wall itself. There is a cryptic warning on the uphill side which reads:

**Caution:
Once you have seen the
Laurel leaves sticking out**

**their tongues there is no
going back.**

Both sides of the wall represent a form of seeing as.... On the bottom side of the diagram, I am seeing as... factually in the usual way. I am seeing the wall as brick of a particular color and texture, and the wall as being of a particular height and length, the result of a familiar process of construction.

On the top side, I am seeing as... metaphorically. Represented here are possibilities from all the valuing categories, and of course this is far from an exhaustive list.

It soon becomes clear that any set of choices from the latter affect the former and vice versa since they are two sides of the same thing. In this simple example, the wall is low because I am seeing it as a seat, a social setting, a special red because it is important that it be understood and felt as indigenous, and so forth. As more and more considerations are mapped over the wall, it comes into and achieves its full character.

In the diagram, the metaphoric brick wall cannot resist reminding us that it does not really exist.

The same wall exists between the mapping of more complex systems of information over larger spatial areas. Overlay

THE METAPHORIC WALL

**SEEING
A WALL
AS:**

Sacred, holy, indigenous, significant, important, historic...
End, beginning, a middle with two sides...
Edge, boundary, curb, container, retainer, marker, separator...
Information, communication, a gallery, story, blackboard...
Niche, habitat, garden, heat sink, shade maker...
Grill, fence, protection, security, privacy, screen, ...
Backboard, balancing beam, tightrope, goal...
Seating, social gathering, a prospect...
Sculpture, painting, mural, as amusing, delightful, playful...
As storage, chest of drawers, mirror, sieve for light...
A member of a relationship, of many relationships...
A protagonist, a conversant, a mere player, a paragon...
Step, line, direction, movement, stop, restraint...

SEEING A WALL AS A NON-EXISTENT ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDER

**SEEING
A WALL
AS:**

Venetian red brick, 18" high, 12" thick, cast stone capped, rugged texture, hard, stepped, waterproofed, reinforced, drained, supported...

mapping, these days performed with high speed computers, is one of the great legacies of the pioneering work of Ian McHarg and others in the 1960's. Advances in ecological science and in the technology for spatializing geographic and ecological data have greatly improved the application of overlay mapping methods to landscape planning problems. These methods, however, typically overemphasize factual over metaphoric mapping in the desire to appear more scientific and for other cultural and political reasons.

Mapping a landscape as a set of spatialized facts is defensible and often needs to be. Mapping as a set of spatially patterned interests (desires, needs, beliefs) however, is a valuing process and politically daunting, especially for areas with diverse populations with very diverse interests. Even when this is done, as in metropolitan land use plans, it is not really understood as metaphoric, as seeing an area's many interrelated interests as... intentionally adding up to a way of life.

There are kinds of mapping as... that everyone finds quite ordinary and comfortable. The yellow line on the subway or transit map is the way home. The larger red lines on the road maps are the major roads.

Designers, however, use mapping as... to do much more than to convey useful information in diagrammatic ways. For one thing, metaphoric mapping as a subjunc-

tive process is ambiguous regarding time. One can make comparisons as though they were right now or as though they might be (in the sense of might become) or both. Scale of overlay and comparison is also elastic. One might, for example, overlay the craft patterns and colors of a culture on the ground plane of a public square, the needs of an impressionist gallery over an old Parisian train station, or proportionally mark off the time of human cultural history on a roll of paper that goes down and around the hall.

Imagine the metaphoric mapping one might do to such single purpose places as the ubiquitous "big box" parking lot. Along with (not instead of) car parking, imagine it mapped as... a place of public ritual, as a place for various forms of recreation, as a place scaled and proportioned for people as well as cars, as a place with a social structure, social programs and seasonal schedules, as a place intended to stimulate, inspire, amuse and delight, as a place which recalled aspects of its past whether these be murders, mo-raines or woolly mammoths, sentimental or sedimentary seas.

Seeing as... is a common metaphor that links vision with understanding (*seeing is understanding*), and in its subjunctive usage, vision with possibility and metaphoric meaning. Mapping as... functions similarly but emphasizes image making and multiple mapping.

It is mapping as... that leads to the higher order metaphoric junctions needed in design. This overlapping of subjunctive seeing enhances the potential for perceiving correspondences between significant interests, desires, beliefs and facts. These connections are not just between map and place, but also between map and map. The resulting intentional order, metaphoric density and emphasis is what gives both poems and places such enhanced potential for human experience.

Metaphor as Gate Keeper

Seeing as... as I have been describing it is mentally expansive, liberating and creative, but it can also be just the opposite. It can become a metaphoric seeing that is narrowing, restrictive, limiting, coercive and even destructive. An overly constrained seeing is a poverty of perception. Metaphoric poverty is an habitual seeing as... from only one or through only a limited set of expected points of view, a far too common practice. This is the Single Vision that Blake warned us about. A prime example from cultural modernism is the insistence that order is a grid. Disorder is not a grid, or is a breaking down or overlaying of other orders on a grid. Even autopoiesis in this conception is a set of self generating processes and patterns which are constrained by or associated with a grid as at La Villette.



My point is that seeing as... is a powerful information filtering process. Metaphors mediate the reality of experience. Since we are constructing realities through metaphoric seeing, the process needs to become as conscious as possible. All the subsurface metaphors that have slipped below scrutiny - the universe is a clock - time is money... - need to be brought back into the arena of attention for reevaluation and another round of choosing.

descriptions have different purposes and needs. These cause them to interpret the environmental conditions they inhabit from quite different points of view.

It is possible to look at the image at the left for a long time and have seen only a stylish young woman dressed for an occasion, looking very proud and confident. It is also possible to have missed the young

The drawing at the left is one of many well known illustrations of how we tend to see what we're looking for and how our point of view organizes and filters that information. Metaphoric seeing as... is how we are in information systems. We construct these metaphors, or system filters, and then 'see through' them, usually quite unconsciously. The recreational bike rider and the racer in my earlier example (The Corporal Rides a Bike...) are after and receiving different sets of information because their prevailing

woman altogether and to have only seen an older woman with her head bent in existential contemplation. When both have finally appeared we begin to appreciate the graphic connections. On closer inspection, the line which is the younger woman's cheek is, if we shift expectations, the older woman's nose. The line which our eye reads as a neck scarf or necklace in the younger profile is the older woman's mouth.

Poignantly suggested to the metaphoric mapper is the further possibility, never noticed by those thinking through a filter of either/or, that we are looking at the same woman or women representing different stages of the life cycle and aging process. The young woman is the old woman is another metaphoric junction.

Thinking through metaphors is common practice in design. If we think of outside space through the metaphor, *space is a room*, we are likely to impose certain architectural expectations on our thinking and a belief in the importance of spatial enclosure. If we are thinking of it as "a room with a certain character", the society and qualities of the place come closer to mind. If a square, a plaza, a courtyard, a clearing, other interests and aspects pass through the screen.

All the more reason to remember to mentally shift between and consciously explore a number of metaphoric points of view. Such mental playfulness and

agility becomes an enjoyment, a form of appetite, and is a needed habit of designing - but it must not become so much of a habit that it sinks below the surface of attention.

And so a meditation that began with pigs and poems and pelicans, feeding on experience, celestial bears and me, a bottom creature, walking through the middle of the sky has come to a conclusion, an end and a conviction: that multiple, attentional seeing as... and mapping as... have enormous potential for poking the eye out of Single Vision, for creating metaphoric richness and for dwelling in an environmental field.

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