

Grammatical and Rhetorical Consequences of Entrenchment in Conceptual Blending: Compressions Involving Change

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1 Introduction

It is a commonplace of blending theory (e.g. Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 260) that “no one is deluded” by the conceptual integrations involved in many creative blends. This paper examines a number of cases in which it seems that people are, in fact, “deluded”—that is, cases where a given blending structure is sufficiently highly entrenched that it becomes routine, automatic, and relatively opaque to self-reflection. Specifically, I present a cluster of phenomena in which variability across a group is compressed (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) into, or conceptualized as, change in an individual.

The starting point of this paper is a new observation about English grammatical constructions for expressing change in an entity over time. Constructions that are canonically limited to expressing change in an individual turn out to show more flexible patterns of use with certain content domains. These exceptions seem to reflect a high degree of entrenchment, not of the expression, but of an underlying conceptual mapping.

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Analysis of these examples suggests that the semantics of certain constructions can be usefully analyzed in terms of whether they do or do not prompt for decompression of an expressed relation. This account is further supported by their use rhetorically to influence conceptualization, as seen in examples such as Kenner 1967 and Hirshman 2008 (below). The resulting account points to new ways that grammatical data can provide evidence for blending structures, and new ways that blending theory can explain grammatical phenomena.

2 Ways of Expressing Change

It has frequently been noted (e.g. Fodor 1970, Shibatani 1976, Haiman 1983, Sweetser 1997) that the variety of situations that can be described by lexical change predicates and lexical causative expressions are subsets of the range of situations that can be expressed by their periphrastic counterparts.

Typically, lexical causatives, as in (1a), are used only to express cases of direct causation, while periphrastic causative expressions like (1b) can be used to express either direct or indirect causation.

- (1) a. Helen moved the book.
b. Helen made the book move.

Similarly, as observed in Sweetser (1997), both (2a) and (2b) can be used to express literal change to a single room, but only (2b) can be used to express fictive change.

- (2) a. My cubicle shrinks every year.
b. My cubicle gets smaller every year.

However, under the right circumstances, both of these lexical constructions can license interpretations usually reserved for their periphrastic cousins, as seen in (3).

- (3) a. Moore shortened the poem for every new edition.
b. Edward cut his hair. [A stylist actually did the cutting.]

I will be arguing that these apparent exceptions to the usual constraints are a consequence of a critical degree of entrenchment of underlying conceptual compressions.

Exceptions of the second sort have received a fair amount of attention from linguists (e.g. Croft 1991, Goldberg 1995, Woolf 2003). In these

cases, the represented causal relation seems to be indirect, in that there is an intermediary cause. But events, and their component chains of causation, can always be construed at different levels of granularity, so that a given causal chain can potentially be construed as a unified single event. Further, Woolf (2003: 5-6) proposes that causal chains with intermediate entities at the same level of granularity as the initial causer or final recipient (as in our hair-cutting example) can be viewed as direct if those intermediaries can be construed as “enabling conditions” rather than salient causal agents in their own right.

Most relevant to the current analysis is the explanation of such examples proposed by Goldberg (1995: 169)—namely, that the acceptability of such constructions depends on how “conventional” the causal scenario in question happens to be:

It is a conventional way to have one’s hair cut to go to a salon, a conventional way to have one’s house painted to have professional painters do it, and so forth. That is, simple causatives can be used to imply *conventionalized* causation that may in actuality involve an intermediate cause. It seems that conventionalized scenarios can be cognitively “packaged” in such a way that their internal structure is ignored.

Specifically, I propose that the particular kind of “packaging” on display here is the result of the entrenchment of patterns of compression across vital relations.

3 Compressions and Vital Relations

Conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2000, 2002; Fauconnier 2005; Turner 2006) argues that our understanding of the world is crucially structured in terms of twenty or so vital relations, such as Cause-Effect, Analogy, Time, Space, Change, Identity, and Uniqueness. Reducing complexity to a conceptually manageable scale involves frequent *compressions* across those relations: from many elements to few, from diffuse connections to tight.

In a conceptual integration network, some mental spaces serve as “input spaces” that selectively project structure to a new, “blended” mental space, where these projected elements are integrated, and new structures emerge. Mappings between input spaces are compressed, selectively, within a single blended space. Relations can be compressed into human-scale versions of the same relation, or into different vital relations. These compressions are memorable, intelligible, and manipulable, because they are concise and at human scale.

When we imagine our current selves answering an old criticism, we are compressing over time, so that events separated by many years can be conceptualized as nearly simultaneous in the compression. When we see an actor on stage and say, “Hamlet is dead,” the link of representation between the thing being represented and the thing representing it is being compressed into uniqueness. While we still understand perfectly well that the actor and Hamlet are not one and the same, we can think about and refer to the situation as if they were.

The role reading of sentences like *My cubicle gets smaller every year*, then, can similarly be analyzed as the product of a conceptual blend in which analogies between many specific individuals are compressed into an identity relation, and further to uniqueness, producing a single individual in the resulting blend. Disanalogies across those specific individuals are then understood in terms of changes to that unique individual, so that the blend presents one individual participating in a dynamic scene. Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of these compressions.

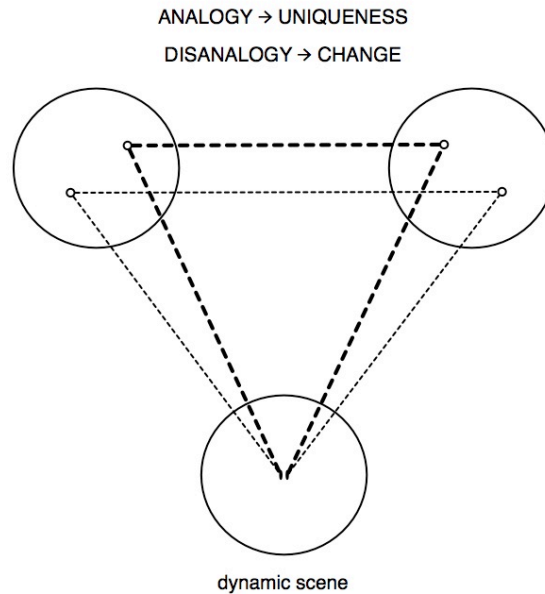


Figure 1: The compression of outer-space relations to inner-space relation

Fauconnier (2005: 524) observes that this general pattern of compression is an especially common one, indeed “one of the most common.” Its archetypal illustration in the blending literature involves the theory according to which birds are the evolutionary descendants of dinosaurs. This evolutionary story covers a vast span of time, during which a great many animals lived, reproduced, and died, without changing into anything else. However, we can and do think about this story as one of change, and we can, for instance, say that some scientists believe that “dinosaurs turned into birds.” In this blend, millions of years are compressed into the single lifetime of a single animal. Again, analogies between individuals—in this case, offspring and their ancestors—are compressed to produce a single entity in the blend, while disanalogies are compressed into change: at the beginning, this entity is a dinosaur, and at the end, it is a bird.

The blending literature often notes that these kinds of compressions are so prevalent that “Everyday language includes expressions for automatically compressing Disanalogy into Change” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 94), with sentences like *My tax bill gets bigger every year* presented as illustrative examples. However, as we have seen, not all change-of-state predicates are equally amenable to interpretations of this sort. Observing when and how the more restrictive constructions for expressing change do appear will provide useful evidence about how conventionalized and “packaged” a given compression is in conceptualization.

4 Constraints on the Expression of Compressed Relations

Sweetser (1997) observes that there are a number of related, semantically close pairs of predicates that differ according to whether they do or do not permit a role reading for their subjects, and identifies a general trend: periphrastic change predicates allow both role and individual readings, while monolexemic change predicates are more restrictive. By way of illustration, consider the different interpretations of the subject noun phrases suggested by the following sentences (examples taken from Sweetser 1997: 119).

- (4) a. His kids keep getting taller.
 b. His kids keep growing. (easy to contextualize)
- (5) a. His lovers keep getting taller.
 b. # His lovers keep growing. (more difficult to contextualize)

(4a) and (4b) seem to be paraphrases of one another, while (5a) and (5b) are not. Why is this?

Sweetser explains that *grow* demands an “individual” reading, in which the subject noun phrase is taken to refer to an individual or (in the case of a plural noun phrase, as in these examples) or set of individuals that undergo an actual change in size. The periphrastic *get taller*, on the other hand, permits either this reading or a “role” interpretation, where the noun phrase can be understood to refer to a succession of individuals, each one taller than the last. It is unremarkable to think of children as individually growing taller, while we are less likely to expect lovers, who are generally adults, to be doing the same. (Sweetser’s original analysis is too polite to mention it, incidentally, but there is indeed a natural, if prurient, reading for (5b) that preserves the requirement for an individual interpretation: *his lovers* can be taken as a *totum pro parte* synecdoche referring to the gentlemen’s most salient body parts.)

Examples (6) and (7) illustrate the same contrast in other cases involving a set of temporally successive fillers of a single role:

- (6) a. Your apartment gets bigger every time I visit.
 b. Your apartment expands every time I visit.
- (7) a. The students make their uniforms shorter every year.
 b. The students shorten their uniforms every year.

The sentence in (6a) can be used to refer to a sequence of progressively larger apartments, while (6b) strongly invites an interpretation in which “your apartment” refers to an individual apartment that is being remodeled. Example (7a) could be used in a situation where one set of (individual) students alter the hems of their (individual) uniforms annually, or to describe a sequence of students (different individuals filling the same role) whose uniforms are sequentially shorter than the set of uniforms on display the year before. (7b) prefers the former reading.

The general pattern is that periphrastic change predicates permit a role reading, while (with certain exceptions) their monolexemic counterparts do not. We can recast this distinction in blending theory in terms of two alternate conceptual structures, one of which involves overt compression, and the other of which does not. Figure 2 illustrates the role reading that is available, and indeed preferred, for the periphrastic *My cubicle gets bigger every year*.

The grammar of the sentence presents a blend in which there is one cubicle, growing bigger over time. Recognizing this sentence as referring to a succession of progressively larger cubicles which fill the role of “my cubicle” requires the hearer to unpack this blend—in other words, to recognize it *as* a blend, and to construct an integration network in which an inner-

space relation of uniqueness is decompressed into a cross-space connection of analogy, and the inner-space relation of change is decompressed into a cross-space connection of disanalogy.

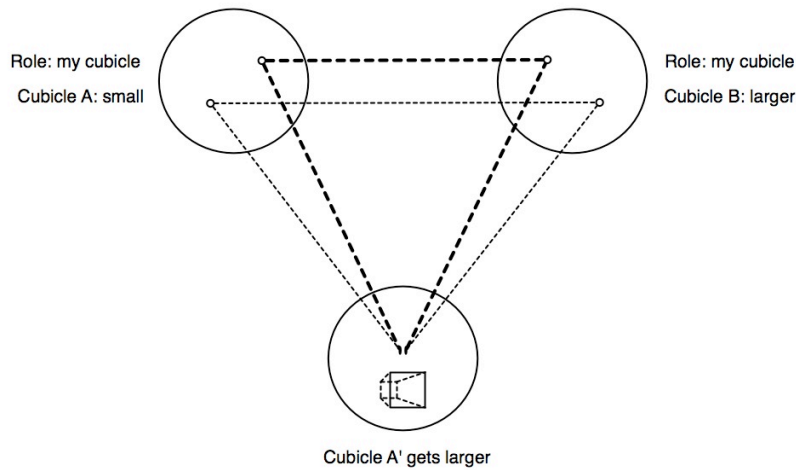


Figure 2: Role reading: *My cubicle gets bigger every year.*

By contrast, as illustrated in figure 3, in the individual reading permitted by *My cubicle gets bigger* and demanded by its counterpart *My cubicle grows* (or, alternately and perhaps more naturally, *My cubicle is growing*, *My cubicle keeps growing*, and similar constructions), there is only one mental space.

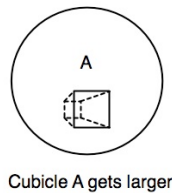


Figure 3: Individual reading

In this construal, there is just one cubicle, which undergoes a change over time. There is nothing to decompress; there are no predecessor cubicles linked to the present one by analogy and identity.

5 Exceptions: The LITERARY WORK Compression

A set of interesting possible exceptions to the generalization cited above arises in the case of noun phrases referring to artistic or literary works, or portions thereof. It is not immediately clear whether the ordinary readings of these sentences should be described as involving an “individual” interpretation.

- (8) The text shrinks and the manuscript becomes predominantly pictorial.
(Henderson 1967: 116)
- (9) She shortened/expanded the poem in every edition.
- (10) Can you enlarge this photograph in the next issue?

The sentence in (8) is from an article on multiple 13th-century illuminated manuscripts presenting the text of the New Testament book of Revelation. Over time, new manuscripts were produced, and the textual component of each book takes up less space in later manuscripts than it does in earlier ones. Example (9) presents a similar case, with the difference that the change predicate appears in a transitive (causative) construction. I introduce this example in order to point out that the role/individual contrast between monolexemic and periphrastic predicates does ordinarily obtain in these contexts as well. In the parallel sentences below, for instance, we see that a role reading is available for a sentence like (11) but not for (12).

- (11) The estate manager made the flagpoles shorter in every yard. (Said of a manager who put up successively shorter flagpoles.)
- (12) # The estate manager shortened the flagpole(s) in every yard.

All of the sentences in (8-10) rest on compressions in which many individuals and diffuse causal structure are compressed to uniqueness in the blend. In these cases, however, the compression is far less amenable to introspection than are the compressions that underlie the role readings of periphrastic sentences in the previous section.

Most hearers of *My cubicle gets smaller every year* are not deluded into thinking that the speaker’s cubicle is “really” growing. It is less obvious that *She shortened the poem in each new edition* does not, in fact, refer to a poem that has “really” changed or that Edward in *Edward cut his hair* did not “really” cut his hair. This conceptual entrenchment is reflected in and evidenced by the expressions available for referring to these relationships.

Example (13) follows the same pattern. It comes from a critical discussion of one of the most famously revised poems in modern English, the twentieth-century American author Marianne Moore's "Poetry."

- (13) The poem initially expands from thirteen lines... to thirty-eight lines...
but then shrinks to a lonely three. (Conley 2003: 26)

Here, the monolexic change predicates *expand* and *shrink* invite a reading in which *the poem* is taken to refer to an individual that changes, rather than to a succession of individuals filling a role identified by the noun phrase. In other words, multiple, non-identical documents are taken to be merely versions or manifestations of one actual literary work.¹

This compression can also be extended such that a number of such "individual" works can serve as successive values for a role, as seen in the following set of examples from Sweetser (1997: 116). A frustrated editor might say either (14) or (15) of a situation in which an author has been refusing to settle on a final version of her contribution to an edited volume, sending new manuscripts each month, every one longer than the last. Meanwhile, the same editor might exclaim something like (16), but *not* (17), of an author who has published a new paper in each volume in a series, and each successive contribution has been longer than the one that appeared the year before.

- (14) Higgenbottom's paper gets longer with every month of delay.
(15) Higgenbottom's paper grows with every month of delay.
(16) Higgenbottom's paper keeps getting longer every year.
(17) # Higgenbottom's paper keeps growing every year.

In Sweetser's original formulation, only the second scenario involves a role interpretation of *Higgenbottom's paper*, but in fact both, at their base, refer to a succession of individuals filling a role identified by the phrase. The

¹ A particularly influential articulation of this construal is put forward in the editorial theories of G. Thomas Tanselle (1975), which distinguishes between a "work" and "expressions" of it. The "work" is the true, idealized form of a piece of literary art, while any realized instantiation of an artwork—in print, performance, manuscript, or otherwise—is merely an "expression" of that ideal. Alternate approaches to scholarly editing, such as the "social text" approach associated most famously with Jerome McGann (1983, 1991), sometimes attempt to jettison this distinction, but they are swimming upstream. The work/expression distinction is alive and well, not to mention officially ratified, in the practice of both editors and librarians, as seen for example in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' *Functional Guidelines for Bibliographic Records* (1998), as well as in the everyday linguistic and social practices discussed here.

difference is that the former rests on a cultural pre-compression that is highly conventionalized. The latter takes that pre-compressed conceptualization and parlays it forward into a new role-value relationship.

Some other compressions that follow the general pattern in which analogy compresses to uniqueness and disanalogy compresses to change are even more deeply entrenched in conceptualization than the LITERARY WORK compression is. Indeed, highly entrenched compressions to uniqueness underlie any conceptualizations of an entity as “one thing” persisting over space and time. We integrate over multiple encounters and variable perceptual input, understanding disanalogies between these experiences as symptoms of changes to some unique individual. These compressions are not just second nature to us, but first nature. It is vastly more natural for me to think of myself, for example, as an individual persisting over time, than as a succession of similar but not identical collections of organic matter.

These sorts of highly entrenched compressions are a fundamental part of our experience, what Fauconnier and Turner (2002:83) call “living in the blend.” Some compressions need to be experienced as the basic essence of our experience, so that we can make use of them quickly, easily, without conscious thought. The apparent exceptions to Sweetser’s rule seen in (8-10) are interesting because they illustrate what can happen when compression to uniqueness is moderately well entrenched, but not so entrenched as to be obligatory. This degree of entrenchment is sufficient to license the use of monolexemic change predicates seen here (or, to put it another way, the availability of these predicates constitutes evidence for the claim that this compression is well entrenched). However, as we will see, there are circumstances where hewing to the compression seems to generate mistakes, or at least vexing presumptions.

The LITERARY WORK compression on display in these examples is a very ordinary, everyday way of talking and thinking about texts, one so common that it hardly seems noteworthy or troublesome at all. But it bears greater consideration.

6 Case Study: “Poetry”

Let us take up the case of Marianne Moore’s “Poetry,” the poem in (13) that “expanded” to thirty-eight lines, before “shrinking” to “a lonely three.” Moore was a frequent and prolific reviser, and the quantity and magnitude of her revisions present a special challenge to scholars of her work. There are many authors for whom revisions are largely a matter of editorial interest: a single definitive edition with a few explanatory footnotes is perfectly adequate for scholars not specifically concerned with publication history. But no one who hopes to write seriously about Moore’s poems can ignore

her revisions and re-revisions. They are simply too numerous and, in many cases, too dramatic to be glossed over. Furthermore, many of her poems take poetry and communication themselves as their subject, making the process of their construction particularly relevant to analysis of their structure and content. Little surprise, then, that critics agree that Moore's poetics are inextricably "entwined with their printing history" (Kenner 1969: 161).

"Poetry" presents an especially compelling locus for this discussion. The many texts that have appeared under this title represent at least six major variations and many dozens of printings over sixty-three years.² The first version, published in 1919, was five stanzas long. Other versions included one organized in a single stanza of thirteen unrhymed lines and one of fifteen lines in three stanzas. Finally, in 1967, Moore produced a version that consisted of a mere three lines, with a lightly revised take on the original five-stanza version included in an endnote. Variants of the five-stanza version were published many more times in Moore's lifetime than any other version, and she went on revising this longer version even as she produced the shorter alternates, making various small adjustments right up until the final endnote version (1967: 266-7), which reads:

POETRY (page 36)

Longer version:

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
 Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
 it, after all, a place for the genuine.
 Hands that can grasp, eyes
 that can dilate, hair that can rise
 if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
 useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,
 the same thing may be said for all of us, that we
 do not admire what
 we cannot understand: the bat
 holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
 a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea,
 the base-
 ball fan, the statistician—

² Detailed accounts of the complete publication history of these variants can be found in Honigsblum (1990) and Schulze (2002). A similarly complete transcript would, unfortunately, take up far more room than I have here;

nor is it valid
to discriminate against “business documents and
school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinc-
tion
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
“literalists of
the imagination”—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, you are interested in poetry.

This five-stanza poem stands in stark contrast to the version that appears in the main body of the collection (1967: 36):

POETRY

I, too, dislike it.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
it, after all, a place for the genuine.

Yet more variations have appeared since Moore’s death. These include scholarly editions that present partial or complete “variorum” overviews of the entire history of the poem, as well as numerous editions in anthologies designed for students and casual readers. The latter most commonly present a five-stanza version in the main text, sometimes accompanied by a footnote or endnote that includes the three-line version.

Critical responses to “Poetry” often treat its history of revisions as a sequence of damages or losses. The critic Hugh Kenner was a particularly dramatic perpetrator of this approach, referring for example to the five-stanza version as “the one scarred by all those revisions” (1967: 1432). Here the many variations published under the title “Poetry” are (as we would expect) presented as a single, concrete entity that the poet has altered many times. This entity is also metaphorically characterized as a living body, and the alterations that remove material from that body as violent mutilations. In this way, even a new, intact printing of an earlier version can be “scarred” by the publication of shorter variations.

The availability of such construals is subject to complex social and conceptual conditions. Various *versions* of a literary work—that is, texts that

the relevant community takes to be variations of the same work—are related by identity across the mental spaces that correspond to their time and mode of production. Culture affords some participants special social authority to decide that two given texts are manifestations of the “same” poem, novel, textbook, article, or what have you. Marianne Moore has the authority to decide that POETRY₁ (thirteen lines), POETRY₂ (thirty-eight lines), and POETRY₃ (three lines) are all manifestations of a single poem, in a way that is difficult for others to resist or undo without her ratification.

Thus, the editor and theorist Jerome McGann is welcome to argue that editors and readers would “probably do well to regard it [the three-line POETRY] as a new and separate poem rather than as a revision of the earlier work” (1992: 86), but the publication history and Moore’s public characterizations of the works in question make this treatment all but impossible in practice. Nor do such decisions rest only in the hands of authors. Exactly which participants in the creation and dissemination of texts have this authority, and to what degree, is historically contingent and varies across genres and media. Early modern print culture in England, for instance, famously accorded primary authority in such matters to printers, rather than composers (Saunders 1951; Marotti 1995).

Culture also adjudicates the “sameness” of texts by external legislation. Some differences are held to be more substantive than others, and the author does not necessarily have any say in the matter. For instance, my own culture will assuredly insist that two texts are the same even if they are set in different typefaces. These rules and their enforcement have material consequences. I may consider a chapter of my book to be a new and separate text from an article that I published in a journal the year before, but if they are similar enough (according to the mores and laws of my culture), I must obtain permission from the journal to “reprint” that material or face sanctions. Screenwriters in the United States may receive “story by” credit (and monetary compensation to match) on films that bear little resemblance to their original scripts, under circumstances constrained by rules laid out by the Screenwriters’ Guild of America and enshrined in contracts with the motion picture studios.

Compression to uniqueness is necessary to produce the emergent structure borrowed from the frame of single entities undergoing change. But not all identity connections, including other identity connections involving literary texts, result in the ultimate compression of identity into uniqueness. Multiple copies of a book, for instance, like the multiple drafts of Higgenbottom’s article, are linked by identity connections. In a classroom, it is common for each student to have his or her own copy of the assigned text, and to treat each of these separate physical objects as common possessors of a shared identity. These individual objects have a great deal in common.

Their covers probably look extremely similar. The printed text inside them is also very similar, though there may be slight variations, perhaps in the color of the ink or the number of printings indicated on the copyright page.

When they emerged from the printer and binder, these books were very similar indeed. Since then they may have become less similar. Some have been marked by pens and highlighters. Some are grubbier than others. Some may be torn. These effects will be understood, however, as changes to individual copies, and as disanalogies between entities that are linked by identity, not uniqueness. For instance, we wouldn't say that one of the figures in the current paper was "destroyed" if you, the reader, altered or annotated your copy with a ballpoint pen; but we might if I, the author, made a similar alteration before publication.

The notion that Moore's revisions somehow damage or detract from the five-stanza version follows naturally from the LITERARY WORK compression. And yet, nothing has actually been destroyed—many copies of the original printings of previous versions exist, and there is nothing stopping anyone from re-reading or even re-printing whatever version they please. The very collection that presents the traumatizing three-line revision includes a complete instantiation of the "scarred" five-stanza version in every copy.

What's more, the variation that is surely most in danger of vanishing from readers' experience is not the five-stanza version, but the thirteen-line version in free verse, which was apparently a one-time experiment appearing only in the second (1925) edition of *Observations*. The three-stanza version has not fared much better, published only five times in Moore's life, in three editions of an anthology edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, *The New Poetry* (1932, 1934, 1938) and two editions of Louis Zukofsky's anthology, *A Test of Poetry* (1948, 1952). Still, even these versions, which had all but vanished in the last decades of the twentieth century, do remain in print to some degree, quoted in critical essays and in the endnotes of Grace Schulman's epic collection *The Poems of Marianne Moore* (2003), as well as Robin Schulze's (2002) variorum edition of Moore's early poetry.

What's going on here? Kenner's dismay seems genuine, and he was certainly not alone in expressing such a sentiment. Critics have characterized Moore's edits variously as "revision by subtraction" (Willis 1986), "revisionary chopping" (Hicok 2000), or a series of "drastic fits of rectitude" (Kenner 1975). Moore herself seemed to take special pleasure in telling friends about the "drastic cut" (Gregor 1984) she had made for the 1967 volume, then savoring their shocked reactions. Why, given the continued existence and frequent reproduction of the five-stanza poetic utterance

quoted above, have these readers persisted in feeling that something has been lost?

7 Constructions of Non-Decompression

In short, these examples are the progeny of a deluded blend, in the sense so often invoked in the negative by Fauconnier and Turner. This characterization is not intended to insult the intelligence or insight of Hugh Kenner or any other reader who feels a sense of loss when she encounters the three-line “Poetry.” Rather, it is to say that the LITERARY WORK compression is both conventional and persuasive, and that these conclusions arise from the conviction that this framing is basic and true. With enough work it is possible, at least temporarily, to unpack the compression, but most of the time, there is no need, and we do not. (Indeed, as discussed in Section 5, sometimes it is much more useful not to—on the flip side to resisting being “deluded” by these compressions are the benefits of “living in the blend.”)

Thus, the compressions that motivate a given conceptualization may or may not be decompressed in the moment. Furthermore, certain grammatical constructions do not admit, or do not encourage, that decompression. Some relations are conventionally pre-compressed in culture and experience, making them conceptually “packaged” enough to license the use of such constructions to express them. The use of these constructions can reinforce that packaging.

This phenomenon extends beyond the specific case of the change predicates discussed above. Haiman (1980, 1983) influentially observed that there is a general, iconically motivated, cross-linguistic pattern in which single lexemes tend to refer to single, well-integrated events, while lexically complex forms tend to refer to more diffuse, complex, indirectly linked sequences of events—which is to say, exactly the kinds of relationships that compression serves to mediate.

We should therefore expect many single word expressions denoting change to encourage interpretations in which the referenced scenario is taken to be “naturally” compressed—i.e. it is conventionally construed as involving actual, direct, unmediated change to an individual—and indeed they do. If Edwina takes up a knife and uses it to stab Frank seven times in the lungs, and as a result Frank suffers from a Class IV hemorrhage, goes into shock, and dies, we are certainly licensed to say that *Edwina killed Frank*. When we do, it seems natural and correct to consider Edwina as the simple agent of Frank’s death, and the act of killing as a single event. The expression does not invite the hearer to decompress this tight cause-effect relation and unique event into something more diffuse.

Single word, adjectival predicates whose lexical semantics centrally denote a significant change to an entity's physical or essential form, such as *mutilated*, *shrunk*, or *transformed*, or Kenner's *scarred*, similarly discourage decompression of the expressed relations of uniqueness and change. So too do those that denote a quality of changeability, such as *erratic*, *fickle*, or *variable*.

As a result, any of these constructions of non-decompression can, by virtue of this feature, be used rhetorically to influence conceptualization. Kenner's description of Moore's publication history persuades in part by taking advantage of this inclination away from decompression. The following example illustrates how the same quality can be exploited in political discourse.

8 Rhetorical Exploitation

The United States Democratic presidential primaries of 2008 pitted Senator Hillary Clinton of New York, a white woman, against Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, a black man. The possibility of electing either the first African-American president or the first female president raised issues of demographic solidarity for many voters struggling to choose between the two. In March of that year, the Washington Post columnist Linda Hirshman wrote the following, from a position of apparent exasperation:

[E]ven though this is also a year with the first major female presidential candidate, women are split every way they can be. They're the only voting bloc not voting their bloc. For the Clinton campaign, this is devastating. A year ago, chief strategist Mark Penn proclaimed that the double-X factor was going to catapult his candidate all the way to the White House. Instead, the women's vote has fragmented... I can imagine the strategists for the senator from Illinois thinking, "What's that song in Verdi's 'Rigoletto'?" Women are fickle. Turns out it's true.

In the final lines of this passage, variability across a group is again figured as change in each individual in a newly conceptualized version of the group. Here, however, both ways of considering the facts are overtly, even forthrightly, available for the reader's consideration: first, women voters are first presented as a group whose votes vary synchronically. It is only after this explanation that the *Women are fickle* compression appears. An ideally alert reader should then respond to this passage with full cognizance of the relationship between the ingredients in the input spaces and their compressed counterparts in the blend, so that we could say, with Turner (2004)

“Of course, we are not deluded in the least,” or with Fauconnier and Turner (2002) “No one is deluded.” But sometimes one is deluded, after all.

The grammar of *Women are fickle* does not encourage decompression or the construction of a multi-space blending network—it prompts, instead, the construction of (or collapse down to) a single mental space structured by inner-space relations. This makes it a good way to smuggle in a claim rhetorically, encouraging readers to attribute structure directly to the source domain, concluding that women *are* fickle. Now Democratic women “not voting their bloc” are not only failing to exhibit desired solidarity in the deployment of their votes, but also letting down the side by individually manifesting the stereotypically feminine fault of fickleness.

9 Conclusions

This paper has suggested that compressions across vital relations can be more or less entrenched for a given conceptual domain, and that this degree of entrenchment has both grammatical and rhetorical consequences. The semantics of several constructions can be usefully analyzed in terms of whether they do or do not invoke, or permit for, a decompression of the expressed relation. Grammatical structures canonically limited to expressing change in an individual can thus serve as tools to encourage moderately entrenched conceptualizations.

These findings, and their particular relevance to the domain of literary works, have interesting applications for professions with a substantial stake in questions of textual identity, such as archival studies, bibliography, and the law. Librarians and legislatures alike do their best to codify precisely when revisions to a document do and do not constitute the creation of a “new” text. Similarly, they must decide and enforce how members of the profession are to treat mechanical reproductions of a document. If certain conceptualizations of these relationships are strongly entrenched in grammatical structure and social practice, it should perhaps not be surprising that some approaches—for instance, the *variorium* edition endorsed by social-text approaches to editing—are much more widely appreciated than used.

Finally, the phenomena described here are difficult to explain without recourse to a theory including compressions or similar conceptual processes. This analysis suggests new ways that grammatical data can provide evidence for the theoretical constructs of compression and vital relations, and new ways that blending theory can explain grammatical phenomena.

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