

# Creativity in Metaphor and Mind

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# Maze of Talk

creativity *of* metaphor

role of metaphor *in* creativity

ATT-Meta approach/system for metaphor  
understanding (& generation)

metaphor creativity via *fiction*

*reaffirm*: metaphor creativity is often not about creating  
new analogical mapping

consequences re: creative metaphor in *mind*

# Creativity in Metaphor

- Lakoff & Turner (1989):

Most creative poetic metaphor is creative not because of radically novel pairings but because of manipulation of familiar, mundane metaphorical conceptions by, e.g.,

- Open-ended elaborations
  - Mixing (in good ways)
- I reinforce, extend and elaborate this message.

# A Mundane but Juicy Example of Creative Elaboration!

Sharon pulled herself out of her jeans, the words “*How could he? How could he?*” jumping about her wearied brain.

Senseless, leaving her empty, cold, helpless. Another voice, angry and vindictive, shouted in her ear, “*Serves you right, you silly fool: play with fire and watch your life go up in flames.* It was all so predictable.”

[from *My Story*, a cheap romance magazine]

# Creativity of open-ended elaborations/variations

- Another voice, angry and vindictive, shouted in her ear,
- The idea was buried in the outback of Katy's mind"  
[only a few Google hits for "outback of his/her mind"]
- I don't think strings are attached. If there are any, they're made of nylon:  
I can't see them.
- A problem about the regulation of banking in Europe] seems to have  
been kicked right over the long grass into the junkyard down the road[.])

# (Non-)Analogy and Metaphor

No (necessary) target-side parallel for

- **Outback, being buried.**
- **The nylon itself, or the property of being made of something.**
- **The grassiness of the long grass; the yardiness of the junkyard.**
  - **All that's important is the hiddenness, the discardedness.**
- **Sharon's internal and external voices.**

# (Non-)Analogy

- Those non-paralleled things in the metaphor source scenario are there only to *generate consequences that DO have a parallel,*
- And which moreover have a parallel by virtue of any mix of:
  - *standard specific parallels* (idea/physical-object; mind/terrain)
  - *standard generic parallels* (dealing with e.g. emotions, evaluations, time, causation, functioning)
- As opposed to novel parallels that have to be worked out.

# Not Just in Language!!

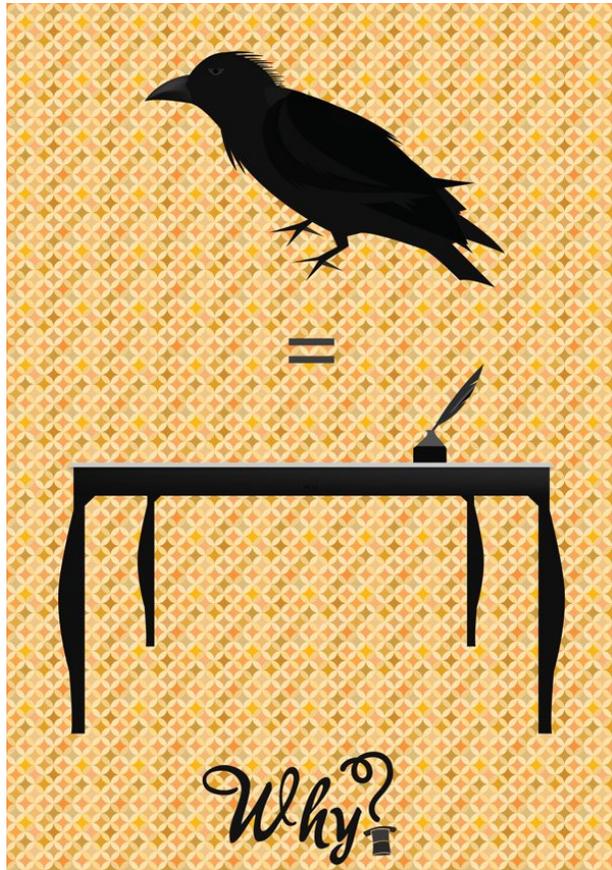
- Metaphor arises in **all media** of communication/expression:  
*gestures, pictures, diagrams, music, dance, ...*
- Many theorists (including me) regard metaphor as a *fundamental* component of *thought*.

Its appearance in language, pictures, music, etc. is just a reflection of that.

- If metaphor exists within thought, then metaphor-based creativity within thought can involve not only analogy-creation but also open-ended elaboration not resting on it.

A (creative or other) thought can in part use concepts that are only from the source-domain, with no translation to the target domain.

# Dramatic Novel Pairing



“Why is a raven like a writing desk?”

asks the Mad Hatter in  
*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

A raven is a writing desk.  
Why?

*They both loom in a dark corner of the room?*

# Less Dramatic Novel Pairing

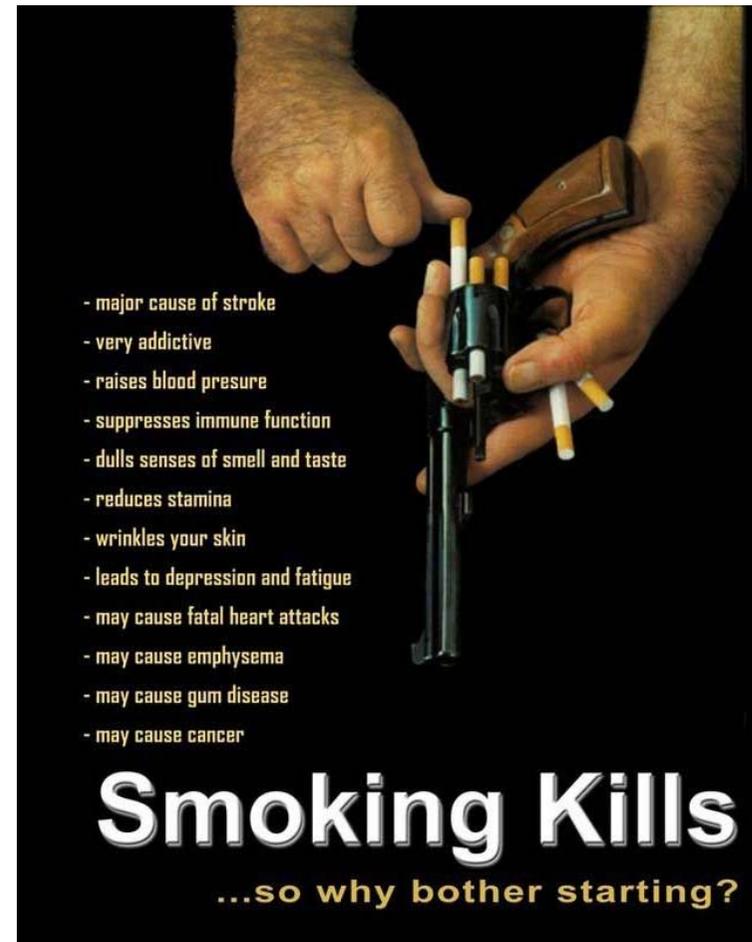
This ghost is a mole.

From Hamlet (Act I Sc. v):

*Ghost [Beneath]:* Swear.

*Hamlet:* Well said, old mole! Canst work i' the earth so fast? A worthy pioner! [= digger] ...

***Not so difficult; somewhat surprising/fruitful.***



[courtesy of Elisabeth El Razaie, 2013]

# Two Types of Novel Pairing

- In **raven/desk** and **ghost/mole**, the novel pairing can itself give a new view of the target, etc. *It is a direct conduit for the message.*
- The **cigarette/cell-bar** pairing is novel, but is *incidental* to the underlying, *familiar* pairing of **addiction/prison**.

The creativity lies in how the message is conveyed: finding an incidental pairing that is so vivid and *leads indirectly but forcefully* to the message.

**EVEN IN Raven/desk**: in my interpretation above, leads to standardly-paralleled emotional reactions.

# Creativity of mixed metaphor

- a text about US foreign policy at

<http://zioanecon.blogspot.co.uk/2004/06/bret-stephens-in-wsj-opinion-journal.html>

- in which we find ``Afghanistan is Vietnam," then some explanation of this view, and then ``But Afghanistan is not simply like Vietnam," some more explanation, then ``Afghanistan is Yugoslavia," some explanation of this, then ``But Afghanistan is not simply like Yugoslavia," and so forth, adding in Colombia and then Somalia in the same cumulative way.

# Creativity of mixed metaphor

- **“This worry was a corrosive chemical that was nibbling at her self-esteem.”**

[closely adapted from an example in a Sylvia Plath diary;  
courtesy of Zsafia Demjen]

- **Serial mix (= chaining) of WORRY-AS-CHEMICAL and CHEMICAL-AS-ANIMAL**
- **Mixed in parallel with SELF-ESTEEM AS NIBBLABLE OBJECT.**

# Creativity of mixed metaphor

- “the car wants to move but something is stopping it. ...

Sounds like the car thinks it's on holiday, all the snow, freezing temps and Christmas boozing has confused our cars into thinking they are Talbot horizons!! get her out out today and show her a good time.”

- [ <http://forums.m3cutters.co.uk/archive/index.php/t-25414.html> ]
- Parallel(?) mix of car as thinking agent, with the alleged thought “I’m on holiday” corresponding metaphorically to the state of not operating normally.

**“ATT-Meta” AI Approach to  
Metaphor:  
concentrating here on open-ended  
elaboration and (good) mixing  
[see References/Bibliography]**

# Fictions

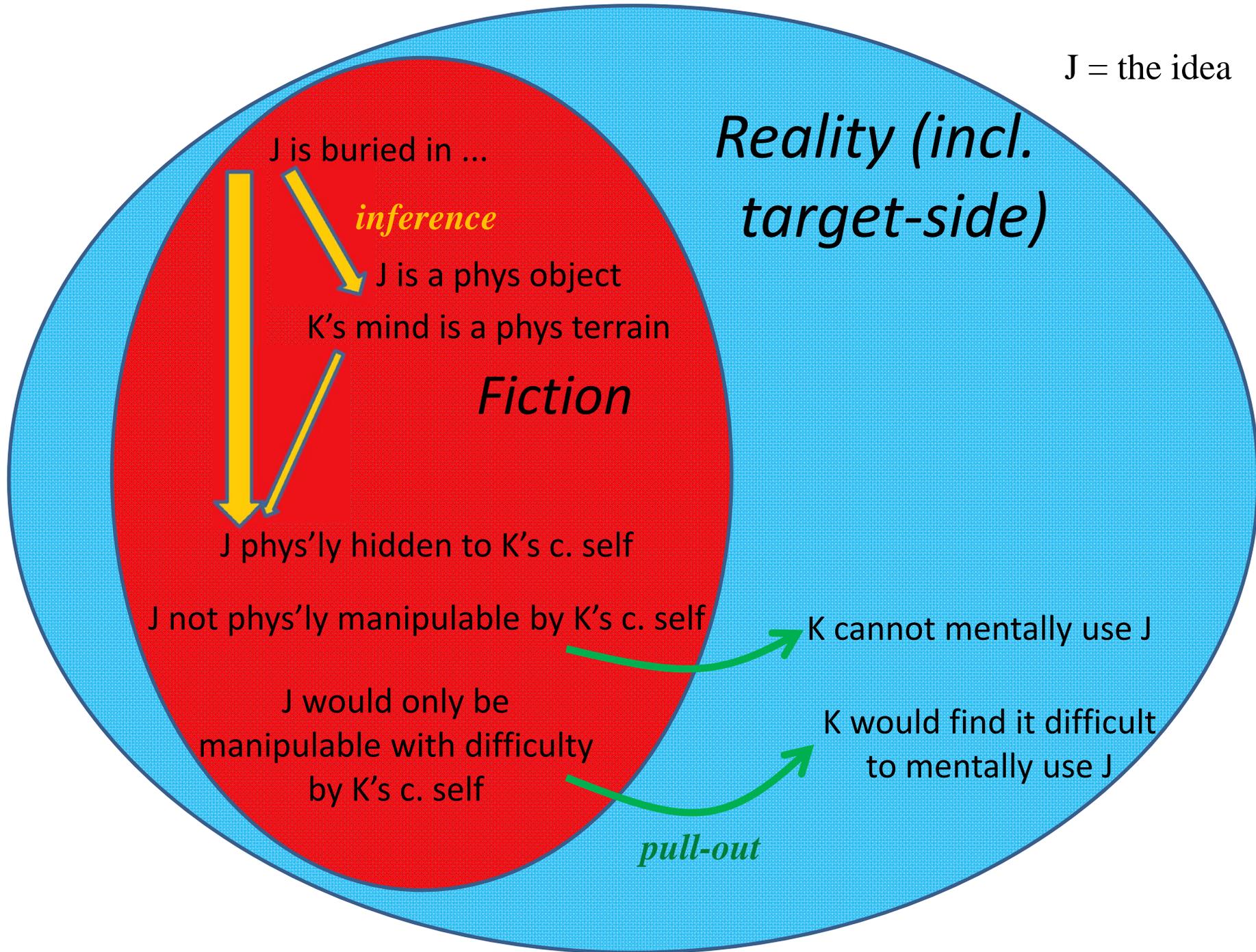
- The Att-Meta approach is based on *pretences* (or *fictions*).
- Related:
  - Levin's approach in literary theory [Levin 1993]
  - **Fictionalist** approaches in Philosophy [Walton 2004/1993].
  - Blending approach [Fauconnier & Turner 2008]
  - Carston and Wearing [2011]

# An Example

***“The idea was buried in the outback of Katy’s mind”***

- The understander (as well as the speaker) momentarily ***pretends*** that Katy’s mind is ***literally*** a physical terrain that has an outback and that the idea is ***literally*** physically buried in the outback.
- So the idea in question is inferred to be
  - ***(to a high degree) physically hidden to,***
  - ***currently physically unmanipulable by, and***
  - ***would be difficult to physically manipulate by Katy.***

J = the idea



# Fictions are great for aspects of creativity identified above

- *Novel pairings between fiction entities and real things.*
- *Open-ended elaboration*
- *Mixing, both parallelly and serially.*
- Fantasy – i.e. distortion
- Leading to suggestions about the real world that overturn normal expectations

# Mixed Metaphor

- Serial mixing (chaining) of metaphor:

*X viewed as Y and Y viewed as Z*

E.g.:

*“This worry was a corrosive chemical that was nibbling at her self-esteem.”*

- The **worry (X)** is viewed as a **chemical (Y)**;  
the **chemical (Y)** is viewed as an **animal (Z)**.

[Also, her **self-esteem** is viewed as a **nibblable physical object.**]

- Handled by nested fictions (nested pretences).

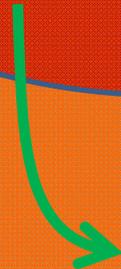
Like a play within a play, or a story within a story.

**SERIAL MIXING**

The worry-chemical-ANIMAL is nibbling at her self-esteem-object



The worry-chemical-ANIMAL is slowly eating her self-esteem-object



The worry-CHEMICAL is slowly physically-damaging her self-esteem-object



The WORRY is slowly affecting her self-esteem negatively

# Multiple Pretences, contd

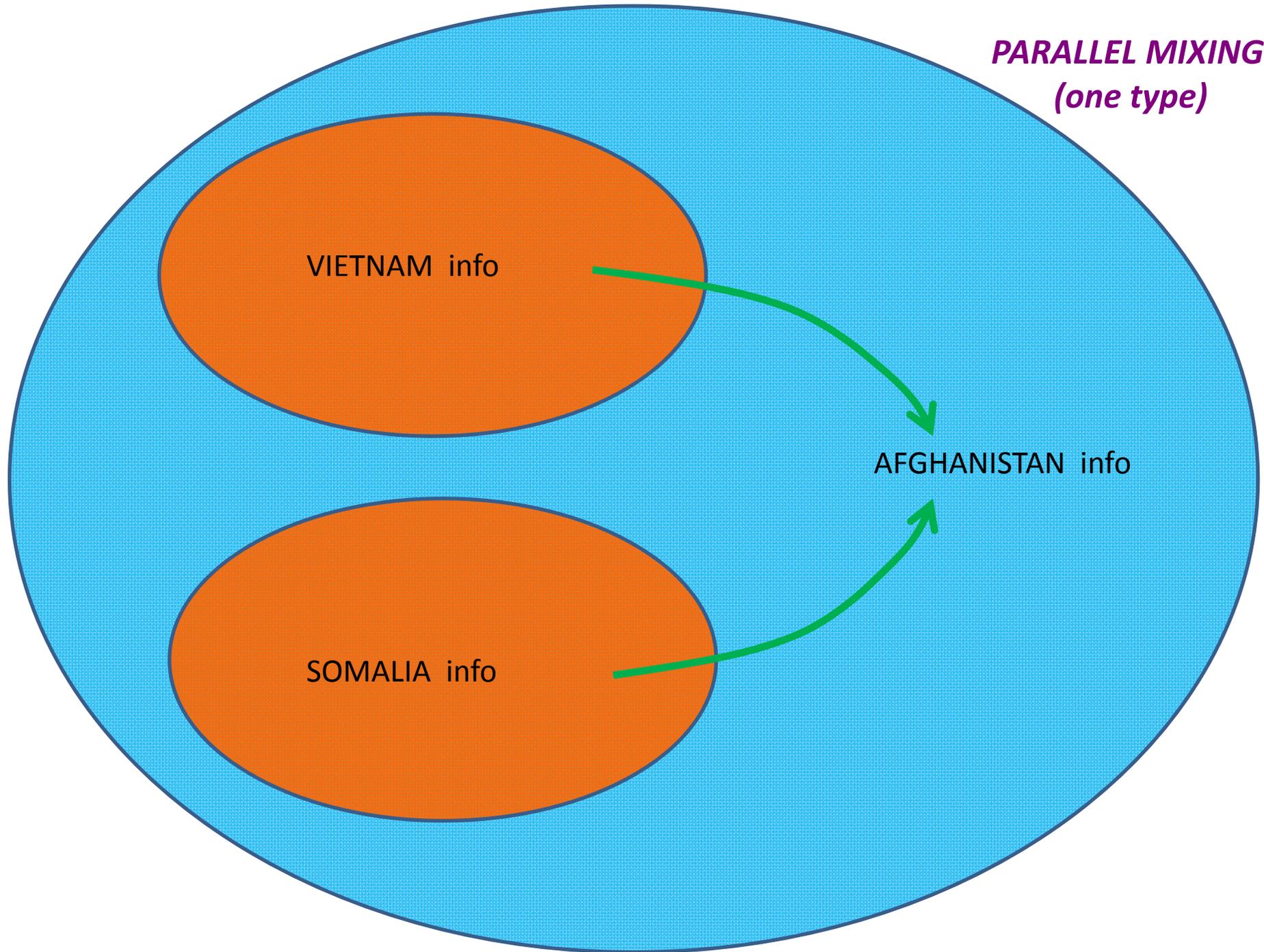
- “Marriage is both a business and a journey”.
- Multiple (but non-nested) pretences also useful for

*Parallel compounding* of metaphor:

**X** is viewed as both **Y** and **Z**

where **Y** is not itself (on this occasion) viewed as **Z**,  
and **Y** and **Z** are difficult to combine within one pretence.

**PARALLEL MIXING**  
*(one type)*

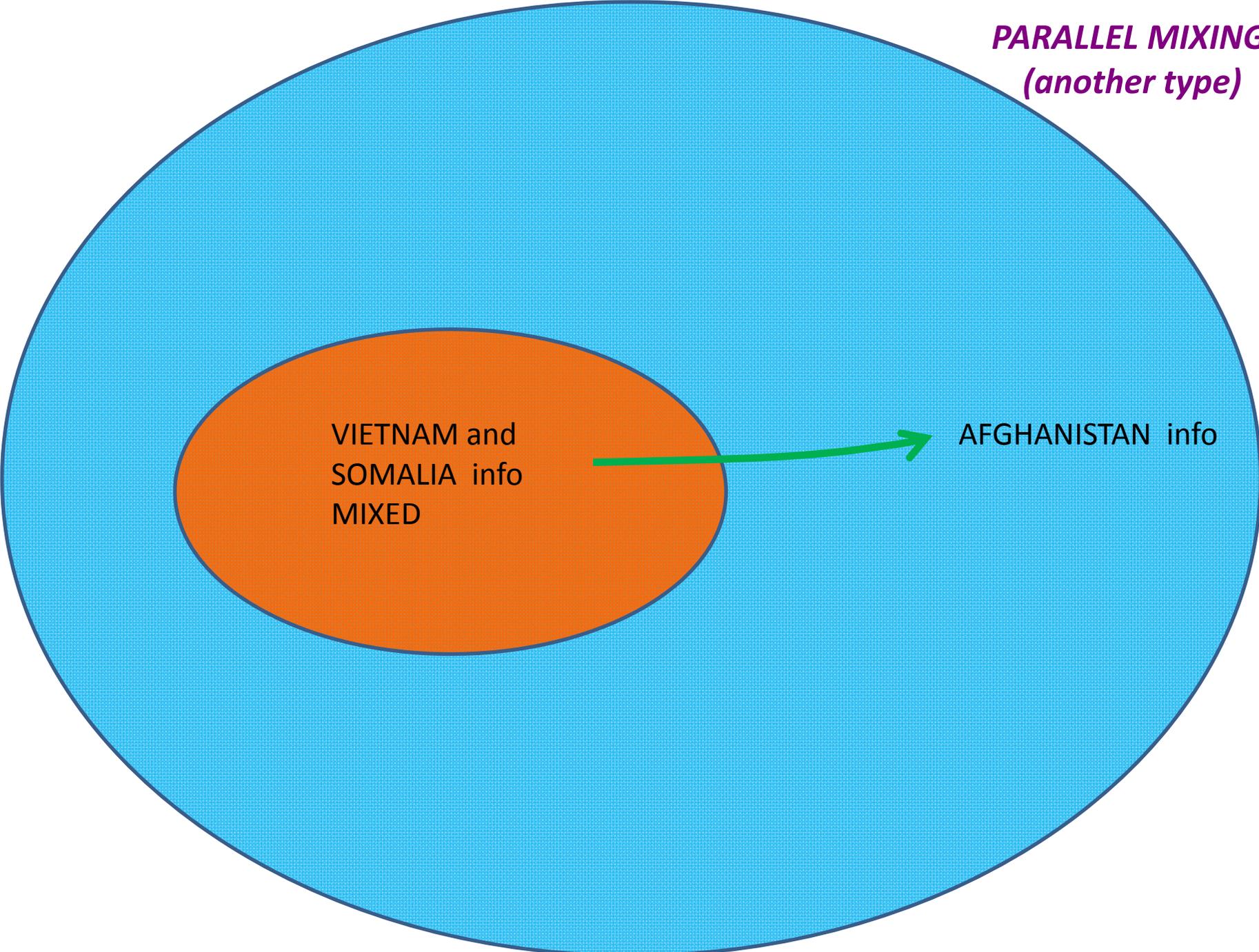


VIETNAM info

SOMALIA info

AFGHANISTAN info

**PARALLEL MIXING**  
*(another type)*



# Ending

- Metaphor can be creative in a variety of ways. One is in open-ended elaborations.
- A fiction-based approach facilitates elaborations and distortions, liberated moreover by non-parallelism (and other useful things) in such elaborations and distortions.
- Even very-creative elaborations and novel pairings work in important part by engaging standard parallels, NOT clever extension of the provided analogy. Creativity exploits the known.
- If metaphor is fundamental to thought, it can provide important aspects of creativity of thought.

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