



# Metaphor

By Denis Donoghue

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## Metaphor By Denis Donoghue

Denis Donoghue turns his attention to the practice of metaphor and to its lesser cousins, simile, metonym, and synecdoche. *Metaphor* ("a carrying or bearing across") supposes that an ordinary word could have been used in a statement but hasn't been. Instead, something else, something unexpected, appears. The point of a metaphor is to enrich the reader's experience by bringing different associations to mind. The force of a good metaphor is to give something a different life, a new life. The essential character of metaphor, Donoghue says, is prophetic. Metaphors intend to change the world by changing our sense of it.

At the center of Donoghue's study is the idea that metaphor permits the greatest freedom in the use of language because it exempts language from the local duties of reference and denotation. Metaphors conspire with the mind in its enjoyment of freedom. *Metaphor* celebrates imaginative life par excellence, from Donoghue's musings on Aquinas' Latin hymns, interspersed with autobiographical reflection, to his agile and perceptive readings of Wallace Stevens.

When Donoghue surveys the history of metaphor and resistance to it, going back to Aristotle and forward to George Lakoff, he is a sly, cogent, and persuasive companion. He also addresses the question of whether or not metaphors can ever truly die. Reflected on every page of *Metaphor* are the accumulated wisdom of decades of reading and a sheer love of language and life.

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## Metaphor By Denis Donoghue Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

For almost half a century **Denis Donoghue** has written stylish, weighty books, distinguished by the way they interweave an intricate sense of literary pleasure with an interest, no less intricate, in philosophical ideas...Now we have *Metaphor*, a characteristically intelligent and suggestive account, which reconsiders these grand philosophical tensions on the small stage of a figure of speech... *Metaphor* becomes an index of spiritual freedom: not a bit of tame likeness-making, like a simile. A metaphor is more like a heroic gesture towards autonomy, a rejection of the world of 'common usage and the values it enforces.' Donoghue pursues this theme with all his urbane powers of implication and range, finding in the metaphor a miniaturized instance of the idealist imagination...Donoghue is vivid and clever about a whole range of metaphorical uses in these pages. (Seamus Perry *Times Literary Supplement* 2014-08-15)

Compelling...[It] meanders gently from the charmingly personal to the keenly microscopic in its treatment of its (largely literary and philosophical) material...A true readerly pleasure in *Metaphor* is the intense, tactile connection **Donoghue** strikes between himself and the text at hand...This is the purpose of *Metaphor*: to make us see how and why metaphor can revitalize our understanding not just of what we read but of how we read...What [Donoghue] succeeds at doing is to force us to scrutinize with greater care, to convince us to bring a portion of ourselves to what we read, and to get us to think outside the (metaphorical) box to which our everyday associations has confined us. Making metaphor personal is the key to eliciting deeper reading. (Lianne Habinek *Open Letters Monthly* 2014-08-01)

You think you know what a metaphor is, but you don't, not really. **Denis Donoghue's** new book, *Metaphor*, is here to help, tracing the genealogy of the metaphor?along with its siblings, like the simile?throughout history, offering a more complete understanding of this ubiquitous literary device... Chock-full of entertaining examples and informative lessons on all types of metaphor. (*Sewanee Review* 2014-08-01)

[A] subtle and engrossing new book...Full of wild and beautiful examples. (Michael Wood *Irish Times* 2014-04-26)

Let us be clear: this is one of the more important books written by an Irish author so far this century...[**Donoghue's**] magnum opus. (Mark Patrick Hederman *The Furrow* 2014-07-01)

In this prodigiously learned meditation, **Donoghue** takes readers through the history of the rhetorical device and its incarnations in poetry, fiction, philosophy, and everyday life...Rummaging through an exhaustive collection of linguistic authorities from Aristotle and Aquinas to Vico, Paul de Man, and J. L. Austin, Donoghue analyzes conflicting accounts of how metaphor shapes language and our experience of reality... Donoghue strives to show how metaphors 'offer to change the world by changing one's sense of it.' Along the way, he studies verse by Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and Stevens, among many others, weaving a thick tapestry of examples to show how metaphors are used and abused...The book successfully plunges readers into the complexities of figurative language and its power to revivify experience. (*Publishers Weekly* 2014-02-10)

**Donoghue's** gentle, appreciative reflection on literary language here comes with the wisdom of accumulated decades of wide reading and robust insight. This is a book all about imaginative life, and it is a celebration of such life *par excellence*. It is a treat to watch a far-ranging, first-rate mind range over poetry and prose of centuries with so much zest for *more life*. (Leslie Brisman, author of *Romantic Origins*)

A wide-ranging, deeply learned account of the ‘daring vivacities’ language can achieve from the man who wrote the book on eloquence. (Denise Gigante, author of *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism*)

Wonderfully combines the scholarly and the personal. Recalling his metaphor-rich Catholic childhood and hearing ‘Panis Angelicus,’ [Donoghue] unlocks Aquinas’ word-play to elucidate the view that divinity conceals itself in physical symbols. He forces us to reconsider ordinary language, what makes (or doesn’t) make one thing like another and ultimately what truth and reality actually are. (Jane O’Grady *The Tablet* 2014-09-27)

[There is a] difference between metaphor that illuminates and metaphor that obscures. It is one of the merits of **Denis Donoghue**’s book, with its rich store of examples and its intimacy with the secondary literature, that he is constantly inciting us to wrestle with that distinction. (Paul Dean *New Criterion* 2014-10-01)

[A] civilized and informative book...When he discusses Yeats, Joyce or Heaney, **Donoghue** doesn't just understand their language but feels it too, and the whole book explains through close analysis of poems by Pound, Stevens and Eliot why image and metaphor have come to occupy such a central position in modernist poetry and 20th-century criticism. (Colin Burrow *London Review of Books* 2015-04-23)

#### About the Author

Denis Donoghue has taught English, Irish, and American Literature at University College, Dublin; Cambridge University and King’s College, Cambridge; and New York University.

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