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## **All-Consuming Passions: Fire Metaphors in Fiction.**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the role of metaphor in describing intense romantic feelings relating to love, lust and desire in American fiction. I propose that 'passion' integrates notions of romantic love with the related ideas of 'lust' and 'desire'. Using the fiction section of the Corpus of Contemporary American English I offer empirical evidence that fictional accounts of intense romantic feelings are characterised by two related types of metaphor: those based on the experience of heat and fire, and those based on the experience of physical or natural forces. These can be represented as LOVE/ LUST/ DESIRE IS FIRE and EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES. These metaphors are employed to understand various aspects of romance feelings including their cause, their effect and the level of intensity with which they are experienced by fictional characters. I explain how fire and heat are related through metonymy and how these are both related to fire through the force dynamic model (originally proposed by Talmy 1988 and developed in Kövecses 2000) to account for fictional representations of the passions, especially as regards variations in their intensity. I also discuss the question of how far empathy and sensual arousal on the part of a reader of romantic fiction may be triggered in the brain by descriptive accounts of people engaging in romantic, affective and, or, sexual activities. Finally I offer two new metaphors specifically for seduction: SEDUCTION IS PLAYING A GAME and SEDUCTION IS FISHING and I suggest possible psychological reasons for their appeal to authors and readers of fiction.

### **Keywords**

FICTION – METAPHOR – LOVE – LUST – DESIRE – SEDUCTION

### **Bio Statement**

Jonathan Charteris-Black has authored around 50 books, journal articles and book chapters. They include *Fire Metaphors: Discourses of Awe and Authority* (Bloomsbury forthcoming); *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor* (Palgrave, 2014); *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Palgrave, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2011); *Gender and the Language of Illness* (with Seale, C., Palgrave, 2010); *Communication and Leadership: The Design of Leadership Style* (Routledge, 2006); *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis* (Palgrave, 2004).

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## Introduction

This paper discusses the role of metaphor in describing intense romantic feelings relating to love, lust and desire in American fiction. Cognitive linguists view emotional expressivity as heavily dependent on metaphor (Lakoff, 1987, Lakoff & Turner 1989, Gibbs 2006a & b, Kövecses 2000, Charteris-Black & Seale 2009). A central tenet is that metaphors describing intense feelings originate in the physiological and physical experience of the body that is usually referred to as 'embodiment'. Based on the findings of this earlier research, I examine such metaphors in the fiction section of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)<sup>1</sup>.

In this article I begin with a discussion of what is meant by 'passions' and its relationship with other related concepts such the 'emotions' and 'love'. I propose that 'passion' integrates notions of romantic love with the related ideas of 'lust' and 'desire'. I then discuss the possible cognitive effects on the reader when experiencing metaphors that describe romantic passions. The findings are presented in line with the framework I have proposed of metaphors for love, for lust and for desire.

## The Passions & Love

The most well known of cognitive linguistic studies of emotion is Kövecses (2000) which proposes a number of emotion related metaphors with particular emphasis on those related to a force schema: EMOTION IS FORCE. Drawing on the British National Corpus Omori (2008) provides empirical evidence of Kövecses metaphor EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES: 'emotions' and 'feelings' are often described in terms of natural forces such as storms, waves, floods and fire. She identifies a number of metaphors deriving from the sea and river such as 'flood', 'torrent' and 'rush' of emotions; she describes how the uncontrollable nature of the emotions implies that emotion is a HUGE MASS OF MOVING WATER IN THE NATURAL WORLD. While questioning her discussion of anger, Kövecses (2008) supports his own original view that the uncontrollability of the emotions is best conveyed by EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES and the more specific version: HUGE MASS OF MOVING WATER IN THE NATURAL WORLD.

The notion of love is a culturally complex one that reflects significantly different cultural and sociological influences and has undergone variation over

time within a particular society or culture. For individual psychological reasons as well as evolutionary ones there is a need for humans to form strong emotional attachments based on trust. The physical survival of the child and his or her successful psycho-emotional development require attachment to a care provider who offers physical proximity and protection from perceived sources of anxiety. Species reproduction requires attachments between fertile parties of opposite sexes, and, from a social perspective, such attachments can reduce inter-group conflicts, wars, rivalries or other survival threats. The concept of 'love' therefore includes early experience of attachment to a primary caregiver and later emotional and sexual relationships – all of which are evolutionary prerequisites both for happiness and survival.

These common social and psychological goals imply that there are also likely to be important areas of overlap in cultural experience across social groups that span time periods. In spite of being authored more than 500 years ago, Shakespeare's romantic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* is still accessible to the contemporary reader. The same applies to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, or the earlier Italian romances on which they were based. Even in Biblical times, the supportive relationship that Joseph offered Christ's mother Mary and Mary's care of Jesus are credible to the modern mind: embodying a central tenet of Christianity: God's love for man. Just as it connects infant with adult experience of relationships, love is a construct that cuts across time and space and thereby has universal dimensions. It is these that allow us to appreciate romantic art in early China, the sexual passions of the *Rubaiyat* of Omayyah, or the Indian *Kamasutra*. But 'love' is not a single uniform concept; it is rather a culturally complex construct, as indicated by the Ancient Greeks distinction between four types of love: *agápe*, a love of God for man or man for God; *éros*, sexual passion or desire; *philia* a type of affection, or friendship between equals and *storge*: the natural empathy felt within family relationships such as the affection of parents for their children. There are similar sorts of variation of 'love' across cultures and time periods.

Social anthropologists have therefore distinguished a range of love related relationships on the basis of whether close empathetic feelings exists between family and non-family members, or within kinship networks; on whether they are based on individual preferences – either on the basis of sexual attraction, on the need to procreate, or on the basis of other forms of mutual attraction such as shared values, interests, beliefs or other such abstract constructs. The social anthropologist Helen Fisher analyses 'love' in terms of three distinct neural circuits based on lust, attraction and attachment. Lust is the general feeling of sexual desire based in the desire to mate, attraction is the selection of a particular candidate for focussed attention and requires the development of a romantic feelings; attachment is the bonding that allows two individual to sustain a relationship over time. It entails shared commitments such as marriage, children and the development of feelings of mutual protectiveness and shared interests; this model of love is summarised in figure one:

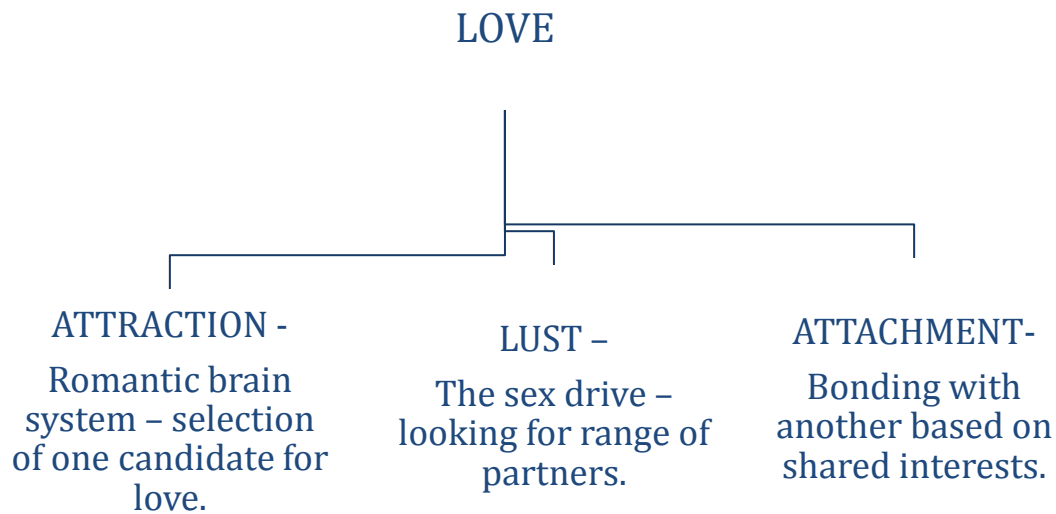


Figure 1: Fisher's model for 'love'

Although Fisher uses 'love' as a superordinate concept in the following study I modify this by treating 'passion' as a more general concept and I will equate 'attraction' with 'love' since in the context of fiction dramatic interest is created through the selection of a particular individual as the focus of the protagonist's attention. I also propose that, again in the context of fiction, 'desire' is a more central concept than 'attachment'; this is because dramatic interest is in whether a relationship will be sustained over time. In the case of sexual desire leading to impregnation – the attraction may be very brief indeed – a one-night-stand – by contrast, desire frequently entails a search for mutually shared appeal based on ongoing feelings of protection, care, empathy etc. I see 'desire' therefore as motivating some aspects of lust with some aspects of attraction such as the search for a long-term partner and lover. In this reformulation of 'attachment' other types of love such as that between parents and children is replaced by the notion of a sexually based relationship that has duration over fictional time. This is because in the fictional world normative relationships such as mother-child are less frequently described than romantic attachments. I summarise this reframing of Fisher's 'love' as follows:

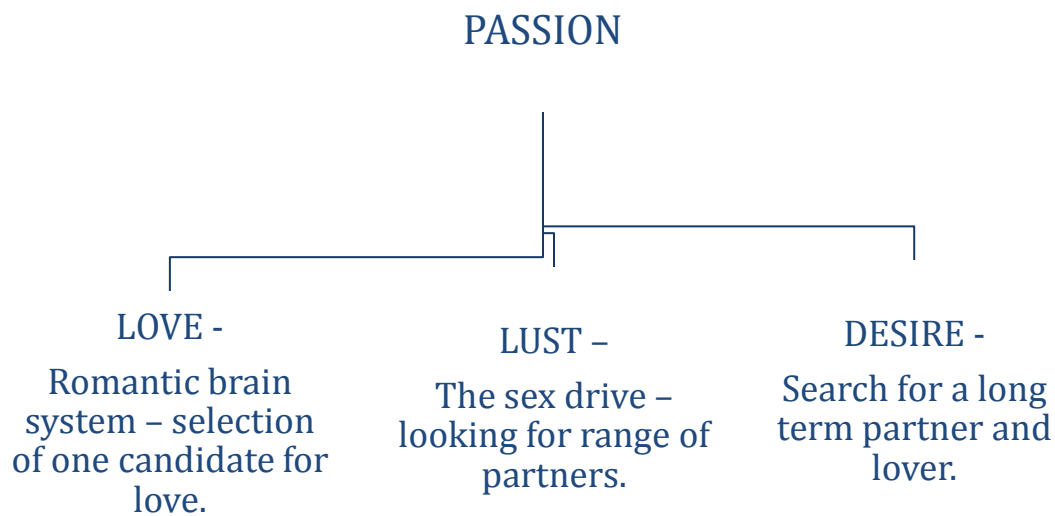


Figure 2: Model of 'passion'

Given that human love relationships have formed *a*, if not *the*, central topic of the fiction genre, it is not surprising that, since its inception, fiction has been characterized by tales of love – commonly, frustrated, non-reciprocated or ‘lost’ love as in the tragedies associated in the English literary tradition with writers such as Thomas Hardy, DH Lawrence or John Fowles. Apart from Literature a major drive in romantic fiction have been racy accounts of liaisons – usually secret and tragic – that have driven an endless mill of popular fiction stimulated by the romance imprint Mills and Boon who first developed romantic fiction as a highly lucrative publishing medium. Their typical readers were whose own lives were often lacking in the passions about which they read in these novels thereby gaining surrogate, or even subliminal, satisfaction through the lives of fictional love characters. More recently the novel *50 Shades of Grey* has given evidence of the ongoing appeal of the racy fictional account of ‘hot’ romance: but how might such accounts affect the brain of the reader?

### Cognitive Effect of the Passions in Fiction

Research into mirror neurons has indicated that the same the parts of the brain are activated when individuals – originally monkeys – observe an action as are activated in the brains of those people actually undertaking the action. This neural activation is known as ‘simulation’ and has been defined as follows:

Simulation is the re-enactment of perceptual, motor, and introspective states acquired during experience with the world, body, and mind. As an experience occurs (e.g., easing into a chair), the brain captures states across the modalities and integrates them with a multimodal representation stored in memory (e.g., how a chair looks and feels, the

action of sitting, introspections of comfort and relaxation). Later, when knowledge is needed to represent a category (e.g. chair), multimodal representations captured during experiences with its instances are reactivated to simulate how the brain represented perception, action, and introspection associated with it. (Barsalou 618–9)

Gibbs (2006a & b), Semino (2010), and Charteris-Black (2016) draw on the notion of simulation to suggest that metaphor can facilitate an embodied simulation of pain by people who listen to, or read, such metaphors. Citing Gallese (2009), Semino (2010) develops the argument that simulation forms the basis of human empathy. In a study of the metaphors used by people experiencing chronic pain Charteris-Black (2016) found that metaphors are much more frequent in accounts of chronic pain than they are in the language of people experiencing heart conditions or cancer. I suggest that richer and more complex metaphors have the potential to trigger a more intense empathic response because they evoke more detailed pain-inducing scenarios. The extremely embodied nature of pain leads to more metaphors and to more complex metaphors. Such image-based descriptive metaphors are also used extensively in pain management therapies such as visualization. What is less clear is how readers are affected physiologically and cognitively when reading accounts of intense romantic and sexual experience.

Because it is transformational metaphor is the linguistic feature where it would seem highly productive to explore in romantic fiction; this is because metaphors characterize the language of people experiencing extreme sensory states: the neural origin for empathy proposed by Barsalou and Gallese, and supported by Semino and Charteris-Black, implies that understanding another's feelings and emotions is not reliant on cognitive deduction of what it would be like to be in a particular situation but because parts of the brain are activated through somatosensory neurons that could be linguistically triggered. This raises the question of how far empathy and sensual arousal on the part of a reader of romantic fiction may be triggered in the brain by descriptive accounts of people engaging in romantic, affective and, or, sexual activities. If the brain itself is multi-modular system based on embodiment, then presumably the same types of arousal that occur in relation to accounts of pain may also occur through verbal fictional accounts of passions.

Evidence that this is also the case in the language of fiction can be found in the very high frequency of metaphor found in romantic fiction. Consider for example the following in which the metaphors are in bold and underlined:

**Blazing a hot trail** from her throat, his lips covered her **unguarded** breasts, and she **shivered** with exquisite anticipation. She became unaware of her surroundings, oblivious to time and place; she only knew her body was **reacting** to this man, pleasure **radiating** outward from some **hidden depths** within herself. She allowed herself to be **transported** by it, incapable of **stopping the forward thrust** of her desires, **spinning** out of time and space into **the soft, consuming vapors** of her sensuality. Her emotions **careened** and **clashed, grew confused** and **wild**, her perceptions **thrumming** and **beating** wherever he touched her. And when he moved away from her, leaving her, she felt alone and grieving. When he returned, she was **whole again**, wanting, needing,

wanting to be needed. The **feverish heat** of his skin seemed to **singe** her fingers as she traced **inquisitive** patterns over his arms and back and down over his muscular haunches. (Michaels, F. *Serendipity*, 1994)

Although this might seem overwritten and 'popular' in style, the intensity of the emotional experience is conveyed by extensive use of at least 20 metaphors (the counting of metaphors is problematic if only because it depends on whether one counts words or phrases, for example is 'feverish heat' one metaphor or two?). Notice how the description includes reference to the protagonist being 'oblivious to time and place' – implying an absence of cognition as the embodied parts of her brain take over. Evidently the writer is drawing on metaphors that she believes will evoke similar experiences on the part of her readers. I analyze the metaphors used in this section later on, but the point here is that the motivation for such metaphors is to engage the reader in some form of instinctive neural response that might reflect physiologically in an accelerated pulse and cognitively in an accelerated pace of reading.

## **Emotion as Force**

I would like to try to explain reader reactions by drawing on the model introduced above and proposed by Kövecses (2000) in which metaphors describing the emotions are analysed using an EMOTION AS FORCE schema. This originated in Talmy's force dynamic approach, a theory based on our basic folk understanding of the physical world in which entities are connected by force relationships as one entity acts upon another thereby causing motion and change. The two entities and their relationships can be described using the terms 'agonist' and 'antagonist'; these were originally explained as follows:

The primary distinction that language marks here is a role difference between the two entities exerting the forces. One force-exerting entity is singled out for focal attention - the salient issue in the interaction is whether this entity is able to manifest its force tendency or, on the contrary, is overcome. The second force entity, correlatively, is considered for the effect that it has on the first, effectively overcoming it or not. ...I call the focal force entity the Agonist and the force element that opposes it the Antagonist. (Talmy 53)

The two force entities act upon each other with the agonist either giving way to or resisting the force of the antagonist. I will apply this force dynamic approach to fictional accounts of the passions. The fictional character experiencing a passion can be viewed as the agonist and the passions that he or she is experiencing can be viewed as the antagonist. When the character is in equilibrium there is some form of homeostasis between competing forces. Using this model the agonist has an intrinsic tendency towards emotional equilibrium, but the passionate antagonist has an extrinsic tendency to act upon the agonist by applying a force. When the inertia of the agonist resists the antagonist a stable emotional state is maintained, but when the passionate antagonist

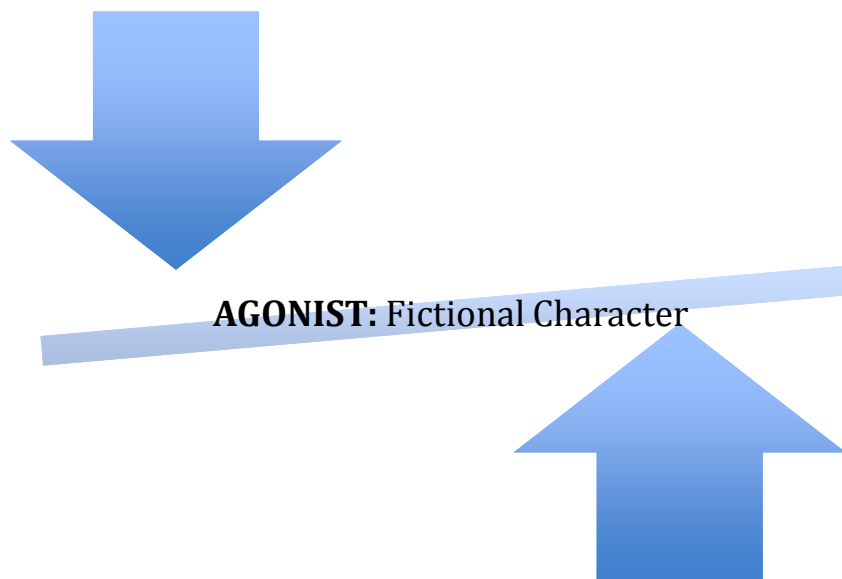


overcomes the powers of resistance of the agonist the person experiences a change in emotional state. This is represented in figure 3:

**FORCE A**

**ANTAGONIST:**

Character's passions



**FORCE B**

**INERTIA:**

Character's tendency to remain impassive

Figure 3 Talmy's force dynamic model applied to passions in fiction

If force A, the passion, exceeds force B, the tendency to remain impassive, homeostasis will be lost and there will be a change in the character's emotional state. This pattern can be classed as 'causative,' because it explains the *cause* of passion. Conversely, if force B exceeds force A homeostasis will be maintained and the character's state will remain unchanged. In the case of fictional accounts, authors are not interested in impassivity on the part of their readers. They assume that readers seek stimulus and arousal and, perhaps, to avoid feelings of boredom, therefore a relation of imbalance is deliberately re-enacted in fiction. Through a process of recreation of the original embodied experience of passion

(force A), the author hopes to overcome the reader's inertia (force B). The force dynamic approach explains the relationship between physiological and neural responses and emotions on the part of both the fictional characters and the reader and writer relationship. A force is a concept in the physical world that gives rise to a response, and experience of passions is strongly associated with the physiological response of movement of blood within the body. The author of romantic fiction seeks to stimulate some form of physical response from readers that will set their blood flowing and trigger a neural response. Metaphor-based accounts of the passions and physiological reactions of fictional characters encourage empathy-based simulation on the part of readers.

Kövecses (2000) proposes that emotions are often described in terms of physical forces that represent the cause and effect of emotional experience and in particular the sequence once an emotion has come into being. While Kövecses refers to this as a schema, I will use the term 'emotion scenario' as summarised in figure 4.

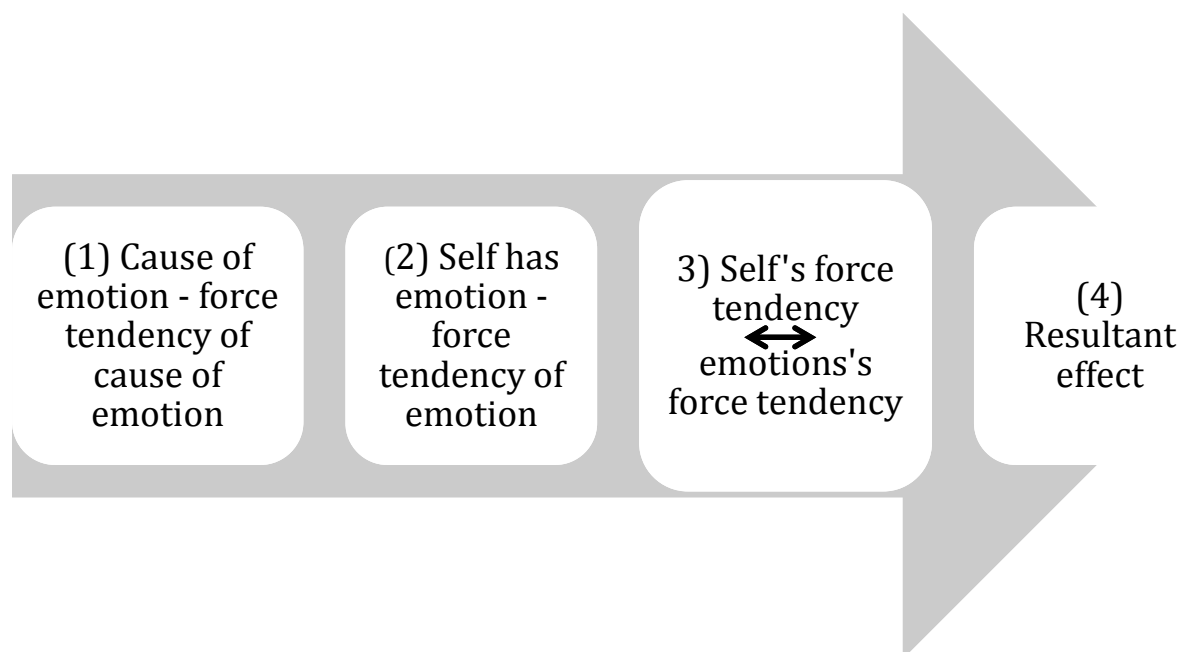


Figure 4 Emotion Scenarios (based on Kövecses *Metaphor and Emotion* 83-84)

This scenario shows how the interaction between antagonist and agonist, between emotion and the self, also takes place within a scenario for the progression of an emotional state. I will illustrate in the following analysis how these force based metaphors work in relation to fiction metaphors in COCA. The issues I am addressing can be summarized in the following research questions:

- 1) What metaphors are employed by writers of fiction to describe romantic relationships?

- 2) What patterns, or systems, can be identified in these metaphors?
- 3) What motivates the choice of these metaphors?

## **Method**

COCA contains a fiction section of 104,900,827 words collected during the period 1992 until 2015. A range of genres are included in this section of the corpus including: short stories and plays from literary magazines, children's magazines, popular magazines, first chapters of first edition books, and movie scripts. Although these genres vary as regards their reliance on characterisation, plot, attention to setting and other generic characteristics of fiction, they all share descriptions of the human passions. While such accounts also occur in other sections of the corpus such as 'magazines' and 'spoken language', extensive description of human passions – of attraction, lust and attachment – are highly typical of fictional genres. The need to provide accounts of emotional experiences that are engaging to readers invites the use of metaphor and therefore the metaphors that occur in fiction provide rich insight into the theories of embodiment that are central in contemporary accounts of metaphor.

My approach to metaphors identification was to use as search terms various metaphors in the literature (in particular Lakoff & Turner 1989, Kövecses 2000 and Goatly 2007) that have 'love', 'lust', or 'desire' as target domains; this entailed searching for a range of lemmas in the semantic field of 'natural forces' using a window of four words.

## **Findings & Discussion**

I will organise the presentation and discussion of findings with reference to three tables of metaphors that have 'love', 'lust', or 'desire' as their target domains. In each table I propose a metaphor concept, an illustration of the type of metaphor that entailed this concept and the frequency of the exact collocation that followed this pattern (underlined and in bold). For example in table one, there were 88 instances of 'heart' collocating with 'melt' (using all inflections, so 'melted', 'melting' etc.) occurring within four words of each other.

### **Love Metaphors**

Lakoff & Turner (1989) has LOVE IS FIRE and Goatly (2007) has LOVE/ PASSION IS HEAT, by comparison Kövecses (2000) has 20 different metaphors for 'love'. I found evidence for all of these in COCA fiction but have illustrated those for which there was most evidence; I also found some additional metaphors not referred to in any of these sources and have indicated these with an asterisk.

**Table 1      'Love' Metaphors**

Conceptual Metaphor	Example	n
LOVE IS A UNITY OF PARTS	Larry's pathological jealousy was partly responsible for <b><u>breaking up</u></b> the <b><u>marriage</u></b> . He's accused Mary Jo of sleeping with every guy in town.	93
LOVE IS HEAT	She walked with unsteady steps to the front door, and her <b><u>heart melted</u></b> within her as she saw him standing there.	88
LOVE IS AN ILLNESS	Maybe we should call a doctor, " he said. " She's <b><u>heartsick</u></b> and there's no medicine for that, " Aunt Lucette sighed, " except time. We ought to know that.	67
LOVE IS WEATHER CONDITION *	She didn't wear a lot of makeup, so it didn't take long. While she was applying it, she mused about her <b><u>whirlwind romance</u></b> with Paul. Thanks to his generosity and spontaneity, they'd not only been to Paris, they'd spent weekends in Los Angeles and Caracas as well.	11
	Nora and Mark had dated for a few months a couple of years ago. The only description he could give to their <b><u>relationship</u></b> then was <b><u>stormy</u></b> .	6
LOVE IS A PLANT *	Fortunately for me, her mother didn't have anything against Americans, and so our <b><u>romance</u></b> continued to <b><u>blossom</u></b> .	7
LOVE IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER	He pulled her to him and squeezed her as he locked her in his arms, causing her to giggle out loud. He stopped, cupped her face, and kissed her with an <b><u>overflow</u></b> of <b><u>passion</u></b> .	3

Expressions such as 'break up a marriage' and may be considered as entrenched metaphors as it is difficult to find an equally succinct literal equivalent and they are unlikely to involve comparison; others such as 'heart melted' and 'romance to blossom' can be viewed as conventional metaphors – that is they are familiar metaphors that while they may evoke a comparison also work by categorising an experience: for example 'heart melted' is a typical way of categorising an emotional response as affective (see Charteris-Black 2014: 171-2 for a discussion of novel, conventional, entrenched metaphor). It was difficult to identify especially novel ways of describing love; even when searching the pattern 'love is ...' the collocations were 'real' (8), 'blind' (7) and 'hard' (6). Novel

metaphors were more characterised by their infrequency for example there was one instance of 'love is poison':

What's wrong with falling in love? " I asked her when she complained. "  
**Love is poison** for us, " she replied, and would say no more about it, no matter how many times I asked. (Andrews, V. C. *Daughter of darkness*, 2010)

In the following exchange the expression 'love is sacred' is mocked by the interlocuter:

Who cares? Get married. Get divorced. That's how it goes. "  
" That's not the way I think about it, " she said. " That's not how I think at all. "  
" What do you think? "  
" **Love is sacred**, " she said.  
I had to smile at that. " And that's why you fuck your clients? All those married men, Lola? I know you do. "  
" My name is Rachel, you fuck, " she said. " And you don't know thing one. "  
" I know you live in my apartment and sleep with me, " I said. " I know you killed this girl." (Terwilliger, C. Cherry Town. *Literary Review*, 2011)

Generally it was difficult to identify novel metaphors for love, however, the corpus method was helpful in establishing the relative frequency of entrenched and conventional metaphors and shows how dependent fiction writers are on these. It is also provided examples of novel metaphors. It is feasible that other more qualitative methodologies may be required in establishing whether metaphors have literary merit.

## **Lust Metaphors**

Lakoff & Turner (1989) have LUST IS HEAT, Goatly does not have a metaphor for lust while Kövecses (2000) has 20 different metaphors for 'lust'. I have marked with an asterisk two metaphors that seem relatively novel and creative in that they refer to the activity of seduction rather than 'lust', but seem closely related. The first of these SEDUCING IS PLAYING A GAME was characterised by the frequent use of the sports metaphor 'first base' – out of the first 100 instances of 'first base' 26 referred to sexual activity; the example offers an explanation of the metaphoric meaning of this sports metaphor.

**Table 2      'Lust' Metaphors**

SEDUCING IS PLAYING A GAME *	I remember freshman year of high school, sitting on Julie's bed, describing making out with a junior named Owen. Julie was sitting at her desk holding Moe, her stuffed platypus, in her lap. Her eyes suddenly widened. " You mean you went to second base with him? " she asked. I had no idea what Julie was talking about. I had a very sketchy understanding of American sports. Julie, blushing, explained the choreography <b>First base</b> was kissing. Second, up the shirt. Third, down the pants. Fourth was doing it. In fact, Owen and I had " gone " to somewhere between third and fourth base. That is, we'd attempted to " do it, " but Owen, in a pivotal moment, had lost his nerve.	26/ 100
SEDUCING IS FISHING *	" Being here is all in a day's work for me. " // She cocked her head. " What sort of work? " // " I'm a pilot. " // " For one of the big airlines? " // " Nope. For whoever can afford me. " // " Fascinating, " Kennedy said. " I love planes. " // He <b>took</b> the <b>bait</b> exactly the way she'd hoped. " I'd be happy to give you a tour through mine. " // " I'd adore that. " Kennedy set down her champagne glass. " Anything wrong with right now? " // " Not a thing. " // His grin widened, suggesting perhaps she'd been playing into his hands, not the other way around, and a secret thrill shot through her at the challenge.	88
LUST IS HEAT	Her mother, she explained, lived at the beach, where she'd worked in tourism for a decade. She had divorced Astrid's dad because she'd had <b>the hots for</b> some teenager.	47
LUST IS HUNGER/ EATING	They had been together for six years, and he'd found her <b>sexual appetite</b> as voracious as her greed. She'd been his " patient " since her parents had brought her to him for private therapy after a run-in with the law for prostitution. She'd only been seventeen at the time and totally out of control as far as her parents were concerned.	17
LUST IS A VICIOUS ANIMAL	BEN - Yes, I'm brimming with passion. I'm up to here with passion. LAURA - I want us to be like animals. You know just screaming and sweating and <b>tearing at each other all the time</b> BEN - The sweating shouldn't be a problem. <b>The tearing sounds painful.</b>	?
LUST IS PRESSURE IN A	Even though everything in my life was about her now. Casual sex <b>exploded</b> into a wrecking <b>passion</b> . I fell in love with a slut as worthless as I was.	8

CONTAINER		
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Since the concepts in the lower four rows are discussed in Kövecses (2000) I focus here on two novel metaphors that I have identified in which the metaphor target is seduction. Baseball is an especially salient metaphor in American culture and in this sport once a participant has struck the ball he commences to run from base to base in order to attempt to get as far as he can. The metaphor SEDUCING IS PLAYING A GAME triggers a script for sexual activity in which there are a series of stages of intimate bodily contact; it implies purposeful progression so that a seducer will typically seek to get to as many bases as possible – with the implication that the ultimate objective of seduction is full sexual penetration. In baseball there are four bases, if a player can get all around three bases and return to home base before the ball is returned to the home base he has scored a home run. It frames seducing as a game, and in this sense trivialises the affective involvement of the participants instead focussing on the physical aspects of their sexual behaviour. Howe (1988) identified the use of sports metaphors in American political discourse, noting their appeal to men in particular and Jansen & Sabo (1994) examined the role of sports metaphors in the first Gulf War. It is possible that these fictional representations of seduction as a game is one way in which young Americans overcome their sexual inhibitions: the seduction as a game scenario makes something that is potentially fearful and potentially anxiety-ridden – with fears of poor ‘performance’ - seem playful and enjoyable. It also profiles the act of seduction as a competition in which an active victor overcomes or vanquishes a passive victim.

Another frequent metaphors was the phrase ‘taking the bait’; while the number 88 refers to the total uses of this phrase as a metaphor (i.e. not related to fishing), only some of these described seduction, so the metaphor is one for deception in general, and frames seduction as a specific type of deception. SEDUCING IS FISHING represents a scenario in which the activity of seduction is one that requires a skillful exponent: one who has a plan for a sexual act that is then skillfully enacted; the metaphorical ‘prey’ is thereby entrapped by the guile and skill of the seducer. By emphasizing the guile and skill of the seducer this metaphor scenario avoids any form of moral judgement and in this respect is similar to SEDUCING IS PLAYING A GAME.

## **Desire metaphors**

Goatly (2007) has DESIRE IS APPETITE and DESIRE IS BENDING ATTRACTION while Kövecses (2000) has DESIRE IS HUNGER but since I have classified these as ‘lust’ metaphors my findings for of ‘desire’ metaphors are summarised in table 3. The following discussion will focus on metaphors relating to force.



**Table 3      'Desire' metaphors**

DESIRE IS FIRE	So he stopped thinking about it and instead allowed that <b><u>burning desire</u></b> to see her again flow through him.	60
DESIRE IS A NATURAL FORCE	Just once in her life she wanted to be <b><u>swept</u></b> off her <b><u>feet</u></b> by the perfect man on the perfect night with perfect love.	53
DESIRE IS INSANITY	His wife's got to be a lucky woman. We're all <b><u>crazy about him</u></b> . Who wouldn't give her eyeteeth for a man like <b><u>him</u></b> ? " Paul looked at the plump curls under the white cap, at the full lips, so richly red, and the inviting shape under the uniform. <b><u>Crazy about him</u></b> . I'll bet you are, he thought.	32
DESIRE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE	And as the words poured from his lips, the other boys faded and she grew, coloring his vision: apricot, silver, brown, and green - the thousand shades of her eyes. <b><u>Animal magnetism</u></b> was not something he could control, Quimbly realized. It flowed through him, his force, the girl's.	15
	Her ability to concoct a powerful <b><u>sexual magnetism</u></b> from her genetic gifts and these accessories was a large portion of her livelihood.	7
	At the last minute he found he couldn't <b><u>resist</u></b> the <b><u>urge</u></b> to slap her ass as she slid by him. Her behind, round, high, and plump, jiggled wildly beneath the assault. Tony's mouth began to water.	6
DESIRE IS AN OPPONENT	Luisa's eyes were now moist as she <b><u>struggled</u></b> to keep <b><u>her feelings</u></b> under control. Ted knew it was time to leave so she could deal with her emotions in her own private way.	10
DESIRE IS MAGIC	She dropped our arms, brushed hair from her face. Where do the mistresses of <b><u>beauty</u></b> learn their <b><u>enchanted</u></b> gestures? "	9
DESIRE IS WAR	He just doesn't believe that <b><u>love conquers</u></b> all, " I said." He doesn't believe anything <b><u>conquers</u></b> anything, " Kirsten said. " He's only interested in the difficulties.	4
	Rumors about his so-called continued <b><u>sexual conquests</u></b> had kept the gossipmongers busy, but he'd tried to ignore them, focusing all his attention on getting the shy Jillian to give him a chance.	5

Fire and heat metaphors were especially prominent in all the three metaphors targets discussed above: love, lust and desire and therefore warrant a more detailed discussion in order to consider my third research question concerning the motivation of metaphor. Consider the fire and heat metaphors (bold & underlined) in the extract that was introduced at the start of this article:

**Blazing a hot trail** from her throat, his lips covered her unguarded breasts, and she **shivered** with exquisite anticipation. She became unaware of her surroundings, oblivious to time and place; she only knew her body was reacting to this man, pleasure **radiating** outward from some hidden depths within herself. ...When he returned, she was whole again, wanting, needing, wanting to be needed. The **feverish heat** of his skin seemed to **singe** her fingers as she traced inquisitive patterns over his arms and back and down over his muscular haunches. (Michaels, F. *Serendipity*, 1994) (Michaels, F. *Serendipity*, 1994)

Although this might seem overwritten and ‘popular’ in style, the intensity of the emotional experience is conveyed by heat and fire metaphors. References to heat and temperature in combination with physical force verbs are very common in accounts of intense emotional experience. The collocation ‘passion’ and ‘heat’ occurs 26 times in COCA fiction, for example:

My immediate reaction would be to salivate. My underpants would get wet and **an unusual, irregular heat**, a **passionate heat**, would follow. The whole thing, salivation and **heat and passion**, could occur at the middle of the night. But it also happened at the middle of the day. (Stavans, I. *House repossessed*, 1995)

Metonymic experience of bodily warmth provides the basis for the metaphoric understanding of affection. Grady (1997: 24) describes basic level connections (such as those between warmth and physical proximity) as ‘primary scenes’:

Primary scenes are minimal (temporally-delineated) episodes of subjective experience, characterised by tight correlations between physical circumstances and cognitive response. They are universal elements of human experience, defined by basic c fiction section of the Corpus of Contemporary American English cognitive mechanisms and abilities, which relate in some salient sense to goal-oriented interaction with the world. (Grady in Goatly 59)

Primary scenes therefore invite a link between a physical state and a cognitive response. Grady and Johnson (2002) reject the view that these primary scenes are metonymic whereas Kövecses (2013) argues that ‘correlation-based metaphors emerge from frame-like mental representations through a metonymic stage’. He explains how this happens as follows:

I proposed this happens when one of the elements of a frame-like mental structure is generalized (schematized) to a concept that lies outside the initial frame in a different part of the conceptual system. The generalization process leads to sufficient conceptual distance between the initial and the new frame on which metaphors can be based. (Kövecses *Metaphor-Metonymy Relationship* 87)

I suggest that in these fictional accounts of intense sexual desire the element of bodily warmth arising from physical proximity in the initial frame is generalised, so that heat becomes associated with desire and that metaphors such as 'passionate heat' and 'burning desire' provide evidence of this process. It is therefore likely that representations such as DESIRE IS FIRE and LUST IS HEAT derive from a metonym HEAT FOR DESIRE when describing intense emotions, and WARMTH FOR AFFECTION when describing less intense ones. The metaphors and metonyms proposed by cognitive linguists seek to provide explicit representations of neural pathways that arise from correlations between two types of experience: in the case of heat metaphors, between an increase in temperature and an emotional response. Fire and heat metaphors weld together the experience of high body temperature with intense sexual desire; Charteris-Black (forthcoming) undertakes a detailed analysis of such metaphors.

Metaphors draw on temperature and fire when describing desire and lust and the intensity of these passions motivates the fire metaphor. Such metaphors are expressive because they combine metonymic embodied experience of heat with experience of fire to provide a force-based model that relies on embodiment combined with experience of the natural world. As explained in Charteris-Black (forthcoming) fire is the prototypical natural force influencing human life. Fire metaphors also fit well with the emotion scenario shown in figure 4, for example when a passion is 'kindled' or ignited' this indicates stage one of the scenario whereas being 'burnt' or 'consumed' by an emotion indicates the fourth stage.

Fire metaphors typically serve to express either high or low intensity of sexual desire; the collocation 'desire' and 'burn' occurs a total of 60 times in COCA fiction for example:

" No. Stay like that, " said Henry. He knelt and kissed her bare shoulders. " You're so beautiful. So very... desirable. " He lifted her face to his and *kissed her fully*. " I need *to possess you utterly*. " Anne felt his heart, his soul, his **desire burning** in his hands, in his lips. She returned the kiss, hungrily, then threw back her head and moaned softly. **A fire erupted in her belly and her private place**, a dreadful, delicious ache that demanded to be acknowledged, to be tended. (Massie, E. & M. Hirst, *King takes queen*, 2008)

Here the embodied nature of the fire is made very explicit with reference to the desire 'in his hands' and 'fire' erupting 'in her private place'. Lower intensity is expressed with the use of fire metaphors in other body parts – such as the eyes; the collocation 'smolder' and 'eyes' occurs 50 times in COCA fiction:

....., and his voice was lower as he spoke, and his eyelids sank down over his suddenly **smoldering eyes**. *She couldn't resist it*. It was crazy, but she just

couldn't. He had to be teased, despite the dangers. Nobody should take himself that seriously. (Booth, P. *Malibu*, 1990)

A low level of intensity may also be combined with the early stages of the emotion path schema (figure 2), 'eyes' and 'kindled' collocate 11 times in COCA fiction:

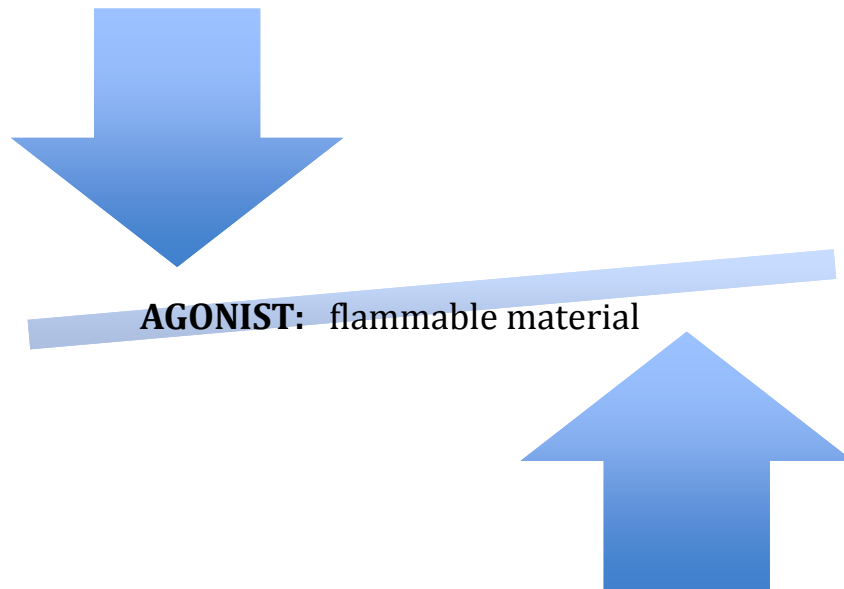
Her tongue glided over her lower lip. Pure suggestion. *His eyes kindled in a hot bronze glow, trapping hers.* "

She is astride him, hands resting on his chest, rocking... in control, confident... very much liking the fire she's *kindled in his eyes*.

Charteris-Black (forthcoming) proposes that the force dynamic model provides a convincing account of the variation in intensity in fire metaphors. Flammable material can be viewed as an agonist since it has a natural tendency to equilibrium – unless it is ignited. The cause of fire - the spark – can be viewed as the antagonist. The spark can either ignite the material and as a result a fire is kindled, or, if the conditions are such that fire is not possible (for example because the flammable material is damp), then there will be no fire and the material will remain the same state rather than being combusted. When fuel and oxygen are readily available the level of intensity of a fire is high, whereas when these are less available, the level of intensity is lower. Knowledge of the physics of natural fire therefore provides a readily available frame for explaining variations in the intensity of the passions as shown in figures 5 and 6:

**FORCE A:**

**ANTAGONIST:** fire



**FORCE B:**

**INERTIA:**  
Tendency of  
materials to remain  
in the same state.

Figure 5 Force Dynamic Model for Natural Fire

If force A exceeds force B a fire will start, whereas if force B is equal to, or exceeds, force A there will no fire and the material will remain unchanged and homeostasis ensured. There are correspondences in ideas of resistance, or inertia, between our experience of emotions and of fire. Expressions such as 'desire burning and 'smouldering eyes' imply THE LEVEL OF INTENSITY OF PASSION IS THE LEVEL OF INTENSITY OF A FIRE. Our understanding of the physical behaviour of natural fire provides the basis for this frame. In these expressions the inertia represented by force B is weaker than force A and therefore they offer a causal account of the intensity of passion:

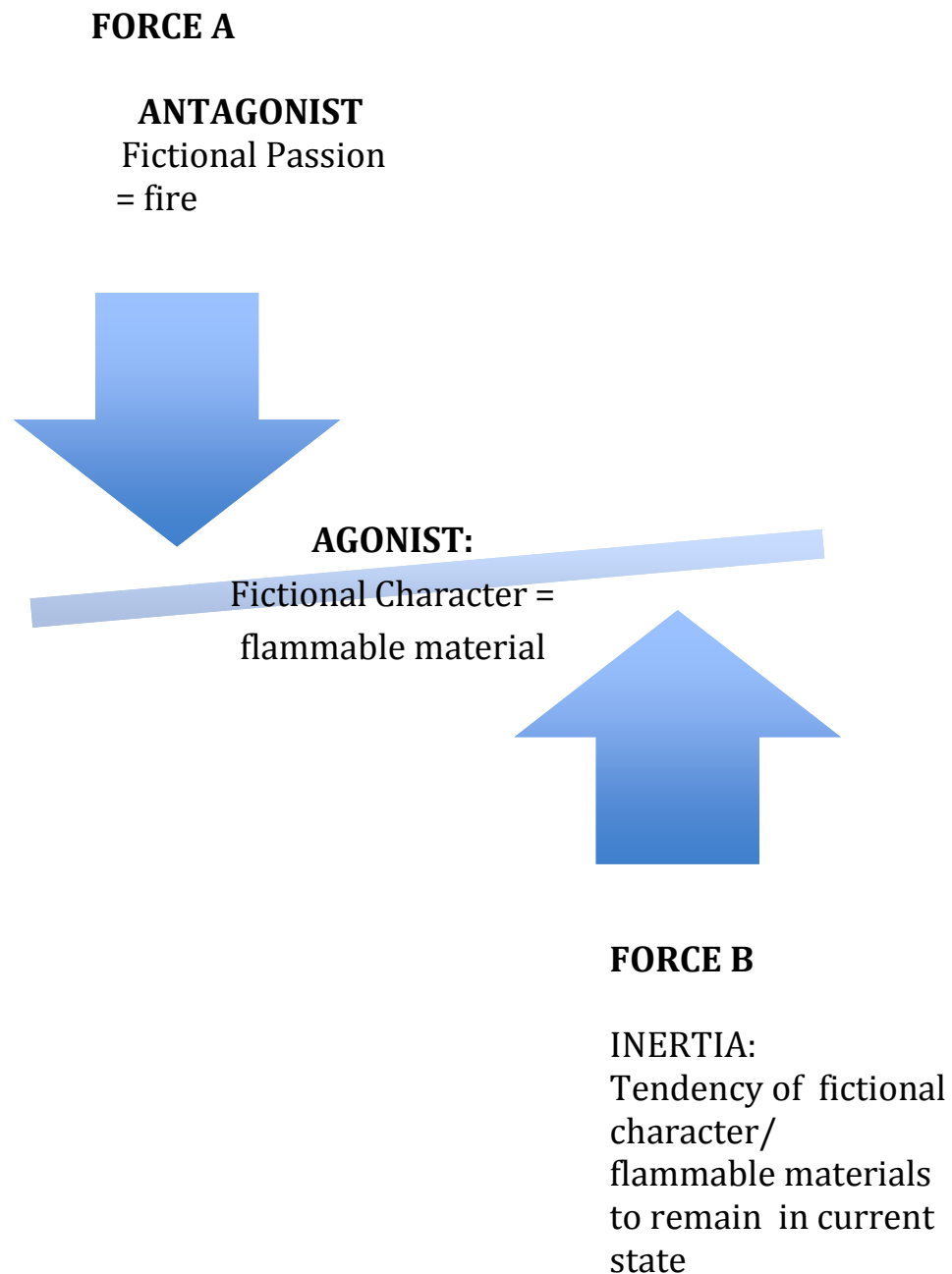


Figure 6 Force Dynamic Model for Fictional Fire Metaphors for Passion

Figure 6 offers a model for intensity of passion and therefore offers an account of the motivation of the metaphors for lust and desire that occur in American fiction. Where force A exceeds force B we have a model for loss of control in which the entity acted upon, the individual, or the flammable material, is overwhelmed or consumed by the intensity of the passion. I will illustrate this situation with a fire metaphor that describes an individual's emotional state; the expression 'old flame/s' occurs 36 times in the fiction section of COCA, as in the following:

Now she understood what he hadn't been able to tell her, that he had met **his old flame** again, and it was **a fire that was consuming** his vacant moments and the empty pockets in his life as it had before. There was nothing left over. (Ackerman, D. *Hummingbirds*, 2001)

Here the narrator develops a fire metaphor to describe the emotion that is overwhelming her partner who is passive in resisting its force. By contrast, when force B exceeds force A we have a model for control in which the self/ social situation (or the flammable material) though acted upon, remain unchanged either because of the lower intensity of the passion or because of their greater resistance of inertia.

## Conclusion

I have demonstrated that American fiction is characterised by many metaphors to describe romantic relationships in terms of whether they describe love, lust or desire. While some metaphors such as SEDUCING IS PLAYING A GAME or SEDUCING IS FISHING seem specifically to describe seduction, others such as LOVE IS HEAT, LUST IS HEAT and DESIRE IS FIRE draw on experience of embodiment and experience of the natural world to describe the full range of the passions, that is: love, lust and desire. I have produced extensive empirical evidence in support of Kövecses's claim that:

The object affected by the natural force can't help but undergo the impact of the force; in the same way, a person experiences emotion in a passive and helpless way. This is the single most important property of emotion in the folk theory. (Kövecses *Metaphor and Emotion* 72).

I have illustrated how this natural force metaphor for emotion applies equally well in providing an account of the motivation of metaphors that describe the all-consuming passions of American fiction.

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