One of the deepest sources of confusion in theoretical discussions of metaphor is the language used to describe what metaphor is and how it works. Considering the variety of philosophical and linguistic terms employed in debates about the nature of metaphor, and the inconsistency with which these are often used and understood, it is little wonder that biblical scholars find it difficult to bridge the gap between metaphor theories and the exegesis of particular biblical metaphors. It is tempting to avoid defining or identifying different types of linguistic expression, or to use the generic (and conveniently nebulous) term ‘imagery’ to describe a range of figurative language in biblical texts. However, recognising a particular expression as a metaphor, and taking how it works and what it can do seriously, can have a huge impact on the translation and interpretation of a text. This section will therefore address those theoretical questions and debates about metaphor that directly influence biblical exegesis, and will highlight potential pitfalls of certain theories and their respective vocabularies.

Metaphor as ‘an Analogical Word-picture’

The basic understanding of metaphor in this thesis is that it is a particular kind of ‘word-picture’. This definition is akin to Macky’s description of metaphor as a “photo-landscape symbol”, and resonates with Aristotle’s explanation that metaphor sets “the scene before our eyes”. The term ‘analogical word-picture’, whilst emphasising the nature of metaphor as a form of verbal art, distinguishes it from other types of verbal art by
identifying analogy as the underlying basis of its *modus operandi*, which will be discussed in more detail further on.4

The definition of metaphor as an analogical word-picture aims to provide not only a basic descriptive model that is reasonably transparent, but also one that can guide the process of biblical exegesis, without getting unduly weighed down by lists of technical terms. It stresses the importance of paying attention both to the particular words in the metaphor, to the picture(s) created by its words, and to the way in which these are related. If either the pictorial aspect of metaphor (the image it creates) or its verbal dimension (the way in which it operates through interactions between individual words within a text) is ignored, the full force and meaning of the metaphor will be obscured. This focus on metaphors as analogical word-pictures draws together insights from lexical semantics, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, whose particular contribution to metaphor interpretation will be explored throughout this section.

*Other Kinds of Word-picture*

In order to see what is ‘special’ about metaphor’s verbal art, two other types of figurative language will be compared—metonymy and synecdoche. Metonymy is the use of an attribute or adjunct of a subject to represent that subject, e.g. 1 Sam 15.24 reads literally ‘I have transgressed the mouth of the Lord’, meaning ‘I have transgressed the commandments of the Lord’, since commands are spoken with one’s mouth.

Synecdoche, sometimes classed as a form of metonymy,5 is a figure of language that uses a part to represent the whole (species for genus) or the whole to represent a part (genus for species), e.g. in Ps 18.45 לֵשׁמֶע אָזֶן יִשְׁמַעְוָה יִלָּשׁ מֵאָזֶן יִשְׁמַעְוָה יִלָּ ‘As soon as their ears hear of me they obey me’. Here אָזֶן ‘ear’ is used to represent the people: literally ‘at the hearing of the ear’, meaning ‘when they hear’. Similarly, in Isa 5.28 גַּלְגֶּל ‘wheel’ is used instead of wagon or chariot (compare the English expression ‘I’ve got a new set of wheels’). A common use of synecdoche in Biblical Hebrew (BH) involves פֹּנֵיס ‘face’ to represent a person, e.g. לַפעֵיסֹו ‘to his face’, i.e. ‘to him’ (e.g. Ps 18.7).

Although these two types of figures are often called ‘ornamental’ or ‘decorative’, they can reveal the way in which a speaker or writer understands or experiences something, for example, the use of ‘face’ to repre-

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5 E.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36.