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The Dead Parrot and the Dying Swan: The Role of Metaphor Scenarios in UK Press Coverage of Avian Flu in the UK in 2005–2006

Nelya Koteyko, Brian Brown, and Paul Crawford
Institute for Science and Society, University of Nottingham

This article takes two events in the ongoing story of a predicted UK avian flu epidemic—"the dead parrot" (October 2005) and "the dying swan" (April 2006)—and examines the role and use of three interconnected metaphor scenarios (related to the notions *of "journey," "war,"* and *"house"*) in the UK press coverage about avian influenza in 2005 and 2006. These represent fundamental descriptive and explanatory structures that derive from culturally or phenomenologically salient objects or experiences, and which allow journalists, scientists, and policymakers to reduce the complexity of the threat posed by a disease and to promote risk-management strategies for the disease that appear to make instinctive or intuitive sense to experts and the public. Although similar metaphor scenarios may be used over time, the kinds of reporting they are associated with and the policy scenarios that result from these framings differ depending on the perceived proximity of the disease threat.

INTRODUCTION

Avian flu, especially the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain, is an emergent disease or zoonotic that can be passed from animals, whether wild (wild birds, especially geese and ducks) or domesticated (poultry), to humans. So far it has only caused a limited number of human deaths by close contact with poultry and an even smaller number in which the virus seems to have infected close family members. The current

Address correspondence to Nelya Koteyko, Research Fellow, Institute for Science and Society, University of Nottingham, NG7 2RD. E-mail: nelya.koteyko@nottingham.ac.uk

pandemic alert level set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) therefore at the time of writing stood at level 3, that is, "no, or very limited, human-to-human transmission" (WHO, 2007). However, it is still feared that the virus might mutate at any time, become sustainably transmittable between humans, and hence trigger a global influenza pandemic similar to the 1918 outbreak of Spanish flu when 50 million people were infected worldwide with an influenza strain of avian origin[1].

In August 2005, after bird flu had appeared in Siberia and Kazakhstan, many newspapers speculated about the possibility that migratory birds could bring bird flu to Britain in the winter. The virus was seen as closing in on Europe. What had, until then, been a far-flung illness (Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002) became a more national and individual concern. In late 2005 the discourse of fear was complemented by a growing discourse of war and containment, which had been relatively absent in early 2005. The UK government published a full version of its pandemic preparedness plan on 19 October 2005, occasioning a good deal of press coverage. By coincidence, this was the month when a parrot in a UK quarantine centre died of H5N1, close to the abattoir where the first case of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) had been detected in 2001—or so some newspapers speculated (*The Times*, 25 October). On 1 November 2005 President Bush outlined pandemic influenza preparations and response plans. This again increased media attention dramatically. The beginning of 2006 was marked by outbreaks of H5N1 in wild and domestic birds elsewhere in Europe, most importantly France, Germany, and Turkey. In April 2006 a dead swan found in Scotland was diagnosed with the virus. However, there were no outbreaks of H5N1 in British poultry until spring 2007.

Building on work done on other disease discourses around FMD (see Nerlich, 2004, 2005), SARS (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005) and avian flu (Nerlich & Halliday, 2007; Martin de la Rosa, 2007), this article examines the uses of metaphor scenarios in discourses around avian influenza or bird flu and explores the emergence of metaphor clusters during noteworthy political and social events. UK press coverage has been examined, since the print media provide a major location where the strategic and implicit metaphors employed by different actors in these cases are filtered into the public domain. They are the site of what Petersen (2005: 203) calls the "politics of the definition of public issues."

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The work presented in this article is based on two traditions. On the one hand, it has emerged from a critique of traditional metaphor analysis in

[1]It is important to distinguish between three different phenomena to which the label "bird flu" can be applied: (1) avian influenza in birds, (2) avian influenza in people, and (3) pandemic influenza, that is, a mutated form of an avian flu virus that has acquired the ability to spread easily between humans.

cognitive linguistics; on the other, it is linked to work on metaphor in social studies of science and the sociology of expectations, especially relating to infectious diseases in humans and animals (Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002; Joffe & Lee, 2004; Washer, 2004, 2006; Nerlich, 2004; Wallis & Nerlich, 2005; Larson, Nerlich, & Wallis, 2005; Nerlich & Halliday, 2006; Washer & Joffe, 2006).

In recent years, students of metaphor have explored its role in political language in which the deployment of cultural conceptual models, root metaphors, and the formulation of ideologies is particularly crucial (Dirven, Frank, & Ilie, 2001; Chilton, 1996, 2004; Musolff, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2004; Goatly, 2007). This body of work has focused upon discourse metaphors that function as key framing devices within a particular discourse over time (Zinken, Hellsten, & Nerlich, 2008; Lakoff, 2004). They are conceptually grounded but their meaning is also shaped by their use at a given time and in the context of a debate about a certain topic.

The source concepts of discourse metaphors refer to phenomenologically salient real or fictitious objects that are a part of interactional space (i.e., can be pointed at, like *MACHINES* or *HOUSES*) and/or occupy an important place in cultural imagination; and, conversely, discourse metaphors themselves highlight salient aspects of a socially, culturally, or politically relevant topic.

Discourse metaphors frame and organize our shared narratives of politics; they are embedded in discursive formations and networks of power, and they are constitutive of certain views of the world, of society, and of how things work. As Lakoff (2004) argues, the framing of issues and the metaphors deployed can have important implications for how policies are formulated as apparently natural and sensible responses to the issue in question.

In a study of the outbreak of FMD in Britain in 2001, Nerlich, Hamilton, & Rowe (2002) identified conceptual metaphors as part of stereotypical narratives of *"war," "contest," "journey," or "plague"* often used in conjunction with potent visual images, such as burning pyres of farm animals. Traditional metaphors of *"war"* and *"battle"* assumed a distinctive social relevance as part of political narratives. Musolff (2006) advocates the study of what he calls *metaphor scenarios* that organise source concepts into mini-narratives. A scenario is:

> [. . .] a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about "typical" aspects of a source-situation [e.g., marriage], for example, its participants and their roles, the "dramatic" storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc. (Musolff, 2006: 28)

Metaphor scenarios are cognitively, emotionally, and politically important, as they:

> [. . .] enable the speakers to not only apply source to target concepts but to draw on them to build narrative frames for the conceptualisation and assessment of sociopolitical issues and to "spin out" these narratives into emergent discourse traditions that are characteristic of their respective community. (p. 36)

Scenarios for Musolff (2004: 18) correspond to clusters of individual terms or concepts in the texts. The identification of concept scenarios aims to determine which aspects of metaphorical mapping can be deemed to dominate public discourse for a particular topic area at a particular time (Grady, 1999). Scenarios thus complement the category of central mappings introduced by Kövesces (2005), which focuses on the conceptual *core* that informs the derivation of all metaphors within a given domain. They also are reminiscent of what Wodak (2006) calls *cognitive frames, event models,* or *heuristic metaphors*, emphasising how they function to enable us to discover explanations for the events concerned. Much earlier, Goffman's (1974) concept of frame alluded to a similar phenomenon.

This article uses the concepts of discourse metaphor and metaphor scenario to analyse media discourses about avian flu in the UK. While focusing mainly on uses of metaphor scenarios in the press, we also will scrutinize the main sources of such scenarios and examine the role of scientists in scenario-based "bird flu talk"[2].

METHODS

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods was used in the analysis of the media output. We used a simple content analysis to study frequency patterns in the use of metaphors. This was achieved through the use of a search function available through the Lexis Nexis Database (see the next section on data). The identification and analysis of metaphor scenarios constituted the qualitative part of our study.

Nerlich & Halliday's (2007) work on avian flu examined how the metaphors from the domain of "*war, journey*, and *house"* were used as major framing devices. In case of disease, the most stable metaphors based on "*war"* seems to be *DISEASE IS A WAR/INVASION* and *TRYING TO CONTROL DISEASE IS WAR*. These metaphors construct disease as an attack by foreign bodies that have to be destroyed (Goatly, 2007). In the context of viral spread and viral infection, the "*journey"* and the "*house"* scenarios are signaled by the use of the discourse metaphors such as *THE SPREAD OF A VIRUS IS A JOURNEY* and *THE APPEARANCE OF A VIRUS IS AN*

[2]For an in-depth comparative study of metaphor scenarios exploited in the coverage of avian flu and FMD, see Nerlich (forthcoming).

INVASION. In this study we wanted to extend this line of research by studying the role of these metaphors in forming specific metaphor scenarios. We therefore paid particular attention to how the metaphor sources belonging to the earlier three domains may frame the selected media texts by forming clusters and organising the reporting content into mini-narratives.

For metaphor identification and extraction, texts were manually read and the occurrence of lexemes from the abovementioned domains of *"war," "journey,"* and *"house"* (e.g., *combat, battle, invade, build, house, arrive, reach, doorstep*, etc.) was noted. To attest the metaphoricity of the identified tokens, the authors, well-acquainted with the cognitive linguistic literature on metaphor, each read the passages where the lexemes occurred to establish whether the use was metaphorical or literal and compared results. The overlap was almost 100% . Novel and conventional metaphors were both included, with domain incongruity as the major criterion for selection (the procedure was similar to the one suggested by Pragglejaz Group, 2007). We make no claims as to whether actual writers or speakers intended their specific words to express metaphorical meanings in any simple sense, or whether the readers succeeded in interpreting the expressions metaphorically. Every metaphorical expression was treated as a self-contained motif, as the texts in our corpora were relatively independent, stand-alone news items.

After having thus attested the metaphor sources, we proceeded to study their role in our corpora. This time, when reading texts, particular attention was paid to the co-occurrence of metaphor tokens, as it is metaphor clusters or metaphor chains (Koller, 2003) that give rise to particular cognitive scenarios. In this way, instead of being introduced a priori (Lakoff, 1987), scenarios in this study are posited as "categories that reflect documented clusters of individual tokens of domain elements in the corpus" (Musolff, 2004: 18). Once the co-occurrences of the tokens were established, it became evident that the conceptual elements combined to whole mini-narratives, e.g., of *TRAVEL OF THE AVIAN FLU VIRUS* or *FIGHTING THE BATTLE AGAINST THE VIRUS*. For example, the co-occurrence of the metaphor sources "*frontline," "fight,"* and *"weapon"* across the texts of our corpora led us to the conclusion that the *"war"* scenario, based on the narrative *particular states or people are on the front line of the battle to control the spread of a virus*, was exploited.

For this small study, we were interested only in the presence of metaphorical chains rather than their organization on the micro level. The investigation of how metaphoric expressions may extend each other or, in contrast, question or negate each other (Koller, 2003) is an interesting topic that would merit further research. Here we point out only some of the complex patterns formed by particular metaphor sources. For example, the "*war"* scenario is an overarching scenario that subsumes other scenarios or mini-narratives, which themselves can be connected to other scenarios and form discursive metaphor clusters of increasing complexity. Each of the sub-scenarios involved can inform metaphors that exploit aspects of the situation.

The *"journey"* scenario and the *"house"* scenario also are complex constructs, as has been shown by the analysis of the press coverage of FMD in 2001 (Nerlich, Hamilton, & Rowe, 2002). These scenarios are based on more basic conceptual metaphors or image schemata: the *"container"* metaphor (Chilton, 1996, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2006) and the *"SOURCE-PATH-GOAL"* schema, respectively. Both can become negatively connoted in the context of *"war"* when an *"enemy"* (the virus) is seen as *"invading"* the *"container"* (nation, body, farm), which again triggers various other *"war"* scenarios of attack and defence. Under these circumstances the *"house"* also can become conceptualised as a fortress. The *"house"* scenario or frame itself has subcomponents, such as *"the gate leading to the house"* and *"the door that leads into the house,"* which can become metaphorically active (letting the virus in) and can attract negative connotations in the context of the *"war"* scenario (entering a house becomes an invasion), or even the *"doorstep"* (which can be crossed). And finally, in the context of disease, especially human disease, the *"war"* or *"battle"* scenario is well entrenched (Montgomery, 1991; Gwyn, 2002) and can be superimposed onto the *"fight"* that a nation or farm or fortress fights against a virus or invader. The intersection of these various scenarios, image schemas, and conceptual metaphors can be represented as follows:

Following a brief description of data in the next section, we will illustrate how these metaphor scenarios were activated in the UK press coverage of avian flu and what disease management strategies they reflect or render plausible.

DATA

As shown in Nerlich & Halliday (2007), the initial media coverage of a possible pandemic of avian influenza around 2004 and early 2005 was not couched in terms of *"war"* and *"plague,"* but rather was framed in terms of natural disaster metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2006), posing a view of an illness that was still remote but could come closer any time soon. The virus was conceptualised as an impending flood, a storm, or a volcano—and this by *scientists*, not the media. However, as the virus spread/traveled from East Asia to the outskirts of Europe, and the threat level increased, *"war"* metaphors began to creep into the language used by experts and the media. In various interviews, the WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Dr. Shigeru Omi has, for example, exploited the *"war"* metaphor. On 4 July 2005 he pointed out that "We must have an *all-out war* against this virus." (*Guardian*, 4 July). On 26 October 2005, at the height of the media coverage about avian flu in the UK, he proclaimed that "Asia remains '*ground zero' in the war* on avian influenza" (WHO, 2005).

To investigate this shift in the perception of the threat from a remote natural disaster to an impending war *"on our doorstep"* (which increased its newsworthiness

quite substantially), a number of searches on the Lexis Nexis database were carried out of articles published in UK national newspapers between September and December 2005 to ascertain whether there was a sudden increase in the use of words such as *"war"* or *"battle."* This was accompanied by a more in-depth qualitative analysis of a smaller sample of avian flu coverage in October 2005, the height of the bird flu panic in Britain. As about 929 articles were published that month on "bird flu" in the UK national newspapers alone, this paper will focus especially upon the output of the *Daily Mail*, a paper which positions itself between the more sensationalist reporting of the so-called "red tops" (*The Mirror*, *The Sun*, and *The Star*), yet adopts a more populist style than what used to be called the "broadsheets" (*The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Independent*, and the *Guardian*). Confusingly, several of the broadsheets recently have adopted publication in a tabloid format, yet they have retained their reputation for a more cerebral style of journalism. To highlight this contrast, a small sample of articles published by the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, which had the highest output over a 10-day period (17–26 October), were chosen for closer study (using "bird flu" as a search term). As a further step, an in-depth study of two smaller samples of avian flu coverage between 22 and 23 October 2005 (26 articles) and 6 and 7 April 2006 (33 articles) was undertaken. On 22 October it was confirmed that a parrot that died in quarantine had the H5N1 form of bird flu, and on 6 April 2006 a dead swan found in Scotland also was diagnosed with H5N1.

These have been the only "wild" birds diagnosed with H5N1 bird flu in the UK as of summer 2007. UK national newspapers extensively reported the stories of the two birds, with the overall coverage peaking the day after each incident occurred. As more than 300 articles were published during these two two-day periods, the sample was reduced to articles that contained the keywords "bird flu" AND "arrive" OR "reach" in order to focus on the representations of the virus that has "reached" its *"GOAL,"* i.e., the UK.

THE METAPHORICAL FRAMING OF AVIAN FLU IN 2005 IN THE UK

Is it war?

Uses of words such as *"war," "fight," "battle"* did not increase as dramatically as expected between early and late 2005. A search for *"war"* and "bird flu" in UK national newspapers between February and April 2005 produced three hits; and for September to November 2004, four hits. A search for *"fight"* produced 13 hits for February to April, and 14 for September to November. A search for *"battle,"* by contrast, produced four hits between February and April, and 20 hits between September and November.

However, there were more *"battle"* metaphors in late 2005, especially at the end of October and the beginning of November when there was increased activity

among governments and global organisations, such as the WHO, the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the World Organisation for Animal Health to draw up bird flu *battle* plans.

There were, however, two significant shifts in reporting between early and late 2005, which coincided with the virus traveling from East to West and closing in on Europe. From September 2005 onward the so-called "red top" papers began to use the term *"killer flu"* or *"killer virus,"* which also had been their favourite phrases during the SARS outbreak (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005), whereas the broadsheets began to use the word *"frontline"* with increased frequency. A search for *"killer flu"* produced no hits for February to April 2005, but 17 hits between September and November 2005, out of which 13 uses were found in the red tops and the *Express* and *Mail*. A search for *"killer virus"* produced two hits for the period between February and April, and 25 for the period between September and November, out of which 20 uses could be found in the *Express*, *Mail*, and red tops.

A search for *"frontline"* produced no hits for a search between February and April, but 22 hits for September to November, predominantly in the former broadsheets.

A closer inspection reveals that the metaphor scenario of *"war,"* of which *"frontline"* forms a subpart, can shape various representations depending on what part of the *"frontline"* scenario or *"frontline"* mini-narrative is highlighted: its geographical position, the people that *"fight"* in it, or the weapons used. Examples of the various perspectives of the *"frontline"* scenario in the broadsheet coverage of avian flu in 2005 are:

Geography:

1. Asian countries on the front lines of the battle against bird flu
   Asian countries on the front lines of the battle to prevent . . .
   Asian countries on the front lines of the disease
   "Remote front line in the war on bird flu"
   Pang Tru has become the front line of the battle against the disease
   . . . on a tour of the bird flu front lines

2. Back on the front line in Gloucestershire [farmers] are expected to be on the front line because of the wild geese and ducks . . .
   . . . poultry farms would be in the front line of an outbreak
   Birdwatchers join the front line

People:

. . . jabs, which were restricted to frontline emergency staff
Frontline NHS workers . . .
GPs would be on the front line
. . . waiting game with its own frontline health staff
. . . the trust is on the front line of the battle against the avian . . .
United Nations organisations in the front line of action against avian . . .

Weapon:
Stockpile Tamiflu[3] as a front line of defence against . . .

Weapon manufacturer:
Remote front line in the war on bird flu: In a small laboratory in a Budapest suburb, scientists are developing a vaccine which could prevent a global pandemic . . . unlikely front line

This exploitation of frontline scenarios by the broadsheets provides a more nuanced understanding of the dangers posed by avian flu than the ostensibly simpler *"killer"* metaphor used by the tabloids.

The Arrival of Bird Flu Panic as Seen Through the Eyes of the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*

To assess the use of *"war"* and other metaphor scenarios in more detail in October 2005, the height of the bird flu panic in the UK and worldwide (O'Neill, 2007), a small sample of UK national press coverage was studied in more detail, that is, articles published by the *Daily Mail* and *The Times* between 17 and 26 October 2005, a time when the virus was reaching Europe and then the UK and when the final version of the UK contingency plan was published.

Using the search term "bird flu," 26 articles published by the *Daily Mail* and 40 articles published by *The Times* were examined. Comparing the metaphors used in the two newspapers revealed a striking difference. Whereas the *Daily Mail* exploited a network of metaphor scenarios, which we shall study later, articles in *The Times* did not contain many metaphors—with one major exception. Professor John Oxford, a famous virologist and pandemic pundit who was seldom out of the news at that time, published an article on the comment pages of *The Times,* which exploited the *"war"* metaphor scenario, as well as the *"journey"* and *"house"* ones, quite skillfully. He warned that the UK was accelerating "towards the *opening shots* of the first global influenza outbreak of the 21st century," that "a new bird virus, H5N1, is the *enemy at the gate*," and that:

> At the moment, we have plans galore but not much in the way of *ammunition.* Yet any investment now in influenza antivirals and vaccines will not be wasted. We deserve a properly planned *war* against our old *enemy*, the flu. (*The Times*, 20 October)

[3]Tamiflu (also known as Oseltamivir) is an antiviral drug produced by Roche to be used in the treatment and prophylaxis of both Influenzavirus B and the H5N1 subtype of Influenza A, i.e., the next candidate for a pandemic flu.

In the following section we shall study the use of metaphor scenarios in journalism, focusing especially on material published by the *Daily Mail*, which yielded a good deal of colourful and metaphorically inflected journalism over the period, but we will draw on other papers' material where appropriate. The newspapers' metaphors overlap with those employed by the scientist John Oxford. Metaphors of *"lines of defence"* against an invisible enemy were conceptualised in the *Daily Mail*, for example: "Bird flu's deadly knock is at our very door" (*Daily Mail*, 17 October). This echoes John Oxford's *"enemy at the gate"* metaphor and also corresponds to the *"journey"* scenario used in a statement in *The Times* a day later that "Death comes from the East in a flapping of wings" (*The Times*, 18 October). However, unlike in the tabloid, the broadsheet articles we sampled for 10 days never seriously exploited the networks of metaphor scenarios that are indexed by these linguistic expressions, namely the *"war," "journey," and "house"* scenarios.

The metaphor scenario evoked by a virus on a journey is linked to the image schema designated as *"SOURCE-PATH-GOAL"* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987), in which the personification of the virus as a moving agent is superimposed, and it is linked to the discourse metaphor *"THE NATION (THE UK) IS A HOUSE."* The virus is seen as approaching the house and knocking on the door or as approaching the gate. Defence against the virus is conceptualised as stopping it from traveling, i.e., escaping from the source (containment) or, once it has started to travel, stopping it from coming through the door or gate, keeping it out. This type of defence against a virus can then be couched in terms of *"war," "fight"* or *"battle,"* in which case the *"house"* becomes, as in the case of FMD, a fortress. Some of the linguistic expressions that instantiate this network of metaphor scenarios are:

> "Virus reached the edge of Europe." (*Daily Mail*, 17 October)
>
> "The Minister's stark warning [Sir Liam Donaldson saying that at least 50,000 people will die] came as scientists revealed the disease continued its march across the globe." (*Daily Mail*, 18 October)
>
> "Coordinating Britain's battle to stop the march of the virus." (*Daily Mail*, 19 October)
>
> "Is this [pet markets] how bird flu will get through?" (*Daily Mail*, 22 October)
>
> "Killer strain has reached Britain." (*Daily Mail*, 24 October)
>
> "Wide open to deadly threat." (*Daily Mail*, 25 October)
>
> "Holes in our defence." (*Daily Mail*, 25 October)

The *"frontline"* metaphor from the metaphorical *"war against a disease"* scenario is in this context superimposed upon the *"threshold/door"* metaphor:

> "Sniffer dogs have gone on duty at Britain's airports as the first line of defence against bird flu." (*Daily Mail*, 19 October)

> "Front line of the bird flu war . . . a rickety row of sheds next to the abbattoir where foot-and-mouth began." (*Daily Mail*, 25 October)

Such lines of defence against a possible risk (which are all imaginary in a way) can be multiplied; there may be a second line of defence (for example Tamiflu), a third line of defence (for example shutting schools), and so on. The institutions defending these lines or barriers can be conceptualised as a "prime bulwark." Here the experience of the past, be it the distant past when real bulwarks were constructed, or the more recent past, the handling of FMD when metaphorical ones failed, colours how the future is perceived by policymakers and the public and may well inform strategies for handling a possible flu pandemic. This is especially important since an outbreak of bird flu in the UK would involve applying a similar control policy as was adopted during the FMD outbreak. At the time, the large-scale contiguous culling and incineration of livestock was widely criticised. When H5N1 bird flu was identified in the UK in 2007, it was eradicated quickly. Nevertheless the *Daily Mail* voiced occasional criticism:

> Incredible as it may seem, the *prime bulwark* to prevent the virus taking hold are from the selfsame cackhanded crew at the Chief Vet's outfit at the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that brought us the tragic fiascos of BSE and foot-and-mouth disease. (*Daily Mail*, 17 October)

The *"house/door"* metaphor used in the *Daily Mail* found a more sinister expression in a book published in November 2005 entitled *The Monster at Our Door* (Davis, 2005). As a science journalist he wrote: "Is the threat of avian flu 'the monster at our door' or, to use an alternative and zoologically mixed metaphor, a frightened chicken crying wolf?" (Watts, 2005; see also Ferguson, 2006). As time passes, the latter seems to be the more likely scenario, but in October 2005 this was certainly not yet the case. The monster was seen as knocking on our door.

The Parrot Incident

The death of a parrot in a quarantine centre from the H5N1 virus triggered numerous announcements in both tabloids and broadsheets on the 22 and 23 of October 2005, announcing that the virus "has arrived," "has reached the shores," and "has reached the country," i.e., according to the *"SOURCE-PATH-GOAL"* schema, the trajector had reached its final destination. As one newspaper speculated, "This incident opens up a new vector for the disease—imported wild birds."

The *"journey"* scenario was widely employed by the media to represent the likely spread of the virus across the country now that it was considered to be "inside" Britain. The virus had not come through the expected *"front door"* (i.e., broken out in poultry or in the wild bird population), but the *"back door"* that is via the import of wild birds. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds described "imports as a 'dangerous back-door route' for bird flu" (*Mail on Sunday*, 23 October). Demands were made to halt the import of birds "from anywhere in the world." The image of the UK not just as a *"house"* but a fortress to be defended against foreign invaders, which had been exploited during the FMD epidemic, came to the fore again. Here, the *"house"* and the *"war"* scenario are combined:

> "The vital breakthrough came as Health Minister Patricia Hewitt warned that the Government is prepared to shut down the entire country if bird flu does strike here."
>
> "Importing exotic animals as pets offers a Trojan horse of infection for recipient nations."

The image of the Trojan horse reinforces that of the virus sneaking in, as during conflict, in which Trojan horse tactics are those considered sneaky, underhanded, or deceitful. One headline asked, "IS THIS HOW BIRD FLU WILL GET THROUGH?"

Now that the virus appeared to have arrived, the media and scientists began to extrapolate very quickly from a single parrot to the death of a nation, so to speak. Scientists were associated with predictions of rapid spread of disease. On 22 October, John Oxford was quoted in the *Sun* as saying, "There will be no immunity in the community at all and it will spread like wildfire" (*The Sun*, 22 October), again an image widely used during the FMD epidemic (see Nerlich et al., 2002). The *"enemy"* (the virus) is conceptualised here not as a person or army but as a natural force. The general trend was to jump from the occurrence of H5N1 in one bird directly to the possibility of a human pandemic. This is something that could only happen if the virus mutates to be transmissible between humans, which had not yet happened. Nevertheless, the slippage between avian and human infection was deftly accomplished by comments such as "Bird flu could not have arrived in Britain at a more dangerous time—the onset of the winter flu season" and led to a surge in demand for the normal winter flu vaccine. This, of course, could not protect against an emergent strain of H5N1 pandemic flu. Widespread anxiety among the population at-large was reported (see BBC news, 2005).

This situation was exacerbated by comments such as this one from a vet: "Very soon that virus will spread, and we will end up slaughtering every chicken while, possibly, humans could die of the disease." or "With no effective vaccine or cure immediately available, such a bug would quickly sweep around the world." There were, however, some skeptical comments that by contrast emphasised

the number of hurdles that would need to be overcome for the disease to progress from a parrot to a human pandemic:

> Even if this particular parrot had got through the system, it is highly unlikely it would have been a route of disease into commercial poultry flocks or anywhere else. (*Mail on Sunday*, 23 October)

However, despite such caution, many newspapers not only evoked the *"journey"* scenario but also the *"war"* scenario:

> UK is 13th to be hit by the virus.

The *Express* led on 22 October with the headline:

> BIRD FLU: IT IS IN BRITAIN; TWO MILLION UNDER THREAT AS THE KILLER VIRUS ARRIVES . . .

and further on in the article the *Express* quotes another scientific expert that also had been a vocal pandemic pundit in 2004 and early 2005 and who, like John Oxford, talks about Tamiflu as the *"weapon"* of choice in the *"fight"* against a rampant killer:

> Microbiologist Professor Hugh Pennington warned that more than two million people in Britain could die. "Bird flu is very bad at spreading but very good at killing," he said. "It would be very serious if it went on the rampage." The Government has ordered millions of courses of antiviral Tamiflu, the main drug used to combat bird flu in humans.

The Swan Incident

A second incident occurred in Britain in April 2006 when a dead swan was found on a beach in Fife, Scotland. This was the time when a major outbreak of H5N1 had occurred in wild birds, poultry, and even domestic cats in Germany, particularly on the island of Rügen. This conjured up images of "them" and "us," "natives" and "migrants" in some newspapers[4]. The *Daily Telegraph* wrote on 12 April 2006: "The bird that brought avian flu to Britain two weeks ago was not a native swan, but a migrant species that may have been infected in Germany before dying on the way to its breeding grounds in Iceland."

As in October 2005, headlines used the *"journey"* and *"house"* scenarios. The *Mirror* reported on 7 April 2006: "Sitting ducks: Exclusive: Deadly virus on our

[4]See Sontag (1991) for the discussion of the association of disease with foreigners.

door. Bird flu 100 miles away and we will not get a vaccine for one month." The images of "no entry signs" so familiar from FMD epidemics were superimposed from the farm premises onto the whole nation. The *Daily Mail* (7 April 2006) reported a poultry farmer near where the dead swan was discovered who claimed to have been "kept in the dark" by the Department for Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and who had erected "a 'no entry' sign at his farm to guard against infection being brought in." And, as during FMD outbreaks, various imaginary doors were "locked." The *Daily Mail* on the same day described police roadblocks: "Their mission was to 'lock down' the alert zone to prevent any movement of bird life, forming a cordon 1.8 miles from the harbour where the H5N1 dead swan was found."

The *"journey"* scenario focused on the spread of bird flu via wild birds along migratory routes. The media focused not only on the trajectory itself, but also on the speed of the vector along the trajectory that gathers pace and sweeps along its path. Here, the metaphor maps metonymically onto the reality—the birds flying across Europe:

> By February, the H5N1 virus was gathering pace, spreading to France, Italy, and Germany (*The Guardian*, 6 April)
>
> The UK has been bracing itself for months as bird flu swept westwards across Europe after originating in the Far East (*Daily Mail*, 6 April)

In the *Daily Mail* (6 April) John Oxford is quoted as saying, "It means the virus has arrived." The article goes on to say: "He said it was worrying but not surprising that the virus, which has been marching steadily westwards across the continent, had arrived in Britain."

Again on 7 April in the *Daily Mail* John Oxford is quoted as saying, "It doesn't look too good at this moment." "You can imagine the swan as a piece of litmus paper. A dead swan will indicate that some wild bird like a duck has silently infected it so there will be other wild birds around that are H5 positive. It means the virus has arrived." Oxford had been reported a week earlier issuing portentous warnings about the scale of a possible pandemic:

> The worldwide death toll from a bird flu pandemic could be almost 80 million, a leading health expert warned yesterday. Professor John Oxford told a conference in Edinburgh the scale of the disaster would be equivalent to the Asian tsunami, which killed more than 200,000 people striking every day for a year. (*Daily Mail*, 31 March).

But his predictions were noted by other commentators to be some distance away on the basis of events in early April 2006. Another expert, Hugh Pennington, was quoted as saying, "A dead swan in Scotland, everyone accepts, but does not signal a human flu pandemic" (*Sunday Herald*, 9 April).

Hugh Pennington was widely quoted as well, although his message has slightly changed since October 2005 when he said the virus was not good at spreading: "This virus has been around since 1996 when it was first reported in China. It is very good at getting around." Moreover, "The British poultry industry will have to live with it for years. It will not be like foot-and-mouth" (*Daily Record*, 7 April). The durative nature of the problem and the encroachment of the virus were reflected in other coverage, too:

> Bird flu did not just crop up overnight (*Daily Mirror*, 7 April)
>
> The terror of bird flu took another step closer yesterday (*Daily Mirror*, 7 April)
>
> The virus will be spreading among wild birds in the Fife area and probably through time will spread to other parts of the UK (*The Guardian*, 7 April)

Although the virus had not yet spread widely in the UK, there was talk of halting the spread of the virus using methods familiar from the control of FMD in 2001 and 2007. Despite the near impossibility of controlling wild bird movements, domestic fowl and farmers would be subject to precautions including the following:

> Movements to and from the farms would be controlled and vehicles disinfected. Birds on neighbouring farms may also be slaughtered, creating a "firebreak" to stop the spread of the bug. (*Daily Mail*, 6 April).

However, as this might be a human pandemic and not only an animal disease, Tamiflu was evoked again as a frontline defence:

> Britain's first line of defence will come from the antiviral drug Tamiflu (*Daily Mail*, 6 April)
>
> On the blustery A917 coast road to Cellardyke, [where the swan was found] Sergeant Martin Johncock and his men are manning Britain's front line against bird flu. (*Daily Mail*, 7 April).
>
> And one of the country's top experts warned that we will be fighting the killer bug "for years." (*The Sun*, 7 April)

Despite the turmoil that the parrot and swan incidents caused in the media and various pronouncements of disastrous consequences, it was nevertheless treated differently from poultry outbreaks in European countries. This is probably why we did not find many militaristic metaphors in the coverage, which would portray the nation's plans or efforts to *"battle"* the *"killer flu."* Instead, there is a plethora of *"journey"* metaphors as journalists and experts speculate about possible

trajectories and speed of travel of the virus, personified as *"marching," "speeding along," "being on the rampage,"* and so on. These are what one might call metaphors of *"contagion"* or *"panic,"* yet *"war"* was mentioned somewhat sparingly by contrast.

DISCUSSION

We identified three major metaphor scenarios that structured the 2005/2006 UK media coverage of avian flu in various ways: the *"journey/invasion"* scenario, the *"war"* scenario, and the *"house"* scenario. The *"journey"* scenario dominated at the time of the analysis, as the virus was regularly depicted as being on its way to the UK, and for the most part was not depicted as being endemic in the poultry or human populations. Neither were there any reports that it had mutated into a form in which it could easily be transmitted between humans.

Using Lakoff's (1987) *"SOURCE-PATH-GOAL"* schema (see Figure 1), our analysis seems to suggest that the further along the *"path"* a virus travels and the closer it gets to its *"goal,"* the more *"war"* metaphors one might find in the media coverage. It also seems to be the case that there is a difference in metaphorical framing and the framing of disease management options that depends on whether the crisis is seen as a national or global event. Once the virus has reached its *"goal,"* the nationalistic invasion scenario seems to be triggered and *"war"* metaphors become a natural or instinctive way of talking about disease management. Once the virus is in a country, the travel scenario seems to change, too, as the virus can now be conceptualised as adopting a wider variety of modes of travel, as illustrated by the FMD virus that not only *"marches," "advances,"* and

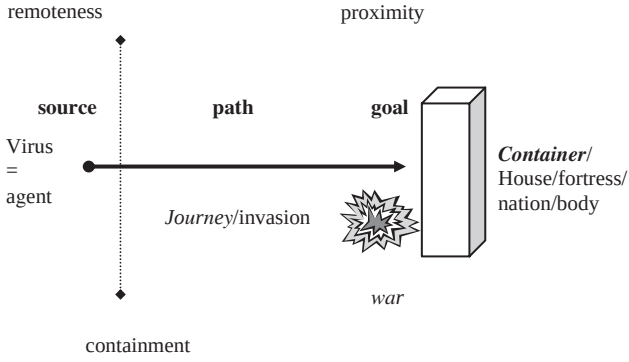

FIGURE 1 The *SOURCE-PATH-GOAL* schema.

"reaches," but also *"speeds up," "slows down," "jumps," "appears," "disappears,"* and so on (Nerlich et al., 2001).

"War" metaphors also seem to be more prevalent in a situation, like the FMD crisis, in which the source of the virus is unknown and its trajectory and mode of travel before arriving in the UK is also unknown. By contrast, in the case of avian flu, a persuasive story is available concerning its source, trajectory, and what can carry it; chiefly migratory birds, traded poultry, and traded wild birds arriving from the East. It is because any presentation of avian flu on the British mainland is the culmination of extensive antecedent storytelling about its journey here that the progress of metaphors and their attendant fears obeys its own distinctive evolution.

That the fear of bird flu was greater when it was a distant threat, compared with now when the disease is right here in Britain, is revealing. It suggests the politics of fear becomes more animated by the spectre of far-away threats (O'Neil, 2007).

Consonant with Lakoff's (2004) proposals, the framing of political issues and the kinds of metaphors they deploy give us apparently reasonable and natural courses of action. Events in the UK occasioned by the dead parrot and the dying swan activated a reassuringly familiar range of discourses and associated precautions. Amid warnings that the parrot represented a kind of Trojan horse, the virtues of locking down, sealing off, closing, disinfecting, and so on were practiced and reported. Against the background of predicted pandemics should mutations render a virus transmissible between humans, the precautions were made immediately intelligible as threats literally *"at the door."* Moreover, the work undertaken by the police, DEFRA officials, or by the preparation of stocks of Tamiflu became a natural *"frontline"* response. Despite the fact that none of this could affect wild bird movements, these apparently eminently sensible precautions based around discourses of *"war"* and *"houses"* supervened over any competing discourses of *"fear," "panic,"* or *"anxiety" per se.*

Metaphor scenarios "enable the speakers to not only apply source to target concepts but to draw on them to build narrative frames for the conceptualisation and assessment of sociopolitical issues" (Musolff, 2006: 36). Such scenarios provide important narrative and discursive framing devices for journalists, but, as we have seen, also for scientists and policy makers. Metaphors construct, or frame, views of reality, which can be used in policy making and planning (Schön, 1979). Although these views of reality may be framed by similar metaphor scenarios (*war, journey, house)*, the policy scenarios that result from these framings will differ depending on the perceived proximity of the disease threat as well as the perception of the threat as global or local/national. In both cases, however, fundamental metaphor scenarios based on culturally or phenomenologically salient objects or experiences allow the media, scientists, and policy makers to reduce the complexity of the threat posed by a disease and to engage in disease

control and risk management strategies that appear to make instinctive or intuitive sense to journalists, experts, and arguably the public in a particular situation.

Nerlich & Wright (2006) describe how during the FMD outbreak visible biosecurity measures, such as putting down disinfectant mats and putting up "keep out" signs, were not only used rationally to prevent the spread of the virus, but they also were used as physical evidence of efforts to deflect blame. Furthermore, the demarcation of boundaries was offered as evidence of "doing one's bit," but it might also have been conceived as a magical *cordon sanitaire*. Visible, physical biosecurity actions became ways to deflect blame and were self-evaluated by farmers as reducing guilt in terms of "how could we live with ourselves if we had done nothing and caught it?" These kinds of precautions and the narratives that enjoin them as sensible responses are also filled with what Valiverronen (2004) has called the *rhetoric of promise*, whereby they will yield a desirable state of affairs if they are undertaken.

We have shown, therefore, the value of understanding risks and the actions they prompt in the policy arena in terms of metaphor scenarios. Moreover, the ideas of "*journey*," "*war*," and "*house*" are deployed at different junctures in the story by journalists seeking to describe the events and render them intelligible and newsworthy to the public. As Lakoff (2004) contends, close attention to the kinds of metaphors employed allows us to understand why policies that activate authoritarian and security-conscious responses make sense and seem a natural way of addressing the political dilemmas we face.

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