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“Livet är ett skådespel” On the Use of the Theatre Metaphor in Swedish

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women, merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.*

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

The beginning of Jacques' famous speech to the old Duke in the play *As You Like it* by William Shakespeare is the *locus classicus* for the theatre metaphor. The old Duke is represented as a compassionate actor on the stage of life, while Jacques is depicted as the eternal spectator. In his speech Jacques compares human life to a play comprising seven acts representing seven phases of life from childhood to old age.¹

The use of the theatre metaphor in dramatic texts implies that things are perceived upside down; theatre is looked upon as the real thing and its properties are projected upon reality and used to describe real life and social condition. As such the use of a theatre metaphor is related to the technique of the play within the play,

¹ The topos of the *Theatrum mundi* is also well known from several other Shakespearean plays such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *King Lear*.

which also presupposes a reanalysis of the theatrical illusion. Without claiming any profound analysis of the concept of the theatre metaphor in drama, I submit its use greatly contributes to dramatic irony, since theatre itself is generally intended as a condensed and symbolic representation of life and social reality; the ironic effect is in the reversal of these elements.

Even outside the theatre, the use of theatrical words and expressions to denote referents from the objective world is very common. In the terminology coined by Lakoff,² 'theatre' may be said to be a frequently used donor domain, from which words and expressions are derived and used with a metaphorical meaning in various so-called recipient domains. Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's work *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, the mechanism of metaphorization has indeed been generally described as the establishment of a relation between a 'donor domain' or 'source domain' and a 'recipient domain' or 'target domain'. Metaphorical usage implies that we use a semantic structure which belongs to a given specific domain in order to denote a meaning that belongs to an other domain. The literal meaning of a word or expression is the meaning referring to the donor domain, while the metaphorical meaning refers to the recipient domain. The transposition is based on the implicit resemblance or analogy between the two referential items concerned, but normally there is no trace left of the comparison in the text. This is what makes metaphors different from explicit comparisons and parables. In some cases an entire lexical field³ (i.e.

² Lakoff, *Metaphors*, 1980.

³ The term lexical field is here used as an equivalent to the German notion "Wortfeld". 'Wortfeld' is defined as "Bezeichnung einer Menge von sinnverwandten Wörtern, deren Bedeutungen sich gegenseitig begrenzen und die lückenlos (mosaikartig) einen bestimmten begrifflichen oder sachlichen Bereich abdecken sollen". 'Wortfeldtheorie' is defined as 'Vorwiegend Konzept vor allem der Inhaltbezogenen Grammatik, demzufolge ein Wort nicht isoliert im Bewusstsein von Sprecher/Hörer existiert, sondern stets zusam-

a group of words and expressions belonging to a coherent conceptual or referential domain) functions as a donor domain for another lexical field. In these cases the donor domain is used as a holistic model for the recipient domain. These systematic transpositions and the links that are established between the two domains, also called ‘cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system’,⁴ are studied within the framework of cognitive semantics. The term ‘iconic metaphor’ is often used to refer to this kind of systematic transposition and is contrasted with ‘analogical metaphor’, which merely establishes a link between distinct elements from two domains by focussing on their mutual resemblance.⁵ An iconic metaphor not only represents (elements of) the recipient domain, but is also used on an explanatory level. An example is given by Sellstedt⁶ regarding the metaphorical use of the word ‘cancer’ to denote racism. When this metaphor is repeatedly applied to the phenomenon of racism in a text, it can lead to other borrowings from the same semantic field (i.e. illness and disease), so that the medical domain is systematically applied as a donor domain to social phenomena. Eventually the similarities between cancer and racism lead us to view both phenomena as instances of a system collapse, so that the two are now seen as alike on a more abstract cognitive level. Svanlund,⁷ in his turn, mentions the example of the domain of ‘journey’ as an

men mit begriffsverwandten Wörtern eine strukturierte Menge sich gegenseitig beeinflussender Elemente bildet?”. See Bußman, *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, 1990 [2].

⁴ Lakoff, ‘Contemporary Theory’, 1993, p. 207 ff.

⁵ “Medan ikoniska metaforer ibland kan formaliseras till matematiska modeller, så är detta mycket svårt när det gäller analogimetaforer. I viss mening är nämligen analogimetaforer ofta absurda. Den absurditeten har emellertid en speciell kognitiv funktion, den bromsar upp oss, den ger en ny medvetenhet”, Sellstedt, ‘Modeller’, 1998.

⁶ Sellstedt, ‘Modeller’, 1998.

⁷ Svanlund, *Metaforen som konvention*, 2001, p. 14.

iconic metaphor for 'love'.

Given that the lexical field of theatre is a well established donor domain, this paper investigates whether there are any specific recipient domains to which it is applied in Swedish. In conducting this investigation, I want to make a distinction between theatre as a metaphor for real life in a very broad sense and theatre as a more established and consistent metaphor for specific domains. I first intend to focus on texts where the theatre metaphor is used in a consistent, so to speak allegorical, way. In these cases the theatre domain is a model applied as a whole to the recipient domain, so that virtually any of its elements can be used to denote elements in the recipient domain. A famous example is Erwin Goffmans's use of the theatre metaphor⁸ in the domains of social interaction and communication. This metaphor has been used as a model in quite a lot of publications on social sciences and has thus become an iconic metaphor of the second degree. Filtered through Goffman's canonical use of it, it is frequently applied to the domains of organisational theory, ethnology, didactics and even information technology.⁹ In all these recipient domains various aspects of communicative and interactional behaviour are looked upon as performance and described in terms of theatre.¹⁰ Goffman's well-known theatre metaphor is based upon his thesis that human beings want to preserve their self-image in contact with other human beings. According to Goffman we do our utmost to be perceived by others in accordance with our ideal selves. In order to transmit an image of ourselves as we want to be, rather than as we (fear we) are, we play certain parts (roles) and we always perform them either front stage or backstage.

⁸ Goffman, *The Self and everyday life*, 1959.

⁹ A software programme for audio-visual presentations is called 'Theatre', another one is called 'Director'.

¹⁰ Dunford & Palmer, 'Metaphors in popular management discourse', 1996.

There are ample examples of the use of this allegorical transposition in Swedish studies in the social sciences. Several recent dissertations refer explicitly to the theatre metaphor and describe their object of study in theatrical terms. Examples are the dissertation by Anders Garpelin¹¹ on social encounters in the class-room, the study by Sören Ollson¹² on social behaviour in public urban areas and the research report by José Barbosa & Johan Gottfridsson,¹³ who even cite the metaphor in the title of their report on the social interaction in non-profit organisations: *Arbete i en kreativ process - en teatermetafor*. The studies by Mia Gladh & Ida-Christina Lindgren,¹⁴ by Ola Lindgren,¹⁵ by Tobias Schölin¹⁶ and by Gustav Gennow & Martin Sjögren¹⁷ also expound at length on the theatre metaphor. In her dissertation about wedding ceremonials Eva Knuts¹⁸ refers explicitly to the theatre metaphor as the conceptual framework of her research: “föreställningar som en teatermetafor, där bröllopet studeras som en regisserad, scenograferad och manusbaserad händelse, där rekvisita spelar en stor roll”. The following quote from her dissertation manuscript makes clear how consistently the theatre metaphor is applied and illustrates the degree of lexicalisation:

Goffmans välkända teatermetafor bygger på att människor gör sitt yttersta för att upprätthålla sin självbild gentemot andra. [...] För att lyckas med detta tar vi på oss *roller*, vi gör

¹¹ Garpelin, *Lektionen och livet. Ett möte mellan ungdomar som tillsammans bildar en skolklass*, 1997.

¹² Ollson, *Stadens attraktivitet och det offentliga stadslivet*, 2000.

¹³ Barbosa & Gottfridsson, *Arbete i en kreativ process - en teatermetafor*, 2001.

¹⁴ Gladh, & Lindgren, *Ungdomars röster om invandrare och svenskar*, 2006

¹⁵ Lindgren, *Psykoterapeuters berättelser*, 2005.

¹⁶ Schölin, *Men vaddå, vi är ju i Sverige! Äldrevård och etnisk mångfald som teater*, 2003.

¹⁷ Gennow & Sjögren, *Have a nice day! Om rutiniseringen av dagens kundmöten*, 2003.

¹⁸ Knuts, *Något gammalt*, (forthcoming).

framträdanden, ibland ensamma och ibland i team. Till hjälp för dessa rollspel har individen inramningen, *the setting* som är platsbunden och kan bestå av möbler, dekor och annan typ rekvisita. Till hjälp för rollen finns dessutom *den personliga fasaden* där delar som kläder, ålder, hudfärg, miner och gester också är en del av skådespelet. Den personliga fasaden består av sådana saker som är mer eller mindre är bundna till skådespelaren, och som s.a.s. följer med personen. Teatern består av en *främre region*, där rollspelandet pågår framför publiken, och den *bakre regionen*, bakom kulisserna, den plats där teamet/skådespelaren kan slappna av tillfälligtvis utom syn för publiken. Till dessa framträdanden/skådespel finns även ibland *regissörer*, som har till uppgift att fördela roller och instruera resten av teamet. Med hjälp av denna teori kan bröllopet ses som en teater, komplett med rekvisita, regissör och kulisser.

We now leave the stage of the systematic and holistic use of the theatre metaphor as a model. Below I concentrate on the metaphorical use of isolated theatre words and expressions in Swedish. These words and expressions can appear in all kinds of contexts involving human interaction, both in fictional and non-fictional written texts and in all kinds of oral texts, not least in colloquial speech, as is shown in the following examples, taken from the Swedish national corpus:

Nu begär du att jag ska lämna mitt eget liv och bli *sufflör* i ditt.
(Rom I)

Jag tycker det är viktigare att tänka på bröllopet, fyller Märtha Louise i och erkänner att båda har litet *rampfeber* inför "den stora dagen". (GP28:0517)

Polen är, som så ofta förr, värt ett bättre öde än denna politiska *tragikomed*. (ARB2:0208)

Att själv *iscensätta* begravningen är en relativt ny företeelse.
(GP92:1107)

Skjutvapen har blivit allt en vanligare *rekvizita* hos rånarna.
(ARB11:0208)

Questions that arise are: To what extent are these metaphors conventional? What is the degree of lexicalisation? In what contexts do these metaphors appear? Do several metaphors within one sentence reinforce each other? What is the relative frequency of this metaphorical usage compared to the literal meaning(s)?

The first question to be answered is how to delimit the scope of the lexical field “theatre”. As a starting point I have used Bring’s *Svenskt ordförråd ordnat i begreppsklasser*. The Swedish word ‘Teater’ is in fact a conceptual category of its own in this thematic dictionary, which is based on Roget’s Thesaurus. ‘Teater’ is mentioned as heading 599 (on page 167) – see copy on next page.

Although the field comprises a few verbs and adjectives, the large majority of these words are – as is nearly always the case – nouns. A first look at the list reveals quite a number of words which are frequently used in a metaphorical sense (e.g. *teaterkupp*, *komedi*, *kuliss*, *ridå*, *scen*; *improvisera*, *göra fiasco*; *melodramatisk*), but we notice that the list also comprises words which cannot really be given a figurative interpretation (e.g. *sångpjäs*, *herdespel*, *kordans*; *kostymera*; *scenisk*).¹⁹ A closer look at Bring’s list also reveals that some evident theatre words are missing (e.g. *scenario*, *podium*; *iscensätta*, *enscenera*). In order to arrive at a somewhat more manageable corpus I decided to make up a sublist of all the words that have a lexicalised metaphorical meaning. The selection of these was based on the intuitions of three native speakers, who were asked to mark all the words in Bring’s list they felt able to use in a figurative sense.

¹⁹ One can of course never exclude the possibility that a given word is used as a fresh metaphor in an entirely new context.

599. Teater; teater-effekt (-kupp, -vana, -vurm, -hjalte), skåde-bana (-plats, -spel, -spelare), scen (-eri), proscenium, tilja; dekor-ation (-atör, -ering), dekorations-förändring (-målare, -målning, -stycke), fond (-dekoration, -kuliss, -målning, -ridå), kuliss (-öppning, -intrig), ridå (-öppning), ramp (-ljus, -feber), orkester, sufflör (-lucka), statist, korist; avantscen, oxöga, (fond-, sido-, kläd-)loge, griljerad loge, klaffplats, galleri (-biljett, -plats), parkett, amfiteater, fätöljplats, par-terr, foajé;

(scenisk) framställning, regi, regissör, aktör, premiäraktör, aktris (-maner), subrett, debut

(-ant), (re-)engagemang, gäst-spel (-roll), (titel-, subrett-)roll, spel, (general-)repetition, mi-mik (-er), plastik, attityd, deklamation, koturn, kostym (-ering, -pjäs), maskering, representation, föreställning, premiär, hand-ling, akt (-figur, -indelning, -slut), prolog, förspel, uvertyr, introduktion, mellan-akt (-pjäs, -spel), tablå, (efter-, för-)pjäs, epilog, extranummer, kassapjäs, entré (-avgift, -bil-jett), applåd (-salva), utvissling;

repertoar, program, stycke, tragedi, tragi-ker, sorgespel, komedi (-ant), fars, komik (-er), lustspel (-sförfattare), dram (-a, -atik, -atiker, -aturg, -aturgi), karaktärs-drama (-mask, -skådespelare), intrig-(situations-)stycke, o-pera, librett, operett, sång-pjäs (-scen, -spel), buff-o (-aria, -asångare), vädevill, melodram (-a), proverb, feeri (-spel), herdespel, diver-tissemang, tal-pjäs (-roll, -scen);

pantomim, balett (-kär, -mästare), dans (-are, -erska, -konst, -musik, -mästare, -ör, -ös), solodans-ör (-ös), premiärdansös, kor-dans (-ag, -förare), vareté (-sångerska), kabaré (-före-ställning, -sångare), tivoli, kafé chantant, kafésångerska, cirkus (-artist, -byggnad, -före-ställning), hippodrom, clown (-upptåg), pa-jas (-figur, -upptåg), pajazzo, pickelhäring, harlekin (-sdräkt, -sputs), polichinell, mario-nett (-teater), akrobat, lindansare.

v. spela, agera, upp-föra (-träda), fram-ställa, gastera, repetera, inöva, debutera, gå över tiljan (scenen), slå igenom, göra furore, maskera, kostymera, dekorera, dramatisera, deklamera, framsäga, improvisera, (re-)en-gagera, applådera, utvissla, göra fiasko.

a. teatralisk, dramatis-k (-urgisk), scenisk, dekorativ, aktrismässig, plastisk, patetisk, (panto-)mimisk, komisk, burlesk, sorglustig, trag-isk (-ikomisk), akrobatisk, fars-(tablå-)artad, melodramatisk.

This resulted in a list of 93 words, which I wanted to study more thoroughly. I looked up all these words in *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok* (SAOB)²⁰ and in *Svensk Ordbok* (SO)²¹ in order to find out whether any metaphorical meanings were mentioned for them in the dictionaries. Decisions about the metaphorical use of the words were thus taken on two grounds: firstly on the basis of elicitation of native informants and secondly on the basis of the meta-lexicographical information, the definitions and examples in the dictionaries. To illustrate this I insert a transcript of the entry ‘rampfeber’ in both dictionaries.

RAMPFEBER:

SAOB

skådespelares nervositet inför åskådarna; ofta i utvidgad anv.: rädsla l. nervositet i samband med att man (i sht för första gången) gör l. skall göra ngt som åskådas l. åhöres av ett större antal människor o. dyl. l. som på liknande sätt innebär ett prov.

SVENSK ORDBOK

nervositet inför scenframträdande

□ äv. utvidgat om nervositet inför annat (ovant) framträdande.

In Table 1 below I have listed the findings for each dictionary and tagged the words with ‘0’, ‘1’ or ‘2’. These codes should be read as follows:

- 0: literal meaning only (= genuine theatre word)
- 1: both literal and metaphorical meaning
- 2: metaphorical meaning only (the literal meaning has become obsolete or technical)

²⁰ Since SAOB only covers the alphabet from *a* to *t* (until till), the remaining part of the words were checked in Östergren, *Nusvensk ordbok*, 1981.

²¹ *Svensk ordbok*.

Table 1: Survey of the metaphorical usage of Swedish theatre words according to SAOB and SO.

| Nouns | SAOB | SO |
|---------------|------|----|
| akrobat | 0 | 1 |
| akt | 1 | 0 |
| aktör | 1 | 1 |
| applåd | 0 | 1 |
| balett | 0 | 0 |
| clown | 1 | 1 |
| debut | 1 | 1 |
| dram | 1 | 1 |
| dramatik | 1 | 1 |
| fars | 1 | 1 |
| feeri | 1 | 0 |
| fiasco | 1 | 2 |
| furore | NA | 2 |
| föreställning | 0 | 0 |
| galleri | 1 | 1 |
| harlekin | 0 | 0 |
| herdespel | 0 | NA |
| huvudroll | 1 | 1 |
| iscensättare | 1 | NA |
| kabaré | 0 | 0 |
| komedi | 1 | 1 |
| kuliss | 1 | 1 |
| librett | 0 | 0 |
| lustspel | 0 | 0 |
| marionett | 1 | 1 |
| mask | 1 | 1 |
| melodram | 1 | 0 |
| mim | 0 | 0 |
| mimik | 1 | 2 |
| operett | 0 | 0 |
| pantomim | 1 | 0 |

| | | |
|------------------|---|----|
| personage | 1 | 2 |
| pjäs | 1 | 1 |
| premiär | 0 | 1 |
| rampfeber | 1 | 1 |
| rampljus | 1 | 1 |
| regi | 1 | 1 |
| regissör | 1 | 0 |
| rekvisita(um) | 1 | 1 |
| repertoar | 1 | 1 |
| ridå | 1 | 1 |
| scen | 1 | 1 |
| skådespel | 1 | 1 |
| skådespelare | 1 | 1 |
| skådespeleri | 1 | 1 |
| sorgespel | 1 | 0 |
| spektakel | 2 | 2 |
| statist | 1 | 0 |
| statistroll | 1 | NA |
| sufflör | 1 | 0 |
| teater | 1 | 1 |
| teaterhjalte | 1 | NA |
| teaterkung | 1 | NA |
| teaterkupp | 1 | NA |
| teaterspel | 1 | NA |
| teatertilja | 1 | NA |
| teaterupplevelse | 1 | NA |
| tilja | 0 | NA |
| tragedi | 1 | 1 |
| tragikomedi | 0 | 0 |
| varieté | 0 | 1 |
| vådevill | 0 | 0 |

| Verbs | SAOB | SO |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|
| agera | 1 | 1 |
| applådera | 1 | 1 |
| debutera | 1 | 2 |
| deklamera | 1 | 1 |
| dramatisera | 0 | 1 |
| gastera | 0 | 0 |
| improvisera | 1 | 1 |
| iscensätta | 1 | 1 |
| kostymera | 0 | 0 |
| maskera | 1 | 1 |
| mim(er)a | 0 | 0 |
| regissera | 1 | 1 |
| spela | 1 | 1 |
| sufflera | 1 | 1 |
| Adjectives | SAOB | SO |
| akrobatisk | 0 | 1 |
| burlesk | 2 | 2 |
| clownaktig | 1 | NA |
| dramatisk | 1 | 1 |
| feerisk | 0 | NA |
| komisk | 1 | 2 |
| marionettaktig | 1 | NA |
| melodramatisk | 1 | 2 |
| mimisk | 1 | 0 |
| operettaktig | 1 | 1 |
| pantomimisk | 0 | 0 |
| scenisk | 0 | 0 |
| sorglustig | 0 | 0 |
| teateraktig | 1 | NA |
| teatral | 1 | 1 |
| tragikomisk | 1 | 0 |
| tragisk | 1 | 1 |

The figures clearly show that a large majority of the theatre words have a lexicalised figurative meaning, which is represented in the dictionaries either as a separate lexical unit within a polysemic structure (e.g. 'spela', 'roll', 'scen') or as a specified extension of the monosemic meaning, normally represented as 'även bildl.' or 'även utvidgat' (e.g. 'fars', komedi, statist'). The density of the figurative use implies that multiple semantic correspondences are established between the conceptual framework of the theatre domain and that of several target domains. That the theatre domain is systematically applied to other domains, is also shown by the fact that a metaphorical meaning can easily be attributed to new members of this lexical field²².

Alla förväntar sig en finansiell *såpopera* under hösten med bud och motbud. (SVD:0831)

Per Unckel [...] nämner själv sommaren 1988, när Ebbe Carlsson-affären var en politisk *såpopera*, som exempel. (SVD:0614)

The next step was to take a closer look at all the words that claimed in SAOB and/or SO to have a figurative meaning by studying their authentic usage in the Swedish national corpus, Språkbanken.²³ To this end I consulted the concordance and looked up the total frequency for each word in the list. As is shown in the screen shot below the concordance comprises material from the Swedish press (p. 65 to p. 04) and from Swedish novels (Rom I and Rom II).

²² The first instance of the word 'såpopera' in the Swedish language is from 1976.

²³ <http://www.spraakbanken.gu.se>

The screenshot shows the 'Konkordanser' search interface. The search term is 'kuliss'. The results table is as follows:

| p65 | p76 | dn | p95 | p96 | p97 | p98 | svd00 | gp01 | gp02 | p03 | p04 | romi | romii | Totalt | Ord |
|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|------|------|-----|-----|------|-------|--------|--------|
| 3 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 18 | 9 | 24 | 29 | 17 | 12 | 19 | 3 | 6 | 165 | KULISS |

Below the table, it states: 'Sökning utförd kl. 8.25 den 4 september 2006'.

In order to get an overview of the metaphorical use of a word in the corpus one has to read through the examples and register manually the number of metaphorical instances. For the words with a total frequency in the corpus of less than 150, I read through all examples and was able to present the number of metaphorical instances both in absolute numbers and as percentage. For those words with a total frequency of 150 or more I made a proportional sample of 150 examples according to the spread over the different sub-corpora (p. 65, p. 76 etc.) and based the percentage of the metaphorical usages on this sample. Since the concordance in 'Språkbanken' is based on word forms and not on lemmas, I restricted the first counting to the generic form of each word; that is the indefinite singular form for the nouns, the infinitive for the verbs, and the indefinite utrum form for the adjectives. A further problem is that in some cases, e.g. 'spela' and 'fars', the word form

is a homograph, that covers several lexical entries. In those cases I only took into account the examples with a meaning referring to the theatre and excluded examples such as ‘spela tennis’ and ‘fars’ as the genitive form of ‘far’. Table 2 shows some examples.

Table 2: Metaphorical use of some Swedish theatre words in the corpus.

| | Frequency | Metaphorical use | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| <i>Nouns</i> | | | |
| harlekin | 50 | 1 | 2,00% |
| kuliss | 165 | 117 | 70,91% |
| pantomim | 46 | 14 | 30,43% |
| rampfeber | 72 | 18 | 25,00% |
| ridå | 311 | 133 | 42,77% |
| sorgespel | 15 | 1 | 6,67% |
| sufflör | 46 | 2 | 4,35% |
| tilja | 7 | 0 | 0,00% |
| tragikomedi | 18 | 3 | 16,67% |
| Verbs | | | |
| iscensätta | 156 | 90 | 57,69% |
| Adjectives | | | |
| teatralisk | 57 | 36 | 63,16% |

A more refined examination would of course involve all forms of a lemma, not only for the sake of completeness, but also because the metaphorical usage of a certain word is often confined to, or at least over-represented in, one specific word form. To illustrate the fluctuations in the proportions of the literal and the metaphorical usage I conducted a more elaborate analysis of the lemmas ‘kuliss’ and ‘ridå’. This brings us to the explicit conclusion that the study of collocations is of vital importance in the mapping of metaphorical usage. In some cases the metaphorical use of a word is especially at stake in lexicalised collocations: ‘bakom kulisserna’, ‘i kulissen’, ‘in-för öppen ridå’, ‘ridån går upp’, ‘dra ned ridån’, ‘ridå!’.

The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. Such a detailed examination of all theatre words, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

Table 3: An elaborated example: the lemma “kuliss”

| | Frekvenstabell | Metaforiskt bruk | Procent |
|------------|----------------|------------------|---------|
| kuliss | 165 | 98 | 59,39% |
| kulissen | 118 | 47 | 39,83% |
| kulisser | 185 | 72 | 38,92% |
| kulisserna | 933 | 724 | 77,60% |
| | 1401 | 941 | 67,17% |

It is obvious that the high percentage (77,60% of all excerpts) of the metaphorical usage for the definite plural form can be explained by the many instances of the collocation ‘bakom kulisserna’, which is strongly lexicalised and mostly used as a metaphor.

Chung Ju-Yung arbetade i många år *bakom kulisserna* för att skapa goda relationer till Nordkorea. (GP6:0805)

Med historietyngda Kalmar slott som *kuliss* och den låga vintersolen i ögonen promenerar vi genom Stadsparken. (GP56:0302)

USA fortsätter att agera *i kulissen* för att Ortega skall få en enda seriös motkandidat i valet. (GP2:0827)

Så lyder det allmänna omdömet från ett flertal personer med insyn i de många förhandlingar som pågått *i kulissen* till den europeiska socialdemokratiska kongressen i Malmö. (SVD10:0607)

In the following examples, however, ‘kuliss’ is used in its literal meaning.

Det var som att se en skådespelerska som står *i kulissen* och vet att hon måste in på scen och är osäker på sin roll. (P98)

Vi provade ut tekniken på kopior av *kulisser* i Per Edströms tea-

terlada på Värmdö, berättar Torkel Blomkvist, stolt över förtroendet att ljussätta en av teaterhistoriens klenoder med hypermodern teknik. (SVD:0104)

Table 4: An elaborated example: the lemma “ridå”.

| | Frekvenstabell | Metaforiskt bruk | Procent |
|----------|----------------|------------------|---------|
| ridå | 311 | 133 | 42,77% |
| ridån | 326 | 30 | 9,20% |
| ridåer | 24 | 0 | 0,00% |
| ridåerna | 8 | 3 | 37,50% |
| | 669 | 166 | 24,81% |

Here again we notice divergences for the different morphological representations due to some lexicalised metaphorical expressions. The collocation ‘inför öppen ridå’ accounts for the majority of the metaphorical examples of the indefinite singular form.

Konventet berömmar sig över att processen förs *inför öppen ridå* i EU-parlamentet och att den enskilde via Internet kan följa utvecklingen [...]. (SVD:0709)

Men *bakom ridåerna* förbereds nästa scen. Några ser det och börjar ana. Muren mot öst är borta men den s k “fienden” finns kvar där. (SVD:0406)

Hermansson var alltför sen i en utåkning efter 12.31 då *ridån* definitivt *gick ned* för närkingarna. (DNA35 SPO)

Och därmed är *ridån nerdragen* för Stockholms län, eftersom regeringen ställer krav på att alla kommuner och landstinget i an-sökarlänet ska vara överens. (SVD:0910)

The generic form of the word ‘ridå’ is also quite frequently used as a pragmatic expression, meaning ‘exit’ or ‘that was it’. I noticed that this expression is especially popular in press texts about sports.

Spanien stod för effektiviteten, Raul slängde sig fram i straffområdet och stötte in 2-0. *Rida* Danmark. (GP45:0401)

Två sekunder före full tid slank baklängesmålet in. *Rida* och degradering. (GP44:0316)

Metaphors can show varying degrees of novelty. There are quite a few theatre metaphors that have become lexicalised and have lost their original link with the donor domain in the mental lexicon of the language user. This means that the language user no longer interprets the meaning of the metaphor by activating the donor domain, but that the metaphorical meaning has been established as an autonomous part of the polysemic structure of the word. Very often it is also annotated as such in the dictionaries and in some extreme cases the autonomy of the metaphorical meaning has even lead to a case of homonymy. In the literature lexicalised metaphors are sometimes labelled 'bleached', 'frozen' or 'dead' metaphors. The process of lexicalisation is a gradual process both at the level of the individual language user and at the level of the speech community. The lexical strength of a metaphor depends on the level of entrenchment in the individual language user's mental lexicon, both with regard to the process of coding and of decoding a linguistic message. The relative frequency of the metaphorical use of a word in a representative corpus mirrors the degree of codability and the level of cognitive entrenchment. High frequency is generally considered as an indication of 'bleaching'. Jan Svanlund,²⁴ however, makes an interesting distinction between the degree of figurativeness and the degree of novelty of a metaphor. The 'figurativeness' of a metaphor is a cognitive notion and is defined as its inherent potentiality to activate concepts from the source domain. The 'novelty' of a metaphor is defined as its "freshness" at the level of the language and is inversely proportional to the degree of lexical-

²⁴ Svanlund, *Metaforen som konvention*, 2001, p. 42 and pp. 98-99.

isation. That there are strongly lexicalised metaphors which can be considered to be frozen at the level of the language, but which have nevertheless maintained a high degree of figurativeness, can be shown by the following examples, where several theatre words are used in the same sentence, thus clearly reinforcing each other and activating the conceptual framework of the source domain:

och när *ridån faller* för universums stora *sorgespel* har alla solar slocknat (Rom I)

Det vi vet med självklarhet är att vi bär barnets erfarenheter med oss, *rekvizita* från barndomen på livets *scen*. (DND06:0920)

Finlands ekonomi. *Drama* i fyra *akter* och en *epilog*. *Akt 1*. Sextio-tal. Finland är den fattige kusinen i öster. Finnarna flyttar till Sverige för att dela vårt välstånd. (DNA20:0222)

I dag *går ridån upp* för *andra akten*. Klockan nio på morgonen börjar kongressen behandla ämnet facklig-politisk samverkan. (GP36:0908)

Theatre words are a gold mine for the study of metaphors. This lexical field offers a broad range of examples of how language makes use of conceptual correspondences between several domains to coin new meanings. This is not only true at the level of lexicalised and conventional metaphors, which have become autonomous brick stones in the mental lexicon, but also at the level of novel metaphorical extensions, where elements of the source domain are activated through a network of word associations and semantic allusions. That semantic correspondences can even be elaborated into an allegory, is shown in these last examples:

Har man sett ett par svenska gardiner har man verkligen inte sett alla. Former, färger och mönster, för att inte tala om kombinationer av färger och mönster, synes oändliga. Ändå rymmer mångfalden en etablerad social grammatik. Högborgerlighetens

tunga gardinuppsättningar har alltid haft en närmast heraldisk ordning, som visar på social kontroll, men också det enskilda hemmets plats i hierarkin. När *ridån är uppe* spelas *pjäsen* till perfektion, när *den dras för* kan allt hända. Under gardinen kan en mördare skospetsar sticka fram. Folkhemmets gardiner kommunicerar med omvärlden. (SVD158:0827)

and finally,

Ridån har gått ned, SH har bugat och tackat. (GP8:0426)

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