

# Metaphor, Poetry, Storytelling, & Cross-Cultural Leadership

Thomas Grisham

## Abstract

### Abstract Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe the theory and benefits of poetry, storytelling, and metaphor when applied to cross-cultural leadership.

### Conceptual Methodology

The methodology utilized is founded on preliminary research on metaphors, poetry and leadership with examples and connections based upon experience.

### Findings

Explains how the use of poetry and metaphors can be utilized by a leader to build trust and demonstrate empathy; how to communicate more effectively; and, how to inspire.

### Research Implications

Possible future research on the psychological and sociological aspects of the messages that most impel, mobilize, and inspire people to act on complex ideas.

### Practical Implications

Leaders can approach communications, empathy, and trust with a tool that will enable them to inspire action in complex cultural environments.

### Originality & Value

There has been little published on the connection between effective leadership and the use of poetry and metaphor. Leadership requires the ability to inspire the desire to follow, and to ignite the intellect and emotions of those who follow.

### Keywords

Leadership, Poetry, Metaphor, Trust, Empathy, Communications

## Introduction

There has been little research and discussion relating to the use of poetry in management, and even less relating to leadership. Some have suggested the difference between management and leadership as the difference between “hard” technical organizational type skills, and “soft” people skills. The definition for leadership used here will be the “ability to inspire the desire to follow, and to inspire achievement beyond expectations (Grisham 2006).” Cross-cultural leadership attributes being trust, empathy, transformation, power, and communication. Considering this definition of leadership, it is necessary for a leader to inspire a follower to take some action. This can be accomplished by building trust, demonstrating empathy, and utilizing effective communication skills.

Many business transactions are now conducted on a cross-cultural platform. Cross-cultural platforms ranging from a domestic company with cultural diversity (race,

gender, ethnicity, etc.), to a transglobal enterprise with virtual teams in multiple locations (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1998). With the increasing mobility of people, it is now common to find multi-ethnic individuals on expatriate assignments. Thus the diversity is truly infinite, and, always changing. To build trust, and demonstrate empathy - especially in virtual teams - a leader must find creative and emotive ways of inspiring others through effective communications. This challenge can be met in part through the use of poetry and metaphor.

For centuries people have told stories through narratives and poetry to convey complex ideas to others. Well crafted poetry, stories, and metaphors have been used for centuries by politicians, philosophers, artists, authors, playwrights, and indigenous peoples, to transfer knowledge and to elicit emotive feelings. Perhaps it is time for leadership thinking to revisit the power and effectiveness of these tools in the world of business.

The following section will provide a short review of the research on the use of metaphors, storytelling, and poetry in management and leadership.

## **Metaphor, Poetry, & Storytelling**

One of the connections between storytelling, poetry, music, literature, and art is the use of metaphor. Learning to use metaphors is an essential part of effective communications, and a skill that leaders must cultivate.

### **Metaphor**

Hawkes (Hawkes 1972) describes the forms of transference in speech as figures of speech or tropes, and that metaphors are the fundamental figure of speech. The first traditional category is a simile, which proposes the transference by use of like or as if. Hawkes suggests that a simile involves a more visually inclined description than a metaphor (example like a red-faced farmer). Next is the synecdoche in which the transference is something carried over to stand for another thing (example twenty summers for twenty years). The last method being metonymy, where the transference occurs as the name of a thing takes the place of something else (example the white house for the president of the United States). Hawkes states that all are forms of metaphor, that all meanings are universally relative, only appropriate to and valid in the cultural context in which they occur (Richards 1936), and that “language causes reality to exist.” He also states that the use of metaphors gives messages complexity of meaning. Hawkes closes by contrasting the neo-classical view that metaphor is a romantic extension or foreground of language, with the neo-romantic view that metaphors create reality. This last concept of creating reality is important for leadership especially for those leading change.

Wheelwright (Wheelwright 1967) begins a discussion on metaphor by quoting the Tao Te Ching: “the Tao that can be spoken is not the real Tao” illustrating the difficulties of communicating deep and complex ideas with language. The author describes the use of epiphor (modern metaphor) to describe similarity between a thing that is relatively well known and a thing that is more obscurely known. Wheelwright uses the example of Edgar describing maturity and readiness in King Lear, as “ripeness is all.” The author

describes a diaphor as a juxtaposition of experience and movement, and illustrates a combination of epiphor and diaphor in the Tao Te Ching: “we put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel; but it is on the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the wheel depends.” The author also quotes Alan Watts: “myth is to be defined as a complex of stories - some no doubt fact, and some fantasy - which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life.” The idea being that myths reflect the metaphoric constructs of different cultural groups.

In *The Myth of Metaphor* by Turbayne (Turbayne 1962), Mr. Hayakawa introduces the volume by saying “no one, to my knowledge has taken the position so boldly expounded in this volume that metaphors are the very stuff with which human beings make sense of the universe.” Turbayne states that all overt acts may be thought of as a metaphor expressing some inner condition. Among the many citations of literature, art, music, architecture, and poetry, the author cites Hamlet as saying before speaking with his mother “I will speak daggers to her, but use none.” This is a use of language to indicate far more than just the overt interactions between mother and son, and as a larger view of how people pursue the reconciliation of social differences. Turbayne states that the image of the tree as a metaphor for life and immortality is widely used by nearly all peoples.

McLuhan (McLuhan 1964) quotes a variation on Robert Browning’s: “a man’s reach must exceed his grasp or what’s a metaphor.” McLuhan says that all media are in fact active metaphors and that information provides the power to translate experience into senses rapidly. McLuhan quotes Bertrand Russell as saying that the great discovery of the twentieth century was the technique of suspended judgment - critical to effective communications, and to knowledge transfer.

Kövecses (Kovecses 2005) sites the work of Lakoff and Johnson as claiming that people actually understand the world with metaphors, and he provides test data from other studies to support this assertion. The author contends that linguistic metaphors are expressions of metaphorical concepts in the brain’s conceptual system. Kövecses claims that a metaphor includes linguistic, conceptual, social-cultural, neural and bodily components. He also claims that abstract concepts are largely metaphorical and that the source and target domains help to explain the universality and particularity of metaphors (love is warmth - warmth is the physical or source component, love is the target or abstract component).

Kövecses believes that the correspondence between source and target domains is what makes a metaphor. He uses Hungarian, English and Chinese to espouse a belief that basic metaphors - happiness, anger, time, event structure and self - are in fact near universal (it is interesting to note that the dimensions of time and self are decidedly different in the work of Hofstede and others). While the linguistic metaphors themselves are near universal, Kövecses notes that the congruent metaphors are cultural specific and are filled-in from the near universal level. One example he uses is the concept of *hara* in Japanese (anger is in the belly), and that no other culture uses this adaptation of the near universal anger metaphor. In this way, they are congruent with the near universal level, but culturally specific.

In one of his many books on myth, Campbell (Campbell 1986) points to the work of Adolf Bastian and his notion of local and universal myths and metaphors. Of the universal primal compulsions, Campbell points to the voraciousness of life, the sexual generative urge, and the impulse to plunder. He describes the metaphorical voyages in religious belief of examples like Jesus rising from the dead, and suggests that the metaphors become myth when transformed by the fusion with concordant insights. Campbell continues by saying that myths are like dreams, being derived from experience and making use of metaphor. Campbell closes by describing the reason that human beings rely on myth and metaphor, particularly in religions. He quotes Goethe as saying, “everything transitory is but a metaphor,” and Nietzsche as saying, “everything eternal is but a metaphor.” This describes the universality of need for cultures to devise myth and metaphor to define and describe religious beliefs.

Nicholson and Anderson (Nicholson and Anderson 2005) addressed the issues of myth and metaphor in an article focused on entrepreneurs and the linguistics of news reports. They begin by quoting Schramm (cited in (Brassington and Pettit 2000)) as saying that communications is “the process of establishing a commonness or oneness of thought between a sender and receiver.” The authors observe that newspapers [news in general] are “not an inert mirror but rather play an active role in the creation and manipulation of reality.” Thus, the global news information services such as CNN or Al-Jazeera not only report facts, but also create reality through metaphors. Nicholson and Anderson say “enterprise culture has all of the defining features of a social anthropological belief system or way of seeing”(trust and empathy) (Berger and Mohr 1982).

Deignan (Deignan 2003) addresses the variability of metaphors across cultures, and their source domains. He begins by stating that there are cross-linguistic differences in metaphors, that some metaphors may not exist in another language, and that some have different details. The example he uses is of *parent company* which in Farsi means one that supplies raw materials to a company that uses them in manufacturing (Henderson 1986) (communications, power, empathy).

Cohen (Cohen 1979) notes that the works of Hobbes and Locke drove the thinking on metaphors as being frivolous and inessential until the twentieth century, and that they do not contain or transmit knowledge, do not connect directly with facts, and do not offer genuine meaning. Cohen points to the work of Max Black (Black 1954-55), and his belief that metaphors hold a cognitive status, not just an emotive one. Cohen suggests that metaphors achieve intimacy (empathy and trust) between the speaker and hearer: “(1) the speaker issues a kind of concealed invitation (communication), (2) the hearer expends a special effort to accept the invitation, and (3) this transaction constitutes the acknowledgement of a community (trust and empathy).” Cohen quotes Aristotle as saying that “a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.”

Yu (Yu 2003) presents a case in which the abstract concept of courage is understood in part via a conceptual metaphor grounded in the body, but shaped by a culture-specific metaphorical understanding of the gallbladder: “courage (boldness, bravery, daring, pluck, and spunk) is Qi in gallbladder” (transformation and power). According to Yu

“The interaction between common bodily experiences and varied cultural experiences determines the extent to which conceptual metaphors are universal, widespread, or culture-specific (see also (Lakoff and Johnson 1999)).” Yu also goes on to say that “At the same time, the same basic embodied experiences, in which many conceptual metaphors are grounded, may be defined differently by different cultural beliefs and values.” He quotes a Chinese proverb as saying “Wu-dan zhi ren shishi nan - everything appears difficult to people without gallbladder,” and points out that proverbs are generally regarded as repositories of folk wisdom. The author also provides examples of negative idioms such as dan-da bao-shen (gall-big wrap-body) “courage appears to be bigger than body; audacious in the extreme.”

Lennie (Lennie 1999) begins an article by surveying the warring factions relating to the use of metaphors in management thinking: those who believe the metaphor is overemphasized (Reed 1990), those who believe it is a critical component (Morgan 1986), and those who believe it has become static and cumbersome (Peters 1992). Lennie points to the work of Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977) who believed that we only know things in relation to other things, and to metamorphose is the ability to make these connections between things known and not known. Lennie states, “all metaphor generates knowledge, but not all metaphor generates relevant knowledge,” and that metaphor is experience in the knowledge that is produced, not a disembodied concept. The author argues that metaphoric experience forms the chaotic and fragmentary (ideas) into a whole (concept), and therefore is an organizational talent. Lennie uses one example of a performance review where the manager doing the review describes her feelings and impressions, by using metaphors, to organize her own internal feelings and observations - part of a leadership skill set.

According to Kramer (Kramer 2004) metaphors in music bridge the bodily with the external world “where music is concerned, this bridging connects the acoustic reality of music to the full array of its worldly circumstances, be they social, psychological, cultural, political, material, or historical. These spheres are not really separate, but they often seem to be, an illusion we have long been taught to cultivate.” He also quotes Wittgenstein as saying, “Wörter sind Taten - Words are deeds,” and draws the conclusion that metaphors in music do matter. Kramer goes on to say that “metaphysics forms images of truth that prove, in the end, to be metaphors; metaphors construct metaphysical fictions that prove themselves, in the end, by their value as truth. Language, we might speculate, has a tendency to slow this process; music accelerates it.” The consideration of music in understanding culture and cultural metaphors is a component on cultural intelligence.

Özçalışkan (Özçaliskan 2003) writes about the Turkish metaphorical structure of death, life, sickness, body, and time by using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The author begins his article by saying that the metaphor of life as a journey is included in Turkish thought (Pg. 221): “Dünyaya ilk geldihim anda Yürüdüm aynk zamanda Idki kapklk bir handa Gidiyorum gündüz gece (Veysel 1991); The first moment I came to the world, I walked at the same time, In a caravanserai with two doors I am going day and night.” His conclusion is that there is a high degree of similarity between English and Turkish metaphorical mappings. He speculates that the lack of variation could be because both cultures are western, secular, and literate. He also suggests that

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are western religions and therefore share concepts about birth, death, and after life (trust, empathy, communications).

One of the most significant works on cultural metaphors discovered in this research was that of Gannon (Gannon 2004). Gannon begins by quoting Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) as saying “if we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.” Gannon then defines cultural metaphors: “A cultural metaphor is any activity, phenomenon, or institution with which members of a given culture emotionally and/or cognitively identify. As such, the metaphor represents the underlying values expressive of the culture itself. Frequently, outsiders have a difficult time relating to and/or understanding the underlying values of a culture, and this book is designed to address this difficulty. Culture allows us to fill in the blanks, often unconsciously, when action is required, and cultural metaphors help us to see the values leading to action. This is probably the most interesting feature of culture.”

As but one example take the metaphor described by Gannon for Japan, the Japanese Garden. There are wet and dry gardens in Japan, wet gardens have water flowing and dry gardens are of the Zen Buddhist type with sand as a metaphor for water. Japanese society is fluid and changes without altering its essential character. As Gannon says, “alone each droplet has a little force yet when combined with many others, enough force is produced to form a waterfall, which cascades into a small pond filled with carp.” The garden is a reminder of the centrality of nature in Japanese society, religion (Shinto), and art.

Gannon describes Japanese society in the four parts of harmony (wa or shikata) or the proper way of doing things, the combination of droplets or energies into group activities, “spirit” training (seishen), and aesthetics. The Japanese borrowed the techniques of rice farming from the Chinese, and the interrelatedness of tasks led to the importance of group activities. Gannon points to the proper way of doing things (katas) as a key component of the society. He describes the tendency of the Japanese to wait at a cross walk for the permission to cross, even when no traffic is present. Experience indicates that Japanese in Tokyo would point to Japanese from the “south” as those who would be crossing in the absence of traffic. Gannon continues by quoting a Japanese proverb to illustrate the idea of the individual droplets “the protruding nail will be hammered.” The Japanese sense of aesthetics is distinctive and is embodied in the Japanese garden through the tranquil effect (shibui), and the merging of identity with object or mood (mono-no-aware). In the following section we will return to Japan and the work of Bashō.

Metaphor is a technique that has been used for centuries, and can both serve to help consolidate ones thoughts, and to communicate complex ideas to followers. One of the mediums that make great use of metaphor is poetry.

### **Poetry**

Spence (Spence 1995), from a trial attorney’s point of view, says that communications occur with words, rhythms, silences, hands, and bodies. The job of a trial attorney is to win minds, and hearts, with the more difficult of the two being the hearts. Spence’s

focus on words, rhythms, and silences leads easily into the connection with poetry. DeMarto (Da Marto 2004) opens an issue of *Leadership* magazine by quoting E.B. White (White 1983) as saying that a poet is a person who “lets drop a line that gets remembered in the morning.”

In an article called Night Visions, Marchant (Marchant 2005) describes the methods (extended metaphors, broken cadences, juxtapositions, overlays, etc.), that poets writing about war have used to evoke emotions. He cites the last few lines of “Facing It” a poem by Yusef Komunyakaa (Komumunyakaa 2001) about seeing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

In the black mirror

A woman’s trying to erase names:  
No, She’s brushing a boy’s hair

Here multiple complex emotions and images are evoked in a stunning manner, using metaphor to connect the idea of erasing a name and brushing a boy’s hair. At the same time the image engages, drawing the reader into emotions, and encouraging a desire to explore further. Imagine a leader wanting to inspire people toward a new goal like the abandonment of war - these 16 words could well move people. In building empathy and trust, a leader must demonstrate his/her understanding of the other person, and make the follower comfortable with the leader’s vision. In such tacit communications, the challenge is to engage the follower but also to provide an interactive intellectual opportunity. By that I mean that the follower must complete the metaphor, and in doing so must internalize and consider the conceptual idea. In impressionist paintings the use of adjacent colors, that caused the eye to blend them and see a third color, is one way of thinking about this process of communicating tacit knowledge not just information.

Also consider the use of tempo, emphasis and silences to provide a truly haunting vision of the apparition in this poem. As Marchant’s title Night Visions implies, the use of poetry to convey complex meaning and emotion is like a sailor’s night vision, the eyes must adjust to subtle levels and often it is looking away that reveals most. In business, time is extremely limited and so a leader must find creative ways to shorten the time necessary to transfer knowledge. Twenty years ago it was possible to patiently nurture this transfer through multiple encounters. With multi-tasking, 50+ hours work weeks being standard, and a 24/7 mentality about work, communications must be more efficient. Poetry is by its nature a compressed communication of emotions and concepts, that the listener must decompress and interpret. By participating in the process the listener must complete portions of the message, and thereby internalize, absorb, and reconstruct the message.

It is easy to see a leader making use of Marchant’s poem to motivate a group of people to follow in protesting war for example. It is not difficult to imagine how difficult this would be without the use of metaphor and poetry. One other method that is useful in communicating complex emotions and ideas would be storytelling. Telling a story about an individual soldier to engage the listener has many of the same intoxicating aspects of poetry. It can also make strong use of metaphor, rhythm, loudness, cadence, and

silences. Story telling and poetry have been used by mankind for centuries, and many cultures still place great value of the ability of a person to tell a good story.

Let us look at three different poets, and their techniques for using metaphor in poetry to convey complex ideas and stories. Czesław Miłosz (Milosz 1995) in a poem titled *At a Certain Age*, describes a person or a society:

We wanted to confess our sins but there were no takers.  
White clouds refused to accept them, and the wind  
Was too busy visiting sea after sea.  
We did not succeed in interesting the animals.  
Dogs, disappointed, expected an order,  
A cat, as always immortal, was falling asleep.  
A person seemingly very close  
Did not care to hear of things long past.  
Conversations with friends over vodka or coffee  
Ought not be prolonged beyond the first sign of  
boredom.  
It would be humiliating to pay by the hour  
A man with a diploma, just for listening.  
Churches. Perhaps churches. But to confess there what?  
That we used to see ourselves as handsome and noble  
Yet later in our place an ugly toad  
Half-opens its thick eyelid  
And ones sees clearly: "That's me."

Milosz could well be describing an organization that had become complacent, and in need of change. Imagine using this poem as an introduction to a speech about taking responsibility and moving into action to overcome a lethargic and sleepy approach to a problem confronting a company. Also the metaphor of the frog conjures up visions of Michelangelo's famous painting of God and Man at the apex of the Sistine chapel. But, for the *punchline* to be effective, Milosz must build the story to prepare the context for the metaphor to achieve effectiveness.

Rabindranath Tagore (Tagore 1997), a Nobel laureate, provides a look at transformational leadership in his poem *My Song*:

This song of mine will wind its music around you, my child,  
like the fond arms of love.  
This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of  
blessing.  
When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your  
ear, when you are in a crowd it will fence you about with  
aloofness.  
My song will be like a pair of wings in your dreams, it will  
Transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.  
It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over  
your road.

My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your  
sight into the heart of things.  
And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in  
your living heart.

Considering the earlier definition of leadership in part as inspiring the desire to follow, a poem such as this could well be crafted to inspire follower ship. Using the metaphor of a song, to *wind its music*, the ideas of trust, inspiration, fearlessness, security, steadfastness, and compassion are woven into the fabric of an emotional entreaty to listen. The tempo and pace of this work as compared to the previous one is also quite different. Miłosz (Lithuania) and Tagore (India) also demonstrate the different cultural means of pace, pause, and silence. That is not to say that all Indian poets utilize a common style, but to say that it will be, in a range, different that that of Central Europe. For effective leadership, cross-cultural intelligence (XLQ) (Grisham 2006) is necessary to have been exposed to the writings of different authors, and to have a feel for the metaphors, storytelling, and poetry of the cultures.

Matsuo Bashō (Basho 1966) was one of the most famous *haiku* poets of Japan. The structure is precise and consists of seventeen syllables, divided into three sections of five-seven-five. In a classic example of *haiku*, Bashō writes:

Breaking the silence  
Of an ancient pond,  
A frog jumped into water -  
A deep resonance.

Here the metaphor of a deep resonance representing the idea of ancient, wise, consistent. In this case, the poem provides a glimpse of Japanese culture with its inherent respect or reverence for nature. The patience and high context (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998) nature of the Japanese culture are well reflected in the content, topic, and tempo of this poem. For a leader in Asia, the concept of an ancient pond or pool of wisdom and the respect for it would serve to build trust and empathy in the followers.

Not many leaders are trained in the use of poetry, as it unfortunately falls somewhere south of economics, marketing, organizational behavior, etc. So, a few words about how to begin working with poetry are in order. In the *Art and Craft of Poetry*, Bugeja (Bugeja 1994) provides some basic guidance on crafting a poem:

#### Voice

Finding one's own voice is the starting point. One way is to read the voices of other poets and find a tone, rhythm, and voice that one resonates with. Bugeja suggests answering the following questions:

- With whom am I speaking - self or others?
- Where is this conversation taking place - a real place or a metaphorical one?
- What is the nature of the epiphany that you want to share?
- What voice is appropriate - personal versus business?

## The Line

According to Bugeja, poetry is the highest and most complex form of human speech, and it is as close to music as it is to writing. By line he means the individual lines of a poem, and a hook to snare the imagination. He suggests the following building blocks:

- The first line should be a zinger.
- A line should work as a unit of speech - start and end with strong words.
- The length of the line can help one to express feelings or evoke moods - the shorter the line the greater the impact, the longer the greater the drama.
- The last line should be as powerful as the first.

## The Stanza

The stanza acts like chapters in book, it mimics the mind in remembering events, it helps set the mood of the poem, and it creates the opportunity for surprise and excitement. The stanza and the line are the key building blocks of a poem.

## The Title

Bugeja quotes a student in a workshop as saying that she dislikes titles, and when asked why she responded “because it is too much of a commitment.” The title promises a payoff if the audience invests time in reading or listening to the poem. In speech writing, public speaking, or in presentations it is common knowledge that a *hook* must be provided to capture the audience straight away. The same idea applies to the title.

## Meter

Meter is the rhythm or cadence of a poem, or similar to the beat in music. When acquiring cultural intelligence, listening to music of the local culture will help train the ear to the tempo and rhythm of the language. Some of the types of sounds are iamb, trochee, anapest, and dactyl. There is also the concept of *feet*, or the mixture of sounds in a line, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter, and octameter.

## Rhyme

Rhyme is a concept that is familiar to most everyone. What may not be understood is that there are a number of primary tones that can be used. A few examples follow:

- Full or true rhyme - use of exact sounding vowels and consonants (e.g. springs and wings).
- Double or multiple rhymes - use of approximate sounding vowels and consonants (e.g. lectures and directors).
- Rising or masculine - full rhyming word that ends on a hard stress.

As from the darkening gloom *dove*  
Upsoars, and darts into the Eastern *light*,  
On pinions that naught moves but pure *delight*;  
So fled thy soul into the realms *above*;...

- John Keats

Poems have been a vehicle for telling stories since the dawn of creation. People, who have the ability to tell enlightened tales, are often honored as priests or visionaries. The next section discusses storytelling from the heritage of verbal cultures in such works as the *Decameron* and *1001 Arabian Nights*.

### Storytelling

Stephen Denning (Denning 2004), a former program director of knowledge management at the World Bank, expressed his initial skepticism of the use of storytelling, but changed his mind when he witnessed how effective storytelling could be in galvanizing support for business goals. In his article he describes his efforts to garner support for knowledge management at the World Bank with little success. He then started telling the following story, with great success:

“In June of 1995, a health worker in a tiny town in Zambia went to the Web site of the Centers for Disease Control and got the answer to a question about the treatment for malaria. Remember that this was in Zambia, one of the poorest countries in the world, and it happened in a tiny place 600 kilometers from the capital city. But the most striking thing about this picture, at least for us, is that the World Bank isn't in it. Despite our know-how on all kinds of poverty related issues, that knowledge isn't available to the millions of people who could use it. Imagine if it were. Think what an organization we could become.”

Denning explores the structure of stories, and his experience with honing his skills. He suggests in conclusion that leaders should build the following into their stories: spark action (transformation), communicate who you are (trust, empathy), transmit values, foster collaboration, tame rumors, share knowledge, and lead people into the future. Denning quotes from work by Noel Tichy (Tichy 2002) who says that “the best way to get humans to venture into the unknown [trust] terrain is to make that terrain familiar and desirable by taking them there first in their imaginations.” Or as indicated above, have them participate in filling in the concept.

In a more scientific vein, Kjærbeck and Asmuß (Kjaerbeck and Asmuß 2005) state that they consider the listener's joint construction of meaning a central activity in the negotiation of meaning. Their work was focused on the *punchline*, conclusion, of a story, and the importance in joint participation between the teller and the listener. From his work in Uganda, David Silver (Silver 2001) says that from the health care perspective that songs serve to educate about the rules of moral behavior (ethics and values), and that they encourage conformity to the rules (Egblewogbe 1975). Silver points to the work of William Barclay in describing the effectiveness of storytelling (Hilton 1981): it makes the truth come alive, it keeps people focused, it can introduce new ideas by starting with a familiar platform, the truth is discovered by each person individually, avoids confronting people with their own inadequacies (face). Silver suggests that the benefits for healthcare are participation, entertainment, cultural relevance, empowerment, repeatability, simplicity, sustainability. Certainly a strong list of ideas that are current in management literature.

In an interesting study on the universality of storytelling, Sugiyama (Sugiyama 2003) took an earlier study by Bohannon (Bohannon 1966) on the Tiv people of West Africa. Bohannon had posited that story's could be universally understood, but when a group of Tiv's were unable to understand *Hamlet*, Bohannon questioned her hypothesis. Sugiyama studied the data from a different perspective and concluded that the fact Bohannon could communicate *Hamlett* at all was significant. The author concludes by saying that "her (Bohannon) essay overlooks the astounding psychological fact that all people everywhere are capable of telling and processing stories." For cross-cultural leaders this common platform is an essential tool in the international marketplace. That is not to imply however that there is some sort of universal story outline that will work in all cultures.

The use of metaphor in poetry and storytelling is an old and trusted art, as we have discussed. So why is it important for cross-cultural leadership? The following section takes up this question.

## Cross-Cultural Leadership

As mentioned in the introduction, the dimensions of cross-cultural leadership are trust, empathy, transformation, power, and communication (Grisham 2006). The importance of metaphor, poetry, and storytelling are connected to each dimension as will be described in this section.

First culture means individual, societal, regional, or corporate. Mead's (Mead 1951) definition of culture is best suited to the discussion of cross-cultural leadership: "a body of learned behavior, a collection of beliefs, habits and traditions, shared by a group of people and successively learned by people who enter the society." This definition provides the versatility required to address intra/inter cultures, organizations, or groups.

### Trust

Mayer, Davis et al. (Mayer, Davis et al. 1995) define trust as being: "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor that other party." The issue of vulnerability is essential to the concept of trust, and forms the basis of cross-cultural leadership. Building and nurturing trust is a process that requires time and patience however. In this world of virtual teams and short schedules, it is necessary to build trust quickly.

The following are some of the attributes of trust:

- Care & Concern
- Character
- Competence
- Dependability
- Fearlessness
- Integrator

- Integrity & Ethics
- Truth & Justice

To build trust one must display, consistently, these attributes. Consider the attribute of character. As noted above, one of the strongest aspects of metaphor, poetry, and storytelling is that the mediums can convey complex concepts more readily. Trying to explain one's character can be a truly time consuming process for it requires the transference of a lot of information in different contexts so that the follower can draw a conclusion themselves about the leader. The types of metaphors, poetry, and stories that a leader tells can shorten this process significantly by permitting the follower to get a quicker focus.

Also as has indicated above, every culture has a history of storytelling, poetry, and metaphor. Therefore, each of these mediums is a recognized format.

### **Empathy**

Empathy is the ability to think, feel, and communicate from another's perspective - or as the saying goes the ability to "walk in another's shoes." There is a strong connection between trust, empathy, and communications as well. Trust requires the removal of fear, and empathy is one tool for accomplishing that goal. The interplay between these attributes is subtle, concurrent, and heavily influenced by education. Without cross-cultural intelligence (XCQ), it is difficult or impossible to understand another person's perspective. As has been noted earlier, in any knowledge transfer there must be explicit information (dialogue, body language, etc.), context (education about a culture for example), reflection, and re-engagement.

Mullavey-O'Brien (Mullavey-O'Brien 1997) defined empathy to be "the ability to put oneself in another's place, to know others' experiences from their perspective, and to communicate this understanding to them in a way that is meaningful, while at the same time recognizing that the source of one's experience lies in the other." As the definition also implies, empathy involves the follower feeling that the leader is feeling the follower's feelings. Empathy creates an intimacy bridge that connects people at an emotional level.

Harrington (Harrington 2002) begins an article on compassion with a quote from Victor Weisskopf "knowledge without compassion is inhuman. Compassion without knowledge is ineffective." Harrington explores the ethical and scientific considerations of compassion - a synonym for empathy. His holiness the Dalai Lama (Lama 2002) offers his beliefs regarding compassion: "I believe that at the most fundamental level our nature is compassionate, and that cooperation, not conflict, lies at the heart of the basic principles that govern our human existence."

Eisenberg (Eisenberg 2002) defines empathy as "an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel." She suggests that sympathy is a response that stems from empathy and elicits feelings of concern or sorrow. While a thorough review of Eisenberg's work is well beyond the

scope of this paper, she draws a conclusion that sheds light on the issue of empathy. Her work included sessions with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala where he contended that children are born loving and caring, and she cites research that shows children at age 1 or 2 exhibit prosocial and empathetic behavior. The suggestions are that societal interactions alter and change the ability of a person to empathize, and thus the need to recapture this essential skill as a leader.

The following are attributes of empathy:

- Cross-Cultural Intelligence (XCQ)
- Humaneness
- Servant Leadership

XCQ requires experience and education. Humaneness is obviously an acquired societal variable for each person. But it must be tempered and flexible if true empathy is to be exhibited. As noted above the work of Gannon is a superb starting point for developing an understanding of other cultures through the use of metaphor.

### **Transformation**

Transformational Leadership has received a significant amount of attention in the literature. In a chapter addressing charismatic leadership, Boal and Bryson (Boal and Bryson 1988) indicate that the essence of transformational leadership is to “lift ordinary people to extraordinary heights.” Similarly, Bass (Bass 1985) says that it is the ability to get people to “perform beyond the level of expectations.” The definition of leadership referred to earlier: “the ability to inspire the desire to follow, and to inspire achievement beyond expectations,” was based in part on this quote from Bass. For transformational leadership, it would further include the ability to inspire people to risk making changes.

- Charisma
- Vision
- Inspiration
- Risk Change

As has been discussed above, the use of metaphor, poetry, and storytelling to convey vision and to inspire others to act is well established. Part of charisma is the ability to engage others. The use of the techniques that have been described for poetry, as one example, can help to pull people into a leader’s thoughts and emotions - to create a bond.

### **Power**

There is an abundance of research on power that spans well over a 1/2 century, and historical examples that extend back to the beginnings of recorded time. For the purposes of this paper suffice to say that power is an essential part of leadership, and power that is voluntarily offered (referent) by a follower to a leader is a potent and lasting form of power. Trust can create power, but power in and of itself cannot produce trust. Power can be considered on a metaphorical basis as the fuel that drives leadership.

The hypothesis is that to gain and maintain power it must be given unilaterally by the follower. Other types of power can certainly be useful, but the question remains if they are sustainable. The types of power are as noted below:

- Knowledge
- Position
- Power Distance
- Reward/Punishment
- Referent

The use of metaphor, poetry and storytelling go to the issue of referent power and knowledge power directly. The topic of a story, the way it is told, and the knowledge it intends to transfer all can build respect in the follower. By doing this it further foments the power base of the leader, because the power is bestowed by the follower. Power Distance is a concept that originated with Hofstede (Hofstede 2001), being the degree that people expect and agree that power would be stratified and concentrated at high levels of organizations. The basic consideration is that a knowledge of the culture will suggest the ways that people view, particularly, position power in different cultures.

### **Communications**

Effective communications begins with effective listening. Grisham's second Law of Project Management is: Listen, Question, Think, then Act. A leader must be an effective listener first and foremost, and must imbue this desire in followers. Grisham's Law follows closely with the concepts of knowledge management. Explicit information is provided (listen), information is placed into context (listen & question), information is internalized and reflected upon (think), and then the information is acted upon (practice).

According to Peter Drucker (Drucker 2000) "what can be learned cannot be taught, and what can be taught cannot be learned." In the context of education and knowledge transfer, the concept is that tacit knowledge cannot be taught, and explicit knowledge cannot be learned. In communications this concept is critically important for the ability to communicate complex tacit knowledge - like cultural attitudes - cannot be taught. In the global marketplace it therefore is essential that time is available for the translation of explicit information into tacit knowledge. When it is not, the use of metaphor, poetry, and storytelling become an even more critical leadership skill.

Pearce (Pearce 2003) contends that one's "ability to manage is measured by what you know and what you get done, but your ability to lead is measured not only by your competence but also by your ability to communicate who you are and what you stand for." The author contends that leadership communications must offer credibility, trustworthiness, confidence, passion, facts, and faith - competence and trust. To do this Pearce contends that there are four principles that must be employed: discovering what matters, applying courage and discipline, deciding to lead, and connecting with others (resonance). He quotes Saint-Exupéry (Saint-Exupery 1950) as saying "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea. As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it."

The leadership attributes for communications are:

- Wisdom (encoding and decoding with filters)
- Competence (language, culture, body, music-tempo, speed, loudness, silences)
- Sensitivity (timing, pattern, speed, active listening, culture)
- Adaptability (empathy, culture, circumstances)
- Creativity
- Patience
- Conflict Management

The connections between these ideas and metaphor, poetry, and storytelling are fairly clear. Take the one example of sensitivity which connects many of the topics discussed above (timing, pattern speed, active listening, culture). The sensitivity and compassion of a speaker like Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan, Leonard Cohen are but a few examples of how important the use of metaphor, poetry, and storytelling are in communicating complex ideas and feelings.

## Conclusion & Implications

International markets are forcing greater productivity, which often translates into more hours. As economies gain strength, the goods and services provided change character, and this increases the pressure to learn, change, and further increase productivity. Increased productivity also forces firms to become flatter, and this forces people to take on more responsibilities. More often in the world economy virtual teams, and leaders becoming followers becoming leaders will demand the ability of leaders to be more effective in less time.

Leadership is a critically important issue in organizations be they public, private, governmental, or NGO's. People have for centuries used metaphor, poetry, and storytelling to engage, educate, and bond one another. Isn't it time that business management and leadership resume this tradition?

## References

Bartlett, C. A. and S. Ghoshal (1998). Managing Across Borders - The Transnational Solution. Boston, Harvard Business School Press.

Basho, M. (1966). The Narrow Road to the Deep North. London, Penguin Books.

Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership: Good, Better, Best. Organizational Dynamics, Elsevier Science Publishing Company, Inc. 13: 26.

Berger, J. and J. Mohr (1982). Another Way of Telling. Cambridge, Granta Books.

Black, M. (1954-55). Metaphor. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.

Boal, K. B. and J. M. Bryson (1988). Charismatic leadership: a phenomenological and structural approach. Emerging leadership vistas. J. G. Hunt, B. R. Baglia, H. P. Dachler and C. A. Schriesheim. Lexington, MA, Lexington Books: 5-28.

Bohannon, L. (1966). Shakespeare in the Bush. Bush. Natural History 75:28-33. The Informed Reader. C. Bazerman. Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

Brassington, F. and S. Pettit (2000). Principles of Marketing. London, Prentice Hall.

Bugeja, M. J. (1994). The Art and Craft of Poetry. Cincinnati OH, Writer's Digest Books.

Campbell, J. (1986). The Inner Reaches of Outer Space - Metaphor as Myth and Religion. Novato, New World Library.

Cohen, T. (1979). Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy. On Metaphor. S. Scaks. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Da Marto, S. (2004). "Finding the words to lead the way." Leadership Leadership J1 - Leadership 33(4): 7.

Introduces a series of articles in "Leadership" magazine on the similarities between poetry and leadership in schools. How administrators are like poets; Use of poetry in school leadership; Importance of reading or writing poetry in education.

Deignan, A. (2003). Metaphorical Expressions and Culture: An Indirect Link. Metaphor & Symbol, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 18: 255-271.

Denning, S. (2004). "Telling Tales." Harvard Business Review Harvard Business Review J1 - Harvard Business Review 82(5): 122-129.

Drucker, P. F. (2000). The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to our Changing Society. New Brunswick (USA), Transaction Publishing.

Egblewogbe, E. Y. (1975). Games and songs as education media (a case study among the Ewes of Ghana), Ghana Publishing Corporation.

Eisenberg, N. (2002). Empathy-Related Emotional Responses, Altruism, and Ther Socialization. R. J. Davidson and A. Harrington. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Gannon, M. (2004). Understanding Global Cultures - Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, clusters of Nations, and Continents. Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Grisham, T. (2006). Cross-Cultural Leadership, RMIT: 150.

Harrington (2002). *A Science of Compassion or a Compassionate Science? What Do We Expect from a Cross-Cultural Dialogue with Buddhism?* R. J. Davidson and A. Harrington. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Hawkes, T. (1972). *Metaphor*. Bristol, Methuen & Company.

Henderson, W. (1986). *Metaphor in Economics. Talking about text*. M. Coulthard. Birmingham, England, University of Birmingham.

Hilton, D. (1981). *Non-formal education for primary health care workers*. In: *The training and support of primary health care workers: proceedings*. 1981 International Health Conference, June 15 - 17, 1981, Washington DC, National Council for International Health.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequence*, Sage.

Kjaerbeck, S. and B. Asmuš (2005). "Negotiating meaning in narratives: An investigation of the interactional construction of the punchline and the post punchline sequences." *Narrative Inquiry*  
*Narrative Inquiry J1 - Narrative Inquiry* 15(1): 1-24.

Komumunyakaa, Y. (2001). *Pleasure Dome: New and Collected Poems*, Wesleyan University Press.

Kovecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture - Universality and Variation*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kramer, L. (2004). Music, metaphor and metaphysics. *Musical Times*, Musical Times Publications Ltd. 145: 5-18.

Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York, Basic Books.

Lama, D. (2002). *Understanding our Fundamental Nature*. R. J. Davidson and A. Harrington. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Lennie, I. (1999). *Managing Metaphorically*. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations & Societies*, Routledge, Ltd. 5: 43.

Marchant, F. (2005). "Night Visions." *New England Journal of Public Policy*  
*New England Journal of Public Policy J1 - New England Journal of Public Policy* 19(2): 285-295.

Mayer, R., J. H. Davis, et al. (1995). "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust." Academy of Management Review **20**.

McLuhan, M. (1964). Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. New York, The New American Library.

Mead, M. (1951). Cultural Paterns and Technical Change. Paris, UNESCO.

Milosz, C. (1995). Facing the River. Hopewell NJ, Ecco Press.

Morgan, G. (1986). Images of Organization. Beverly Hills, Sage.

Mullavey-O'Brien, C. (1997). Empathy in Cross-Cultural Communications. Improving Intercultural Interactions. K. Cushner and R. Brislin. Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Nicholson, L. and A. R. Anderson (2005). News and Nuances of the Entrepreneurial Myth and Metaphor: Linguistic Games in Entrepreneurial Sense-Making and Sense-Giving. Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice, Blackwell Publishing Limited. **29**: 153-172.

Özçaliskan, S. (2003). In a caravanserai with two doors I am walking day and night: Metaphors of death and life in Turkish. Cognitive Linguistics, Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG. **14**: 281.

Pearce, T. (2003). Leading Out Loud: Inspiring Change Through Authentic Communication. San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons.

Peters, T. (1992). Liberation Management. London, Macmillan.

Reed, M. (1990). "From Paradigms to Images: The paradigm warrior turns post-modern guru." Personnel Review **19**.

Richards, I. (1936). The Philosophy of Rhetoric. Oxford.

Ricoeur, P. (1977). The Rule of Metaphor. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Saint-Exupery, A. d. (1950). The Wisdom of the Sands. Orlando, FL, Harcourt Brace.

Silver, D. (2001). "Songs and Storytelling: Bringing Health Messages to Life in Uganda." Education for Health: Change in Learning & Practice  
Education for Health: Change in Learning & Practice J1 - Education for Health: Change in Learning & Practice **14**(1): 51-60.

Spence, G. (1995). How to Argue and Win Every Time - at home, at work, incourt, everywhere, every day. New York, St. Martins Press.

Sugiyama, M. S. (2003). "CULTURAL VARIATION IS PART OF HUMAN NATURE." Human Nature

Human Nature J1 - Human Nature 14(4): 383-396.

Tagore, R. (1997). 1997. Rabindranath Tagore An Anthology. K. Dutta and A. Robinson. New York, St. Martins Griffin.

Tichy, N. (2002). The Leadership Engine, Collins, Harper Edition.

Trompenaars, A. and C. Hampden-Turner (1998). Riding the waves of culture : understanding cultural diversity in global business. New York, McGraw-Hill.

Turbayne, C. M. (1962). The Myth of Metaphor. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Veysel, A. (1991). Let my freinds remember me. Dostlar beni hatirlasin, 9th edition. Istanbul, Ozgur Yayin Dagitim.

Wheelwright, P. (1967). Metaphor & Reality. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

White, E. B. (1983). Poems & Sketches of E.B. White, HarperCollins.

Yu, N. (2003). Metaphor, Body, and Culture: The Chinese Understanding of Gallbladder and Courage. Metaphor & Symbol, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. **18**: 13-31.