

Metaphor Analysis – Historia Illius Itineris

"It is like a large silvery cylinder in my abdomen that is filled with hot shit, which sloshes around in the container."

The inside of the container is white, the outer surface is chrome, it is sealed.

Beginning with basic idioms we have:

- it takes guts to keep this concealed
- it is a burden that is kept secret
- it is a disgusting and fluid situation that is kept contained
- at the centre of this is something really shitty

In terms of taxonomy we have (i) a burden and (ii) a contamination. As with all burdens we know this is a retrospective situation rather than a prospective (future) situation. This is about the past.

The contamination is contained and hidden from view, we can infer these are the qualities of shame. The shame is kept contained and hidden from view.

The burden is internalised, so we know (i) he has grown up around it, it stems from childhood and (ii) it is secret unless he chooses to divulge it.

There is a cost to the client for him to carry this responsibility – he must maintain “not giving a shit” lest this shame and secret be revealed.

The contamination is inside a container, which in turn is inside him. This is a family shame that he has internalised and made part of himself, yet he remains outside of it but is still affected by it. Being an internalised burden, this affects every aspect and every context of his life. He is never free from it yet he must simultaneously portray that he is unaffected by it.

This denial is *probably* so normal for him (remember, he grew up with this) he rarely notices how and when he is doing it.

The internal surface of the container is white. This is common for vessels used to receive shit. Whilst toilets do exist in strange shades of green and pink, white is the most common. White helps highlight contamination and is a sign of cleanliness, purity and lack of sin.

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”
Psalm 51:7, KJV

“And the priest shall see him: and, behold, if the plague be turned into white; then the priest shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: he is clean.” **Leviticus 13:17, KJV**

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” **Revelation 19:14, KJV**

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” **Daniel 12:10, KJV**

What is important here is the detail that something white looks clean, therefore when it is no longer white, the contamination is obviously something else, unlike a darker surface where it may be

difficult to tell if it is contaminated or not, or if it is itself the contaminant. To emphasise the distinction here, imagine the difference between a white porcelain sink, and one made from an old mix of mud, clay, horse manure and fish blood.

This white surface gives some of the qualities of the inside of the family, pure but covered in shit.

The chromium outer surface is the most interesting detail of the whole metaphor. Anyone who were to look into it would only see themselves reflected back. In this instance, when the client looks within to examine this shitty burden that he carries, he can only look into himself.

This reveals an interesting dynamic about the family and the relationship and communication patterns that exist around the historical source of the shame. When Client talks to family about the event, the family defensively flip it back to the client and talk about his behaviour instead.

It might look something like this,

“You left the front door open again!”

– Well you never pick up your socks.”

“You left the front door open again!”

– “Don't speak to me like that, who do you think you are.”

“You left the front door open again!”

– “Why do you care? It won't be your stuff that gets stolen.”

“You left the front door open again.”

– “Why didn't you just close it yourself?”

Now we can see why the inside of the container is white. The interior family narrative is “We are pure, it is <contamination> that is the problem”. For the chrome outer aspect we have, “Don't look at us, look at yourself first.”

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

Matthew, 7:3 NIV

Next we can look at the Balance of the Elements. The first clue here is that the shit is hot and liquid.

Earth: the container, shit

Fire: heat

Water: liquid

Air: very limited by the nature of the container, or possibly absent.

So if we translate this to more real world aspects:

Earth	Shit	Physical environment, material world, house/home, finances/money	How he feels at home
Air	Limited/Absent	Intellect, education, thinking	How he thinks at home
Fire	Heat	Will, action	How he takes action at home
Water	Liquid	Creativity	How he solves the problem

We can take this further:

Earth	North	A shitty direction to take	Moving forwards to what he wants will be a shitty way to go
Air	East	An absent or restricted direction	He really needs to think about what is right for him
Fire	South	Available	He could take a step back if he wanted to
Water	West	Available	He could explore creative solutions that are left for him

Now with this information in mind, what else can we ascertain?