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ANALYZING IMAGE SCHEMAS IN EXCERPTS OF SOME SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS

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Abstract: This paper explores the various manners in which the literary texts of certain plays written by William Shakespeare can be interpreted coherently. The possibility to supply a connection between the structure of a play and some of its themes will be depicted in the usage of image schemas as useful devices in the process of interpretation. Image schemas will be described in a general fashion and further exemplified in some of Shakespeare's plays. The main goal is to show how image schemas can serve as solid sources of knowledge for the readers and/or the audiences of Shakespeare's plays.

Key words: *image schemas, literary text interpretation, William Shakespeare, cognitive theory*

Introduction

The aim of this essay is to provide an application of cognitive theory to parts of the dramatic discourse created by William Shakespeare written more than four centuries ago. The essay is mainly a theoretical exploration of the manners in which cognitive theory supplies coherent results in the interpretation of the literary texts of some of Shakespeare's dramas, by which an understanding of the embodiment of concepts is provided. The role of image-schemas on distinct experiential areas within the literary texts of the dramas supplies a valuable device that brings together the play's structure and some of its themes.

Comprehension of the literary text of the dramas can be provided via the exploration of image schemas. The intricacies of their meanings can be observed in certain parts of the literary texts. This essay will provide general descriptions of image schemas, as well as certain examples of identification of image schemas in some of Shakespeare' works, namely in *Romeo and Juliet, King John,* and *King Lear*.

The theory of image schemas and their presence in Shakespeare's works

The notion of image schema is rooted in gestalt psychology and the phenomenology of the body; this notion was developed by cognitive linguists from the early 1980s onwards, and has since built various branched outs in neighbouring disciplines. Image schemas have been defined by Johnson (1987) as non-propositional gestalt representations that stabilize in infancy because perceptual and bodily experience displays recurrent topological patterning. Frequent image schemas are "path", "container", "entity", "link", "force", "balance", "centre-periphery", "up-down", "part-whole", "surface", "contact", "scale", "near-far", "straight", and "multiplex-mass". These and similar image schematic gestalts participate in the dynamic structuring of our perception, action, and cognition.

Cognitive linguists have studied conceptual functions. These functions cover the basis of abstract concepts, force dynamic conceptualizations, the theory of word meanings, meaning construals, and grammar (Oakley 2007). The most established application hails from the analysis of linguistic, gestural, and visual metaphor. Image schema research also has demonstrable merits for comparative approaches, e.g. in cultural linguistics (Palmer 1996). Image schemas explain the interface between the embodied and the conceptual realm as well as the cross-modal features that kinaesthetic, tactile, visual and auditory imagery share. Developmental psychology confirms that infants acquire image-schematic knowledge via the body and later increasingly utilize them for conceptual tasks (Mandler 1992).

There have been many applications of image schemas to poetry works, but also a large number of case studies that have analysed image-schematic aspects around which a narrative theme crystallizes in a novel or a drama in most cases based on metaphor analysis. But image-schematic story themes through metaphor analysis are only one amongst several possibilities. The embodiment has been properly recognized as a decidedly compelling issue for analysis. Cognitive literary studies have not made a clear distinction and have equated image schemas with an embodiment, which makes it more difficult to accentuate particularly embodied text passages or make a deduction about anything relevant about a text.

It is important to note that image schemas do not play the same cognitive role, nor do they obtain the same level of significance as every kind of metaphor. In terms of literary metaphors (cf. Steen & Gibbs 2004), image schemas can be found in the respective vehicle terms of a metaphor. Vehicles profile one or several concepts from a source domain, in terms of which a given target is conceived. For instance, the target of communication is typically conceived in "container" and "conduit" source imagery.

Image schemas have a certain importance for metaphor in several ways, depending on the type of metaphor. They can function as structuring devices determining rich imagery and propositional knowledge, whereas in "pure" image schema metaphors they are the only mapped structure available.

Metaphors are conceptually diversified and their image-schematic basis takes on different roles in each type of metaphor. Furthermore, image schemas are not in all respects contextual explanatory concepts; sometimes they should be accompanied by other types of knowledge. In terms of methodology, the end result of this brief

taxonomy is that we should always check if the metaphors at hand are typologically commensurable before grouping them into a set for analysis.

The main theoretical frame for this analysis is based on the works of Lakoff and Johnson, as well as Lakoff and Turner. It is their claim that cognitive metaphor is not an aesthetic decoration in literature, but an imminent part of everyday verbalization and conceptualization. According to them, ideas about the world and ourselves can be conceptualized by means of our embodied experience. Thus, the metaphor is central to perceptual understanding and creativity. A cognitive theory of metaphor applied to a literary text through the analysis of conceptual metaphors provides an understanding of the conceptual world of the poet or writer.

The main connection between Lakoff and Johnson's work with Shakespeare's literary works can be identified and illustrated in the metaphors Shakespeare used which are well-established in everyday language and are still used even nowadays in common speech. Of great importance is also the connection between common language metaphors and metaphors that stretch beyond the conventions on which poetic or creative metaphors are established.

In the views of experientialists, image schemas are types of conceptual metaphors, which have source domains with skeletal image schemas. The basic physical experiences bring about image schemas which structure metaphorically quite a lot of our abstract concepts. They are elementary units of representation, rooted in the experience of the human body.

According to Lakoff and Johnson, a metaphor includes mapping from a source to a target domain. The source domains are common in the physical world, whereas the target domains are abstract conceptual domains, which are often of the mental and emotional field of the physical world. Lakoff and Johnson claim that certain schemas of physical world relations (which are most of them known as image schemas), called image schemas, are rooted in bodily experience and the ways in which the body is involved in an interaction with the physical environment.

Many concepts seem to be structured by image schemas, for instance, the concepts of time, events of the time, and casual relations. These concepts do not have a shape, continuity, or extension. Image schemas function in physical domains as well, where they supply structure for rich mental images and have an internal logic that allows for spatial reasoning (Lakoff and Turner).

Johnson describes pre-conceptual image schemata as "a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience. Many of our most important pervasive image schemas are those underlying our bodily sense of spatiality." (Johnson, 1987). Image schemas cannot be identified with rich, concrete images or mental pictures as elements of an imagined world.

It is necessary to differentiate between image schemas and image metaphors. The latter maps rich mental images onto other rich mental images, whereas image schemas are not rich mental images, but general structures, such as path, and center opposed to the periphery, spatial senses of prepositions, etc.

A.B. Sanchez in *Metaphorical Models of Romantic Love in Romeo and Juliet* from 1995 writes that Shakespeare took the advantage of metaphor models including

image schemas to describe and express the romantic and pure love between Romeo and Juliet to create the tragic atmosphere in the play. In *Romeo and Juliet*, there is a comparison between the image schemas of the part and the whole, namely love is the integration of two complementary parts. For instance, Juliet says to Friar Laurence,

> "God joined my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands;
> An ere this hand, by thee to Romeo's sealed,
> Shall be the label to another deed,
> Or my true heart with treacherous revolt,
> Turn to another, this shall slay them both."(IV. 1. 57-61)

Romeo compared Juliet to the sun, fully and properly showing his love at first sight to her.

> "It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
> Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
> Who is already sick and pale with grief,
> That thou her mind art far more fair than she:
> Be not her mind, since she is envious;
> Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
> And none but fools do wear it; cast it off." (II. 2. 3-9)

In Turner's analysis of a scene of Shakespeare's *King John*, he speaks of an "ironic tension between the image schemas". The powerful king, who senses his impending decline, commands the messenger foreboding ill news (who is probably kneeling before him) "pour down thy weather", thus ironically likening him, who is a mere subject, to powers beyond the king's own, those of nature and fate. According to Turner, the scene involves a juxtaposition of two inverse "up-down" predictions.

In the analysis of *King Lear* provided by Beatriz Rodenas Tolosa, amongst the many image schemas she detects, there is the conventional link image scheme between clothing and status. It projects from the source domain of our bodily experience onto the target domain of status, law, and possession. This is noticeable when Edgar speaks of his past when he describes himself as a symbol of the rich person that he once was: who hath three suits to his / back, six shirts to his body / Horse to ride and weapon to wear (III.iv.131-3). This is an example of a part-whole metonymy relationship with clothing. King Lear abounds in image schemas and references to clothes and clothing.

An example of the conventional link image schema between clothing and status in King Lear is provided when Kent addresses a knight saying: "For confirmation that I am much more, / Than my out-wall, open this purse and take / What it contains." (III.i.40-2). The clothes worn by people signified who they were in society, as well as their selfhood and identity. In this way, out-wall refers to both appearance and clothing in an unconventional and elaborating way, providing clothing linked to status image schema.

In *King Lear* clothing is exploited in terms of the container image-schema as

well. Edgar conceives clothing as a container image schema for hiding his identity when he speaks to his brother: "Into a madman's rags, t'assume a semblance / That very dogs disdained." (V.iii.186-7)

Conclusion

The study of metaphors allows us to appreciate their contribution to the coherence of a dramatic text, including the texts of Shakespeare's plays. The cognitive theory of metaphor plays a significant role in expressing language by means of the organization of human thoughts and feelings. In the provided examples, Shakespeare used brilliant metaphor writing grounded on bodily experiences that made sense and involved everyone in his plays. The image schemas provide a good source of knowledge through the metaphorical process of an abstract concept. A more elaborate analysis would constitute a new way of finding meaning and understanding concepts contributing to a new study in a literary work within the cognitive theory.

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