Metaphor as
Organizing and Creative Principle of
Thought, Language, and Literature

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Keywords: conceptual metaphor, mapping, analogical thinking, blending, conceptual integration networks, mental spaces, emergent structure, integration, double-scope blending, imagination, self, identity, consciousness, homeostasis, somatic markers, emotions, feelings, schemata, mind style, conceptual universe, poetic iconicity, foregrounding, literariness, enactment reading, defamiliarization, free will, remembering, narratives.

Extended summary

The title of my PhD thesis is *Metaphor as Organizing and Creative Principle of Thought, Language, and Literature.* It is structured into four main parts and a bibliographic list. The first part constitutes *a survey of the methods and characteristics of the more recent cognitive theories* that are metaphor oriented (since Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 *Metaphors We Live By*), including a chapter on *neuroscience* which grounds scientifically all the gains and hypotheses of these rather revolutionary theories. The second part contains more specific reference *to the relevant analytical concepts* that I isolated in order to explore, understand, and attempt to apply later in part III of the study. Also each chapter in this part features an *exemplification of literary analysis* that can illustrate how these theories can be applied, the intentions of their authors and the relevance of such an analysis. Since the approach of the analyses is a stylistic/poetic one, I describe examples of analyses conceived by the main authors representative of the theories studied: Elena Semino, Margaret H. Freeman, and David Miall. In Part III of my study I apply some of the analytical concepts discussed in detail in Part II to the analysis of two short stories of postcolonial literature which I believe can testify for the cognitive linguistic-literary line of study that I have found relevant and I intend to develop more in the future. Last but not least, Part IV of the present thesis contains my concluding remarks concerning the relevance of the line of study which I have been pursuing.

Part I, under the main heading *Metaphor Oriented Cognitive Theories and Methods – General Characteristics,* refers as the title suggests to the rather recent linguistic theories developed under the framework of cognitive sciences and which have metaphor as star principle of cognition and creativity (new meaning). It presents, in distinct chapters, namely chapters 2 and 4, the general notions and characteristics, the *main premises of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Conceptual Integration networks theory and Cognitive Poetics*. Chapter 3 makes exclusive reference to the most recent redefinition of the concepts of self and consciousness in neuroscience and the essential *import of feeling in cognition.* Part I also includes a chapter (chap. 5) on David Miall's Reader Response Defamiliarization theory, his understanding of the role of *metaphor as a paradigm* for all analogy-based thought processes and for creativity, and also more detailed reference to the important fact that Miall actually *anticipated* or paralleled *the major insights of CMT and CIN theory in his early 1977, 1979 studies* on metaphor.

The Introduction presents a more general view over the rather misconstrued and disadvantageous status of metaphor in the history of language and literary studies with focus on the major paradigm shift that has occurred with Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 pioneering book, which marked the theoretical articulation of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Up until then, the general tradition in linguistics and philosophy, in humanities actually with few but eloquent exceptions (from the pre-Socratic thinkers to Coleridge, Wallace Stevens and Merleau-Ponty), deplored the status of all types of figurative language as misguiding, elusive, artificial and inaccurate, even confusion breeding. The necessary categorization of the fields of knowledge into objective sciences and idiosyncratic aesthetics exiled analogy and imagination as creative principles into the realm of fancy and the onirical, hardly relevant for cognition. Philological and philosophical tradition treated/considered as severe weaknesses befalling all earnest scientific knowledge pursuits most principle we now have to recognize as structuring knowledge: language itself (with its gaps and 'betrayals'), senses and perception in general (too elusive and subjective), imagination (too fanciful and limitless), emotion (erratic, highly unpredictable and misguiding), and the subconscious, all of them featuring extensively in metaphor, and in cognition generally, as proved by CMT, Blending theory and neuroscience.

So the two theories discussed in the present study reverse rather dramatically the traditional and widely held concepts of cognition, mind, imagination, subjectivity and objectivity, and of course metaphor, analogy and other types of 'figurative' language.

In the introduction of Part I of my study I also refer to the three generations of cognitive theory we are aware of so far: *1*.the 1st generation cognitive scientists: Schank & Abelson (1977) with their notions of scripts, schemata, and frames; *2*.the 2nd generation: CMT and Blending theory with an accent on the abstracting affordances of our embodied language and conceptualization; *3.the 3rd generation cognitive paradigm*: Margaret H. Freeman, Masako Hiraga, Per Aage Brandt and Line Brandt as part of the Cognitive Poetics branch focusing more on the essential role of emotion and feeling in literature (motivating the choice of metaphor and structuring poetic iconicity) and in cognition in general.

Chapter 2 shows a detailed presentation of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (or CMT) principles, namely how our abstract conceptual system stems from the projection/mapping from concrete/experiential domains of knowledge to abstract concepts/domains (e.g. love, life death, ideologies, generosity, redemption, etc). This is the basic mental operation which provides us

with orientational metaphors, ontological metaphors, personification, etc and which turns metaphor into an essential (if not *the* essential) principle of our structuring, shaping, making sense of reality. Next in the same chapter, I referred to how CMT was followed rather immediately by Fauconnier and Turner's Blending Theory explained in 2002 in *The Way We Think – Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities,* another landmark book for linguistics (and the other studies written by the two linguists together or separately) which formulated the linguistic theory of Conceptual blending, or double-scope integration, a theory which started from the same premises as CMT, i.e. the status of metaphor as main cognitive instrument but developed it into the definition of double-scope integration as main cognitive principle based on *mapping and integration*. Mapping is the star principle of CMT and CIN theory as it is a ubiquitous cognitive operation working at all levels of knowledge and it underlies analytical thinking which motivates blending and literally constitutes our main means of doing any type of cognitive work. And, furthermore, what constitutes an important focus of this study, mapping is never arbitrary, its principles are extensively detailed by Fauconnier and Turner as it can be seen in this chapter (as well as in chap. 1 part II). The main goal of mapping and blending is *integration* of knowledge. That is why blending is called double-scope integration. The ultimate, "overarching" goal of conceptual integration networks, of blending, is the integration of multiple aspects of experience, the bringing to human scale of all the relevant knowledge so that the mind can manipulate it to extract relevant insight from it.

Chapter 2 also includes reference to a redefinition and realignment (in the light of these new theories as well as of neuroscience) of some of the most pervasive oppositions in Western thought such as: literal vs. figurative language, emotion vs. reason/cognition, subjective vs. objective, mind vs. body. The concluding realisation, considering also the vital input of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's theory of the role of *somatic/affective markers* of knowledge and decision-making (the internal value system) which I describe in chap. 3, is that there is *no cognition without emotion*, that there is *no consciousness without a self*, that there is *no self without a body* and there is *no mind without the body's input* in the concepts that the mind is working with, which leads my study into the direction of Cognitive Poetics and its main representatives.

Cognitive Poetics is an important direction that cognitive linguistics has taken and my study presents (in chapter 4 of part I) the main preoccupation of this complex explanatory

cognitive theory. I value CP's input a great deal because, as a linguistic branch, it stays faithful to the scientific, specialized purpose of the classic linguistic endeavour, that of tracing the architecture and the laws of our abstract linguistic structure. Yet it studies the embodied abstracting affordances of both our linguistic system as well as those of our conceptualization system as cognizing beings. That is, it departs from the literary text instead of theories or ideologies and it articulates and integrates the study of both the myriad idiosyncratic realizations of metaphor and their overarching conceptual structuring, it follows how distinct metaphorical patterns and particular uses of metaphorical patterns can and do reveal the conceptual universe of an author, character or critic. It has great explanatory potential and it asks questions about mind, creativity, conceptual worlds, incompatibilities between schemas in a text, ambiguity and indeterminacy projected by literary texts, and much more. In its pursuit, the linguistic theories it relies on are CMT and Blending theory, it also employs the rich tradition of stylistics and poetics and it does all that while attempting to explain the metal operations at work in the processes of creating and construing the interpretations of literary texts.

Chapter 5 of part I deals with the fact that Miall actually *anticipated* or paralleled *the major insights of CMT and CIN theory in his early 1977, 1979 studies* on metaphor, *Metaphor and Literary Meaning* and *Metaphor as a Thought-Process,* namely*:*

✓ that meaning and thought are created beyond language, at the conceptual level,

✓ that metaphor has the power to shape the world and to acquire 'archetypal' significance, which is equivalent to the structuring capabilities of conceptual metaphor in CMT,

✓ that the systematic, organised nature of the unconscious influences on conscious thought resemble or rather parallels a similar significant unconscious influence and ordering that metaphoric cognitive processes work in our minds.

In the same chapter, I refer to Miall's definition of the three essential properties of feeling upon which his whole Defamiliarization theory resides:

✓ *self-reference* – which means that emotion encodes issues of self-concern for the subject;

✓ *anticipation* – feelings are predictive, they carry with them expectations which can be confirmed or challenged by the situation encountered;

✓ *domain-crossing* - feelings call up affectively similar resources cognitive affective or imaginal. They connect, by virtue of shared affect, concepts, memories, situations which are non-affectively/objectively different.

Part II of my study concerns major analytical concepts employed in the theories discussed in part I. One way or another, these concepts circumscribe or relate to the role of metaphor in the cognitive interpretation of literary texts. The theories are now approached from the perspective of the contribution of certain representatives and the concepts they employ in their literary analyses. At the same time each chapter features an analysis which I consider exemplary for the illustration of the role that metaphor plays in the CP interpretation and in the experiential reading of a literary text. The original analyses are highly specialized stylistically/poetically and in every other way. Yet, I chose to describe their most relevant contributions in order to point towards the relevance of this line of approach in linguistics and literary studies, such as I understand it.

Chapter 1 of part II presents the function of blends and conceptual integration networks, and also the principle of compression (and decompression) of vital relations that allows blends to achieve human scale, integrate knowledge and experience and achieve new relevant meaning. Herein the concepts of blend, input space, frame and topology of mental spaces are explored. I also chose to present three examples of blends as they feature in Fauconnier and Turner's 2002 *The Way We Think.*

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the contribution of Elena Semino and her take on the role of schemata, MOPs, and TOPs (also frames, scripts and scenarios - Schank and Abelson 1977, Schank 1982) as key concepts in the cognitive linguistic approach which still constitute the main means for linguists (also for literary critics and other researchers) to refer to the most basic packets of experientially organized knowledge. In the same chapter I provide a description of Semino's understanding of metaphorical patterning and creativity at the linguistic level as well as at the thought/conceptual level departing from Lakoff and Turner's four principles of creativity as described in their 1989 book *More than Cool Reason, A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor: extending, elaborating, composing,* and *questioning* conventional conceptual metaphors. Semino's take on these creativity principles is that creativity at the conceptual level may imply the pairing/association of domains that had never been previously brought together, idiosyncratic analogies that are rather unexpected and very fruitful, especially when they are

accompanied by coherent more entrenched metaphors or metaphorical patterns. The illustrating analysis focuses on a fragment from Ian McEwan's *Atonement* which very creatively and eloquently resorts to the conceptualization of pain as an animal aggressor.

Chapter 3 of part II of the present study refers to one the representatives of Cognitive Poetics whose work inspires me greatly. Margaret H. Freeman has the following major preoccupations which feature in this chapter:

✓ the *role that metaphor* plays in the structure of the conception of a literary work as well as in its interpretation, namely how metaphor is able to confer coherence and unite the meaning of a literary work at the level of the text: through unique, salient and generally structured linguistic instantiations, at the level of the narrative through perspective and point of view even (or rather especially) the idiosyncratic vision of unusual characters, and at the level of the conception of a literary work: revealing the author's very structure of intent. It is a view she shares with other cognitive poeticians such as Elena Semino for instance. It is also a view that leads to the second concern:

✓ the understanding and use of the notion of *individual conceptual universe*, i.e. the way in which an author chooses specific and personally-meaningful metaphors and metaphorical patterns in order to structure his/her text, and the way in which such metaphors reveal an author's attitude towards the existing cultural metaphors structuring his/her world, how an author positions him/herself in reference to these available conceptual resources: whether he/she endorses them and makes use of them through creative instantiations or rejects them and forges new connections that describe and conceive the world in a new fashion. Along these lines M. H. Freeman has studied in close detail the work of the American poet Emily Dickinson in order to reveal her coherent, fresh, unusual, deeply personal and idiosyncratic conceptual universe, namely the metaphors that run across her entire work, metaphors which embrace the scientific discoveries of her age rather than the pervasive cultural metaphors of those times. Her individual conceptual universe has made Dickinson not only one of the most eccentric and puzzling poets for the academic medium but also one of the most cherished, loved and widely read. This is because the metaphors that circumscribe her conceptualization of this world are genuine and they are also felt as such by countless generations of readers who resonate emotionally and conceptually with these metaphors more or less explicitly. I show in this chapter how M. H. Freeman has clearly deciphered her work in terms of the most pervasive metaphor created by

Dickinson in order to convey her understanding of her world: *LIFE IS A VOYAGE THROUGH SPACE* as opposed to *LIFE IS A JOURNEY.* In its turn, Dickinson's metaphor accommodates other idiosyncratic realisations of this conceptualization: *sea* becomes *air, everything that flies* becomes *a sailor*: butterflies and birds, *the sun* becomes *a boat*, *feelings* become sea that one can *wade through, paths* become *orbits,* and the poet talks in terms of dimensions such as *crescents, arcs, discs, circumferences* and *diameters.*

✓   the role of feeling as catalyst and motivator for the chosen metaphors, whether entrenched or creative, for *poetic iconicity* as it engenders the rendering of a genuine feeling of an author by allowing /generating/occasioning into the reader an equally genuine feeling of *semblance of felt life/*of experiential knowledge. I chose as relevant for an illustration of the role of metaphor in literature (and art), as M. H. Freeman understands it through the lens of CP, an analysis that the American cognitive poetician made of Shelley's *Ozymandias* poem. The unifying metaphor for the poem is ENTROPY THROUGH TIME IS CHANGE THROUGH SHIFT. It guides the cognitive forms of the poem *at all levels: 1.*the *prosodic aspects* are made to vary – syntax "complicates" meter and destabilizes expectations, sound patterns are shifting – rhymes and rhyme schemes suggest shift and instability; *2.*the undermined attempt to *establish anaphoric* or *cataphoric reference* of words destabilizes meaning; *3.point of view* leaps through time and through the different locations of narrative perspective so that the whole structure of the poem iconically embodies one coherent unifying metaphoric visualization/conceptualization and feeling, the schema of CHANGE, instability and vulnerability.

✓   the explanatory use of Blending theory in the interpretation of literary works especially for aligning apparently incompatible schemas or settle aspects of ambiguity and indeterminacy of meaning, but with the specification that *the Blending model* should somehow take into consideration the essential input of emotion and feeling in cognition and understanding.

Chapter 4 of part II deals with Miall et al.'s Defamiliarization theory which defines itself rather radically in opposition to the Received view of the role of literature and of the status of literariness proposed by literary critics and historians such as Fish, Eagleton or Smith.

The Defamiliarization theory relies on numerous empirical studies and experiments undertaken by Miall et al. concerning the following issues that are discussed in the thesis:

✓   the importance of *foregrounding* and the properties of literariness which in turn depend upon the three properties of feelings. *Foregrounding* refers to the formal stylistic features

of a text at all levels (phonetic, semantic, grammatical, structural, etc.) which, by virtue of their being striking and unexpected have the power to defamiliarize, to de-habituate, to de-automatize. They elicit from the reader memories, images, experiences that are affectively similar with the ones engendered by the text. Foregrounding is a concept put forward by the Prague Linguistic Circle linguist Jan Mukařovský but also endorsed retrospectively, so to speak, by the Romantic tradition, especially by Coleridge who recognizes the essential need that literature fulfils, that of breaking "the film of familiarity", of entrenchment, of the stereotypical which make people blind to meaning.

✓ the *modifying powers* of feeling to engender a change in a reader's self-concept by prompting the *blurring of boundaries* between reader and different aspects of the text he/she identifies with (a character, or any aspect of a text). The interaction between the *foregrounded features* of a text and the reader's innate linguistic ability and neuropsychological makeup generate a response from the reader in which he/she creates his/her own metaphors called by Miall after Cohen *metaphors of self-identification*. But it is a process that takes place during enactment reading, the most fruitful and genuine type of reading.

✓ the *inherent properties of words* which transgress experience, age, talent, class. It is a major preoccupation of Miall et al. to underline how words influence people regardless of their level of education and literary experience. He invokes the relevant research in the area such as Jonathan Rose's 1992 book *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class, as well as* Willie Van Peer's 1986 study *Stylistics and Psychology: Investigations of Foregrounding.* Also Miall et al. have their own experiment (Sikora, Kuiken, Miall 1998) concerning literary critics' reactions from 1900 to 1991 versus students' reaction to foregrounded features in Coleridge's *The Rhyme of The Ancient Mariner.* The study shows that there was a clear correspondence between the foregrounded features selected by the critics and those isolated by the students.

✓ *enactment reading* and the reasons why literature, literariness (and *foregrounding* as inherent properties of words) are adaptive from an educational and evolutionary psychological view. This type of reading is innate. If we are genuinely receptive to a literary text, not an easy thing to do in the age of the exacerbated visual, we can all harvest the benefits of literature, namely, we can recalibrate our stereotypical representations and responses about the world, we can become more flexible in thinking and more in control of our feelings which would take us

less by surprise. But more importantly we could better manage the narratives that we constantly create and recreate about who we are and who we wish to become.

Part III of the thesis presents the analysis of two short stories *Deus ex Machina* by Hari Kunzru and *Firebird's Nest* by Salman Rushdie.

The first analysis employs Fauconnier and Turner's Blending theory. It traces the most relevant conceptual networks that can be revealed to work in the story and it features the composition of the actual networks (pp. 166, 167). It also demonstrates how this type of analysis engenders the emergence of the main theme(s) of the story both in a much more grounded way and at the same time in a more abstract and organized fashion. The tracing of the domains and mental spaces is followed by the selection of the elements which can be relevantly mapped; then the blended space enables the understanding of the missing element(s) that our reading of the story should imaginatively provide. The most relevant domains are: *supernatural beings/angels*, *computers/machines* and *people*. They are integrated into the following networks: GOD IS A PERSON, COMPUTERS/INSTRUMENTS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS and PEOPLE ARE ANGELS/SUPERNATURAL BEINGS. These conceptual networks, once established, yield the main theme of the story: people have the potential to be angelic creatures but they let the instruments that they create acquire an undeserved supernatural status which repositions people's destiny in a rather tragic way. People are the victims of the narratives, especially the visual ones but not only, that society constantly spins around them and bombards them with until they are unable to create their own personal true empowering narratives. The instruments that come to acquire god-like status are cultural blends, metaphors, art, television, poetry reviews and many more. The balance of power is reversed and people come to *allow their creations to take over the meaning of their lives and deprive them of free will.*

The second analysis centres more around the importance of the *concept of the migrant* as a relevant *metaphor for man's contemporary condition*. The analysis of Salman Rushdie's short story *Firebird's Nest* employs the understanding afforded by neuroscientific research in reference to how identity/self are constructed, the role of stories and narratives in people's cognitive makeup, the fluid status of memory and the need for new meaning and change in the individual. The analysis is supported by Rushdie's own critical perspective over the importance of this metaphor as he defines it in his 2010 book *Imaginary Homelands.*

The last part of the present thesis, part IV, is dedicated to the relevance of the study. Mainly, this chapter rounds up the directions of research one should follow in order to reach a better grasp of the importance of metaphor and analogical thinking. It attempts to underline the main, scientifically grounded, reasons why metaphor as basic cognitive principle within our analogically oriented minds really constitutes both an organizing and a new-meaning creating principle of cognition. They are stated at page 182 (*1*.the power of *the word* upon readers, *2*.the role of *emotion* in cognition, in the definition/elaboration of identity and selfhood, and in the reading experience, *3*.the way our sense of *self/identity/subjectivity* is always implicated and recreated in any act of cognition, *4*.the crucial part *experience* plays in the creation of our knowledge structures/neuronal make-up, and *5*.the essential role that *language* and *literature* play in the way that we are and we think) and described more clearly throughout pages 183-187.

While we acknowledge these reasons that cognitive linguistics, cognitive poetics and neuroscience made available for us, we can also think differently about the role of the study of language structures, the role of literature (and poetry) not only in providing cultural knowledge but in the active process of identity construction and reconstruction, the undeniable benefits of reading (as an experiential act/process) that enables students both to become more sensitive to the power of words and also an occasion to discover one's cognitive, affective, and imaginal resources as well as one's inner /genuine self concerns. All these insights can beneficially reshape education towards a better understanding of who we are and who we can become.

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