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Cognitive Mapping in Literary Analysis

Literary analysis takes many forms, depending on the critical approach adopted. Critical theories vary in the ways they accommodate the three components of literature—the writer, the reader, and the text. At one extreme are those theories that focus almost exclusively on the text itself, such as formalist or structuralist approaches; at the other, those that focus on the writer (biographical, psychoanalytical) or the reader (reader response); and then there are approaches that fall somewhere between, adopting elements of more than one component (historical, cultural). Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses in illuminating the nature and role of literature in a given society.

A cognitive linguistic approach to literature provides a methodology by which the insights of these literary theories may be reconciled. Because cognitive linguistics is concerned with the conceptual workings of the embodied mind, all aspects of human experience and behavior, whether from the perspective of the writer, from the perspective of the reader, or from the perspective of the text itself, are relevant and are integrated into a cognitive understanding of the literary experience. In addition, cognitive linguistics further contributes to literary studies by revealing the extent to which the imaginative powers that both create and comprehend literary works reflect the general workings of the human mind.

One question raised by a cognitive linguistic approach to literature, as Claiborne Rice notes, is whether “textual production and reception necessarily rely on identical, or even similar, integration networks” (43). Joseph Grady provides some evidence for experiential motivation for conceptual metaphor that would indicate that speakers and hearers share the same cognitive network structures. Fauconnier and Turner’s claim that these conceptual integration networks are “the way we think,” rather than just the way we speak (or write), would indicate that the same structures are at work in both production and reception. Norman Holland relates the conceptual processes of the reader to those of the writer in his work on the poetry of Robert Frost. Indeed, it would be strange to contemplate the notion that the human mind has two discrete and independent conceptual components for formulating and understanding language. In this paper, therefore, I explore some general cognitive processes at work in literary texts and show how readers utilize

these same cognitive processes in understanding them. I restrict my analysis to the work of one poet, Emily Dickinson, to show that these cognitive strategies are not ad hoc or randomly chosen but pervasive and structurally significant in creating human conceptual reasoning.

The way poets think is the way we think. Recent work in cognitive linguistics explores the analogical processes by which the human brain makes sense of its world (Fauconnier and Sweetser; Fauconnier and Turner; M. Johnson; Lakoff and Johnson). The human mind, under this view, thinks analogically. Analogy is the process underlying all the *topoi* of classical rhetoric (such as definition, classification, comparison and contrast) and figures of speech (such as synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor). It also informs the structure of poetry. Its components include cognitive mapping skills that create levels of identification across different domains and projections across multiple mental spaces. In order to understand what literary critics do when analyzing a literary text, we need to identify the kinds of cognitive mappings they use.

Analogical Mapping

Understanding the meaning of a speaker's sentence involves more than understanding the words. A linguistic expression is made significant when it is understood in the context of a knowledge domain, or, in Lakoff's term, an idealized cognitive model (ICM). These knowledge domains are also culturally determined.¹ The notions of "God" and "Heaven" in Dickinson's poetry, for example, depend on a cognitive model that is Christian and Protestant, a cultural model that situates the poems in nineteenth-century Puritan New England, and Dickinson's individual stance toward that idealized cognitive cultural model (ICCM). From these ICCMs, Fauconnier has shown that we articulate our thoughts about the world by mapping across partial, dynamic, and temporary "mental spaces." These mental spaces allow us to project our thoughts and ourselves from the present reality space in which we are grounded into past and future spaces, into hypothetical and counterfactual situations, into "wish" spaces, and so on. As Fauconnier notes, these mappings "are central to any understanding of semantic and pragmatic language interpretation and cognitive construction" (*Mappings* 12). Analogies are examples of mappings across mental spaces.

In making analogies, we use at least three cognitive skills that Holyoak and Thagard identify as attribute mapping (perception or creation of similarity between objects), relational mapping (sensitivity to relations between objects), and systems mapping (recognition of patterns created by those object relations, which enables generalization to more abstract structure). From a somewhat different perspective, Fauconnier identifies such mappings as projection, pragmatic function, and schema mappings. Metaphors are examples of projection mappings, which "project part of the structure of one domain onto another." Pragmatic function mappings "allow an entity to be identified in terms of its counterpart in the projection" and thus give rise to metonymy and synecdoche. Schema mappings

“operate when a general schema, frame, or model is used to structure a situation in context” (*Mappings* 9-11) and are the structural basis for allegory and symbolism.

On the most basic level, attribute or projection mapping occurs when we recognize the sameness of objects, like identifying the student who walks into the office one day as being the same student who came in the day before, or recognizing Dickinson’s reference to “Rose” in the following line: “If I should cease to bring a Rose” as being the same as in the line “ ’Twill be because *beyond* the Rose” (F53/J56:1,3).² This basic level extends to recognizing that two different names refer to the same individual, as when Dickinson refers to a “Mouse” in one poem and then calls it a “Rat” three lines later (F151/J61). Attribute mapping also occurs when we recognize the similarity of objects, such as identifying several pieces of fruit in a basket as apples, or two animals running down the road as coyotes. This fairly simple skill underlies our more complex ability to create or “map” similarity between objects and concepts, as when Dickinson says “The clouds—like listless Elephants—” (F216/J194:3), or “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers” (F314/J254:1). It is the same skill that enables literary critics to map metaphorical extensions onto poems, as when they say that the gun in Dickinson’s Loaded Gun poem (F764/J754) is a woman, or that the “King” in her Fly poem (F591/J465) represents God. Thus, attribute or projection mapping may, as Grady shows, take various forms via resemblance or correlation.

With relational or pragmatic function mapping, analogy operates at a more abstract level, with relations between—rather than the objects themselves—being highlighted or “profiled.” It depends on the ability to distinguish the differences between objects as well as their similarities, and yet to perceive that they can have relations in common. In Dickinson’s Snowstorm poem, for example, the falling of the snow on the trees is likened to the action of sifted flour powdering a board, and the gray, snow-laden clouds to lead-colored, heavy sieves: “It sifts from Leaden Sieves - / It powders all the Wood” (F291/J311:1-2). In another poem, the actions of two people who die for beauty and truth, respectively, cause them to become related as “Brethren” in the tomb (F448/J449). When Dickinson calls the dog “the noblest work of Art,” she is invoking the relationship of comparison. Relational or pragmatic function mapping is the basis for metonymy, as when Dickinson uses “feet” to refer to the whole person (F453/J615) or “Sandals” to point to the foot of the mountains (F108/J124).

Once multiple mappings begin to occur, the relations between the components of the mappings become more abstract so that it is the structure of the relations that is seen to be the same or be “isomorphic” (having identical form), and mapping occurs at the systems or schema level, drawing on the knowledge domains of ICCMs. Most critical analyses of literature involve systems or schema mapping. Following is an extract from a posting to a Dickinson discussion list that shows the reader drawing on systems or schema mapping to understand a Dickinson poem (F1139/J1106; the transcription is given by the reader):³

We do not know the time we lose—
 The awful moment is
 And takes its fundamental place
 Among the certainties—

A firm appearance still inflates
 The card—the chance—the friend—
 The spectre of solidities
 Whose substances are sand—

ED [Dickinson] is saying that there is an awful moment of certain loss at points in time which we can't know or predict. Death, broken friendship, love etc. We cannot know or predict these moments because a "firm appearance" or the spectre [*sic*] of one inflates our vision. We are in a sort of delusive state. We wish to rely on firm appearance but it is not as solid as it seems to promise—the card etc. The poem is in a sense about the impossibility of *carpe diem*. What you think you have that day may actually have been lost—I think Emily's losses were immense and she had the gift and strength to describe the pain in all its many facets.

Recently I spoke with a woman who lost her daughter in a terrible accident. It was one tiny split second of a car and bicycle collision, yet it changed the course of her life and thoughts forever. Can she look at the people around her, her remaining children and friends, with anything but the thought that their "solidity" too is built on sand? Emily has had that experience. And one of the things about her poetry that is so demanding is that she doesn't attempt to normalize pain or loss.

In the second paragraph, the reader maps the story of her friend's experience onto the interpretation of the poem in the first paragraph through a series of multiple mappings:

| poem | interpretation (first paragraph) | commentary (second paragraph) |
|--|---|---|
| the time we lose— | one who experiences "certain loss" | "woman who lost her daughter" |
| The awful moment | "awful moment" | "one tiny split second" |
| We do not know the time | "points in time we cannot know or predict" | "it was [. . .] yet it changed the course of her life" |
| The awful moment | "death, broken friendship, love, etc." | the "terrible accident" |
| The card—the chance—the friend — | "what you think you have that day" | "the people around her, her remaining children and friends" |
| A firm appearance [. . .]/The spectre of solidities/Whose substances are sand— | "firm appearance [that] is not as solid as it seems to promise" | "the thought that their 'solidity' too is built on sand" |

The concluding comment, "Emily has had that experience," does not mean that the reader thinks Emily lost a daughter in an accident involving a car and a bicycle. It shows how the reader understands the poem by mapping the various elements of her friend's story onto the experience described in the poem. The purpose of the

analogy—to understand the poem—causes the reader to reach into her own knowledge and experience to develop the multiple relations she draws between the story of her friend and the poem.

Conceptual Projection and Integration

The traditional distinctions among rhetorical terms such as *analogy* and *metaphor* tend to obscure the element they have in common: the ability of the human mind to create conceptual projections from the concrete to the abstract by a process of mapping from one to the other. This ability is the defining characteristic of the human mind. Without it, cognition would not be possible. The moment we become conscious of the physical world, we transform insensate experience into sensate cognition of it. For example, as I sit at my computer, concentrating on the words I create, I do not notice the scene around me, I do not hear the ticking of the clock, I do not feel the seat of my chair. As these things are brought to my cognitive awareness, I see the sunlight creating speckled shadows on the oak leaves under the trees; I hear birdsong, the sound of the wind in the branches, and the regular alternation of the ticking of the clock; I feel the texture of the chair beneath me. This cognitive ability, which enables us to translate our physical and emotional experiences into mental conceptions, underlies the corresponding ability to project our thoughts into another space and time, to relate one thing to another, and to integrate the results of our mappings into new conceptualizations of our experiences. The grammar of our language reflects this capability. In *Mental Spaces* Fauconnier shows how grammatical markers, such as tense morphemes or inflectional suffixes, determiners or other function words such as prepositions, pronouns, or conjunctions, indicate shifts in mental spaces that serve to construct complex conceptualizations. In the following poem, for example, Dickinson sets up a series of mental spaces to deliver a flirtatious message with the gift of a flower to her friend Samuel Bowles:

If She had been the Mistletoe
 And I had been the Rose,
 How gay upon your table
 My velvet life to close!
 Since I am of the Druid,
 And She is of the dew,
 I'll deck Tradition's buttonhole,
 And send the Rose to you.

Fascicle 2, A 80-5, 32 (F60; J44)

The speaker in the poem projects her own identity as a sprig of mistletoe, with its Druidic associations (linked to Dickinson's self-reference in L976 as a "Pagan"), and fantasizes exchanging identities with a rose she is sending to her friend. In the first four lines, the use of the past tense "had been" creates a "distancing" of the speaker's commitment to the truth of the statement. The speaker adopts, instead, what Dancygier and Sweetser call a "negative epistemic stance" in that she rejects the statement predicted by the *if* conditional. That is, Dickinson sets up several

mental spaces, a base or “reality” space, and two conditional spaces: the *if* clause (protasis), a negative epistemic or counterfactual space triggered by the distanced verb form “had been” in which the projected identifications are denied or rejected (lines 1-2), and its consequent *then* clause (apodosis), “How gay” (lines 3-4). These mental spaces of the first four lines are illustrated in figure 1.

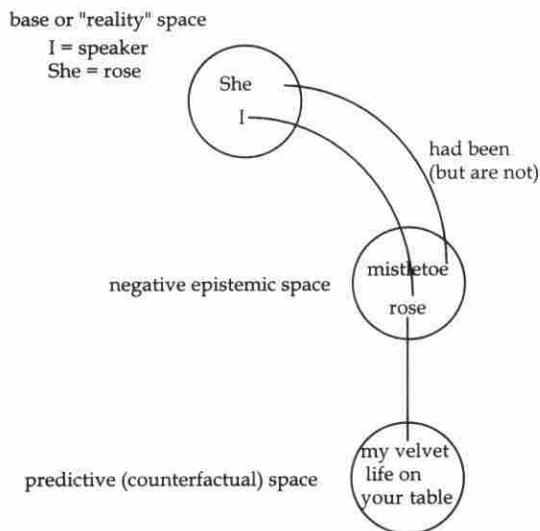


Fig. 1

The last four lines reverse the identification of the negative epistemic space set up in the first four lines by identifying the speaker with the mistletoe, which is mapped onto “Druid,” and “she” with the rose, which is mapped onto “dew.” The predictive space which ensues replaces the predictive counterfactual space of the first diagram with a space indicating the future location of the speaker (mistletoe) and her gift of the rose, as illustrated in figure 2.

The ability to create multiple mappings of mental spaces enables us to project ourselves cognitively into the past and the future, into hypothetical and counterfactual situations, to create correspondences and identities, to manipulate complex relationships, and ultimately to construct new conceptualizations of the world.

Conceptual Metaphor

The ability to map elements of structure in one domain onto elements of structure in another is the prerequisite for metaphor. Under conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), metaphor is not a figure of speech. Rather, it is an operation of thought, a basic and fundamental process of the human mind.⁴ We cannot think

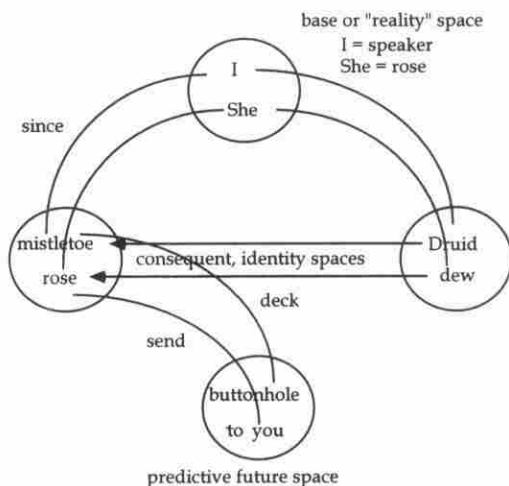


Fig. 2

abstractly without thinking metaphorically because our understanding is embodied in our experience of the physical world. We create abstract thoughts by conceptually projecting them from our concrete experience of ourselves in the world. For example, we articulate our ideas about "life" in terms of our physical movement through space. Thus we talk of "life's journey"; we have "career paths"; we can be "led astray"; we can "stumble" or "overcome life's obstacles." Our emotions and moods, whether happy or sad, contented or angry, courageous or afraid, are often articulated in terms of a "container" that can hold or overflow, burst or be emptied. Thus we say we are "full of courage" or "overflowing with happiness." "bursting with rage," or "drained of energy." In all these instances, we seem to "grasp hold" of the immaterial only by means of a conceptual integration with the experiences of our physical bodies.

Lakoff and Turner discuss the explanatory power of CMT in its ability both to recognize the coherent metaphorical systems that underlie everyday language and to show that literary language exploits the same metaphorical systems. When Dickinson, for example, writes "He put the Belt around my life -" (F330/J273: 1), "Immured in Heaven!" (F1628/J1594: 1), or "it burst the Hearts / That fancied they could hold" (F530/J567: 5-6), she is invoking the CONTAINER metaphor in which the body can be seen as a container or can itself be contained in some other physical space. As may be expected, her poetry is full of the basic metaphors common to language in general, such as orientation metaphors like HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN, or the EVENT STRUCTURE schemas which generate such metaphors as LIFE IS A JOURNEY. I have shown elsewhere how these

metaphorical structures reveal the ways in which Dickinson perceives and conceptualizes her world ("Metaphor").

The JOURNEY and CONTAINER metaphors occur in many of Dickinson's poems that deal with the question of metaphysical knowledge. In one poem, for example, the soul is seen —paradoxically— as the body, and the body merely the clothing in which the soul is dressed: "The Spirit turns away / Just laying off for / Evidence / An Overcoat of Clay" (F973/J976: 8-10). In another poem, the body becomes the "Temple" or "Closet" of the soul (F438/J578). In these poems, Dickinson's CONTAINER metaphor is predictable in its conformity to the Protestant tradition in which she was raised. The tone of the poems is one of certitude and trust. It gives little indication of the "disquiet" Dickinson said she felt about the subject of life after death (L872). The JOURNEY metaphor in another poem, however, raises the question of what exactly survives life after death, as the mind's thoughts are seen as a journey toward the goal of Heaven's "Grace" (F666/J550). The opening lines set up the JOURNEY schema: "I cross till I am weary / A Mountain - in my mind -" and the final two stanzas of the poem denote the journey's end:

+²
 At last - the Grace in sight -
 I shout unto my feet -
 I offer them the + Whole
 of Heaven
 The instant that we meet -

 They strive - and yet delay -
 They 'perish - Do we die -
 Or is this Death's Experiment -
 Reversed - in Victory?
 + *The Grace*
is just in Light + the Half
 + *stagger* -

Fascicle 30, H 95, 725-726 (F666; J550)

Although the mind invites the physical "feet" to meet "Heaven," they are reluctant to move forward. The question "Do we die -" is ambiguous: is it asked by the feet, afraid that they will perish while the mind survives, or is it asked by the mind, with the idea that both will die? The tone of disquiet in this poem arises from the idea of the death of the body, because, I have argued, Dickinson's ultimate way of seeing does not separate the abstract spirit from the concrete body ("Another Way"). In other words, she ended up rejecting the kind of JOURNEY and CONTAINER metaphors that express the traditional Western thought that the body is the prison house of the soul that, when released, will journey to a place called heaven, if not doomed to the other place called hell.

Earlier theories of metaphor attempted to explain the mapping of attributes in terms of similarity, substitution, or comparison.⁵ They attempted to account for the fact that metaphorical mapping is unidirectional or asymmetric; that is, to say that

“a man is a wolf” is not to say that “a wolf is a man.” They attempted to explain how certain elements in the “vehicle” term are blocked from applying to the “tenor”; that is, in the metaphor just cited, the physical characteristics of a wolf, its having four legs, fur, and sharp teeth for example, are not mapped onto the term *man*. They attempted to explain how, in spite of the asymmetric characteristic of metaphor, a more abstract level of meaning unites the two terms; that is, in our example, the notion of “fierceness” as applied to a wolf is not characterized by the same behavior as the notion of “fierceness” in a man. They attempted to explain how there appears to be a shift in meaning, so that similarity is created rather than simply recognized. CMT, as articulated by Lakoff and Johnson, Lakoff and Turner, and Kövcses, captures these insights into the nature of metaphor by providing a more unified account of how metaphor works. More importantly, as Grady, Oakley, and Coulson show, CMT, in its mappings between cognitive knowledge domains, complements Fauconnier and Turner’s theory of mental space mappings that enable creativity, the creation of meaning greater than the sum of its parts, through the concept of blended spaces. Blending is a general conceptual operation that compresses vital relations (such as cause and effect, identity, and change) into dynamic human scale. It includes the creation of what we customarily call metaphor and provides a more complete and coherent explanation of metaphor and its relation to other types of mental mappings than earlier theories were able to do.

Blending

Whereas earlier theories of metaphor involved cross-mappings between two spaces, Fauconnier and Turner’s theory of conceptual integration, or blending, introduces multiple spaces that are temporary dynamic constructs in the process of creating meaning. These spaces include a generic space, which maps elements of abstract structure shared by the input spaces, and a blended space, which inherits partial structure from the input spaces and creates new meaning or “emergent structure” by the processes of composition, compression, completion, and elaboration. All metaphorical expressions involve blending.

Dickinson’s only explicit reference to metaphor shows multiple blendings at work. In a valentine letter full of light-hearted nonsense that was published in a student magazine at Amherst College in 1850, she writes: “I am Judith the heroine of the Apocrypha, and you the orator of Ephesus. That’s what they call a metaphor in our country. Don’t be afraid of it, sir, it won’t bite. If it were my *Carlo* now! The Dog is the noblest work of Art, sir” (L34). Judith is known for her beauty, wisdom, and wit (Judith 11:21-23). She is also known for divinely inspired deceitful speech that enables her to behead Holofernes. Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, the orator of Ephesus, is known for his eloquence and knowledge of scriptures (Acts 18: 24). He is also known for not knowing that the promise of the Messiah had become real. One can understand, given Judith’s story, Dickinson’s reassurance to her valentine that he not be frightened by her self-identification. But why should metaphors not

bite? The introduction of her dog, Carlo, into her thought processes may very well have come from Judith's own words: "and a dog shall not so much as open his mouth at thee: for these things were told me according to my foreknowledge, and they were declared unto me, and I am sent to tell thee" (Judith 11:19). Thus the first part of Dickinson's words sets up a complex blending structure, in which Dickinson is mapped onto Judith, her recipient onto Apollos, and the values of these roles (Judith as divinely inspired with power to kill, Apollos as eloquent speaker but without the truth) are projected into a blended counterfactual space in which Judith will not present a threat to Apollos (bite his head off) because she is (only) speaking in metaphor. Through this counterfactual space, that imaginative metaphors, unlike real animals, don't bite, Dickinson is at first invoking the conventional distinction between reality and art. The knowledge domains from which this passage is constructed constitute a rich ICCM that includes biblical, historical, and linguistic allusion, the power of beauty and eloquence, and philosophical attitudes toward divinity, art, and reality. These all inform the blending that occurs in the sentence "The Dog is the noblest work of Art, sir."

The immediate implication of Dickinson's words is that the dog is the noblest of all works of art (including metaphor) because it bites. This is not simply a matter of mapping elements from the natural to the human or vice versa. A dog is not "noble" when it bites; art does not literally have teeth. The input spaces to the blend are divine creation and human creation. A dog and a metaphor share in the generic space the fact that they are both works of creation. The ideas that art is noble and that dogs bite are projected into a blended space where they are composed into new relations, completed by means of the generic frame of a work of creation, and elaborated by cognitive work that creates a comparison, as in figure 3.

In the human creation space, art is evaluated by such scales as beauty, worth, emotion, and nobility, and can be said to reflect the oratory of Apollos. In the divine creation space, the values include the general notion of doing harm or hurting, associated with both dogs and Judith herself. Blending links the two scales "noble" and "hurts" in a double hierarchy, using the principle of one scale to create another so that the points may be ordered in the same way, to produce the scalar implicature that the more it hurts the more noble it is (Coulson 252).⁶ In this double hierarchy schema, the divine creation space draws on the ICCM that the deity is ultimate artist, creating what is most noble and most powerful. In the blend, the most noble and the most powerful is what the artist should aspire to. This is then projected back into the human creation space to imply that true art has power, can "bite," and therefore can be dangerous. In contrast to the commonplace distinctions between art and nature or the notion of God as ultimate artist, Dickinson blends the notions of harm and nobility into the concept that great art, like reality, has the power to hurt, to make us feel, to move us emotionally. This creation of new meaning, through the emergent structure of the blend, activates metaphor as reality. In other words, Apollos without Judith is (figurative) rhetoric without (real) divine

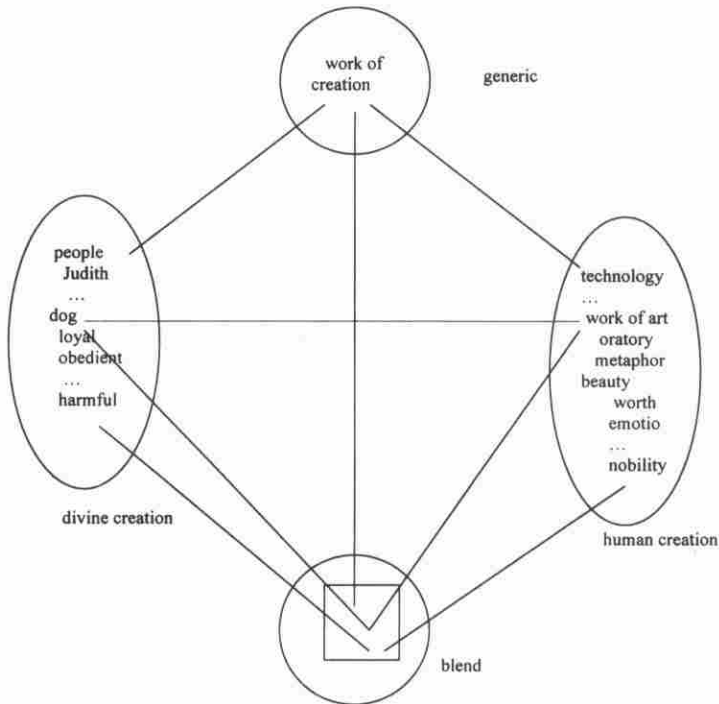


Fig. 3

inspiration. The compression that occurs in blending and the emergent meanings that result are what happen in poetry (Freeman, "Poem").

Cognitive Mappings in Literary Interpretations

A brief survey of literary interpretations of a Dickinson poem reveals that readers in fact use some, if not all, of these mapping strategies. For my data, I selected a sample of discussions of an Emily Dickinson poem that were posted to the emweb listserv in May of 1999.⁷ Marcela Linkova, a graduate student from the Czech Republic, raised questions about the following poem (F1675B/J1601):

Of God we ask one favor,
That we may be forgiven -
For what, he is presumed to know -
The Crime, from us, is hidden -
Immured the whole of Life
Within a magic Prison
We reprimand the Happiness
That too competes with Heaven.

Four of the six posts generated by this query provide direct interpretations; the other two give contextual evidence from other Dickinson writings. The somewhat different interpretations arise from slightly different conceptual and metaphorical mappings. Linkova writes,

It seems to me that the argument is pretty straight forward. She criticizes the original sin and our required asking for forgiveness to a "crime" that is never really revealed to us. She seems to question the image of this life as magic "prison" where we reproach happiness in view of the bliss to come. It is, however, the "too" in the last line that I find enigmatic. I was thinking that either there is a transposition of the too, meaning "as well," suggesting that happiness competes with Heaven just like we, perhaps, compete with God. Another alternative, even more enigmatic, is that there is an elision of "much" after "too," and the line should sound "That too much competes with Heaven"—but WHY would happiness be competing too much and how that would be done? Could it be that because the happiness tries too hard, it is bound to lose to Heaven?

Linkova maps the phrase "a magic Prison" onto life, "Crime" onto original sin, and "Heaven" onto bliss (which is greater than happiness). She sees the stance of the speaker as one of protest against these mappings. She raises the question of whether the word "too" in the last line should be read as meaning "as well" or "too much." Reading "as well" for "too," she produces a double scalar analogy that just as happiness competes with heaven, we compete with God. Although she does not develop this analogy, her comments suggest that she understands our competition with God as one over whether his mappings (of life as a prison for the crime of original sin) should take precedence over ours (which is presumably that the goal of life is happiness). She uses the same mappings when she reads "too" to mean "too much." This causes her to ask why happiness should be trying so hard and whether this means "it is bound to lose to Heaven." Partial double hierarchy mappings dominate in Linkova's reading.

The second post, by Wayne Whittaker, a high school teacher from the United States, adopts the "too much" scenario and points out that Linkova's composition of the comparison is incomplete: "I would say your second interpretation is closer to the mark, and that the meaning is that terrestrial happiness by competing for our attention causes us to turn from the pursuit of eternal happiness in heaven." Competition, as Whittaker notes, does not exist in a vacuum but is competition "for" something. He maps that something onto "our attention" to produce a resolution for Linkova's question. In doing so, he changes Linkova's cross-space identification mappings of *happiness : us / heaven : God* to a PURSUIT metaphor involving a PATH schema in which life deflects us from trying to catch up with heaven.

The third post, by Stephen Browning, a classical musician from the United States, questions Linkova's mapping of "Crime" onto original sin by introducing biographical details:

I'm not sure that I can agree with your "original sin" notion. Did ED ever embrace the concept of original sin? It seems very far removed indeed from her daily wrestling with the idea of God, and her creation of him in so many different guises. Actually, the notion of original sin strikes me as exactly the kind of conventional dogma that she so strongly rebelled against in her teens, as abundantly documented in the early letters.

I think that there is a paradox operative in this poem—on the surface it would appear that the "Crime" is that we love life too much, and that that love distracts us from higher matters. But then the poem appears to contradict itself, since it asserts "The Crime, from

us, is hidden." One can't really have it both ways. Underlying the paradox, I think, is the notion that God himself has created this situation for us, it is he who has created this "magic Prison" of life, has made it so alluring that it bids to outshine heaven, and we experience guilt on this account. But this is GOD's doing, not ours, and ED knows it. So she goes on asking for forgiveness, knowing that she can't know what it is that must be forgiven. The circularity of ED's reasoning is characteristically brilliant, and is a trap from which there is no escape.

Of course ED wouldn't be ED if there were only one possible interpretation. On another level the poem is certainly a heartfelt expression of the need to beg forgiveness for enjoying life too much (her "paganism").

Browning introduces the cultural knowledge domain of Dickinson's religious background and her self-identification with "paganism," and offers a more complex reading by mapping the "Crime" onto "lov[ing] life too much." This produces a paradox, since the crime is said to be unknown by us in line 4, but then the last two lines say what it is. To resolve the paradox, Browning maps God as Creator of the prison, which is a metaphor for life, and makes him responsible for the "Crime" of creating a world that can "outshine heaven." His conclusion, that the circularity in reasoning produced by the paradox is "a trap from which there is no escape," results from understanding the poem as a complex blend.

In one input space for the metaphor of LIFE IS A MAGIC PRISON, there is the prison itself, with its associated components of a prisoner who has committed a crime and who (in Browning's reading) experiences guilt and asks forgiveness. In another space, life is understood as being "alluring," causing us to love it too much. The mappings across the spaces link the prisoner to us, the creator of the prison to God, and the prison itself to the world in which we live. The metaphor produces a blended space, expressed in the phrase "magic Prison." This space produces emergent structure that occurs in neither of the input spaces. That is, prisons are not alluring; being born is not a crime (Browning rejects Linkova's notion of original sin); enjoying life does not produce guilt; we can't ask for forgiveness for something we haven't done; and we can't feel guilt for a crime we didn't commit. The emergent structure that makes all these things happen enables us to understand life as a world, unlike a prison, that we do not want to leave, but because we love it so much, we have to ask forgiveness for not wanting heaven instead. Browning's paradox produces another blend in his interpretation: we want to and can escape from prison, but we can only escape from life through death, which we don't want. The life God has created for us is "a trap from which there is no escape." That is, in the poem's "Prison," we are given a "life" sentence.

In Browning's reading, "magic" is understood as something alluring and something to be desired. Bonnie Poon, a high school graduate and entering college freshman from Hong Kong at the time of her post, understands magic as ritual that we need to avoid:

Maybe the "magic Prison" refers to the religion which can play such a large role in forming the society. Perhaps ED sees it as "magic" because she questions the religious part of religion - i.e. making a ritual out of a relationship with God (?—I'm not an expert

on ED's religious standing) which can so control people and has a sort of attraction of its own. And because religion teaches people to seek not what is of this world (the "Happiness"), we have to reprimand, rebuke what earthly things that bring that Happiness which is not of God.

I think both readings could work, though one might be a little more far-fetched than the other. The one that suggested "too *much* competes with Heaven" is the way earthly desires block one's relationship with God. Perhaps she is speaking of the way it is difficult for humans to "let go" and just go full on for God, and so God is, essentially, competing with the world for humans.

The reading which suggested "also" competes with heaven: if we substitute "too" with "also," that in itself suggests that there are TWO things that compete with heaven—one being Happiness, and the second might be Prison (it's capitalized too), which goes back to the whole religion being too religious and not personal, thus becoming a Prison rather than a gate to freedom.

Poon attempts to accommodate the readings resulting from the different construals of "too" by creating another set of mappings. She maps "magic Prison" onto religion by metonymically relating "magic" to "ritual" that can control and attract and maps "Happiness" onto worldly things or "earthly desires." Both these mappings (religion and earthly desires) compete with Heaven, which she metonymically identifies with God. Under these readings, God competes for humans with both world happiness and the ritual of religion. Poon draws on an ICCM in her understanding of Christian religion—that Christians are taught to "seek not what is of this world" and that religion is the "gate to freedom"—to distinguish between that and false (that is, ritualistic) religion that is "too religious" and therefore becomes instead a "Prison," which blocks our relationship with God.

Cognitive analysis shows that the readers are using metaphorical and metonymical mapping strategies and their own cultural knowledge and backgrounds to understand the poem. The remaining two posts place the poem in the context of Dickinson's own words, and thus attempt to establish readings that would reflect more closely the poet's own conceptual understanding or world view. The late Louis Forsdale, at the time of his post a retired Communications professor from the United States, provides the lines immediately above and below the letter poem. His question deals with the extent to which a poem's meaning and tone might be related to its immediate context:

J1601 was in a letter addressed to Helen Hunt Jackson, ED's friend in Colorado (L976). Jackson had broken her foot and Dickinson wrote her a consoling letter, which Jackson may not have received. [...] The text line immediately preceding J1601 in the letter to Jackson, is this: "Knew I how to pray, to intercede for your Foot were intuitive, but I am a Pagan." And immediately following J1601 in the letter to Jackson is this line: "May I once more know, and that you are saved?" These two lines—before and after the poem—appear to reinforce ED's feelings of peevishness about what she assumes God has asked.

In his second post, Browning adds two additional statements from other letters that might shed light on the poem:

Incidentally, a couple of other remarks of ED's came to mind that relate to the subject of J1601. One unforgettable (and unforgettably punctuated) line from a letter to Mary

Bowles in the spring of 1862: "I often wonder how the love of Christ, is done - when that - below - holds - so -" (L262). And from another letter, even earlier (late August 1858? in the Johnson edition), this time to Samuel Bowles himself, striking the same theme in a different key: "God is not so wary as we, else he would give us no friends, lest we forget him! The Charms of the Heaven in the bush are superceded I fear, by the Heaven in the hand, occasionally." (L193).

The first quotation compares the love of Christ with the love of life and illuminates Browning's statement that the poem is also "a heartfelt expression of the need to beg forgiveness for enjoying life too much." The second quotation reflects the complex reading of his first interpretation with the idea that it is God's fault we prefer friends and life. The quotations from Dickinson's letters suggest a means by which one interpretation might be determined to be "closer" to the poet's conception than another.

This preliminary rough sketch of these postings suggests that cognitive analysis can provide a means whereby literary interpretations might be described and categorized with respect to how cultural knowledge may influence readings and which readings might be more prototypical with respect to a poet's life and other writings. The interpretations themselves provide a database for empirical research on how metaphorical meanings are mapped and what motivates them. Such studies reveal the kind of mental operations that contribute to skilful analysis and interpretation.

Conclusion

By linking literary analysis with the general processes of the human mind, a cognitive approach to literature shows how human creativity can be nourished by reading poetry. As Browning says in his second post, Emily Dickinson "trains us to think in metaphors and make fantastic leaps of logic, so almost anything COULD appear to be connected to anything else." Blending, in particular, shows exactly how important metaphorical thinking and Browning's "fantastic leaps of logic" are to human creativity. As I have tried to show in this paper, there are at least four additional ways in which cognitive linguistics can contribute to literary analysis: 1) it can explicate and possibly evaluate the differences between multiple readings; 2) it can identify what cultural knowledge influences interpretation; 3) it can contribute to a clarification of the writer's—as opposed to the reader's—conceptual world view; and 4) it can form the basis for an empirical study of literary interpretations. Finally, cognitive linguistics integrates different literary approaches by showing how they make use of cognitive mapping strategies across ICCMs in exploring the conceptual processes of the writer, reader, and text.

Notes

¹ Subsequent work in cognitive linguistics has noted the cultural dimension of Lakoff's idealized cognitive models (ICMs). These are often referred to as idealized cognitive cultural models (ICCMs). See relevant articles in Gibbs and Steen.

² Only ten of Dickinson's poems have been found to have been printed during her lifetime, and these were edited. Accordingly, the texts cited follow the original manuscript versions as far as possible. Dickinson frequently marked words and phrases with a cross, and the alternatives are given in italics in approximately the same place they appear in her manuscripts. Spellings are Dickinson's, as are the line breaks. Citations to the poems include the numbers of the poems in the Franklin (F) and Johnson (J) editions and, where relevant, the facsimiles of the manuscripts and their archive numbers. References to Dickinson's letters are marked by an "L" followed by the number assigned in Johnson's three-volume edition of the letters. Dickinson almost never titled her poems, so that Franklin's titles reflect the first line. She did, however, identify some poems by short phrases, such as "My Cricket" (F895E/J1068), and I have adopted her practice when referring to a poem.

³ Posted to EmMail1@aol.com 01:03:55 EDT 97-05-17 by Ruth Gustafson. Used with permission.

⁴ Aristotle identified metaphor as a mode of thought. However, Danesi's description of the indifference accorded Vico's work in the eighteenth century shows how much rhetorical tradition that reduced images of thought to figures of speech predominated up to the twentieth century.

⁵ Eileen Cornell Way gives an excellent survey of the different metaphor theories, including an extensive bibliography for further reference. The wolf-man example originated with Max Black.

⁶ I am grateful to Gilles Fauconnier (personal communication) for advice on blending and the reference to Coulson's work on scalar implicature.

⁷ The posts to the emweb listserv in this section discuss a poem by Emily Dickinson as it appears in Johnson's three-volume edition. I have silently corrected typographical errors. The posts can be found in the emweb archives (<https://www.rotman.utoronto.ca/pipermail/emweb/>) as follows: Marcela Linkova, Fri, 28 May 1999 13:11:46 +0200; Wayne Whittaker, Fri, 28 May 1999 15:55:39 EDT; Stephen Browning, Sat, 29 May 1999 00:49:30 -0400, Sun, 30 May 1999 00:38:21 -0400; Bonnie Poon, Sun, 30 May 1999 19:10:56 +0800; Louis Forsdale, Sat, 29 May 1999 17:04:02 EDT. All are cited with permission.

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