

•According to my bond': *King Lear* and re-cognition

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Abstract

The theory of cognitive metaphor, applied in an analysis of *King Lear*'s opening scene, shows that the scene's figurative language depends upon metaphorical projection from the schemata – skeletalised structures of knowledge – of BALANCE and LINKS into the abstractions of filial love and family relationships. The metaphors arising from the BALANCE schema, in particular, are organised into a scenario, an interpretive framework, of financial accounting. Lear understands his relationships with his daughters in terms of the debits and credits of fiscal accounts; the Fool identifies him as 'an O without a figure'; Regan and Goneril destroy their father by the very numbers he so relishes. Cordelia tries and fails to get Lear to 'recognise' parental love and filial duty in terms of the LINKS schema, beginning with language interpretable within both ('I love you according to my bond', where 'bond' is both a financial obligation and a linking medium). Lear must learn to understand the world in terms of LINKS through action, most strikingly portrayed when he strips off his clothes and joins Tom o'Bedlam in nakedness. We understand this and other dramatic action, the plot structure, and the play's other abstract elements through the same cognitive apparatus that we use to understand its textual metaphors: projection into those abstract entities from schematised bodily experience. In the theory of cognitive metaphor, 'interpretive communities' are constrained by the embodied imagination.

Keywords: cognitive grammar; frame semantics; interpretive communities; King Lear; literary theory; metaphor; Shakespeare studies

An emerging theory of cognitive metaphor provides a promising basis for analysing figurative language in literary works.¹ In particular, cognitive metaphor provides accounts of language patterns that are isomorphic with larger imaginative literary structures, as well as particular interpretations that are more explicit and falsifiable than existing interpretations founded upon the language of literary works. I want to demonstrate this theory in a reading of *King Lear* that focuses on its opening scene, where metaphorical structures arise from a competition between the framing bodily experiences of balance and linking that define ways of understanding crucial to the larger patterns of the play.

1 Metaphor and schematised bodily experience

The salient features of earlier research in the theory of metaphor are epitomised in the work of Samuel R. Levin, who argued in a seminal essay that, for example, to interpret a metaphor like 'a grief ago' we in effect import the

semantic feature [+Time] from 'grief's' syntactic frame into the word itself; the phrase is to that extent a 'confrontation' (Levin 1964: 314) between ordinary and metaphoric language. Metaphor thus is part of a figurative language that contrasts with a 'literal', non-figurative language. According to this theory, 'literal' language, including 'dead' (but not literary) metaphors, is unmarked and ordinary, but figurative language, including literary (but not dead) metaphors, is deviant, foregrounded, highlighted, made strange. The 'deviance' is with respect to a language-universal set of semantic features and combinatory rules external to individual cognition. Lakoff (1987: 157-84) has characterised this view as the Objectivist position. Classically, metaphor is seen – and not only in linguistically based theories – as a deviant and parasitic structure; we characterise metaphors in terms of their deviance from ordinary non-metaphorical language.²

Precisely these two characterisations of metaphor – that it is a structure parasitic upon ordinary language structure and that it can be explained in terms of its deviance from semantic interpretations of ordinary, non-metaphorical language interpretable by a compositional semantics – are explicitly rejected by cognitive metaphor. The cognitive view arises from the Experientialist position (as articulated, for example, in Lakoff 1987: xv) on semantic theory. The Experientialist position claims that we create metaphor by projecting onto an abstract *target domain* the entities and structure of a concrete *source domain*, a schematised real or vicarious bodily experience. Metaphor arises from, in Johnson's (1987: xv) cogent formulation, 'embodied human understanding'. As human beings we share a range of physical experiences that take on structure and coherence from the non-propositional schemata we extract from them. Our propensity to extract these schemata is a fundamental property of mind. We project elements of the structure and components of our physical experience onto our non-physical, abstract experience. Precisely this sense of projection from schematised bodily experience constitutes the claim for metaphor as embodied human understanding.

Consider, for example, the famous line from *King Lear*, 'I am a man / More sinn'd against than sinning' (III.ii.59-60). The context, justice, makes it clear that this line epitomises Lear's sense of a higher justice, that in a truly just universe he would be no more sinned against than he had sinned, that if there were justice, Lear's sins would balance his sufferings. This notion of balance is fundamental to our idea of justice: we understand the abstraction of justice in terms of bodily balance. The concept of horizontal balance dominates both our non-verbal and verbal language about justice. Our courts decide civil lawsuits according to 'the preponderance', or greater weight, 'of the evidence'. A witness's testimony can be said to be 'biased'. Our icon for justice is a blindfolded woman holding a two-pan scale. All of these metaphors, and many more besides, having to do with such seemingly disparate notions as mathematical equality, patterns in visual art, and certain kinds of musical progression are projected from a non-verbal, non-propositional, non-representational schema of BALANCE (for general discussion of schema

theory, see Johnson 1987: 18-40 and the references he cites; for discussion of musical progression and the BALANCE schema, see Freeman 1991: 153). The theory of cognitive metaphor claims that we project the elements of this schema – entities (the items that balance) and the relationships among those entities (counteraction or equality) – onto elements of our more abstract experience.

Such an explanation of 'justice' as deriving ultimately from our embodied human understanding of balance explains 'I am a man/More sinn'd against than sinning'. But the BALANCE schema also captures lines like Edgar's, 'He childed as I father'd' (III.vi.108), in which Lear's sufferings at the hands of his daughters are balanced by Edgar's sufferings at the hands of his father Gloucester (and the balance between the plot and major subplot of the play is epitomised); it captures Lear's misunderstanding of the father-child relationship, which persists even to the end, when, awakened from his sleep after he has been brought in from the heath, he implores Cordelia:

Lear If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.

Cordelia

No cause, no cause. (IV. vii. 72-5)

Lear persists in understanding the parent-child relationship in terms of the BALANCE schema, even as Cordelia reaches beyond it. But children need no cause to wrong parents; conversely and more importantly, a child whom a parent has wronged need not balance that wrong by committing another. By no means all of the metaphors I have cited are metaphors of justice. But they do derive from a common source, the embodied, culturally reinforced experience of balance.

That source, the schema of BALANCE, underlies a richer, more important, and previously unexplained structure of metaphor in the play: that of financial accounting.³ Terms and phrases like 'divest', 'prize me at her worth', and 'comes too short' (I.i. 48, 69, 71) partake of the BALANCE schema, but they are not metaphors of justice. They can be better explained in the more densely structured, balance-based scenario⁴ of financial accounting.

A second rich source of metaphor in *King Lear* is the equally simple LINKS schema, which consists of two entities joined by a bonding element. These three aspects of the LINKS schema's structure, like those of the BALANCE schema, are mapped onto a wide array of non-physical human experiences. The source of the LINKS schema arises from our literal, physical link to our biological mothers. We then proceed to, for example, a 'bonding' with our parents, our relatives, and our friends. Marriages are often celebrated with the proverb 'blest be the tie that binds,' and sometimes include the Biblical admonition, 'What therefore God hath joined, let no man put asunder' (*Matthew* 19, verse 6). People without a romantic interest are 'unattached', or free of 'entanglements'. When one event

consistently follows another, we hypothesise that the two events are linked by causation. Links of divine ordination and divine love join the elements of the Great Chain which, shorn of its theology, is alive and well today (see Lakoff and Turner 1989: 160–213). The lion is still the king of the beasts, and gold is still the premier investment commodity, whereas platinum, rarer and more expensive, is merely an industrial commodity.

These two powerful perceptual structures give a local habitation and a name to previously unjustified and unrelated critical commonplace. For example, it is a staple of Shakespearean criticism to say that in the opening scene the playwright establishes the atmosphere of a play's world. What are established, in fact, are the play's dominating schemata. In *King Lear*, Gloucester's cynical account to Kent of his sons' parentage establishes the play's competing schemata of BALANCE and LINKS. Gloucester demonstrates that like Lear, he understands parental relationships through the CHILDREN ARE FINANCIAL ASSETS metaphor, one that the audience is shortly to see played out fully in the ritual of Lear's retirement.

His [Edmund's] breeding, Sir, hath been at my charge:

...
But I have a son [Edgar], Sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer to my account: (I.i.8, 18–19)

The 'charge' that Edmund's breeding constitutes for Gloucester is an analogy from estate accounting, which used the so-called 'Charge and Discharge' method, in which, Green (1930: 47) writes, 'the executor "charged" himself with the estate and "discharged" himself of disbursements properly chargeable to the estate'. Edmund, a bastard, is not a financial asset but a cost item that it has embarrassed Gloucester to acknowledge; Edgar, though not an embarrassment (a cost to Gloucester's reputation) is no more highly valued in the balance sheet of his father's affections. From the start of the play, familial LINKS are debased; children are bastards or 'by order of law'; the relationship of child to father, an important source of LINK metaphors in the play, begins with what will result in Edmund's perversion of his filial duty. Charges and accounts, sons and daughters, bastards and legal progeny (and what ought to be but are not the same thing, natural and unnatural children) – these seemingly unrelated facts of language and plot spring from the same impulses: the BALANCE and LINKS schemata.

These competing schemata structure a significant portion of the play's metaphors that traditional accounts of the play's language leave unrelated. More significantly, they and the analyses they make possible, constitute previously undiscovered empirical evidence for relating the play's figurative language to such other structural elements as narrative, plot, and particular constellations of characters. For example, many critics have found parallel structure or balance in the fact that while in the sub-plot Edmund gouges out Gloucester's eyes but

Edgar redeems him to a new life, in the main plot Goneril and Regan strip Lear of his retainers but Cordelia awakens him to a restoration, however temporary, of his health, fatherhood, and kingship. But I know of nothing written about *King Lear* that uses one theoretical apparatus to *explain* this balance, the patterns of metaphor I describe, and the relationships among these levels. It is this greater explanatory power that is the major contribution to literary theory of cognitive metaphor.

2 The King's account-books

Most accounts of *King Lear*'s opening scene treat it as a trial or a love-test. Yet curiously the scene lacks elements crucial in any trial: an offence, a judge, advocates, juries, opposing parties. It is no sense an adversarial proceeding. Lear has divided his kingdom before the scene begins.⁵ We find none of the legal vocabulary that Shakespeare uses so profusely in the mock trial scene (III.vi.35–83) and elsewhere in those of the sonnets and plays containing unambiguous references to trials.

Rather than a trial, what we have in the first scene of *King Lear* is a semantic frame (in the sense of Fillmore (1982)) that depends upon the structure of a quasi-legal proceeding, the auditing of financial record-books, and a more general scenario of financial accounting (the substantial evidence that Shakespeare was familiar with this subject matter is summarised in Knight 1973: 248). In financial accounting obligations are recorded both to and from the entity keeping the books. Within this scenario, centrally for Lear and less importantly for other characters, the generative metaphor (in the sense of Schön 1979: 264) that controls the scene's 'story' is CHILDREN ARE FINANCIAL ASSETS. Lear understands his daughters in the same way that he understands wealth, real property, assets, and debts. Financial assets are expected to provide a return on capital to their owners (here, their fathers). Hence an important metaphor within this framework is FILIAL LOVE IS INTEREST. Financial assets and organisations are periodically audited to see whether they are providing an adequate return, and how the return from one asset compares with that from another, so that, if need be, the investment strategy can be revised. Assets that provide better returns can be the objects of further capital investment. Assets that do not perform well are disposed of, and the money provided by the sale is re-deployed to those assets that do perform well.

Although the fundamental principles of financial accounting are the same today as they were in Shakespeare's time, some details are quite different. First, although balance sheets of a kind were kept, they were balanced out only 'when some special circumstances required the formal closing of the books' (Yamey 1949: 106). Second, audits of financial records were oral (indeed, the term 'audit' comes from the Latin *audire*, 'to hear') because when the financial audit in more or less its modern form came into existence in England in the fourteenth century,

6 most of the participants were illiterate. The steward of another's capital recited, or 'spoke' the accounts, in the customary language, and the auditor 'heard' them. Many early account books contain notations such as the following, describing the appointment in 1456 of two auditors for the accounts of the City of Dublin: . . . their schold be from that tym forward two Audytors assignet upon the treswerys saud cytte, to hyr har acownt yerly . . .

The model for financial accounting and auditing with which Shakespeare and his audience probably would have been most familiar, if only by report, was the semi-annual settling of the Crown's accounts with the sheriff of every county for subventions from the Crown to the county and revenue from the county due the Crown. At this proceeding, according to a standard history:

the treasurer representing the Exchequer read from his copy of the Great Pipe Roll [a document amounting to a national ledger] the amount due the crown from the sheriff. The Exchequer attendants placed on the checkered cloth [of the table used for the ceremony] dummy counters representing the amounts due the crown. On the near side of the checkered cloth was the sheriff. As the treasurer called the amounts the sheriff placed in the appropriate columns his tally stick, crown vouchers and money or jewels to balance the dummy counters. This settled the yearly account between the crown and sheriff.

So rich in tradition was this ceremony that it continued from the early Norman period well into the nineteenth century. Even in Shakespeare's time, this event would have been seen not merely as a settling of accounts, but a ceremony in its own right.

Just this ceremony, the hearing, or audit, of state accounts, more satisfactorily explains the curiously ritualistic character of this first major scene of the play. Much of the language crucial to Lear's expression of his 'fast intent' can be simultaneously interpreted in the semantic frames of financial accounting and of statecraft. He wishes to 'divest' himself of rule, of 'interest of territory'. He calls upon his daughters to 'tell' (i.e. count out, as well as relate) which of them 'shall we say doth love us most' so that he may invest⁷ more parental love, which the frame asks us to understand as capital investment, according to the return on each of the three investments represented in his daughters. Each daughter is enjoined to 'speak' or 'say'. Lear will listen, or audit, as each speaks her account, and 'extend . . . [his] largest bounty' where nature, natural affection, filial love, challenges, lays claim to that bounty (which again has a financial, though not an accounting, sense) with merit, with the greatest deserving. Future investment will balance past performance – as Lear perceives that performance.

Goneril is in no doubt how to demonstrate that 'merit'. Like her father, she couches the language of her declaration in financial terms. The love she bears her father is 'dearer', a word with a financial as well as an affectionate sense; that love is 'beyond what can be valued' as more conventional financial assets are appraised; it 'makes breath poor'. Regan's accounting is more concrete. She

is made, she asserts, of the same 'metal' (in Shakespearean usage, normally gold metal) as her sister, and appraises herself equally ('and prize me at her worth'). But Goneril, Regan claims, 'comes too short', an idiom directly from the contemporary language of financial accounting.⁸ Regan's reckoning is even more unrealistically extravagant: she professes to find happiness only in her father's love.

Underlying all of this, again, is the schema of BALANCE. Lear seeks to balance his 'bounty' against the love his daughters say they have for him; his new investment in them must balance the return he has received on his previous investments. Goneril in turn, seeks to demonstrate a highly valued love (in order to receive a highly valued piece of kingdom): Regan values herself at her sister's worth, but insists that Goneril is short in her accounts. Lear abundantly demonstrates a trait of character to which we will return: an obsession with what Johnson (1987: 95) calls 'moral mathematics' – here, the notion that the emotional costs of child-rearing can be quantified, and ought to be balanced by equally quantifiable expressions of love in a verifiable balance sheet of accounts.

Lear's version of the BALANCE schema forces Cordelia from the start into an unpalatable choice:

Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so; since I am sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue. (1.1.75-7)

Compared with Regan, who 'prize[s] [herself] at [Goneril's] worth', Cordelia is both pitiable and financially poor – but she immediately rejects the financial metaphor in favour of her own version of the BALANCE schema, in which the spiritual weighs more, is more ponderous (and hence more valuable), than its literal expression. She must mediate between her father's intense desire for her to express her love in ways that allow him to maintain his account-books of filial devotion, while remaining true to her 'spiritual' notion of love. In her very first words in the play, Cordelia shows the relative value she places on feelings and words: 'What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent'. For her, feelings will always outweigh words; the two can never balance; she refuses to *speak*, a word associated with the financial audit scenario, what is in effect her accounting of filial love and paternal love returned.

Hence when Lear asks Cordelia, who is the object of a financial claim⁹ by her two suitors, what she can 'say to draw¹⁰ / A third more opulent than [her] sisters?' *Speak* (1.1.84-5), Cordelia gives the only response possible for one who thus weighs words and feelings. She rejects the notion that a paternal gift should be 'drawn' like a salary, a usage current in Shakespeare's time. All she can *say* – all she can *speak* – is 'Nothing'. What counts for her is what she feels, but feelings have no place in financial audits. Understood in terms of the accounting framework that dominates this scene, Cordelia's famous silence is quite unremarkable. Cordelia's 'nothing' is understood by her father only as a number,

as his bewildered response makes clear: 'Nothing will come of nothing' (I.i.89).

At this point the process of frame competition begins that undermines Lear's ceremony and results in Cordelia's being disinherited. For the BALANCE schema underlying Lear's scenario of financial accounting, Cordelia seeks to substitute a schema of LINKS. She seeks to redefine her father's understanding of family relationships as items in an accounting balance sheet into an understanding characterised in the generative metaphor FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ARE LINKS. She begins this process with the polysemous word 'bond', which exists in both competing frames, financial and kinship:

I love your Majesty
According to my bond; no more nor less. (I.i.91-2)

From the beginning, Cordelia makes clear that she understands 'bond' in terms of her father's financial accounting scenario. In Shakespeare's time, a bond, the financial instrument, was what Shylock (*The Merchant of Venice*, I.iii.144) called a 'single bond'. It was a financial or other obligation undertaken solely on the basis of the borrower's credit, without collateral. The obligation memorialised in a single bond is not, in legal language, defeasible (performance of the obligation is the only way the debtor can discharge it; see *Black's Law Dictionary* 1981: 163). One performs under a single bond or one does not.

Performance under a single bond is, in two words that come to dominate *King Lear*, all or nothing. For Cordelia, to love her father 'according to [her] bond' is to love him completely; that love can be no more (more complete than complete) nor less (partial) because of the nature of financial single bonds.

But for Cordelia the same all-or-nothing property holds of filial bonds, when this term is defined within the LINKS schema through the metaphor FILIAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL LINKS. I have sketched out how the same metaphor governs our understanding of phrases like 'family ties' and 'parental bonding'. Lear cannot share the richness of Cordelia's metaphorical understanding, and replies in solely financial terms:

Mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes. (I.i.93-4)

Cordelia's reply partakes once again of both schemata, BALANCE and LINKS:

Good my Lord,
You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty:

Sure I shall never marry like my sisters.

To love my father all. (I.i.94-103)

Cordelia focuses first on the physical closeness of her filial relationship with Lear, and then relates this closeness to the financial accounting frame with a verb, 'return', that can be interpreted in both frames. Links are by nature biconditional – A is linked to B if and only if B is linked to A. Within the accounting frame we speak of an investment that 'returns' such-and-such per cent. What Cordelia will 'return', she characterises as 'duties', a term that resonates in both the accounting and the links frames. That 'return' is commensurate with both the intensity of filial relationships and the balanced nature of accounts: here the most fundamental of human ties, blood relationships of begetting, breeding, loving, are expressed in the language of the wedding ceremony: obedience, love, and honour (see Rosinger 1974).

Yet the explicitly financial character of the accounting metaphor is still kept in play. For Cordelia, marriage as a bond (a human relationship) involves a 'plight' or pledge, another word interpretable within both frames, that necessarily, by the laws of both financial accounting and human development, diminishes the line of credit underlying the 'bond' of daughter to father. If a wedded daughter still loves only her father, she has falsely plighted her troth, for she has no credit left for the bond with her husband – and for Cordelia, nothing truly can come from nothing. The protestations of Goneril and Regan that they 'love [their] father all' are thus false in the same ways that Cordelia's is true – within both the accounting and the links scenarios. Lear's daughters cannot plight the half of their love that their husbands deserve without defaulting upon the bonds calling for them to 'love [Lear] all'. In both scenarios, Cordelia is 'So young, my Lord, and true' (I.i.106): i.e. both truthful, bearing a higher loyalty to her filial bond with her father, and true in the sense of having opposed to her sisters' false accounts (their 'bonds' are simultaneously pledged to two different creditors) her own true reckoning under the obligations of her financial and filial bond. In both senses, Cordelia is her family's best auditor.¹¹

Characteristically, Lear interprets Cordelia's 'true' only within the financial accounting frame: 'Let it be so: thy truth then be thy dower' (I.i.107). Likewise, Burgundy expresses in financial terms the bargain he now seeks to strike for Cordelia's hand:

Burgundy Most royal Majesty,
I crave no more than hath your Highness offer'd,
Nor will you tender¹² less.

Lear Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so.
But now her price is fallen. (I.i.192-6)

France, however, shares Cordelia's view that love cannot be understood as a set of accounts. After Lear offers Cordelia to Burgundy one last time, as 'herself a dowry', only to have Cordelia point up the irreconcilable conflict between balance and link: 'Since that respects and fortunes are his [Burgundy's] love, I shall not be his wife' (I.i.247-8). France, terming Cordelia 'unprized', makes clear that he loves her precisely because she does not fit Lear's balance-sheet vision, harking back to Regan's use of 'prize' as 'appraise':

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor,
Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd!
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon: . . .
Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy
Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me. (I.i.249-51, 257-8)

Thus in this opening scene, Shakespeare embeds the play's major themes in the framing scenario of a financial audit, one that depends on the schema of BALANCE. Lear himself sees statecraft and fatherhood in exclusively abstract, numerical terms; Goneril and Regan give an account of their filial love in language dominated by accounting metaphors that derive from the BALANCE schema¹³; the same metaphors dominate the case pleaded unsuccessfully by Burgundy. Cordelia refutes the balance schema in its own terms; she would substitute an understanding of family relationships as arising from a schema of LINKS. For her, to say 'nothing' does not deny a daughter's love but exalts its inexpressibility; for Lear, 'nothing' is merely a nought, a book-keeping entry.

This word resonates more ambiguously for Lear as the Fool redefines it for him during his visit to Goneril:

Kent This is nothing fool.
Fool Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, Nuncle?
Lear Why no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.
Fool (*to Kent*) Prithce tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a Fool. (I.iv.126-32)

The linguistically nimble Fool entraps Lear with a specifically financial phrase, and reminds his king of the deeper sense of the 'nothing' he now has. Lear, the great valuer, is now without value, an '0', a zero, 'without a figure' (I.iv.189-90), a king with no kingdom, a father with no daughters, a man with no standing, a cipher without a number to give it value, to whom the Fool applies Lear's own principle of accounting: 'I am better than thou art now: I am a fool, thou art nothing' (I.iv.190-1). The currency in which Lear will repay his older daughters' professions of love comes at a much higher rate of exchange than he anticipated:

Fool But for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year. (II.iv.52-3)

Lear's world is destroyed in the same terms of balance and numbers in which he sought to build it, as Goneril and Regan strip him of the numbers of his retainers:

Regan . . . I have hope
You [Lear] less know how to value her [Goneril's] desert
Than she to scant her duty . . .
I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation. (II.iv.135-9)

Goneril and Regan, however, indeed know how to value their father's desert; they know just the issue that will torment him most – the number of his followers. As his daughters reduce his retainers – and with them, his humanity – from the *number* one hundred to the *number* zero, it dawns on Lear that in family relationships, a deal is not necessarily a deal, irrespective of what the account-books say or what reservations are spelled out in contractual visiting arrangements:

I gave you all –
. . .
Made you my guardians my depositaries,
But kept a reservation¹⁴ to be follow'd
With such a number. (II.iv.248, 249-51)

We recall that the Fool has already told Lear that he is 'an 0 without a figure'; now, Lear begins to realise that the 'all' he has given Regan and Goneril is being balanced – if that is the word – by nothing at all (and will come to know that Cordelia's 'nothing' is everything). With his daughters' final and specifically numerical slashes at his selfhood, 'What need you five-and-twenty? ten? or five? . . . What need one?' Lear begins to see the human condition as going beyond what 'moral mathematics' or the balance sheet will justify:

O! reason not the need; Our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need, –
You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need! – (II.iv.262-9)

links that hold together the world, the bonds of nature and the human race, the very 'germains' or gene-pool of life itself. He stands alone, 'the pattern of all patience', divested of links of any kind, to his daughters, to his household, to his kingdom, to the elements of the created world. Lear does not 'tax [the] elements with unkindness' (III.ii.16) because they are not of Lear's kind, they are not linked to him as his daughters should be, by gratitude, by blood, by the duty of subjects to their king.

As Lear's reintegration with the human condition begins, we likewise understand that reintegration through the schema of LINKS. As the nature of the metaphors based upon that schema begins to change, Lear first identifies himself with the Fool through shared physical needs of warmth and safety, and sees himself as linked to the Fool in suffering and sympathy:

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?

I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?

The art of our necessities is strange,

And can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.

Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart

That's sorry yet for thee. (III.ii.68-73)

Lear demonstrates this same pattern – from physical sensation to mental feeling, from concrete to abstract, from his own physical suffering to a spiritual empathy with the suffering of another – as he begins to reverse the operative definition of kingship that has so far dominated the play: a status in which the links between a king and his subjects (and a father and his daughters) are constituted by the abstractions of courtly ceremony, of debits and credits. Lear seeks the ground of human community and kingship in the concrete links of shared physical suffering in the storm, between his nakedness and his subjects' 'loop'd and window'd raggedness' (III.iv.31), between man and man, and between a King and his subjects. When he strips off his garments in the play's climactic scene and stands naked against the elements, he is clothed in his solidarity with the physical nakedness of Tom o'Bedlam, linked to him in spiritual nakedness and vulnerability of 'unaccommodated man' before the random cruelties of the gods.

The progression is crucial. When Lear's understanding of the world in terms of the empty abstractions of the balance sheet and kingly ceremony fails him, he progressively denies first the abstract and then the physical links of fatherhood, his own marriage, his ungrateful daughters' legitimacy, their humanity and their progeny, and finally the linking structures of the created world and the human species. He then re-cognises and rebuilds his place in that world in terms of these links, bonding himself first with physical feeling (cold), then with spiritual feeling (empathy), then with individuals (the Fool), then with the rags and hunger of his kingdom's subjects ('the poor naked wretches' with 'houseless heads and unfed sides' (III.iv.28, 30)), and finally with the irreducibly human, unaccommodated, primal human condition figured in Mad Tom. This condition

Like Cordelia's use of 'bond' in Act I scene i, Lear's agonised 'O! reason not the need' epitomises the competition between the financial accounting and links metaphors crucial to the play's conceptual structure. Historically, 'reason' had as one of its nominal meanings a monetary reckoning.¹⁵ The term 'need' bespeaks a link of desperate desire between Lear and 'th' name and addition of a king', represented for *this* king by the number of his retainers, which defines for Lear the nature of kingship beyond what a debit-credit, accounts-book, cost-benefit analysis would show, and represented for human beings by more than the entitlement of their mere physical requirements. For the first time, Lear begins to weigh the links of humanity more than account balances. 'True need' cannot be reasoned, accounted for, reckoned up.

3 The LINKS schema

Early in the play, the links-based metaphors involving Lear have to do more with breaking links than with creating them. From his first entrance, Lear sees only the financial side of Cordelia's rich-linguaged assertion of the 'bond' between them, and ignores her attempt to couch the father-daughter link in language that he will understand ('I return those duties back as are right fit'). Instead, Lear both physically and spiritually breaks the filial bond and denies the bonding structures of both ownership and family:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,

Propinquity and property of blood,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee from this for ever.

(I.i.112-15)

Later, when Goneril begins the process of stripping him of his retainers, Lear seeks to destroy not only the father-daughter link, but the link of common membership in the human race – 'degenerate bastard' – and to extend this curse into the next generation, so that Goneril either may have the mother-child link denied her or have the parental link become for her an instrument of exquisite torture. Lear prays that the gods may give his own daughter a 'child of spleen' who will be 'thwart disnaturaed torment' to her, yet linked to her by the very constitutive linking structures that she has denied her father: nature, honour, pains and benefits, and thanks.

This severing of links is carried even further in Act II: Lear threatens to deny the bond of marriage with Regan's mother and thus his bond of fatherhood to Regan, and turns this destruction of human bonds upon himself. Lear converts his physical links of flesh and blood to Goneril to highly particularised, loathsome diseases of that same flesh and blood. The bonds that link Lear with Goneril now are only those of 'disease', 'plague', and 'corrupted blood' (II.iv.220, 222, 223). Finally, in the midst of the storm, Lear would shatter the

and bond are epitomised in Lear's 'We came crying hither' and in that 'very foolish fond old man' of Act IV, linked to Cordelia now in human mortality and imperfection.

4 On description and explanation

Few of the critical analyses in the foregoing are startling; indeed, Lear's restoration to humanity is an important part of any discussion of the play. Some of the financial language in *King Lear* (although not its critical significance) has been described before, as have the play's larger structural entities and the relationships between them. But to describe the play's financial language is merely that: description. What I would claim for this article as an analysis from the standpoint of cognitive metaphor is that this theory enables us not merely to describe, but to *explain* patterns of this kind, and to explain them and their interconnections at different structural levels of the play using the same theoretical apparatus. The analyses produced by a cognitive-metaphoric approach are, moreover, better grounded than earlier purely critical work.

As to the first of these assertions, cognitive metaphor proceeds on the hypothesis that . . . metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason' (Lakoff 1993:13). The same concept, or 'activated pattern inhering in thought' (Turner 1991: 45), underlies both the dozens of examples in *King Lear* of metaphors of financial accounting that instantiate the BALANCE schema and many larger structures in the play. These would include, by way of example, the Gloucester-Edmund-Edgar subplot balanced against the main plot, and the play's balanced sets of characters: the 'unnatural' children - Edmund on one side, Goneril and Regan on the other; the rejected, despised, and then redeemed fathers - Gloucester and Lear, the 'natural' children - Edgar and Cordelia; and the good and bad servants - the Fool and Oswald. The connection between these entities and the balance-based metaphors in the text is not accidental, fortuitous, or the product of what Fish (1980: 251) criticises as responsive only to 'the pressure of the question "how do they relate?" and a relation will always be found'. The connection results from the same process, metaphoric projection from the BALANCE schema, into many distinct domains of the play: into the abstractions of Lear's idea of paternal love, and the ways in which his daughters' responses play into and resist it; into the abstractions of plot-construction, character relations, and narrative sequence; into psychological and social settings, and into many other structural elements (for discussion of these elements and cognitive-metaphoric analysis, see Wye 1992 chapters 3 and 4).

The second part of my claim for cognitive metaphor is perhaps more important. The metaphoric impulse is grounded not in intellectual abstractions but in the body that is in the mind. Because cognitive-metaphoric analysis proceeds from the elements and structure of schematised bodily experience to their projection into such abstractions as (for *King Lear*) family relationships and

parental and filial love, these analytical claims can be confirmed or disconfirmed according to the accuracy with which those elements and structure and their projection are articulated. The same falsifiability applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to claims made for metaphoric projection into larger abstract structural units. In short, this analysis can be falsified if its topological analysis proves to be wrong. It can be invalidated if the patterns it posits exist only at the level of text and not in larger structural units, or if a competing candidate source domain and metaphoric projection better explains these patterns at all levels of the literary work.¹⁶

On this second point, we can, for example, trace a pattern of textual metaphors in *King Lear* that depend on the core metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which is based on the PATH schema: 'we came crying hither' (IV.vi.176); 'I have no way, and therefore want no eyes; I stumbled when I saw' (IV.i.18-19); 'she's [Cordelia] gone for ever . . . Thou'lt come no more' (V.iii.258, 306), and many others. But very little connects this pattern of metaphoric projection in the text with larger structural elements in the play. The PATH schema entails such salient aspects as starting and terminal points and a sequence of locations that connect the beginning and the end (for discussion, see Johnson 1987: 113-17). The lives of all of *King Lear*'s major characters have terminal points: most of them die. But we see little of the source points of these paths, the beginning of these journeys. A contrasting example, *Macbeth*, is not only replete with textual metaphors based on the PATH schema, but the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphoric projection dominates the play's plot and characters (the extreme case is Macduff, who begins the journey of his life by an alternate route to the conventional birth canal - for discussion, see D.C. Freeman forthcoming). Thus for *King Lear* we can make a principled argument for two candidate source domains, BALANCE and LINKS (they exist independently and the play manifests both a pattern of projections from them at the textual level and an equally rich pattern of the same projections at different levels) and *against* a third, the PATH (the play manifests a pattern of projections from it at the same level, but few if any at different levels), as the defining 'conceptual universe' (M.H. Freeman forthcoming) of the play.

Of course the choice of dominant source domains and hence of the abstract entities into which they are projected is interpretive, even if we grant the currently all-encompassing sense of that term (see Fish 1989: 320). These choices can change over time: for me, they have changed in 35 years of watching, reading and teaching *King Lear* from the SCALE schema ('Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again . . . Do but look up' [IV.vi.55, 59], and 'The worst is not / So long as we can say "This is the worst"' [IV.i.27-8], both instances of the orientational metaphors GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN) to the PATH schema (in particular, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor), instantiated in the lines cited above. These changes arise from autobiography, from deepening insight, from changing views that arise from many causes. I have 're-cognised' *King Lear* several times, and I probably will do so again. But these progressive acts of 'interpretation',

acts of choice, are far from being unconstrained. My choice of source domains is limited to those that are independently motivated. BALANCE. LINKS. PATH. and SCALE all lead richly documented lives as image-schemata underlying similar source domains outside *King Lear*. My choice of target domains into which a candidate source domain is projected must be consistent in form with that source domain (the source domain for 'I love you according to my bond' cannot arise from a CONTAINER schema because we do not conceive of 'bond' as having the shape of a container).

On the theory of cognitive metaphor, both my changed 'interpretations' over time and the very different 'interpretive' choices that might be made within a different interpretive community from mine are situated in the body and in bodily experience. Interpretations that depend on evidence from cognitive-metaphoric analysis are constrained both by that experience and by the requirement that the topology of that schematised experience in a metaphoric source domain be mapped into the topology of the target domain. The relative validity of particular source domains and metaphoric projection can be assessed with reference to their independent motivation and internal consistency. Of course there is no one valid God's-eye interpretation of a literary work, whether the evidence for such a claim arises from cognitive metaphor or anything else. But there is a range of plausible interpretations and a scale of valid ones. Cognitive metaphor constrains the interpretive community to the body of the embodied imagination.

Notes

- 1 Research for this article was conducted at the Institute of Cognitive Studies, University of California, Berkeley, while I was on sabbatical leave from the University of Southern California. I am grateful to both institutions for their support of this work, part of a longer study of cognitive metaphor in Shakespeare's major plays. Quotations from *King Lear* are taken from the Arden Shakespeare edition of the play (Muir 1985).
- 2 The body of recent literature on metaphor is enormous. A brief summary of this field as of a decade ago may be found in Levinson (1983: 147-62). An unsurprisingly partisan account of more recent work may be found in Lakoff forthcoming.
- 3 The play's financial language was noted as long ago as 1928 by Fr. Gundolf (*Shakespeare, Sein Wesen und Werk*), cited in Clemen (1951: 135), and most recently and felicitously in Colie (1974: 185-219). But these studies fail to capture two systematic relationships: first, between that language's source domain in financial accounting and the schema of BALANCE; second, between this source domain and the schema of LINKS.
- 4 Throughout what follows I use the term 'scenario' for what cognitive grammarians usually call a 'frame' or 'cognitive model' or 'idealised cognitive model', a way of understanding a concept or scene that structures our thinking about it.
- 5 Frost (1958) perceives that predictable outcomes such as the already determined awards of territory are the nature of rituals like this scene. Cordelia thus not only disrupts the ritual but, more seriously, disrupts the participants' (and the audience's) settled expectation of its outcome.
- 6 Reported in Brown (1905: 78).
- 7 Lear is to use precisely this word to describe his actions to Cornwall and Albany after he has disinherited Cordelia.

I do invest you jointly with my power.

Pre-eminence, and all the large effects

That troop with majesty.

8 See *OED*, s.v. short, III.C.8.c., 1579: 'They will all commie to short in their reckoning.' (l.l.129-31)

9 Cordelia is one

to whose young love

The vines of France and milk of Burgundy

Strive to be interess'd;

(l.l.82-4)

'Interested' is glossed in the *OED* (1) as 'To have a right or share.' It is cognate with a noun that captures the modern sense of 'interest' as 'legal concern.'

10 A word that in Shakespeare's time also collocated with 'payment' or 'salary', just as it does today; this passage is cited in *OED* (B1.45) for the 'payment' sense.

11 But she remains her father's daughter. When Cordelia wields executive authority late in the play she displays some of Lear's bad habits. To any of her retainers who will help the mad Lear she offers 'all [her] outward worth', (IV.iv.10) when by the link of service they should help their mistress's father (who remains, in Cordelia's view, their king as well) gratis. She seeks to balance Kent's service to her with good works of her own, a world-view he rejects with dignified irony:

Cordelia O thou good Kent! how shall I live and work

To match thy goodness? My life will be too short.

And every measure fail me.

Kent To be acknowledg'd, Madam, is o'er-paid. (IV.vii.1-4)

12 A specifically financial sense, meaning in Shakespeare's time as well as ours 'to offer (money, etc.) in discharge of a debt or liability, especially in exact fulfilment of the requirements of the law and of the obligation'. *OED*, s.v. tender, v., 1.

13 They pledge to Lear as consideration for their inheritances a bond that Cordelia demonstrates is already half-encumbered. Cordelia's 'audit' of Lear's balance sheet demonstrates that his assets are subject to an old adage of financial audits: the troubles are usually found in the receivables. A term in English property law conferring a residual right in land, such as an easement, that can have a monetary value (*Black's Law Dictionary* 1981: 1175).

14 *OED* 2c. The only citations are late fourteenth century. The same sense is not recorded for the verb, but the functional shift, from noun to verb, is one of the most general in English.

15 I am often taxed on this point with being 'totalising' or 'essentialist'. Guilty as charged. I take these terms to mean 'general, ignoring particulars that do not fit the theory. Noam Chomsky's early work in linguistic theory is often held up to me as an example of this 'fault' (e.g. Chomsky 1957: I blush at the comparison), where he focuses on syntax and gives short shrift to semantics and pragmatics. Chomsky took the strongest position consistent with the reliable facts that he had. Subsequent research produced more, and more reliable, facts, better theoretical accounts of areas of linguistic structure that his early work ignored, etc. But the theory of government and binding, a more recent incarnation (see Chomsky 1981), bears a recognisable resemblance to its 1957 ancestor, as does a libraryful of books and articles produced in the intervening three decades. None of these developments would have been possible, in my view, had not Chomsky been an unrepentant 'totaliser' from the start. Any theory of anything worth anything begins as totalising, essentialist, and universalist, and progressively qualifies its claims as research proceeds. Among the many problems of contemporary literary 'theory' is that in seeking to keep in play exceptions and purported anomalies it explains nothing, and is less 'theory' than 'general talk'.

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