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DEVELOPMENT OF METAPHOR IN THE CONTEXT OF POETIC TEXT

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The article identifies metaphorical expressions in the body of poetic text. It further formulates them into patterns, investigates underlying conceptual metaphors and explores their dynamics throughout the text. In course of the research the structure of conceptual metaphors is being taken into focus as well as the context of their use.

Key words: conceptual metaphor theory, concept, source domain, target domain, context.

В статье на основе поэтического текста выделяются метафорически использованные выражения. Далее они формируются в паттерны, выясняются концептуальные метафоры, лежащие в их основе, а также исследуется их динамика и развитие в течение всего текста. В ходе работы структура концептуальных метафор находится в фокусе исследования, как и контекст их использования.

Ключевые слова: теория концептуальной метафоры, концепт, сфера-источник, сфера-мишень, контекст.

Вуєк О.Є. РОЗРОБЛЕННЯ МЕТАФОР У КОНТЕКСТІ ПОЕТИЧНОГО ТЕКСТУ

У статті на основі поетичного тексту виокремлюються метафорично вжиті вирази. Надалі вони формуються у патерни, з'ясовуються концептуальні метафори, що лежать у їх основі, досліджується їхній розвиток і динаміка впродовж усього тексту. У ході роботи структура концептуальних метафор є фокусом дослідження поряд із контекстом їх використання.

Ключові слова: теорія концептуальної метафори, концепт, царина джерела, царина мети, контекст.

The **purpose** of the paper is to select metaphorical expressions within the poem by Patrick Kavanagh "Great Hunger" (1996) and explore the dynamics of metaphorical patterns through the body of poetic text. The paper provides an overview of the development of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, explores the theory of metaphor from the philosophical, stylistic, linguistic, psychological and pragmatic perspectives, looks into the process of metaphor analysis from the standpoint of cognitive poetics, specifically in terms of rapid versus delayed categorization.

The research seeks to accomplish the following **tasks:** single out metaphorical expressions and connect them to the underlying conceptual metaphors; form metaphorical patterns in poetic text representative of the most salient existential phenomena; examine the role of context in metaphor interpretation; identify conceptual metaphors in terms of conventionality / novelty; follow development of conceptual metaphors through text. Topicality of the paper is conditioned by the fact that the poem by Patrick Kavanagh *Great Hunger* has not yet become the subject of such analysis.

Metaphor interpretation in contemporary studies is multifaceted in the fact that it is pre-

sented in any aspect if linguistic encounter, be it political media or academic discourse, online or daily communication, literature or poetry. Most importantly it can be represented in various types of language use as well in "fundamental scheme of thought" [1, p. 607]. Hence division between literary and conceptual metaphor in contemporary linguistics.

Theory of metaphor is examined from the philosophical, stylistic, linguistic, psychological and pragmatic perspectives. Conceptual Metaphor Theory established the idea of primacy of thought, basic notions of source and target conceptual domains that are connected by establishing similarities or correlations in a way to produce metaphoric expressions [7].

Previously it was assumed that metaphoric language is more difficult to process. In this respect, Grice [3] developed the theory of conversational implicature, according to which metaphor interpretation in conversation involved appeal to maxims or general principles of conversation for understanding its inferences. In this theory "standard pragmatic model" is used to differentiate nonliteral and indirect meaning [3]. Further psychological research has proven that identification of inadequate literal meaning



is not necessary for interpretation of non-literal meaning [1, p. 608].

Psychological approach to metaphor understanding offers methods for assessing internal mental processes in interpretation of indirect meaning. R. Gibbs states that the ubiquitous use of metaphor in written and spoken language was proven by extensive empirical evidence in psycholinguistic research [1, p. 608].

Interest to metaphorical language in real discourse required development of a reliable method for its identification. Pragglejazz group with the primary researcher Gerard Steen developed metaphor identification procedure (MIP) that in four steps allowed to recognize metaphorically used words in an utterance [8]. MIP was later elaborated and a five-step metaphor analysis was proposed [12; 13]. This procedure is quite elaborate and complex and provides much better insight into the structure of metaphorical expressions. Although its drawback is the fact that it only allows to examine single cases of metaphors, which is not convenient in the work with a large body of text.

One of the limitations of CMT is its lack of integration of context into the process of making meaning. Zoltan Kövecses states that comprehension of metaphor requires surrounding aspects of physical, social and mental environment (context), which includes embodiment of metaphor, linguistic surrounding (co-text), and “conceptual-cognitive context” – conceptual system that produces metaphors, part of which functions as context for their production [6, p. 186].

It is commonly assumed that the metaphor of literary text is more complex, rich, novel and striking than metaphorical expressions found in non-literary texts. The founder of Cognitive Poetics, Reuven Tsur, in his work “Lakoff’s Road not Taken” expresses uncertainty about application of conceptual metaphor theory to literary metaphor interpretation. In his view preexisting conceptualized meaning can be attributed to rapid conceptualization, but this approach is rigid and does not allow mental flexibility [14, p. 339]. Tsur’s greatest critique of Lakoff’s work is that in working out meaning potential of conceptual metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, THE BODY IS A CONTAINER, he created “an extensive repertory of stock responses”, which alongside with obvious service in metaphor interpretation also created a disservice, as they prevent a more adequate response to encounter of metaphorical text [14, p. 345].

Many theories lean towards the analysis of individual metaphorical expressions and do not

examine common metaphorical patterns of the text in general. Although the existence of enduring conceptual metaphors is a proven fact, we believe that close examination of the whole body of text may reveal development of conceptual metaphor, a certain evolution of underlying conceptual structure or a “cumulative effect of metaphors” [9, p. 240]. We assume that interpretation of literary metaphor requires significant processing effort on the part of the reader and may establish diverse and atypical correlations between source and target domains. A set of subtle implicatures communicated by metaphorical expressions in poetry can be said to restructure the content of what would be traditionally included in a certain concept representative of corresponding aspects of objective reality.

According to Tsur’s principle of rapid versus delayed conceptualization instantaneous comprehension most likely will differ from interpretation in perspective [14, p. 339]. Over time people establish different correlations between domains and the inferences can engage several concepts and involve multiple interpretations. This is one of the biggest challenges of interpretation of metaphor in poetry – it is close to impossible to provide a precise number of metaphors contained in one piece of text or the exact number of underlying conceptual metaphors. In Kavanagh’s *The Great Hunger* (a 6080-word poem) we have singled out over 200 metaphorical expressions and identified underlying conceptual metaphors.

In the context of the poem the primary concepts are LIFE, FARMLAND, PEOPLE, DEATH, ANIMALS, PLANTS, SEXUAL DEPRIVATION, MORALITY, RELIGION. By establishing correlations within these domains, we were able to discern metaphorical patterns and observe their development throughout the text. An example of such a pattern is of an ontological concept of LIFE.

life as it is broken-backed over the Book of Death	LIFE IS A PERSON
We will wait and watch the tragedy to the last curtain	LIFE IS A THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE
to pluck the fantasies	LIFE IS A TREE
From the fruited Tree of Life	
While his world withered away,	LIFE IS A PLANT



Life slipped between the bars.	LIFE IS A LIQUID SUBSTANCE
A new rhythm is a new life	LIFE IS MUSIC
Life dried in the veins of these women and men	LIFE IS BLOOD
Who bent the coin of my destiny	LIFE IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT
That it stuck in the slot?	
He will hardly remember that life happened to him	LIFE IS A SINGLE EVENT
To sing the gospel of life	LIFE IS RELIGIOUS TEACHING
To a music as flighty tangent	LIFE IS MUSICAL PIECE
As a tune on an oboe.	

These metaphorical expressions coupled with underlying conceptual metaphors are presented in order of their appearance in the text and are representative of the most common instances of reference to the target domain LIFE. The source domains that initiate correlations are of various physical and spatial qualities. The commonalities are found in the source domains of *plant world*, *liquid* and *music*, they establish similar qualities of *fluidity*, *flexibility* and *pliancy*; other metaphors infer references to *the source of life* and *religion*. The occurrence of life metaphors in poetic text shows their evolution from conventional type indicating physical quality to novel type of abstract quality.

We further present other common metaphorical patterns of the poem.

Personification of objects and entities of the animal and plant world.

crows gabble over worms and frogs	ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE
and the fence	OBJECT IS A PERSON
Shows the green of after-grass through a little window	
As the shadows of poplars crooked the furrows	SHADOW IS A PERSON

Identification of people with inanimate objects or animals.

potato-gatherers like mechanized scarecrows move	PEOPLE ARE OBJECTS
Patrick Maguire bent like a bridge	
She held the strings of her children's Punch and Judy, and when a mouth opened	PEOPLE ARE PUPPETS
It was her truth that the dolls would have spoken	
If they hadn't been made of wood and tin -	
The peasant ploughman who is half a vegetable	PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

We can observe the so-called reversal or inversion of roles, a scenario in which people are devoid of life forces, while objects and animals (especially those referring to farming) are endowed with life. As Kövecses point out "in many languages and cultures of the world animals are commonly viewed as humans and humans as animals; humans are commonly conceptualized as objects and objects as humans" [6, p. 6]. Metaphorical expressions presented here are versatile and creative, but the underlying conceptual metaphors are conventional and near-universal.

Imparting female qualities to the religious objects, and cattle.

And the pregnant Tabernacle lifted a moment to Prophecy	OBJECT OF CULT IS A WOMAN
When girls laughed; when they screamed he knew that meant	
The cry of fillies in season	WOMEN ARE FEMALE CATTLE
Two cyclists pass	
Talking loudly of Kitty and Molly?	
Horses or women? wisdom or folly?	
He saw his cattle	
And stroked their flanks in lieu of wife to handle.	FEMALE CATTLE ARE WOMEN



We believe this scenario is indicative of emotional turmoil of psycho-sexual deprivation recurrent in the text of a poem. Only the first example presented here is a novel metaphor and, to our knowledge, cannot be found in many other cultural backgrounds.

Presentation of abstract notions as people.

Religion, the fields and the fear of the Lord	RELIGION IS A PERSON FARMLAND IS A PERSON
And Ignorance giving him the coward's blow	EMOTION IS A PERSON
Come with me, Imagination, into this iron house	NOTION IS A PERSON
Be easy, October Evening at the cross- roads	TIME IS A PERSON

One of the key motives of the poem is reference to farmland as a person, an object, a captor, or a weapon of death.

Is there some light of imagination in these wet clods? hurrying fields of April	FARMLAND IS A PERSON
O the grip, O the grip of irregular fields	FARMLAND IS A CAPTOR
she praised the man who made a field his bride.	FARMLAND IS A WOMAN
And jails are narrower than the five-sod ridge And colder than the black hills facing Armagh in February.	FARMLAND IS A CAPTOR
The fields were bleached white	FARMLAND IS AN OBJECT

Conceptual metaphors of the poem are conventional for the most part. Although novel metaphors presented in metaphorical expressions appeal to the theme rarely disclosed in poetry in such a candid and almost brutal honesty – sexual relations. In the body of text this topic is conceptualized in the concept of SEXUAL DEPRIVATION and is realized in the form of numerous metaphorical expressions.

passion that never needs a wife	ABSTRACT NOTION IS A PERSON
And two stones in his fist And an impotent worm on his thigh.	GENITALS ARE OBJECTS GENITALS ARE ANIMALS
Once a week at least flesh must make an appearance.	GENITALS ARE PEOPLE
So Maguire got tired Of the no-target gun fired	GENITALS ARE OBJECTS WOMEN ARE OBJECTS
And returned to his headland of carrots and cabbage	FARMLAND IS A PERSON LIFE IS A PERSON
To the fields once again	
Where eunuchs can be men	
And life is more lousy than savage	

In the metaphorical expressions one can observe common reference to the concept of IMPOTENCE, SEXUAL DEPRIVATION and MASTURBATION. Based on the context of the whole text we can infer conceptual metaphor LIFE OF A FARMER IS SEXUAL DEPRIVATION, or FARMLING IS IMMASCULATION.

This pattern indicates that interpretation of some metaphors that constitute the main idea of the literary text is often based not on available metaphorical expressions, but rather understood implicitly, or based on the absence of an expected element from an inherent concept.

Consider the following example:

O he loved his mother
Above all others.
O he loved his ploughs
And he loved his cows

The concept of LOVE is missing an expected and natural element – woman (bride or wife). Although these lexical units are present in other metaphorical expressions, they are purposefully excluded from the concept of LOVE. This allows us to create an implicit conceptual metaphor: LIFE OF A FARMER IS SEXUAL DEPRIVATION, mentioned previously.

One of the challenges that presented itself in the present research is the necessity to explain

an abstract notion by means of another abstract notion. This is an unorthodox approach in contemporary theory of metaphor, as it is agreed that the topic of the metaphor is a concept and the vehicle is a specific object of objective reality, something more palpable, so to speak. We have found it rather challenging to present some conceptual metaphors in this manner, as our interpretation afforded no other choice.

We may suggest that conceptual metaphor of literary text can be presented on two different layers:

- 1) base layer metaphors, those available from immediate linguistic metaphorical expressions;
- 2) “supra-layer conceptual metaphors”, which
 - a) cannot be understood from particular immediate verbal surrounding;
 - b) their comprehension requires higher degree of abstraction;
 - c) involve the knowledge of context;
 - d) presuppose a closer study of underlying conceptual metaphors.

To make the distinction clearer, base-layer metaphor are generated from linguistic context, while supra-layer metaphors develop from the underlying conceptual metaphors.

This hypothesis resonates with Kövecses’ theory of “conceptual-cognitive context”. If we were to accept it, then there is a number of issues that need to be resolved. One of them is explication of an abstract notion by means of another abstraction. Another is identification of the structure of such metaphors – while the topic can be identifiable, the vehicle is likely to be presented in multiple ways. Finally, we must define the distinction of this type of metaphors from implicit metaphors.

The role of context cannot be overestimated in metaphor understanding. *The Great Hunger* contains allusions that cannot be perceived from available linguistic surrounding. The poem starts with the line “*Clay is the word and clay is the flesh*”, which alludes to description of conception and birth of Jesus Christ: “*And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us*” (St. John 1:14). This transformation of Biblical lines indicates the main theme of the poem that in rural Ireland Christianity yielded to materialism. Metaphoric expressions of the simile type A is B are direct, deliberate. Knowledge of the context allows us to discern correlations between four concepts: FARMLAND, RELIGION, SUBSTANCE OF THE BODY, ELEMENT OF SPEECH. Available metaphorical expressions are only two, but established correlations give us reason to infer several conceptual metaphors: FARMLAND IS

A SUBSTANCE OF THE BODY, FARMLAND IS AN ELEMENT OF SPEECH – obvious superficial conclusions; FARMLAND IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE, FARMLAND IS AN OBJECT OF RELIGION – more subtle and open to further interpretation. It is quite apparent that without the context conceptual metaphors would be miscomprehended, as outside of linguistic surrounding they become novel and ambiguous.

Consider another example: “*As Respectability that knows the price of all things // And marks God's truth in pounds and pence and farthings*”. The available linguistic context allows us to infer conceptual metaphor RESPECTABILITY IS A PERSON, or more abstract NOTION IS A PERSON, where the topic is respectability and the vehicle is presented by two lexical units – *knows* and *marks*. Although, these lines contain an allusion to Oscar Wilde’s play *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, specifically the definition of a cynic – “*the man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing*”. If we make a connection **cynic – personified notion of Respectability**, this offers a different perspective: a respectable person as viewed by the farm folk is nothing but a cynic in disguise. In which case a different conceptual metaphor may fit better: RESPECTABILITY IS CYNICISM.

The title of the poem itself is a reference to historical events of Irish Potato Famine otherwise called The Great Famine or the Great Hunger that devastated the island between 1845 and 1852. In the text of the poem there is no direct indication of hunger, but it is plausible that deprivation of food and cause of death is being compared to deprivation of basic psychological and physical needs. Thus, this correlation allows us to construct the conceptual metaphor LIFE OF A FARMER IS DEPRIVATION OF BASIC NEEDS. It is introduced at the start of the poem and is developed throughout by means of supporting conceptualizations. It is very abstract, which is an obvious drawback, but at the same time it is the “supra-level” type of metaphor that cannot be perceived by analysing separate utterances. It appears in the result of complex investigation of metaphorical patterns, their development within the body of text and examination of the broad context.

It is clear from the analysis that the implications of metaphorical expressions can be explained by historical events of a language community. Although what needs to be researched yet is if the same conceptual metaphors are common for other literary works of the same cultural background and how far beyond this culture they go. The present study is an attempt to offer a different perspective



to the theory of metaphor in poetic text. We have been able to present only a few metaphorical patterns developed in context of a poem and believe that a deeper research into the theory of metaphor from pragmatic and semantic perspectives will offer better insights and clarify the issues that have presented themselves in this paper.

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