

Original Paper

Review of on “Metaphoric Criticism” in “*Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*” by Sonja K. Fo

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Abstract

This review critically presents the “Metaphoric Criticism” in “Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice” and tries to discuss the purposes of metaphor which is persuasive in people’s lives. In a conclusion, Conceptual metaphor is a powerful cognitive tool, as well as “Metaphoric Criticism” is not just a book for research, but a learning guide.

Keywords

metaphoric Criticism, Conceptual Metaphor, Bestrangement

1. Short introduction on Metaphoric Criticism

Metaphor plays an important role in people’s life. Obviously, “metaphor” here, in the essay, does not only refer to a figure of speech that is only found in the literary works, but is considered a way of people’s thinking. As the essay defines at the beginning, “Metaphors are nonliteral comparisons in which a word or phrase from one domain of experience is applied to another domain” (Sonja, 2018, p. 299). The definition is similar to the definition of the conceptual metaphors—as a major element in cognitive linguistics. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is no longer viewed just as a way of expressing ideas by means of language, but as a way of thinking and acting. In other words, conceptual metaphor is a basic and important cognitive model that is responsible for the birth of new meanings and our understanding of new things. Koveceses defines it as a metaphor for “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kovecess, 2002, p. 28). Metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4).

On the basis of that, the author of the essay further proposes that metaphor is a major way in which

people constitute reality. It works as a kind of decoration, but not always a positive one. Sometimes, the use of metaphor was regarded as a cheat, which was illustrated in detail in the first supporting example. In addition, the author also insists that by organizing reality in particular ways, our selected metaphors also prescribe how to act.

In the following statement, the essay emphasizes the great influence of the metaphors in human beings' lives by exemplifying the metaphors used in the immigrant, the Iraq war and architecture. Metaphor used in immigrants and the early immigration restriction debate in the United States holds the main part of this essay. From the perspective of different metaphors about immigrants, such as organism metaphor, natural catastrophe and war metaphors, as well as animal and subhuman metaphors, the metaphors that were employed to denigrate immigrants reinforced both conscious and subliminal fears that were particularly ominous. If people in America, a nation of immigrants, want to get rid of the influence of the new immigrants, both in gene and cultural invasion, the first step they took is undermining the images of those immigrants, and then followed by a strict restrictive policy. In the second aspect, the author comments on a short essay "Captive Audience", analyzing the effective metaphor in it. One of the main ideas mentioned is that metaphors make the familiar foreign, which is also the topic of the short review. Finally, it comes to architectural metaphor, taking Portland Building as an example. Through the use of metaphor, architectural forms can subvert or reaffirm existing ideologies. Portland Building, as a controversial one for its special appearance and unique color coordinate, would remind people of the negative ideology of the government and bureaucracy. But the Portland Building's metaphors Graves employs, including toy metaphor, anthropomorphic quality and romance, gave people a chance to think about something delightful.

2. Brief Comments on "Metaphoric Criticism"

2.1 *The Employment of Metaphors for Political Purposes*

Metaphors are influenced by the culture and are a reflection of the culture. On the other hand, metaphors play a significant role in shaping the ideologies and values of a community, and are usually used for political purposes by the authority. In the example that metaphor employed in the early immigration, metaphors were used to fashion a negative image of immigrants, thus supporting the following repressive policies against the marginalized group. In this way, metaphors were regarded as tools, or even weapons for authority in social control. For instance, The "IMMIGRANT AS INVADER" conceptual metaphor enforces citizen's disgust for the new immigrant unconsciously. Obviously, it is not the only example of metaphors employed for political purposes; similar things happen in racial discrimination.

Such pejorative metaphors of race contain *Dutch courage*, *French postcard*, *Swede*, *Frenchman*, *to welsh*, *go to the Jews*, and *castles in Spain*. The pejorative metaphors of race are mainly the reflection of the ethnic exclusion of the British nation. It is closely related to the imbalance of political, economic and military development between countries, as well as the differences in religious beliefs, social

customs, values and other cultural factors. For example, the metaphors which are pertinent to French, such as *French letter* (condom), *excuse my French* (forgive my foul language), *Pedlar's French* (the jargon of thieves, puzzling words) (Yue, 2009, p. 181), are shaped by the Britain historical feuds with French, which begins from the Norman Conquest to the later Anglo-French “Hundred Years’ War”. Shaped by the culture, the metaphors of the race will also help to construct culture, and even be used as tools by the authority.

In the essay, metaphors were employed for excluding immigrants, while metaphors are also frequently employed in political discourse to embody specific ideological attachments and implicitly influence the audience's understanding, so as to realize discourse goals (Zhao, 2020, p. 41). The “NATION AS A PERSON” metaphor is one of the frequent use in political discourse. Conceptualized as persons, nations have their personalities, build social relationships with other nations, and carry out policies consistent with their personalities and relationships. China always conceptualizes himself as a person who always firmly supports peace and development, pursues dialogue and cooperation with others, and holds against negative values such as terrorism and hegemony. For example, China regards all countries as equals whatever their size and China pursues friendship and cooperation with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful. While American conceptualized himself as a person who has strong power, considers himself as the leader of the others. Here is one example: Every nation must know: America will live its values, and we will lead by example.

2.2 *The Employment of Metaphors for Bestrangement*

“Bestrangement” is the core concept of Russian Formalism. Victor Shklovsky advocated the theory of “Bestrangement” and tried to use it as a method of summarizing complicated feelings and expressing phenomena. From the viewpoint of the Formalist, art means to become “Bestrangement”, that is to say, art makes itself more difficult to be understood so that the time used for tasting is prolonged. Metaphors, together with other tools including ambiguity, conceit, irony and tension, worked as the main standards of literariness of works. To summarize, metaphor is a means of creating defamiliarization.

In the second essay, when analyzing the metaphors in the article “Captive Audience”, the author title his review “Making the Familiar Foreign”, which is similar to the concept of “Bestrangement”. One of the metaphorical vehicles employed in the Iraq War is familiar but unknown to others, such as “AI”, “Larry” and “Uncle Sam”. Here, a name may be printed upon a uniform, but the person behind it is camouflaged. This disorientation serves to make the reader feel alienated and out of place, creating an opportunity for introspection.

Here is another example. We can take the phrase “a pale moan” as an instance. “Pale” means “very lighted colored”, but is employed to modify sound—“moan”. That kind of collocation which seems to be inappropriate gave the readers special feelings. In the phrase, people metaphorically refer to sound as an object that can be seen. The employment of metaphors matches the basic meaning of “Bestrangement”: all expressive forms are not strict copies of reality; on the contrary, they are

intentional violations.

3. Conclusion

From a figure of speech to a way of thinking, metaphors become dominant in people's lives. Nowadays, more and more researchers realize the important role metaphors play and try to explore and study their employment in various fields. When metaphor is applied in the literary works, it helps build estrangement, enables readers to reconstruct and experience the miscellaneous consciousness of characters, furthermore, to understand the thematic meaning of the work underlying the seemingly chaotic surface of narration. When metaphor is employed in political area, it can be a tool for the one who controls it, working as a transition for a radical policy or helping create a positive image of a nation. To sum up, conceptual metaphor is a powerful cognitive tool for us to conceptualize abstract categories, which shapes not only our communication but also the way of our thinking and action.

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