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Literary Creation and Cognitive Linguistics: An analysis of the Semantic Structure of Alireza Rowshan's Poems on the Basis of the Conceptual Blending Theory

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Abstract: this paper aims at an examination of Alireza Rowshan's poems based on the Conceptual Blending Theory put forth by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), investigating their semantics structure by drawing on the conceptual means the theory provides, and thus classifying his poems into a couple of stylistic categories. This is conducted through a qualitative research method, in a descriptive and analytic manner, so that, first, four select typical poems are explored throughout using the conceptual means provided by the Blending Theory, such as integration networks, blends, vital relations and so on, and, then, the resultant outcomes get extrapolated statistically into the rest of the poems contained within two of his most famous collections. In the process, according to the application of the foregoing conceptual means, Rowshan's poems turn out to be clearly and systematically classified into four major groups in terms of their semantic structure, while the details of each of these semantic structures are formulated through the conceptual means of the foresaid theory. What comes about through this analysis reveals that, by applying the newly emerging linguistic theories to the analysis of literary works, it is possible to enhance the conducted analyses in precision and order, thus advancing literary criticism one step further.

Keywords: Blank Verse Poetry; Alireza Rowshan; Conceptual Blending; Integration Networks; Vital Relations.

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1. Introduction

This paper aims at an examination of Alireza Rowshan's poems within the framework of the Conceptual Blending Theory put forth by Fauconnier and Turner (2002). It tries to investigate the semantics structure of these poems by drawing on the conceptual means the Blending theory provides, and thus to reach a classification of his poems into a couple of stylistic categories. Conceptual Blending Theory was originally proposed as a means to describe and explain meaning construction in ordinary language. Nevertheless, since the process of sense making constitutes one of the main characteristics of human beings in every domain, literature among many others, the mental operations Blending Theory proposes apply to all human activity, including literary texts. The same can be said in the case of Blank Verse poetry, as the main task in creating (and understanding) such poetry revolves around the analysis of complex semantic structures lying behind its form, usually composed of two or more clashing input mental spaces, giving creativity to it. The current research wishes to answer one main question: is it possible to make use of new linguistic theories (here Cognitive Linguistics) for an increase in the precision, clarity and systematicity of analyzing literary works, and if so, how? Our Hypothesis is that this is practical. In order to answer this question, we have selected two collections of the contemporary Persian Blank-Verse poet Alireza Rowshan, trying to scrutinize the semantic structure of them with the help of the conceptual means contained with the Blending Theory, and thus arriving at overall generalizations as to their semantic features and the way they are created by the author. Finally, we try to classify these poems stylistically on the basis of the Blending Theory means.

2. Materials and Methods

following a qualitative methodology and in an analytic-descriptive manner, first, four select typical poems are throughly explored using the conceptual means provided by the Blending Theory, such as integration networks, blends,

vital relations and so on, and, then, the resultant outcomes get extrapolated statistically into the rest of the poems contained within two of his most famous collections, namely, *The Book of Ain't* and *Riveted by*. We have built upon these two collections, as they contain the poet's short, minimalist poems.

3. Results and Discussion

An application of the five-fold dimensions of the Blending Theory, including Constituting Principles, typology of Integration Networks, Classification of Blends, Vital Relations and Optimality Principles or Governing Principles, in the case of Alireza Rowshan's poems demonstrates that this theory, because of its rich conceptual tools for describing the process of meaning construction, is most capable of explaining the creation of the mentioned pieces, as well as assessing them in a rigorous, quantificational manner, implying thus a good ability for the systematic criticism and examination of literary works in general. As a result, Rowshan's poems turn out to be clearly and systematically classified into four major groups in terms of their semantic structure, while the details of each of these semantic structures are formulated through the conceptual means of the Blending theory.

As it turns out, stylistic features of the semantic structure of Alireza Rowhan's poems in terms of the conceptual tools of the Blending Theory may be identified across four axes: 1) typology of the blends used in the semantic structure, which are mostly simple; 2) integration networks, which are mostly simple in his poems; 3) vital relations, which are mostly role and value, then, analogy and part-whole, all of which finally are compressed to uniqueness. 4) emergent structure, which are typically not very creative, but have s strong emotional impact. As for vital relations, it is to be noted that, through this analysis, a new vital relation has come to be identify which has not been referred to in the literature, and that is intertextuality. This is one of the new findings of this article.

4. Conclusion

What comes about through this analysis reveals that, by applying the newly emerging linguistic theories to the analysis of literary works, it is possible to enhance the conducted analyses in precision and order, thus advancing literary criticism one step further. Thus, the question we raised at the beginning of our work (the possibility for new linguistic theories to be used in literature) is answered affirmatively.