



Metaphor as argument: A stylistic genre-based approach

Language and Literature

21(2) 119–135

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DOI: 10.1177/0963947011435858

lal.sagepub.com



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Abstract

One of the most intriguing questions in both stylistic and rhetorical analyses relates to determining textual effect on readers, aesthetic or otherwise. Whether the power of the text is directly associated with the role of the text producer and his or her intentions, the linguistic, paralinguistic, extralinguistic and situational context of the text, the background and socio-cognitive expectations of the reader, or a combination of some or all of these factors (or other factors) is a question that is still the subject of stylistic and rhetorical analysis today. This article is a further step in this direction. It attempts to investigate one dimension of textual effect, namely uniformity in reader reaction to an argumentative poem entitled *Dinner with the Cannibal*, by focusing on the roles that genre and metaphor play in ideologically positioning readers. It argues, on the one hand, that literature is the dominant genre in this hybrid literary-argumentative poem, channelling the readers' initial interpretations almost exclusively in the interest of more traditional literary interpretative approaches. On the other hand, and more importantly, it focuses on the role that metaphor, as a cognitive link between text producer and reader, plays in the construction of an extremely controlled, uniform interpretation of the argumentative dimension to the poem. The overall effect of the way genre and metaphor function in this argumentative poem, it is concluded, is highly ideological.

Keywords

Dinner with the Cannibal, genre, ideology, metaphor, pedagogical stylistics, postcolonial literature, (the) reader, rhetoric, Wittl Ihimaera

I Introduction

In classroom settings, experiencing readerly effect and possibly experimenting with it become more tangible for a researcher. Within such a controlled context, monitoring effect and investigating the reasons behind it can add some validity to the claims made

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about the generally theoretical and problematic notion of ‘the reader’. This obviously falls in line with stylisticians’ and rhetoricians’ numerous attempts to empirically validate assumptions about what readers do as they read literary and argumentative texts (see Cockcroft, 2004; Fahnestock, 2005; Hamilton, 2005; Watson, 1999) as well as their calls to approach ‘textual meaning, including literary meaning, [starting from a] re-focus on shared interpretations’ (Jeffries, 2001: 341).

The latter call is precisely the area I propose to focus on and examine in this article. The context is that of an ESL setting where students presented with an argumentative poem read the poem and react to it in a uniform manner, at two different stages. In the first stage, the text is uncritically read *as* literature (see the next section for a detailed explanation); in the second, and following specific instructions and clarifications, still uncritically read, but *as* rhetoric (also detailed later). Since both readings run contrary to the formal analytical, critical, and dialectic/argumentative frameworks and procedures taught in that particular class (explained later), and are therefore not expected to be the overall reaction of ‘the reader’, questions in trying to determine the reasons behind this phenomenon (i.e. the uniformity and uncriticality in reading) are raised. The answers to these questions, I argue, take us one step closer to understanding the mechanics of textual effect and readerly interpretation.

Overall, the argument in this article falls under the umbrella of what Hamilton (2005) terms ‘a cognitive rhetoric of poetry’ with the pedagogical direction emphasised by Burke (2010). This means that this essay is ‘grounded in classical theories of rhetoric and poetics on the one hand, and in cognitive linguistic theories of figures on the other ... [placing] equal emphasis on the poet’s production of figurative language and the reader’s comprehensive processing of it’ (Hamilton: 2005: 279). What it attempts to show is precisely how ‘a discussion of the poem’s figures [in this case, metaphors] can help explain how readers [in this case, the students] realize the poem’s argument’ (2005: 286).

2 Text and background

The context in which this experiment took place is that of a modern rhetoric and argumentation course (called ENG 202: Sophomore Rhetoric) taught to 51 students at a Lebanese University following the American system. This is a 15 week, 3 hours per week mandatory course, one of whose main objectives is training students in methods of formal argumentation. As the syllabus explicitly states, the course aims at enhancing the students’ critical abilities, by ‘reinforcing and sharpening the students’ analytical reading and writing skills as well as expanding their ability to critique and synthesize information from a variety of disciplines and for argumentative purposes’. The learning outcomes of the syllabus are more specific in that they aim at enabling the students to:

1. Read a variety of argumentative texts in a critical manner by
 - a. identifying elements of formal argumentation;
 - b. evaluating the logic behind arguments and the different types of evidence;
 - c. exploring the significance of tone, style and ‘creative language’ to the argumentative process.

2. Respond critically to a variety of argumentative texts, orally through class discussions, but mainly in writing through developing documented argumentative essays.

In short, teaching formal argumentation and helping students develop critical and analytical skills, both at the receptive (reading/identification) and productive (evaluation through oral and written responses) levels are the ultimate objectives of the course, occupying the whole of the 15 instructional weeks. Accordingly, the course moves through different modes of persuasion, reading, evaluating and critiquing arguments, as well as producing well-structured arguments.

In terms of actual textual analysis, most of the texts used in this course are typically common expository essays, of the kind found in newspapers and magazines and normally collected in textbooks (such as Behrens and Rosen's 2005 *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* which was used at the time of the experiment), covering a variety of contemporary social, cultural and political issues. Yet in order to meet one of the objectives of the syllabus (1.c in the foregoing list), namely 'exploring the significance of tone, style and "creative language" to the argumentative process', instructors are encouraged to introduce an element of argumentation in literary texts, with freedom regarding the choice of these texts and timing of their coverage. Normally, such texts are used towards the end of the course, as the students are deemed more experienced and therefore more confident in analysing arguments in more straightforward, expository texts than literature.

In this particular case, the first literary text used, around week 12 of the course is a short story, followed by a short one-act play, and then around week 14, the poem under study in this article. This is a postcolonial poem, written by Witi Ihimaera and entitled *Dinner with the Cannibal*. In it, the poet argues against the brutality and cruelty of the colonisation of the Maori in New Zealand by metaphorically comparing colonisation to an act of cannibalism. The instructional point of focus in the text is providing students with a working example of how to critically read any text by identifying the elements of formal argumentation following the Toulmin model of 1958 and the Aristotelian model of syllogistic, deductive reasoning (see Aristotle, 2007). It is also meant to show students how all text types can be argumentative, including literary texts.

Dinner with the Cannibal by Witi Ihimaera

Of course I should have realized at dinner

That he would be a man of special tastes

His mordant wit and intellect proclaimed him bon vivant

I suppose I was bedazzled by it all

The chandelier, the red roses like stigmata

Too flattered by the invitation

To notice that the table was laid only for hors d'oeuvres

It was understood of course that I was privileged to be there

With him in dinner jacket and black bow-tie
The fact that he drank claret should have made me realize
That he liked his meat rare yet, even so
I was taken aback when, all of a sudden
He reached across the table to snap off both my legs
As if I was a crisp brown Maori bread-man
Saying 'You won't need these, will you?'

The snap and wrench of bone from socket
Sounded louder than I expected, but the agony was slight
(I've always had a high pain threshold)
What alarmed me more was that my silk trousers were for ever ruined
'After all', he said, 'a landless man may just as well be limbless'
'And just in case', he added, breaking both my arms,
'This will prevent any further throwing of wet black tea-shirts
At her Majesty'

What could I do? I watched him
Suck the marrow of my bones and tear the meat
That once had made me mobile
I was pleased his manners were impeccable
Not one sweet morsel of me dropped
From his lips – I loved the way
He cracked my toes and fingers open with his teeth
To work the fine gristle for its flavour

He was a gourmet of impeccable sophistication
'That was much better than Aboriginal or Red Indian'
He said, 'And I have never liked the taste of Hindu or Pakistani
Too much curry in their diet taints the flesh.
You, being Maori, are a repast quite delicious,
Almost like Samoan, less fatty than the Tongan'
So saying, he proceeded to the main course –

This was my stomach, heart and ribs
Not exactly in that order, for I could not see

What he ate first as he leant forward
With silver fork and knife
To slice the cavity of my breast open
Like a crisp golden chicken
My thoughts were entertained in fact by the memory
Of Noel Coward's witticism about Salotte
At the Queen's coronation in 1953 –
Mr Coward was wise never to visit Tonga

'Ah, there it is,' he said, impaling my heart with his fork
And lifting it from its protective cage.
I wept to see its pulsing beauty,
But thought – This is only to be expected really
From people who eat and drink the body and blood
Of Christ every Sunday
'Best rid yourself of this, old chap,' he added,
'Your Maori yearnings are excessive, you agree?'

I wondered if he was right, after all, why yearn
For language and culture already taken, why fight it?
Where does Maoritanga and where do Maori people fit in this world of teenage
mutant Ninja turtles?
Yet I did protest and fight as he cut through the middle
Of my heart and, seeing that rich blood flow red as a river
Wondered if there was time to escape this dinner
'Oh, no, you don't', he said, as he began dessert

Dishing the sweetmeats of my body onto a crystal plate
My liver, kidneys and tongue
And last of all, my eyes,
Smothering them with strawberries and rich cream
By then, without eyes, I could no longer see
the relish of his enjoyment
Cruelly, he left my brain intact to wonder
Why I had ever invited him to dine
150 years ago -

3 Classroom instructions and methodology

Normally, lessons in this class proceed in the following manner. The text is initially assigned for critical reading at home, where a critical reading, in argumentative terms, is typically associated with approaching a text in the light of the three Aristotelian appeals: ethos, pathos and logos. Students are expected and trained to spot weaknesses in logic (fallacies), assess the credibility of the author, and evaluate evidence and support presented both in terms of quantity and quality. Consequently, an argument is deemed more persuasive or less so depending on how the author makes his/her appeals and whether there is an over-dependence on one type of appeal at the expense of another. Moreover, and most importantly, being critical also means the students' ability to present counter-arguments and relevant support to challenge or refute claims made.

Once the reading is done at home, the classroom discussion starts with very general, teacher-initiated questions about the text. During that semester, the topic discussed was 'obesity' and most of the articles argued for different causes (genetic, social, government related), effects (social ostracism, health problems), and/or solutions (gastric-bypass, parental control, clear governmental policies) to the problem of obesity. The opening question would ask students, very generally, what they thought about the article, and answers would normally take the classroom discussion straight to the intended argument; that is, whether, for instance, the argument that obesity is not the obese person's problem but a problem of social perception makes sense to them. Different students usually adopt different positions and the argumentative nature of the activity immediately starts to take form.

In order to manage the discussion and debate that the students get into (and usually get excited about), the instructor would then seek a more structured approach by listing on the board the elements of formal argumentation following the Toulmin (1958) model; that is to say, under the six categories: claim, reason, warrant, backing, qualifier and rebuttal. The students are then asked to identify each of these categories, and, based on that, a critical evaluation of the text would proceed more smoothly since it becomes easier to see how a text's argument is presented in order to point out its strengths and weaknesses. A teacher-led discussion would then elaborate on the three Aristotelian appeals by raising questions about who the author is, how credible s/he is, what type of evidence is used, how relevant and useful this evidence is, whether there is enough of it, whether there are any fallacies and so forth. Finally, and very importantly, if the students have not already done so (since most of the times they have), they are asked and encouraged to question and counter-argue some of the claims made and to present counter-evidence.

The lesson typically concludes either with a writing activity (a written response, evaluation or critique) or an oral discussion on how that text can be linked to previous articles, something else the students have read, a documentary they have watched or to something they have experienced in their daily lives. And by the end of around 13 weeks of training, the majority of the students are usually capable of applying such critical skills of questioning claims and evaluating evidence.

In the case of *Dinner with the Cannibal*, the manner in which the lesson was conducted was similar to the approach detailed earlier. The poem was initially assigned for critical reading at home with the same expectations regarding evaluating it in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the argumentative process.

However, there were different types of obstacle to this activity in that particular class. When asked about their overall reaction to the poem, the students' responses were, to begin with, quite uniform. The overwhelming reaction to the poem was that of utter shock and disgust. Some students commented that they had to reread the poem (some more than twice) just to make sure that they understood it correctly; in other words, that someone was actually being eaten. All those students who did comment on the poem said that the act of cannibalism and the amount of detail describing it in the poem was quite sickening. Picturing that act while reading the poem was, as one student put it, 'gross'. Some even wondered why we were assigned that reading in the first place.

Judging from their reaction, and in line with previous questionnaires, it seemed that this poem did not meet their expectations of what general poetic themes are supposed to be like: emotional and aesthetically pleasing themes like 'love' and 'life' (see Badran, 2007). Instead, this type of thematic deviation seemed to change the nature and direction of the classroom discussion. Suddenly students were exclusively and uncritically discussing how disgusting, shocking, repulsive and inhuman the act of cannibalism was and thus directly identifying with the poet's evaluation of the act. In other words, the vividness of the poet's description of the cannibalistic act seemed to achieve its most prominent goal of emotional appeal. The first reading produced by the students was thus a highly emotional, uncritical (in argumentative terms) and a rather unquestioning, text-as-literature reading. The poem was not read as an argument.

Despite their training to critically question claims and support, all students without exception accepted and adopted the perspective of the author without offering any counter-arguments. Accordingly, and since the classroom discussion was not going in the intended direction, explicit instructions were given to students to remind them of how this class normally approaches an argumentative text. The elements of formal argumentation were listed on the board in the hope that students would reset their reading and analytical parameters into 'critical', though still receptive, mode by following the first step in critical reading; that is, identifying the claim, reason, warrant, backing, rebuttal and qualifier.

This led to the next obstacle. Identifying the elements of formal argumentation meant an understanding of the argumentative nature of the extended and cognitive metaphors in the poem. This effectively blocked the students' ability to proceed any further in this activity and forced the instructor's intervention. On the one hand, the students found the symbolic nature of the poem relatively easy to highlight; that is, that cannibalism obviously refers to something else, in this case, colonialism and battles resulting from it (according to some students who had looked up information on the Maori culture while reading the poem at home). On the other hand, however, they could not subdivide the components of the argument until the specific nature of the metaphors and their significance was discussed. Here, the instructor explicitly pointed out metaphorical relationships between the body parts and the different stages of the meal (see Table 1). After suggesting what the 'hors d'oeuvres' stand for, students could easily complete the rest.

Then, to initiate the interpretative activity, the instructor suggested the source and target domains of the metaphorical mappings by asking the following question: If colonialism is metaphorically compared to cannibalism, then what loss would the cannibalised body parts (symbolically and metaphorically) represent in the context of colonialism? A slide of Table 2 was then projected but only with the first column complete.

Table 1. Body Parts are the Meal Metaphor.

Legs and arms Bones and marrow Fingers and toes	Hors d'oeuvres
Stomach, heart and ribs Breast cavity Heart and Blood	Main course
Liver, kidneys and tongue Eyes	Dessert
Brain	

Table 2. Cannibalism is Colonialism and Colonialism is War/a Lost Battle Metaphorical sequence.

Body part cannibalised (in that order)	Lost ability/skill/power/virtue/culture symbolism
Legs	Movement/freedom/manoeuvrability/escape
Arms	Work/strength/fighting back
Bones	Solidity/strength/structural cohesion
Toes and fingers	Delicate work
Stomach/heart/ribs	Bravery/passion-emotions-feelings/defence
Liver/kidneys/tongue	Purity (from poison/soul?)/language
Eyes	Vision – also metaphorical (future/hope)
Brain (not consumed)	Consciousness ('cruelly' not lost) Control (also not lost, but useless, like the conductor in an orchestra – but with no orchestra) Thought but inability to do

Next, the labelling process transformed into an extremely straightforward, fully engaging activity where students would compete to fill out the missing sections. Cannibalised body parts were easily related (symbolically) to the lost skill in the context of war. Cannibalising the legs, for instance, symbolised the loss of the ability to move whether through attacking or retreating, while the loss of the arms deprives the fighter of the ability to carry weapons and fight back. Again, the order in which these body parts were cannibalised was seen as especially realistic and significant from a military battle perspective. Having first-hand experience in wars and battles, some students justified the strategic necessity of starting with crippling the enemy's ability to move (forward or backward) and potentially to outmanoeuvre the attacker before working systematically on other lines of defence. It then made perfect sense to start with the legs, followed by the arms, bones and other body parts. Other metaphors which consolidated the war metaphor were also highlighted by students in the effort to make the poem more coherent at the symbolic interpretative level. This included 'cannibalism/colonialism is the loss of culture', and 'cannibalism/colonialism is the loss of freedom'.

Not until that issue was resolved did the students begin to see the poem as an instance of rhetoric and subsequently manage to locate the elements of formal argumentation.

Following the Toulmin (1958) model, the argument then looked quite clear:

- Claim:** The colonisation of the Maori nation was an undesirable episode in Maori history.
- Reason:** Because it ‘cannibalised’/destroyed the Maori nation.
- Warrant:** All that is destructive is generally undesirable.
- Backing:** The narrative and historical references in the poem and their symbolisms.
- Rebuttal:** Unless this change is a ‘civilising’ of the Maori people.
- Qualifier:** None. Maybe the colonised are to blame. (Identified towards the end of the analysis.)

Then in determining the technique used by the poet to ‘weave’ the argument, students again found it fairly straightforward to see the argument as a clear instance of ‘argument by analogy’ which would take the following deductive syllogistic form:

- Major Premise:** What colonialism did to the Maori culture is comparable with an act of cannibalism.
- Minor Premise:** Cannibalism is uncivilised/deplorable.
- Conclusion:** What colonialism did to the Maori culture is uncivilised/deplorable.

Yet despite the fact that the readers, through careful guidance, finally managed to identify the elements of formal argumentation in the poem, it was an overwhelmingly uncritical process because at no stage were any counter-arguments offered, and it was only towards the end of the class that one student identified a qualifier, whose role is to present the argument as un-categorical and open to further debate. In this article, I want to argue for two reasons behind the students’ tendency not to read the text as argument in the first place, and then for their collective, unified, though still uncritical interpretation of the argument in the poem. The first is due to the generic setting and channelling of interpretative parameters of the reader by the visibly dominant genre: literature. The other, more important one, is due to the role played by the dominant extended metaphor in the poem which ensures (1) the opaqueness and distancing of the argument from the reader, (2) the controlled nature of the interpretative process as well as (paradoxically) (3) the direct involvement of the reader in the active construction (as opposed to the interpretation) of the argument.

4 Literature as genre

The role that genre plays in controlling and channelling the reading process is central to understanding such a complex and elusive notion as readerly effect, and in this particular case, the uniformity in reading and interpreting the poem. As ‘menus of interpretive procedures’ (Rabinowitz, 2004: 328), genres and, subsequently, generic restrictions can have the unique function of placing the reader in ‘positioned’ reading conditions, the effects of which are to a large extent predetermined and preconditioned.

Underlying the foregoing claims is a socio-cognitive, functional definition of genre. This entails the following:

- Firstly, that through its functional character, genre is seen as a form of ‘social action’ (Miller, 1984); that is, that ‘people [collectively] use genres to do things in the world’ (Devitt, 2000: 698), and that different genres correspond with different goals and functions including the particularly relevant ‘persuasive function’ (Cockcroft and Cockcroft, 2005: 141). In time, this type of action becomes ‘typified through occurring under what is perceived as recurring circumstances’ and is consequently labelled and recognised as ‘genre’ (Devitt, 2000: 698).
- Secondly, that genre is cognitive and schematic in the sense that ‘the selection of one particular genre will arouse mutual expectations in both author and audience about mode, structure and likely content’ (Cockcroft and Cockcroft, 2005: 140). The reading and interpretative processes would then follow accordingly, a point Fish (1980) experiments with in several classroom settings.
- Thirdly, that genre can be ideological. In describing genres as ‘social contracts between a writer and a specific public’, Jameson (1983: 106) indirectly points to an agreement between writers and readers on the ‘rules which make up the activity of textual construction’ (Badran, 2010: 196). In other words, genre sets the rules of textual engagement between text producer and reader, the principles and the parameters. At the one level, it may force explicit or implicit rule-based limitations on the text producer while also allowing some liberties in bending and breaking some of these rules. At the other level, genre may equally direct the reading process by socio-cognitively setting readerly expectations regarding these rules, as well as regarding the possibility for their being bent and broken by the producer. Of course, the general assumption for critical discourse analysts, stylisticians and literary critics alike is that ‘the choices text producers make are not random, but are motivated’ (Walsh, 2001: 31) and that generic rules can be manipulated since text producers count on texts being read in line with these agreed-upon rules of engagement: the more rigid principles and the more flexible parameters. Consequently, it is in this sense that genre can become ‘a form of ideology’ (Beebee, 1994: 19) since generic choices can cognitively position the reader in controlled and predetermined reading contexts, an ideological situation *par excellence*.
- Finally, and most importantly, that genres are both ‘inescapable’ since they are ‘part of the cultural context within which writers and readers work’ (Devitt, 2000: 699) and essentially hybrid in the sense that texts ‘always participate in multiple genres simultaneously’ (2000: 700). This means that our readings of texts are inescapably genre bound and, because of the hybrid generic nature of all texts, to further elaborate the foregoing point, genre is therefore inescapably ideological (see Badran, 2010).

Consequently, viewing literature *as* genre becomes especially significant as far as setting reading parameters. In this case, defining ‘literature’ (with a capital or small ‘L’) is inextricably linked to how literature is viewed by the reader. Despite numerous approaches and calls citing the centrality of structural, functional and chronologically binding features or continua

of features in determining whether a work is to be considered literature, literature-like or neither, the more dominant, institutional and institutionalised view (more clearly dominant in Middle Eastern countries) has focused more on literature's aesthetic function and less on its social, cognitive and rhetorical functions (see Bakhtin, 1986; Jakobson, 1960).

This is evident in the work of numerous linguists and stylisticians such as Birch (1989), Semino (1997), Jeffries (2001), Simpson (2004), Brumfit and Carter (1986), as well as many others, who have constantly pointed out that readers tend generally to associate literature 'with both linguistic creativity and with innovative, original thinking' (Jeffries, 2001: 327). Consequently, readers approach literature as a 'complex and opaque' form of discourse 'because the experiences [it] describe[s] and elicit[s] in the reader are considered necessarily to be complex and deep' (Birch, 1989: 86). Despite the fact that literature, according to Cockcroft and Cockcroft, does 'include the persuasive function along with others' (2005: 141), this persuasive element is less accessible to the reader because of the schematic-aesthetic view embedded in the generic requirements of literature.

Hence, the question that subsequently follows relates to the role that literature as genre plays in affecting the reading process. In this particular case, how do the aforementioned generic rules of engagement with literature influence the way the poem is read and interpreted? The answer in my view is that while these general, implicit, socio-cognitive rules of engagement greatly affect the reading process, it is the role that metaphor, as a traditionally prevailing feature of literature and literary language, plays which is most central.

5 Metaphor as argument

Despite the fact that our understanding of metaphor has evolved greatly in the past few decades, the more classical sense of metaphor, I argue, is still very influential in more traditional, literary approaches to text analysis. Such approaches, which view metaphor as a distinctive characteristic central to literature and literary language, are still quite dominant in many of today's educational institutions.

Historically speaking, metaphor has been the subject of discussion by a variety of fields including philosophy, literature and linguistics, each approaching it from a different perspective. Despite Aristotle's agreed upon general definition that 'a metaphor involves talking about one thing in terms of attributes normally associated with another' (Billig and MacMillan, 2005: 460), defining metaphor in functional terms has taken several routes. In the more prevailing classical case, metaphor was essentially seen as a feature of figurative and literary language whose function was mainly 'decorative' and 'ornamental' (Fahnestock, 2005: 218). In another rhetorical, argumentative sense, metaphor was a stylistic device utilised mainly by the Sophists for more effective persuasion through appealing to an audience; that is, pathos (Cockcroft and Cockcroft, 2005: 6). Finally, in some intermediary cases, metaphor was treated as a stylistic device which aims at 'vivification' (Fahnestock, 2005: 222) both in the literary and argumentative senses, since it involved looking at older ideas and concepts but from a fresh new perspective.

The more contemporary, cognitivist account of metaphor is that of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who add the conceptual dimension to the views discussed earlier. Very simply, Lakoff and Johnson argue that since 'our concepts structure what we perceive ... [then] our

conceptual system plays a central role in defining our everyday realities ... [and since] our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor' (1980: 3). The power of metaphor then goes beyond decoration, argumentation and even conceptualisation of 'a pre-existing reality' to an ability to 'create a reality' (1980: 144), which explains the caution with which Plato approached metaphor since it could be a tool used to mask reality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 189). This, according to Plato, is done by mixing emotion and imagination with rationality since metaphor uses words in their 'improper sense, to stir the imagination and thereby the emotions and thus to lead us away from the truth and toward illusion' (1980: 191). In the Aristotelian rhetorical sense, metaphor helps empower pathos over logos.

Hence, if we look at the multiple functions of metaphor, the 'decorative', 'persuasive' and 'conceptual' ones, the latter of which is responsible for constructing our realities and consequently, our experiences, then metaphor becomes an essential ideological tool which links both text producer and receiver. In this particular argumentative poem (i.e. a literary text with a persuasive function), metaphor has an extremely critical role.

According to Hamilton, metaphor 'offers the most productive means for conveying memorable and persuasive arguments' (2005: 292), with power which transcends the mere 'reflection' of 'similarities between conventionally unrelated items or domains' to that of 'creating' such similarities (2005: 285). This means that beyond the more traditional 'mediational' function, metaphor can 'fundamentally change, for better or worse, our way of conceptualizing the world' (De Guerrero and Villamil, 2002: 97).

From the reader's perspective, metaphor then becomes the cognitive link between her or himself and the text producer in that the intentions of the text producer could presumably be realised through the *producer-controlled* decoding of the metaphor by the reader. As Hamilton argues in specific reference to parables, 'parables are constructed in the minds of readers ... [and] writers count on our capacity for conceptual blending ... in the hope that their works will inspire us to produce powerful parables' (2007: 230). In other words, a reading becomes far more significant and effective if both text producer and receiver, whether consciously or unconsciously, participate and collaborate in the production of meaning. Here, writers can possibly count on our capacity to adhere to the generic restrictions of literature, central to which are the decorative, argumentative and conceptually creative hybrid function of metaphor, in order to direct, restrict and ultimately *control* the interpretative process. As Rabinowitz argues, metaphor can act as a 'distort[ing] ... dominant reading strategy ... the closest thing that literary studies has to a Black Hole' where, once a reader starts 'to see something in metaphorical terms, it's hard to escape back to the literal and the concrete' (2004: 330–331). This means that the use of metaphor in literature in particular can be counted on to produce specific desired effects, which can of course be, though they are by no means limited to, ideological effects.

6 Analysing interpretation

Ultimately, analysing how all the foregoing views on literature, genre, metaphor, rhetoric and the reader interact in the context of reading and interpreting the poem at hand, the issue becomes quite complex. Starting from the students' reactions to the poem, as already mentioned, the interpretation of the poem takes place over two stages. The first

is the uncritical (i.e. emotionally dominated) reading of the text as literature, the other, yet another uncritical (i.e. receptive) reading of the text as argument.

In the first instance, it is evident that the dominant approach is a genre-based one: in other words, reading the poem as literature. This suggests that reading parameters are set into 'uncritical' mode, which subsequently implies a focus on the 'creative', 'innovative', 'original' as well as 'complex and opaque' aspects of literature. In line with their expectations of literature as genre, that is, the presumed and generically anticipated aesthetic function of the poem, the readers react through emotions: mainly with disgust, though with different levels of fascination at the power of the text, the symbolisms and descriptions. This genre-based, uncritical, unquestioning reading, I argue, seems to fulfil its main objective as that of experiencing the event and emotions in which the poet is trying to involve the reader.

The second, in my view, more interesting reading is one following explicit instructions to approach the poem as an instance of rhetoric: i.e. the poem as argument. As already explained, despite the student's active engagement in decoding the metaphorical symbolisms, the rhetorical reading of the poem is still resisted and postponed to the last stages of the activity. The reason, in my view, is that these metaphors act as a distancing layer between the reader and the actual argument in the sense that the reader's attention is drawn almost exclusively towards the inferential, identification and labelling processes.

Here, and despite their active involvement in the symbolic-mapping interpretative process (as described earlier), I want to argue that the students do not read this section as a form of implicit argument but rather as a form of exposition embedded in a narrative; i.e. a description of an incontestable and real event in story form. And this is the case despite the precise instructional objectives, announced at the onset of the lesson: i.e. those of trying to identify the elements of the argument, the type of argument, counter-arguments as well as evaluating the text for weaknesses in logic, credibility of evidence or lack of support. In fact, through competing to fill in the 'correct' and adequately coherent symbol, students seem so immersed in the symbolic, metaphorical labelling section of the activity that their attention is drawn away from the critical process. By the end of the poem, it appears that all the students adopt the perspective of the poet without showing any signs of criticality in approaching an argumentative text. Part of the reason for that, I argue, is the literary generic nature of the text (discussed earlier) and the implications of approaching a text as literature. However, more importantly, I want to highlight the role that metaphor plays and the manner in which it is used 'to involve, implicate, entangle or engage the reader with a text' (Watson, 1999: 218).

Other than *distancing* the argument from the reader, the extended sequence of metaphors also serves the purpose of *controlling* the nature of the interpretative process. If we agree with Lakoff and Johnson that 'metaphor highlights certain features while suppressing others' (1980: 141), then uncritically conforming to the 'highlighted' features of these extended metaphors effectively drives all readers to the same conclusion, which explains the uniformity in reader reaction and subsequently interpretation. In practical terms, through comparing colonialism (although the word is never explicitly mentioned) to an act of cannibalism, the reader is forced down an interpretative path where finding something positive in the act of cannibalism would be unacceptable and shameful (to say the least) as well as contradictory to the very humanity that we share. While one could

find something positive about colonialism, the same cannot be said about cannibalism. And in accepting the comparison, there becomes very little leeway in the metaphorical domain mapping because of the controlled orientation of the metaphor which ultimately controls interpretation. This again serves the purpose of naturally reinforcing a less critical reading of the poem. In rhetorical terms, the emotional orientation of the situation 'plays a critical role in determining how an audience sees and understands a particular situation ... [since these] emotions help determine how the world appears' (Kastely, 2004: 225). According to Meyer, 'passion is what is beneath *logos*' (in Kastely, 2004: 227) and by extension, 'the logic of emotions is always metaphorical. It comes to us as a kind of discourse that needs to be interpreted' (Kastely, 2004: 228) and is therefore both distanced and controlled.

Finally, the third function that metaphor serves in this poem is *ideological*. This function, I argue, is achieved through slowly and indirectly altering the more straightforward metaphorical mapping process into an argumentative one, ultimately ensuring the direct involvement of the reader in the active construction, and not mere interpretation, of the argument.

Through the symbolic labelling and mapping of the source and target domains of the metaphors at hand, the reader becomes more actively engaged and consequently more deeply involved in the poem. Such deep involvement becomes rather critical in swaying the reader's view of things (whether in favourable or unfavourable ways). Here, if we agree with Watson that 'the more one infers, the more likely one is to become more involved with the text at hand' (1999: 223), and that in more 'difficult or unusual text[s] one needs to infer at a greater, or deeper, level' (1999: 222), then the process of metaphorical mapping that the reader is forced to participate in (let alone being controlled through) if she or he is to make any sense of the poem guarantees, at the initial level, full engagement of the reader. Interestingly, however, such participation goes beyond the mere identification of meaning since through trying to comprehend the poem, the reader is indirectly but actively participating in the reconstruction of the argument ultimately taking the side of the poet. This, in my view, explains why readers find it difficult to counter-argue or critique the argument since they indirectly and unconsciously feel responsible for generating it in the first place. In brief, identifying the argument is dependent on interpreting the metaphor, which appears to be a straightforward, uncritical process. In reality however, this uncritical interpretative activity gradually transforms into an active and personal engagement in constructing the argument since the mere labelling of the metaphors, on which the understanding of the poem is dependent, is not less than constructing the argument. This vicious circle is, to say the least, ideological.

Moreover, what further facilitates the ideological ends of this process is the generic hybridity of this argumentative poem. As Cockcroft and Cockcroft argue, 'persuasion is much more indirect in literary than in functional contexts' yet, in my view, become much more involving since 'the reader may be given space to fill in the textual interstices' (2005: 47–48). This hybridity means that the readers are placed in a constantly shifting position where they are simultaneously asked to be critical (at the argumentative level), to look for and derive aesthetic pleasure (at the literary level) as well as to struggle to understand symbolisms (at some intermediate level). Here, literature or more appropriately, the hybrid literary/argumentative text is a uniquely powerful context for persuasion

since its power springs from its indirectness and implicitness in 'inclining' 'readers to engage with a particular vision' (Cockcroft and Cockcroft, 2005: 47), a process which is also highly ideological in nature.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (1980: 5). Although 'understanding' and 'experiencing' may seem to be two separate activities, in the 'conceptual metaphors' sense they are completely interdependent and inseparable. The reality is that a more comprehensive understanding of an idea must be rooted in experience and this is the principle on which the argument in this poem rests. Here, through emotionally engaging and indirectly positioning the reader in the war between coloniser and colonised, the metaphor disguises arguing for understanding by merging understanding with experiencing. To illustrate, the reader is metaphorically involved in the war through emotionally experiencing repulsion to the act of cannibalism, consequently understanding colonialism through that experience, and ultimately siding with the author against it by subconsciously taking responsibility for initiating or constructing the argument. As Cockcroft and Cockcroft properly phrase it, the use of 'powerful imagery' as a 'link between emotive source, persuader and audience ... creates empathy' (2005: 17), and what is more engaging and influential than an unconsciously positioned argumentative, cognitive-emotional appeal?

7 Conclusion

There are several implications to my discussion in this article. The first relates to our understanding of the workings of genre and its ability to shape readerly reactions. While genre can be seen to mutually constrain text producer and receiver, the constraints on the receiver are, in my view, much tighter since writers can count on the reader's generic expectations to 'direct' and 'control' the reading-interpretation process. As Carter argues, 'some texts (especially political or satirical works) demand to be read in a particular way – and there is very much a preferred reading that positions a reader whether they like it or not' (Carter, 2010: 119). Consequently, genre as a socio-cognitive, functional tool is probably best approached from the reader's perspective by examining readerly effect and affect specifically in the case of uniformity in reader response. And this was the main perspective adopted in the foregoing analysis.

Another implication relates to the intermediate role that metaphor plays in the construction of the argument and in serving as a cognitive link between text producer and reader, ultimately ensuring that the text producer controls interpretation. The decision of using an extended metaphor as the argument in the sense that the identification of the argument is dependent on the interpretation of the metaphor is precisely what Walsh refers to as choices that 'impose constraints on the process of interpretation by acting as traces and cues which promote certain readings, while seeking to suppress others' (2001: 31). Using metaphors with carefully controlled orientation and which 'anticipate the audience's response' (Cockcroft and Cockcroft, 2005: 167–168) ensures that the interpretation of the argument in which the interpreters 'often have to do a good deal of inferential work to make connections that are not always made explicit in a text' (Walsh, 2001: 31) proceeds in the intended direction. Metaphor can therefore also be used as a

tool for control and is consequently ideological. In other words, if metaphor is ideological and if genre is ideological, then an argument, which is dependent on generic expectations and pre-positioning and on metaphor as a distancing argumentative tool, is necessarily ideological.

Finally, there are pedagogical implications regarding the appropriateness of using a stylistic approach to literature in the teaching of rhetoric. In the past, at a time when strict categorization of sub-literary genres did not exist as such, it was more common for rhetoric to approach literature as argument (Fahnestock, 2005: 220). However, our modern view of literature cognitively distances persuasion as one of the dominant functions of literature, in favour of the more aesthetic function. This is where a stylistic approach to rhetorical analysis is quite appropriate. If rhetoric is pragmatic in the sense that it is essentially functional, then stylistics today, which is more analytical, can be used to explain reasons for how rhetoric works. The extent to which a stylistic approach to rhetoric can help students both understand 'how language, grammar and rhetoric function in texts' and practically apply this knowledge is a point elaborated in *Language and Literature's* special issue on pedagogical stylistics (Burke, 2010: 7).

Pedagogically speaking then, answering the question 'what is the poem doing?' falls more in the realm of rhetoric because the question is a pragmatic-functional one. On the other hand, answering the question 'how is the poem doing it?' can benefit greatly from the analytical tools available through stylistics. In conclusion, a stylistic approach to rhetorical analysis of literary texts is necessarily enriching to classical rhetorical analyses since it utilises techniques available to the critic from macro-generic as well as micro-linguistic approaches to textual analysis, all while keeping the reader in the foreground. It is, in short, a more well-rounded approach.

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