Metaphor, the Secret of Shakespeare's Success in *Romeo and Juliet* Writing

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ABSTRACT. *Shakespeare is a genius, and Romeo and Juliet, one of his four great tragedies is loved by readers, especially the favorite of the youth, and had been edited to a series of films and plays. This paper tries to investigate his key to success in Romeo and Juliet writing. It lies in his skill of using metaphor. Metaphor, or conceptual metaphor, is a cognitive term, a systematic way of human thinking, action and expression. Metaphorical expressions are displayed in this work based on his bodily experience.*

KEYWORDS: *Metaphor, Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, English Writing*

Introduction

Undoubtedly, Shakespeare is a genius and his great tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* is especially the favorite of the youth, but what on earth is his key to success in *Romeo and Juliet*, what makes this play so thrilling and so attractive, and why are his characters Romeo and Juliet so popular and beloved? As a matter of fact, it is not a mystery at all. This great genius' success in *Romeo and Juliet* lies in his skill of using metaphor.

In *Metaphorical Models of Romantic Love in Romeo and Juliet* published in *Journal of Pragmatics* in 1995, A.B. Sanchez displays the metaphorical models of romantic love in *Romeo and Juliet*. He discovers that the large amount of metaphorical expressions can be generally classified into two types. One is the comparison between the lightning and the darkness, namely love is the lightning. For example, Romeo has depicted the love between them to Juliet, "Too like the lightening, / which doth cease to be / Ere one can say 'It lightens'". The other is the comparison between the image schemas of the part and the whole, namely love is the integration of two complementary parts. For instance, Juliet says to Friar Laurence, "God joined my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands; / An ere this hand, by thee to Romeo's sealed, / Shall be the label to another deed, / Or my true heart with treacherous revolt, / Turn to another, this shall slay them both".

Chapter One Metaphor

1. Metaphor: A Cognitive Concept

Metaphor is traditionally considered as a kind of figurative speech, but now it is regarded as the way of human cognition and thinking. According to the viewpoint of Lakoff (1980), metaphor, namely metaphorical concept or conceptual metaphor, is a systematic way of human thinking, action and expression. It is the mapping of the structure of a source model onto a target model, which is produced by experience and understanding. In *Metaphor We Live By*, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) state that metaphor is ubiquitous and in essence, systematic, and constructed by source domain and target domain, between which the metaphorical projection is not produced randomly but rooted in our bodily experience. They maintain that "metaphor is 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. The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another. According to the viewpoint of Lakoff & Johnson, metaphor can be classified into structural metaphor, orientational metaphor and ontological metaphor.

2. Image Schema: Foundation of Metaphor

Image Schema, the foundation of conceptual metaphor, is a kind of cognitive structure constructed on the basis of the cognition of basic relations between matters, an organizing structure combining ABSTRACT relations with concrete images in human experience and understanding, and the basic structure for us to comprehend and know more complex concepts. Holmqvist (1993) gives a rather detailed description of Image Schema: it "could be said to be that part of a picture which remains when all the structures are removed or a piece of text in a linguistic description of a picture. That which remains is a highly fluid image, specified in some aspects… but completely unspecified in others…"

Chapter Two Metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet*

1. Metaphor Writing in *Romeo and Juliet*

In A.B. Sanchez's paper (1995), Shakespeare took the advantages of metaphor models including image schemas to describe and express the romantic and pure love between Romeo and Juliet to create the tragic atmosphere in the play.

It is metaphor that makes both Shakespeare and his *Romeo and Juliet* particularly successful. In the play, metaphors are almost everywhere from the beginning to the end. Shakespeare's mind is a box of metaphors or a spring of metaphors. He has a large number of incredible ideas, and his associative thinking and imagination is a galloping steed. In addition, he is so creative that he has countless of expression ways to demonstrate every scene and story and every meeting of Romeo and Juliet. In the following lines, Romeo compared Juliet to the

sun, fully and properly showing his love at first sight to her. "It is the east, and Juliet is the sun! / Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, / Who is already sick and pale with grief, / That thou her mind art far more fair than she: / Be not her mind, since she is envious; / Her vestal livery is but sick and green, / And none but fools do wear it; cast it off." Water seems to be the link of all parts of the love scenery in the modern version of the movie. On many occasions, it appears as the metaphor to express the romance of love.

Many other metaphors like "Worry is Night", "Cheer is Day", "Romeo is Dying Plant, Oxymoron, Beast, Wax", "Love is Container, Oxymoron, Smoke, Fire, Sea, Food, Burden, God, Bud, Light, Journey", "Juliet is Light, Treasure, Dove, God, Angel" echo in audience's heart despite of their gender, age or status.

2. Effect of Metaphor Writing in *Romeo and Juliet*

It is the brilliant metaphor writing grounded on bodily experiences that makes sense and involves everyone into this play and theatre on synaesthesia, empathy, aesthetics and philosophy. They create an atmosphere of warmth and coldness and lead to fatality.

Shakespeare adopts the mapping of ABSTRACT emotions on common objects in Nature and people's lives in Romeo and Juliet writing, which is a wise and successful way for the audience to understand the characters, settings, stories and conflicts easier. Therefore, it becomes well received among the audience with different social status. Those metaphors are bodily founded and are just like mirrors of people's daily lives and experiences, which stirs their great interest in watching and reading it. They also have aesthetic effect. The great beauty in the poetic lines and the catching metaphors not only create the popularity of the play but also enrich people's spiritual lives so much so that the two leading characters are loved and their fate and the tragedy is remembered.

Conclusion

Metaphor, as the way of thinking, perception and cognition, is the key to Shakespeare's success in plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*. But it is believed that in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's metaphor was stimulated to the maximum, for he was so emotional and passionate. Never cannot the audience be touched in the empathetic metaphorical lines make resonance. Never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo. Metaphor is constructed on the basis of experiences and bodily movement. From his experiences and his entire lifetime, it is not difficult to know why he is so talented. Metaphor, grounded on daily life and bodily experience, is the key to Shakespeare's success in *Romeo and Juliet* writing, generating power of love and arousing education of pursuing truth, kindness and beauty. As Aristotle said, command of metaphor is a mark of genius. Shakespeare is such a great genius.

Acknowledgement

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