



## Conceptualization of Sadness Metaphor in English

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### Abstract

Metaphor in traditional rhetoric is considered decorative and ornamental in nature, thus a set of extraordinary or figurative linguistic expressions out of normal language systems. However, the innovative work in cognitive linguistics sheds a new light into the understanding of metaphor as a figure of thought. Metaphor in essence is a perceptual and conceptualizing tool, by which human beings understand the surrounding world. The abstract concept of emotions is largely conceptualized in terms of a variety of metaphors. Due to the fact that inadequate attention has been given to some basic emotional category like Sadness, this paper conducts a corpus analysis on the sadness metaphors in eminent English verses in an attempt to probe how human body experience influences the conceptualization of sadness metaphor.

**Key words:** Conceptual metaphor; Schema; Mapping; Bodily experience

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### INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is viewed as a matter of language in tradition appeals to rhetoricians and literary critics for more than 2000 years. Aristotle's view—"metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something

else" (from Ricoeur, 1978, p.13)—has dominated western theories on metaphor for centuries. Guided by this explanation, metaphor is considered decorative and ornamental in nature, thus a set of extraordinary or figurative linguistic expressions out of normal language systems. However, cognitive linguistics, as a product of integration of cognitive science into the comprehension of language, casts a new perspective to the understanding of metaphor. Instead of being devalued as an ornament to language, metaphor is promoted to a powerful tool that helps us to shape the cognitive world we experience. It is a matter of thought rather than language.

Metaphor in cognitive linguistics refers to conceptual metaphor, which should be differentiated from metaphorical linguistic expressions. Conceptual metaphor is customarily illuminated as metaphor carrying structure from one conceptual domain (the source domain) to another (the target domain) directly (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Turner 1991). In this definition, "conceptual domain" refers to a vast organization of knowledge. Thus metaphor allows us to understand abstract, unstructured subject in terms of a more concrete one. And the understanding is greatly grounded in basic bodily experiences in the surrounding world. This is what Lakoff called experientialism or experiential realism. But according to him, experientialism differs from objectivism which is supposed to be the other version of "basic realism".

Where objectivism defines meaning independently of the nature and experience of thinking beings, experiential realism characterizes meaning in terms of *embodiment*, that is, in terms of our collective biological capacities and our physical and social experiences as being functioning in our environment. (Lakoff, 1987, p.266).

Emotion, as one of the most central and pervasive aspects of human experience, serves as a good platform to display metaphor is constrained by human bodily experience. A substantial amount of research has shown

that human emotion is conceptualized metaphorically in terms of bodily processes and activities. The current study is a continuation of exploring how shared experience influences the conceptualization of sadness metaphor in an attempt to reinforce some fundamental views on emotional metaphor.

The selected English and Chinese examples, mostly eminent metaphorical poetic verses in the world and along with few ordinary ones on sadness, are categorized according to their underlying image-schemas. English examples mainly are taken from *Golden Treasure of English Poetry* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. The research method adopted in this dissertation follows the traditional one of linguistic corpus analysis. This is rooted in the belief that language is another readily available access to emotions. Why the examples chosen are mostly poetic verses. The first reason is that poetry is believed to be abundant in metaphorical expressions on emotions. Hazlitt once said that terror is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry, hate is poetry, so is contempt, jealousy, lament, adoration, miracle, sympathy, despair or insaneness.

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## 1. LITERARY REVIEW

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### 1.1 Metaphor

#### 1.1.1 Rhetoric View

Metaphor in traditional rhetoric study is confined to a kind of rhetoric phenomenon. In broad sense, metaphor by which the word describing one entity is used to describe another entity is analogy, an appellation differentiated from the other non-metaphoric language. In a narrow sense, metaphor refers to a type of analogy.

In classical theories, metaphor is generally viewed, at its most basic, a rhetorical trope or a figure of speech, where a comparison is made between two seemingly unrelated objects without using “like” or “as”. It is a transference of one object’s characteristics onto another.

#### 1.1.2 Cognitive Approach

Advances in psychology, linguistics, and anthropology reveal an amazing discovery that our language is metaphorically structured and our cognition is metaphorical in nature. Consequently a new way to perceive metaphor springs up, i.e., cognitive approach. In cognitive linguistic studies Metaphor is found to be pervasive in everyday life. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the prominent figures in cognitive linguistics have claimed that our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. In this view metaphor is considered not simply a matter of words or linguistic expressions but of concepts. Metaphor ceases to be an ornament to language, but becomes a valuable cognitive tool by which people live.

### 1.2 Emotion Metaphor

Emotion is one of the most central and pervasive aspects of human experience. Emotions have many facets, in which feelings and experience, physiology and behavior, cognitions and conceptualizations are involved. For a long time, emotion as the subject is relegated to psychological analysis, more granted to be a privileged topic of psychology. This situation has undergone a dramatic change due to the efforts of linguistic philosophers, anthropologists and linguists, to mention a few, Kövecses (1994a, 2000) and Wierzbicka (1992). Language of emotion in fact can constitute an interesting research domain in its own right. Of course emotions themselves are not linguistic things, despite the distinct bodily expression elaborated by William James as a wave of bodily disturbance of some kind accompanies the perception of the interesting sights or sounds, or the passage of the exciting train of ideas, the nonphenomenal access to them is through language. Emotion words are divided between expressive and descriptive functions. Words like “oh, woo” which can directly express emotions are expressive. Other emotion words that describe the emotions like “anger, sadness, and love” are descriptive ones. Research in this dissertation focuses solely on descriptive emotion words, specifically “sadness” including the metaphorical expressions where the word “sadness” appears and the ones contain conceptual and connotative, or even stylistic content through which sadness is conveyed.

Emotion in cognitive point of view is most embodied in metaphor. Kövecses in *Emotion and Metaphor* reinforces that it is impossible to conceptualize most aspects of the emotion in other than metaphorical terms. Scholars such as Quinn (1987), Kövecses (1994a, 1995b), affirm the role and possible contribution of conceptual metaphors and metonymies to the conceptualization of emotional experience. As the elusiveness of emotion is hard to grapple with, metaphor is used as a bridge to channel physiological consciousness out. This is because cognition plays an essential role in our metaphorical understanding of emotion. Among the approaches to the study of metaphor, emotive approach lays stress upon the capacity of metaphors to evince or arouse feelings. Distinct from other views claiming metaphor conveys information, emotive view emphasizes rather that metaphor goes beyond literal language in its capacity to affect feeling. In its extreme version, this view upholds that metaphorical expressions have no cognitive content (meaning) at all, but serves rather as affective devices only. The middle and mild versions, on the other hand, both affirm the cognitive content of metaphor, but agree that conveying of such content does not constitute their primary function. This somewhat is in line with Morgan’s suggestion that the purpose of making a metaphor is to convey emotionality. However,

the idea that all metaphors are peculiarly emotive, in any sense, is hardly convincing. “They can be emotive” cited from Beardsley, “and many of them are; they do not have to be” (1958, p.135).

Extensive studies have been cast on the metaphorical expressions of emotion language in English and other languages (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987). Out of the five basic emotion categories, much is concentrated on more typical emotions like anger, love and happiness in Western culture. Sole studies in English or comparative studies have been done by Lakoff and Kövecses (1987), King (1989) on anger; Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Kövecses (1988) on love. Many of them try to jump over the individual configuration of emotion in seeking cultural universality in it.

### 1.3 Sadness Metaphor

The basic emotion category “sadness” on the other hand acquires a less central role in English, so only a small amount of research can be found. Barcelona (1986) analyzed metaphors for sadness from a cognitive linguistic perspective. Sadness is usually studied along with the exploration of basic emotions.

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## 2. CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

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### 2.1 Linguistic Metaphor Vs. Conceptual Metaphor

It is extremely important to make a distinction between metaphor in cognitive linguistics and metaphor common people talk about. Metaphor in cognitive linguistics primarily means conceptual metaphor (metaphorical concepts) differentiated from linguistic metaphor (metaphorical expressions). The former refers to cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system. The latter is the individual linguistic expressions that are sanctioned by the mapping. A conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. Metaphorical expressions are the linguistic manifestation or realization of conceptual metaphor. In terms of Ortony’s view, metaphors at the sentence level are symptomatic of underlying systems of metaphor or metaphorical models. Metaphor in cognitive linguistic view is fundamentally conceptual rather than linguistic in nature.

Conceptual metaphors, according to the cognitive functions they perform, can be divided into three types: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor and ontological metaphor. Structural metaphor refers to the application of one conceptual structure to the frame of another. What is transferred by metaphor is the structure, the internal relations to the logic of a cognitive model. A metaphor is a mapping of the structure of a source model into a target model. But there is another kind of metaphorical concept that does not need to be structured

from the source domain to target domain, yet organizes a whole system of concepts in one domain with respect to another. This conceptual system is grounded on the bodies of the sort we have and functions they perform in interaction with physical and cultural environment. These most basic concepts people live by in our communication are “up and down, left and right, before and behind, center and peripheral, in and out, on and off” and so on. Expressions “I’m feeling down” and “I’m in high spirits” embody what is orientational metaphor, based on our experience in spatial orientation. Emotions motivated inside physiological organs accompany bodily disturbance and facial manifestation. Quite a lot of emotion metaphors employ spatial orientation to express feelings tendency. Happiness goes along with “up” direction and sadness follow downward path. Our experience goes much richer than simply orientational interaction. The experience of physical object and substance provides a further basis for understanding. Experiences are identified as discrete entities or substances, even for those things not clearly bounded; categories are still drawn for them. Artificial boundaries that are imposed to make physical phenomena discrete are required by the way we are: surrounded by a surface. A wide variety of ontological metaphors are rooted in our experiences with physical objects, which view events, activities, emotions, ideas as entities and substances compared to human’s own body. The most typical of ontological metaphor is container metaphor. Man himself is an entity independent of the surrounding world. The surface of skin set off our physical body from the rest of the world. Thus the human body can be considered as a container marking off the inside and the outside. Physiological changes are entities of in terms of its quantities, size and pressure. With the help of container metaphor, it is not difficult to understand figurative expressions using body as a container to express emotions.

### 2.2 Mapping

Conceptual metaphors constituted by “mappings” are fixed conceptual correspondences between a source and a target domain (Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses, 2002). This mapping is a set of correspondences that is organized systematically. Mappings are of two types: conceptual mappings and image mappings. Metaphorical mapping at the conceptual level is a fixed set of ontological correspondences between entities in the source domain and those in the target domain. This is what is termed as “ontological” correspondence. A typical example of this kind is the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. The tightly organized concrete knowledge structure in the source domain is projected onto an abstract target domain.

Image mapping by contrast is less complex than conceptual mapping where only imaginary impressions of a mental image domain are mapped onto the other. Image

mappings happen on image metaphors. In these one-shot metaphors, mappings can sometimes be from image structures from widely disparate knowledge domains, following the usual mapping structure in part or whole into the part or the whole structure of another domain. Since image metaphors concern little of people's ordinary conceptualization of experience, they are involved in reasoning. Many poetic metaphors are of this kind, no need to say an emotional metaphor.

Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image-schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain. This is termed as The Invariance Principle (Kövecses, 2002) in mappings. This principle guarantees that, for container schemas, interiors will be projected onto interiors, exteriors onto the exteriors, and boundaries onto boundaries; for path-schemas, goals onto goals, trajectories onto trajectories.

### 2.3 Image-Schema

Metaphorical mappings are presumed not to be arbitrary, but grounded on the body and in everyday experience and knowledge. To put it much straight, mappings are, in large measure, constrained by the so-called image-schemas that are built on bodily experience. Image-schema is defined by Johnson (1987, p.22) as "a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that give coherence and structure to our experience". Image-schemas are different from images, though they are intertwined. Image-schemas, as suggested by their name, are not about rich, concrete images or mental pictures. They are instead very general structures, like bounded regions, paths, centers and so on. They structure our mental representations at a level more general and abstract than that where particular mental images are formed. Since the image will always be of some particular things, which may not share all the same features with each other, schema, by contrast, contains structural feature common to a range of different objects, events, activities, etc..

Image-schemas take on forms of "containment, path, links, balance and so on" and spatial relations: "up-down, front-back, part-whole, center-periphery" and so forth. Among the most common image-schemas are CONTAINER schema, PATH schema, LINKS schema, PART-WHOLE schema, etc..

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## 3. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SADNESS METAPHOR IN ENGLISH

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### 3.1 Materials and Method

William Wordsworth once said Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. Poetry overwhelmed in literature records the best and happiest as well as

worst and saddest moments in human life. Poetry is ever praised as one of the best ways to express emotion because we can use figurative and literal images to express emotions in fresh ways. Owing to this reason, verses on sadness in poetry enjoying world fame are chosen to be the study sample in this paper. Most of the English samples are selected from *Golden Treasury of English Poetry* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Revised Fourth Edition) with a few from ordinary communication dialogue. The research method adopted in this dissertation follows the traditional one of linguistic corpus analysis.

### 3.2 Analysis

As what is going to be discussed is the emotion "sadness"(in psychoanalytic theory, a quiet mood resembling sorrow and grief, due to accepting that some loss has occurred or that satisfaction is elusive. A feeling state characterizes depression.) which shares a myriad of synonymies like melancholy, gloom, grief, lament, sorrow, dejection, depression, downcast, dismay, disconsolation, pensiveness etc., it is the author's responsibility to dispel the ambiguity on the different terms depicting the emotion "sadness". Their definitions are taken from *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and *American Heritage Dictionary* respectively.

- Sadness is an emotional attitude characterized by an unpleasant feeling tone and expressing itself in sighing, weeping, as well as passivity and diminished tone of the voluntary muscles. It is the most general word used here.
- Melancholy refers to a lingering state resulting from temperament or to a condition marked merely by somber thoughts.
- Sorrow applies broadly to the manifestation of extreme sadness.
- Gloom may suggest the dark and dispiriting overall atmosphere or effect of depression or dejection.
- Depression may indicate a brooding, listless, sullen or despondent condition in which one usually feels let down, disheartened or inadequate.
- Dejection is close to depression but may apply to a more temporary mood and suggest a natural cause or logical reason.
- Desolation implies extreme sorrow due to an irreparable loss.
- Downcast suggest dark moods of rather short duration, often triggered abruptly by something external and marked by disheartenment.
- Woebegoneness suggests the appearance of one overcome by woe.
- Miserableness and wretchedness pertain to any state of profound unhappiness.

- Blue is less formally applied to lowness of spirits.

Above is a list of the terms that express the emotion “sadness”. They are just a touch of a myriad of vocabulary applied to the description of sadness. Although they are listed in a linear range, yet they deserve equal treatment if encountered in the verses, as they all depict the emotion “sadness” with a variant degree or emphasis on diverse aspects of sadness. In order to take a systematic study of those sadness metaphors, they are sorted into categories according to the underlying conceptual structure.

#### A. Sadness is substance in a container

- (1) Age is full of *care*
- (2) But when the melancholy fit shall fall  
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,  
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,  
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;  
Then *glut thy sorrow* on a morning rose.

#### B. Sadness is a container

- (3) Was the worst pang that *sorrow ever bore*,  
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn.
- (4) And he, repulsed, —a short tale to make, —  
*Fell into a sadness*, then into a fast.
- (5) Sweet though *in sadness*.
- (6) It is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, which, by often rumination, wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

#### C. Sadness is element

Element here refers to what universe is constituted. It is well known that matter embodies in three states: solid, liquid, and gas. Thereby this metaphor entails the following submetaphors.

#### D. Sadness is an object

- (7) In sooth I know not why I am so sad;  
It wearies me; You say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff it is made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn.
- (8) And with a *green and yellow melancholy*,  
She sat like patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief.
- (9) Where glowing embers through the room  
*Teach* light to counterfeit a gloom,  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth.
- (10) *It is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels,*

which, by often rumination, wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

#### E. Sadness is substance

- (11) On Sabbath Eves I am oppressed. . . O the rotted Talmuds of my childhood! O the dense melancholy of memories!  
The man must have a rare recipe for melancholy,  
Who can be dull in Fleet Street.
- (12) Shoot, if you must, this old grey head,  
But spare your country’s flag,” she said.  
*A shade of sadness*, a blush of shame.

#### F. Sadness is fluid

- (13) Sir Henry Wotton . . . was also a most dear lover,  
And a frequent practiser of the art of angling;  
Of which he would say, “it was an employment  
For his idle time, which was then not idly  
Spent . . . a rest to his mind, a cheer of his  
Spirits, a diverter of sadness . . . . .”  
There *gloom the dark broad seas*.

#### G. Sadness is nuisance

- (15) Hence, loathed melancholy.

#### H. Sadness is animate being

- (16) But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,  
Hail *divinest Melancholy!*  
Whose saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the sense of human sight  
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing<sup>4</sup>.
- (17) Ay, in the very temple of delight  
Veiled melancholy has her Sovran shrine,  
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might.
- (18) Now, the *melancholy god* protect thee, and  
The tailor make thy doublet of changeable  
Taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal.
- (19) Yestday the *sullen year*  
*Saw the snowy whirlwind fly;*  
Mute was the music of the air.

#### I. Sadness is food

- (20) If man were wise to see’t  
But only melancholy,  
O sweetest melancholy!  
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley;  
Nothing’s so *dainty sweet as lovely melancholy*.
- (21) Ay, in the very temple of delight  
Veiled melancholy has her Sovran shrine,  
His soul shall *taste the sadness of her might*.
- (22) I can *suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs*.
- (23) All my joys to this are folly,  
Naught so *sweet as Melancholy*.

- (24) She left me marveling why my soul  
Was sad that she was glad; (feel of sadness in  
body is feel of sadness in soul)  
At all the sadness in the sweet,  
The sweetness in the sad.
- (25) *Sweet though in sadness.*  
Still where rosy Pleasure leads,  
See a kindred grief pursue.  
The Hues of bliss more brightly glow  
Chastised by sabler tints of woe.
- (26) *O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,*  
The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,  
That life, a very rebel to my will,  
May hang no longer on me.
- (27) *Sad memory brings* the light  
of other days around me.
- (28) And such a *want-wit sadness makes of me,*  
That I have much ado to know myself.
- (29) *Demonic frenzy, moping melancholy*  
And moon—struck madness.
- (30) And naked shingles of the world.  
Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,  
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.  
Fair Science frowned not no his humble birth,  
And *melancholy maked him for her own.*
- (31) *O hateful error, melancholy's child!*
- (32) Tell us, pray, what *devil*  
*This melancholy is, which can transform Men*  
into monsters.
- (33) I inherited a *vile melancholy* from my father,  
Which has made me mad all my life, at least not  
sober.
- (34) *My desolation* does begin to make  
A better life (effect of emotion is motion).
- (35) Suffering from a sharp attack of the blues, a  
*feeling of depression* and foreboding had *taken*  
*possession of him.*
- (36) With eyes up—raised, as one inspired,  
*Pale Melancholy* sate retired,  
And from her wild sequestered seat,  
In notes by distance made more sweet,  
Poured thro' the mellow horn her pensive soul.  
(patient).
- (37) *Welcome, kindred glooms!*
- (38) *Ring out the grief that saps the mind*  
For those that here we see no more.

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## DISCUSSION

From the above, we can see that container metaphor, just as expected to be quite common. The container image defines an “in and out” perspective which is exactly applicable to the human body, a natural container. Due to the belief that emotions are believed to occur inside the body, it seems to be a universal way of conceptualizing

emotions and body relationship by container structure. Container is distinguished into two kinds: The open one and the closed one. In the case of Sadness metaphor, an open container is preferred.

The image-schema of animate being personifies sadness emotion. Obviously, it takes pains to have access to emotion directly, but if from a perspective of human, things are much easier. Often it is involved in a passive or active relationship with human. It is amazing to find out that sadness is usually related to female, more often than not to “divine goddess” like in the first two examples due to the power it brings. Quite interesting is that, examples 25-27 by contrast describe sadness as a devil. As emotion can doubtlessly have impact on one’s decision or even one’s life, consequently, sadness can act like a master or superpower to influence, manipulate and sometimes ruin one’s life if he is a devil as in examples 21-28. Man is eager for freedom, so is human mind. Sadness is normally considered as negative emotion and has negative impact on human. If man is trying to shake off this negative impact, then sadness is hostilely considered as an intruder as in the last example. Sadness is also personified as a pale patient as noticed. From the diverse roles human assigns to sadness, it is not hard to perceive the intricate attitudes of man to sadness.

The other image-schemas like fluid, food and substance are grounded in a variety of human experiences. Experience here is construed in a broader sense of involving everything that makes up actual or potential experiences: perception, motor movement, the body functions in nature and social environment. Between the external world and the internal state of affairs exists human cognition, i.e., the way we perceive and conceptualize the world and the grounded experience. Meaning comes not just from “internal” structures of the organism ( the “subject” ), nor solely from “external” inputs (the “object”), but rather from recurring patterns of engagement between organism, and environment .The abstract inner emotion of sadness is an indispensable part of human life just as the physical substance we depend on.

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## CONCLUSION

The evidence from the study of metaphor suggests that cognitive models of abstract phenomena are indeed grounded in basic bodily experiences in the surrounding world. Conceptual structures of sadness metaphor are shown to be rooted in and constrained by the bodily experience. In linguistic expressions, physiologic and spatial experience is employed to conceptualize sadness. This paper reinforces some fundamental claim on metaphor or more precisely emotion metaphor from a cognitive perspective: Conceptual emotion metaphor is characterized by cognitive universality.

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