

**SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN ADRIENNE
RICH, JOHN ASHBERRY AND SYLVIA PLATH'S SELECTED POEMS**

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Submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in
Applied Linguistics, University of Management and Technology, Lahore.

Supervised by: Dr. Tamsila Naeem



2024

University of Management & Technology, Lahore

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I, Ms. Maimoona Maliha Khan ID: F2021084004 Student of MPhil Applied Linguistics in the Session 2021 - 2023, hereby declare that the matter printed in the thesis title “Semantic Analysis of Conceptual Metaphor in Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery and Sylvia Plath's Selected Poems” presented in this document is entirely my own, without substantial input from any other individual or institution. Any minor assistance received has been appropriately credited.

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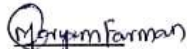
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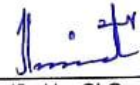
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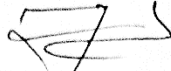

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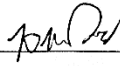
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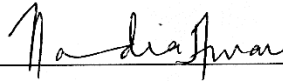
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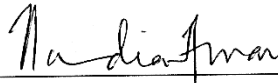
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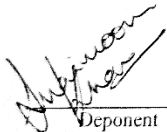


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I certify that I have read “Semantic Analysis of Conceptual Metaphor in Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery and Sylvia Plath’s Selected Poems” by Maimoona Maliha Khan and that in my opinion, this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MPhil degree at the University of Management and Technology.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation undertakes a semantic analysis of *conceptual metaphors* in the poetry of Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath, challenging prevailing assumptions about the dichotomy between poetic language and everyday language. Building upon the *conceptual metaphor theory*, a prominent cognitive semantic model initially designed for analyzing everyday language, the study seeks to illuminate how metaphors function as integral components of meaning construction in the selected poems. Contrary to the conventional perspective that considers metaphorical elements in poetry as mere decorative devices, this research contends that *conceptual metaphors* play a foundational role in interpreting and comprehending poetic language, akin to their significance in non-poetic contexts. The investigation aims to demonstrate that the *conceptual metaphor theory* applies to everyday language and is equally relevant for unraveling the semantic intricacies of poetry. The study posits that Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath employ *conceptual metaphors* as fundamental building blocks for conveying nuanced meanings in their respective works. By delving into the semantic nuances of select poems by these renowned poets, the thesis seeks to establish a connection between *conceptual metaphor theory* and the rich tapestry of metaphors woven into the fabric of their poetry. Through this analysis, the research contends that *conceptual metaphors* are not merely ornamental in the poetic realm but are indispensable tools for constructing meaning and fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate semantic landscapes within these poetic compositions.

Keywords: Semantics, conceptual metaphor theory, postmodern, american poetry

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Dr. M. Ayub Khan (late) and Nasreen Akhtar (late) whose unwavering belief in the power of knowledge and education continues to inspire me every day. They were a guiding light, a source of endless encouragement, and a constant reminder of the importance of perseverance.

I also dedicate this work to my children, Hania, Muneeb, and Irha whose love and support have been the foundation upon which I built this academic endeavor. Their patience, understanding, and encouragement have sustained me through the challenges and triumphs of this journey.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Semantic analysis is an important tool for understanding poetry because it helps to uncover the underlying meaning of the text. In everyday life, language serves as the primary means of human communication, taking on various forms and types. As a form of literary expression, poetry represents a culmination of different types of language, characterized by stylistic language, engaging sentences, and striking vocabulary. Through figurative language, mainly in the form of metaphors, poetry can convey not only the writer's emotions and ideas but also those of others. Essentially, poetry can be viewed as a written communication tool, taking on different types and themes, ranging from emotions and concepts to suggestions, places, politics, and life as a whole. From point of view of Wolosky (2008), poetry has multifaceted functions, including philosophy, which can offer depictions, models, or narratives and incorporate nuances, political commentary, and information.

Poetry often employs figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, and other literary devices, that may not be immediately apparent to the reader. By analyzing the language and syntax of the poem, semantic analysis can reveal the deeper meanings and themes that the poet is trying to convey. One way that semantic analysis can help understand poetry is through the identification of literary devices. For example, if a poem uses a lot of metaphors, then semantic analysis can help identify the literal and figurative meanings of the metaphors and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the poem. Similarly, if a poem uses a lot of allusions, then semantic analysis can help

identify the historical or cultural references being made and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the poem. Another way that semantic analysis can help understand poetry is by identifying the emotions and ideas that the poet is trying to convey. By analyzing the language and syntax of the poem, semantic analysis can identify the tone and mood of the poem, as well as the themes and motifs that are present. This can help the reader to understand the poet's intentions and the message that they are trying to communicate

Adrienne Rich stands as a pivotal figure in post-modern American poetry. Born in 1929, she witnessed significant socio-political changes throughout her lifetime and her work became an emblematic representation of these shifts. Rich's poetry evolved from formal and traditional styles to experimental and radical forms that echo postmodernism's inclination to challenge established norms. As a feminist and activist, Rich questioned the very foundations of society, including gender roles, sexuality, and power structures.

Adrienne Rich's poetry is a tapestry of profound introspection, societal critique, and explorations of identity, particularly surrounding issues of gender, sexuality, and the experiences of women. Her work often employs potent metaphors that serve as vehicles for deeper understanding and inquiry. These metaphors are not just decorative elements; they are critical tools that Rich uses to dissect complex topics such as oppression, love, and the intricacies of the human experience. They invite readers to connect with the profound truths that lie beneath the surface of her words. In this way, Rich's poems become transformative landscapes, wherein metaphorical imagery and insightful narratives intertwine to challenge, inspire, and provoke thought.

John Ashbery (1927-2017) was an influential American poet known for his unique and innovative approach to poetry. His works often challenged traditional conventions, embracing a fragmented and non-linear style that explored the complexity of human experience. Ashbery's

poems were characterized by their intricate web of language, vivid imagery, and enigmatic narratives, creating a rich tapestry of ideas and emotions.

John Ashbery's poems were a testament to the power of language and its ability to transcend traditional boundaries. Through his masterful use of *conceptual metaphors*, he created a poetic landscape that defied easy categorization and encouraged readers to explore the vast depths of human existence. "I'm quite puzzled by my work too, along with a lot of other people. I was always intrigued by it, but at the same time a little apprehensive and sort of embarrassed about annoying the same critics who are always annoyed by my work. I'm kind of sorry that I caused so much grief."-John Ashbery (1927-2017), in an interview with *Contemporary Authors*.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) was an American poet, novelist, and short-story writer. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, she showed remarkable talent in writing from a young age. Plath attended Smith College on a scholarship and excelled academically. After graduating, she won a Fulbright scholarship and studied at *Newnham College*, Cambridge, in England. It was during this time that she met and married the poet Ted Hughes.

Sylvia Plath's poetry is characterized by its vivid and evocative use of metaphors. Her poems are like intricate tapestries woven with layers of symbolism and imagery, inviting readers to delve into the depths of her emotions and experiences. Through her metaphors, Plath explores themes of identity, mental illness, gender roles, and existential angst. In poems such as *Mirror*, she uses the mirror as a metaphor for self-reflection and the harsh realities of aging. In *Daddy*, she employs the metaphor of her father as a *Nazi* and herself as a Jew, symbolizing her complex and tumultuous relationship with her father. Plath's metaphors are often intense and unsettling, capturing the rawness of her emotions and the darkness that resides within her psyche. Her work is a testament

to the power of metaphor as a means of expressing and grappling with the complexities of the human experience.

Metaphor, a concept with a lengthy history dating back to Aristotle's era, has been a topic of interest for rhetoricians, critics, and, more recently, linguists. The term *metaphor* has a French origin, stemming from the Greek word *metaphora* which aims to transpose a word from its actual sense. According to Childs and Fowler; although there is no unanimous agreement among scholars regarding its definition, it is commonly understood that metaphors are easier to demonstrate than to explain, as scholars suggest. (2006, p. 138). When it comes to sources discussing metaphors, they tend to provide an example before presenting a definition. As per the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, a metaphor is defined as the using of words to show something distinct from the literal meaning. However, Cruse (2000, p. 202) finds this definition unsatisfactory, as it fails to explain why such a practice is used and might lead one to view metaphor as careless or perverse. A more satisfactory definition of metaphor may be what Knowles and Moon (2006, p. 2) suggest: The use of language referring to something other than what it was originally enforced to, or what it literally means, suggesting some similarity or make a link between the two things. Richard (1936) has described metaphors in his book *The Philosophy of Rhetoric and proposes Interaction Theory*, he stresses that the importance of metaphors lies in the relationship between the expression used metaphorically and the context of use which is the linking source domain to a target domain.

Before the 1980s, the majority of studies regarding metaphors focused on the concept that it was strictly a rhetorical device, solely used in poetic language and observed as a cause of linguistic or semantic violations (Leech, 1969, pp. 48-9). However, the release of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980 pronounced a milestone in the history of metaphorology, as it is

now regarded as the foundation of cognitive semantics. The definitions of metaphor provided above reflect the traditional understanding of metaphor, which deemed it exclusively linguistic and a rhetorical trope, typically found in literary works, particularly poetry.

Metaphor, according to cognitive semantics, involves understanding or being subjected to one thing in terms of another. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) suggest that the heart of metaphor lies in this ability. Besides being a linguistic process (Evans and Green, 2006, p. 38), metaphor is also considered a cognitive process by cognitivists (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 6). The authors claim that human thinking processes are mostly metaphorical and that metaphor involves the mapping of an object in one domain onto another object in a different domain (Evans, 2007, pp. 136 ff.).

The theory of *Conceptual Metaphor* was first presented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) in their book *Metaphors We Live By*. Before their proposal, the metaphor was considered merely a form of figurative language or a linguistic expression, rather than a product of thought or cognition. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) presented linguistic and sociological evidence from various sources, such as life is a journey, argument is war, and anger is fire, to support their belief that our everyday conceptual system, through which we ponder and perform, is essentially metaphorical (p.4). They argue that metaphor is an obligatory aspect of human thought and intellect, as we consciously or unconsciously construct our experiences through metaphorical processes. The crux of metaphor, they propose, is to comprehend and experience one thing in terms of another (2003, p. 6). This is the basis of the notion of *conceptual metaphor*, which is a mapping between two domains in the conceptual system (Cameron, 2010a, p.5). *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)* emphasizes the linking between the body and the world, to elucidate the essential structure of the mind. According to Thomas (2010), these structures produce the framework that lets metaphoric

linkages between concepts and types occur, given that the basis for abstract reasoning and deliberation. Therefore, metaphor is seen as a means of conceptualizing the world.

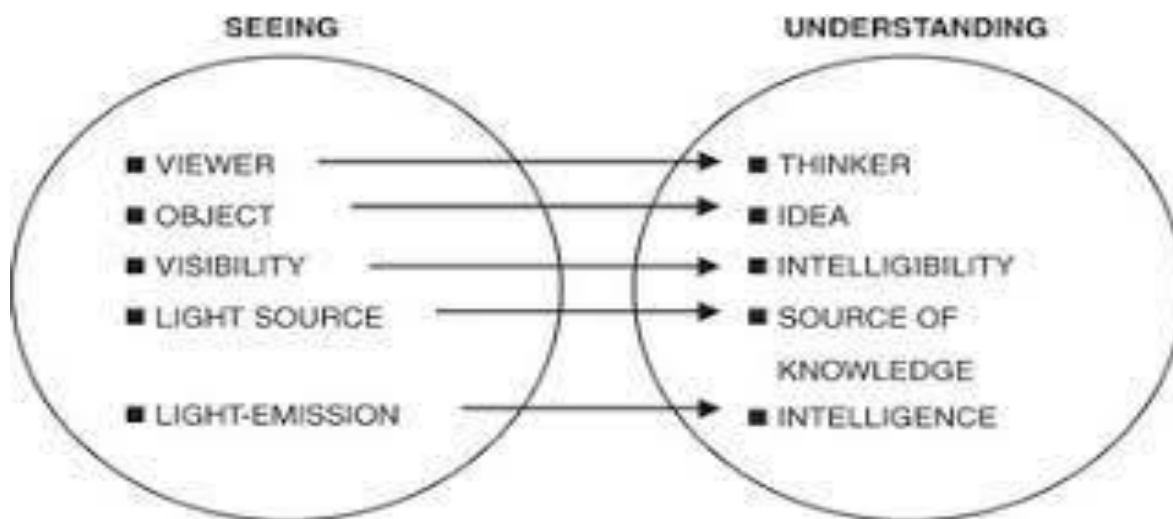


Figure 1: Conceptual Metaphor Domains

According to the *CMT* theory, metaphor plays a crucial role in both languages and thought. There is a tangible relationship between object and idea, visibility and intelligibility, light source and source of knowledge, etc. Deignan (2005) states that metaphor is fundamental to thought, while Deignan (2010) argues that it operates at the level of thinking. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) suggest that human thought is primarily embodied and automatic and that most abstract concepts are metaphorical. The *CMT* position asserts that metaphor forms and transforms human conceptual structures, which in turn affects our experiences (Thomas, 2010). Overall, the fundamental principle of *CMT* is that our conceptual system is grounded in embodied experience and structured by metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003; Lakoff, 1993; Gibbs, 2006).

Kövecses (2002) asserts that *conceptual metaphors* utilize a concrete or physical concept as their source and an abstract concept as their target. This is because concrete concepts provide clearer details of abstract concepts, resulting in better comprehension. In essence, the source

domain is assumed to conceptualize the target domain, allowing for the mapping of the structure of conceptual domains from the concrete to the abstract, which aids in understanding concepts beyond direct experience (Thomas, 2010). Additionally, our understandings of the physical world provide a natural and logical substance for understanding more abstract domains (Kövecses, 2002).

Thus, metaphor is recognized as a cognitive tool that facilitates the understanding of composite concepts and ideas. From the *CMT* viewpoint, metaphor plays a vital role in the process of converting concrete physical experience into abstract domains to facilitate understanding. The key is found in the cognitive process of linking two domains (Lakoff, 1993). As we strive to comprehend the world, metaphors serve as a tool to conceptualize the cognitively less easily accessible domains in terms of the more easily accessible ones (Kövecses, 2020, p.5).

1.2 Aim of the study

This study aims to conduct a semantic analysis of the metaphors utilized in the poetry of three highly influential 20th-century poets: Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery and Sylvia Plath. It also aims to uncover and analyze the *conceptual metaphors* that underlie their works, recognizing that one of the major characteristics of all three poets' works is their frequent use of metaphors of different types.

1.3 Objectives

The study further purposes:

- To identify the types of *conceptual metaphors* that poets use in their works and to explore their underlying meanings and implications.

- To examine how poets use *conceptual metaphors* to create deeper and more impactful meanings in their works, and how these meanings are conveyed to readers.
- To analyze how the use of *conceptual metaphors* in poetry reflects the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which the works were written.

1.4 Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. How does semantic analysis of *conceptual metaphors* in poetry contribute to the overall meaning of a poem?
2. How do readers interpret and make sense of the metaphors used in poetry, and how does this process relate to cognitive linguistics?
3. How can a semantic analysis of metaphors in poetry be used to enhance literary criticism and the study of poetry as a form of artistic expression?

1.5 Significance of the study

By analyzing the semantic aspects of the conceptual metaphors in the selected poems of these prominent poets, the study enhances our understanding of their literary works. It sheds light on the intricate layers of meaning, symbolism and figurative language employed by Rich, Auden, and Plath, contributing to the broader scholarship on their poetic oeuvre. Investigating conceptual metaphors provides insight into the cognitive processes underlying poetic creation and interpretation. It elucidates how poets conceptualize abstract ideas and emotions through metaphorical expressions, offering valuable perspectives on the intersection of language, thought

and artistic expression. Examining conceptual metaphors in the context of Rich, Ashbery and Plath's work provides insights into the cultural and historical influences shaping their poetic expression. It highlights how societal norms, political events, and personal experiences inform the use of metaphorical language in their poetry, contributing to our understanding of broader cultural trends and movements. The findings of the study have educational and pedagogical value for students, scholars and enthusiasts of poetry. They serve as valuable resources for teaching and learning about poetic language, metaphorical expression and literary analysis, fostering critical thinking and appreciation of poetic artistry.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Poetry

Poetry has been prevalent and deeply rooted in human language since ancient times. It has been embraced by both primitive and sophisticated societies alike, appreciated for the pleasure it imparts. Whether through reading, listening, or reciting, people engage with poetry because of the enjoyment it brings. According to Perrine (1969), a poem can be understood as a form of language that communicates more profoundly and powerfully than usual language. In essence, poetry relies on a distinctive language that goes beyond the everyday.

Wordsworth (1802), on the other hand, characterized a poem as the impulsive overflow of powerful feelings, initiating from emotions recollected in tranquility. This process involves contemplating emotions until tranquility diminishes, giving rise to a kindred emotion that truly exists in the mind. The language chosen for poems is deliberately selected for its aesthetic appeal, as the beauty of language is considered crucial. This choice is significant because poems written in ordinary language may lack the impact that is essential for resonating with readers.

2.2. Semantic analysis

Semantic analysis of poetry is an exciting and important way to better understand the many layers of meaning and symbolism that can be found in a poem. By looking closely at the language used to develop a specific poem, one can begin to uncover the poet's intentions and the deeper implications of the work. This deeper understanding is often essential for readers to truly

appreciate the beauty of poetry and the skill of the poet. Further study in this area can help anyone gain a better appreciation for the depth and power of poetry.

2.3. Conceptual metaphors

According to Lakoff and Johnson, along with their followers, metaphor involves the conceptualization and experience of one domain, known as the target domain, in terms of another, referred to as the source domain. Lakoff and Johnson's monograph is considered a foundational work in the development of cognitive linguistics, or cognitive semantics. *Cognitive semantics* underscores the pervasive nature of metaphor, highlighting it as a cognitive phenomenon. It asserts that the human conceptual system is inherently metaphorical in both thought and action. The evidence for the ubiquity of metaphors and the metaphorical nature of human thinking and behavior is evident in language, where many, if not all, linguistic expressions are grounded in these *conceptual metaphors* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, pp. 3-4).

Unlike earlier theories on metaphor, *conceptual metaphor theory* suggests that metaphor is not confined to language alone but is widespread and omnipresent in everyday thinking and behavior. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Lakoff and Johnson assert that our ordinary conceptual system, which underlies both our thinking and actions, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (1980, p. 3). According to the *conceptual metaphor theory* proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, it entails mapping concepts from a well-known conceptual domain (source domain) onto a less familiar conceptual domain. (target domain) (Hurford et al., 2007, p. 331). In the metaphor life is a journey, the conceptual mapping involves linking elements from the familiar source domain, which is journey, to the less familiar target domain, which is life. This establishes a correspondence between

the two domains, where "journey" is a concrete and tangible concept, while life is regarded as less concrete or more abstract within this metaphorical framework. According to Evans & Green (2006), *conceptual metaphors* exert influence across various domains such as social, political, and anthropological fields within cognitive psychology, particularly in the realm of semantic cognition. Yusuf (2018) notes that cognitive semantics constitutes a component of the cognitive-linguistic movement, recognized as a distinct school of linguistics with modern applications. Additionally, *conceptual metaphors*, integral to semantic cognition, have been a subject of discussion since Aristotle's era, as highlighted by Danesi & Perron (1999). This technique can be used to uncover the true meaning of figurative language that can't be understood by a literal interpretation. For example, when a poet uses the phrase the world is a stage, the reader may interpret this phrase to mean that the world is full of theatrical performances. However, semantic analysis can reveal that this phrase is meant to convey the idea that life is fleeting and that people are merely actors in a larger play. By utilizing semantic analysis, readers can gain a more in-depth understanding of the figurative language used in postmodern American poetry. Furthermore, semantic analysis can be used to uncover the relationship between the literal and figurative meanings of a poem, which can provide helpful insights into the poet's intent. Ultimately, semantic analysis is an invaluable tool for extracting the full meaning of *conceptual metaphors* in postmodern American poetry. Kreuz (1993) contends that metaphor, being the most prevalent rhetorical device, has garnered considerable interest from psychologists, philosophers, and literary theorists. In traditional language theories, metaphor is often viewed solely as a linguistic phenomenon. However, this perspective is challenged by the contemporary *conceptual metaphor theory* introduced in 1980 by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The *Conceptual metaphor theory* expands the understanding of

metaphor beyond mere linguistic expression, highlighting its crucial role in shaping thought and cognition.

As per Goatly (1997), the functioning of metaphors involves three key elements: the topic (tenor), the vehicle, and the ground. The topic is the main subject or the intended idea to convey, the vehicle is an alternative concept used to describe the tenor, and the ground comprises the similarities or analogies that form the basis for connecting the topic and vehicle. To illustrate, in the phrase Bob is a tiger in debate, Bob serves as the tenor, and tiger functions as the vehicle. The analogy between Bob and a tiger, possibly indicating Bob's strategic and forceful argument akin to a tiger, constitutes the ground. This analogy makes Bob's arguments challenging to refute others.

Until recently, Aristotle's theory of metaphor and its five common features, as identified by Kövecses, remained influential. However, in 1980, Lakoff and Johnson's book, *Metaphors We Live By*, sparked a significant shift in the study of metaphor. This led to the development of *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* or *Cognitive Metaphor Theory* by researchers in the field of cognitive semantics, which is now widely accepted as the notion of metaphor-as-thought. Since then, a growing body of literature has elaborated on this theory, emphasizing that human thought is metaphorically made and that the metaphor is inherent in both thought and language. According to Lakoff and Johnson, the roots of metaphor can be drawn back to embodied experience, which provides the human conceptual system through the metaphorical prediction of conceptual structure. (Thomas, 2010, p.80).

Gibbs (1999) has researched the use of *conceptual metaphors* in poetry, examining how these metaphors contribute to the meaning and impact of the poems. In his research, Gibbs analyzed a variety of poems from different periods and cultural contexts, including the poetry of William

Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and contemporary poets. He found that poets use *conceptual metaphors* in a variety of ways in their poetry, including to create imagery and convey complex ideas and emotions. Gibbs also explored how *conceptual metaphors* can be used to create meaning and impact through their structure and placement within the poem, as well as through the use of figurative language and sound patterns. He argued that *conceptual metaphors* are a crucial element of poetic language and that they play an important role in the way that poems are understood and experienced by readers. Deignan (2005) distilled the core principles arising from *conceptual metaphor theory* into the following points: Metaphors play a pivotal role in shaping thought processes, they serve as a foundational structure for organizing knowledge, abstract language relies heavily on metaphorical expressions, metaphors find their roots in tangible, physical experiences and they are inherently ideological (Deignan, 2005, p. 13).

The *conceptual metaphor theory* posits that metaphor is central to thought, and therefore to language (Deignan, 2005, p.13). Moreover, a foundational claim of *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)* is that metaphor functions at the level of thinking. (Deignan, 2010, p.44). This underscores the theory's emphasis on the integral role of metaphor not just in linguistic expression but in the cognitive processes that underlie thought itself.

Kövecses (2010) has done research on the use of *conceptual metaphors* in poetry, with a focus on the role of these metaphors in the expression of love in poetry. In his research, Kövecses (2010) analyzed a selection of poems that express love and identified the *conceptual metaphors* that were used to describe love in each poem. He found that love is often described using metaphors of light and darkness, life and death, and heat and cold. In addition to his work on the expression of love in poetry, Kövecses (2010) has also studied the role of *conceptual metaphors* in the expression of other emotions in poetry, including anger, fear, and happiness. He has argued that *conceptual*

metaphors are a crucial element of poetic language and that they play an important role in the way that poems are understood and experienced by readers. Kövecses (2010) has also explored the cultural and individual differences in the use of *conceptual metaphors* in poetry, and how these differences can reflect the unique experiences and perspectives of different poets. In addition to his work on poetry, Kövecses (2010) has also done research on the use of *conceptual metaphors* in other areas, including emotional language and political discourse. Overall, Kövecses' research has contributed significantly to our understanding of the role of *conceptual metaphors* in poetry and how they can be used to convey emotion and meaning. (Kovecses, 2010).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2008), *conceptual metaphors* arise from mental construction and involve analogous principles that encompass the conceptualization of two elements. These cognitive mechanisms entail mapping experiences from one realm (source domain) to other realms of experience (target domain). In this process, the source domain, typically the more abstract domain, is used to understand the target domain, which represents the destination. *Conceptual metaphors* are characterized by the alignment of two concept domains—the source domain where the metaphor is observed (or originated) and the target domain where the metaphor is applied. This alignment is achieved through the process of mapping between the two domains.

Mapping involves establishing a correlation and connection, lacking similarity, between aspects in two domains at the conceptual or thought level. This process of mapping is intricately linked to various elements such as culture, knowledge, language, experience, and physical activity. As per Zhang and Gao (2009), metaphor fundamentally encompasses all mappings within the conceptual domain. The mapping function, in essence, comprises a set of enduring ontological correspondences between entities in the source domain and the target domain. The primary role of mapping is to elucidate the relationship between the target and conceptual domains. In the context

of *conceptual metaphors*, there are three main types: *structural metaphors*, *ontological metaphors*, and *orientational metaphors*.

2.4. Structural Metaphors

Structural metaphors involve the systemic correlations between two domains—namely, the target and source domains—derived from everyday experiences. According to Lakoff & Johnson (2008), *structural metaphors* play a crucial role as they, along with *conceptual metaphors*, are culturally rooted in our experiences, both material and personal. Cultural foundations are drawn from our experiences, and these metaphors, particularly structural ones, are not merely about orienting concepts but also encompass referring to them or being able to measure them. They serve as logical metaphors, clearly illustrated and structured to align with others. It's crucial to emphasize that *structural metaphors* derive not only from the relationships between source and target domains but also from the systematic correlations observed in everyday life.

2.5. Orientational Metaphors

Orientational metaphors are named based on their function, which revolves around correlating with fundamental human spatial orientations. These metaphors are linked to the orientation of human experiences, encompassing concepts such as Up-Down, In-Out, Front-Back, and the like. (Kovecses, 2010). The spatial orientation emerges from human physical experiences in navigating direction and daily life. Consistent with the viewpoint of Lakoff & Johnson (2008), *orientational metaphors* offer spatial orientational concepts. As per Kovecses (2010), one metaphorical concept is another type of concept in a different case, and these metaphors do not just organize concepts independently but establish a system where concepts mutually respect and regulate each other.

2.6. Ontological Metaphor

An ontological metaphor is a conceptual form of metaphor intended to conceptualize abstract thoughts or experiences by transforming them into tangible or physical forms. In essence, *ontological metaphors* translate abstract concepts into concrete manifestations, portraying non-physical events, emotional activities, and ideas as tangible phenomena. (Evans & Green, 2006).

An image schema is a fundamental form of cognitive semantic conceptual structure that arises from the experiences of how the body engages with the world. Saeed (2011) describes the image schema as an unconscious mental framework of abstract form or tropology. Mark and Johnson, as cited in Hampe (2008), emphasize the significance of image schema in providing insights into our inherently embodied mind. Lakoff & Johnson (2008) note that image schemas serve as source domains for metaphorical mapping, constituting knowledge structures derived from pre-conceptual experiences. Citraresmana et al. (2018) additionally underscore that image schemas stem from fundamental experiences, depicting how the body engages with the world, and comprehension relies on a hypothetical approach to experience. This method enables experiences to serve as a valuable tool in grasping abstract concepts for a deeper understanding.

Finally, cultural models are shared beliefs and assumptions that shape how we understand the world. These models influence the development and use of *conceptual metaphors* and can be seen in the way that metaphors are used across different cultures and languages. Metaphors and culture are intricately connected, and the question arises as to why they cannot be separated but are instead deeply interwoven. Culture has the power to shape our thinking, influencing how we perceive metaphors. Saeed (2011) identifies four conventional characteristics of metaphors, namely idea, systematicity, asymmetry, and abstraction, which are linked to the metaphors embraced by

speakers. Additionally, Semino & Demjén (2016) describe conceptual metaphor as both a process and a product, representing a cognitive process for understanding the connections between domains. The inseparability of metaphors and culture underscores the profound impact that cultural contexts can have on the creation, interpretation, and acceptance of metaphors.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature, which aims to explore the possible meanings of metaphors in the selected poems by three eminent postmodern American poets; Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath through the postulates of *conceptual metaphor theory* presented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980. The quality of relationships, activities, situations, and materials is commonly examined in qualitative research. According to Ary and Jacobs (2010), qualitative analysts focus on the overall picture rather than breaking it down into elements to understand a wonder.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5), the principle of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another. The *conceptual metaphor theory* is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of cognitive semantics, providing essential theoretical support for understanding the interconnected relationship between language, cognition, and lived experiences. (Evans, 2007, p. 34; cf. Evans and Green, 2006, p. 286). Croft and Cruse (2004, p. 194) similarly emphasize that metaphor has been a central focus for cognitive linguists, to the extent that some individuals mistakenly believe that cognitive linguistics revolves solely around metaphor (Hilpert, 2015).

Semantic analysis is a powerful tool for uncovering the meaning of *conceptual metaphors* in postmodern American poetry. As MJ Landau argues that semantic analysis can help “to identify and interpret the creative and figurative aspects of language” (Landau, 2016). The selection of poems is made using purposive sampling approach, since the poems richly embedded with

metaphors are selected for this study. Furthermore, semantic analysis is important in understanding poetry because it can help to reveal the deeper meanings and themes that may not be immediately apparent to the reader. By identifying the literary devices, emotions, and ideas present in a poem, semantic analysis can help the reader increase a healthier understanding of the poem and appreciate its artistic value.

The selected poems of Adrienne Rich are *Aunt Jennifer's Tigers*, *Living in Sin*, and *Moving in Winter*; John Ashbery's poems are *Paradoxes and Oxymorons*, *Some Trees*, and *At North Farm*, while Sylvia Plath's poems are *Lady Lazarus*, *Child* and *Daddy*. These poems serve as the primary source of data for this study. Several methods can be used to analyze the *conceptual metaphors* in Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath's poetry. Identifying the source and target domains of the metaphors is a fundamental step in understanding how *conceptual metaphors* work. By identifying the source and target domains, readers can gain a better understanding of the relationships between different concepts and how they are being used to communicate ideas. This is particularly important when studying *conceptual metaphors* in Rich's poetry, as she often uses metaphors to explore complex and nuanced themes and ideas. Examining the language used to convey the metaphors can provide valuable insights into the meaning and significance of the metaphors. By looking at the words and phrases used to describe the source and target domains, as well as the figurative language and imagery used to connect them, readers can gain a deeper understanding of how Rich is using metaphors to communicate ideas and explore the relationships between different concepts. Considering the context in which the metaphors are used and the cultural and historical background of the metaphors can help to shed light on the broader cultural and social significance of the metaphors. This is particularly important when studying the work of

a poets like Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath whose poetry is often deeply rooted in cultural and historical contexts.

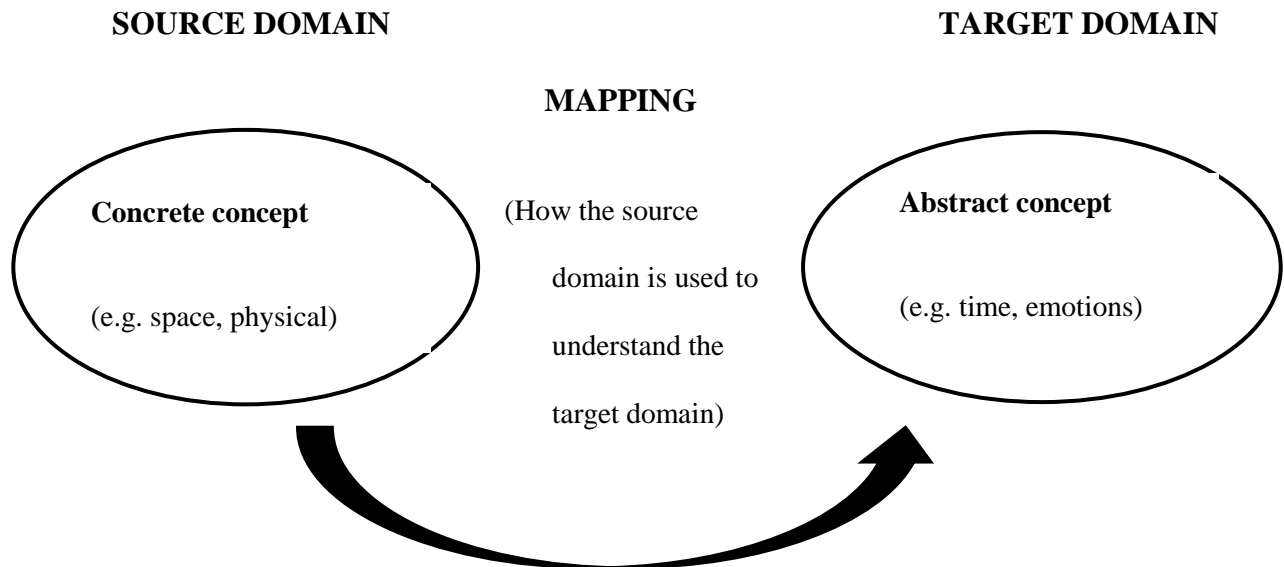


Figure 2: Schematic depiction of conceptual metaphor

The initial step involves providing an overview and description of the poem's general theme to elucidate its meaning. Subsequently, each conceptual metaphor within the poem will be elucidated by delineating its source and target domains.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

4.1. Adrienne Rich's Poems

Adrienne Rich's poems are imbued with a profound sense of introspection and a critical gaze on societal constructs. They weave a tapestry that reflects both the personal and political, revealing the interconnectedness of private struggles with larger systemic issues. In the post-modern landscape, Adrienne Rich's poetry serves as a bridge, connecting deeply personal narratives to broader cultural and political critiques. Helen Vendler (1988) on Adrienne Rich says, four years after she published her initial book, that she read it with an almost incredulous sense of amazement; someone of her age was articulating my own life experiences. She believed that, for every reader, there are only a handful of poets for whom this holds, and typically, according to statistical likelihood, those poets are either deceased or considerably distant in time and space. However, there was a poet who, almost miraculously, echoed her existence. Until then, she hadn't realized how much she yearned for a contemporaneous and female voice to express the essence of life.

Her mastery in the use of metaphor ensures that her work remains timeless, resonant, and deeply impactful for generations of readers. According to Janusz, S. (1994) Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde, employing metaphorical language, reshapes a worldview that significantly diverges from the conventional phallogocentric perspective. The assertion is made that the challenges faced by feminists do not solely lie in linguistic issues but, instead, originate from the intentions or motives of individuals who wield metaphor as a tool to diminish and demean women. We engage in daily language use to convey information, and whether intentionally or not, we also express

attitude. The question arises: how can attitude be communicated inadvertently or unknowingly? The answer, as articulated by Watzlawick in his work *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (1967, 49), is straightforward: "One cannot communicate." Watzlawick's assertion encompasses not only spoken or written language but extends to encompass non-verbal elements such as posture, facial expressions, intonation, gestures, and images. These serve as examples of deliberate or unintentional oral and visual communication of attitude, with the additional dimension that attitude can also be conveyed through written means.

4.1.1. Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

Aunt Jennifer's Tigers (1990) is a poem by Adrienne Rich that delves into the themes of repression, gender roles, and the burdens women bear due to societal expectations. The poem begins with a description of Aunt Jennifer's embroidered tigers. These tigers are vibrant, fearless, and move with a swift, decisive grace. They are described as prancing and shining brightly against a backdrop of a green tree, an image that evokes freedom and vitality. According to Turner (2015), Aunt Jennifer's artistic endeavor is emblematic of the subdued female voice. Needlework, as a form of expression, is portrayed as a silenced and domesticated art with limited avenues for visibility. While Aunt Jennifer engages in this domesticated handicraft, she is denied substantial influence in artistic expression. Although the tiger in her needlework may exude pride and fearlessness, it is confined within the patriarchal system where dominant voices are exclusively granted to men. Turner's analysis suggests that Aunt Jennifer's creative outlet is constrained by societal norms, highlighting the broader theme of the suppression of women's voices in the context of artistic expression. This is in stark contrast to Aunt Jennifer herself, who is weighed down by

the "massive weight" of her wedding band, a symbol of her oppressive marriage and the societal expectations placed upon her.

Conceptually, the tigers serve as a powerful metaphor for the freedom, autonomy, and courage that Aunt Jennifer presumably yearns for but doesn't have in her own life. According to Jaber & Ali(2023), Rich presents herself as a woman enduring the challenges of a patriarchal society. Acknowledging the limitations of language in conveying women's voices, she actively seeks an effective means to communicate the experiences and suffering of women. The wedding band symbolizes the constraints of her marriage and possibly the broader confines of the patriarchal societal structure she inhabits. Despite Aunt Jennifer's hands, which may tremble with age or frailty, the tigers she crafts through embroidery exude fearlessness and exhibit no apprehension towards the men depicted beneath them. This suggests a timeless, unconquerable spirit that Aunt Jennifer may have instilled in her artistic creation.

In essence, the poem contrasts the two worlds: the imagined, vivid realm of the tigers which is free from any patriarchal constraints, and the actual world of Aunt Jennifer, marked by its oppressive confines. Through these *conceptual metaphors*, Rich underscores the struggles women face in patriarchal societies, their desires for freedom, and the means they might use to express those desires, even if only in art or imagination.

In the first stanza, Tigers represent Aunt Jennifer's aspirational self, the self that is free, untamed, and undaunted by the oppressive structures in her life. In the poem, tigers embody several traits. They are bold (prance), beautiful and precious (Bright topaz), autonomous (denizens of a world of green), fearless (fearless to men), and confident (sleek chivalric certainty). The tigers serve as a reflection or projection of what Aunt Jennifer wishes for or sees within herself but cannot actualize due to the constraints in her life.

The action of prancing is lively and spirited. This contrasts sharply with Aunt Jennifer's life, which, as we gather from later in the poem, is weighed down by her marriage's "massive weight." It implies a desire for unburdened freedom. Bright Topaz semantically denotes something valuable and shining. Aunt Jennifer sees value and brightness in this imaginative freedom, perhaps something she feels she doesn't have in her current life. 'Denizen' typically refers to an inhabitant or a resident. The tigers inhabit a verdant, fresh world, suggesting a place of unspoiled freedom and vitality. This is the space where Aunt Jennifer's aspirational self exists. The tigers move with certainty and a kind of honor (chivalry). The use of sleek and chivalric together combines grace with a sense of righteousness or moral integrity. Aunt Jennifer desires this assuredness and moral grounding for herself. According to Handayani, D. (2019), an animal metaphor is a figurative expression designed to draw parallels between human characteristics and those of animals. It serves the purpose of conveying insights about human nature by likening it to the traits of animals. Additionally, animal metaphors may be employed to underscore equality between an individual and a specific animal, with the relevance determined by the context in which they are used. The utilization of animal metaphors in communication highlights the intricacy and depth of the Javanese language. In direct conversations, speakers employ animal metaphors to emphasize particular meanings to their interlocutors. This linguistic device adds nuance and depth to the communication, allowing speakers to convey ideas in a vivid and culturally rich manner within the Javanese language.

The tigers act as a vibrant metaphor for Aunt Jennifer's inner desires and her vision of an unoppressed self. The stark contrast between the tigers' world and Aunt Jennifer's reality serves as a powerful commentary on the differences between our innermost aspirations and the confines placed upon us by society. The first stanza of *Aunt Jennifer's Tigers* (1990) serves to introduce the

central symbols and themes of the poem. The tigers are presented as strong and free beings, unencumbered by the fears and limitations of the men beneath the tree. This contrast between the strength and freedom of the tigers, and the weakness and confinement of the men, set the stage for the themes and conflicts that will be explored in the rest of the poem.

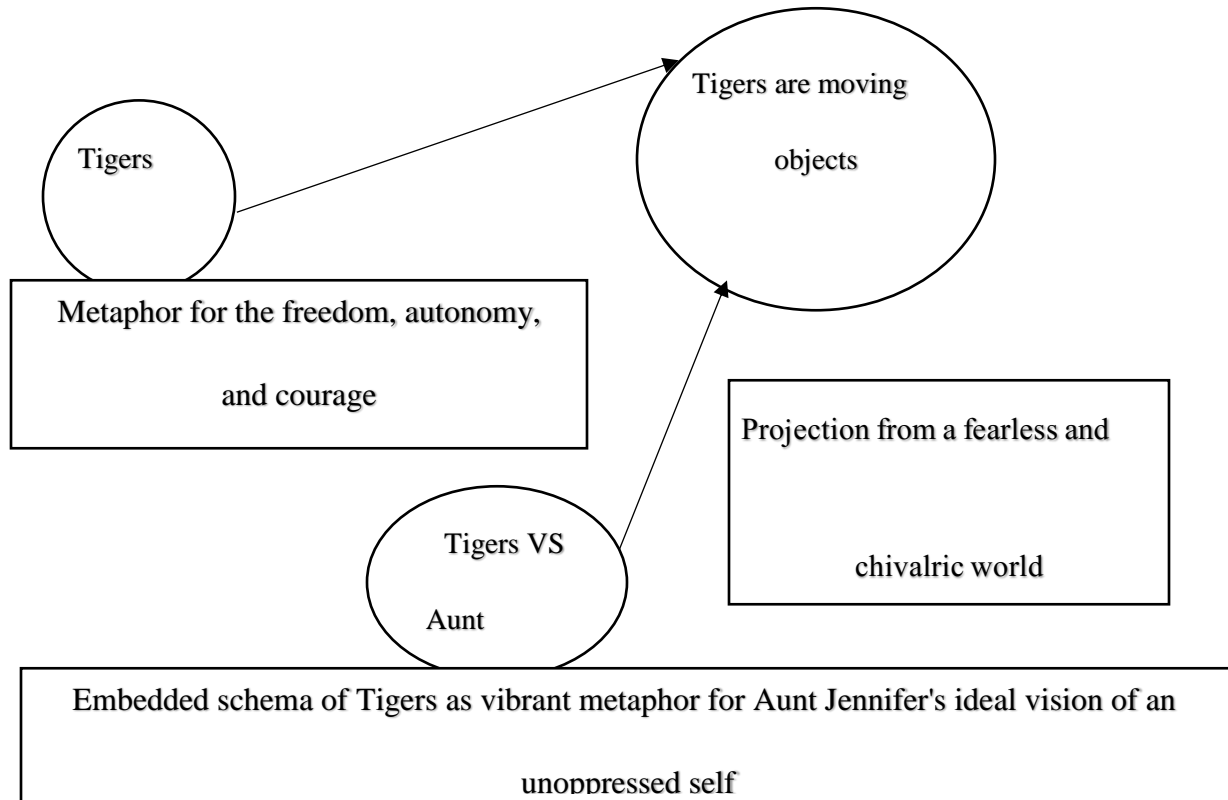


Figure 3: Schematic depiction of conceptual metaphor of Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

In the second stanza, the difficulty Aunt Jennifer faces in her embroidery represents her struggles in life. The act of embroidery, which usually suggests a delicate, nurturing, and traditionally feminine activity, becomes strenuous and arduous for Aunt Jennifer, mirroring the struggles she faces in her life. The phrase *Fluttering Fingers* conveys a sense of frailty, suggesting vulnerability or perhaps anxiety. *Fluttering* implies a lack of firmness or strength, possibly pointing to the oppressive circumstances that have weakened her spirit or the physical toil of age. *Ivory*,

being a precious and somewhat delicate material, juxtaposed with the difficulty Aunt Jennifer faces in pulling the needle, illustrates the weight and gravity of her situation. The needle, a tool of her craft, has become a challenge, much like elements of her own life.

The thread holds a profound symbolic significance, embodying a multitude of concepts according to *Słownik Symboli* (1990). This symbolic representation encompasses themes such as existence, life, love, the umbilical cord, offspring, fate, and destiny. Furthermore, the thread is seen as a symbol for the axis of the world, a ray, sublimation, ascent, and nothingness. Beyond these notions, it serves as a symbol for memory, intelligence, and the path to cognition, relationships, stories, dreams, friendship, danger, intrigue, talkativeness, and escape. The adjective massive is compelling. Wedding bands are physically light, but their described weightiness symbolically communicates the immense burden Aunt Jennifer feels in her marital commitment. The imagery of the heavy ring sitting on her hand suggests an immovable and persistent weight, something she carries with her. It encapsulates the ongoing nature of her struggle and her feeling of being trapped or constrained by her marriage.

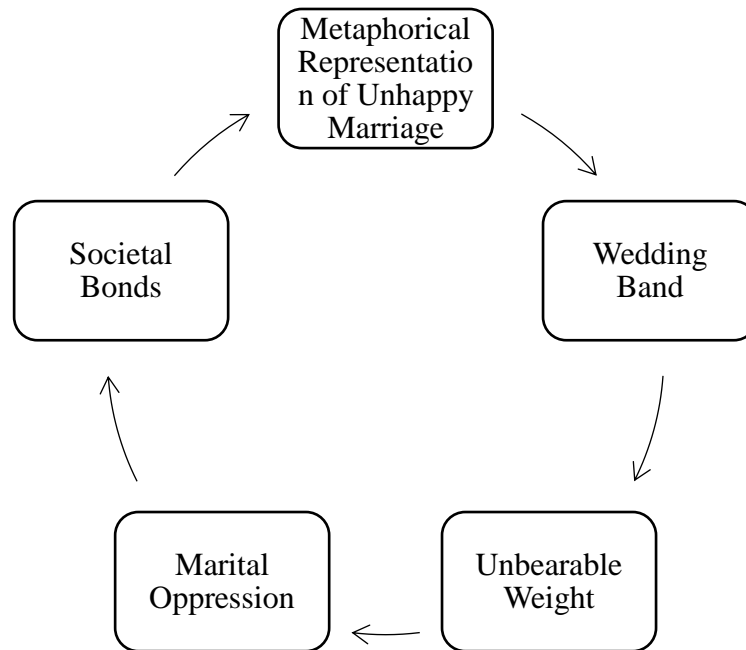


Figure 4: Metaphorical Representation of Unhappy Marriage

The powerful imagery of Aunt Jennifer's embroidery and her wedding band depict the challenges and burdens she faces in her marriage. The source domains of embroidery and the wedding ring are mapped onto the target domains of her life struggles and marital oppression, respectively, to form compelling *conceptual metaphors* that underpin the poem's central themes.

In this poem, Adrienne Rich conveys a feminist message through the use of *conceptual metaphors*. These metaphors involve mapping two distinct concepts onto each other, facilitating the transfer of meanings, connotations, and implications. The source domains of tiger, wedding band, and embroidery are employed to symbolize virginity, life, desire, power, and struggles on behalf of the protagonist. Rich's use of these *conceptual metaphors* allows her to subtly communicate feminist messages to readers. For instance, describing tigers and contrasting their prancing, proud, and unafraid traits serve freedom, confidence, and fearlessness. This suggests that

while her physical existence was bound by constraints, her spirit, as depicted through her art, remains unbound and immortal. Moreover, the connection between animals and power, while not immediately apparent, allows Rich to depict a woman seizing and enjoying power—an idea that might have offended more conservative readers if stated outright. Rich's adept use of *conceptual metaphors* thus enables her to convey complex feminist messages discreetly and engage a broader readership.

The tiger, in Aunt Jennifer's art, becomes a silent witness to the complexities of relationships, echoing the themes of disillusionment and the enduring struggle against societal norms that resonate in "*Living in Sin*." Through these interconnected poems, Rich paints a profound canvas of human experience, where love, disillusionment, and resilience converge in the delicate strokes of her poetic craftsmanship.

4.1.2. Living in Sin

Living in Sin (1954) is a poignant commentary on relationships and the disillusionment that can arise from romantic ideals. At the outset, the poem describes a woman who lives with her lover in a studio, which she once viewed with a romanticized lens. She imagined a life filled with effortless passion and harmony. However, as time passes, the reality of her day-to-day existence in the studio becomes a stark contrast to her initial expectations.

The woman notices the grime, the disorder, the unwashed dishes, and the unmade bed. There are signs of decay everywhere, such as a beetle crawling in the kitchen and a cracked window letting in cold air. Her partner is depicted as indifferent, more engrossed in playing the piano than acknowledging the studio's disarray or her dissatisfaction. The title *Living in Sin* is ironic. Instead of referring to the traditionally sinful act of a couple living together outside of marriage, it hints at

the sin of allowing oneself to be ensnared by unrealistic romantic ideals and then waking up to the stark reality of unmet expectations. The poem employs several metaphors that highlight the gap between romantic fantasies and everyday life. According to Jaber & Ali (2023), Rich embarks on this journey prompted by her experiences of suffering within patriarchal social institutions, epitomized by the constructs of marriage and motherhood. In her endeavor, she seeks to reframe her poetry, shifting the focus away from public concerns and instead centering it on the pain and oppression experienced by women. The first verse of the poem implies an idealized expectation that the domestic space, or the studio, would maintain itself effortlessly. This could be seen as a metaphorical expression of the broader conceptual metaphor that maintaining a relationship is like maintaining a well-kept space. The studio stands for the relationship, and the expectation of it "keeping itself" represents the desire for an effortlessly harmonious and self-sustaining love. The phrase "no dust upon the furniture of love" can be analyzed as a *metonymy*, where the cleanliness of the furniture becomes a representation of the state of the relationship. The cleanliness is associated with the idealized concept of love, and the dust becomes a metonymic expression for the issues or challenges that might accumulate and tarnish the idealized image. In these lines, the poet employs metaphors and metonymy to convey the speaker's initial expectations of an effortlessly perfect relationship contrasted with the practical, less glamorous reality. The studio serves as a metaphorical space for their love, and the cleanliness or lack of dust becomes a metonymic representation of the state of their romantic connection. Cooper (1984) explains that in this poem the woman is subjected to mockery by minor demons. The characterization of the angels and demons hinges on the verbs "chide" and "jeer," both of which convey a sense of rebuke. The term "chide" implies not just rebuke but also a prodding or impelling force. Similarly, "jeer" conveys the act of taunting. In both these verbs, there is an inherent quality of pressure or

insistence, suggesting the presence of a potent force capable of delivering the reproach. The choice of these verbs adds depth to the portrayal of the woman's experience, emphasizing the oppressive and forceful nature of the judgment she faces from the supernatural entities.

Verse 3 uses metaphorical language to describe the desired state of the household. The taps being "vocal" metaphorically suggests that they make noise, possibly symbolizing conflicts or disturbances in the relationship. The wish for taps to be less vocal implies a desire for a quieter, more harmonious environment. The panes being "relieved of grime" is a metaphor for the desire to eliminate obstacles or imperfections in the relationship. The lines that follow provide a series of images related to the domestic setting: "A plate of pears, a piano with a Persian shawl, a cat stalking the picturesque amusing mouse." These images contribute to the overall atmosphere of the home. The choice of a plate of pears could symbolize abundance or sweetness, the piano with a Persian shawl adds a touch of culture and luxury, and the cat and mouse creates a charming, picturesque scene.

Verse 4 introduces a metaphorical depiction of the stairs "writhe" under the milkman's tramp. The use of the word "writhe" conveys a sense of movement, possibly emphasizing the disturbance or disruption caused by the routine arrival of the milkman. This could be a metaphor for the intrusion of mundane daily activities into the perceived stability of the relationship. The phrase "morning light so coldly would delineate" employs a metaphorical expression to describe the cold and precise illumination of the morning light. This can be interpreted as a metaphor for the harsh reality that becomes apparent in the morning. The beetle eyes fixed on her own suggest a sense of scrutiny or observation. This could be a metaphor for the gaze of judgment or the intrusion of external perspectives into the private space of the relationship. The mention of the "envoy from some village in the moldings" adds to the metaphor, suggesting an emissary or representative of

societal expectations. The portrayal of the morning routine and the intrusion of external elements can be seen as a metaphor for the persistence and unstoppable nature of the world's routine, akin to the ticking of a clock. The mundane activities, harsh light, and external gazes all contribute to the sense that the world continues its unrelenting pace despite the personal dynamics within the relationship. Jaber & Ali (2023) add that Rich actively challenges the patriarchal system that has been imposed on women, suppressing them for generations. She contends that women endure oppression and face violations of their rights within a male-dominated society. Her work reflects a commitment to confronting and resisting the structures that perpetuate gender-based inequality and discrimination.

"Jeered by the minor demons" metaphorically depicts internal challenges or conflicts within the relationship. The source domain in this metaphor is the realm of supernatural beings or entities, specifically, demons. In mythology and folklore, demons are often associated with malevolent forces, mischief, and challenges. They are creatures that embody negativity and create obstacles for individuals. The use of the term "minor demons" suggests that these challenges are not overwhelmingly significant or catastrophic but rather persistent and troublesome in a subtler way. The target domain is the internal challenges or conflicts within the romantic relationship. The term "jeered" implies mockery or taunting, suggesting a certain degree of adversarial behavior. The speaker is not just facing challenges; these challenges seem to mock or ridicule the efforts made within the relationship. The target domain is the internal challenges or conflicts within the romantic relationship. The term "jeered" implies mockery or taunting, suggesting a certain degree of adversarial behavior. The speaker is not just facing challenges; these challenges seem to mock or ridicule the efforts made within the relationship. Describing Adrienne Rich as "a poet of ideas," Ostriker (1979) delves into the analysis of several of Rich's poems, notably *Snapshots of a*

Daughter-In-Law No. 3. In this particular work, Rich expresses her frustration at being ensnared in a heterosexual marriage that erodes and commodifies her identity. Ostriker contends that Rich's discontent extends beyond the fact that she, a queer woman, finds herself confined in a life with a man. Rather, as Ostriker (1979) elucidates, Rich grapples with "the conflict between the subversive demands of the poetic imagination and the societal and self-imposed expectations on a woman attempting to conform to the traditional way of life."

4.1.3. Moving in Winter

Adrienne Rich's poem *Moving in Winter* (1974) reflects on the dissolution of a relationship, symbolized by the metaphor of a life collapsing like un-played cards. The imagery depicts the remnants of a shared life being carried in fragments through the snow. The bed, once a place of desire, now becomes a site of separation as the sleep overhead creates a canopy that stifles connection. The worn table mirrors reflecting their presence, and bureaus enclosing memories all witness the unraveling of their shared history. The poem portrays the emotional aftermath through images of rolled-up carpets, containing echoes of past altercations and silences. Rich captures the intricate details of a broken relationship and the poignant aftermath of what was once a shared existence. *Moving in Winter* employs vivid and descriptive metaphors to convey a sense of separation, discontentment, and coldness. These metaphors not only narrate the couple's physical relocation during the winter but also symbolically represent the state of their relationship. The wintry move serves as a metaphorical backdrop, subtly reflecting the emotional chill and challenges within the couple's connection (Kibin, 2023).

Adrienne Rich captures the sense of powerlessness and inner conflicts experienced by the typical housewife, portraying shared dissatisfaction. Rich establishes a connection between the

reader and the protagonist by employing the pronoun "their" at the outset. In the first stanza the metaphor "Life Collapsed Like Unplayed Cards," the conceptual metaphor is the representation of life as a deck of cards. By comparing life to a deck of cards, the metaphor implies that life, like a deck, contains a mix of elements that can be unpredictable and subject to change. The dissolution of the relationship is then likened to the collapsing or disarray of these cards, suggesting a loss of order and control. The choice of "unplayed cards" adds layers of meaning to the metaphor. Unplayed cards suggest neglect and abandonment as if the potential for meaningful interactions or experiences remains untapped. The cards, which hold inherent value in a game, also symbolize the untapped potential of the relationship that is now collapsing. Here, life as a deck of cards is used as a metonymy-based metaphor. According to Radden (2000), metonymy-based metaphors are characterized by conceptual domains that are interconnected through a cultural model. Quinn and Holland (1987, p. 4) describe cultural models as ingrained, commonly accepted frameworks of the world that are widely shared among the members of a society. These cultural models play a significant role in shaping individuals' comprehension of the world and influencing their behavior within it.

In the next stanza the metaphor "Bed as a Canopy," the conceptual metaphor is the representation of relationship dynamics using the imagery of a physical barrier. This metaphor involves understanding the nature of a relationship by likening it to a physical barrier. In a typical understanding of a bed, it is a place associated with closeness, intimacy, and shared moments. However, in this metaphor, the bed takes on a new role as a symbolic barrier. The choice of the word "canopy" suggests an overhead covering that can both protect and restrict. The metaphorical use of "canopy" suggests that within the bed – a space traditionally associated with emotional and physical closeness – there is now a sense of separation or emotional distance. The consequences

of their shared history are portrayed as an overhead covering that may be stifling or confining rather than comforting.

The third stanza contains the figurative expression, “Table Worn by Four Elbows”, which is the conceptual metaphor that is the representation of a relationship as a shared space. This metaphor involves understanding the nature of a relationship by likening it to a shared physical environment. In this context, employing the metaphor of a table conveys the idea of a communal space where significant moments and interactions have taken place. The visible signs of wear and tear on the table, particularly caused by the pressure of four elbows, serve as symbols representing the passage of time and the cumulative effect of repeated shared experiences. The evident wear on the table suggests a consistent and habitual use, underscoring the sense of familiarity that develops through the duration of time spent together. The four elbows, representing the presence of both individuals, emphasize the shared quality of the space and the joint effort involved in shaping the history of their relationship.

In the next stanza of the poem, the poet employs a commonly used idiomatic expression, the verb "reflecting them," which euphemistically signifies self-awareness. From a cognitive semantic perspective, this idiomatic expression represents the surface-level realization of an underlying conceptual metaphor: Mirrors as reflections of relationships. The use of mirrors suggests a metaphorical tool for self-examination and introspection. The presence of mirrors in the context of the relationship implies that both individuals are engaged in a continual process of self-awareness. The reflection serves as a metaphor for recognizing and understanding one's actions, emotions, and contributions to the relationship. The metaphor emphasizes the perpetual nature of this self-awareness. The constant reflection in the mirrors implies an ongoing acknowledgment of each other's presence, actions, and perhaps the impact they have on one another. The shared

experiences are metaphorically mirrored, creating a dynamic where self-awareness and mutual recognition are integral to the relationship. Charles Lock (2015) has noted that mirror reflections, akin to shadows, possess characteristics of both metonymy and metaphor. This duality, according to Lock, accounts for their cultural significance and elevated status. Mirror reflections, like shadows, embody elements of both metonymic association and metaphorical representation, contributing to their cultural resonance and widespread appeal.

Additional linguistic expressions that exemplify this conceptual metaphor are found in the phrases "Bureaus Coffining" next. In this context, Bureaus, typically associated with storage and organization, take on a metaphorical role as coffins. The use of "coffining" adds a layer of symbolism, implying that emotions and memories are being sealed off or entombed. The cold environment is not only a physical description but also a representation of emotional chilliness within the relationship. The choice of "coffining" emphasizes the intentional act of sealing off emotions and memories. It suggests a deliberate effort to compartmentalize and isolate feelings, perhaps as a protective measure. The "cold" environment contributes to the idea that emotions are frozen or distant, creating a sense of emotional detachment.

In another the phrase "Carpets Rolled Up Around Echoes," the poet employs exaggeration with the verb "rolled," suggesting that conflicts and unresolved issues are being intentionally concealed or hidden, much like rolling up a carpet to cover a space. The act of rolling up the carpets symbolizes a conscious effort to put aside or bury the echoes of past disagreements. This introduces an image metaphor where the poet implicitly compares by likening it to rolled-up carpets. This metaphor involves understanding the act of suppressing or concealing past conflicts within a relationship by likening it to rolling up carpets. The choice of "rolled-up carpets" implies a temporary hiding of the echoes of past conflicts. However, the metaphor also carries the idea that

these issues are not permanently resolved; they are merely concealed. The potential for these conflicts to resurface is depicted by the image of unraveling the carpets, and when they do, it may lead to the generation of new altercations or arguments.

The use of "old silences" in the last stanza suggests that these communication gaps, marked by unspoken tensions or unresolved issues, have a history and have persisted over time. The term "silences" implies a lack of verbal expression, emphasizing the quiet, unresolved aspects of the relationship. The metaphor emphasizes that these "old silences" are not momentary lapses in communication but represent a historical and enduring aspect of the relationship. It underscores the persistence of unresolved issues and emotional gaps, suggesting that these silent spaces have been present over an extended period, contributing to the complexity of the relationship. According to Alfandary (2000), silence, within the realm of E. E. Cummings' poems, is not merely a lack of sound; it is an experience. This multifaceted nature is reflected in its usage as both an adjective, adverb, and noun in Cummings' works. Silence, for him, is not just a descriptor; it embodies a quality and even an emotion. It takes on various roles in his poetry, whether it serves to qualify a noun, as seen in "silent shoulders," functions as a qualified substantive in expressions like "nervous and accurate silence," (CP 114), or stands alone as a quality in phrases such as "she smelled of silence." (CP 208) In each instance, silence goes beyond a mere absence of noise, becoming a nuanced and expressive element within the emotional tapestry of Cummings' poetry.

Embarking on an exploration of *conceptual metaphors* in Adrienne Rich's poems serves as a poignant prelude to delving into the intricacies of John Ashbery's unique poetic landscape. Rich's metaphors, rooted in the social and political milieu, provide a foundation for understanding the transformative potential of metaphorical language. As we transition to Ashbery's work, the lens

widens to encompass a more abstract and elusive terrain, where *conceptual metaphors* become portals to a realm of linguistic play and existential inquiry. By bridging the analytical insights drawn from Rich's socio-political metaphors to the enigmatic tapestry woven by Ashbery's linguistic experimentation, we embark on a journey that unravels the diverse facets of metaphorical expression, traversing the spectrum from the concrete to the abstract in the rich tapestry of contemporary poetry.

4.2 John Ashbery's Poems

One of the defining features of John Ashbery's poetry was his adept use of *conceptual metaphors*. Rather than relying solely on traditional metaphors, he employed a variety of unconventional and unexpected associations to convey deeper meanings. Ashbery's *conceptual metaphors* acted as bridges between the tangible and intangible, opening up new avenues of thought and interpretation.

In his poems, Ashbery blended the ordinary with the surreal, often juxtaposing disparate images and ideas to create a sense of dissonance and ambiguity. His metaphors allowed readers to explore the complexities of existence, as well as the fluid and subjective nature of language and perception. By drawing upon a vast range of references, from art and literature to popular culture and personal experiences, Ashbery invited readers to embark on a journey of discovery and introspection. In an interview, in 2004, John Ashbery expressed, that he is very much like a magpie when it comes to reading. He delves into anything that he comes across—be it the National Enquirer, Dear Abby, a magazine at the dentist, or a Victorian novel. He does not adhere to any specific reading program. When someone commented on an explicit passage in a poem, he responded that the shock wasn't that it was present but that there weren't more such passages.

There's an American inclination to believe that if you engage in one thing, you should only do that and nothing else. That doesn't sit well with him. Poetry encompasses everything and anything. Ashbery's *conceptual metaphors* were characterized by their openness and multiplicity of meanings. They invited readers to engage actively with the text, inviting personal interpretations and reflections. His poems were like intricate puzzles, encouraging readers to delve into the depths of language and explore the intricate connections between words and ideas. Ashbery's metaphors often served as portals to alternate realities, inviting readers to question the boundaries of imagination and the nature of reality itself. They could be paradoxical, challenging traditional notions of logic and reason. Through his metaphors, Ashbery sought to capture the ineffable aspects of human experience, the elusive emotions and fleeting moments that often elude precise description.

4.2.1. Paradoxes and Oxymorons

The poem *Paradoxes and Oxymorons* (1981) by John Ashbery can be analyzed using the same approach of identifying the source domain, target domain, and the type of metaphor. The poem itself is concerned with language and its paradoxical and oxymoronic qualities. The book *Paradoxical Thinking: How to Profit from Your Contradictions* by Jerry L. Fletcher and Kelle Olwyler (1997) explores the concept of paradoxical thinking and its potential benefits. The authors argue that contradictions and paradoxes are not necessarily obstacles to success but can be sources of creativity and innovation. They propose that by embracing contradictions and approaching them with a different mindset, individuals and organizations can uncover unique opportunities and find solutions that go beyond conventional thinking. The book provides strategies, tools, and case

studies to help readers develop their paradoxical thinking skills and leverage contradictions to their advantage in various aspects of life and business

Flayih, Rajaa (2009) explores the concept of oxymorons and highlight their characteristics. According to Flayih's analysis, an oxymoron is a lexical device that brings together conflicting syntactic and semantic structures. It is a figure of speech intentionally created by combining two words or ideas that are traditionally seen as opposite or incompatible. Oxymoron is typically short and self-contained, serving as a means of emphasis. It flexibly employs antonyms or quasi-antonyms, with its most commonly recognized structure being attributive. Furthermore, Flayih emphasizes that oxymoron serves various rhetorical functions, adding depth and complexity to the language and its usage.

In the first stanza of the poem the source domain is "language," and the target domain is the concept of communication or connection. The poem employs *paradoxes and oxymorons* to highlight the complexities of language and communication. The paradoxical nature of language can be seen in the lines "You have it but you don't have it" and "You miss it, it misses you. You miss each other." The poem suggests that language is simultaneously present and absent and that it can create a sense of longing and separation.

The oxymoronic quality of language is seen in the line "this poem is concerned with language on a very plain level". The use of the oxymoron "plain level" suggests that language can be both simple and complex at the same time and that it is often filled with contradictions and paradoxes. The use of *paradoxes and oxymorons* creates tension between opposite concepts, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of language. It also suggests that language is not always straightforward and can be filled with contradictions and paradoxes. The poem invites us to think about the complexities of language and how it shapes our understanding of the world.

In the second stanza, the source domain is "the poem" and the target domain is possessiveness" or "ownership. The metaphor suggests that the poem is like a person who is sad because he wants to be owned or possessed by someone, but cannot be. The poem desires to be understood, appreciated, and valued by the reader, but this connection is ultimately unattainable. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1910) famous poem *Kubla Khan*, Coleridge personifies the poem itself as a living being by describing it as a "stately pleasure-dome" and a "miracle of rare device." The poem takes on a tangible form within the narrative as if it were a living entity. Walt Whitman's (1904) *Song of Myself* explores the interconnectedness of all living beings, blurring the boundaries between the self and the external world. In this sense, the poem itself can be seen as a living entity, embodying the collective spirit of humanity

Moving to the next line of the same stanza contains a question about the meaning of a "plain level." The speaker is questioning what it means for something to be "plain" or simple and suggests that this simplicity can encompass many different things and bring them into a system or context. The third line begins by repeating the word "play" from the previous line, but then the speaker pauses to question whether the play is an appropriate word. The source domain here is "play" or "game," and the target domain is the act of reading or interpreting the poem. The use of the word "play" suggests that reading the poem is a kind of game or playful activity, but the speaker acknowledges that this characterization may not be entirely accurate. The metaphorical language used in these lines highlights the complexity and ambiguity of language and meaning.

In the third stanza, the metaphor "the division of grace these long August days" draws on the source domain of division and time to convey a deeper understanding of the target domain of experience and perception. In this metaphor, Ashbery uses the concept of division to emphasize the idea that time, specifically the long days of August, can be divided into distinct segments or

moments. This division implies that within these extended days, there are specific instances of grace or beauty that stand out from the ordinary flow of time.

The metaphor suggests that these moments of grace or beauty have a unique quality or significance that sets them apart from the rest of the days. It implies that during this particular period, the potential for experiencing something extraordinary is heightened. By referring to them as "the division of grace," Ashbery implies that these moments of beauty or transcendence are distinct and separate, almost as if they exist in their separate realm within the continuum of time. Marcinkiewicz, P. (2018) delves into the intricate layers of John Ashbery's poetry, unraveling its enigmatic themes and stylistic innovations. Through meticulous analysis, Marcinkiewicz offers profound insights into Ashbery's complex use of language, his exploration of postmodern aesthetics, and the interplay between meaning and perception in his work *Literary Translations and Stages of Their Existence in the Receiving Culture: The Case of John Ashbery's Poetry*.

In the fourth stanza, the lines "It has been played once more" and "the poem has set me softly down beside you" suggest that the poem is being compared to a game, and therefore the source domain is "poem" and the target domain is "game". The metaphor being used is a structural metaphor, where the game is the target domain and the poem is the source domain. The use of the word "tease" implies that there is a playful element in their interaction, but the fact that the person is not always there or has a different attitude suggests that the game is not always fair. Kenneth Goldsmith (2003), is a poet and conceptual artist who often incorporates playful and experimental approaches to his work. In his project *Day* (2003), he transcribed an entire issue of *The New York Times* and presented it as a poetic gesture, challenging notions of authorship and the role of the poet in the digital age.

The final line, "The poem is you," brings the metaphor back to the realm of poetry. The poem itself is being compared to the person the speaker is addressing, suggesting that the poem is a representation of the person or their relationship. This line reinforces the idea that the poem is a structural metaphor for the relationship between the speaker and the person they are addressing.

4.2.2. Some Trees

Some Trees (2014) by John Ashbery is a celebrated poem that showcases Ashbery's unique style and experimental approach to language and meaning. It was first published in 1956 and is considered a significant work of the *New York School of Poets*. Ashbery's poem *Some Trees* is rich in vivid imagery and descriptive language. The opening lines, "These are amazing: each Joining a neighbor, as though speech/ were a still performance," immediately capture the reader's attention. The use of words like "amazing" and "still performance" creates a sense of wonder and intrigue, drawing readers into the poem's world. One of the defining characteristics of Ashbery's poetry is its ambiguity. *Some Trees* is no exception. The poem contains multiple layers of meaning, which can be open to interpretation. Ashbery often plays with language and syntax, making it difficult to pin down a single definitive interpretation. This ambiguity invites readers to bring their own experiences and perspectives to the poem, creating a more dynamic and interactive reading experience. The poem explores the relationship between nature and perception. The trees in the poem serve as symbols of the external world, while the act of perceiving them becomes a metaphor for the act of understanding and interpreting reality. Ashbery challenges the idea of a fixed and objective reality, suggesting that our understanding of the world is subjective and influenced by our perceptions. Ashbery emphasizes the importance of words as entities in their own right, separate from their meanings, and highlights the role of the reader in constructing meaning.

Some Trees by John Ashbery is a complex and thought-provoking poem that challenges traditional notions of language, perception, and meaning. Through its use of vivid imagery, fragmented narrative, ambiguity, and self-reflection, the poem invites readers to actively engage with the text and explore their interpretations. It remains an important work in the realm of experimental poetry and continues to be studied and analyzed for its innovative approach to language and representation. Helen Vendler (1981) suggests that John Ashbery, at times, resembles Charles Ives in expressing irrepressible Americana. According to Vendler, Ashbery articulates timeless and representative truths in an American vernacular, showcasing the pure Americanness of his diction.

In the first stanza the metaphor joining a neighbor, as though speech/were a still performance, the source domain of performance or theater is used to describe the target domain of human communication and connection. The joining of the trees is compared to a still performance, highlighting the idea that the trees communicate and connect in a way that is expressive and meaningful, much like actors on a stage.

The title *Some Trees* carries a dual implication. Firstly, it suggests that the trees mentioned are random or unspecified. Secondly, it hints at the possibility that these trees are unique or significant in some way. The word "These" in the context refers to specific trees that the poet can either see or imagine as they write. It can be likened to a fruit vendor admiring the fruits displayed before them and remarking, "These fruits are amazing." Therefore, the title references particular trees. The colon following the statement "These are amazing" explains why the poet finds them remarkable, which is the notion of "Each joining a neighbor, as though speech were a still performance."

The connection between speech and joining is not a physical one but an emotional one. The trees are portrayed as if they communicate through a silent performance, although conversation typically involves hand gestures and facial expressions. They stand beside one another without verbal communication but still share an emotional bond. The comma after the initial statement, "each joining a neighbor, as..." indicates that this statement functions independently as well as connects to the next part through a simile ("as"). It suggests the possibility of both physical and emotional connections between the trees. Additionally, the line break after "each" emphasizes the poet's emphasis on the idea that each tree possesses equal uniqueness.

The inclusion of the phrase "arranging by chance" in the first stanza initially leads readers to believe that the trees themselves are engaging in some form of arrangement. However, as the poem progresses, it becomes apparent that it is the poet and their muse, someone they love, who are arranging to meet. This sudden shift from describing the trees to the poet's love life may indicate the poet's intention to draw a comparison between themselves and their love for the trees growing alongside each other. As noted by Shoptaw, (1994) Ashbery tends to twist words or phrases, creating novel and unforeseen meanings. In his writings, the serendipitous alteration of a single letter can give rise to an entirely new realm. In the metaphorical comparison between the source domain of performance or theater and the target domain of human communication and connection, the poet draws upon the characteristics and dynamics associated with performances to illuminate the nature of interpersonal interaction.

The trees joining together are likened to a still performance, suggesting that their arrangement holds a significant resemblance to the deliberate coordination and choreography found in a theatrical production. The concept of performance implies intentionality and purposeful action, indicating that the trees' connection is not arbitrary but rather carries a sense of meaning and

significance. By invoking the idea of performance, the metaphor also suggests that communication and connection between individuals involve a degree of artistry, creativity, and expression. Like actors on a stage, the trees convey a message without words, relying on their physical presence and arrangement to communicate and connect. This implies that human communication and connection can transcend verbal language and rely on nonverbal cues, gestures, and shared experiences.

With the phrase "arranging by chance," it is implied that the poet and their love have decided to meet without informing each other. They might be aware of their respective schedules and locations throughout the day and choose to coincidentally encounter one another, creating the illusion of chance. This could reflect a teenage infatuation or youthful behaviors. As the poem progresses, it becomes apparent that they have agreed to meet in the morning, but the exact location remains unspecified. The line "as far this morning from the world as agreeing with it" suggests that their meeting place is not fixed to a particular spot but rather somewhere that distances them from the world, following their agreement or disagreement with the world. Perhaps the poet is comparing the concept of arranging serendipitous meetings to the branches of the trees swaying in the wind and casually meeting at an undefined point, giving the appearance that it was the wind (or coincidence) that brought them together and not their deliberate intentions. The second stanza's closing line, "you and I are suddenly what the trees try....," clearly indicates that the poet is drawing a parallel between their love life and the trees growing alongside each other.

The idea that the trees connect and touch each other's branches without verbal communication can be interpreted as a metaphorical story the poet is conveying. Perhaps they are standing beneath or near "*Some Trees*," awaiting a serendipitous encounter with their love, and they realize how closely their relationship mirrors the message conveyed by the trees. The mere presence of both

the poet and their love next to each other, akin to the trees, holds significance. It was meant to be, as destined as the presence of the neighboring trees that grew together without deliberate intent or knowledge. At this point, it becomes apparent that this poem is not solely about teenage attraction but rather about true love. Soon, just like the trees with their intermingling branches, the author and their love will also come together, fall in love, and express their affection for each other.

Many poets have employed trees as metaphors in their poems, using them to symbolize various aspects of life, human experiences, and the natural world. Robert Frost frequently used trees as metaphors in his poetry. In *Birches*, he uses the image of bending birch trees to explore themes of youth, imagination, and the desire for escape. *Birches* by Robert Frost (2002) draws inspiration from the poet's childhood memories of swinging on birch trees. Essentially, the poem reflects on these trees, which possess both flexibility and resilience. In contrast to the "straighter darker trees" that encompass them, Frost speculates that the bending of the birches is a result of a boy's play. However, he acknowledges that this is unlikely the true cause; rather, it is likely attributed to nature, specifically the wintry weather that is frequently present in Frost's poems, aligning with his surname.

In the fourth stanza, a canvas on which emerges/a chorus of smiles, a winter morning, the metaphorical use of a canvas as the source domain suggests that the world and experiences are represented as a canvas. The canvas becomes a medium on which different elements emerge, such as a chorus of smiles and a winter morning. This metaphor implies that the world is a creative and ever-changing space, where various experiences and emotions manifest like images on a canvas. The canvas is a medium used by artists to create visual representations of their ideas and experiences. It is a blank surface upon which images, colors, and textures are applied. The target

domain encompasses the entirety of the world and the range of experiences that individuals encounter. It includes the physical environment, emotions, events, and interactions with others.

The metaphorical use of a canvas suggests that the world and experiences can be understood as a creative space where various elements emerge, just like images on a canvas. The canvas represents the medium through which these elements manifest and take form. It serves as a surface upon which the world and experiences are depicted and expressed. The poem mentions a "chorus of smiles" and a "winter morning" as examples of the elements that emerge on the canvas. The "chorus of smiles" implies the presence of happiness, joy, and positive interactions that are part of human experiences. It suggests a collective expression of positive emotions. The "winter morning" evokes a specific time and atmosphere, highlighting the transient and evolving nature of experiences. It implies the emergence of new beginnings, freshness, and the beauty found in nature.

By employing the metaphor of a canvas, the poet suggests that the world is a dynamic and creative space. It is not merely a static entity but a realm where experiences constantly unfold and are transformed. The metaphor implies that experiences are not random but can be intentionally crafted, much like an artist's deliberate choices on a canvas. It emphasizes the active role individuals play in shaping their experiences and the world around them. Additionally, the metaphor suggests that experiences are subjective and open to interpretation, similar to how viewers interpret and engage with art on a canvas. Each person's canvas of experiences is unique and personal.

In Robert Boyers' analysis in the *Times Literary Supplement* (1978), he suggests that if we interpret meaning as the potential for shared discourse where both the speaker and the audience can engage on somewhat equal terms, then Ashbery, throughout much of his career, is an example

of a poet who omits meaning without attaining any distinctive intensity. Boyers contends that in Ashbery's poems, meaning is frequently omitted as a deliberate choice to maintain the ongoing pursuit of a quest where the very notion of endpoints is perceived as inherently menacing or challenging.

In the fifth stanza the phrase "Placed in a puzzling light" metaphorically draws on the source domain of puzzles or enigmas to describe the target domain of human existence. It implies that the nature of our existence is often mysterious, uncertain, and filled with intricate complexities that are difficult to fully understand or solve. Puzzles or enigmas typically refer to problems or situations that are challenging, mysterious, and require careful thought and investigation to solve or understand. They often involve hidden complexities and require unraveling. The target domain encompasses the nature and experience of human life, encompassing aspects such as identity, purpose, relationships, and the broader questions of existence and meaning. The metaphorical use of puzzles or enigmas implies that human existence shares similarities with these challenging and mysterious problems. It suggests that the nature of human existence is complex, uncertain, and filled with intricacies that are not easily grasped or fully comprehended. Placing human existence in a "puzzling light" indicates that it is viewed or experienced as something that poses difficult questions or requires deeper exploration to unravel its meaning and complexities.

The metaphor suggests that human existence presents challenges and uncertainties similar to a puzzle that needs to be solved or an enigma that needs to be unraveled. It implies that there are hidden layers, complexities, and unanswered questions surrounding human identity, purpose, and the meaning of life. The metaphor highlights that understanding and navigating human existence require careful contemplation, introspection, and a willingness to grapple with the mysteries and uncertainties that accompany it. The metaphor emphasizes the inherent complexity and mysterious

aspects of human existence, suggesting that life cannot be easily reduced to simple explanations or fully understood. It acknowledges the limitations of human knowledge and the ongoing quest for understanding and meaning in the face of the enigmatic nature of existence. By likening human existence to a puzzle or enigma, the metaphor invites individuals to engage in deeper introspection, exploration, and contemplation of life's complexities.

In the final two stanzas, the poet expresses their gratitude for not turning this affair into a spectacle that would attract attention. They desire solitude with their love, but they find themselves already surrounded. Amidst the silence filled with unspoken questions and the need to express love, the noises and the smile-lit face of their beloved appear vividly in the poet's eyes. All of this occurs beneath the light that filters through the rustling leaves of *some trees*—an illuminating, moving light. With their love expressed and acknowledged, their days become introverted, distancing themselves from others. These elements—the seclusion from people, the collective smiles—seem to defend themselves, explaining on their own to others about the poet's relationship, without the poet having to say a word.

4.2.3. At North Farm

At North Farm (1984) by John Ashbery is a thought-provoking poem that explores themes of anticipation, connection, and the complexities of human emotions. The poem begins by introducing the idea of someone traveling towards the speaker with great urgency and determination. The speaker wonders if this traveler will be able to find them, recognize them, and deliver something significant upon their arrival.

Throughout the poem, there is a sense of longing and expectation, as well as a recognition of the complex emotions that come with anticipation. The speaker acknowledges that they think of

the traveler sometimes, but their feelings are mixed. The poem invites readers to contemplate the nature of connection, the uncertainties of relationships, and the emotional intricacies that arise when awaiting the arrival of someone significant. The vivid imagery and contrasting elements in the poem contribute to its evocative and enigmatic nature, leaving room for individual interpretation and reflection. The poem begins with the metaphor of someone traveling towards the reader. The source domain of "traveling" is used to represent the target domain of pursuit or seeking. This metaphor implies that someone is making a determined effort to reach the reader, suggesting an intense desire for connection or closeness.

John Ashbery explores the enigmatic nature of human connections and relationships. He poses questions about whether the anticipated individual will recognize us upon meeting and if they have something significant to offer. It goes beyond a literal journey, delving into the mental and emotional voyage between two people. Additionally, Ashbery highlights the tendency to form hasty judgments or preconceived notions regarding what we expect from others. It seems as though we are in search of something but uncertain about the triggers that elicit the anticipated responses. This adds to the challenge of comprehending the mysteries inherent in relationships. Regardless of our efforts, we may never fully grasp their intricacies. Robert Frost (1915) frequently used the motif of traveling and the road in his poems. One of his most famous poems, *The Road Not Taken* (1915), presents a traveler standing at a fork in the road, contemplating which path to take. The poem explores the themes of choice, individuality, and the uncertainty of life's journeys. According to Asad, O., (2015, November 26) *The Road Not Taken* is a timeless masterpiece that inspires readers to reflect on life's choices and the path they choose to take.

The initial phrase, "Somewhere someone is traveling furiously toward you," creates a vivid depiction of an individual swiftly and determinedly making their way toward the reader. To ensure

clarity, I will examine the pronouns in the sentence. The use of "someone" serves as a replacement for "he/she," indicating consistency in referring to the same person throughout. Now, let's proceed to the subsequent segment, "At incredible speed," which conveys that the individual is traveling exceptionally fast. Moving on to the connections between the segments, the phrase "somewhere someone" suggests an unidentified person approaching the reader. This connects with the concluding phrase of this segment, "toward you," allowing us to infer that this person is journeying in your direction. Finally, I will search for any contextual clues within the text that could provide further insights into the story. The terms "furious" and "incredible" may suggest that this is an extraordinary and momentous expedition. According to Rahimi, Ashbery's poems exhibit a consistent interplay between ambiguous and undefined positions, primarily clarified through pronouns. The presence of the pronoun "I" is common in his poems, indicating a speaker, yet establishing a continuous presence or a stable persona throughout the entire text proves challenging. Both the "I" and "you" in Ashbery's poetry remain unclear and undergo alterations. The notion of personhood in Ashbery's poems manifests only in fragments of various discourses and is discernible solely in "the fact of addressing someone." Therefore, the act of addressing, or the "address," holds significance in Ashbery's polyphonic poetry.

The speaker describes the traveler encountering various obstacles such as blizzards, desert heat, torrents, and narrow passes. The phrase, "Through blizzards and desert heat, across torrents, through narrow passes," illustrates the source domain of a difficult and perilous journey. The metaphors of blizzards, desert heat, torrents, and narrow passes suggest challenging conditions and obstacles that the traveler must overcome in their quest. These metaphors symbolize the hardships and trials that the traveler endures on their way to find the speaker. The following lines, "But will he know..." introduce the target domain of recognition, discovery, and the exchange of something

meaningful. These metaphors revolve around the notion of the traveler locating the speaker and successfully delivering something significant. The metaphor of "knowing where to find you" implies the importance of understanding the speaker's whereabouts. It signifies the need for the traveler to have accurate knowledge or a clear direction to reach the intended destination. These lines in the poem employ *conceptual metaphors* to convey the challenges and uncertainties of the traveler's journey, as well as the expectations surrounding their arrival and the exchange of something meaningful. The metaphors of a difficult journey, recognition, and the exchange of a significant offering enrich the imagery and deepen the emotional complexity of the poem.

The second stanza of the poem employs *conceptual metaphors* and explores the source and target domains to convey its message. The source domain in the stanza revolves around the idea of scarcity, while the target domain relates to abundance and vitality. These contrasting domains create a conceptual metaphor that adds depth to the imagery presented. The stanza begins by establishing the source domain of scarcity, stating that hardly anything grows *at North Farm*. This sets the stage for the subsequent contrasting images. The granaries bursting with meals serve as the primary target domain, representing abundance. This metaphor suggests an unseen source of sustenance and nourishment within the seemingly barren environment. The granaries become a symbol of hidden abundance. The sacks of meal piled to the rafters further emphasize the target domain of abundance. The metaphorical image of the sacks overflowing with meals signifies surplus and excess, contrasting with the initial impression of scarcity.

The next aspect is the streams running with sweetness, which signifies the target domain of vitality and nourishment. The streams metaphorically become a source of life, despite the lack of visible growth in the surroundings. This metaphor implies an underlying source of sustenance that is not immediately apparent. The metaphor of birds darkening the sky adds to the target domain of

abundance and vitality. It suggests a thriving avian population, filling the sky and contributing to the sense of abundance in an otherwise seemingly barren landscape.

The second stanza of the poem employs *conceptual metaphors* to create a contrast between the source domain of scarcity and the target domain of abundance and vitality. These metaphors, such as the granaries bursting with meals, the streams running with sweetness, and the darkened sky filled with birds, enhance the richness of the imagery and convey a deeper meaning about hidden sources of sustenance and thriving life within a seemingly barren environment. These *conceptual metaphors* in the poem enrich the imagery and contribute to the overall meaning and themes of pursuit, obstacles, and abundance. They provide a deeper layer of interpretation and invite the reader to reflect on the complexities of human connection and the challenges encountered in the search for it.

Ashbery challenges the traditional role of metaphor, questioning its usual function of substitution where figurative terms replace literal ones. Instead, Ashbery's use of metaphor suggests a constant reconfiguration of seemingly literal terms, blurring the line between the figurative and the literal. This erases the distinction between improper and proper terms, raising the question of whether Ashbery's poem truly consists of any strictly appropriate or inappropriate terms. As Ashbery's words never clearly indicate their metaphorical or literal nature, often encompassing both simultaneously, readers are prompted to wonder if his poetry is coherent. According to Balle, S. H. (2004) the absence of a definitive answer to this question is significant, as it does not result from a breakdown where the indeterminacy of metaphor and the distinction between literal and metaphorical reference render the poem devoid of meaning. On the contrary, the multitude of potential references stemming from the unstable position of metaphor in Ashbery's poem generates an excess of signification, although one that remains inexhaustible.

Within the intricate web of *conceptual metaphors* within John Ashbery's poems, a shift in poetic terrain is palpable, leading us to the threshold of Sylvia Plath's visceral and emotionally charged verse. Ashbery's abstract and labyrinthine metaphors, often challenging traditional notions of meaning, act as a bridge to Plath's intense and personal explorations. While Ashbery's metaphors invite readers into a realm of linguistic ambiguity and play, Plath's metaphors, shaped by her emotional tumult, serve as windows into the depths of the human psyche. Transitioning from the ethereal complexities of Ashbery's metaphoric tapestry to Plath's poignant and often haunting imagery, the exploration of *conceptual metaphors* takes on a new dimension, unraveling the diverse ways in which poets navigate the interplay of language and emotion within their respective realms of poetic expression.

4.3. Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath's literary career flourished, with her poems appearing in various prestigious publications. However, her personal life was marked by turmoil and mental health struggles. Plath battled depression and had a tumultuous relationship with Hughes, which eventually led to their separation. Plath tragically died by suicide in 1963, at the age of 30. Her posthumous collection of poems, *Ariel*, became a seminal work in modern poetry, earning her widespread acclaim and recognition. Plath's writing delves into themes of femininity, identity, and the complexities of the human psyche. Her works are often characterized by their confessional and raw nature, offering intimate glimpses into her own experiences and emotions. Plath's impact on literature and feminist discourse has been profound. Her haunting and evocative poems continue to resonate with readers, and her unflinching exploration of mental illness and gender roles has paved the way for future generations of poets and writers. Plath's tragic life and her remarkable body of work have solidified

her as a significant and enduring figure in literary history. In his essay titled *An Interesting Minor Poet?* William H. Pritchard (1981) appears to deride Sylvia Plath's literary worth right in the title. He interprets the lines "there is a charge..." in one of her poems as a self-imposed payment that Plath made by ending her own life (267). Similarly, critics like Al Alvarez (1970) have construed the poem as a foretelling of doom, suggesting that Plath deliberately set out to inflict harm upon herself, ultimately succeeding in committing suicide (64).

4.3.1. Lady Lazarus

In Sylvia Plath's poem *Lady Lazarus* (2001), the poet employs a specific structure, lyrical quality, and simple diction that might typically be associated with a lighthearted poem. However, upon closer analysis of the metaphors used in the poem, it becomes evident that Plath intentionally chose this form to soften the impact of the intense and disturbing emotions she wishes to convey. The poem can be divided into three distinct parts, each revealing different aspects of the persona's experiences and emotions. Linda Wagner-Martin (1988) observes that Sylvia Plath, through the title *Lady Lazarus*, intentionally flips the gender of the biblical Lazarus to emphasize the female aspect, using 'Lady' Lazarus. Wagner-Martin interprets this bold choice as a deliberate move by Plath to express not only her "unforgiveness" towards the injustices inflicted upon women by the male-dominated world but also as a call for revenge (A Literary Life 112).

In the first part of the poem, Plath provides a detailed description of the persona rising from the grave, drawing a metaphorical parallel to the biblical story of Lazarus and his resurrection. This association is reinforced by the title of the poem, *Lady Lazarus*, implying that the persona is a Jewish woman. By drawing upon this religious allusion, Plath sets the stage for exploring deeper themes and emotions that are connected to issues of life, death, and rebirth.

The second part of the poem focuses on the persona's account of her own failed suicide attempts. The persona openly confesses that she has made three unsuccessful efforts to take her own life. This revelation delves into the realm of intense personal suffering and despair, highlighting the profound emotional turmoil experienced by the persona.

In the third part of the poem, Plath introduces the *Nazi-Jew* metaphor, intricately interwoven with a religious metaphor. The persona describes how German doctors have brought her back from the brink of death, connecting her experiences with the historical context of the Holocaust and the persecution of *Jews* by the *Nazis*. This metaphorical exploration adds another layer of depth to the poem, exploring themes of victimhood, survival, and the lingering impact of historical trauma.

The poem culminates in the final stanza, where the persona compares herself to the mythical phoenix, a creature that rises from its ashes. This imagery symbolizes resilience and transformation, suggesting that despite the persona's harrowing experiences, she has found the strength to emerge from the depths of despair. The poem concludes with a warning of vengeance, hinting at the persona's determination to overcome her suffering and seek retribution against those who have caused her pain.

Lines 1-3 discuss the metaphorical representation of Accomplishment as a Physical act and how it enhances our understanding of this abstract concept. The source domain, which is the abstract concept of accomplishment, is mapped onto the target domain, the more tangible and physical idea of doing something. This mapping helps convey the idea that accomplishments are not just vague notions but are instead closely related to concrete events or actions.

The statement "I have done it" highlights the significance of the speaker's achievement, indicating that they have accomplished something noteworthy. This metaphorical use of language brings forth the idea that accomplishments are not just intangible ideas but are actual

accomplishments made visible through actions. This notion aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) concept of conceptual metaphor, where abstract ideas are understood through more concrete ones. By mapping accomplishment (an abstract idea) onto the act of doing something (a physical experience), the concept becomes more comprehensible and relatable to us.

The phrase "One year in every ten" suggests a periodic occurrence, meaning that this significant event of accomplishment happens at specific intervals. This could imply a cyclical pattern in the speaker's life or the broader context being discussed. The concept of "managing it" further emphasizes the speaker's ability to handle or endure this significant event every ten years, indicating that accomplishment is not only about achieving something once but also about sustaining success and managing its recurrence.

This notion of recurring accomplishment aligns with Joseph Campbell's concept of the hero's journey, as explored in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). Campbell proposed that heroes undergo a cyclical pattern of challenges, growth, and accomplishments. The idea of "managing it" aligns with the hero's ability to endure challenges and achieve success repeatedly throughout their journey.

In lines 4-6, the poet employs the metaphor "Self as an Extraordinary Phenomenon" to articulate their view of themselves as something exceptional. In this metaphor, the poet associates the abstract concept of their self (source domain) with the notion of an extraordinary phenomenon (target domain). This metaphor serves to underscore the speaker's perception of themselves as remarkable and outside the realm of the ordinary. However, the metaphor becomes more complex with the comparison of their bright skin to a "Nazi lampshade." This introduces a dark and disturbing image that adds depth to the metaphor. The reference to a *Nazi* lampshade could be symbolic of historical atrocities and suffering, suggesting that the speaker's uniqueness is linked

to pain or struggle. This dark image contrasts with the initial notion of being an extraordinary phenomenon, presenting a conflicting and multi-layered self-concept.

The next metaphor of the poet's right foot being compared to a "paperweight" further adds to the complexity. Here, the foot is metaphorically represented as something heavy and immobile, suggesting that the poet carries a burden or weight. This burden could be emotional, psychological, or represent the weight of responsibilities or past experiences. Likewise, the face being described as "featureless, fine Jew linen" introduces a sense of fragility, vulnerability, and anonymity. The face, which is usually associated with identity and individuality, is portrayed as "featureless," possibly suggesting a loss of identity or a feeling of being invisible. The use of "fine Jew linen" may also carry historical and cultural connotations, potentially alluding to experiences of discrimination or persecution. This metaphor deepens the emotional complexity of the speaker's self-perception and adds layers of meaning to their description.

In lines, 13-15 the metaphor "Time is a Resource," the abstract concept of time (source domain) is mapped onto the concrete and familiar idea of a resource (target domain). This mapping enables us to conceptualize time in a way that is relatable and understandable, similar to how we think about other tangible resources like money, energy, or raw materials.

The phrase "will vanish in a day" further reinforces the metaphor's idea of time as a limited and fleeting resource. The word "vanish" evokes a sense of disappearance or disappearance over time. This imagery underscores the transient nature of time, reminding us that each moment that passes is gone forever and cannot be reclaimed. The mention of "a day" suggests a specific timeframe, emphasizing the finite nature of time and how it can be experienced and utilized within defined intervals.

In lines 16-18, the phrase "the grave cave ate" is a vivid representation of the process of decay and decomposition that occurs after death. By using the word "ate," the metaphor creates an image of the earth consuming the body, highlighting the return to the earth's elements after death. This imagery reinforces the idea of death as a destination, where the physical body becomes one with the earth once again. The poet is at peace with the idea of death and accepts it as an inevitable part of life's journey. The use of words like "peace" and "serenity" indicates the poet's calm and composed attitude toward mortality. The metaphor of death as a journey or destination helps make sense of this profound and abstract concept by relating it to something more familiar and understandable. The second part compares the life of the poet to a cat with "nine times to die." This analogy draws on the myth that cats have nine lives, implying that the poet has faced significant life-altering events or near-death situations multiple times throughout their life. This comparison emphasizes the idea that the poet has experienced various challenges, perhaps surviving close calls with death, and has come to accept death as a natural part of the human experience.

In lines 24-27, the poet employs the metaphor "Human as an Object or Objectified Being," presenting themselves as an object to be scrutinized and unwrapped, likening the experience to a "big strip tease." This metaphor serves to objectify the poet, diminishing their identity to mere physical attributes. It underscores how they are perceived as objects of curiosity or amusement, rather than being recognized as multifaceted human beings with emotions and agency. The metaphor emphasizes the dehumanizing nature of such objectification. The phrase "my hand and foot" emphasizes the objectification of the poet. By referring to themselves in this manner, they are reducing their identity to the physical aspects of their body, suggesting that the crowd sees them as nothing more than a physical entity to be looked at or scrutinized. The use of words like

"peanut-crunching" and "shoving in to see" in the description of the crowd further reinforces the objectification. The crowd is depicted as being consumed by a spectacle, treating the poet as a mere attraction or curiosity to be observed and enjoyed. This imagery highlights the dehumanizing effect of objectification, where the poet becomes a passive object of the crowd's gaze, lacking autonomy and agency. The comparison to a "big strip tease" implies that the poet feels exposed and vulnerable as if they are being laid bare for the crowd's entertainment. It suggests that the poet's privacy and personal boundaries are being invaded, further contributing to their sense of being objectified and devalued as a person.

In lines 37-39, the metaphor "Life as a Journey," is discussed where the abstract concept of life is likened to the concrete idea of a journey. In this metaphor, life is perceived as a process that has a clear beginning and end, similar to embarking on a journey from a starting point and reaching a destination. The phrase "The second time I meant / to last it out and not come back at all" signifies the poet's perspective on life as a journey with a definitive direction. The mention of "the second time" suggests that the poet has experienced life or embarked on this journey before, perhaps hinting at previous experiences or phases in their life. When the poet says they "meant to last it out," it implies a commitment to enduring the entire journey of life until its natural conclusion. This phrase conveys the idea of perseverance and dedication, akin to the determination of a traveler who persists until they reach their destination. The metaphor likens living one's life fully and completely to traveling through a journey without turning back or retreating. The expression "not come back at all" further emphasizes the finality of the journey. It suggests that the speaker envisions life as a one-way journey with no possibility of returning to a previous state or reliving certain experiences. Instead, life is perceived as a continuous process that unfolds until it reaches its ultimate destination, which in this metaphor would be the end of life itself.

Lines 67-69 discuss the metaphor Relationship as a Creative Work, the concept of the speaker's relationship with someone (source domain) is mapped onto the idea of a creative work (opus) (target domain). In this metaphor, the relationship is seen as a work of art, involving creativity, effort, and emotional investment similar to the process of creating a valuable and significant creative piece. The use of the titles "Herr Doktor" and "Herr Enemy" indicates that the relationship is intricate and multifaceted. The use of German titles adds a sense of formality and depth to the connection between the poet and the other person. "Herr Doktor" suggests a sense of authority or intellectual complexity, while "Herr Enemy" implies a certain level of conflict or tension within the relationship.

In lines 79-81, the poet introduces the metaphor "God and Lucifer as Figures of Caution," in which the abstract concepts of God and Lucifer are metaphorically depicted as cautionary figures. Unlike their traditional religious contexts, here they symbolize the need for vigilance and wariness. The use of the title "Herr" (German for "Mr." or "Mister") before both "God" and "Lucifer" injects a sense of formality and respect into the addressing of these entities. However, it also implies a cautious approach, suggesting an awareness of their power and influence and underscoring the need to be careful when dealing with these formidable figures. The repetition of the word "Beware" further emphasizes the need for caution. By repeating this warning, the poet underscores the importance of being vigilant and cautious when dealing with entities as powerful and influential as God and Lucifer. It implies that interacting with such forces can have significant consequences and requires careful consideration.

4.3.2. Child

Child (1971) is one of Sylvia Plath's more tender poems, written for her child. The poem offers a poignant contrast between the innocence and wonder of a child's world and the darker, more troubled reality of the adult world that Plath sees herself inhabiting. The poem begins with Plath's observation of her child's clear gaze, which is like that of a "window cleaner's sponge." This image conveys the idea that the child's view of the world is unclouded and pure. She then proceeds to list various images of wonder from nature, such as the "zoo of the new," which signifies the fresh and exciting experiences that she wishes her child to have. However, as the poem progresses, there's a shift in tone. Plath's insecurities and anxieties creep in, and she expresses a desire to protect her child from the world's darkness and her internal struggles. The poem ends on a somewhat somber note, reflecting Plath's complex emotions as a mother — her deep love and desire to provide beauty for her child, juxtaposed with her awareness of life's hardships and challenges.

When analyzing just the title *Child*, the word itself might not initially seem metaphorical, especially when considered in isolation. However, when examined within the broader context of the poem and Plath's oeuvre, the title and its implications can carry metaphorical weight. The critical analysis suggests that a crucial moment arises when an individual, represented as "it," becomes aware of its sexually specific identity. This realization occurs first in the reflection of the mother's eyes and is subsequently internalized. Before reaching this point, the individual experiences a state of decentralization and dispersion, with various images and possibilities lacking a unifying focus. When Sylvia Plath's poetry revisits the motif of the mirror, it delves into a realm where images multiply, and the cohesive sense of self dissolves. This insight is drawn from Smith's analysis in 2007 (p. 221).

The line "Your clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing" in the first stanza emphasizes the purity, innocence, and beauty of the individual's perspective or soul. The "clear eye" is a metaphorical window into this untainted and beautiful inner world. The desire to "fill" the eye suggests a yearning to contribute to, influence, or be part of the individual's experiences. "Color" symbolizes variety, experiences, and emotions, while "ducks" might signify specific memories, moments of joy, or simple yet profound experiences. A zoo, filled with diverse creatures, symbolizes an array of emotions, experiences, and moments that life presents. Both "April snowdrop" and "Indian pipe" are plants, each with its symbolic significance. An "April snowdrop" is one of the first flowers to bloom in spring, symbolizing rebirth and hope. The "Indian pipe," also known as the ghost plant, is unique and can grow in darkness; it can symbolize resilience, uniqueness, and the ability to thrive in adversity.

These lines artistically use the conceptual metaphor of the eye as a landscape or vessel to delve into themes of innocence, growth, potential, and the richness of human experience. Through this metaphor, the poet expresses a deep appreciation for the individual's perspective and a desire to contribute to or be part of their evolving journey. In his work, Lacan (1977) emphasized the significance of the mirror stage, attributing it a dual significance. Firstly, he ascribed historical value to it, regarding it as a crucial turning point in the mental development of a *child*. Secondly, Lacan noted that the mirror stage characterizes a fundamental libidinal relationship with body image, playing a pivotal role in shaping one's perception of self (p. 125).

In the second stanza, the combined imagery of a "stalk without wrinkle" and a "pool" in which reflections are expected to be "grand and classical" crafts a composite metaphor for understanding one's existence or identity. A fresh, young stalk represents the early stages of life or existence, signifying purity, potential, and innocence. This smooth stalk stands metaphorically for youth and

its unblemished nature, free from the wear and tear that comes with age or life's burdens. A reflective pool can capture and represent whatever stands before it, acting as a mirror to its surroundings. Here, it serves as a metaphor for introspection, self-perception, and memory. It's about how one sees oneself, how experiences shape identity, and how memories are stored and perceived.

The expectation that these reflected images ought to be "grand and classical" introduces the pressures or ideals that one places on oneself or the external pressures society might impose. The desire for life's moments and memories to be grandiose and timeless is akin to the desire for one's life to be meaningful, fulfilling, and adhering to a revered standard. When we view these lines as a cohesive whole, they poetically encapsulate the journey of life — from the freshness and potential of youth (stark) to the introspective moments where we evaluate our experiences and self-worth (pool) and the ever-present aspirations and pressures to ensure that life is significant and esteemed ("grand and classical"). This entire metaphorical framework presents a reflective contemplation on identity, growth, and societal or self-imposed expectations. Sylvia Plath's poems vividly depict her resistance to the "humiliating roles" imposed by the men in her close circles. Friedan (1990) notes that in America, women grapple with an "identity problem," and Plath's poetry resonates with the challenges posed by this issue. The relevance of Plath's work lies in its exploration and articulation of the struggles women face in defining their identities amidst societal expectations and prescribed gender roles.

In the 3rd stanza, the act of "wringing of hands" is a universal gesture of despair, anxiety, or distress. When combined with the term "troubled" which means full of trouble or distress, it paints a vivid picture of deep emotional turmoil, anxiety, or concern. It symbolizes a state of unease and restlessness. The imagery of a "dark ceiling" without even a single "star" further emphasizes a

sense of overwhelming hopelessness and desolation. Stars often represent hope, guidance, or a break from the darkness. A sky or ceiling devoid of stars thus symbolizes an absence of hope or respite. Metaphorically, it captures a feeling of being trapped under an oppressive emotional weight without a guiding light or hope in sight.

When read as a whole, these lines poignantly convey a state of deep emotional despair. The collective metaphor paints an image of a person enveloped in darkness, both in their mind (the act of hand-wringing) and in their perceived environment (the starless ceiling), encapsulating feelings of hopelessness and overwhelming distress.

4.3.3. Daddy

Daddy (1962) is one of the most visceral and powerful poems by Sylvia Plath, Written in 1962, just a year before her tragic death, the poem delves into Plath's complex emotions towards her father, who died when she was just eight, and her husband Ted Hughes, from whom she was separated. The poem stands out for its raw emotional intensity, piercing imagery, and exploration of themes like love, hate, trauma, and the impact of patriarchal figures. Renowned critic George Steiner characterizes Sylvia Plath's poem *Daddy* as "the Guernica of modern poetry," drawing a parallel between the poem and Picasso's powerful painting depicting the horrors of war. Steiner suggests that *Daddy* attains the status of classic art by transforming a deeply personal and unbearable pain into a code of straightforward expression. The poem achieves this through the use of instantly relatable public images, making it relevant and impactful for a broader audience (Steiner, George, 2016).

Daddy is a confessional poem where the poet grapples with her feelings of betrayal, anger, and hurt towards her deceased father. Plath employs intense and at times disturbing imagery to depict

her relationship with her father, comparing it to the torturous relationship between a *Nazi* and a Jew. Throughout the poem, Plath describes her struggle to cope with the oppressive memories of her father and her efforts to break free from his lingering influence. The poem is characterized by its raw emotion, depicting the poet's journey from fear and entrapment to anger and, finally, to an assertion of independence and agency. By the end of the poem, Plath proclaims that she has killed the image of her father and has managed to move on from the trauma of his overbearing presence in her life. According to Adam Kirsch (2005), Sylvia Plath's poem *Daddy* is viewed as self-mythologizing and should not be strictly interpreted as a fully "confessional" autobiographical account of the author's real father. Contrary to common perceptions, Plath herself asserted that the poem is not autobiographical. Close to her suicide attempt, Plath recited lines from *Daddy* on BBC radio, describing herself as "a young lady with a severe Electra complex" whose father had passed away while she still held him in high regard. Plath's situation is complex due to her father being a *Nazi* and her mother being Jewish. The daughter, in this scenario, finds herself entangled in both lines and feels incapacitated by them. To free herself, she must confront and repeat this troubling metaphor. This interpretation is based on Adam Kirsch's analysis in 2005 (Kirsch, Adam. 2005).

The multitude of metaphors in the poem creates a tapestry of emotions ranging from fear and resentment to longing and desolation. Through these images, Plath paints a picture of her struggle to break free from the shadow of oppressive figures and traumas in her life. The poem stands as a testament to her brilliant poetic skill and her ability to convey profound emotional complexities.

The collocative meanings make the poem much more convincing and understandable to the readers. In the first stanza, the repeated phrase opens the poem with a tone of finality and determination. The repetition emphasizes a declaration or realization. By saying "you do not do,"

Plath may be trying to break away from a dominant force or influence, indicating that she won't allow it to control or define her any longer.

The father is metaphorically described as a "black shoe." In literature and art, the color "black" can represent various concepts, from mourning and death to oppression and menace. By characterizing her father as a "black shoe," Plath portrays him as an overshadowing, perhaps even oppressive, presence in her life. The imagery of living "like a foot" inside a shoe conveys feelings of confinement and restriction. It suggests that Plath felt confined by her father's memory or influence, restrained to a predefined space or role. The relationship, in this metaphor, is restrictive, not nurturing. It's a depiction of an identity suppressed or overshadowed by another's overwhelming presence. The duration of "thirty years" signifies the entirety of Plath's life at the time she was wrestling with these feelings, pointing out the prolonged impact of this relationship. The descriptors "poor and white" intensify her feeling of vulnerability. "Poor" portrays economic deprivation, but metaphorically it can signify emotional or psychological impoverishment. "White" contrasts starkly with the "black shoe," highlighting her perceived innocence or vulnerability. In a broader interpretation, it can symbolize purity, emptiness, or even invisibility—suggesting she felt overshadowed or unseen in this relationship.

In Sylvia Plath's *Daddy*, the words and language used serve as a rich source of insight into her physical, psychological, and mental condition. The choice of words and phrases provides a window into her inner world, allowing readers to glean valuable information about her thoughts, emotions, and overall state of being. The language becomes a tool through which Plath intricately portrays her *daddy's* character and the complexities of her mental and emotional landscape. Butscher (2003) conveyed that Plath confided in Nancy Hunter and others, revealing a new truth: she considered her father a tyrant and harbored a desire for his death. However, when he did pass

away, Sylvia experienced intense guilt about her feelings. The quote emphasizes the profound and conflicting emotions Sylvia felt, including fierce rage and a sense of abandonment following her father's death (Butscher, 2003, p. 234).

In the second stanza, the term "marble-heavy" alludes to the weight, coldness, and permanence of marble statues. Marble, a material associated with gravestones and monumental sculptures, suggests a sense of permanence and rigidity. The phrase "a bag full of God" can be seen as a portrayal of the father's domineering presence. In many cultures, God represents authority, omnipresence, and sometimes an insurmountable force. By comparing her father's weight to that of God, Plath emphasizes his overbearing nature and the immense burden his memory imposes on her.

"Ghastly statue" further emphasizes the cold, unfeeling, and haunting presence of her father. The immovable nature of a statue parallels the unchanging and dominant image of her father in her mind. The specific imagery of a "gray toe" brings a surreal, eerie visual. The color "gray" often denotes something lifeless, dull, or in between extremes. By emphasizing just the "toe" of this vast statue and comparing it to something as large as a "Frisco seal," Plath underscores the colossal nature of her father's presence in her psyche. The Frisco seal refers to the seals of San Francisco, which are large and imposing. By drawing this comparison, Plath amplifies the vastness of her father's presence. This isn't just a statue—it's something monumental and all-consuming.

These lines exemplify Plath's struggle with her father's overwhelming presence even after his demise. Through the conceptual metaphor of the statue, Plath paints her father as a monumental, omnipresent, yet cold and lifeless figure in her life. The weight of his memory and influence is so vast that even a small part of it—the "gray toe"—is depicted as being as significant as a large seal. The mingling of the divine ("a bag full of God") with the lifeless (marble statue) encapsulates the

paradox of her feelings: a mixture of reverence and resentment, love and fear, longing and aversion. The lines convey the complexity of Plath's relationship with her father, capturing her feelings of being overshadowed, haunted, and overwhelmed by his memory. According to Hunt, & Carter (2012), the connection between the figurative language we employ and our cognitive processes implies that metaphorical language mirrors specific conceptual structures and cognitive patterns, thereby revealing an individual's worldview and thought processes. In other words, the metaphors we choose and the figurative language we use are not arbitrary; instead, they provide insights into the way we perceive and understand the world around us.

Using the German phrase "Ach, du" in the third stanza serves several purposes in the poem. Sylvia Plath's father, Otto Plath, was of German heritage. By choosing a German exclamation, she directly connects to that heritage and her father's background. The choice adds an intimate and personal touch to her recollections. The exclamation, especially in a foreign language, emphasizes the deep emotional turmoil Plath experiences. It's an utterance that transcends the Standard English lexicon she uses in the poem, suggesting emotions that are so profound or complex that they demand a different linguistic framework.

"Ach, du" can convey various emotions depending on its context and intonation. This multifaceted nature of the exclamation mirrors Plath's multifaceted relationship with her father—full of longing, resentment, love, and pain. In the lines leading up to "Ach, du", Plath describes a surreal and poignant image of a head in the Atlantic, the ocean standing between her and her father's origins. The waters described as "pouring bean green over blue" in "Beautiful Nauset" (a reference to a beach in Cape Cod, Massachusetts) represent both the beauty and the vast, insurmountable divide between Plath and her deceased father. "I used to pray to recover you" underscores her yearning, the deep wish to retrieve or reconnect with her father. Following this

intense proclamation with "Ach, du" encapsulates a rush of feelings, making the exclamation a poignant climax to her emotional outpouring.

The repetition of "ich," the German word for "I," in the 6th stanza emphasizes her immersion in or confrontation with German culture and language, a direct tie to her father's heritage. She expresses an overwhelming association between her father and all Germans, suggesting his presence is so domineering in her life that any reminder of German culture or language brings her back to him. The line "I could hardly speak" hints at the stifling effect this association has on her.

In the 7th stanza, the German language is depicted as a force, an "engine," pushing her away or oppressing her. The metaphorical reference to being treated "like a Jew" during the Holocaust resonates with feelings of being targeted, persecuted, and dehumanized. This establishes a parallel between her emotional experience with her father and the historical trauma *Jews* faced during the Holocaust. By invoking the names of infamous concentration and extermination camps, Plath underscores the extreme feelings of persecution and oppression she feels. When she says she "began to talk like a Jew" and might "we'll be a Jew," it signifies a deep identification with the suffering and persecution *Jews* faced, suggesting she feels similarly victimized in her relationship with her father.

In the 8th stanza, Tyrol and Vienna are emblematic of Germanic culture and heritage. Plath suggests that these symbols, which might typically be seen as pure or enjoyable, are tainted for her, further emphasizing the negative association she has with her father's heritage. Plath alludes to her heritage, possibly hinting at a sense of displacement or persecution in her lineage, which aligns her further with the metaphorical representation of a Jew.

In these lines, by mapping the source domain of the *Nazi-Jew* relationship onto her relationship with her father, Plath poignantly conveys feelings of oppression, persecution, and trauma. It's a

powerful and jarring metaphor that captures the intensity and complexity of her emotions. According to George Steiner (2010), Sylvia Plath's use of the Holocaust metaphor is characterized as "larceny" (330). Steiner contends that since Plath had no direct involvement in the Holocaust, employing it as a metaphor and appropriating the magnitude of the Holocaust to represent personal suffering is considered illegitimate and akin to theft.

In the 15th stanza, this metaphor paints the male figure as someone who sucked the life or energy out of her, much like a vampire drains its victim. This is a continuation of the poem's motifs of dominance, control, and the painful weight of the past. Blood here can be seen as a symbol of life, vitality, and emotional energy. By saying her blood was drunk "for a year" and then correcting it to "seven years," Plath conveys the prolonged emotional and psychological toll that the relationship had on her. The specific time references could relate to specific periods in her life of particular emotional significance. By instructing "*Daddy*" to "lie back," Plath may be asserting her newfound autonomy or freedom. It's a declaration that she's now in control and that the dominating figure (be it her father or anyone else) no longer holds power over her. The act of "lying back" also carries connotations of rest, finality, and death, suggesting that she has finally laid the haunting memories or influence to rest.

In essence, these lines delve into the depths of Plath's struggles with dominant male figures in her life, using vivid metaphors like the vampire to convey the emotional and psychological weight of these relationships. Through this imagery, she captures her journey from subjugation to eventual liberation. In *The Feminine Mystique* Friedan famously labeled the domestic environment as a "comfortable concentration camp."

He believes there's an inherent danger in the state of being a housewife. Certain psychological observations of prisoners in *Nazi* concentration camps offer an unsettling understanding of why a

woman might lose her sense of self in this role. While American housewives are not facing the extreme fate of a gas chamber, they find themselves ensnared in a metaphorical trap. To break free, they must reject being nameless, depersonalized, and manipulated (Friedan 367, 371-372).

Chapter 5

Discussion

The semiotic exploration of *conceptual metaphors* within Adrienne Rich's poems "*Aunt Jennifer's Tigers*," "*Living in Sin*," and "*Moving in Winter*" reveals a nuanced and multi-layered approach to understanding the complexities of human experiences. Rich, a poet known for her feminist perspective, employs metaphorical language as a powerful tool to convey the intricacies of identity, relationships, and societal expectations.

Aunt Jennifer's Tigers delves into the metaphorical realm of the embroidered tigers as a symbol of Aunt Jennifer's suppressed desires and the constraints imposed by societal norms. The tension between the delicate needlework and the powerful tigers encapsulates the struggle of women in a patriarchal society. According to Ford, M. (2023), the challenge faced by a creative woman attempting to express herself within a culture designed to fulfill the needs and desires of men is effectively captured in early poems such as *Aunt Jennifer's Tigers*. Despite the poem's subtly delivered ironies infused with a delicate sense of sadness, its tone of feigned innocence communicates a clever and sophisticated wit to the discerning reader. However, in hindsight, it can also be interpreted as foreshadowing the evolution of Rich's future poetry. Similar to the proud and fearless tigers depicted in the poem, Rich's later work would boldly confront and challenge the assumptions, conventions, and institutions that exerted control over Aunt Jennifer. (*Woman Much Missed*)

Living in Sin explores the metaphor of domesticity as a complex web of expectations and disillusionment. The metaphorical tension between the pristine morning and the reality of a messy, unfulfilling relationship reflects the dissonance between societal ideals and personal experience.

In *Moving in Winter*, the metaphor of the winter landscape becomes a poignant reflection of change, transition, and the inevitability of time. The movement in winter serves as a metaphor for the challenges and uncertainties inherent in life's journey.

Collectively, these poems showcase Rich's mastery of using *conceptual metaphors* to convey deeper meanings and challenge societal norms. The metaphors serve as a bridge between the personal and the political, inviting readers to reflect on the broader implications of gender roles, relationships, and the human condition. Rich's poetic language transcends the literal, inviting readers to engage in a semiotic exploration that goes beyond surface meanings, encouraging a thoughtful examination of the intricate layers of metaphorical expression in her work.

The *conceptual metaphors* in John Ashbery's poems, namely *Paradoxes and Oxymorons*, *Some Trees*, and *At North Farm*, unravel the intricate web of linguistic complexity and existential inquiry that defines Ashbery's poetic body of work. Renowned for his cryptic and elusive style, Ashbery utilizes *conceptual metaphors* to navigate the intricate realms of language, perception, and the human experience. *Paradoxes and Oxymorons* beckons readers to delve into the paradoxical essence of language itself. The poem unfolds as a journey into the inherent contradictions within words, challenging the stability of meaning and the elusive nature of truth. Here, the conceptual metaphor serves as a reflective mirror, showcasing the inherent paradoxes inherent in the act of expression.

Some Trees delves into the transformative power of perception and the fluidity of meaning. The metaphorical interplay between trees and language serves as a conduit for contemplating the subjective nature of reality and the ever-shifting boundaries between the self and the external world. *North Farm* explores the concept of memory and the elusive nature of the past. The poem employs the metaphor of North Farm as a landscape of recollection, where memory becomes a

delicate interplay of presence and absence. The conceptual metaphor acts as a prism through which the poet reflects on the fragility of time and the impermanence of human experience.

Throughout these poems, Ashbery's *conceptual metaphors* transcend the ordinary, challenging conventional modes of expression. They beckon readers to embark on a semiotic exploration beyond the surface, encouraging a profound contemplation of the fluid and mutable nature of language, perception, and existence. Ashbery's work stands as a testament to the power of poetry to stretch the boundaries of linguistic representation, urging readers to grapple with the complexities of meaning and discover beauty in the inherent contradictions of the human condition.

Lastly, the semiotic analysis of *conceptual metaphors* within Sylvia Plath's poems *Lady Lazarus*, *Child*, and *Daddy* illuminates the profound psychological landscapes that characterize her poetic exploration. Plath, renowned for her intense and confessional style, employs *conceptual metaphors* as a powerful means to navigate themes of identity, trauma, and the complex relationships between self and others. *Lady Lazarus* immerses readers in the metaphorical realm of resurrection and rebirth, drawing parallels between the speaker's struggles and the biblical figure of Lazarus. The conceptual metaphor becomes a vehicle for expressing the cyclical nature of despair, survival, and empowerment, challenging societal expectations and gender roles.

Child delves into the metaphor of childbirth as a transformative experience. Plath uses the metaphor to explore the tensions between creation and destruction, innocence and experience, and the impact of motherhood on personal identity. The conceptual metaphor serves as a lens through which Plath examines the profound shifts in self-perception and societal expectations. *Daddy* employs the metaphor of the father as a complex symbol of authority, repression, and unresolved trauma. Plath's conceptual metaphor becomes a battleground for the speaker's struggle with her

paternal legacy, exploring the interplay of power dynamics, personal history, and the quest for autonomy.

Together, these poems showcase Plath's mastery of using *conceptual metaphors* to confront and interrogate the intricate layers of human experience. The metaphors serve as a bridge between the personal and the archetypal, inviting readers to grapple with the complexities of mental illness, gender roles, and the legacy of familial relationships. Plath's poetic language transcends the literal, encouraging a semiotic exploration that invites readers to navigate the profound depths of emotion, psyche, and societal expectations embedded in her work.

Conclusion

Through the in-depth analysis of *conceptual metaphors*, this thesis has concluded that *conceptual metaphor theory* proves to be a pivotal tool in unraveling the intricate layers of meaning embedded in poetry. Extending this analytical framework to poets such as Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath provides an exciting avenue for further exploration. These iconic poets, known for their rich and diverse bodies of work, likely employ a myriad of *conceptual metaphors* to convey profound insights and emotions. Delving into their poems with a focus on conceptual mapping could unveil nuanced layers of meaning, allowing readers to engage more deeply with the intricacies of language and symbolism. As the field of literary analysis continues to evolve, embracing the rich terrain of *conceptual metaphors* promises to enhance our appreciation of poetry, shedding light on the intricate interplay between language, thought, and artistic expression. By unraveling the metaphorical tapestry woven by poets, we can unlock new dimensions of meaning and foster a deeper connection with the profound beauty that resides within the written word.

Future Recommendations of the Study

Moving forward, there is immense potential for researchers, scholars, and literary enthusiasts to expand the application of conceptual metaphors theory in the analysis of poetry. Exploring how various poets utilize and manipulate conceptual metaphors can offer fresh perspectives on their artistic intent, thematic explorations, and the emotional landscapes they aim to evoke. Additionally, comparative studies across different poets and literary movements could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of conceptual metaphors in shaping the aesthetic and intellectual dimensions of poetry.

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