

## الاسلوبية المعرفية ونظرية المخطط الصوري في قصيدة "الفردوس المفقود" لجون ملتون

م. د. نسرين جبار حسين الحيدري  
مديرية التربية في البصرة/ مدرسة الموهوبين

البريد الإلكتروني Email : [nissrinephd10@gmail.com](mailto:nissrinephd10@gmail.com)

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## Cognitive Stylistics and Image Schema Theory in John Milton's Paradise Lost

By

Lecturer: **Nissrine Jabbar Hussain Al-Haidari**  
Directorate of Education, Basra, Iraq  
Gifted Students School of Basra

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### المخلص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة التقاطع بين الأسلوبية المعرفية ونظرية المخطط الصوري في قصيدة "الفردوس المفقود" لجون ملتون، مبينة كيف تثري المقاربات المعرفية عملية تفسير الأدب. فالأسلوبية المعرفية، المستمدة من اللسانيان وعلم النفس، توفر اطارالفهم كيفية معالجة القراء للنصوص عبر التأثيرات الذهنية والسياقية. أما نظرية المخطط الصوري، المنبثقة من التجربة المجسدة، فتقدم رؤى حول الأنماط المفهومية المتكررة- مثل مخطط الحاوية، والمسار، والقوة، والتوازن- التي تُسهّم في تنظيم المعنى داخل النصوص الأدبية.

ومن خلال تحليل مقاطع مختارة من "الفردوس المفقود"، توضح الباحثة كيف تعمل استعارات ملتون وصوره البلاغية كاستراتيجيات ذهنية تبني شبكات دلالية معقدة. وتُظهرالنتائج أن الانتقالات بين الواقع والفضاءات الذهنية، والخرائط الاستعارية التي تسقط العواطف البشرية على كيانات غير بشرية، وتداخل المخططات التصورية- جميعها تُسهّم في العمق المعرفي والابداع الشعري في القصيدة. وتخلص الدراسة الى التأكيد على قيمة الأسلوبية المعرفية في البط

بين الشكل اللغوي والعمليات النفسية والمعنى الأدبي، مقدّمة للقراء والباحثين عدسة تحليلية دقيقة لفهم النصوص الكلاسيكية.

### Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of cognitive stylistics and image schema theory in John Milton's Paradise Lost, highlighting how cognitive approaches enrich Literary interpretation. Cognitive stylistics, rooted in linguistics and psychology, offers a framework for understanding how readers process texts through mental and contextual influences. Image schema theory, derived from embodied experience, provides insights into recurring conceptual patterns such as container, path, force, and balance that structure meaning in literature. By analysing selected passages from Paradise Lost, the researcher demonstrates how Milton's metaphors and figures of speech function as mental strategies that construct complex semantic networks. The findings reveal that shifts between reality and mental spaces, metaphorical mappings of human emotions onto non-human roles, and the blending of schemas contribute to poem's cognitive depth and poetic creativity. Ultimately, the study underscores the value of cognitive stylistics in bridging linguistic form, psychological processes, and literary meaning, offering readers and scholars a nuanced lens through which to interpret canonical texts.

### 1.Literature review and theoretical background

Stylistic can be traced back to classical rhetoric, particularly Aristotle's Rhetoric, which emphasised the style of verbal expression and elocution. The modern growth of stylistics emerged in Britain during the 1960s, largely influenced by Russian Formalists emerged such as Roman Jakobson and Victor Shklovsky. From its inception, stylistics displayed an interdisciplinary character, combining literary criticism with linguistic analysis. This dual focus led some scholars to regard stylistics as a subfield of literary criticism.

A major influence on stylistics was Halliday's functional model of language, which conceptualised language as a form of "social semiotics"- a system of meaning-making shaped by and embedded within social contexts (Nøgaard, Montoro, & Busse, 2010, pp. 2-5). Wales (2011) notes that stylistics continually reassesses its models and terminology in light of developments in linguistics. For example, transformational grammar was influential in the late 1960s; critical discourse analysis emerged in the 1990s; and more recently, cognitive linguistics and corpus linguistics have become central.



The term steam stylistics is sometimes used to describe stylistic analysis prior to the corpus and computer-assisted era. Wales (2011) explains that this label is often applied self- mockingly, acknowledging that no machine can replicate human sensitivity or the ability to interpret complex discourse structures.

Three direct influences on stylistics can be identified: Anglo-American literary criticism, the emerging field of linguistics, and European- particularly French- structuralism (Wales, 2011, p. 743). Early twentieth century literary criticism tended to be diachronic, focusing on authorial intention or the texture of language in literary works. By contrast, practical criticism emphasized close reading of short poems or prose extracts, often accompanied by textual modification and typewritten scholarship.

### **1.2 Cognitive Stylistics: Overview**

Cognitive stylistics occupies an interdisciplinary space among linguistics, psychology, and literary studies. It treats literary texts as products of readers' cognitive processes and emphasises how mental representations, contextual knowledge, and bodily experience shape interpretation. This approach, foregrounded by Stockwell (2002) and Gavin and Steen (2003), seeks to illuminate how texts are constructed and read rather than making evaluative stylistics, (2) Image Schema Theory as grounding for textual interpretation, and (3) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as a mechanism for understanding meaning construction through metaphorical mapping. The aim is to articulate a cohesive framework for applying these theories to literary analysis and to suggest avenues for scholarly work and pedagogy.

Cognitive stylistics, thus, applies cognitive linguistics and psychology to literary texts to illuminate how readers construct meaning. It emphasises reader' knowledge, practices, and interpretations, seeking descriptive accounts of linguistic features in literature and explanations of readerly interpretation in terms of cognitive processes and contextual factors (Stockwell, 2002; Gavins & Steen, 2003). This framework foregrounds mental and contextual influences in interpretation and positions readers as active constructors of meaning rather than passive recipient.

Thus, Stockwell (2002, pp.4-6) observes that "cognitive stylistics provides a new way of thinking about literature involving the application of cognitive linguistics and psychology to the literary texts". Gavins and Steen (2003, p.35), in their turn, maintain that cognitive stylistics can be viewed as suggesting a descriptive as well as detailed explanation of linguistic characteristics of texts in "a mechanistic and non-evaluative way".

In verifying the association between "literature and psychology", Glotova (201, p. 45) assumes that literary texts reflect the productions of "cognizing minds", and he considers illustrations as the productions of other "cognizing minds" in terms of context of the physical and socio-cultural worlds in that they can be made and read.

In this respect, Stockwell (2002, p.15) asserts that "cognitive stylistics" views people as mental humans who depend upon their theoretical knowledge and practices to interpret literary texts. In other words, cognitive stylistics shows crucial instruments for the readers having an obvious viewpoint of texts and contexts, environments and usages, knowledge and thoughts. It may thus be viewed as an initiating stage for readers understanding and method how literary contexts are built.

Thus, Woldemariam (2015, p. 18) concludes that "cognitive stylistics" posits mental and contextual influences at the core of its analytical spaces. Both formal and functional stylistics approaches put sentences and texts respectively at heart of their analyses. They are mainly text-immanent approaches. The current model, however, refers to departures from textual to contextual stylistics comprehension of texts.

### 1.3 Image Schema Theory

Bussmann (1999, p. 1031) defines a schema as a generalized cognitive representation of recurrent event structures embedded within specific sociocultural context- for example, going to restaurant, purchasing a ticket, or borrowing a book. Such routinized experiential knowledge provides a fundamental cognitive scaffold for language interpretation, allowing readers to infer, complete, or reconcile ambiguous or underspecified information. Within narrative comprehension, these culturally shared expectations about how stories typically unfold help readers identify which sequences of events are plausible, coherent, and meaningful. As Bussmann emphasizes, schematic knowledge is stored in long-term memory and can be activated rapidly during the processing of new information.

Lakoff (1987, p. 267) elaborates that one of the principal ways embodied experience is manifested at the conceptual level is through image schemas. Image schemas constitute basic, recurring structures of embodied experience- such as contact, container, and balance- that emerge directly from human sensorimotor interactions with the physical environment. Because these structures are grounded in preconceptual bodily experience, they serve as universal building blocks for more complex conceptualisation.

In similar vein, Clausner and Croft (1999, p. 15) argue that image-schematic concepts are not abstract or disembodied constructs but derive





their semantic content from the sensory-perceptual experiences that give rise to them. They identify a broad range of image-schematic patterns, including up-down, near-far, center-periphery, contact, path, containment, force, balance, counterforce, compulsion, blockage, diversion, attraction, and removal, among many others. These schemas' structure both perceptual experience and higher-order reasoning, thereby functioning as central mechanisms in human cognition.

Rumelhart (1980, p.34) views schema theory as a comprehensive account of the representation and organisation of knowledge in the human mind. He maintains that all knowledge is configured into structured units, or schemata, which guide the interpretation of new information by linking it to pre-existing cognitive structures. Within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this perspective highlights the significance of cultural and experiential knowledge in reading comprehension. Fries (1963, p. 22) similarly argues that meaning extends beyond the linguistic code and is rooted in the sociocultural background shared by speakers of a language. Effective comprehension, thus, occurs when the meaning of a text resonates with and is integrated into the reader's existing knowledge network.

Building on contemporary schema theory, Huang (2009, p. 139) and Tavakoli (2012, p. 139) identify three principal categories of schemata:

1. **Content schema** encompasses an individual's background or world knowledge, including topic-related information and culturally shared experiences. It plays a decisive role in enabling readers to activate relevant knowledge that facilitates the interpretation of textual content.

2. **Linguistic Schema** refers to the linguistic resources and competences- such as vocabulary, syntax, and idiomatic expressions- required for decoding textual meaning. It reflects the reader's semantic, grammatical, and pragmatic proficiency.

3. **Formal Schema** involves knowledge of the structural and rhetorical organisation of texts. This includes familiarity with various genres, their expected discourse patterns, structural conventions, and the formal principals governing how meaning is organised in different types of written discourse.

#### 1.4 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) posits that metaphor involves understanding one conceptual domain through another. As Kövecses (2004, p. 4) explains, a metaphor arises when a target domain is conceptualised in terms of a source domain, which supplies the structural correspondences that shape how the target is interpreted. Thus, metaphor



operates as a cognitive mechanism central to organising and shaping human conceptualisation rather than as a purely linguistic ornament.

Evans (2007) elaborates that perceived similarities between conceptual domains are encoded through mappings, defined as systematic correspondences that connect elements of the source and target domains within the broader conceptual system (p. 130). These mappings determine how attention is projected from one domain onto another, enabling speakers to reason about abstract or complex experiences through more concrete and embodied source domains.

Within cognitive semantics, meaning emerges from conventionalised conceptual structures rooted in recurrent bodily and cultural experiences. Saeed (20016) notes that mental domains reflect these structured conceptualisations and underlie the lexical representations used to categorise and describe the external world (p. 342). Consequently, linguistic meaning is inseparable from the cognitive models that speakers develop through interaction with their environments.

Consistent with this view, Stranzy (2005) argues that metaphor plays a crucial role in conceptualising emotional experience. Emotional concepts often surface in idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions- such as “You make my blood boil” or “He’s just letting off steam”- which draw on the primary metaphor ANGER IS A HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER (p. 282). Similar metaphorical patterns illustrate how the human body is conceptualised as container for emotions, as in expressions such as “She was filled with love” or “Her feelings overflowed.” These examples demonstrate that metaphor provides a fundamental cognitive strategy for structuring and articulating subjective emotional states.

## 2. Data Analysis

### 2.1 Introduction

The following section presents a cognitive-stylistic analysis of selected lines from Paradise Lost by John Milton (1667/2003). The poem recounts the Biblical narrative of the Fall of Man, including the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their consequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The analysis adopts a mental-spaces and conceptual -mapping framework (Fauconnier, 1994; Turner & Fauconnier, 2002), focusing on how selected extracts construct meaning through metaphor, image schemas, and conceptual integration. The data examined here are obtained from a publicly available online edition of the poem.





## 2.2 Data Analysis and Results

### Extract 1

#### Book V, lines 10-17

1. *I rose as at thy call, but found thee not;*
2. *To find thee I directed then my walk;*
3. *And on, methought, alone I passed through ways*
4. *That brought me on a sudden to the tree*
5. *Of interdicted knowledge: fair it seemed,*
6. *Much fairer to my fancy than by day:*
7. *And, as I wondering looked, beside it stood*
8. *One shaped and winged like one of those from Heaven*

### Discussion

This extract demonstrates a clear shift between cognitive spaces. The expression "methought" (line3) signals a transition from the reality space-Eve's waking world-into a counterfactual dream space. Within this dream space, further embedded spaces are constructed, illustrating what Fauconnier (1994) describes as space -building through linguistic triggers. Eve narrates not only the content of the dream, but also her perceptions within the dream, thereby creating layered mental spaces.

The verb "seemed" (line 5) forms an epistemic mental space, separating Eve's subjective perception from empirical reality. This perception-based space foregrounds the cognitive distinction between what is real and what is imagined, a recurrent strategy used by Milton to explore temptation, illusion, and internal conflict. Such transitions illustrate how mental-space theory helps explain the nuanced shifts between narrative levels in the poem.

### Extract 2

#### Book IV, lines 268-274

1. *Our two first parents, yet the only two*
2. *Of mankind in the happy garden plac'd*
3. *Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,*
4. *Uninterrupted joy, unrivall'd love,*
5. *In blissful solitude; he then survey'd*
6. *Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there*
7. *Coasting the wall of Heaven on this side Night*

### Discussion

Fauconnier's (1994, p. 40) distinction between roles and values is evident in this passage. The phrase "happy garden" (line2) maps human value ("happy") onto a non-human role ("garden"), demonstrating metaphorical projection from the human emotional domain to the



physical environment. This conceptual mapping attributes human experiential qualities to a non-human entity, creating a blended space that conveys the paradise-like quality of Eden.

Additionally, "fruits of joy and love" (line3) employs conceptual metaphor, assigning abstract human emotions ("joy," "love") to concrete objects ("fruits"). This mapping reveals how Milton uses embodied metaphors to communicate complex theological meanings. The blending of human emotional domains with natural imagery produces a layered interpretative space that foregrounds the richness of human experience before the Fall.

### **Extract 3**

#### **Book I, lines 1-5**

1. *Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit*
2. *Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste*
3. *Brought death into the World, and all our woe,*
4. *With loss of Eden, till one greater Man*
5. *Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,*

### **Discussion**

Two image schemas emerge prominently:

1. The image schema of Disobedience: The phrase "first disobedience" (line 1) establishes a conceptual template for subsequent acts of human disobedience, functioning as a superordinate schema within which all later transgressions are cognitively framed.
2. Force and Containment Image Schemas: The notion that the forbidden fruit "brought death into the world" (line3) blends the force schema (death entering the world as an external force) with the containment schema (the world conceptualized as a container into which death penetrates). Through this integration, Milton constructs a vivid conceptualization of the origin of mortality as an invading force.

These schemas illustrate how poetic meaning is constructed through embodied cognition, linking physical experience to abstract theological concepts.

### **3. Discussion**

The cognitive -stylistic analysis of the selected extracts shows that Paradise Lost employs mental spaces, conceptual metaphors, and image schemas to articulate theological and emotional complexities. Milton's language systematically shifts readers between reality, counterfactual, perceptual, and moral spaces, thereby creating multi-layered interpretive possibilities.





Across the extracts, Milton conceptualizes abstract ideas-temptation, innocence, sin, mortality-using embodied metaphors and spatial schemas. These strategies support the idea that metaphor and conceptual integration are not merely stylistic ornaments but are fundamental cognitive operations that structure narrative understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Turner & Fauconnier, 2002).

This analysis demonstrates that cognitive stylistics provides tools for uncovering how texts construct meaning at a conceptual level. Such findings align with previous scholarship arguing that literary interpretation is deeply rooted in embodied cognition (Stockwell, 2002).

#### **4.Implications**

##### **1. For Literary Studies:**

Cognitive stylistics enriches traditional literary criticism by revealing underlying conceptual structures. This approach can be applied to other canonical works to uncover how cognitive mechanisms shape literary meaning.

##### **2.For Teaching Literature**

Using mental -space conceptual -metaphor frameworks can help students identify abstract patterns in complex poetic texts, thus improving interpretive skills and deepening engagement with classical literature.

##### **3.For Cognitive Linguistics**

The study reinforces the idea that language provides authentic evidence for how conceptual mappings operate in natural cognition, thereby supporting interdisciplinary research between linguistics and literature.

##### **4.For Future Research**

Further studies could apply conceptual blending theory to entire episodes of Paradise Lost, exploring how Milton constructs theological arguments through multi-layered integration networks.

##### **5.Conclusions**

The analysis reaches the following conclusions:

**1.**Stylistics examines linguistic choices across different varieties of language, explaining how writers and speakers use language purposefully.

**2.**Cognitive stylistics offers a detailed and non- evaluative account of how linguistic features shape meaning.

**3.**Schema theory identifies three major schemas types-content, forma, and linguistic-which guide comprehension across sociocultural contexts.

**4.**Metaphor functions as a cognitive tool for conceptualizing emotions and abstract ideas, often realized in idioms and conventional expressions.



5. Paradise Lost relies on figures of speech, especially metaphor, as mental strategies for constructing meaning. Milton uses conceptual mappings and space-building to shift readers from the real world to constructed imaginative worlds where poetic meaning becomes cognitively accessible.

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