



METAPHORS AND EMOTION ILLUSTRATION: THE CASE OF PATHETIC FALLACY.

1. Metaphors and Emotions:

“Emotions are the core of literature. Every character, every story written have a purpose: to create a reaction” (Brown: 1962, p.122).

Emotions are personal and abstract, as there is no accurate way of testing if we all feel similarly. This represents a challenge for authors to convey a character's emotions in a way that will reach the reader in a universal and objective way. Using figurative language to illustrate emotions is an ideal way of portraying those emotions in a way that will be clear for any reader. This idea aligns with **Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT)** principles. CMT has for its founding principle that metaphors are used to illustrate subjective or abstract concepts through images that are objective and physical, easily visualised by all. Pathetic fallacy is a special type of metaphor used to communicate emotions. Its usage is best defined through CMT: “a **conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another**” (Kövecses: 2002, p.6). In the case of pathetic fallacy, emotions are understood in terms of the environment.

2. Pathetic Fallacy:

Pathetic fallacy was originally defined by John Ruskin as giving human attributes to objects and natural elements, thus impacting the ambiance. This definition and the examples given by Ruskin illustrate personification more than the process of pathetic fallacy. David Lodge defines pathetic fallacy as a “**projection of human emotions onto phenomena in the natural world**”, yet no model in linguistics or literary studies exists to correctly identify pathetic fallacy and its impact in texts.

After multiple studies and text analysis with a prototype grid classification, I have identified the following :

4 key elements of pathetic fallacy:

- ♦ Human presence
- ♦ Presence of environment
- ♦ Presence of emotions (explicit or implicit)
- ♦ Context (particularly if emotions are implicit)

3 uses of pathetic fallacy:

- ♦ 1. Expresses explicitly an implicit emotion.
- ♦ 2. Illustrates clearly and universally what the character cannot.
- ♦ 3. Contribute to characterisation.

3. Text Analysis:

Each text below represents one main function of pathetic fallacy mentioned above.

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë (1847).

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further out-door exercise was now out of the question.

I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed.

Human presence
Presence of environment
Presence of emotions
Context: Title + names given + deictic terms used
Explicit state of mind

- ♦ Jane's emotions are explicit and portrayed by the nature around her.
- ♦ Her emotions are clear not only because she voices it but also through the surrounding nature.
- ♦ Jane is not yet named as this is the opening of the novel, yet we know a lot about her, particularly about how she feels: **pathetic fallacy contributes to characterisation (3).**

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain (1884).

So they dug and dug, like everything; and it got awful dark, and the rain started, and the wind swished and swished along, and the lightning come brisker and brisker, and the thunder boomed; but them people never took no notice of it, they was so full of this business; and one minute you could see everything and every face in that big crowd, and the shovelfuls of dirt sailing up out of the grave, and the next second the dark wiped it all out, and you couldn't see nothing at all.

Human presence
Presence of environment
Presence of emotions
Context: Title
Sounds

- ♦ The context in this extract is not clear unless we are familiar with the novel and recognise the situation Huck is in.
- ♦ No explicit emotion is stated, but we can figure out how Huck is feeling:
 - ♦ Only 1 sentence yet multiple clauses used to mirror stream of consciousness.
 - ♦ Use of onomatopoeia and assonances to illustrate the atmosphere.
 - ♦ The atmosphere and the weather reflects Huck's feelings.
 - ♦ With this bottom-up approach it is clear Huck is panicked by the situation.

Pathetic fallacy is composed of varied techniques to allow the reader to understand explicitly how Huck feels in this implicit situation (1).

The Hound of the Baskervilles, Arthur Conan Doyle (1902).

October 16th. A dull and foggy day with a drizzle of rain. The house is banked in with rolling clouds, which rise now and then to show the dreary curves of the moor, with thin, silver veins upon the sides of the hills, and the distant boulders gleaming where the light strikes upon their wet faces. It is melancholy outside and in. The baronet is in a black reaction after the excitements of the night. I am conscious myself of a weight at my heart and a feeling of impending danger—ever present danger, which is the more terrible because I am unable to define it.

Human presence
Presence of environment
Presence of emotions
Context: Title + deictic terms used
Explicit state of mind

- ♦ Watson explicitly states his melancholia but he struggles to define how he really feels or why.
- ♦ The surroundings reflect how Watson feels, and although his statement his vague, the image is clear to the reader.
- ♦ **Here pathetic fallacy is used to clearly illustrate Watson's emotions, even though he cannot (2).**

References:

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