

Living is Writing

Metaphors of Representation in Hanif Kureishi's *The Last Word*

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Hanif Kureishi's *The Last Word* (2014) is a fictional work that depicts the effort of a young journalist from London, Harry, to write the biography of a very famous author of Indian origin, Mamoon, who now lives in the quiet English countryside. Starting from the very beginning, with its symbolic title, the novel is built upon a metatextual framework as it discusses the power of words and narratives in a literary context. In particular, the thematic coordinates of the text incessantly creates intersections between the conceptual domain of WRITING, which includes its peripheral subdomains such as researching, remembering, but also the manipulation and revision of facts and stories. The overall effect is to hybridise the fields of narrative, (fictional) biography and authorship, and deliberately challenge the reader in the construction of meaning and the attribution of reliability to characters. Therefore, the governing megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING and its possible micro-articulations emerge as a network of rhetorical devices of representation and conceptualisation of life experience through the practice of writing and communicating.

This paper intends to investigate the range of these metaphorical renditions in the novel, and their power to symbolically encapsulate lives in words (Mamoon's life recorded and/or reinvented through words). The central argument is that such structures superficially serve to mirror reality and experience, blending the macro-concepts of WRITING and LIVING, but in reality they are also endowed with the possibility to set off a sequence of ambiguities, given their ideological potential (i.e. biography writing as a process of adjustment and interpretation of facts in spite of claims of faithfulness). As readers are asked to apply a kind of "double vision" (Gavins 2007) to the text, various text worlds are generated, bringing to light the language continuum connecting the coterminous spaces of fiction and non-fiction and the key role of metaphor as a tool to approach the self and the other, and human existence at large. The purpose of this article is twofold, namely a) to take into account various metaphoric expressions originating from the central megametaphor in select extracts from the novel and b) to provide a preliminary examination of their ideological effects. Methodologically I follow an interdisciplinary frame that draws from stylistics, postcolonial discourse, biography studies and literary studies (Adami 2006; Ashcroft 2009; Bradford 1997; Browse 2016; Douthwaite 2000; Kövecses 2000, 2002; Stockwell 2009; Sorlin 2014).

1. Introduction

The idea of WRITING is a powerful embracing notion rooted in human culture and society, as demonstrated by frequent standard and idiomatic phraseology, and is often used directly or indirectly as a metaphor or image for a variety of life situations. On the one hand, superficially, it stands as a creative and practical activity in the arts, but on the other it emerges as a conceptualisation of various circumstances. This view seems to frame and drive metaphorical patterns in *The Last Word*, a novel by diasporic author Hanif Kureishi (2012), which depicts the effort of a young journalist from London, Harry, to write the biography of a very famous author of Indian origin, Mamoon, who now lives in the quiet English countryside. With its abundant recourse to metatextuality and metafiction (Wales 1995: 292-3), realised by a variety of deictic shifts and other resources, the novel triggers the megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING as a paradigm to conceptualise, represent and construct the abstract and complex sense of LIVING via the notion of WRITING, thus building (and blending) discourse and text worlds and inviting the reader to apply a “double-vision” (Gavins 2009: 146-164).

In this paper I propose to approach Kureishi's novel by mapping out the different metaphorical articulations that interweave the mingled conceptual domains of LIVING and WRITING (two very generic and wide fields) to signal the manifestations of identity.¹ Very often writing here functions as a source domain, whilst living represents the target domain, but at times the two seem to be interchangeable as their correspondences are not distinct: in this case, for Gibbons and Whiteley (2018: 214), “rather than unidirectional conceptual mapping, conceptual properties appear to be mapped dual-directionally.”

It is not incidental that the novelistic format is here, at least partially, hybridised with other genres such as literary biography, treatise, journalism or even parody, in an attempt to record and chronicle facts, although they may be subject to manipulation, revision and ‘rewriting’. The purpose of this article is twofold, namely a) to take into account various metaphoric expressions originating from the central megametaphor in select extracts from the novel and b) to provide a preliminary examination of their ideological effects, arising from the metaphors that the author decides to employ in his story. In other words, I aim to study the conceptualisation of the megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING, namely how the (meta)textual and figurative process of writing, of constructing a (fictional) biography may hide or modify some details, and in thus doing project other meanings and

¹ Conceptual metaphors and megametaphors are signalled by the use of small capital letters and I use this convention in my paper.

persuade the reader to adopt a particular viewpoint. In order to explore the complex textual architecture of the megametaphor running throughout the novel, I adopt a primarily stylistic methodology, though I also draw on and adapt theories and frameworks such as literary studies and postcolonial discourse (e.g. Ashcroft 2009; Gavins 2007; Kövecses 2000, 2002; Steen 1994; Stockwell 2009; Sorlin 2014).

2. Metaphors and megametaphors

Over the last decades, the study of metaphor has seen a growing body of important scholarship that reinvigorated its tenets and key concepts, in particular after the so-called ‘cognitive turn,’ i.e. a deep reflection on the conceptual nature of metaphor and its key position in human culture and language. Traditional approaches to metaphor (e.g. Bradford 1997), which refer to classical rhetoric, have been revised and updated taking into consideration other impactful aspects such as the mental work that occurs behind the production and reception of metaphorical constructions at large, as well as their entrenchment in thought and the way in which they conceptualise reality and life thanks to their two components: target domain (the main ‘topic’ of the metaphor) and source domain (the ‘source’ of the linguistic structure), cognitively tied by mappings, i.e. meaningful correspondences and links. These structures are termed cognitive metaphors: for Sorlin “ces représentations sont le fruit de nos interactions avec le monde” (2014: 193) and they function through “mappings between cognitive domains that are set up when we think and when we talk” (Fauconnier 1997: 8).

As a whole, metaphors are pervasive in and across discourses and texts, regardless of genre boundaries: the realm of literature in particular seem to exhibit a significant and more evident repository of such devices, which consistently contribute to the process of textual meaning creation and towards which readers respond and react in various ways. For example, Steen (1994: 241) draws attention to the issue of metaphor comprehension in literature and holds that “its basis in non-literal analogy can trigger fantasies, rich ideas, and pleasure in language which few other literary signs may be able to equal”. Rather than being a mere form of embellishment for aesthetic purposes, metaphors therefore are chief tools for the complex organisation of literary texts, but in reality they also signal the intricate relations and links between fictional and non-fictional discourse. Literary metaphors, for instance, are sometimes described as innovative and bizarre, but very often they are the final result of various linguistic processes of transformation, combination and extension of ‘mundane’ narrative material, as demonstrated among others by Kövecses (2002: 43-54). However, there is now scholarly agreement that both literary and non-literary metaphors share elements of creativity,

which in Carter's view (2004: 140) "is a mentalistic phenomenon and draws for its effects on basic conceptual categories and prototypical experiences of the world."

As mentioned above, cognitive metaphors imaginatively inform the way we think and speak and thus function as mental structures: they are not mere figures of speech but powerful expressive devices. When the same metaphor, in various shapes and functions, occurs regularly through the text, this may be identified as an embracing system of signification whose network of substructures allows the orchestration of complex meanings via the implementation of micrometaphors, making up the wider structure called megametaphor (Gavins 2007: 151; Kövecses 2002: 51-2). According to Kimmel (2009: 181) "a megametaphor is an implicit large-scale mapping onto a target domain that is recurrently hinted at, creating a deeper-level meaning the text 'really is about.'" Also termed extended metaphor, it is an imaginative conceptual strategy frequently employed in the exploration of the literary field, for example the poetic work of Blake (Kirvalidze and Davitishvili 2012), or some novels by Jack London (Rezanova and Shilyaev 2015). Recently, it has also received critical attention when functioning in the areas of specialised non-literary discourse too, for instance in the study carried out by Browse (2016) working with the language of the British financial crisis. In this perspective, all the metaphorical patterns (micrometaphors) that constitute the backbone of the megametaphor do not stay in compartmentalised spaces of meaning, but provide a range of linguistic and cognitive blending of two domains.

3. The novel and the language (between fiction and non-fiction)

In this section I provide an introduction to the novel, which groups together a few characters that for various reasons orbit around the figure of Mamoon Hazan, a famous author and essayist of Indian descent, settled in the UK. Harry Johnson, a brilliant and ambitious young writer and journalist, is commissioned to prepare his biography and therefore spends a lot of time with the old intellectual and his entourage, in particular Liana Luccioni, the artist's eccentric Italian wife. The story progresses in various directions, piecing together some sides of Mamoon's past and at the same time intruding into the life of Harry and his family too (we are shown his frail wife Alice and his father, a psychiatrist). However, ambiguity seems to mark all the narrative levels unfolded by the author, because the idea of writing and presenting one's past experiences clashes with personal interests, different viewpoints and personal ideologies. Researching Mamoon's life turns out to be complex and difficult to put into words, in particular when Harry has to consider two important female presences of the famous author's past. These are Marion, "a Colombian with an English Jewish mother" (Kureishi 2014: 187) that Harry manages to meet in the USA, and Peggy, Mamoon's first wife, who

committed suicide many years before the time when the action of the novel takes place but whose ghostly echo somehow seems to linger in the interstices of memory. Besides, dealing with his literary task and Mamoon's uneasy and overflowing personality, the young journalist also has to face transformations in his own life, with a progressive distancing from his wife and a parallel love affair with Julia, the girl who works for Mamoon and Liana, as well as a tense relationship with his messy and semi-alcoholic agent, Rob Deveraux.

Superficially the novel strives to follow or evoke the forms of biography writing, but it also has the force of provocation and even traces of parody since reviewers have juxtaposed it to or compared it with a 'real' biography, that of V.S. Naipaul, written by Patrick French and originally in 2008 (2009). Approaches to writing may change and oscillate for a variety of reasons, and can impinge or affect visibility, and implicitly popularity, fame and success, of public figures, as incidentally demonstrated by the controversial relationship for example between V.S. Naipaul and Paul Theroux, with the latter initially writing a very appreciative work on the author of Asian origin and then proposing a not so mild portrayal of the same some twenty-five years afterwards. Incidentally, it should also be noted that Kureishi has often shown an interest in the biographical genre, for instance with *My Ear at His Heart* (2004), a kind of biography of his father, a migrant from the Indian subcontinent.

In fictional terms, *The Last Word* works as an arena of confrontation between characters and viewpoints, and foregrounds the idea of literary manipulation, of how words can be used to represent certain ideologies or persuade people to follow certain perspectives. In this respect, the novel belongs to the postcolonial genre that questions the power of writing and linguistic representations for those subjects that are split between different cultural worlds and the manifestation, transformation and impact of logos, according to Ashcroft's view (2009). The text discloses bits and pieces of Mamoon's Indian boyhood, a period still clouded by the heritage of the colonial past, but these are depicted like distant, even exotic echoes, in an attempt to relocate the viewpoint and restrict the diasporic experience.

Hanif Kureishi's narrative prose and shorter fiction is particularly imbued with the trope of metatextuality and a general reflection on the sense of writing, and its capacity to persuade or influence readers (see Adami 2006), and this also lies at the heart of the metaphorical system operating in the novel under consideration here. The techniques of rhetorical manipulation and representation in this text are further amplified thanks to the hybrid nature of this type of writing, in which the fictional genre liminally borders with the biographical, with the consequence that in the reading process a proliferation and overlapping of narrative (and meta-narrative) voices and entities have to be considered (Gibbons and Whiteley 2018; Sorlin 2015). Investigating the various layers of

the literary biography genre, Holden (2014: 920) sets up the notion of contract operating between “two complementary identities: between the biographer and the narrator of the biography, and between the protagonist of the biography and the implied author of those literary texts discussed in the biography with which the reader is already familiar”. This approach *mutatis mutandi* may be extended to Kureishi's text, also considering that the novel is generously sprinkled with literary references, including Poe, Hugo, Hughes, Joyce, Pasolini, Tolstoy and Camus. In this way, the fictional biographical format engenders a rich polyphonic effect.

4. WRITING IS LIVING as a megametaphor and its realisations

One of the recurring features of the novel here under examination, which even a cursory look will reveal, regards its ‘literary’ essence (Douthwaite 2000: 134), namely the constant foregrounding of the idea of WRITING, spanning literariness and narrative activity realised via an assortment of images and items deriving from the wide, abstract notion of LIVING. Indeed, this is a fictional story that continually portrays and deals with writers, biographers, the value of literature and criticism, the world of letters and arts, or artistry in general, and the scope of writing for a variety of purposes such as recording or representing reality, society and life. Metatextual tones are suggested from the very title, which highlights the lexical item ‘word’, and its premodifying adjective ‘last,’ which triggers connotations of prophecy, inevitability and even responsibility as we wonder whose last word it is, e.g. the author's, the narrator's, the character(s)'s, the reader's and so forth. This and many other clues therefore contribute to the progressive construction of a large system of reference – in my hypothesis governed by the megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING, which remarkably impacts on the negotiation of meaning between author, text and reader, since, as Steen (1994: 48) argues, “understanding metaphor in literature is a mental process which is part of literary reception.” In this light, the dense significance of WRITING, interpreted as a term with a wide semantic area spanning both a very general (but practical) activity as well as a creative intellectual practice, runs throughout the text and underpins its main narrative structures. This recurring construction may be interpreted following what Kövecses (2000: 98) defines “complex system metaphors,” namely a patterning that “takes various social, psychological, biological, and emotional domains as its focus,” in this case the manifold significance of LIFE and LIVING reshaped through the prism of WRITING. Viewed from this perspective and hierarchically positioned at the top of a possible structure of classification, the megametaphor WRITING IS LIVING unfolds various image schemas (Gavins 2007: 5; Kimmel 2009) and comprises various subtypes such as ABSTRACT EXISTENCE IS PHYSICAL EXISTENCE OR ABSTRACT FUNCTION IS PHYSICAL FUNCTION that will substantiate several metaphoric expressions.

From a mere linguistic angle, it is also worth recalling that in the common lexicon of English the ‘sense’ of writing not only characterises a large number of possible linguistic collocations, but also surfaces with a variety of set expressions such as ‘written all over one’s face’ (a structure that symbolically cues the process of embodied metaphor), ‘the writing on the wall’ and idiomatic verb phrases such as ‘write someone off,’ ‘write something off,’ ‘write something up’ and others. This is evidence of the centrality of such notion in the human tendency to observe and conceptualise surrounding reality and circumstances, i.e. in the form of documenting, chronicling, communicating and passing on information and knowledge. Therefore, the domain of WRITING may serve as a mirror to filter and condense human life experience, and in this way it endorses the mapping of the two domains, which are interconnected in order to produce meaning. Very often these metaphorical constructions rely on the use of core vocabulary items, that is, “the most normal, basic and simple words available to a language user” (Carter 2004: 115), to convey and naturalise meaning out of less tangible subjective experiences. I now mine the novel to trace local instantiations of the megametaphor introduced above and examine their textual and cognitive mechanics in a selection of passages.

The presence of the megametaphor is sanctioned by the very first paragraph of the novel, which activates a text world about the relationship between LIVING and WRITING, via the mediating agency of the biography genre: “Harry was about to be employed to tell the story of the man he was going to visit. Indeed, he had been chosen to tell the *whole* story of this important man, this significant artist. How, he wondered, with a shudder, did you begin to do that? Where would you start, and how would the story, which was still being lived, end?” (Kureishi 2014: 1, emphasis in the original). A few elements here draw the reader’s attention to a particular type of context so as to build a network of analogies and correspondences: expressions such as ‘to tell the story of the man’ or the use of verbs like ‘begin’ (reinforced by the adjacent near synonym ‘start’) paralleled with ‘end,’ which literally and symbolically can be referred to ‘life’ as well. These, and other, lexical items subtly invite the reader to reflect on the sense of life, and implicitly identity (also with the aid of linguistic structures almost shaped as inner, existentialist questions of a wondering subject), and in a parallel fashion suggest the role of WRITING, in particular through the biographical genre, as a metonymic form of representation of the human experience, encoded in the key term ‘story.’ Moreover, the adjective ‘whole’ graphologically stands out thanks to italicisation and in this way it extends hyperbolically (and unrealistically of course) its meaning to cover an entire life. However rich and detailed a biography is, it cannot include every type of experience, and it is up to the author to select which events, and episodes will be covered and narrated.

Discussing the function of the narrating voice in literary biography, Diane Middlebrook puts forward a range of deep questions that can be applied to the developments of this novel too and that to some extent surface in the quotation above, in particular considering that “the life of the subject begins with birth; but where does the story of the subject’s life begin? Also, a life ends in a death, but where does the *story* end?” (2006: 14, emphasis in the original). Other issues raised by Middlebrook refer to the richness or paucity of materials and documents in the biographer’s work, as well as the difficulty for the biographer to investigate the subject’s inner thoughts and feelings. In the novel, the process of meaning construction will be developed and carried out with a wealth of images and metaphors that conceptually consider the correspondences linking the LIFE and WRITING domains.

One of the most salient micrometaphors activated in the novel by the intradiegetic narrator (Bradford 1997: 59) concerns the very material used in the narrative activity, the building blocks of discourses and texts, namely words. Mamoon, for instance, is described as being able to have “more or less complete control over his speech; he didn’t like his words to run away from him” (2014: 240), with an imaginative process which transforms words into objects, or dynamic or even animal forces to be tamed and dominated by the artist going through his life stages. Considering that the term ‘control’ relates to the individual’s attitude and behaviour, and thus covering an emotional sphere, the expression used in the quotation may be grounded on the mapping EMOTION IS (WILD/CAPTIVE) ANIMAL (Kövecses 2000: 133), with further support from the dynamic verb phrase ‘to run away.’ In another passage, focalised through the gaze of Mamoon, the linguistic fabric is heightened from the artist’s perspective as the access to higher levels of consciousness and comprehension. Words are seen as the brick and mortar of literature but in reality they serve to understand much more: “words were the bridge to reality; without them there was only chaos. Bad words could poison you and ruin your life, Mamoon had once said; and the right words could refocus reality. The madness of writing was the antidote to true madness. People admire Britain because of its literature; the pretty little sinking island was a storehouse of genius, where the best words were kept, made and remade” (Kureishi 2014: 46). Concreteness and abstraction both seem to characterise the elements of the quotation as it deals with tangible items (‘the bridge’) but also conceptually abstract and more complex notions (‘reality’), so that some cognitive mappings are endorsed: if life is too wide a notion to grasp and comprehend, with the risk of being overwhelmed by chaos, then the use and consideration of words appear to be tools for overcoming obstacles and yielding meaning, although such vision is not devoid of possible ideological implications concerning the very nature of words to be used and reshaped purposefully, as signalled by the symbolic list of three verbal items ‘kept, made and remade.’

In the fictional world of the text, Harry employs linguistic and rhetorical strategies to work on a particular narrative genre, i.e. biography, reconstructing Mamoon's life across and within a text, thus trying to illuminate two dimensions, in transit between a real person and an imagined persona: "what was a person then, but a self which travelled between private fantasy and public recreation?" (Kureishi 2014: 61). To corroborate the metaphorical framework, the novel here adopts the modality of free indirect discourse, thanks to which "it is not always straightforward to decide when the voice of the character leaves off and the narrator's takes over" (Black 2006: 68). The rhetorical question cited above captures the intricacy of representing a life's complexity by means of words, with the power of the writer to construct and manipulate elements. Significantly the occurrence of various forms of the causative verb 'make' (Griffiths 2006: 61) brings to the fore the nature of agency in both WRITING and LIVING as well as the idea of reporting, and implicitly the boundary between truth and falseness. Talking with the old novelist, the biographer affirms: "I'm trying to make you look interesting here. I can make you look good in bed, as out of it" (Kureishi 2014: 239). A possible conceptual mapping here lies in the CREATION IS MAKING metaphor (Kövecses 2000: 98), which in this instantiation centres around the notion of rendering, creating or inventing, a performance that distantly evokes and implies the action of a maker, or with a metatextual echo an author who decides what happens in the story-world, thus operating on the essence of life, and identity, in their plural breadth.

Normally in fiction, and other contexts, identity is portrayed as the sum of various aspects and traits, rather than with a monolithic image. The idea of split self, for example, is often utilised to keep track of the numerous manifestations of personality. Since writing a biography (fictional or non-fictional) means that it is necessary to reconstruct the various phases of the life, or in cognitive terms the various 'selves', of a subject, it is not surprising that Kureishi's megametaphor appropriates and elaborates this issue to construct a mental space embedding the many lives and many identities of Mamoon, who eventually admits: "Harry, you know more about my many selves than I do" (2014: 240). The polyphonic sense of identity as narrated and documented by the fictional biographer allows the unfolding of possible narrative alternatives, namely the Mamoon depicted in Harry's book is different from the 'real' Mamoon living in the novel and conceived by Kureishi himself. Put differently, this type of writing offers an insight into the exploration of the textual self, and to cite Holden (2014: 923) "literary biography, exploring the lives of individuals with particular inside knowledge of the narrative construction of the self, may have important things to tell us about the processes of individualization, of self-making through narrative."

Moreover, discussing the polarities of and intermediations between remembering and forgetting, Mamoon affirms: “I have to say, I particularly like it when you remember things which never happened. You are now making an imaginary life” (Kureishi 2014: 241). Once again the ideas of WRITING and LIVING are intertwined and given prominence. The cognitive scope of these, and other, expressions at play in the novel entails that both the characters in the text world and the readers in the real world shift between various conceptual and deictical levels (stories within stories, but also memories, dreams, speculations and other modal sub-worlds) to process language and extract meaning, and in so doing they construct, integrate and blend different text worlds (Gavins 2007). In fact, as Stockwell (2009: 7) points out, the shift between the various text worlds or narratorial levels is activated by a variety of means comprising “flashbacks, flashforwards, hypotheticals and speculations, representation of beliefs, wishes, or obligations through modalisation, metaphors, negations, and direct speech,” and throughout the novel such orientation will generate a range of self-contained images and stories, similar to a game of Chinese boxes.

The trope of constructing a life with and through words, i.e. WRITING as a conceptualised form of LIVING, lends itself to speculations about the discrepancy between real and make-believe as well as the role of mediator, or narrator, and their measure of reliability. In the novel, the old author is both fascinated by and suspicious about Harry's incessant questions and talks, but in the end he admits that “the idea of becoming a fiction does appeal. To my surprise, you might have the makings of an artist” (Kureishi 2014: 241). How does Mamoon become a fiction? Of course it is thanks to the biographer's work, which in reality might also disclose an unconscious form of symbolic ‘appropriation’ of the other's experience because the key word ‘fiction’ denotes imaginative works in opposition to reality, and thus it suggests binary links between the act of writing something on the one hand and the real, pragmatic experience of living on the other. But the metaphor amplifies its gist as it relies on a verb (‘become’) that in systemic functional terms expresses a relational process, in this case a transformation of the ‘real’ subject into a literary entity, with a proliferation of deictical shifts to and from the real world, the fictional realm and its multitude of sublevels, once again triggering, as in the other examples above, a system of text worlds with readers having to constantly pop into and out of them to make sense of the story.

Many other parts of the text exploit the two domains of the megametaphor to achieve relevant effects, for example by establishing new conceptual connections and analogies with items such as ‘book’ and ‘child’. From this perspective, the meaning of procreation and continuation of life is objectified and made material, as it filters out from the following instance: “Harry's priority and pride, his other child, had been the book” (2014: 320). To some extent this strategy is close to

traditional figures of speech, for example it could be rephrased via the simile child/book, but the conceptual environment is more articulated here as the reader is invited to look for connections between the two elements such as the sense of producing a text and a child, the role of the parent/writer in (re)creating life as well as the idea of facing time, memory and posterity. The emerging overall significance of the construction draws input from the mental representations of the two activities and requires a type of processing in the reader that will be affected by their own knowledge of the world and cultural vision (Douthwaite 2000), blending and condensing the two images.

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have tried to tease out the ways in which Hanif Kureishi elaborates and maps the domains of LIVING and WRITING with the aid of several imaginative textual structures targeting the construction of an organic, and composite, megametaphor, one that moves from abstract concerns to pragmatic and embodied issues, and eventually generates a plethora of various, and often new or unexplored, meanings. Black (2006: 109) for instance underscores that “the value of metaphor is to encourage us to think anew on familiar topics, to grapple with the unknown or inexplicable (which may account for the proliferation of metaphors in the mind).”

All the excerpts that I have briefly tackled here, in fact, do not work in isolation, but channel the macro-potentials of metaphor, and as such have to be considered collectively across the text, in particular “because recurrent metaphors comprise an effect of foregrounding device and because they lead to insights about how authors specifically conceptualize a narrative theme at large” (Kimmel 2009: 166). The constant and coherent presence of such figurative patterns in Kureishi’s novel is thus indicative of various stylistic and ideological positions, which climax in the final chapter of the text. Mamoon, by now in bad condition and confined to a wheelchair, attends a literary reception and is surrounded by his usual entourage. Harry uses this circumstance to come to terms with his personal quest for meaning in his biographical project, as the omniscient narrator illustrates in the very last paragraph of the novel: “He had completed his work, which was to inform people that Mamoon had counted for something as an artist, that he’d been a writer, a maker of worlds, a teller of important truths, and that this was a way of changing things, of living well, and of creating freedom” (Kureishi 2014: 344). The sentence condenses and amplifies the power of the metaphorical structure in its single components, for example the choice of verbs selected is particularly significant and evocative when combined in phrases such as ‘completed his work’, ‘inform people’ or the matter-of-fact, assertive form ‘he’d been an artist’. Lexical items are then employed for the construction of

comparisons ('something as an artist'), but they also acquire saliency thanks to parallelism and apposition in unfolding the assorted roles of the author seen as "a writer, a maker of worlds, a teller of important truths" (Kureishi 2014: 344).

The creative, visionary and authoritative aspects of the man of letters are here emphasised via the symbolic textual practices of a three item list in an attempt to blend the concepts of WRITING and LIVING, since the quotation explicitly mentions semantically broad terms such as 'worlds' and 'truths' as well as the notions of making and telling. With regard to this enumeration, the superficial effect is a rhetorical praise of the artist, the writer and the intellectual with an impact on society, but in reality, from a cognitive viewpoint, it is value-laden since, according to Jeffries (2010: 73), "the ubiquitous three-part list seems to imply completeness, without being comprehensive." Indeed, depicting Mamoon through these nouns (writer, maker, teller) discloses a captivating illusion of the entire life-experience of the character, but in reality it is based on selection and thus is partial and biased, as is the genre of biographical account. For Holden (2014: 932), "we read literary biography both in the quest to attain authorial presence, and in recognition that such presence is ultimately impossible" and the persistent use of the megametaphor conceived by Kureishi sustains the discourses of life, truth, falseness, memory and its discontents. Ultimately, in Fauconnier's (1997: 187) view it might be argued that in processing language "the simplest things are in fact not simple at all. They rely on remarkable cognitive mapping capacities, immense arrays of intricately prestructured knowledge, and exceptional on-line creativity," and hence stems the inventive power of metaphor, language and the mind in both WRITING and LIVING.

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