

Troubled Images: Analysing the Republican Use of Visual Metaphors in Wall Paintings and Pictures in Northern Ireland

Antonio Piga¹

¹ Department of Humanities, Languages and Heritage, University of Cagliari, Italy

Correspondence: Antonio Piga, Department of Humanities, Languages and Heritage-Via Is Mirrionis, 1, 09100 Cagliari, Italy. E-mail: antoniopiga@unica.it

Received: April 6, 2022

Accepted: November 21, 2022

Online Published: November 29, 2022

doi:10.5539/ijel.v12n6p112

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v12n6p112>

Abstract

The republican movement in Northern Ireland was visually manifested in images drawn on walls and on the gable ends of houses in the towns of Belfast and (London) Derry. As well as being an iconographic expression of the social injustice they suffered (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013; Goalwin, 2013), these wall paintings were employed by the republicans to convey political and ideological messages in order to heighten awareness and to mobilize people. Blank spaces on walls were increasingly exploited by republican groups and were converted into a visual medium *sui generis* for their political and ideological claims and demands. Over the years republicans developed this novel communication strategy geared to expressing highly emotional content that served to reflect and influence the sentiments of the communities involved in the conflict. It also served to channel collective memory, recording key events and contributing to the formation of an identity. Intense political disagreements and armed conflict between the Catholic and Protestant communities from 1968 to 1998 led to violent clashes during the period known as “the Troubles”. This complicated time frame has been metaphorically represented in various ways in wall paintings and posters in Northern Ireland. The aim of this paper is to analyze the political and ideological use of visual metaphors in the images of the republican movement during the “Troubles”. More specifically, by applying the most recent methodological tool derived from a socio-cognitive model of discourse analysis, namely Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the purpose is to analyse, both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, the three different types of Conceptual Metaphorical Schemas: Propositional, Image and Event Schema (Soares da Silva, 2016).

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor schemas, target domain, source domain, Proposition Schema, Image Schema, Event Schema

1. Introduction

For more than eight centuries, two factions in the North of Ireland have fought one another in order to decide who should prevail in governing the territory. On one side, the republican Catholics, with their Celtic and Irish traditions, and on the other the Protestant loyalists, who favour Union with Great Britain. This culminated in a civil war that broke out in 1968, when the so called “Troubles” began. Paramilitary organizations such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or the loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), just to name a few, spread terror and fear over many decades, which resulted in them being responsible for more than three thousand deaths. This struggle was—indeed still is—depicted by images drawn on the walls of the houses within Northern Ireland’s urban areas. These ideologically motivated mural paintings were employed by both sides—Catholics and Protestants—to spread their ideological and political messages across the country and beyond in order to galvanize people and increase awareness of both their political as well as terrorist campaigns. The blank spaces on the walls were soon exploited by groups on both sides and were transformed into visual mediums for their political ideologies and demands. Across Northern Ireland, slogans from riots and photographs of prisoners began to appear in painted images, as well as in the written messages in the murals, with the aim of ingraining the significance of the images and messages of the struggles and to strengthen them in the “passerby’s memory” (Asenjo, 2020, p. 98). As Asenjo (2020) and Rolston (2013) have affirmed, the murals in conflict areas can be regarded as the “highlights of the Troubles” (Asenjo, 2020, p. 98) and as expressions of a community’s voice. This turned out to be particularly important for the Catholic population, since their rights to employ the traditional means and modes of communication were severely restricted by the Unionists. Therefore, ideological

and political murals developed as a *sui generis* communication channel, helping republicans to consolidate their propaganda campaigns and to document their political messages in Northern Ireland during the tense time of the “Troubles” (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013).

This work will proceed with a brief overview of the “Troubles” and the historical context in which they began, and will analyse how visual images can be considered to be a potent instrument in the political and cultural context of Northern Ireland. This is followed by an outline of the Theoretical framework for a metaphorical analysis of the images. In specific terms, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) will be discussed in detail in order to explain the Republican messages and their mission to mobilize new recruits in the ‘fight’ for a united Ireland. A brief presentation of the corpus description and selection will then follow before turning to the linguistic analysis of the Republican mural images.

2. Brief History of “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland

The Northern part of Ireland (also known as the six counties) was for many years in the spotlight of the world’s media, showing the disconcerting images of hooded gunmen and menacing terrorists. These became a common feature of news channels throughout the world (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013). The armed struggle that ensued following the outbreak of the “Troubles” between Catholics and Protestants was essentially rooted in the question of identity and territoriality (McGarry & O’Leary, 1997). After the division of the country in 1922, Catholics in Northern Ireland were treated as second-class people, as they were disadvantaged and generally lived in deprived areas (Gurr, 1976 in Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 668). The diverse heritage and traditions of the Catholics together with the mix of political, socio-economic and geographical disequilibrium that the Catholics suffered, gave rise to considerable desperation on the part of the republicans and subsequently led to many citizens marching for their civil rights during the 1960s. The loyalists violently opposed these protests, so the republicans struck back with reprisals and very soon the violence and resentment escalated on the streets in Northern Ireland’s urban areas. The conflict and clashes continued over a long period of time, until the peace process drew to a conclusion with the implementation of the so called ‘Good Friday Agreement’ in 1998 (Maloney, 2002). The terrorist attacks, together with the unending and dreadfully violent killings continued unabated, such as those perpetrated on “Bloody Sunday” in 1972. On that day fourteen innocent Catholics were gunned down by British soldiers during a civil rights march, which made Belfast and (London) Derry operation zones for decades to come (Maloney, 2002). At the same time, in the name of the Catholic religion thousands of guerrilla fighters used Catholicism as a cover to bomb and attack certain loyalist and British targets, while loyalists groups such as the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) or the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and others responded in turn with their own targeted killings and massacres.

2.1 Visual Reflection on the Troubled Images

The intercultural, internecine hatred between loyalists and republicans paved the way to an uncontrolled bellicose struggle, which manifested itself on almost every wall of Northern Irish towns and on the gable ends of houses by threatening, aggressive and violent images depicting hooded gunmen or heavily armed terrorists. In this perspective, wall paintings, flags, and symbols of different kinds have always exacerbated the cultural divide between the republicans and loyalists by displaying paintings of sectarian hatred (Rolson, 2004), since they were principally employed as instruments of propaganda to reinforce the opposing sectarian troops and their respective identities (Bryan et al., 2009; McCormic & Jarman, 2005). According to Rapp and Rhomberg (2013), the Republican murals can be seen as a visual medium and representation of a social movement that became radicalized after the IRA returned to power in the early 1970s to fight with the aim of obtaining a greater political voice in the drive to campaign for a reunited Ireland. Social movements serve to publicize the political convictions of a social group with a common ideology; in Northern Ireland they aimed to achieve the goals depicted in the murals, which represented their ambitions of furthering nationalism and “helped to literally paint a common vision of a shared ideology” (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 669).

The upshot of this was that the IRA soon realised the effectiveness of conveying messages through visual art, in the sense that not only could murals and images in general get across the Republican ideological message, but they also had the effect of marking nationalist territory (Cfr. Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013; Goalwin, 2013; McGarry & O’Leary, 1998). Continuous assaults by British soldiers and officers from the RUC and permanent censorship of republican opinion confirmed to republicans how strategically important mural images were in the war of propaganda. The social injustice which lasted for decades only strengthened the republican aspiration to build their nationalist identity and culture, as well as, of course, to fuel indignation for the incivility and social injustice they had long been subject to. Republican ideology and thoughts were routinely censored in the most important mainstream media channels, which is why murals and pictures were the only means of diffusing

republican ideology, aims and identity to a worldwide media (Cfr. Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013; Goalwin, 2013).

2.2 *The Role of Visuals: A Single Picture Is Worth Thousand Words*

According to Goalwin (2013) and Sluka (1996), as well as being a recruiting instrument to reinforce the nationalist spirit by focusing attention on common frames of references, visual symbols and icons play a crucial role in building political images. Vatikiotis (2005 in Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 669) notes that communication processes are not only addressed in “representative terms (‘for the people’), but in participatory terms (‘from the people’)”. All the iconic forms—including graffiti, murals, pictures, wall paintings, etc.—are powerful means of communication because they are easily familiar and have instant meaning to a large group of people (Farrell, 2009). A second aspect of Farrell’s reflections is that symbols and icons are predominantly significant when a leader and a group need a rallying call to a political cause that is designed to radicalize a people, start a revolution, or bring about drastic social change. Viewed in this perspective, therefore, wall paintings, pictures etc. enable any given community to identify with a specific ambition or a topic, and at the same time lead to a specific territorial ground being identified with that community (Sluka, 1996; Bazarnik, 2018).

Unlike verbal texts, visual images can better convey ideas given their greater efficiency in activating and maintaining people’s memory. In other words, images directly communicate the complete range of emotions, have rhetorical impact, and provide convincing arguments to the viewer (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013; cfr. also Schweiger & Adami, 1999). In addition, images can document and substantiate that a given event occurred or that certain events happened and bring their audiences to different places and times by providing evidence of poignant scenes from the past (Messaries, 1997). This is especially true in political contexts where they serve to provide and disseminate “powerful cultural symbols around which movements mobilized and which social movement organizations could use to form cultural group to support their cause” (Goalwin, 2013, p. 7). By exerting a direct effect on communities, they provide a pervasive platform for creating a recruiting strategy for the republican movement. From a democratic-participant perspective, the media are perceived as “favouring [...] interaction and facilitating citizen’s need” (Vatikiotis, 2005 in Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 670) and one of these participative media are murals, which have assumed greater importance because of the mass media’s failure to meet...

The needs that arise for the daily experience of citizens, to offer space to individual and minority expression. [...] The geographical locality and/or a community of interest constitute an essential context of communication since participants, both senders and receivers, share the same concerns on community issues; in this context, a ‘community’ realizes the reproduction and representation of its shared interests (Vatikiotis, 2005, p. 5, in Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 670).

As indicated above, the focus of this study is to emphasize the significance of wall paintings as an essential tool for “group-making” (Goalwin, 2013, p. 4) and for visualizing the goals of a specific movement as well as building an awareness that the communication of certain types of messages is the only way to revolutionize and change the social and political *status quo* in the drive to obtain new civil rights. The republican movement, which was group-focused and highly organized by the political wing of Sinn Féin, was initiated by a specific group formed within the segregated and divided society of Northern Ireland with the objective of changing the value system in a non-violent way, struggling for more civil rights by leveraging on sociological, cultural and political issues and questions.

In this socio-political context, murals were increasingly used to represent republican ideals and visualize their struggle against British occupation and social injustice, not least because, unlike other media (press, television, etc.), murals were “difficult for British security forces and the RUC to censor and control” (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 671). In addition, the visual force of wall paintings reverberated continually; and served as a medium to toughen the republican ethos by reflecting images of nationalist ideals. It certainly contributed to building and expressing identity and culture (Rolston, 2004). Initially, republican muralists depicted the armed struggle in their murals, but it was a theme that never prevailed in republican murals to the extent that it did in loyalist murals. They soon chose the alternative theme exploiting ethno-symbols, which highlighted that the vigor and force of republican nationalism originates from internal sources such as history and cultures (Isiksal, 2002). Indeed, mural images to represent the republican movement drew on historical events and nationalist iconographies, such as the Irish tricolor flag, Celtic myths, and various other symbols; in other words “symbols, ranging from flags [...] from saints to martyrs have the ability [...] to add legitimacy to elites and institutions, and inspire powerful popular protest against colonial powers” (Githens-Mazer, 2008, p. 23).

3. Theory and Methodology

In this section, in order to explain the intricacy of the relation which lies behind the production and

comprehension of the Irish wall paintings under scrutiny, the analytical tool of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Turner, 1980; Turner, 1990) will be analyzed. Conceptual Metaphor Theory belongs to Cognitive Linguistics (CL) and is designed to better comprehend abstract entities by referring to them as if they were concrete concepts. According to Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009, p. 12), Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) “has always stressed that human beings can only come to grips with the abstract by metaphorically coupling it with the concrete-perceptible”. In other words, in a metaphorical process an abstract concept is thought of as though it had a material reality (Charteris-Black, 2004), since the conceptual domains of the source and the target are intimately bound up with our life experience, thus determining the way we think and what we believe about the world. The following quote from the poet Apollinaire (in Asenjo, 2020, p. 81), “when man wanted to make a machine that would walk he created the wheel, which does not resemble a leg” perhaps better illustrates the principle of conceptual metaphors (‘legs are wheels’ ‘humans are machines’). Indeed, although they stem from conceptions belonging to completely diverse ‘cognitive domains’ (human body and machines), there are analogies to one another in the sense that they both involve movement (Cfr. Asenjo, 2020).

As mentioned above, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is based upon the relationship between two conceptual areas or units of cognitive association that are called ‘cognitive domains’, which can be defined as mental images of the ways in which the world is structured. Therefore, metaphoric conceptualisation based upon analogy is primarily carried out through mapping that consists of connecting two different domains or conceptual structures in which a concrete vehicle or source domain is associated to and uni-directionally projected towards an abstract topic or abstract domain, as shown in Figure 1 below.

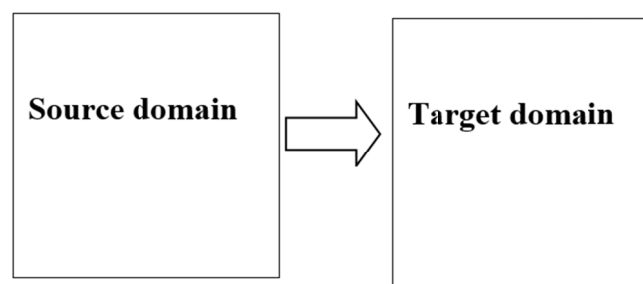


Figure 1. Source domain and Target domain

In Section 3.1 below, the three different schemas based on the Conceptual Metaphorical Theory will be explained in greater detail.

3.1 Metaphorical Classification

The basic tenet of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) asserts that human beings instinctively think metaphorically and metaphors can occur in various methods of communication. Clearly, language has traditionally been the primary means of communication and metaphors have been a tool for transmitting information that shows the composite and resourceful nature of language and of the human mind itself. However, metaphor is not only a resource of verbal language and literature to decorate a message; it is also an effective resource of visual language, since metaphor is principally connected to thought processes involved in constructing notions from reality and not specifically to verbal or visual modes of communication. As Lakoff (1993, p. 210) has stated, “metaphor [is] not a figure of speech, but a mode of thought”. As asserted by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), human beings think metaphorically and this figurative reasoning can be articulated in three different ways or “sign systems interpretable because of a specific perception process” (Forceville, 2009, p. 22):

- Metaphors based on propositional schemas;
- Metaphors based on image schemas;
- Metaphors based on event schemas;

1) Propositional Schemas

Conceptual metaphor based on Propositional schema has been advocated by Lakoff and Turner’s (1989, p. 160) classification of the world and draws upon Lovejoy’s theory of The Great Chain of Being (dated 1936), and is a kind of Conceptual metaphor that classifies the world into a hierarchical structure in which all of matter and life

are in some way linked. In line with Lakoff and Turner, the order of The Great Chain of Being ranges from the most valuable and spiritual beings, which occupy the highest point down to the less significant and simpler ones occupying the lowest positions. The descending order of the Great Chain is the following: a Divine, or Celestial beings, Humans, Animals, Plants, Complex objects or Artefacts moving downwards towards essential materials such as minerals and raw materials. As Soares and da Silva have stated (2016; cfr. also Asenjo, 2020), The Great Chain of Being is a cultural model of cognition that is highly influential in Western thought and places the entities of the universe in a hierarchical order according to the quality of their properties. In order to categorize propositional schema, it is crucial to verify the occurrence of an entity within The Great Chain of Being in the source of the metaphor. In this category of cognitive metaphor, certain properties of the source are conveyed to the target with the intention of placing it in a point within this hierarchical order; therefore, propositional schemas convey the metaphor maker's assessment in relation to an entity. In the corpus under investigation, there are entities from The Great Chain of Being belonging to 'Supernatural beings' identified as target domains. In this study, the following conceptual metaphors were identified in the data based on propositional schemas (12 patterns were found): 'people are supernatural beings' and 'places are supernatural beings'.

2) Image Schemas

Image schemas are cognitive models or mental representations that serve to vehicle the conceptualization of the extra-linguistic world and physical experience. According to Evans and Green (2006, p. 178), they draw from "sensory and perceptual experience as we interact with and move about the world". Image schemas function as source domains in the concept metaphors transmitted by the metaphor inventor in order to refer to an entity in terms of its embodiment of physical experiences and socio-cultural phenomena (Talmy, 1988; Asenjo, 2020). Following Geeraerts (2006, p. 239), "studies in cognitive linguistics suggest that [...] different image schemas and several image schema transformations appear regularly in people's everyday thinking, reasoning, and imagination" (cfr. Asenjo, 2020; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). In short, as pointed out by Asenjo (2020), and Lakoff (1997), they are not specific images but are schematic, in the sense that "[T]hey symbolizes schematic patterns arising from imagistic domains" (Lakoff, 1987, p. 453), such as *containers*, *connections*, *forces*, and *balance* that recur in a variety of embodied domains and structure our bodily experience (Lakoff, 1987).

In this study, the concept metaphors based on image schemas (11 samples) found in the corpus under investigation have been classified into the following types: *force* and *connection*. The former conceptual metaphor consists in the physical or metaphorical obtainment of some empowerment to perform certain acts in order to change reality; the latter type of metaphorical concept regards the physical or metaphorical connection between different entities.

3) Event Schemas

This category of cognitive metaphor is "based on the generic-level metaphor ACTIONS ARE EVENT [...] in which *actions*, *states*, *changes*, *causes*, *aims* and *tools* are metaphorically conceptualized as space, movement and force" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, pp. 170–234) [italics added]. In this respect, event schemas express how the metaphor creator alludes to different realities or conditions in terms of events (Asenjo, 2020). In general terms, event schemas are based on the following cognitive domains: *light*, *war*, *game*, etc. and the 7 samples of conceptual metaphors based on event schemas identified in the corpus under scrutiny were classified in the following category *light*, or more specifically 'positiveness is a bright event' and 'negativity is a dark event'.

4. Corpus Description and Selection

The corpus consists of thirty wall paintings taken in the Catholic area of the cities of Belfast and (London) Derry. The images analysed were retrieved from the Internet, and since they are protected by copyright, the URL for each of them will be inserted in the footnotes.

All the murals under scrutiny were grouped into dates (year of depiction), sites (street or general area), and community (Catholic). The total *corpus* of thirty pictures was then analyzed from a qualitatively and quantitatively perspective. In order to choose the thirty images, two main selection criteria were taken into consideration: first of all, i) only murals with cultural historical themes from Catholic parts were taken into account and, ii) all the murals considered for this research have distinct metaphorical content. As stated above, the pictures of the murals analyzed were taken on the streets of Belfast and (London) Derry. These drawings were principally depicted on the walls that divide regions of the towns and on gabled walls of houses.

5. Images as a Weapon of Propaganda in the Republican Movement: Analysis and Results

The very beginnings of political imagery on walls in Northern Ireland date back to 1908, when John McClean, a Protestant, painted a mural in Belfast to commemorate the historic victory of King William of Orange over

James II, who was considered the last Catholic King of England. From then and till the outbreak of the “Troubles”, the tradition of the mural paintings in Northern Ireland was an exclusive loyalist phenomenon, not least since Catholics were not permitted to express their opinion freely and in public (Goalwin, 2013). As pointed out by a Republican muralist and former IRA member Danny Devenney, “We were living in a State dominated by loyalists [...]” (in Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 677).

The minority of Catholics in Northern Ireland considered themselves to be in a position of profound disequilibrium, which culminated in forms of segregation, fewer civil rights, and a drastic evidence of political and social discrimination (Bew & Gillespie, 1999). As a result, Catholics decided to protest against the existing *status quo*, which was the main reason that the Civil Rights Association was formed in the mid-1960s (McGarry & O’Leary, 1998). This organization focused on the intent to strengthen Catholics’ demand for civil rights and thus started the (London) Derry march in 1968, in which the Catholic demonstrators were defeated by the RUC and the “Troubles” officially started (McGarry & O’Leary, 1998). The situation escalated in the following years especially when the majority of Catholics began to revolt overtly against repression and injustice towards certain Republican prisoners. In order to support these prisoners, who soon started a hunger strike to demonstrate against the *status quo*, the citizens in the Republican areas of Belfast began painting messages and slogans on the walls. What at the beginning appeared to be more graffiti than mural art, changed completely subsequent to the death of Bobby Sands, the leading figure of the hunger-strike, who was voted MP during his hunger-strike protest. Hundreds of mural paintings appeared soon afterwards, leading to a new tradition in republican culture asserting that they have always been the innocent and wronged part in the conflict (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013; Bew & Gillespie, 1999).

5.1 Analysis

The main purpose of this Section is to present a Conceptual Metaphor Theory analysis based on the three different types of schemas both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. Due to space restrictions, the analysis of the most significant prototypical cases for each type of metaphorical schema will be explained in details in order to describe the cognitive procedure that lies behind the meaning of the conceptual metaphors. For each schema a quantitative analysis will also be provided.

1) Propositional Schemas

As stated above in 3.1.1, in this category of conceptual metaphor certain properties of the source domain are transposed to the target domain to place it in a position within the hierarchical order represented by The Great Chain of Being (Lakoff & Turner, 1989).

In this study, the conceptual metaphors identified in the data under scrutiny are classified into the following categories based on propositional schemas (12 examples):

- i) ‘people are supernatural beings’
- ii) ‘places are supernatural beings’ (Note 1)

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Catholics in Northern Ireland turned to the use of images to emphasize their strategic orientation of focusing on identity, thereby substituting militaristic propaganda with cultural and artistic expression (Bew & Gillespie, 1999):

In relation to the nationalist murals that I saw within Nationalist areas in Belfast [...] many of them [...] expressed [...] Irish National culture and its sentiment of freedom and equality [...] whereas loyalist murals seemed based much more on fear and hatred and violence (in Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 675).

In line with this perspective, Figure 1 (Note 2) shows a mural that was depicted soon after the death of the tenth hunger striker at Rocksville Street in the Republican “murder line”, Falls Road (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 675). The intention of the mural is to celebrate the martyrs by showing their first names on a decoration right under the central iconographies, on the yellow sunburst and the immortal bird Phoenix with an orange, white and green wing, symbolizing the flag of Ireland.

The conceptual metaphor in Figure 1 is based on the propositional schemas *‘people are supernatural beings’*, which is inspired by *‘hunger strikers are myths’* (Note 3). Indeed, as can be seen, the ethno-symbols such as the republican iconography of the Phoenix symbolizes the rebirth of the nationalist movement, together with the sunburst. The latter is the iconographic emblem of the Fenians, namely a Celtic warrior clan from Irish mythology, employed by the muralists as a republican ethos to reinforce the commemoration of the fallen hunger-striking martyrs. Moreover, “The Final Salute” is still one of the Republican trademarks used to honour the fall martyrs and suggests the concept of sacrifice with a last volley from a rifle (Githens-Mazer, 2008).

The same type of conceptual metaphor based on *propositional schemas* is presented in the mural shown in Figure 2 (Note 4). The mural depicts King Núada Airgetlám who, according to Celtic mythology, was one of the most powerful warrior kings with an artificial hand and a magic sword. The power of this supernatural entity is so effective and forceful that “the majesty of the king was transferred as a message to [...] every person crossing the mural. It showed the self-confidence and power of Celtic tradition and therefore became a shrine of *national identity*” (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 679) [Italics added]. Smith (1991) states that myths and deities are an indispensable presumption for a common identity and a reinforced national distinctiveness. The propositional schema ‘*places are supernatural beings*’ based on the metaphor ‘Ulster is a deity (or myth)’ is represented by the King in the centre with Celtic knots surrounding him symbolizing “the Celtic tradition and nationalist force” (cf. Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 680).

In the following example represented in Figure 3 (Note 5), a Catholic victim of the conflict in Northern Ireland is represented in the cognitive metaphor ‘a Catholic sacrifice is Christ’ as a sacred religious figure. As can be seen, the “psychological salience” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 63) of the image is represented by the body of the victim, who is the central element and thus the nucleus of the visual information and to which all the other elements are the “ancillary, dependent elements” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 196), characterized by the people carrying the body of the dead person killed on ‘Bloody Sunday’, when people were unlawfully killed in an event whose purpose was simply to demand equal civil rights for the Catholic people of Northern Ireland. According to Forceville (2009), one of the most effective methodologies employed to trigger a metaphor is perceptual similarity, namely when one visual representation is similar to another pre-existing one. In the context of a strongly religious Northern Ireland and in line with what Asenjo (2020) has described, the Catholic population interpreted the victim’s portrayal as a religious reference to Christ descending from the cross, which is a common theme in religious paintings and statues and works of art in general displayed in Catholic churches. Indeed, could it be only ‘coincidental’ that the depiction of the sacrifice has been devotedly reproduced from that of Christ? Cfr. for example with the depiction of *Piedad* by El Greco represented in Figure 4 (Note 6) (cf. Asenjo, 2020; Forceville, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Therefore, the cognitive metaphor in this mural can be classified as ‘a Catholic sacrifice is Christ’ (Asenjo, 2020), in accordance with the propositional schema ‘People are supernatural beings’. In other words, a Catholic sacrifice during the infamous ‘Bloody Sunday’ (a human being) is represented as a dead Christ (a deity), so there is an elevation from an inferior position, that of a human being, to a superior position, that of a divine entity in the hierarchy of The Great Chain of Being.

From a quantitative point of view, in the corpus under scrutiny there are a total of twelve metaphorical murals based on propositional schemas, in which the most frequent ones are ‘people are supernatural beings’ followed by ‘places are supernatural beings’. Indeed, there are 8 samples of the former and 4 of the latter, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Conceptual Metaphor based on propositional schema

Schema	Conceptual Metaphor	Total
<i>Propositional</i>	<i>People are supernatural beings</i>	8
	<i>Places are supernatural beings</i>	4

2) Image Schemas

As pointed out above in 3.1.2, image schemas are cognitive representations or mental models which provide as source domains in conceptual metaphors transmitted by the metaphor creator with reference to an entity in terms of its embodiment of physical experiences, as well as a sociological and cultural phenomena (Talmy, 1985, 1988; Johnson, 1987; Evans & Green, 2006). Image schemas are also not limited to a specific sensory modality and characterize schematic patterns that arise from imagistic realms, such as *forces*, *containers*, *connections*, *pathways* that recur in a variety of embodied domains and constitute our physical experience (Lakoff, 1987; Johnson, 1987). In this study, the conceptual metaphors based on image schemas (11 samples) identified in the *corpus* under scrutiny are grouped into the following categories:

- i) force-empowerment which consists in obtaining and holding the physical and metaphorical potential force or power necessary to perform certain acts and change reality;
- ii) connection which consists in the physical or metaphorical union of two or more different entities;

The *force-empowerment* conceptual metaphor “Event is force” (cf. Forceville, 2009, p. 31) can be derived from the image schema ‘vote is weapon-empowerment’ expressed in Figure 5 (Note 7). The election-mural from Sinn

Féin represented in Figure 5 depicts a man with an upward gaze in front of an Irish tricolour, which symbolizes nationalist values and a sense of grandeur and traditions. Beside him a group of people are demonstrating for more civil rights and signs which state “Jobs”, “Houses” in big characters clearly refer to the tremendous socioeconomic injustices encountered by Catholics in Northern Ireland, including segregation in housing and labour, as well as political marginalization (McGarry & O’Leary, 1998). While the IRA itself employed “the paintings to mobilize new recruits for their armed struggle” (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 678), which in totality led to more than 2000 deaths (Rolston, 2003), the political wing of the IRA attempted to employ the wall paintings and their potential coverage to conscript and empower citizen-voters as new ‘armed forces’ in which the “conceptual metaphor” (Forceville, 2009, p. 31) is based on the image schema ‘vote is weapon-empowerment’ “for the *New Ireland*” [italics added], as stated on the wall. Indeed, one important factor for the Republicans and the hunger strikers was the fact that Sinn Féin was now a full member of the political board (Mckittrick & McVea, 2000), although they were nominally the political faction of the IRA. For the first time and for promoting the creation of “the New Ireland”, the intention was to change the face of the struggle; no longer would it be belligerent warfare fought on the battlefield, but civic warfare fought by using another weapon, the most civic weapon of all in any democracy, the most important form of empowerment; namely the vote. In order to encourage the recruitment of voters as a new ‘army’, the IRA began increasingly to employ the visual displays’ potential, especially after they almost disintegrated at the end of the 60s when they were no longer able to safeguard their communities from the RUC’s cruel repression, since they had recently ceased to use their weapons as a means of protest (Mallie & Bishop, 1988; in Rapp Rhomberg, 2013, p. 677). They came up with the idea of how rich and effective the visual language on the walls could be to promote recruitment for the elections. The murals soon came to be used as a medium for political messages once it became clear that they had a much greater impact than posters and flyers (Golwain, 2013).

Among the 30 murals analyzed, there are six samples that follow the conceptual metaphor “Event is Force” (Forceville, 2012, p. 123; Evans & Green, 2006; Johnson, 1987), and all of them are based on the image schema ‘vote is weapon-empowerment’.

The second type of imagistic domain based on image schema is *connection* or ‘Association is (powerful) connection-solidarity’. Picture 6 (Note 8) depicts *the Irish flag* (target domain) as being (like) *the flag of South Africa* (source domain). This powerful and potent association between them suggests that both conceptions are national emblems and this could designate the authoritative idea of building a bridge between them in the sense that the histories of both countries are in some way connected and intertwined. In the mural on Bogside, (London) Derry, the portrait of the republican activist Bobby Sands (target domain) with Nelson Mandela (source domain) suggests the simile (or metaphor) (Note 9) “Bobby Sands is (like) Nelson Mandela” (Asenjo, 2020, p. 103), which suggests a potent and poignant analogy between them as both were similarly significant political figures in their countries and both of them spent part of their lives in jail.

From a quantitative analysis perspective, in the corpus under scrutiny there are a totality of 11 samples of cognitive metaphors related to Image Schemas and the most recurrent one is “association is (powerful) connection-solidarity”, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Conceptual Metaphor based on Image Schema

Schema	Conceptual Metaphor	Total
<i>Image</i>	<i>Force-empowerment</i>	5
	<i>Connection</i>	6

3) Event Schemas

This type of cognitive metaphor references the generic-level metaphor ‘actions are event’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; cfr. Asenjo, 2020) which forms part of the more general conceptual structure of the Event-Structure metaphor in which states, actions, causes, changes, goals are metaphorically conceived as *space, movement, force, effects, results* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; cfr. also Lakoff, 1993). In other words, event schemas communicate the ways in which the metaphor creator alludes to diverse realities or situations in terms of events (Asenjo, 2020). In this study, the conceptual metaphors based on event schemas (7 samples) identified in the *corpus* under scrutiny are categorized into the following types:

- i (absence of) Light (Note 10): ‘negativity is a dark event’;
- ii (presence of) Light: ‘positiveness is a bright event’;

As regards the former, in Picture 7 (Note 11) the negative results of the brutality of the actions caused by certain human beings is presented as ‘dark light’. The image shows the result of the shooting of thirteen unarmed civil rights demonstrators by the Parachute Regiment in (London) Derry on January 30, 1972. The image appeared in 1974 on the occasion of the second anniversary of the murders, represented by thirteen skulls; a fourteenth victim died later. The image had a powerful impact and reflected the systematic indignation of what had happened.

The red text evoking blood and above all the usage of skulls as white on black complete with deep hollow eyes within the black and gloomy background is graphically very effective in eliciting the blind brutality it conveys as an event schema suggesting that ‘mourning-sadness of death is a black event’. The skulls of the thirteen who died are piled up in a symbolic and emblematic way to evoke the idea that on that day “Derry became the holocaust” (Gray, 2001, p. 54).

The second kind of event schema is based on the opposite conceptual metaphor, namely ‘positiveness is a bright event’. The image in Figure 8 (Note 12) shows a lit candle behind the barbed wire. This image was displayed in Andersonstown, West Belfast, in 1971 during Christmas, to show a protest against internment. This kind of internment was, however, an internment without a trial under the so-called Special Powers Act introduced with “disastrous consequences” (Gray, 2001, p. 51) on 9th August 1971, with the detention of 342 men. Huge commotion resulted following this internment, especially after the killing of twenty-three people in only two days. A lit candle is a symbol of life. Here the Event Schema is based on the conceptual metaphor ‘positiveness is a bright event’ carrying the message ‘survival is a beam of light’. According to Gray (2001), there are resemblances with the Amnesty International logo, designed by Diana Redhouse in 1961 and inspired by the Chinese proverb “Better to light a kindle than to curse the night” (in Gray, 2001, p. 51), although “it is unlikely that the designer of the crude poster would have been aware of this sophisticated borrowing” (*ibidem*).

From a quantitative analysis point of view, there are a total of 7 examples of conceptual metaphors based on event schemas, the most frequent of which is ‘positiveness is a bright event’ (5 occurrences), whereas there are only two occurrences of ‘negativity is a dark event’, as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Conceptual Metaphor based on event schema

Schema	Conceptual Metaphor	Total
<i>Event</i>	<i>(absence of) light</i>	2
	<i>(presence of) light</i>	5

6. Conclusions

The scope of this work was to analyze cognitive metaphors in the republican movement during the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland. Murals and images in general were employed as a medium by the Republican movement to transmit a message within and beyond the boundaries of the nationalist community (Rolston, 2004). The armed struggle in the battlefield of the streets of Belfast and (London) Derry “against the political disequilibrium and social injustice” (Rapp & Rhomberg, 2013, p. 684), developed a new weapon based no longer on guns and rifles but on artistic messages of visuals and iconographic components, which led to of the adoption of artistic ritual in the republican movement. Paintings on walls together with other kinds of images (posters, etc.) gave Republicans the opportunity of being heard by a broader audience, including an international audience as they advanced other forms of identity geared to obtaining more civil rights.

This article shows that the Republican’s strategic messages during the “Troubles” were not focused on displaying masked images of gunmen (like loyalist propaganda does, cfr. Goalwin, 2013; Rhomberg & Rapp, 2013; Rolston, 2003; Rolston, 2013; etc.), but rather to convey civic messages of human dignity, which were absorbed by the viewers and recipients much more subtly and subconsciously as they were emotionally engaging and distressing. The significance of a metaphorical way of thinking has shown that the three different theories of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, namely Propositional Schema, Image Schema and Event Schema have provided the necessary instruments to deal with the corpus under scrutiny and have been invaluable in interpreting these highly complex mural and image messages. The quantitative analysis results have shown that there is a significant use of the conceptual propositional schema in which metaphors of supernatural entities from Celtic traditions, Irish heritage or Gaelic history were painted in a variety of guises and forms in order to convey proud nationalist ideals and their desired future goals that went beyond the already impressive artwork. The other two conceptual metaphors related to Image Schemas and Event schemas are employed to a lesser extent in the corpus

under investigation. The conceptual Event schema ‘negativity is a dark event’ (“Remember Derry”) impacts powerfully and reflects the outrage of what had happened; on the other hand, the opposite Event schema ‘survival is a beam of light’ conveys a message of hope for those innocent prisoners who survived the disastrous consequences of internment. One of the conceptual metaphors of Image schema contains messages of convergence between the figure of Nelson Mandela and Bobby Sands. Another important message conveyed by Image schema is that of ‘the vote as a new form of weapon’, namely polls are seen as a powerful political message to foster pride and self-development in the cultural life of the area(s) involved in the conflict. It was a strategy that provided an alternative focus to the blood that had hitherto been spilled on the streets of (London) Derry and Belfast. In other words, the mainstream of the Republican movement endeavoured to seek a more peaceful path, banning hatred and war and projecting a new image for the Republican ethos.

References

- Asenjo, R. A. (2020). *Multimodal creativity in the murals of Northern Ireland*. PhD dissertation.
- Bazarnik, K. (2018). Verbo-Visual Rhetoric in Belfast Murals. *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy*, 3(37), 381–395. <https://doi.org/10.4467/20843860PK.18.021.10106>
- Bew, P., & Gillespie, G. (1999). *Northern Ireland: A Chronology of the Troubles 1968–1999*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.
- Bryan, D., Stevenson, C., Gordon, G., & Bell, J. (2009). Public Displays of Flags and Emblems in Northern Ireland. *Survey, 2006*, 2009. Belfast: University Press.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230000612>
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Farrell, J. (2009). *Is this soil Irish or British? How Iconic Symbols in Mural Paintings Shape Reality in Northern Ireland*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the NCA 95th Annual Convention. Retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p368062_index.html
- Forceville, C. J. (2009). Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: Agendas for research. In C. J. Forceville & E. Urios-Aparisi (Eds.), *Multimodal Metaphor, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter* (pp. 19–42). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215366>
- Forceville, C. J. (2012). Creativity in pictorial and multimodal advertising metaphors. In R. H. Jones (Ed.), *Discourse and creativity* (pp. 113–132). Harlow: Pearson.
- Forceville, C. J., & Urios-Aparisi, E. (2009). *Multimodal Metaphor. Applications of Cognitive Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215366>
- Geeraerts, D. (2006). *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110199901>
- Githens-Mazer, J. (2008). Locating Agency in Collective Political Behaviour: Nationalism, Social Movements and Individual Mobilisation. *Politics*, 28(1), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2007.00309.x>
- Goalwin, G. (2013). The Art of War: Instability, Insecurity, and Ideological Imagery in Northern Ireland’s Political Murals, 1979–1998. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 26(3), 1–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-013-9142-y>
- Gray, J. (2001). *In Troubled Images*. Belfast: The Linen Hall Library.
- Isiksal, H. (2002). Two perspectives on the Relationship of ethnicity to nationalism: comparing Gellner and Smith. *Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 1(1).
- Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226177847.001.0001>
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203619728>
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226471013.001.0001>
- Lakoff, G. (1993). The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (2nd ed., pp. 202–251). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139173865.013>

- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003, 1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226470993.001.0001>
- Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). *More than Cool Reason. A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. The University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226470986.001.0001>
- McCormick, J., & Jarman, N. (2005). Death of a Mural. *Journal of Material Culture*, 10(1), 49–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183505050094>
- McGarry, J., & O'Leary, B. (1997). Explaining Northern Ireland. In K. Cavanaugh (Ed.), *Interpretation of political violence in ethnically divided societies*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233444>
- Mckittrick, D., & McVea, D. (2000). *Making Sense of the Troubles*. Belfast: Blackstaff.
- Messaris, P. (1997). *Visual persuasion. The role of images in advertising*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Moloney, E. (2002). *A Secret History of the IRA*. London: Penguin Books.
- Rapp, M., & Rhomberg, M. (2013). The importance of murals during the Troubles: Analysing the republican use of wall paintings in Northern Ireland. In D. Machin (Ed.), *Visual Communication* (pp. 667–686). Berlin: Mouton de Gruiter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110255492.677>
- Rolston, B. (2003). *Drawing support 3. Murals and transition in the North of Ireland*. Dublin: Beyond the Pale Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0967088032000057861>
- Rolston, B. (2004). The War on the Walls: Political murals in Northern Ireland. *Museum International*, 223, 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1350-0775.2004.00480.x>
- Rolston, B. (2013). *Drawing support 4. Murals and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*. Dublin: Beyond the Pale Publications.
- Romano, M. (2017). *Are similes and metaphors interchangeable? A case study in opinion discourse*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/rcl.15.1.01rom>
- Schweiger, G., & Adami, M. (1999). The non-verbal image of politicians and political parties. In B. Newman (Ed.), *Handbook of political marketing* (pp. 347–364). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Sluka, J. (1996). Peace process images, symbols and murals in Northern Ireland. *Critique of Anthropology*, 16(4), 381–394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X9601600404>
- Smith, A. D. (1991). *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soares da Silva, A. (2016). The persuasive (and manipulative) power of metaphor in 'austerity' discourse. A corpus-based analysis of embodied and moral metaphors of austerity in the Portuguese press. In M. Romano & M. D. Porto (Eds.), *Exploring Discourse Strategies in Social and Cognitive Interaction. Multimodal and cross-linguistic perspectives* (pp. 79–108). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.262.04soa>
- Talmy, L. (1985). Force dynamics in language and thought. *Chicago Linguistics Society*, 21(2), 293–337.
- Talmy, L. (1988). Force dynamics in language and cognition. *Cognitive Science*, 12, 49–100. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog1201_2

Notes

Note 1. Cfr. also Asenjo, 2020.

Note 2. Retrieved from <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110255492.677/pdf>

Note 3. Cfr. Asenjo, 2020 for a detailed description of the metaphors employed in the loyalists and catholic murals of Northern Ireland.

Note 4. Retrieved from <https://thecelticjourney.wordpress.com/2013/07/12/nuada-of-the-silver-arm/>

Note 5. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-12227481>

Note 6. Retrieved from https://www.ecured.cu/Piedad_%28El_Greco%29

Note 7. Retrieved from <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/07/b5/9a/07b59a9628ad29db9cf3d599fecff5a.jpg>

Note 8. Retrieved from <https://www.alamy.it/foto-immagine-nelson-mandela-e-bobby-sands-murale-90525572.html>

Note 9. It is important to point out that metaphor is identifying while simile is comparative. Similes are more explicit than metaphors and involve different comparative prepositions such as “is like” or “as”, “is similar to”. According to different scholars (Romano, 2017), these two analogical tropes do not involve only structural differences but they also reflect “different cognitive process as well as different discursive functions” (Romano, 2017, p. 2), in the sense that metaphor makes implicit what a simile renders explicit. Therefore, in the Examples above *Bobby Sands is like Nelson Mandela* is a simile, while *Bobby Sands is Nelson Mandela* is a metaphor.

Note 10. Cfr. Asenjo (2020) who provided an exhaustive taxonomy about the conceptual metaphor ‘event schema’ category based on ‘light’.

Note 11. Retrieved from <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-201020-5-60/atkinson-colour-photograph-of-a-poster-depicting-skulls-and-the-caption-remember-derry>

Note 12. Retrieved from <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/candle-barbed-wire.html?sortBy=relevant>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).