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Conceptual Metaphors in History Discourse

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Abstract Scientific discourse is characterised by a set of rigid rules, one of which includes minimal use of stylistic devices. However, with the development of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is now regarded as an inseparable part of human cognition and discourse. This enables the examination of scientific texts within the framework of conceptual metaphors. The article aims at: (a) identifying conceptual metaphors and their subtypes in soft sciences, more specifically, in history discourse; (b) determining their functions and value for the language of history. The findings showcased how extensively metaphors are used in scientific language despite analysing only a small number of concepts. As a result of the study, the majority of metaphors described belong to structural and ontological subtypes, including the examples of ontological personification. Relatively few orientational metaphors were found as well.

Keywords Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, History Discourse, Soft Sciences, Structural, Ontological, Orientational

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1. Introduction

According to the traditional view, metaphor, as a stylistic device, plays a crucial role in literary texts, as it is a sign of an author's unique style, talent and sophistication. Metaphor is viewed as an ornament of a language, as not everyone is capable of producing it; as a result, it has been studied under rhetoric (Kirby, 1997). According to the mentioned view, metaphors have no place in the language of science, as the two are incompatible with each other (Finatto, 2009).

The development of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980), which resulted in the move of metaphors from the field of rhetoric to cognitive linguistics, expanded the scope of metaphor study to many other disciplines, including scientific discourse. Now it is not considered to be a meretric but an essential part of human thinking and language.

On the basis of the conceptual metaphor theory introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and developed by Lakoff (1993), Kövecses (2010; 2017) and many others, the paper aims at 1. identifying the conceptual metaphors in history discourse; 2. determining which type (orientational, ontological or structural) they belong to; 3. pointing out their role and significance for the language of history.

2. Data and Methods

In the paper, the empirical data comprises written works conducted in the field of history by Aldrete (2014), Grenville (2005), and Yoffee (2015). As for the method, MIPVU – a method for identification of metaphorical or metaphorically used words – was applied.

Following the popularity of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphor became an object of study not only for literary researchers, but also for representatives of such disciplines as psychology, philosophy, linguistics, poetics, history, anthropology, discourse studies, etc. (Steen et al., 2010). It emerged as an interdisciplinary subject matter, thus giving rise to the importance of its methodological description.

The Pragglejaz group (2007) were the first to develop the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), which "aims to establish, for each lexical unit in a stretch of discourse, whether its use in the particular context can be described as metaphorical" (Pragglejaz group, 2007: 2).

Later, Steen (2010) introduced a more refined version of the already existing method, focusing not only on direct expressions of metaphor but also indirect ones, which include such forms of metaphor as analogy and simile, and implicit expressions, such as ellipsis and substitution.

Based on the methods discussed above, the following steps were taken to analyse the empirical data:

1. After choosing some key concepts (distinguished by high frequency of usage in history discourse) for the analyses, the texts were inspected on a word-to-word basis;
2. The lexemes used nonliterally were identified and considered the indicators of metaphors;
3. The identified metaphorical expressions were examined with the purpose of stating their link with the concepts chosen initially;
4. Finally, metaphorical image-schemas were revealed.

3. On conceptual metaphor theory

As is known, conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) was first introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By*, which suggested that metaphors are not the product of a language, but that of a mind. It is the fundamental part of a human thought. By means of metaphors, humans understand and structure their worldview.

According to CMT, "a conceptual metaphor is a systematic set of correspondences between two domains of experience" (Kövecses, 2017: 13) or simply a mapping from the source domain (typically concrete) onto the target domain (typically abstract). Lakoff and Johnson used the mnemonic means for naming the mappings, which have the following form: "TARGET-DOMAIN IS SOURCE-DOMAIN, or alternatively, TARGET-DOMAIN AS SOURCE-DOMAIN" (Lakoff, 1993: 207). The said can be shortly described by the formula "A IS B, in which a target domain, A, is understood in terms of a source domain, B" (Kövecses, 2010: 91). Many of the mappings are grounded in the bodily

experience and interactions with the physical world (Lakoff, Johnson, 1999), which explains the abstract and concrete nature of targets and their sources, respectively.

When mapping a source on a target, only certain aspects of the target are highlighted, while others, unnecessary ones, are hidden (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). This means that concepts are not fully structured by a metaphor and can be extended only in restricted ways. Therefore, a concept cannot be fully understood by means of one metaphor. This explains why we have various metaphors for a single target: "Different metaphors highlight different aspects of the same target concept" (Kövecses, 2010: 93).

As for the limitations of what can be transferred from one domain to another, Lakoff (1993) introduced a principle of invariance, which states that everything that is mapped from the source to the target should not be in contradiction to the image-schematic or the inherent structure of the target domain.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) outlined three types of metaphors. These are orientational –the whole system of concepts are organised with respect to one another, which are based on the basic experience of humans' spatial orientation (HAPPY IS UP); ontological – where one concept is understood as an entity or substance, thus including container metaphors (THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT); and structural –one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another, which provides us with the framework of understanding abstract objects by more concrete, tangible ones (LIFE IS A JOURNEY). Kövecses (2010) later adds that the cognitive function of ontological metaphors is merely to produce new abstract entities that are given elaborate structures by the structural metaphors.

4. On scientific discourse and its characteristics

As stated by Galperin (1977), the main purpose of scientific style is to prove a hypothesis, to create new concepts, to disclose the internal laws of existence, development, relations between different phenomena, etc. Therefore, every linguistic means used is characterised by objectivity, lack of emotionality, and precision; generalised forms of expression are preferred. Due to the logical sequence of utterances, scientific discourse uses an abundant and varied system of connectives. Another noticeable feature is the use of specific terms of each branch of science. Words are mostly used in their primary logical meaning in order to avoid any ambiguity. Emotiveness is not completely excluded, especially when there are hypotheses, pronouncements and conclusions based on strong beliefs, so they require a certain level of usage of emotionally coloured words. Emotional structures and stylistic devices that aim at creating aesthetically pleasing language are not the attributes of modern scientific prose.

Although the abovementioned features characterise the language of both hard and soft sciences, there could be found some differences. Halliday and Martin (2005) studied discourses of hard sciences and humanities and found out that compared to the discourse of hard sciences, the discourse of history uses relatively few technical terms, as "the taxonomy it establishes is not a technical one" (Halliday, Martin, 2005: 251). In the language of hard sciences, logical connections are established between clauses/sentences, whereas in history discourse, participants and events within a clause/sentence create logical links. Another distinction is that history texts interpret; they generalise and rearrange already existing knowledge, while the texts on hard sciences try to construct new knowledge.

As it has been mentioned, the role of metaphor has been reevaluated due to the changing approach towards it. Many authors started to emphasise the significance of metaphor for scientific discourse. Halliday (2004) wrote about "grammatical metaphors", which can be described as the category meaning of nouns and verbs mixed together in order to create a new element or simply grammatical structures that are used metaphorically. "Grammatical metaphor is '[a] critical feature of the grammar through which the discourse of science evolved" (Halliday, 2004: 4).

Temmerman (2000) discusses a nominative function of metaphor. She claims that creative analogical thinking gives rise to metaphorical neologisms/neolexicalisations and therefore points out two types of metaphors: creative metaphors – those that produce neologisms which later become part of specialised language– and didactic metaphors – used in teaching. Shuttleworth (2017) also agrees that metaphor has been used as a basis of scientific and medical terminology; it is one of the main ways in which terms are coined. The author identifies some main functions of metaphor, including „the channelling of scientific thought and the creation of new terminology“ (Shuttleworth, 2017: 19). Braithwaite (2006) recognises analogy and metaphor as the basis of knowledge clarification and communication of abstract ideas for science. Kuhn (1970) states that conceptualising different phenomena can foster the development of science.

Although all of these works highlight the importance of metaphor for scientific discourse, they only focus on hard sciences. This article tries to prove that the disciplines of soft sciences use conceptual metaphors as abundantly and effectively.

5. Analysis

The concepts of *alliance*, *conflict/battle/war*, and *nation/country* (characterised by a high frequency of usage in history discourse) were chosen for the analysis.

5.1 Metaphorical conceptualisation of alliance

The study has revealed the following mappings related to alliance:

Metaphor *ALLIANCE IS A DESIRED OBJECT*—alliance is described as a desired object, which can have a value; it is sought, and gaining it is equal to winning. Hence the conceptual metaphor.

- (1) "... *sought and won* the alliance..." (Grenville, 2005:6)
- (2) "... the Italian alliance was of *limited value*." (Grenville, 2005:208)
- (3) "... Russia would discover that the French alliance was, in reality, *worthless*." (Grenville, 2005:56)

This metaphor can be viewed as the specific version of the generic-level ontological metaphor *—ALLIANCE IS A MATERIAL OBJECT—* as an alliance possesses certain qualities of physical objects –it can be breakable or solid, and it can be lost: "... to *risk the loss* of the French and British alliance." (Grenville, 2005:237); "... the alliance between France and Russia 'encircling' Germany could have been *broken* ..." (Grenville, 2005:204);

Metaphor *—ALLIANCE IS A TRAP*:

- (4) "... found itself *enmeshed* in a 'moral' alliance with military promises" (Grenville, 2005:37)
- (5) "Bismarck's genius was to bind nations in rivalry together in a *web* of alliances at the pivot of which lay Germany... But this *construction* was beginning to *come apart* at the *seams*." (Grenville, 2005:20)
- (6) "The government had fled to Bordeaux and was *seeking release from* the British alliance..." (Grenville, 2005:250)
- (7) "... whose allegiance to either the existing Crusader states or their home countries was questionable and who often did not feel *constrained* by existing treaties or alliances." (Aldrete, 2014:75)

The two of the discussed metaphors carry opposing connotational meanings. On the one hand, we have alliance as a positive phenomenon—a desirable object –and on the other hand, a negative one – a trap. The reason behind opposing mappings is the significance of alliances for the countries that are part of it. An undesirable alliance is unprofitable; it brings no value and is only restrictive and burdensome to the country. This can be traced by the use of such verbs as "*constrained*" and "*enmeshed*".

In example (5), an alliance appears as not a simple trap but a web, i.e., a specific type of trap. The structure of a web is mapped on an undesirable alliance, giving rise to a specific-level metaphor – *UNWANTED ALLIANCE IS A WEB*. This gives the metaphor a certain emotive colouring: a smart ally who sets the web, which is disguised as a friendly alliance, traps the other country in that union and makes it incapable of escaping it, and so the other country is forced to act according to the will of the web-setter party. Therefore, we can speak of the trapped country as a prey (this metaphor was also found in another mapping analysed below). An agreement/treaty is conceptualised in a similar manner in the following example: "By 1914, the nations of Europe were bound together in a *complex web of treaties and agreements*..." (Aldrete, 2014:215), which can be explained by the fact that both agreement and treaty are indirect synonyms of the term alliance.

In addition, a web of alliance is referred to as a *construction* in the second part of example (5), and at the same time, the crumbling of that construction is presented as *coming apart* at the *seams*, consequently giving us other conceptual metaphors *—ALLIANCE IS A CONSTRUCTION* and *ALLIANCE IS A SEWN CLOTHES/MATERIAL*, respectively.

Metaphor *—ALLIANCE IS A DESTINATION*:

(8) “The *path* to the alliance with Russia was *smoothed* by the large loans raised on the Paris...” (Grenville, 2005:26)

(9) “Its foreign policy *turned* Britain from *the path of seeking* an alliance at the turn of the century...” (Grenville, 2005:21)

This metaphor is derived from the path image-schema, where, according to example (8), the “*large loans*” act as the steamroller that smooths and ensures that the path to the alliance meets no obstacles on its way. We can say that the conceptualisation of an alliance as a destination also carries a positive meaning.

Metaphor – *ALLIANCE IS A WEAPON*:

(10) “... the British alliance became a *potent weapon* which Chamberlain and Halifax *used to force* the French into line...” (Grenville, 2005:230)

(11) “The Soviet leaders succeeded for a time in *forging* an alliance with Chinese nationalists in a *joint drive* against Western and Japanese imperialism.” (Grenville, 2005:84)

Based on the last example, an alliance akin to a weapon can be forged, but simultaneously, it can be used against someone/something; in this particular example, it is used against Western and Japanese imperialism and is described as a joint *drive*. Therefore, we can see the use of the force metaphor, or the path image-schema metaphor, which was discussed in the previous example (*ALLIANCE IS DESTINATION*); however, in example (11), the alliance is not the final destination but an actual drive, a journey to fight against the imperialism. As a result, we get a double conceptualisation where the process of forging an alliance is concurrent with a joint drive of that alliance.

Among other examples, we come across the conceptual metaphor –*ALLIANCE IS A LIVING ORGANISM*:

(12) “... French who in 1912 strongly *revived* the Franco-Russian alliance.” (Grenville, 2005:47)

(13) “Would the alliance *survive* if Germany once again forced the Monarchy to desist from doing what it thought imperative for its survival...” (Grenville, 2005:56)

Alliance can be revived and has the ability to survive, similar to other living organisms.

5.2 Metaphorical conceptualisation of conflict/war/battle

As conflict, war and battle have similar connotations and express semantically close notions, they are discussed in the same category.

Structural Metaphor –*GETTING INTO CONFLICT/WAR IS DIVING/PLUNGING*:

A conflicting situation/starting the war is depicted as diving, more precisely, plunging:

(14) “... the West *plunged* into such a cataclysmic conflict.” (Grenville, 2005:6)

(15) “... threatened to *plunge* a part of the United Kingdom into civil war.” (Grenville, 2005:40)

(16) “The *circle* of conflict in this one region of Europe then spread *to engulf* the whole continent.” (Grenville, 2005:41)

As a result of the structural metaphor, we get the following set of other types of conceptual metaphor: *NATION/COUNTRY IS A DIVER* – an example of ontological personification – and *CONFLICT/WAR IS WATER/FLUID*, as seen from example (16). As we can see, one type of conceptual metaphor does not exclude the presence of other types of metaphors; precisely, structural metaphors (*GETTING INTO CONFLICT/WAR IS DIVING/PLUNGING*) can be further divided into individual sets of metaphors (*NATION/COUNTRY IS A DIVER* and *CONFLICT/WAR IS WATER/FLUID*), and those individual metaphors can belong to other types (ontological) as well.

Metaphor –*CONFLICT IS A PLANT*.

(17) “Unjust and harsh treatment of defeated Germany would only *sow the seeds* of future conflict.” (Grenville, 2005:98)

(18) “The *roots* of the conflict lie in the militaristic-spiritual values that Japanese education inculcated.” (Grenville, 2005:255)

These attributes of plants are characteristic of conflict: it has roots and seeds; it can be sown and grown. Crisis, somehow related to the notion of conflict, can also have roots: “the roots of the crisis” (Grenville, 2005:574).

Metaphors–*CONFLICT AS A PROCESS OF COOKING* and *THE PLACE OF CONFLICT IS A DISH/A CONFINED SPACE*.

Of particular interest is the mapping evidenced in the metaphor–*CONFLICT IS A PROCESS OF COOKING*; the place where conflict takes place is shown as a confined space, more specifically, a cauldron:

(19) “Palestine had become a *cauldron* of conflict...” (Grenville, 2005:266)

(20) “Certainly, party leaders believed that they could *stir up* class war between the poor peasant and the kulak and so gain some peasant support.” (Grenville, 2005:176)

In addition, conflict has a bitter quality –“*bitter* conflict” (Grenville, 2005:370)– which makes us think that it has taste and temperature. For instance, one of the most significant wars in the 20th century carries the name *Cold War*.

Metaphor –*CONFLICT IS A PLAGUE/DISEASE*

The source and target domains share the following similarities: both a conflict and a disease are spread quickly, have negative effects and might even have fatal consequences. This is the basis on which this metaphor is formed.

(21) “... industrial conflicts that *plagued* the Fourth Republic.” (Grenville, 2005:516)

(22) “At the end of the twentieth century many of the problems that *afflicted* the world at its beginning remain unresolved.” (Grenville, 2005:11)

(23) “The allies had won a truly decisive victory and one from which the French could not *recover*. The *shaky* coalition now had a shared victory and could see a *clear path* to the end of the war.” (Aldrete, 2014:180)

(24) “Conflicts between nationalists in Austria frequently *paralysed* parliament.” (Grenville, 2005:49)

Example (23) makes use of the path image-schema, where the end of the war is viewed as the destination reached by the means of creating a coalition, which corresponds to the abovementioned metaphor – *ALLIANCE IS A PROCESS OF DRIVE*; consequently, ending the war and forming a coalition is the purpose, the final destination.

Metaphor –*CONFLICT IS A BOMB*

Due to its unpredictable and uncontrollable nature, starting a conflict or war is associated with the ferocious force of the explosion of a bomb in the following examples:

(25) “Would racial conflicts *explode*...” (Grenville, 2005:541)

(26) “Mao sought to revive the revolutionary spirit by *unleashing* a conflict...” (Grenville, 2005:612)

By using the verb *unleashing*, we can view a conflict either as a force or a wild animal.

As it can also be launched as in this example: “... *launching* a war against Russia” (Grenville, 2005:82), we can talk about conflicts as rockets.

Among other examples, we can also see:

Similar to alliance, undesirable conflict is also depicted as a process of getting trapped (in the ropes), hence the conceptual metaphor –*GETTING INTO WAR IS GETTING TRAPPED IN THE ROPES*: “The halting of the German advance at the Battle of the Marne left both sides *enmeshed* in a war that neither had anticipated or prepared for.” (Aldrete, 2014:220).

Metaphor –*GETTING INTO WAR IS BEING SWARMED*:

(27) “... 4 new battleships, 3 older battleships, and an attendant *swarm* of cruisers, destroyers, and support ships.” (Aldrete, 2014:211)

(28) “Another army of at least 30,000 Xiong-nu now joined in and, for nearly a week, *swarmed* around the beleaguered Chinese...” (Aldrete, 2014:51)

The role of bees or wasps can be performed both by people, according to example (28), and by inanimate objects (27), such as cruisers, destroyers and ships. The purposeful movement of a huge number of people or ships is, by analogy, shown as the movement of a group of bugs and structurally mapped on the target.

Structural Metaphor –*FIGHTING IS HUNTING*:

(29) "... the golden age of Greece that ended when they once more *fell prey* to their old rivalries," (Aldrete, 2014:22)

(30) "The backward and *weak* independent Caribbean Island states were also *easy prey* for any intending European imperialist." (Grenville, 2005:69)

(31) "All were already *in the hands* of the Gestapo or being *hunted down*." (Grenville, 2005:190)

In example (30) we see a dual conceptualisation: the party that lost the battle is prey which the strong country hunts; thus, we get two ontological personifications – *COUNTRY (DOMINANT) IS A HUNTER* and *COUNTRY (WEAK) IS A PREY* – respectively. Simultaneously, losing to another country is expressed by the use of the linguistic metaphor *fell prey* (29), where "*fell*", in its own term, is a downward movement. Therefore, we get an orientational metaphor –*LOSS IS DOWN*–which can also be seen in the following example: "... the *city fell* to Arab conquerors..." (Yoffee, 2015: 458).

In certain examples, the death of soldiers is equivalent to losing and is expressed by the same verb *fall*, which gives us another orientational metaphor –*DEATH IS DOWN*.

(32) "Egypt's President Sadat *fell victim* to the terrorists' implacable hostility." (Grenville, 2005: 938)

(33) "Many families had lost their bread-winner at the front, '*fallen* for Führer and country'..." (Grenville, 2005: 311)

Furthermore, according to example (31), *BEING UNDER SOMEONE'S CONTROL IS BEING HELD* or *LOSING IS BEING HELD*. The power that can control is concentrated in this part (hand) of a human body. Further examples also reveal another orientational metaphor: *BEING CONTROLLED IS UNDER*:

(34) "... who enjoyed greater liberties *under* Austrian than Russian and German *rule*..." (Grenville, 2005:49)

(35) "Yet Kadesh had *slipped from his grasp* into alliance with the Hittites." (Aldrete, 2014:11)

Being under control is shown as a process of holding and grasping. In this particular example (35), alliance is not a trap but a means to escape that trap, which opposes the aforementioned conceptual metaphor – *ALLIANCE IS A TRAP*.

The proper time to attack someone is associated with the ripe fruit: "... the time was *ripe* to strike" (Grenville, 2005:17); "The time was *ripe* for an attack..." (Aldrete, 2014:185), hence the metaphor *TIME IS RIPE FRUIT*.

5.3 Metaphorical conceptualisation of nation and country

Metaphor –*NATION IS A LIVING ORGANISM*

Nation and country are often depicted as living organisms: they are born, undergo the growth period, which is followed by the period of falling and eventually dying.

(36) "You may roughly divide the nations of the world as *the living* and *the dying*..." (Grenville, 2005:6)

(37) "... there existed a certain fatalism that the *growth* and *decline* of nations must inevitably entail war between them." (Grenville, 2005:6)

Not only is the nation/country regarded as a living organism, but it also possesses the qualities that humans have and thus is personified: "each nation *believed*" (Grenville, 2005:6); "the *fate* of nations..." (Grenville, 2005:7); "the very *soul* of the nation." (Aldrete, 2014:199); "... these nations now *felt safe*..." (Aldrete, 2014:177); "national *pride*" (Aldrete, 2014:93); "*poor* countries" (Grenville, 2005:10); "*young* country" (Grenville, 2005:67); "country *enjoyed*" (Grenville, 2005:50) and so on.

A nation is described as a construction which is formed and built by humans and can be destroyed, therefore giving rise to the conceptual metaphor *NATION/COUNTRY IS A CONSTRUCTION*:

(38) "The great majority of the people who *built* the nation had left a Europe whose soil had been soaked with Jewish blood..." (Grenville, 2005:455)

(39) "... *forming* one nation" (Grenville, 2005:751)

(40) "*stable* country" (Grenville, 2005: 22)

(41) "... the country's virtually total *collapse* after six years of war and civil war." (Grenville, 2005: 168)

6. Conclusion

Quite numerous conceptual metaphors were identified as a result of the study. These include the following:

- Orientational metaphors –*LOSS IS DOWN*, *DEATH IS DOWN* and *BEING CONTROLLED IS UNDER*.
- Ontological metaphors –*ALLIANCE IS A DESIRED OBJECT*; *ALLIANCE IS A TRAP*; *UNWANTED ALLIANCE IS A WEB*; *ALLIANCE IS A WEAPON*; *CONFLICT/WAR IS WATER/FLUID*; *CONFLICT IS A PLANT*; *THE PLACE OF CONFLICT IS A DISH*; *CONFLICT IS A BOMB*; *COUNTRY (WEAK) IS A PREY*; *TIME IS RIPE FRUIT*.
- Ontological personifications –*NATION/COUNTRY IS A DIVER* and *COUNTRY (DOMINANT) IS A HUNTER*.
- Structural metaphors –*ALLIANCE IS A DESTINATION*; *ALLIANCE IS A LIVING ORGANISM*; *GETTING INTO CONFLICT/WAR IS DIVING/PLUNGING*; *CONFLICT IS A PROCESS OF COOKING*; *CONFLICT IS A PLAGUE/DISEASE*; *GETTING INTO WAR IS GETTING TRAPPED IN THE ROPES*; *GETTING INTO WAR IS BEING SWARMED*; *FIGHTING IS HUNTING*; *BEING UNDER SOMEONE'S CONTROL IS BEING HELD*; *LOSING IS BEING HELD*; *NATION IS A LIVING ORGANISM* and *NATION/COUNTRY IS A CONSTRUCTION*.

Despite the limited number of concepts chosen for the study, evidently, conceptual metaphors are quite frequent in history texts, which once again proves that metaphor is an inseparable part of any discourse, including historical.

Metaphor functions as an essential tool for conceptualising abstract concepts by more concrete ones, which makes the comprehension of scientific ideas easier for the reader. With the help of different sources for the same target (e.g., alliance), the reader can perceive tense relationships between countries/people and the social climate of the past events, and this is one of the main functions of history discourse.

Therefore, the value of metaphors for history discourse can be summarised as follows: 1. They simplify complex concepts, such as conflict (and its many forms), alliance and nation; 2. They provide different perspectives on those concepts (e.g., alliance that can be understood as both a negative and positive phenomenon); 3. They shape the way historical narratives are understood and then communicated to others; and 4. They make the past experiences more relatable to modern readers/audiences.

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