

# Shakespeare and Conceptual Blending

Cognition, Creativity, Criticism

*Michael Booth*



Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance



# Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance

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Michael Booth

# Shakespeare and Conceptual Blending

Cognition, Creativity, Criticism

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Michael Booth  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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*For Mark W. Booth*  
*“Venisti tandem, tuaque exspectata parenti vicit iter durum pietas?”*

## FOREWORD

Artists are cognitive scientists in the wild, doing the work to make visible to us features and problems of cognition that we would otherwise not notice. The human mind is not only not built to look into its own workings; it is mostly built *not* to look into them. Vision, for example, is astonishingly complicated. Fifty percent of the neocortex is implicated in it. But consciously, unless something goes terribly wrong, we do not even notice that we are doing any work to see, much less what work we are doing. It is the same for higher-order human operations.

Conceptual blending is a capacity shared by all normal human beings for perhaps the last fifty thousand years, and it is indispensable; it has given us advanced tool use, social cognition, art, music, religion, language, law, scientific discovery, mathematical insight, fashion, and so on. It comes automatically with any cognitively modern brain, is not costly, and is constantly at work. It helps us create mentally tractable concepts that we can use to understand ranges of conception that would otherwise be intractable. Memory and imagination, which may feel like open windows through which the past and future simply come to us, are in fact produced at each moment by the biological functionality we have for thinking, and blending is part of what allows our here-and-now minds, astonishingly, to arch broadly over space, time, causation, and agency.

Consider our concept of *the day*.

There are infinitely many days we could think about, and they all have a different structure. Our standard way to handle this diversity of passing days is to blend them mentally into one day that *repeats*, the cyclic day.

We make unconscious selections for this blend. We do not, for example, project to the blend *the date* for any of the days—the cyclic day has no specific date—but we create structure for it that is not in any of the inputs, namely this property of repeating. No day repeats. No midnight *comes around again*. But the cyclic day repeats. Referring to the cyclic day blend, we can say “it is time for my *morning coffee*” or “this park closes *at dusk*” or “when afternoon comes around again, we’ll go for a sail.” No one notices that the cyclic day is a conceptual blend. It is a crucial product of blending that seems to us given, straightforward, obvious, true, not a product of invention at all.

But now look at Shakespeare, where we often see blends that we can recognize as blends. When Macbeth broods upon “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,” he is doing the unusual and unsettling work of unpacking the cyclic day—first to produce a sense of *getting nowhere*, and then to highlight the uncomfortable truth that every person’s days, however slowly they pass, are numbered. They are not reiterations of a timeless state of being; they are drips from a bucket. When he concludes that “All our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death,” he is imaginatively blending his own life, his own chain of yesterdays, with the sequence of days that have led others to annihilation. Shakespeare walks us through details of a given blend, bringing onstage operations of the mind and interesting questions about them, both philosophical and scientific, that we otherwise would have been disinclined to notice. These blends often provide striking and useful new ways of understanding things. In Sonnet 3, Shakespeare writes,

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest,  
Now is the time that face should form another,  
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,  
Thou dost beguile the world, unless some mother.

“Unless” is a word I do not know in English aside from this passage. I have no conceptual frame for “unbless.” I cannot think of a specific example from history of “unblessing.” What is it? How do we understand it? The answer is that we understand it as a conceptual blend. Two futures, or two future selves, are constructed for the addressee, who is choosing whether to become a father. In one future, he has a child, and in the other, he does not. The counterfactuality between these futures precipitates new material for our idea of the present. In one case, there



is a woman whose future self includes the role of mother. If the other future is contemplated, she “no longer” has that role. *Blessed* with a child in one future, she is blessed in advance in a present where procreation is chosen. But there is a potential future derived from a present with no procreation, one in which the woman is “deprived” of that future. The friend’s choosing not to procreate is now an action by him of *unblessing* that woman, although we do not know who she is, and perhaps indeed neither the man nor the woman knows who she is, or that she has been unblessed. We all make blends like this all the time, but almost never notice them. Shakespeare routinely makes remarkable blends, useful for conceptualization across space, time, causation, and agency, and, moreover, *helps us see what is going on when we blend*. He is not only a great artist, a spectacularly creative blender; he is an exceptional investigator of cognition.

Now Michael Booth, in this book, gives us a persuasive and highly illuminating analysis of Shakespeare as a creator of conceptual blends and as a particularly perceptive and sensitive inquirer into the nature of blending. This superb work on Shakespearean blending in the creation of stories and poetic language, focusing on the domain of *literary* artistry, neatly complements Amy Cook’s influential work on Shakespearean blending in stage performance. Writing in a way that is accessible to both the literary scholar and the cognitive scientist, Booth shines a useful light on cognitive operations that are, as I have said, universal, but he devotes special attention to some particular ways in which these can yield results that we regard as exceptional, creative art.

Shakespeare is a gold standard for discussions of meaning and interpretation, and has thus offered a touchstone for cognitive linguistics from the very beginnings of the field. A book that George Lakoff and I published on metaphor in 1989, *More Than Cool Reason*, takes its title from one of the passages, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where Shakespeare is at his most explicitly reflective about the processes of the imagination, as he knew them:

### HERMIA

Methinks I see these things with parted eye,/ When every thing seems double.

...

## THESEUS

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
 The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
 Are of imagination all compact [*formed, composed*].  
 ...The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
 And as imagination bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
 Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation and a name.  
 Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
 That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

## HIPPOLYTA

But all the story of the night told over,  
 And all their minds transfigured so together,  
 More witnesseth than fancy's images  
 And grows to something of great constancy;  
 But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

We who study language, the mind, and the creative human imagination have always known that Shakespeare had a great deal to say about these matters, both directly and indirectly, and we have regularly returned to his works as to a wellspring, for inspiration and for illustration.

Michael Booth's fine, encompassing new study is a timely and welcome contribution to the advancing intellectual enterprise of cognitive linguistics, as well as to Shakespeare studies. Demonstrating the centrality of conceptual blending to Shakespeare's art, Booth shows not one but many ways in which an awareness of it can inform and invigorate the study of literature. This is a highly felicitous blend of cognitive theory and literary reading. A major achievement.

Mark Turner

## SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

Noam Chomsky started a revolution in human self-understanding and reshaped the intellectual landscape to this day by showing how all languages have deep features in common. Gone—or least retreating—is the idea that the mind is a blank slate. In its wake, fierce debates have broken out about what the mind is and how it works. At stake are some of the most urgent questions facing researchers today: questions about the relationship between brain, mind, and culture; about how human universals express themselves in individual minds and lives; about reason, consciousness, and emotions; about where cultures get their values and how those values fit our underlying predispositions.

It is no secret that most humanists have held fast to the idea that the mind is a blank slate. Not only has this metaphor been an article of intellectual faith, it has also underwritten a passionate moral agenda. If human beings have no inherent qualities, our political and social systems are contingent rather than fixed. Intellectuals might be able to play an important role in exposing the byways of power and bringing about a fairer world. But evidence is rapidly accumulating that humans are born with an elaborate cognitive architecture. The number of our innate qualities is staggering; human cognition is heavily constrained by genes and by our evolutionary past. It is now known that we are born with several core concepts and a capacity for developing a much larger number of cognitive capabilities under ecological pressure.

Beyond that bold headline, however, the story gets murkier. Each of the mind sciences is filled with dissonant debates of its own. In

her magisterial investigation into the origin of concepts, Susan Carey writes that her goal "is to demonstrate that the disciplines of cognitive science now have the empirical and theoretical tools to turn age-old philosophical dilemmas into relatively straightforward problems." Notice her sense of being on the verge rather than on some well-marked path. The terrain ahead is still unmapped. But notice, too, her sense that scientific methods will eventually transform fuzzy questions into testable ones.

How brave, then, are language and performance scholars who, driven by their passion to understand how the mind works, seek to explore this new terrain? Brave, but increasingly in good company. The Modern Language Association discussion group on cognitive approaches to literature has grown exponentially in the last decade. And sessions in cognition and performance at the American Society for Theatre Research are flourishing. Many scholars are fascinated by what cognitive approaches might have to say about the arts. They recognize that this orientation to literature and performance promises more than just another "ism." Unlike the theories of the last century, the mind sciences offer no central authority, no revered group of texts that disclose a pathway to the authorized truth. Indeed, cognitive approaches to the arts barely fit under one broad tent. Language processing, reader and spectator response, pragmatics, embodiment, conceptual blending, discourse analysis, empathy, performativity, and narrative theory, not to mention the energetic field of biocultural evolution, are all arenas with lively cognitive debates.

Cognitive approaches are unified by two ideas: The first is that to understand the arts we need to understand psychology. Humanists have uncontroversially embraced this idea for decades, as their ongoing fascination with the now largely discredited theory of psychoanalysis suggests. Now that psychology has undergone its empiricist revolution, literary and performance scholars should rejoice in the fact that our psychological claims are on firmer footing. Second is the idea that scholarship in this field should be generally empirical, falsifiable, and open to correction by new evidence and better theories—as are the sciences themselves. Of course this epistemological admission means that many of the truth claims of the books in our series will eventually be destabilized and perhaps proven false. But this is as it should be. As we broaden our understanding of cognition and the arts, better science should produce

more rigorous ideas and insights about literature and performance. In this spirit, we celebrate the earlier books in our series that have cut a path for our emerging field and look forward to new explorations in the future.

Pittsburgh, PA, USA  
Stanford, CA, USA

Bruce McConachie  
Blakey Vermeule

## PREFACE

This book is written for anyone who is interested in Shakespeare and in how the mind works; like the First Folio that Shakespeare's friends began assembling four hundred years ago, it is addressed "To the great Variety of Readers." It will mainly be of interest to those who already have, or who are gaining, familiarity with Shakespeare's work—scholars and students of Shakespeare. It is not, though, meant to be narrowly academic.

I first encountered Fauconnier and Turner's theory of Mental Spaces, the groundwork from which they developed the theory of conceptual blending discussed here, when I was studying a contemporary of Shakespeare's: the scientist, mathematician and linguist Thomas Harriot. Harriot's intellectual accomplishments were so strikingly varied—he was the first Englishman known to have learned a Native American language, and also the first English algebraist—that I felt he really needed to be considered as a unique, *thinking* individual, rather than simply as someone whose activities illustrated the great movements or ideologies of his time, even though the latter approach was then the prevailing one in literary studies. Contemplation of Harriot's role as an Algonquian-language interpreter turned my attention to current ideas in the academic field of linguistics, and specifically the aforementioned Mental Spaces model, which I found extremely useful for bringing together the Algonquian and algebraic facets of Harriot's work.

As a student of English literature who was drawn to consider such matters, I was fortunate to have the opportunity of obtaining an Andrew

W. Mellon postdoctoral fellowship, for 2006–2008, through the John B. Hurford Center for the Arts and Humanities at Haverford College; this fellowship enabled me to combine my new, deepening interest in cognitive linguistics with my longstanding interest in Shakespeare, and ultimately to convene an interdisciplinary symposium on “Shakespeare and the Blending Mind,” a conversation among scholars in these two fields. The present book was beginning to take shape then, as a long-term vision, which would require several more years of study, teaching and writing to be fully realized. I am deeply grateful to the symposium participants, to the Humanities Center, to Haverford and to the Mellon Foundation.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Michael Booth

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I am fortunate to have shared discussions of Shakespeare and poetry with many exceptionally able and inspiring students; one group that stands out in memory is my poetry seminar at Haverford College that included Noel Capozzalo, James McDowell and Isaac Wheeler.

I would also like to thank the participants, many of whom are cited in these pages, in several cognitive-critical discussions held in Dallas, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Paris, and on the campuses of Haverford College and Harvard University.



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## Introduction

For those unfamiliar with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Fig 1.1 may defy interpretation; for those who have seen or read the play, though, this image, even if encountered without a word of accompanying text, may be not only intelligible but indeed rich in *story*, *humor* and *poetry*—three arts in which Shakespeare's excellence is very widely celebrated, and which provide the successive topics that structure this book (Fig. 1.1).

What is in the picture? A man whose head is that of an ass reclines in a moonlit woodland clearing. A woman holds his arm, with her head resting on his shoulder, and appears to have been decorating him with flowers. The man with the ass head converses with a strongly muscled man standing before him who has sharply pointed ears and no clothes, is somewhat less than a foot tall, and is accompanied by several other small figures with similar ears, some of whom have wings and/or are riding on white rabbits. A larger, winged child figure observes the gathering from behind, unseen. Many will know that the woman is Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, that the man is Nick Bottom, aspiring actor, and that she is in love with him, under a spell; the smaller figures in the foreground are the fairies who wait upon Titania, and the one behind is Puck, who has made Titania fall in love with Bottom and arranged this liaison. We who are familiar with the story can absorb the image at a glance, its diverse elements making their own peculiar kind of sense in relation to each other. Many of those elements are Shakespeare's own, though some have been contributed by the visual artist, including the rabbits, the



**Fig. 1.1** Engraving: “A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Shakespeare, Act 4, Scene 1)” After Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (British, London 1802–1873 London), Samuel Cousins (British, Exeter 1801–1887 London) via The Metropolitan Museum of Art

scale of Bottom’s interlocutor, and the clothing of Titania and Bottom: “[T]he queen’s gauzy attire and her paramour’s Turkish slippers suggest a harem scene,” according to the collection record for this engraving in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>1</sup> Something is happening as we interpret the image: an act of conceptual integration.

This cognitive action has a relation to narrative, since the viewer may recall how the two main characters have come together, and what the nature of their relationship is, and what its past and its future are. It also has something to do with humor, as this scene is recognizable as an amusing one. The humor is amplified by Shakespeare’s dialogue:

Titania: Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy

<sup>1</sup>Accession number 47.30.46.

And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

...

Bottom: I could munch your good dry oats.  
 ...Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.  
 [Then again,] I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas...

“Particular statements seem to concentrate the humor of these situations,”<sup>2</sup> as Patrick Colm Hogan notes, but in Shakespeare much of the humor is fundamentally situational, and the situations are often conveyed in staging and can be captured visually, as here. The ass head in the picture is only the most conspicuous of this story’s many absurdities—*absurdus* meaning etymologically “out of tune,” or “clashing.” An ass-headed man is clearly an anomalous figure, a frankly impossible blend of two irreconcilable things; Bottom thus exemplifies here a particular mental experience, that of conceptual *blending*, which is an aspect of the integration noted above, but may also be distinguished from it.<sup>3</sup> A conceptual blend might be thought of as an integration that has not been, or cannot be, completed, something in a state of unresolved duality, showing two natures at once. (“I must to the barber’s, monsieur; for methinks I am marvail’s hairy about the face”; the hairiness belongs to the ass here, and the sense that it is excessive belongs to the man.) Absurdities or cognitive clashes can elicit the laughter of surprise, which is one pleasure that the playwright strove to provide for his public.

If there is narrative implicit in the image, and if there is humor, there is also poetry: The moonlight suffusing the scene, emanating from the horizon at the right of the picture, is, in some sense, an attribute or a

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<sup>2</sup> *What Literature Teaches Us about Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 171.

<sup>3</sup> The theorists Fauconnier and Turner use the terms “integration” and “blending” somewhat interchangeably. For simplicity, I will generally use “blending” in this book to describe what they would more technically call “double-scope” blending; that is, cases where two differing mental scenarios are mutually influencing each other in our thought, and their differences create some degree of incongruity. This is as opposed, in their discussion, to “single scope” integration or blending, where one mental space is unilaterally lending structure to another.

correlative of Titania herself as Queen of the fairies. (“Wait upon him; lead him to my bower. The moon methinks looks with a watery eye.”)<sup>4</sup> It is also emblematic of dreams or night visions, things not seen in the broad light of day. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is, I think, a fitting place from which to begin a book on Shakespeare’s conceptual blending because that is a continuation, in the unconscious levels of waking thought, of the creative and accommodating dream-logic that allows one thing to be many, and allows many things to be one.<sup>5</sup>

The research area of conceptual integration, first delineated by cognitive linguists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, has been explored by scholars in a range of fields.<sup>6</sup> In a 2013 book investigating the topic of analogy, Douglas Hofstadter, the noted author of *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, and his co-author Emmanuel Sander, describe blend theory as “an enormously rich source of insight into many phenomena in human cognition.”<sup>7</sup> Conceptual integration, indeed, pertains so widely and

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<sup>4</sup>IIIi.168–169.

<sup>5</sup>Henry S. Turner’s 2007 *Shakespeare’s Double Helix* (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2007) uses *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to explore, in a somewhat similar spirit, this play’s clear celebration of “the value of mixing ideas and substances that are not normally mixed together.” The differences between my approach and Henry S. Turner’s are, first, that he pursues a comparison between Shakespeare’s work and modern biological science, and second, that he focuses on cultural history. I pursue questions that are principally phenomenological rather than historical.

<sup>6</sup>See Fauconnier and Turner’s book, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), and Seana Coulson’s *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). On blend-theory and Elizabethan culture, see Eve Sweetser, “‘The suburbs of your good pleasure’: Cognition, Culture and the Bases of Metaphoric Structure,” in G. Bradshaw, T. Bishop and M. Turner (eds), *The Shakespearean International Yearbook, vol. 4: Shakespeare Studies Today* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 24–55; For cognitive approaches to early-modern and literary studies generally, see F. Elizabeth Hart, “Matter, System and Early Modern Studies: Outlines for a Materialist Linguistics,” *Configurations*, 6 (1998): pp. 311–343, and see also Hart’s, *The Epistemology of Cognitive Literary Study*, *Philosophy and Literature*, 25 (2001): pp. 314–334.

<sup>7</sup>“[U]nder the name ‘conceptual integration’ it [blending] has been beautifully and richly explored and described by cognitive scientists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner and their colleagues and students. They have shown time and again that frame-blending is found throughout human thought, sometimes using marvelous examples that seem exotic, just as often using examples that are as down-to-earth as can be, but in any case, demonstrating the fundamental importance of the phenomenon.” Hofstadter and Sander, *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 362.

diversely to questions of interpretation, perception and communication that it will be necessary to come at the subject from many angles in the present work, with a degree of overlap and restatement, though hopefully not more than will seem warranted in retrospect.

In a 2011 article “Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Literary Studies: State of the Art in Cognitive Poetics,” Margaret Freeman wrote that blend theory provides “an elegant explanation for creativity in its theory of an ‘emergent structure’ created by the blend”; “As in all cognitive linguistic applications to literature,” Freeman says, “work in this area has only just begun, but increasingly, more researchers are applying blending analysis to literary texts.”<sup>8</sup> I quote her remarks partly as a warrant for my own project which explores conceptual blending as “an elegant explanation for creativity,” and also partly to contextualize my project in the recent history of this emerging interdisciplinary field. Relating this project to others in the field of cognitive literary study is naturally a desirable goal, and potentially useful for my readers; it is also very much a moving target, as much relevant work has been done by others during the time of this book’s incubation. Comprehensively incorporating current scholarship can also be at odds with the goal of addressing the book’s own concerns without being drawn off in many other directions. The scholars who, to my knowledge, had made connections between conceptual blending and Shakespeare when I began this project included: Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, Eve Sweetser, Barbara Dancygier, Mary Thomas Crane, Per Aage Brandt, Amy Cook, Bruce McConachie, F. Elizabeth Hart, Nicholas Moschovakis, and perhaps a few others. Scholars whose pertinent work I have recently encountered include Patrick Colm Hogan, Raphael Lyne, Brian Boyd, and Nancy Easterlin. I have cited all of them in these pages, hopefully without falling too far short of a just rendering of their many, diverse insights.

Some apologies are surely due to them on this score, as well as to scholars whose work should ideally have been considered here but doesn’t happen to have been. What I can assure the interested reader is that conceptual blending is a multifaceted phenomenon being examined from many perspectives by a growing number of extremely thoughtful

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<sup>8</sup>In *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1175–1202.



and perceptive observers; their understanding of it may not coincide at all points with my own or one another's, but that is why they can all be profitably read.

As Hart says, conceptual integration theory “outlines the mind’s apparently endless capacity to create spontaneous, discrete sets of associations...then to juggle deftly those sets of associations, folding them into one another but also—and equally important—keeping track of their boundaries.”<sup>9</sup> The duality between “keeping track” of different mental objects and “folding them into one another” is essential to understanding the theory and the argument of the present book. This duality is surprisingly easy to lose sight of, in part because of the nearly unavoidable terminological shortening of what more properly should be called something like the “theory of conceptual integration and conceptual differentiation,” or “blending and sorting theory.” This book is not *only* about things in Shakespeare that are blended, like, for instance, Bottom’s ass-head, above; it is really about how Shakespeare succeeds, across many domains of artistry, in occupying our minds with a rich intricacy of mental work. Engaging such mental capacities is a characteristic function of poetry and other art forms. William Empson, in much the same vein, admires how Edmund Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene* can “pour [together] Christian, classical, and chivalrous materials with an air, not of ignoring their differences, but of holding all their systems of values floating as if at a distance, so as not to interfere with one another, in the prolonged and diffused energies of his mind.” With regard to certain words of ambiguous spelling in Shakespeare, Empson surmises that Shakespeare “actually intended, by putting down something a little removed from any of the approximate homonyms, to set the reader groping about their *network*.”<sup>10</sup>

Hart is right to call such blending and sorting, or mental network-searching, an “apparently endless” human capacity, and this is not a trivial point. Those who look closely into the matter are often astonished by how intricate, subtle and rapid are the mental ramifications of any moment’s thought; likewise, and perhaps not coincidentally, readers of Shakespeare have always been struck by his works’ great intellectual

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<sup>9</sup>Hart, “The view of where we’ve been and where we’d like to go,” *College Literature*, Winter 2006.

<sup>10</sup>Empson, William, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions, 1947) 34, 83.

scope, the range of things that they combine or challenge us to keep track of.<sup>11</sup> His reach, his capacity to take us with him or send us on our own along new trajectories of thought, is indeed so great as to seem pragmatically endless; he has a knack for showing us the endlessness of thought. There is one sense, though, in which “endless” must be qualified: What isn’t endless is the time we have for creating and juggling mental associations as we engage with any given matter.

We have to move on, and move on again. Inexorably, from line to line in his works, and then out of his works altogether and back into the passing moments of our own lives. This forced march of human temporality is a theme of much poetry, including much of Shakespeare’s, and it has a specifically cognitive saliency here. We can only take so much with us on the march from moment to moment; attention and memory are limited. It is notable that we use the verb “concentrate” to indicate both the extraction or distillation of an essence and the focusing of our attention; Shakespeare had, it seems, a great power of concentration. We often receive his thought in highly concentrated form, which means we can take more of it with us; there is always more there in his works, when we stop to contemplate them, than we had initially realized. Conceptual blending theory is useful for appreciating Shakespeare because it illuminates the mind’s resourcefulness in dealing with the unforgiving constraints of finite human attention, memory and time.

Against the forces of distraction, forgetting, error, and the overwhelming complexity if not outright incoherence of the world, the mind struggles toward an integrated understanding marked ideally by *global insight*, a free and flexible, though inevitably temporary, ability to see a subject and all its various parts in their mutual interrelation. The mind tries to add what it knows, or perceives, to what else it knows or perceives, to achieve a more comprehensive view. Concomitant with this is *compression* necessitated by the limits of memory and attention. When the mental objects are sufficiently alike or compatible, such compression is felt mainly as a gain in conciseness and clarity. Through compression, our mental life can often “grow to something of great constancy,” as Shakespeare says in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

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<sup>11</sup>“And there we hope, to your diverse capacities, you will find enough both to draw and hold you,” wrote his friends John Heminges and Henry Condell in the First Folio.

This human instinct for integration and compression also operates opportunistically in cases where the mental objects involved are not straightforwardly related or compatible, but where some contingent point of connection may be discovered between them. Here we can begin to see an intimate and fundamental relationship between thought and metaphor, and a practical usefulness that is not always conceded to metaphor; it is not an added ornament of speech but a mechanism of thought, a demonstration of the mind's relentless impulse to discover relevancies wherever it can, and express them concisely.

Conceptual integration tends to escape our conscious attention; no doubt it should, to be a useful evolutionary adaptation—why devote resources of memory and attention to the marking of themselves? Fauconnier and Turner have remarked upon this, noting that “Consciousness can glimpse only a few vestiges of what the mind is doing. ... Evolution seems to have built us to be constrained from looking directly into the nature of our cognition, which puts cognitive science in the difficult position of trying to use mental abilities to reveal what those very abilities are built to hide.”<sup>12</sup> This invisibility of the mind's characteristic operations is part of what makes blend theory a fresh contribution to current debates about meaning, and the centrality of these operations to creative thought is part of what make blend theory, I think, an important contribution. Blending becomes particularly visible when it involves incongruous mental objects. In these cases, we may be struck by the dissonance of the *frame clash* involved. A dissonance may sometimes impinge on our awareness as an absurdity, or as a spark of metaphoric significance, as wit or poetry. Our thoughts may “grow to something of great constancy,” but can also undergo, together, “a sea-change into something rich and strange,” as Ariel sings in *The Tempest*.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Way We Think*, 34;

[I]t may be part of the evolutionary adaptiveness of these mechanisms that they should be invisible to consciousness, just as the backstage labor involved in putting on a play works best if it is unnoticed. Whatever the reason, we ignore these common operations in everyday life and seem reluctant to investigate them even as objects of scientific inquiry. Even after training, the mind seems to have only feeble abilities to represent to itself consciously what the unconscious mind does easily. This limit presents a difficulty to professional cognitive scientists, but it may be a desirable feature in the evolution of the species. One reason for the limit is that the operations we are talking about occur at lightning speed, presumably because they involve distributed spreading activation in the nervous system, and conscious attention would interrupt that flow. 18.

A few more aspects of conceptual blending that will be elaborated further are these: The mind accomplishes its partial, experimental blends through the *selective projection* of elements from different conceptual sources into a mental workspace where they may be freely combined. These diverse elements seldom add up with computational exactness to a perfect whole, though computation is arguably one form of conceptual integration. In most cases, the selective projection of diverse elements is accompanied and augmented by *imaginative completion*, where the mind draws upon its resources of experience and knowledge, of long-term memory, to flesh out the picture that it has begun to sketch.<sup>13</sup> The embodied physicality of human experience supplies us with a large repertoire of more or less abstract *image schemas* (such as symmetry, containment, motion on a path) as templates and grounds for our imaginative blends, giving them a shape and structure. It also situates us in a world of objects, many of which, as artifacts of human ingenuity, serve as *material anchors* for conceptual blends of particular and continuing usefulness. A clock is one such object, ink marks on a page are another, and stage props yet another.

In the chapters that follow, I consider aspects of conceptual integration that pertain to Shakespeare's stories, wit, and poetry (considered both as figuration and as verse).<sup>14</sup> There is overlap, because some of the same processes are at work in any instance of meaning-construction with which the language arts present us. But there are also differences among the chapters as they specify what is characteristic of each mode. Storytelling involves, as my first chapter discusses, two sorts of conceptual integration: the causal integration of events into a plot, and a socio-cognitive integration of relationships among the characters. Stories, jokes, metaphors and rhymes all involve juxtaposition and interpenetration

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<sup>13</sup>“We rarely realize the extent of background knowledge and structure that we bring into a blend unconsciously. Blends recruit great ranges of such background meaning. Pattern completion is the most basic kind of recruitment: We see some parts of a familiar frame of meaning, and much more of the frame is recruited silently but effectively to the blend.” Ibid., 48.

<sup>14</sup>The project of considering Shakespeare's stagecraft in terms of conceptual blending has already been definitively handled by Bruce McConachie and Amy Cook. See Cook, above, and McConachie's *Engaging Audiences - a Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), in which he writes that “conceptual blending may be a more accurate way to understand the doubleness of theatre for spectators than [is] ‘suspending disbelief’.” 559.