

Classifying the Body Politic Metaphor in Early Modern English Tragedies

1 Introduction

- To develop a method that captures patterns of figurative language meaningful for literary analysis across texts.

- Classifying 607 figurative instances into 101 topics; example:
“As mad as the vex’d sea” → Mental states, Emotions, Nature.
- Constructing a network out of the co-occurrences of figurative topics
- Analyzing the shared interactions of Anatomy and Politics.
- Comparing the play’s main topics with the body politic’s main topics, and calculating a score based on the topics’ aggregated rankings.
- Tracing shifts in the interactions throughout the play.

Future Work: Improving the methodology by adding features to the analysis, as tenor and vehicle directionality, abstract and concrete domains, and others.

- Banou et al. (2025). A systematic review of figurative language detection. *Natural Language Processing Journal*.
- Blumenberg, H. (2010). *Paradigms of Metaphorology*. Cornell University Press.
- Gutman, G. (2024). A Network Analysis of Figurative Topic Classification. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*.
- Hale, D. G. (1971). *The Body Politic*. Mouton Publishers.

- Processing literary texts in order to extract the figurative language.
- Classification of the figurative instances into distinct conceptual semantic domains.
- Network analysis of topics co-occurrence models interactions among figurative domains.
- Detecting patterns in the network of figurative language centring on a focal metaphor.
- Clustering a literary corpus based on configurations of the focal metaphor.
- Tracing semantic shifts in figurative language across individual literary works.



- Clustering 23 early modern English tragedies on the basis of the plays' normalized score into three classes: Divergence, Negotiation, Alignment.
- Discovering recurrent patterns of topic configurations in each class.
- Selecting plays from each class and zooming in on shifts in the topics interactions throughout these plays.
- Returning to close readings of the select plays, developing interpretations informed by the distant reading, and assessing existing interpretations.

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