Atwood's Canadianisms and Neologisms: A Cognitive Approach to Literature

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Abstract : This paper takes as its starting point the notions of cognitive linguistics and lexical blending, and uses both these theoretical concepts to advance a new reading of Margaret Atwood's latest writings, one which sees them as paramount literary examples of norm and usage in bilingual Canadian lexicography. Atwood's prose seems to be imbued with Canadianisms and neologisms, lexical blends of zoomorphic forms, a kind of meeting-point between two conceptual structures which follow the principles of lexical economy and asyntactic relation. Atwood's neologisms also attest to the undeniable impact on language exerted by Canada's aboriginal peoples. This paper aims to track through these references and with the aid of the Eskimo-English dictionary look at the linguistic issues – attitudes to contaminations and hybridisations, questions of lexical blending in literary examples, etc – which they raise. Atwood's fiction, whose cognitive linguistic strategy employs 'the virtues of scissors and matches', always strives to achieve isomorphism between word form and concept.
Keywords : Atwood, Canadianisms, cognitive science, Eskimo/English dictionary
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