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## THE SEMANTICS OF SMALLPOX IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

Sickness and health have always been in the foreground of human experience, and, consequently, the corresponding concepts have found rich verbal expression. The conceptual salience of this field is confirmed by the numerous conventional formulas it has provided: people of many cultures have greeted each other with wishes of good health (Lat. *Salve*), wished each other health when parting (Pol. *Bądź zdrow*), drank to their health (Ger. *Gesundheit*), and cursed their enemies using disease related vocabulary.

The strong negative emotions associated with the concept of DISEASE may serve as the basis for bringing in a modified version of Sperber's theory and suggesting that we can expect numerous metaphorical expressions where the conceptual domain of DISEASE serves as a strong *centre of expansion* and *centre of attraction*. Thus, we may assume that the deeply entrenched concept of DISEASE often serves as a vehicle for expressing other, more abstract, meanings. On the other hand, DISEASE, which poses a fundamental threat to survival, tends to be a focus of thought and linguistic expression, some of which will necessarily be figurative in nature, making DISEASE a frequent target of metaphor and metonymy. As Ullmann (1962:202) puts it,

*[...] subjects in which a community is interested, which epitomize its fears [...] will tend to attract synonyms from all directions, and many of these will be metaphorical since metaphor is the supreme source of expressiveness in language.*

The metaphorization of DISEASE has recently been discussed in two essays by Susan Sontag (1990). Sontag, who is strongly opposed to at least some metaphors of illness, seeing them as harmful and potentially fatal, concedes nevertheless that *[...] of course, one cannot think without metaphors [...] as [...] saying a thing is or is like something-it-is-not is a mental operation as old as philosophy and poetry* (Sontag (1990:93)).

The conceptual field of DISEASE seems to furnish a promising setting for a cognitive semantic study. After all, DISEASE pertains to the body, and the

recognition of the embodied and anthropocentric nature of language and thinking has been one of the most central claims of cognitive linguistics, made independently by the main theorists of the framework (see Langacker (1987); Lakoff and Johnson (1980); Johnson (1987)) and exemplified by the subsequent linguistic analyses of the relevant phenomena in many unrelated languages. Recently, in their *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson extend the notion of embodiment by applying it to the area of human activity that is usually considered to be in an almost polar opposition to carnal matters. In their early work, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) show that many of the everyday metaphors that people *live by*, as well as the schemata on which not only language, but also conceptualisation is based, originate in various aspects and functions of the human body. As an example, we might consider such a basic pattern of experience as the upright (vertical) position with the control centre placed at the top, which sanctions such metaphors as HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP, RATIONAL IS UP or GOOD IS UP and HAPPY IS UP. The axiological (evaluative) elements present in specific image schemata and the nature of underlying bodily experience that motivates them have recently been analysed by Krzeszowski (1997). In general, it appears that more attention has been devoted to what one might call the physiology rather than to the pathology of bodily experience<sup>1</sup> – and the present analysis can be seen as an attempt to reverse this imbalance.

### **Metaphor and historical lexicon**

In what follows, I am going to be guided by several related postulates concerning the nature of semantics and the organisation of the mental lexicon current within the cognitive linguistic theory. Starting with Langacker's conception of word meaning, a strictly modular, dictionary-based model of the lexicon has gradually been replaced by one that views the lexicon as encyclopaedic in its nature, with access to all relevant, mentally available information. Within this model, no limit is set on just how much of the general encyclopaedic knowledge is directly relevant linguistically, and thus can be considered as the semantic representation of a lexeme, or its semantic pole (Langacker (1987:63,76)). It seems that the prototype-based model of lexical categories renders this open-endedness less of a problem, as the most entrenched information may be viewed as a prototypical core of a lexeme's semantics, from which links to more peripheral (individual or contextually evoked) knowledge are formed.

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<sup>1</sup> This was definitely more true when an earlier version of this article was presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Cognitive Linguistics Conference in 2001, before the publication of an important contribution to the cognitive analysis of disease by Nerlich *et al.*

The notion of metaphor is as old as human interest in language. Understandably, over time it has been developed and reinterpreted by philosophers, linguists and literary critics, so that it seems necessary to elucidate the understanding of metaphor implicit in the present analysis, where the term *metaphor* is going to be applied to a wide spectrum of phenomena, encompassing not only conventional and poetic metaphors but also simile and analogy. This rather catholic approach is partly explained by the understanding of the lexicon developed within cognitive linguistics. The evidence for the relevance of a wide range of metaphorical links for the lexicon comes from several directions, including polysemy structures and change of meaning, where many classic examples of semantic change involve metaphorical extensions, sometimes of the most poetic nature (see Ullmann (1962:212–218); Stern (1931:301–330)).

Traditionally, similes have not drawn as much scholarly attention as metaphors. This may be due to their more overt, less radical operation – saying that one thing is *like* another does not seem to involve as dramatic a leap of imagination as shifting a concept across domains. It seems, however, that the use of the word *like*, which formally sets apart simile from metaphor, is of less importance than the cognitive distance between the two juxtaposed concepts. Whether we say that *time is money*, or *time is like money*, we are invoking cross-domain mappings at the conceptual level. As Kittay (1987:18) notices,

[...] although there are important distinctions to be drawn between metaphor and simile, a point frequently missed is that similes are not mere comparisons any more than metaphors are.

At the same time, it would be impossible to deny that there is a difference in the intensity of the effect evoked by metaphor and simile respectively, just as [...] *looking at a scene through blue spectacles is different from comparing that scene to something else* (Black 1979:31).

A historical semantic study cannot remain impervious to arguments concerning the mutual influence of language and culture. Far from being solved, the controversy over the linguistic relativity hypothesis has recently been revived within the cognitive linguistic paradigm (cf. Lee 1996). Recognising the relevance of different aspects of the cultural background for the meaning of linguistic expressions has two immediate consequences for a study in historical semantics. On the one hand, it calls for the reconstruction of those aspects of culture – scientific knowledge, belief systems, historical events, and social mores of the time – that are pertinent to the scope of the linguistic analysis. On the other, the analysis of culturally significant concepts might offer further insight into the culture in which they are embedded. In her recent book, Wierzbicka (1997) presents several contemporary cultures through what she believes to be their *key terms*; although I am not going to argue that *smallpox* was a key term in England during the Renaissance and Restoration periods, the

rampant epidemic disease that was characteristic of that time would suggest that the concept must have been salient in the minds of the speakers and (more relevantly) writers of Early Modern English.

In order to fully appreciate the motivation of the metaphorical mappings to be presented, care has to be taken to avoid viewing historical data in terms of present-day models of the body and its functions. To the extent to which this is possible, an attempt will be made to place linguistic expressions against the context of the contemporary knowledge about human anatomy and attitudes to carnal matters, constituting folk and scientific models of DISEASE and contagion current at the time.

## Disease in Early Modern England

From what we can fathom about the seventeenth century folk model of disease, the views on etiology must have varied, reflecting the changes within the scientific model that were taking place at the time. The knowledge of the relatively recent discoveries of microorganisms by Anton van Leeuwenhoek (as a direct result of his invention of the microscope), and the medical model of the *seeds* of infection described by Girolamo Fracastoro in 1546 were not immediately assimilated within the medical profession. Fracastorius recognised the fact that disease is spread by germs (*semina*), and [...] *worked out a clear and essentially accurate analysis of the way in which living germs operate, without ever suspecting that they were living* (Winslow 1967:133). However, a very different model gained currency in the 17<sup>th</sup> century England, where Thomas Sydenham advocated the view that it was the *epidemic constitution of the atmosphere* that caused the Great Plague of 1665–66. In the case of the plague, Sydenham admitted that, in addition to the constitution of the air, there must exist another cause, such as receiving the effluvia from an infected person. When it came to other diseases, such as smallpox, he ignored the factor of contagion and stressed the metaphysical factor, which must be seen as a significant step backwards in the development of epidemiology, and consequently prevention of contagious disease (cf. Winslow (1967:174)).

Yet, from what is known about the intellectual activity and literacy among the new urban classes in the seventeenth century, and about the development of the new institutions such as academies or learned societies, one can assume that the new ideas were rapidly disseminated and may have influenced a layperson's understanding of disease. Also, all the contemporary preventive measures, involving the building of barriers between the sick and the well, such as quarantine, the shutting up of infected houses, and the wearing of special protective clothing, indicate that disease was generally perceived as an invasion of a body by some unspecified agents.

Consequently, we may conclude for the purposes of this analysis that many different, often competing models of disease were current at the time, giving rise to even more numerous folk models entertained by the authors and audiences of the texts that constitute the database.

## Smallpox

Smallpox has been chosen as the focus for this study because of the exceptional place of this disease in both the history of mankind and the history of medicine. In the latter, medical context, smallpox is unique, as it is believed to be the first contagious disease ever to have been eradicated.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the concept whose semantics we are going to trace is to a large extent historical, as it does not have a referent in the real world. On the other hand, it is one that for ages must have been very salient in the minds of generations, as [...] *in the suddenness and unpredictability of its attack, the grotesque torture of its victims, the brutality of its lethal and disfiguring outcome, and the terror that it inspired, smallpox is unique among human diseases* (Hopkins (1983:3)).

The first peak of the increased morbidity and, it could be claimed, increased cognitive salience of the disease, coincides with the period in which the texts used in this analysis were written: although smallpox had probably been present in England even before king Edward's Crusaders returned from the Holy Land in 1300, it suddenly became much more dangerous in the seventeenth century. The statistics of smallpox mortality in London indicate the increase in the fatality of the disease during the period 1574–1730, with fluctuations in the virulence of the smallpox during the period, with a first peak during 1670–1690 and a second in 1710–1730. According to Hopkins (1983:32),

*[...] if smallpox began to reach alarming levels in Europe during the latter part of the sixteenth century, by the end of the seventeenth century Variola major had clearly succeeded plague, leprosy, and syphilis as the continents foremost pestilence. Typhus, dysentery and plague were still common killers of Europeans, but smallpox was now the most common.*

The data for this study has been extracted from the English Drama and Early English Prose Fiction<sup>3</sup> Chadwyck-Healey databases. The occurrences of the lexeme *smallpox* in the literature written in the years 1650–1750 reveal the expected familiarity of the authors with the disease, while it seems that many of the overt and implicit metaphors and similes would remain incomprehensible to

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<sup>2</sup> The last case of natural smallpox reported in 1975 in Bangladesh (*Variola major*) and in 1977 in Somalia (*Variola minor*), and the extinction of the disease certified by the Global Commission for the Smallpox Eradication in 1979 (Hopkins 1983:317).

<sup>3</sup> Copyright 1996-99 Chadwyck-Healey Ltd and Chadwyck-Healey Inc.

a modern reader, at a time when, at least in Europe, the disease has long been extinct. In other words, the eighteenth century observation that *there is no disease to which mankind is unhappily subject, so fatal in its effects, so universal in its influence, which so deeply affects the minds of people*<sup>4</sup> could not be reiterated at the beginning of the twenty first century.

## Analysis

Although the data is going to be presented in a maximally non-technical manner, the analysis is nevertheless based on the understanding of metaphor current within cognitive linguistics, and, consequently, couched in the relevant terminology. Since Lakoff and Johnson's early work in the field, which inspired renewed interest in metaphor, the metaphorical process has been described as a mapping between a *source* and *target domain* – corresponding to the *vehicle* and *theme*, or *secondary* and *primary subject* in more traditional terminology. These terms are more than just new labels for old ideas, as they highlight those aspects of metaphor that have been in the foreground of cognitive linguistic research: the term *domain* emphasizes the fact that the juxtaposed *subjects* are viewed as complex conceptual structures, while the notion of *mapping* captures the non-random, systematic nature of the described projection. More recently, Fauconnier (1997) has been describing metaphors in terms of *blends*, a special case of *mental spaces* that inherit parts of the source and target structure, but whose structure is partly emergent as a result of the processes of *composition*, *completion*, and *elaboration*. The juxtaposition of the two *input spaces* and the cross-space mapping is sanctioned by the fact that they share some common, more abstract structure, which is referred to as the *generic space*. The generic space thus reflects the partial – existing, perceived, or even created (see Turner (1987:17)) – similarities between the two input spaces, and thus corresponds to what has traditionally been known as the *ground* of the metaphor. It is the ground, or generic space, that seems to be particularly revealing when it comes to the semantics of the two concepts that participate in the metaphor, as it is here that the beliefs about their (shared) attributes, which belong to the relevant folk model, are reflected.

Somewhat surprisingly, but perhaps less so in view of the dominant themes characteristic of the genres represented in the database, the most frequent concept for which SMALLPOX serves as the source domain is LOVE. The assertion that LOVE IS (LIKE) SMALLPOX highlights several different aspects of similarity between the relevant event scenarios. In the first example, the ground for the comparison rests on a shared metaphor – both LOVE and

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Thompson. 1752. *An Enquiry into the Smallpox*, quoted in Razzell (1977:123).

SMALLPOX are conceptualized as FLUIDS IN A CONTAINER: <sup>5</sup> *I love Plain-dealing – I'd have Love come out like the Small Pox, or else 'tis dangerous* (Shadwell, T. *The volunteers* (1693)). The use of the phrase *come out* reflects a theory popular at the time, maintaining that *seeds* of smallpox, present in the blood of every individual from the moment birth, would at the time of an epidemic become active, making the blood ferment and expel the consequent waste through the pores of the skin. Once the disease had broken out, the body was seen as a CONTAINER filled with its *poisonous juices*; it was believed that the prognosis was better if there was more issue from the eruptions or at the place of incision (cf. Razzell (1977:7)). The same metaphorical understanding must have motivated the medical practice of opening the pox pustules with a lancet or a golden needle, so that the disease could *come out*. This operation made many patients worse, but it was not until the end of the seventeenth century that it was abandoned. Also, the *hot treatment*, imposed by doctors until in 1682 Thomas Sydenham recommended a much more beneficial cooling treatment, was based on the premise that the patient should sweat [...] *lest the efforts of the nature should be impeded, [...] and the matter which ought to be driven out should be retained* (Shurkin (1979:63)). The practice is described in the following example, where the verb *throw out* is a further indication of how smallpox was conceptualized as FLUID IN A CONTAINER, with disastrous consequences for the patients to whom the internal logic of the container model was applied.

*In short, a Physician set me on fire, by giving me Medicines to throw out my Distemper. I died of a hot Regimen, as they call it, in the Small-Pox* (Fielding, H. *A Journey from this World to the Next* (1743)).

The conviction about the existence of *inner seeds* of smallpox in every individual led to the acceptance of INEVITABILITY as one of the attributes of the disease. This attribute provided the ground for the explicitly formulated comparison stating that, in this respect, LOVE IS LIKE SMALLPOX. There are several instances of this more general mapping, highlighting different aspects of the perceived similarity. Thus, we read: [...] *Ne'r be asham'd: Love, like the Small Pox, since it must be, is best had while we are young* (Sedley, C. *Bellamira* (1687)). This is an example of a popular simile, which may have been conventionalized to the extent of becoming a proverb. Again, it states that LOVE IS LIKE SMALLPOX, and the ground is provided by the (then) experientially justified belief that both events constitute inexorable parts of the human condition. The second part of the explicitly stated ground, proclaiming that smallpox is best had while young, had dubious experiential basis, for there

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kövecses (1986:82). Love is one of the many emotions that are conceptualized as fluids within container, schematic for the body or, especially in the case of love, for the heart.

is no proof that the prognostications in smallpox were better for young patients. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the victims in the eighteenth century were young children, and in London [...] *nine of every ten persons who died of smallpox were under five years old* – the main reason being the fact that most of the adults were already immune (Hopkins (1983:74)). Other sources state that in smallpox [...] *the death rate is much higher for the very young and the very old* (Shurkin (1979:27)).

Possibly, then, the conclusion does not refer to the medical, but rather to the psychological advantages of having smallpox at a young age, and then being able to live without fear. The phrase *since it must be* referring to smallpox is a reflection of an almost fatalistic acceptance of the reality of the time, which was by no means restricted to England: similar expressions were to be found in other languages, such as the German proverb stating that *From love and smallpox but few remain free* (Hopkins (1983:32)). The same folk wisdom is expressed in the following two passages:

*Yes, Love like the small Pox, as any seldom escape it, so the more dangerous it is when it comes late* (Ravenscroft, E. *The Canterbury guests* (1695)).

*Love, like the small Pox, as any seldom escape it, so the longer we live without it, the more Dangerous 'tis when it comes* (Ravenscroft, E. *King Edgar and Alfreda* (1677)).

Although this simile might appear to be a variant of the even more widespread and more conventionalized metaphor LOVE IS A DISEASE,<sup>6</sup> the two are sanctioned by distinct configurations of similarities. The latter metaphor is based on very general similarities between the two states, such as the different forms of both physiological and psychological changes they involve, while the cross-domain mapping from SMALLPOX to LOVE highlights the alleged inevitability of both events. The ‘explanation’ in the two examples refers to the (erroneous) folk belief that smallpox is more dangerous when contracted later in life. The same set of beliefs about the inevitability of smallpox, and the advantages of undergoing it at a young age, sanctions the following metaphor: *Love is a natural Distemper; a kind of small Pox. Most have either had it, or is to expect it, and the sooner the better.* The metaphor is then developed into an analogy, in which the alteration and disfigurement caused by smallpox serve as the generic space – or ground – sanctioning the mapping, in which LOVE is to the MIND as SMALLPOX is to the BODY.

*To be short, thus I continued Loving upon the stretch without fear or wit, so long till I had forgot my self and every thing else, till I found my Mind as much disfigured with that feverish disease, as my Face with the Small-pox – and to lose such a Face, and such a Mind* (Dunton, J. *A Voyage Round the World* (1691)).

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ungerer and Schmidt (1996:132). See also Kövecses (1986:87), who writes about the physiological grounds for this metaphor.



The metaphorical construal of SMALLPOX AS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER serves as the ground of yet another comparison, this time with a negative emotion, Jealousy:

*Jealousie, like the Small-Pox; if it comes out kindly, is never mortal; and my Love will be the stronger; and the more vigorous, for this short Distemper* (Shadwell, T. *A true widow* (1679)).

The metaphor maps the smallpox scenario onto the domain of love, by stating that love will be stronger (immune to jealousy) after a mild bout of that emotion, just like a body/person is stronger (immune to smallpox) after smallpox *comes out kindly*.

Emotions are not the only abstract concepts juxtaposed with smallpox: in the following examples, two axiologically opposite moral attributes are compared with the disease. The first simile, VICE IS LIKE SMALLPOX, is grounded in the observation that both smallpox and vice seem to be inevitable (negative) facets of life: *He knows no Vice, poor Boy. He will have his turn to know it then; as sure as he will have the Small Pox* (Shadwell, T. *The squire of Alsatia* (1688)). A more elaborate generic space sanctions the next simile, suggesting that CONSCIENCE IS LIKE SMALLPOX:

*I don't see any body has any Conscience, after they come to years of Discretion. Most People have it when they are young, as they have the Small Pox; but when they are once cured of it, they are seldom troubled with it any more* (Crowne, J. *Regulus* (1694)).

The implicit ground (expressed by the verb *cure*) is provided by the satirical notion that, like smallpox, conscience is a disease. The explicit ground of comparison – *most people have it when they are young* – is supported by the fact that smallpox was at the time a childhood disease. The other part of the explicit ground *when they are once cured of it, they are seldom troubled with it any more* refers to the acquired immunity to the disease, which in the target space is translated into the indifference to conscience.

In many of the examples presented above, smallpox, in addition to serving as the source domain of metaphor and simile, is itself conceptualized metaphorically as a fluid in a container. Further occurrences of the lexeme reveal other source domains used in the conceptualizations of the disease. Thus, in the following example SMALLPOX and other diseases are presented as (animate?) PURSUERS: *I have escap'd the Jaundice, Green Sickness, and the Small Pox* (Farquhar, George: *The inconstant* (1702)). The experiential grounding for this metaphor may be traced to the common practice of leaving the infected houses or towns, often to no avail, as the person literally trying to escape from the disease was often already infected.

Smallpox and other diseases are portrayed as AGENTS (or INSTRUMENTS) in the frame of the verb *carry away*: *Children; squalling Children. Ay, but then there are Rickets and Small-Pox, which perhaps may carry them all away* (Farquhar, G. *Love and a bottle* (1699)). This

conceptualization of disease is embedded in the deeply entrenched model of death as departure (Cf. Lakoff and Turner (1989:10)), expressed in many languages in euphemistic phrases meaning “pass away” or “leave”.

In another example, mortal smallpox is more clearly personified as a THIEF:

*I had a very severe Affliction indeed, while she lived with me, for the Small-Pox, a frightful Distemper in that Country, broke into my Family, and carry'd off three of my Children, and a Maid Servant (Defoe, D. Colonel Jack (1723)).*

Apart from being deadly, another reason why smallpox induced fear was the havoc it wreaked on the appearance of its victims. In this context, smallpox is often metaphorically understood as an (animate) destroyer of faces:

*Keep off your hands, or else may Thunder Blast me, if my Nails don't dig as many Holes in your Face as ever the Small-Pox did (D'Urfey, T. The intrigues at Versailles (1697)).*

In this example, while being the target of the metaphor SMALLPOX IS AN ANIMATE BEING, the concept simultaneously functions as the source of the simile: NAILS (metonymically, a person) CAN BE LIKE SMALLPOX, on the grounds of the effect they have on a victims face. The appearance of the pocks, and the alteration of a face are the aspects of smallpox mentioned in the texts more often than its other symptoms, such as fever or excruciating pain, or the fact that it is contagious. The fear of disfigurement inspired by smallpox made it a very appropriate concept to be used for cursing and ill wishing,<sup>7</sup>

*I will sell my Soul to the Devil; but I will be reveng'd; May thy Daughters have the small-pox till their faces look like the inside of a Bee-Hive. (Mountfort, W. The successful strangers (1690)).*

Somewhat unexpectedly, several examples highlighting ALTERATION of the face place it in the positive axiological space, which can be interpreted as a function of the genre. The plays in the database are usually comedies, often dealing with intrigue and deceit, so that the alteration of the protagonist's face may be used to his advantage:

*But, telling her I had lately been sick of the Small Pox, which had extremely alter'd me, it pass'd clearly (D'Urfey, T. The virtuous wife (1680)).*

*'Tis she, by Heaven, but the Small Pox has so alter'd me I see she does not know me, which suits well with my design (D'Urfey, T. The campaigners (1698)).*

In one example, this attribute of smallpox is used in what might seem like an ironic remark: *And your Complexion nothing cou'd mend but the Small Pox. (Wycherley, W. The plain-dealer (1677)).* However, other occurrences of the

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<sup>7</sup> The instances where *smallpox* is used as a swearword are not analyzed here, although they are found in all samples in great numbers.

lexeme suggest that traces of smallpox on a man's face could indeed be considered as an improvement of his looks:

*His face mark'd with the small-pox, but no more than what added a grace of more manliness to features, rather turn'd to softness, and delicacy, was marvelously enliven'd by eyes* (Cleland, J. *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749)).

*His person is pleasing; he has good eyes and teeth (the only beauties I require), is marked with the small pox, which in men gives a sensible look; very manly, and looks extremely like a gentleman* (Brooke, F. M. *Emily Montague* (1769)).

Thus, it would seem that even the very strong PEJORATIVE element of the conceptualization of smallpox could be relativised if that was warranted by the context – a man whom smallpox made less *turned to softness and delicacy*, or *more sensible*, became less effeminate (more prototypical), and thus more desirable.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the similes and metaphors where smallpox serves as the source domain, we can extrapolate several elements of what might be seen as the conceptual scenario of SMALLPOX current in the Early Modern English period. In this scenario, or folk model, smallpox is an inseparable part of life from its beginning, for every human being carries *inner seeds* of the disease, which makes it INEVITABLE. The inescapability of the disease, together with its possible outcomes, such as DEATH, or DISFIGUREMENT, forms a strong link between SMALLPOX and the negative emotion of FEAR. Naturally, the fear is preempted if smallpox is contracted and survived in childhood – creating lifelong IMMUNITY. The notion of DISFIGUREMENT seems to have a bleached variant, ALTERATION (experientially grounded in the cases of mild smallpox, which left only a few marks), which in turn can lose its pejorative element completely, and lead to the perception of SMALLPOX as an almost positive<sup>8</sup> experience.

Other examples, where smallpox itself is the topic of discourse, and thus becomes the target domain of metaphor, show that the disease can be conceptualized within alternative, experientially motivated metaphorical scenarios, where it is personified as a PURSUER or THIEF. It could be argued that these metaphors led to beneficial practices in the face of an epidemic, such as isolating the sick and leaving the infected areas. These personifications are complementary with the model mentioned above, conceptualizing SMALLPOX

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<sup>8</sup> For rather obvious reasons, the positive axiological charge of SMALLPOX is restricted to its conceptualization as a past event.

as FLUID IN A CONTAINER, and thus portraying the disease as existing interior, rather than exterior to the body. This metaphor, which was deeply embedded within the contemporary scientific model of disease, mapped the common knowledge about fluids in containers, notably hot, or fermenting fluids, onto the smallpox scenario, and encouraged potentially lethal methods of treating the disease, proving to be one of these cases when, indeed, *metaphors and myths [...] kill* (Sontag (1990:102)).

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