Article

The Death Taboo: Euphemism and Metaphor in Epitaphs from the English Cemetery of Malaga, Spain

Eliecer Crespo-Fernández

Department of Modern Philology, University of Castilla-La Mancha, 30071 Ciudad Real, Spain; eliecer.crespo@uclm.es

Abstract: In spite of the fact that taboos change over time, death is still a delicate and sensitive subject in today's Western societies. Our unwillingness to talk openly about death and dying makes people resort to euphemism as a safe way to talk about human mortality and related matters. Following Steen's Deliberate Metaphor Theory, this study discusses the role that euphemistic metaphors play on a sample of 174 gravestone inscriptions from the English Cemetery of Malaga, the oldest Protestant cemetery in Spain, and, at the same time, examines the social and cognitive aspects of metaphor in epitaph writing. The analysis carried out reveals that most of the 96 metaphorical items observed in the gravestone inscriptions present positive connotations. Indeed, the source domains of REST, PEACE, NEW LIFE and JOURNEY offer an optimistic and comforting approach to death and dying, whereas the domains of LOSS and SEPARATION refer to the target domain of death in negative terms. All in all, the metaphors encountered in the epitaphs are deliberately used both to help the bereaved confront the loss of a loved one and pay tribute to the deceased.

Keywords: death taboo; euphemism; deliberate metaphor; epitaph

1. Introduction

Although times change and taboo subjects vary widely, death still remains one of the greatest taboos in our contemporary Western societies, one of our great forbidden topics along with personal inequalities based on gender, race and disabilities. For many people, death is a touchy subject, too intimate and delicate to talk about in straightforward terms. Lee even argues that death "is prejudged as a 'pornographic' event that should be veiled" (Lee 2008, p. 745). Death is, indeed, a timeless and complex taboo in which different interdictions coexist. On the one hand, death is a fear-based taboo, a phenomenon that we cannot control or have direct experience of. In Allan and Burridge's (2006, p. 235) words, it is "an unknown, something to be avoided and something that is reasonable to be fearful of"[1]. On the other hand, death is a social taboo people are supposed to respect in civilised conversation out of respect for the bereaved family. In any case, either owing to fear, superstition or tact and respect, the fact remains that death has not lost its interdictive strength with the passing of time.

Our discomfort with the topic of human mortality is reflected on the vast array of lexical alternatives for death and dying, both metaphorical and non-metaphorical, which ultimately seems to confirm the strength of the taboo. As Burridge (2004, p. 2) claimed, taboo "provides a fertile seedbed for words to flourish—and the more potent the taboo, the richer the growth". The taboo surrounding death makes people try to soften the effect of death-related concepts in communication. To this end, they resort to euphemism as a way to talk about human mortality and related matters without sounding rude or insensitive. Euphemism, from Greek *eu* 'well' and *phēmē* 'speaking' is, simply put, the process whereby a taboo-laden, i.e., unpleasant or offensive, term or expression is stripped of its most explicit overtones. A socially acceptable and polite-sounding word such as, for example, the euphemistic departure facilitates the reference to such a delicate topic as

death in communication. Euphemism, however, is not simply a question of word choice; as we will see, euphemism is a complex process which helps us to understand how a taboo subject—death in our case—is conceived in social groups and what beliefs are more or less implicitly accepted.

As epitaphs—a significant part of the death ritual for thousands of years[2]—constitute a breeding ground for death-related euphemism, this study explores the euphemistic language of death on a sample of epitaphs from the English Cemetery of Malaga, the oldest Protestant cemetery in mainland Spain. In doing so, this research analyses the social, cultural and cognitive dimensions of metaphor use in epitaph writing. Given that figurative language constitutes a common way to cope with death in different discourse types and genres—mostly, but not exclusively, epitaphs and obituaries (see Crespo-Fernández 2006, 2011, 2013; Herrero Ruiz 2007; Jamet 2010; Kuczok 2016; Heynderickx et al. 2017; Heynderickx and Dieltjens 2021a, 2021b, among others)—this study focuses specifically on the conceptual metaphors aimed at substituting the notions of death and dying inscribed upon the gravestones. For this purpose, the theoretical assumptions that this study is embedded in derive from Steen's (2015, 2017) Deliberate Metaphor Theory. This is a cognitively based model which concerns the intentional use of metaphors in real-life discourse within a multi-dimensional framework that conceives metaphor not only as a matter of language but, more importantly, as a matter of thought which serves a particular purpose in communication. This study departs from two basic assumptions: first, epitaphs are not merely death announcements; rather, they reflect the attitude of people towards mortality; second, metaphor plays a key role in gravestone inscriptions, especially in the so-called "opinion" epitaphs, i.e., personal and emotive inscriptions in which feelings play a key role.

The present research seems to be justified—although previous cognitively based studies have focused on the metaphorical language of epitaphs in European cemeteries (Crespo-Fernández 2011, 2013; Heynderickx and Dieltjens 2021b), to the best of my knowledge, no research so far has been devoted to the analysis of euphemistic metaphors in the gravestone inscriptions of an English cemetery located on mainland Spain[3]. The only existing study devoted to the epitaphs from the English Cemetery of Malaga, by Marchant Rivera et al. (2005), however interesting it may be, does not offer a linguistic analysis of metaphor as a euphemistic response to the death taboo, as is the case here.

This study is structured as follows. Section 2 offers the theoretical assumptions on which this study is based and delimits the concept of euphemism. Section 3 briefly presents the data sample and the methodology used. Sections 4 and 5, respectively, offer the results and a discussion of the findings obtained from the analysis of the death-related conceptual metaphors observed in the gravestones, which constitutes the main focus of the research. Some final comments and remarks will bring the study to an end.

2. Theoretical Assumptions

As mentioned earlier, the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis of metaphor is based on Steen's (2015, 2017) Deliberate Metaphor Theory. As a cognitively based approach, Steen's model assumes that metaphor is not merely a matter of language but fundamentally a cognitive device which has the capacity to create, organise and provide a particular understanding of reality through the correspondence between the linguistic content of metaphors (i.e., the source domain, the realm of the physical or more concrete reality) and what they describe (i.e., the target domain, death in our case). This view of metaphor as a cross-domain mapping provides for two levels of metaphor: conceptual metaphor, i.e., a semantic mapping of a source domain onto a target domain; and linguistic metaphor, i.e., the surface realisations of the cross-domain conceptual mappings.

It is important to note that sometimes the dividing line between metaphor and metonymy is rather fuzzy. Although both are cognitive devices that serve to reason and talk about the world in particular terms by highlighting or hiding certain aspects of the target domain, simply put, the difference lies in the fact that conceptual metaphors involve two domains in a relation of resemblance or correlation, whereas metonymies operate

within a single domain in a relation of contiguity whereby the part stands for the whole, the cause for the effect, the result for the action and so on. However, it is true that conceptual metaphors have some metonymic motivation. As Barcelona (2003, p. 31) argues, "every metaphorical mapping presupposes a conceptually prior metonymic mapping, or to put it differently, [...] the seeds for any metaphorical transfer are to be found in a metonymic projection".

In order to account for the potential of figurative language to generate euphemistic meanings in discourse, a more socially oriented approach to that first proposed by Lakoff and his colleagues in the eighties and early nineties (Johnson 1987; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff [1979] 1993) must be followed. In this sense, Steen's Deliberate Metaphor Theory (Steen 2015, 2017) seems particularly useful. This is a theory about metaphor in language use and discourse "which concerns the intentional use of metaphors as metaphors between sender and addressee" (Steen 2017, p. 1). This theory relies on Steen's (2011) three-dimensional model of metaphor: metaphor as a matter of language (linguistic function); metaphor as a matter of thought (conceptual function); but also, and fundamentally, metaphor as a matter of communication. This three-fold definition of metaphor can help explain the role of figurative language expressions in real-life discourse, their rhetorical impact on the receiver and the deliberate and intentional behavior behind metaphor use. In this respect, Steen (2011, p. 59) claims that "metaphor may manifest itself in communication when it is used deliberately and then it is a matter of conscious thought by challengeable metaphorical models with a predominantly social function". From these words it may be deduced first that the source domain is purposely exploited in communication to highlight, deliberately, one particular image of reality over another for specific communicative intentions—in fact, what distinguishes deliberate metaphor from non-deliberate metaphor is that, in the former, language users "pay distinct attention to the source domain as a separate domain of reference" (Steen 2017, p. 2)[4]; and second, that metaphor is necessarily linked to social and cultural issues.

In this way, Steen's theory makes it possible to gain an insight into the axiological value of metaphors and how their persuasive force is projected in real-life discourse, which is of utmost importance in the present research. For example, in the euphemistic expression "go to Heaven", one of the instantiations of the JOURNEY metaphor for death, the notion of movement from one place to another as part of the source domain is represented outside the target domain and purposefully highlighted and employed for euphemistic purposes: dying is conceived of as a journey to a better place, at least for Christians. The metaphor employed here is used as a means by which to provide some sort of hope and consolation for those left alive. In this regard, metaphor is not only a matter of language but also a matter of thought which is deliberately used to serve a specific purpose in the context of the epitaph.

This view of metaphor supports the approach to euphemism adopted in this study. Euphemism goes beyond a word-for-word substitution process intended exclusively to avoid an unpleasant or potentially offensive word or expression. Rather, following Casas Gómez (2009, 2018), euphemism is understood as a cognitive process of conceptualisation of a certain forbidden reality (death in our case), whereby the taboo concept is stripped of its most explicit or distasteful overtones, thus allowing language users to refer to the taboo without sounding rude or insensitive. In this regard, "euphemistic" refers to any taboo-motivated (death-related in our case) lexical alternative deliberately used for a purpose in the context of funeral texts not only to avoid offence or disrespect but also to provide some sort of consolation to the bereaved family. From this perspective, euphemism can be considered a conceptual make-up which departs from the taboo reality and leads to the deliberate use of mild and polite-sounding words to refer to the taboo in polite conversation when no offence is meant. In this respect, for Allan and Burridge (1991, 2006), the linguistic manifestation of taboos is closely related with politeness, i.e., concern for the feelings of the interlocutor, through the notion of face, i.e., one's public self-image (Brown and Levinson 1987). In fact, these authors (Allan and Burridge 2006, pp. 29–30) defined the response

to the taboo in communication in terms of face effects; whereas the aim of euphemism (or "sweet talking", as they informally refer to it) is to "avoid possible loss of face by the speaker or also the hearer or some third party", dysphemism (or "speaking offensively") is the use of the dispreferred expression in order to cause the face loss of an interlocutor or that which is perceived as such. In this regard, these axiological categories of taboo naming, together with orthophemism (or direct and neutral reference to the taboo concept), are not merely a lexical response to the taboo; rather, they allow us to see how a taboo subject is understood and reasoned about within a social group, as we will see in the course of this analysis.

3. Materials and Methods

The data sample for this research consists of 174 gravestone inscriptions (3384 words) collected in the English Cemetery of Malaga, a Protestant cemetery founded in 1831 to provide for the burial of non-Catholics. After having fallen into a state of neglect by the end of the twentieth century, the cemetery was put into the hands of a Spanish non-profit foundation ("Fundación Cementerio Inglés de Málaga"), which is now in charge of preserving and maintaining the cemetery with the agreement of the British government. This cemetery, listed as a cultural asset by the Andalusian government in 2012, is currently registered with the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (ASCE) thanks to its artistic, historical and botanical value. The cemetery is the resting place of many notable figures such as the Spanish poet Jorge Guillén, the British hispanist Gerald Brenan or the American poet Gamel Wolsey, to mention a few.

The choice for epitaphs as the source of data for this study is not random: first, epitaphs are, obviously enough, a breeding ground for death-related euphemism, as pointed out before; and second, epitaphs allow us to focus on authentic, naturally occurring data, thereby avoiding a set of examples constructed by the author or excerpted from lexicographic sources. It is important to note that epitaphs are here considered instances of functional language (Halliday 1985, p. 10); that is, language that is doing some job in a specific context. In fact, epitaphs fulfil a two-fold function: they indicate the identity and resting place of the dead and facilitate mourning (see Kichner 2012, p. 7). Epitaphs can therefore be seen as goal-oriented texts whose function is carried out through euphemistic terms and expressions.

Out of the 174 epitaphs that make up the corpus, 99—that is, 56.89%—are opinion epitaphs, i.e., personal and sentimental inscriptions in which emotions, feelings and sometimes sociopolitical issues play a role. The remaining belong to the category of informative epitaphs, i.e., objective and impersonal inscriptions that provide basic information about the deceased, namely, name, dates of birth, and death or age[5]. It is also important to mention that not all the epitaphs are inscribed in English: 17 are fully written in Spanish, 8 in German and 3 in French.

Let us move on to methodological questions. The research methodology followed here roughly corresponds to the "bottom-up" approach, which can be summarised via the following steps.

- First, linguistic data is collected. The epitaphs were randomly collected from all types of graves, regardless of their historical or artistic value, metaphorical richness or relevance of the deceased in the community. It is worth noting that those epitaphs which could not be satisfactorily read for any reason (e.g., total or partial destruction of the inscription or the gravestone) were not included in the sample.

- Second, data are classified and interpreted. All the metaphorical references (be they words or expressions) to the notions of death and dying were searched for in the epitaphs. To this end, as metaphors are not always easy to detect in real communication. The method for metaphor detection developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) known as Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) was put into practice. This method consists of three steps: first, establishing the meaning of the lexical unit in context; second, determining the more basic meaning that the word has; and third, deciding whether

the contextual meaning of the word contrasts with a more basic, literal meaning but can be understood by some sort of familiarity with it. If this happens, the word is metaphorically used. Take, for instance, the term *departed* (in "departed this life") as an example of how this method has been applied. Its contextual meaning ('died') contrasts with its basic meaning ('leave a place') but can be understood in comparison with it (dying is seen as the act of leaving this world). Therefore, *departed* is a verb used metaphorically in the context of the epitaph. Although some conceptualisations (take, for instance, the REST metaphor in "Rest in peace" or "Here lies. . .") are not perceived as having a literal counterpart and can therefore be considered cases of "dead" or lexicalised metaphors, their analysis may still reflect a particular scheme of metaphorical thought and give us information concerning the way that the taboo of death is understood. This is why these metaphors have been included in the sample.

- Third, the conceptual metaphors that underlie the selected data are uncovered. To this end, the metaphorical units encountered in the sample were assigned first to their corresponding source domains and then, more particularly, to their source concepts within each domain (see Appendix A). For example, the euphemistic term *departed* is an example of the source concept DEPARTURE within the JOURNEY source domain.
- Fourth, some conclusions are reached from the analysis regarding the role of metaphorical euphemism in gravestone inscriptions and the social and ideological intentions underlying metaphor use.

4. Results

A total of 96 metaphorical euphemistic items for death and dying were found in the 174 gravestone inscriptions of the English cemetery of Malaga. These metaphorical references (be they words or expressions) can be assigned to six conceptualisations, namely, those which take REST (n = 42), PEACE (n = 20), NEW LIFE (n = 14), JOURNEY (n = 12), LOSS (n = 6) and SEPARATION (n = 2) as source domains. Figure 1 displays the number of linguistic metaphors in the sample classified by source domain.
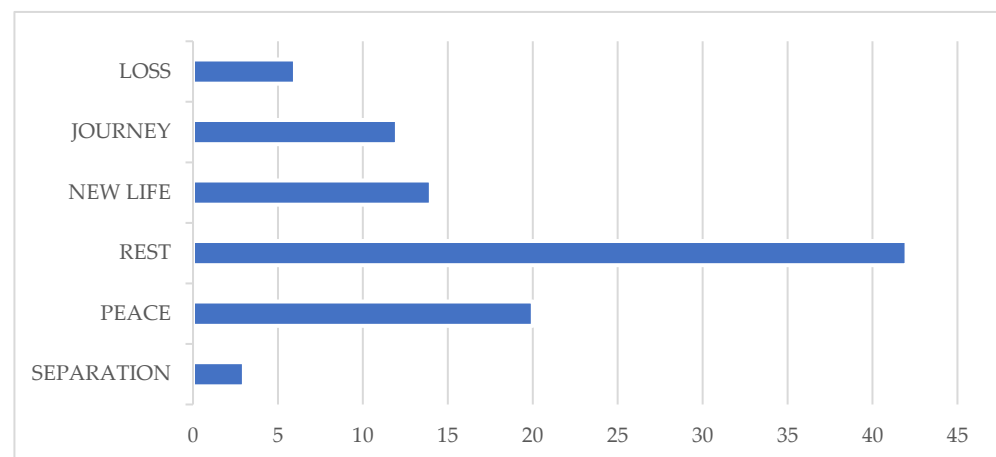

Figure 1. Scores of linguistic metaphors in the sample classified by source domain.

Concerning the evaluative role of metaphors found in the sample, graphically shown in Figure 2, it is important to highlight that the vast majority of the metaphorical words and expressions (to be precise, 88 out of 96, which makes up 91.66% of the total) carry positive connotations. Indeed, the source domains of REST, PEACE, NEW LIFE and JOURNEY offer an optimistic, even life-like approach to death. The only domains which express a negative evaluation of mortality, LOSS and SEPARATION have little relevance in quantitative terms; the conception of death as the loss of our most valuable possession and as the physical separation from our loved ones, respectively, only appears in eight metaphorical items (8.33%).
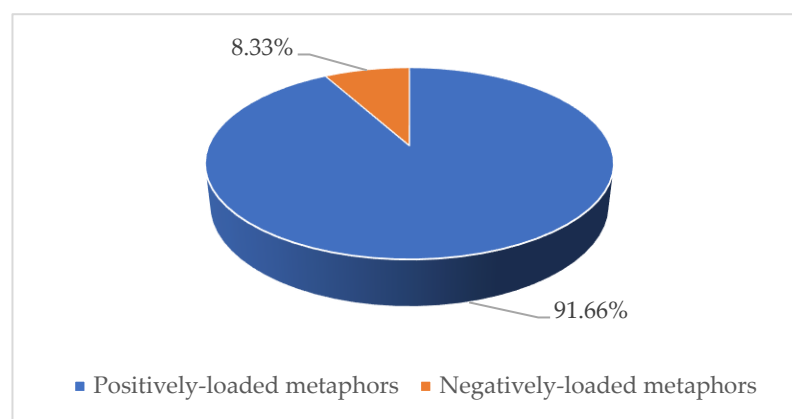
Figure 2. The evaluative nature of linguistic metaphors in the sample.

As shown in Figure 1, the REST domain is the most frequent in the epitaphs collected; it is the source of almost half of the linguistic metaphors detected in the sample (43.75%, to be precise). Within this domain, two source concepts can be distinguished: REST and SLEEP. The former, which is responsible for the vast majority of metaphorical euphemistic items included this metaphor (35 out of 42), is verbally realised in different ways: "rest" as a verb (followed by the prepositional phrases "in peace" and "in eternal peace"); and "rest" as a noun in nominal phrases ("eternal rest") and in prepositional phrases ("at rest", "into rest"). Other verbs within the source concept REST are "lie" (above all in the formula "Here lies…") and "repose", which appears both as a verb ("repose in thee") and as the object of the verb find ("find repose"). The corresponding verbs meaning "rest" in Spanish *descansar* and *reposar*, and in German, *ruhen*, have been also found in the inscriptions. For its part, the source concept SLEEP, materialised in the verbs "sleep" (in Jesus), "fall asleep" (in Jesus), its French equivalent *s'en dormir* and "slumber", is the source of seven metaphorical euphemistic references.

The REST domain is followed, at a distance, by PEACE. The view of death as peace appears in 20 linguistic metaphors found in the epitaphs (20.83%). This metaphor is verbalised in nominal and prepositional phrases ("peace", "everlasting peace", "at peace"), in particular expressions ("have peace with God", "peace after pain") and in the adverb "peacefully" ("peacefully passed away" and "died peacefully")[6]. This source concept also gives rise to the formulas "Rest in peace" and "In peace lies", in which the PEACE metaphor conflates with the metaphor DEATH IS REST, already seen.

Another metaphor with positive overtones takes NEW LIFE as source domain. Two source concepts within this metaphor can be distinguished in the epitaphs collected, namely, LIFE WITH GOD and LIFE WITH OUR LOVED ONES, which are the source of four and ten metaphorical euphemisms, respectively. The first source concept is verbally represented in expressions such as "in the arms of our Lord" and "live with God", whereas the second is found in verbal phrases ("join one's wife, meet again"), nouns ("reunion"), adjectives ("reunited") and adverbs ("together"). In the particular case of "rest together", the view of death as an encounter with a relative who died before combines with the REST metaphor. This conceptualisation is, in total, responsible for 14 consolatory euphemisms (14.58% of the metaphorical references collected).

There are 12 occurrences in the sample (12.50%) of the metaphor that understands death in terms of a journey. There are two versions of this conceptualisation in the epitaphs collected. The first one, which understands death as a journey with an unknown destination, focuses on the starting point of the journey and what is left behind. This source concept is responsible for a total of five linguistic metaphors, four verbs ("depart", "go", "leave", "pass away" and Latin *partire* 'leave') and one adjective ("departed"). The second version of the metaphor—linguistically materialised in the verbal expressions "go to God" and

"reach one's heavenly home"—highlights the spiritual destination of the journey that the deceased embarks on as the raw material of euphemism.

The source domains which do not present positive connotations to talk about death (LOSS and SEPARATION) have little relevance in quantitative terms (see Figure 2). The LOSS metaphor is the source of only six euphemisms for death and dying (6.25%), verbally materialised in three linguistic metaphors: "give one's life", "miss" and *pérdida*, 'loss', whereas just two linguistic metaphors—"part" and "separation"—(2.08%) can be assigned to the conceptualisation that views death as a physical separation from the loved ones.

5. Discussion

As seen in the preceding section, almost the totality of the metaphorical items found in the epitaphs under scrutiny imply a positive value-judgement of death. Indeed, the source domains of REST, PEACE, NEW LIFE and JOURNEY offer a comforting approach to human mortality, whereas LOSS and SEPARATION tend to evoke negative meanings. Let us see how these source domains are used to talk and reason about death and dying in the epitaphs from the English Cemetery of Malaga.

5.1. DEATH IS REST

The euphemistic basis of the death-as-rest metaphor lies on two assumptions: first, resting is a commonplace and temporary activity that the person can control over; and second, as Herrero Ruiz (2007, p. 64) argues, resting is not only physical but also, and perhaps more importantly, emotional and psychological. All these characteristics of what we understand by rest are transferred to death, which is conceptually represented as a peaceful and serene experience, far from all pain and earthly, everyday concerns; hence its euphemistic quality. In the following epitaph, "entered into rest" functions as a euphemistic alternative to "died" as a means for consolation.

(1)
> In ever loving
> memory of
> Harry
> eldest son of
> W. E & M. Welton
> who entered into rest July 21st 1899
> during a visit to Malaga
> aged 7 years[7]

It is worth noting that the REST metaphor gives rise to the formula "Rest in peace", a word-for-word translation of the Latin, *Requiescat in pace*. Although it is a standard, unemotional phrase in funeral inscriptions, even more so its initialism *R.I.P.*, in epitaphs such as (2) below, it is used in a more personal and intimate way.

(2)
> To the memory of
> Vera
> 19-7-1910–10-2-1997
> For 64 years
> the beloved wife of
> Henry L. W. (Bob) Cherry
> Rest in peace darling
> You will never
> be forgotten

This metaphor takes a step further in the verbs that represent death as sleep. This reoriented version of the REST metaphor is based on the analogy between some of the physiological qualities of sleep such as lack of movement and speech and those that characterise death. Furthermore, the relaxation and the sense of calmness one feels during sleep is also transferred to death in the inscriptions, which leads to the representation of death as a peaceful and serene experience. In the following epitaph, a poem by Thomas

Hardy is used to paint an idyllic and bucolic picture of the afterlife as a way to comfort those left alive.

(3)   Regret not me
                    Beneath the sunny tree
                    I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully

The source concept of SLEEP also makes it possible to view death in terms of a temporary experience, a commonplace activity that we do every day. This perception of death as temporary ultimately leads to the denial of death itself as a means for consolation in the following epitaph.

(4)   To the memory of
                    Elizabeth Martha
                    The maid is not dead but sleeping

In some materialisations of the REST metaphor, the source domain is explicitly associated with the afterlife: the sleep is tinged with a religious sense through the prepositional phrase "in Jesus" in cases such as "Them that sleep in Jesus". What we have here is a cultural elaboration of a metaphor based on the Judeo-Christian tradition which makes it possible to understand the rest in spiritual terms and separate it from earthly life[8]. In cases such as these, the metaphor clearly serves a consolatory purpose by reassuring the surviving relatives that the deceased is under the Lord's protection.

5.2. DEATH IS PEACE

The PEACE metaphor equates human mortality with a peaceful state of being, hence its consolatory function in the context of the epitaph. In (5), death is portrayed as serene and pleasant, as something not to be feared by virtue of the conflation of the source concepts of PEACE ("at peace") and LIFE WITH OUR LOVED ONES ("together once again").

(5)   In loving memory of
                    Harold Goodbarne
                    died 12th May 2012
                    and
                    Phillips Goodbarne
                    died 16th June 1995
                    Together once again
                    and at peace

The consolation that this metaphor suggests is more evident in epitaph (6). The view of death as a peaceful experience is highlighted through the opposition between peace and pain in "Peace after pain". In this way, the contrast established between heavenly life (peace) and earthily life (pain) is intended as consolation for the bereaved: the deceased is now in peace after having been liberated from the pains of life.

(6)   Cyril Wall
                    Born Manchester 12-7-31
                    Died Malaga 9-8-87
                    Beloved husband of Dorothy
                    Devoted to and lived by
                    his children, grandchildren, family
                    and friends
                    Peace after pain

The notion of death as peace gives rise to the euphemistic adverb "peacefully", which softens the semantic force of the verb "die" ("died peacefully") and is also present in the euphemistic "pass away" ("passed peacefully away"). The belief that the deceased has experienced a peaceful departure is a powerful source of comfort and consolation in the following epitaph.

(7)
<div align="center">

Molly
Much loved wife
of James Ritchie
died peacefully at
Parque San Antonio Malaga
Sept 24 1993
aged 86 years
</div>

It is worth noting that the PEACE metaphor for death also combines with some of the metaphors already commented. Indeed, the formula "Rest in peace", sometimes abbreviated as *R.I.P*, rests upon the conflation of the metaphors DEATH IS REST and DEATH IS PEACE both in emotive and intimate inscriptions, as happens with "Rest in peace, darling" in (2), and in impersonal epitaphs such as (8) below.

(8)
<div align="center">

Howitt Mathew Brian
29-6-1920–16-10-1983
Rest in peace
</div>

Furthermore, PEACE as a source domain conflates with the notion of death as a joyful life in which the deceased enjoys the company of a loved one in his or her afterlife in the inscription "Together once again and at peace" found in epitaph (5) above. These metaphorical conflations reflect that metaphors do not always perform their euphemistic, consolatory function in isolation.

5.3. DEATH IS A NEW LIFE

The belief that death is not the end but the gateway to a joyful afterlife in Heaven is an effective means of coping with the pain of the loss and the fear of dying. The verbal materialisations of this metaphor tend to present positive overtones insofar as they highlight the fact that death marks the beginning of a new life in which the deceased will not be alone, but will enjoy the company of God, the highest reward for any believer. In this sense, the death-as-life metaphor can be more explicitly postulated as TO BE DEAD IS TO LIVE WITH GOD. This metaphor applies in the following epitaph which illustrates the positive connotations that this conceptualisation carries.

(9)
<div align="center">

In memory of Julia and William (…)
Born at Malaga, October 17th 1859
Died
Julia Dec 3rd 1859
William Sept 6th 1860
No sin, no sorrow, no complaints
Our pleasures here destroy
We live with God and all his saints and endless is our joy
</div>

Within the same source concept of LIFE WITH GOD, the deceased is said to be "in the arms of our Lord" in (10). In this particular case, the euphemistic force of the metaphor is based on experiential correlation through the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS whereby a state (being dead) is equated with a particular location (being in the arms of our Lord) for consolatory purposes.

(10)
<div align="center">

Kenneth Hartley Pringle
*24-5-1943
†3-6-2011[9]
In the arms of our Lord
</div>

It is worth noting that the view of death as a life with God that epitaphs (9) and (10) illustrate has hyperbolic overtones: this source concept performs its euphemistic function by deliberately upgrading a considerable feature of the referent, a semantic process which is intended to magnify physical death. In fact, in the two epitaphs above the person has not just died; he is said to enjoy the company of God in Heaven, which, from the point of view of Christian belief, is the highest reward a believer can obtain for a virtuous life on earth.

The same applies to the expression "have peace with God" in (11), taken from a passage from the Bible (Romans 5:1), in which the LIFE WITH GOD and PEACE metaphors conflate.

(11)
> Lungley Prentige
> of Stowmarket England
> He died at Malaga
> December 27, 1858
> aged 27 years
> Being justified by faith,
> we have peace with
> God through our Lord Jesus Christ

In other epitaphs, the consolation derives more explicitly from the belief that the deceased will live a new life with his or her loved ones already dead, who are waiting for him or her in Heaven. This source concept is verbally realised through expressions which make the encounter explicit and ensure that close relationships will be maintained beyond death such as "joins his wife, meet again, reunited with his beloved wife or together again". In this sense, the fear of feeling isolated in an unknown dimension is relieved by the belief that those already dead (most commonly husband or wife) will accompany the deceased in the afterlife. This is the case of epitaph (12), in which the death of a man is represented as an encounter with his wife, who had left before him, and had been, since then, waiting for him so they could live "a long life together".

(12)
> In peace lies
> Alice Robbins (nee Tachdjian)
> 1918–1997
> married to husband Geoffrey
> for 52 years
> for whom she now waits
> Geoffrey Robbins
> joins his wife
> 25 09 1922–30 08 2008
> A long life together

It is worth noting that the LIFE metaphors employed in the epitaphs collected implicitly deny death as a means for consolation. In fact, the metaphors which conceive death as a new life either with God or with our loved ones already dead are based on antiphrasis; that is, on the identification of two antithetical concepts, death and life, as a means to refer euphemistically to death.

5.4. DEATH IS A JOURNEY

The JOURNEY metaphor is understood in terms of the source-path-goal image schema[10]. As Lakoff ([1979] 1993, p. 275) argues, "complex events have initial states (source), a sequence of intermediate stages (path) and a final stage (destination)". As we will see, this image schema applies differently in the epitaphs: some emphasise the act of leaving, that is, the starting point of the journey (or source location), whereas others highlight the destination (or goal location). In consequence, there are two versions of the JOURNEY metaphor at play: DEATH IS DEPARTURE and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION (Lakoff and Turner 1989, pp. 7–8).

The metaphorical mapping which represents death as a departure from this world presents different sets of conceptual correspondences as a result of using the knowledge we have about journeys to talk about death and dying: first, dying corresponds to leaving a place; second, the departed is someone who embarks on a journey with an unknown destination. In these sets of correspondences, the notion of movement is shown in verbs such as "depart", "go", "leave" and "pass away", which map motion (as the euphemistic source domain) onto change (as the target domain). Accordingly, as Grady (1997) argues, this version of the JOURNEY metaphor is based on the primary metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION; that is, the change involved in passing from life to death is motivated by the fact

that the deceased starts a journey in which the destination is left implicit, as seen in the epitaph that follows.

(13)
>To the memory of
>Mary
>Wife of Thomas Barnsley
>native of Donnington, Shropshire, England
>who departed this life at Malaga
>on the 6th of May 1860
>aged 86 years

In the second version of the JOURNEY metaphor, the final destination of the journey that the deceased (if mentioned) embarks on is a reunion with God in Heaven. By making the heavenly destination explicit through expressions such as "go to God" and "reach one's heavenly home", epitaph (14) is directly connected with Christian death. The forward movement here performs a consolatory function insofar as it implies a positive change from one state to another, leaving earthly life behind and embracing a better future in Heaven.

(14)
>In memory of Leonor Coello de Nolan
>who fell asleep in Jesus
>and reached her heavenly home
>May 28 1961

In this case, the JOURNEY metaphor can be considered more specifically a reoriented version of PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, a primary metaphor arising from our experience of going to places we intend to reach that underlies any metaphor in which we talk about goal-oriented activities (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez 2011). By virtue of this metaphor, death is metaphorically represented as a purposeful activity through which one may reach Heaven, which is, we should not forget, the highest reward for Christians, hence its euphemistic and consolatory capacity. Therefore, what we have here is an example of the complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL DEATH IS A JOURNEY in which two primary metaphors conflate: PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS.

Finally, it is worth noting that in any of the correspondences of the JOURNEY metaphor discussed here, the deceased is represented as a traveller, as someone who has embarked on a journey and, therefore, has been capable of moving. From this perspective, the deceased is considered somehow alive, which ultimately leads to the denial of death itself (Crespo-Fernández 2011, p. 211). This negation of mortality is used in the epitaphs as a means for consolation and relief insofar as it gives the hope of another life beyond the grave.

5.5. DEATH IS SEPARATION

The conceptual basis of the metaphor DEATH IS SEPARATION lies in the fact that death involves a physical separation: at the end of our lives, when we die physically and our body is placed into the grave, we are separated from our loved ones on earth[11]. Death takes away those we love, and this is one of the main reasons why people are so afraid of dying: that moment when your soul dissolves from your body and starts a journey to an unknown destination without anyone's help or support. The following epitaph exemplifies this metaphor.

(15)
>Alfred Halliday Mudie
>1906–1991
>and
>Irish Mudie
>Born 9 Nov. 1912
>Died 8 Nov. 1984
>Beyond the separation
>always a reunion

Although the conception of death as separation implies a negative value-judgement of human mortality, the fact remains that the negatively loaded term "separation" stands in

contrast with the positive-loaded "reunion", a metaphorical euphemism included in the metaphor DEATH IS A NEW LIFE—more specifically, DEATH IS AN ENCOUNTER WITH OUR LOVED ONES—which is exploited here to help the bereaved cope with their suffering: death is not the end, not even a separation from our loved ones, but a reunion in the afterlife.

5.6. DEATH IS LOSS

The other conceptual metaphor with negative overtones conceives death as the loss of our most valuable possession: life. Death involves a physical loss in the same way as it involves a physical separation. The euphemistic terms that arise from this metaphor, *pérdida* 'loss' in (16) and "miss" in (17) are seen from the perspective of those left alive, who are represented as heartbroken mourners who must confront the reality that someone they loved has died. In this respect, the LOSS metaphor is an effective way to express the grief and suffering of the surviving relatives. Therefore, this source domain is not meant to provide any sort of comfort or relief; what is more, as Allan and Burridge (1991, p. 162) point out, the view of death as the loss of a loved one associates human mortality to a malevolent fate one cannot control: "The using of lose/loss evokes the misfortunate lack caused by an event over which the bereaved has no control: it captures death as a malign fate". The misfortune caused by the loss of a loved one is evident in the epitaph that follows.

(16)
Jose Isaac Gabay
Su esposa e hijo lo llorarán amargamente toda su vida
Sus hermanos ausentes
y presentes lloran con dolor
pérdida tan sensible
Málaga 29-7-1961
Jose Isaac Gabay.
His wife and children will mourn him bitterly all their lives.
His absent and present brothers cry with pain such a sensitive loss.
Malaga 29-7-1961

If someone is lost, those left alive will miss him or her. Missing the deceased, as a normal response to the loss, is considered in the epitaphs a sign of everlasting love and affection, as happens in the following example.

(17)
R.I.P.
Anthony J. Reith
Lt. Col.
Wiltshire Regiment
1908–1990
Your wife Mª Victoria Gross
loves and misses you

Finally, in (18), death is also represented as loss, but the perspective is different. Here, the deceased is not the victim of a force that he does not have control over, as happens in the other materialisations of this metaphor; rather, he takes an active role when he gives (and therefore loses) his life for the common good.

(18)
Sergeant
F. W. Calladine
Wireless operator/Air gunner
Royal Air Force
31st December 1942
Lest we forget
he gave a young
and wholesome life
for everlasting peace

The sergeant of the RAF this epitaph is dedicated to is portrayed as a hero, as someone who has purposefully decided to give his life for his country during World War II. Therefore,

the LOSS metaphor conflates with the HERO metaphor. The HERO—also called heroic myth—metaphor, which derives from the folk belief that heroes are brave and bold characters whose mission is to fight against malign forces and protect people (Kinsella et al. 2019, p. 482), reinforces the notion of courage in the face of danger and projects a sense of solidarity. In this respect, the metaphor here clearly stands as a way to pay tribute to the deceased and honour his memory.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the epitaphs from the English Cemetery of Malaga presented here has not only revealed that metaphor is a potent source of euphemism; the use of euphemistic metaphors goes well beyond other death-related references encountered in the epitaphs such as the plain-speaking, potentially dysphemistic "drowned" or *fusilado* 'shot'. It has also offered, on the one hand, first-hand information concerning the way in which the taboo of death is actually perceived, understood and mitigated; and on the second hand, it has allowed us to examine the role of deliberate metaphors in assisting those left alive to confront the loss of a loved one, as summarised in what follows.

The majority of the metaphors found in the epitaphs aim at providing some sort of consolation and helping the bereaved cope with their suffering. Indeed, the source domains of REST, PEACE, NEW LIFE and JOURNEY that are used to target the DEATH domain imply a positive value judgment of mortality insofar as they represent death as the gateway to a better life in Heaven in which those who have led virtuous lives on earth will be rewarded. There are only two conceptual associations—of little relevance in quantitative terms—which reflect the grief of death: the LOSS and PHYSICAL SEPARATION metaphors.

In relation to this, it is to be noted that the death-related metaphorical references are deliberately used in the epitaphs with a conscious euphemistic intention: the source concepts employed invite the reader of the epitaph to view death from a different perspective by shifting the reader's attention from the target domain (DEATH) to particular source domains. The contrast between the source and the target is intended to cause particular effects on readers and perform specific functions, i.e., to assist those left alive in coping with the pain of the loss and pay tribute to the deceased.

It is also important to say that the Christian belief of an eternal life in Heaven is the inspiration for many of the linguistic metaphors encountered in the inscriptions. In this sense, the metaphors that conceptualise death as a journey to Heaven or as an encounter with God in Heaven present hyperbolic overtones insofar as they purposefully upgrade death and magnify the biological act of dying.

In general, the results obtained in the present research seem to confirm those reported in previous studies regarding the role of metaphor in funeral inscriptions. For instance, the studies by Crespo-Fernández (2006) and Heynderickx and Dieltjens (2021b) reveal that the metaphors used in English Victorian obituaries and in those of Belgian politicians, respectively, represent death as a positive, even desirable event by virtue of the REST, DEPARTURE, JOURNEY and NEW LIFE metaphors. Similarly, in other studies devoted to gravestone epitaphs from Highgate cemetery, London, and from Belgian cemeteries, the same authors demonstrated that the metaphors which display an optimistic, life-like approach to death prevail (Crespo-Fernández 2011; Heynderickx and Dieltjens 2021a). However, some of the findings of previous works on this topic somewhat differ from the results obtained here; for example, the death-related metaphors found in Spanish epitaphs (Crespo-Fernández 2013) reflect a stronger influence of Christian beliefs in the afterlife and a more relevant role of political issues than in the inscriptions of the English cemetery of Malaga.

It remains to be said that the study presented here can make no claim to completeness or exhaustiveness given the limited number of epitaphs that make up the sample. However, it offers a valuable insight into the metaphorical representation of the taboo of death in the gravestones of a Protestant cemetery located in a traditionally Roman Catholic country

such as Spain and complements previous studies on the potential of figurative language to reason and talk about human mortality in funeral texts.

Appendix A

Source Domain	Source Concept	Linguistic Realization	Occurrences
JOURNEY	JOURNEY	depart	3
		departed	1
		go	1
		leave	1
		partire 'leave' (Latin)	1
		pass away	3
	DESTINATION	go to God	1
		reach one's heavenly home	1
LOSS	LOSS	give one's life	1
		miss	4
		pérdida 'loss' (Spanish)	1
NEW LIFE	LIFE WITH GOD	in the arms of our Lord	1
		live with God	2
	LIFE WITH OUR LOVED ONES	join one's wife	1
		life together	2
		meet again	2
		rest together	1
		reunion	1
		together again	2
PEACE	PEACE	at peace	2
		everlasting peace	1
		have peace with God	1
		in peace lies	1
		peace after pain	1
		peacefully (die/pass away)	4
		rest in peace	10
REST	REST	at rest	1
		descansar 'rest' (Spanish)	1
		enter into (one's) rest	1
		eternal rest	1
		find repose	1
		lie	7
		repose in thee	1
		rest	2
		rest in peace	10
		ruhen 'rest' (German)	4
	SLEEP	fall sleep	1
		fall asleep in Jesus	1
		s'en dormir 'fall asleep' (French)	1
		sleep	1
		sleep in Jesus	2
		slumber	1
SEPARATION	SEPARATION	part	1
		separation	1

Notes

1   In fact, Allan and Burridge (2006, p. 222) maintain that the death taboo rests on a number of fears, namely, fear of losing the people we love; fear of the corruption of our bodies; fear of going towards the unknown; fear of evil spirits that may be awaiting us after death; and fear of a meaningless death.

2   The cemetery started to be conceived as a site for mourning in the Victorian era, which increased the social relevance of epitaphs at a time characterised by a strong sense of sentimentality and spirituality surrounding death (Kichner 2012, p. 18).

3   For a historical account of the English cemeteries in Spain, see Marchant Rivera et al. (2005, chp. 3).

4   Concerning the distinction between metaphors that arise automatically and those may be created deliberately, see also Gibbs (2015) and van Poppel (2020).

5   For an explanation of the epitaph as a discourse genre, its functions and typology, see Crespo-Fernández (2011, pp. 200–2).

6   Although beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that the verb "die" is used with an ortophemistic value, that is, as a neutral reference to the act of dying in a total of 41 epitaphs from the sample.

7   The epitaphs used as examples are copied verbatim from the originals.

8   This is a common characteristic of Spanish epitaphs, in which the rest or sleep are commonly associated with Christian beliefs through prepositional phrases such as *en el Señor* ('in the Lord'), *en la Paz del Señor* ('in the Peace of the Lord') or *en los brazos del Señor* ('in the arms of the Lord'), which reflects the pervasiveness of religiosity in Spanish gravestone inscriptions (Crespo-Fernández 2013, pp. 107–8).

9   In this epitaph, the star and the cross are symbols that represent the person's birth and death respectively.

10 As defined by Johnson (1987, p. xiv), an image schema is "a recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience". Image schemas establish patterns of understanding that emerge from our sensory and perceptual experience as we interact with the world, perceive the environment, move our bodies, etc.

11 The scriptures (Moses 6, p. 48) speak of two kinds of separation which correspond to two kinds of death, none of which applies here: physical death, i.e., the separation of the body from the spirit; and spiritual death, i.e., the separation of humankind from God's presence.

References

Allan, Keith, and Kate Burridge. 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism. Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Allan, Keith, and Kate Burridge. 2006. *Forbidden Words. Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barcelona, Antonio. 2003. On the plausibility of claiming a metonymic motivation for conceptual metaphor. In *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*. Edited by Antonio Barcelona. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 31–58.

Brown, Peter, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burridge, Kate. 2004. *Blooming English. Observations on the Roots, Cultivation and Hybrids of the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casas Gómez, Miguel. 2009. Towards a new approach to the linguistic definition of euphemism. *Language Sciences* 31: 725–39. [CrossRef]

Casas Gómez, Miguel. 2018. Lexicon, discourse and cognition: Terminological delimitations in the conceptualization of linguistic taboo. In *Linguistic Taboo Revisited. Novel Insights from Cognitive Perspectives*. Edited by Andrea Pizarro Pedraza. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 53–72.

Crespo-Fernández, Eliecer. 2006. The language of death. Euphemism and conceptual metaphorization in Victorian obituaries. *SKY Journal of Linguistics* 19: 101–30.

Crespo-Fernández, Eliecer. 2011. Euphemistic conceptual metaphors in epitaphs from Highgate Cemetery. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 9: 198–225. [CrossRef]

Crespo-Fernández, Eliecer. 2013. Euphemistic metaphors in English and Spanish epitaphs: A comparative study. *Atlantis. Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 35: 99–118.

Gibbs, Raymond W. 2015. Do pragmatic signals affect conventional metaphor understanding? A failed test of Deliberate Metaphor Theory. *Journal of Pragmatics* 90: 77–87. [CrossRef]

Grady, Joseph. 1997. Theories Are Buildings Revisited. *Cognitive Linguistics* 8: 267–90. [CrossRef]

Halliday, Michael Alexander Kirkwood. 1985. *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Herrero Ruiz, Javier. 2007. At the crossroads between literature, culture, linguistics and cognition: Death metaphors in fairy tales. *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada* 20: 59–83.

Heynderickx, Priscilla, and Sylvain Dieltjens. 2021a. If cemeteries could talk . . . A discourse-analytical analysis of epitaphs. *Omega. Journal of Death and Dying* 83: 944–57. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Heynderickx, Priscilla, and Sylvain Dieltjens. 2021b. Politics beyond death? An analysis of the obituaries of Belgian politicians. In *Discourse Studies in Public Communication*. Edited by Eliecer Crespo-Fernández. Amsterdam and New York: John Benjamins, pp. 129–48.

Heynderickx, Priscilla, Sylvain Dieltjens, and Albert Oosterhof. 2017. The final fight. An analysis of metaphors in online obituaries of professional athletes. *Omega. Journal of Death and Dying* 79: 364–76. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Jamet, Denis. 2010. Euphemisms for death: Reinventing reality through words? In *Inventive Linguistics*. Edited by Sandrine Sorlin. Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, pp. 173–87.

Johnson, Mark. 1987. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Cognition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Kichner, Heather J. 2012. *Cemetery Plots from Victoria to Verdun: Literary Representations of Epitaph and Burial from the Nineteenth Century through the Great War*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kinsella, Elaine, Eric Igou, and Timothy Ritchie. 2019. Heroism and the pursuit of a meaningful life. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 59: 474–98. [CrossRef]

Kuczok, Marcin. 2016. Metaphorical conceptualizations of death and dying in American English and Polish: A corpus-based contrastive study. *Linguistica Silesiana* 37: 125–42.

Lakoff, George. 1993. The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor. In *Metaphor and Thought*. Edited by Andrew Ortony. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 202–51. First published 1979.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Turner. 1989. *More than Cool Reason. A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lee, Raymond L. M. 2008. Modernity, mortality and re-enchantment: The death of taboo revisited. *Sociology* 45: 745–59. [CrossRef]

Marchant Rivera, Alicia, Antonio Vázquez Escudero, Rubén Camacho Fernández, and Francisco J. Calvo López. 2005. *El Cementerio Inglés de Málaga. Tumbas y Epitafios*. Málaga: Universidad de Málaga.

Pragglejaz Group. 2007. MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol* 22: 1–39.

Ruiz de Mendoza, Francisco, and Lorena Pérez. 2011. The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor: Myths, developments and challenges. *Metaphor and Symbol* 26: 161–85. [CrossRef]

Steen, Gerard J. 2011. The contemporary theory of metaphor—Now new and improved. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 9: 26–64. [CrossRef]

Steen, Gerard J. 2015. Developing, testing and interpreting Deliberate Metaphor Theory. *Journal of Pragmatics* 90: 67–72. [CrossRef]

Steen, Gerard J. 2017. Deliberate Metaphor Theory: Basic assumptions, main tenets, urgent issues. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 14: 1–24. [CrossRef]

van Poppel, Lotte. 2020. The relevance of metaphor in argumentation. Uniting Pragmadialects and Deliberate Metaphor Theory. *Journal of Pragmatics* 170: 245–52. [CrossRef]