

Perception of men through the source domain of animals In american literature of the 20th century

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Received: 06/7/2023; Accepted: 17/7/2023; Published: 26/7/2023

Abstract: *This article explores the mapping mechanism of the conceptual metaphor men are animals in American literary works of the 20th century. The source domain of animals is mapped onto the target domain of men, creating six subordinate metaphors including men are types of animals, the appearance of men is the shape of animals, characteristics of men are properties of animals, activities of men are activities of animals, activities with men are activities with animals, and the living environment of men is the habitat of animals.*

Keywords: *Conceptual metaphor; target domain; source domain; animals*

1. Introduction

Humans and animals have many shared similarities since humans are highly evolved animals. It is a common practice for people in many cultures to associate certain characteristics of animals with those of humans. This research's results show that numerous typical species of animals have been chosen to perceive different objects and phenomena, including men. Within the scope of this paper, the author examines the conceptual metaphor MEN ARE ANIMALS in American literature of the 20th century to figure out how Americans use this metaphor and to examine the impact of American culture and national thinking on the mapping mechanism.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Definitions of conceptual metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "A conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience in terms of another, or the systematic mapping from one domain to another in order to establish a cognitive model that facilitates the effective acquisition of knowledge in the target domain" (p.5). Tran Van Co (2007) defines "a conceptual or cognitive metaphor as one form of conceptualization, a cognitive process that helps to express and form new concepts, without which new knowledge cannot be obtained (p.293). In brief, a conceptual metaphors is the perception of one conceptual domain in terms of another based on the similarities between the two domains.

2.2. The nature of conceptual metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that conceptual metaphors are prevalent in everyday language; they do not exist in language but rather in our mind and

actions. Regarding the mapping mechanism of conceptual metaphors, there are always two domains: the source domain, which provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the metaphor and is activated through cross-domain mapping, and the target domain, which is structured by the source domain (Evan, 2007). The source domain is concrete, containing much knowledge closely related to the linguistic community's daily life, while the target domain is often abstract, complex, and more difficult to grasp.

3. Methodology

The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods with the following techniques and methods: statistical methods, descriptive methods, comparative and contrastive methods, and discourse analysis methods. Six American literary works coded A01 - A06 were used as research data (*Light in August*: A01, *Gone with the wind*: A02, *To kill a mocking bird*: A03, *Rage of Angels*: A04, *100 years of the best American short stories*: A05, *The best American short stories of the century*: A06). They were all written in the 20th century.

4. Results and discussions

a) The subordinate conceptual metaphor MEN ARE TYPES OF ANIMALS

Because of their country's unique climate, geography and fauna, Americans often choose certain animals for the mapping process which can be subdivided into the following groups: wild animals, farm animals, rodents, insects, reptiles, birds and aquatic animals. Among these, three groups playing dominant roles in constructing the metaphorical concept of men are farm animals, wild animals, and birds.

In the farm animal subgroup, the properties

of domestication and serviceability are activated, forming the ground for constructing this metaphor. For example:

(1) *I see him black-haired, heavy-shouldered, with the **strength** of a **plow horse**, and the kind of **somber, shackled beauty**.* [A01]

Horses are often associated with freedom, so they are symbolic of a free life. At another extreme, the image of a *shackled plow horse* is a symbolic expression of a laborious, enslaved life. Horse-related expressions also have the highest number of occurrences in this group. This can be explained by the American nomadic culture in which horses play a very important role in the daily life of its people. The image of horses has been ingrained in Americans' mind, resulting in a host of conceptual metaphors of horses in this language.

In the wild animal subgroup, an interesting phenomenon has been found - the discrimination against black people in language.

(2) *If that **black ape** got her again, she would die before he even got his hands upon her. Ah hope Ah done kill dat **black baboon**.* [A02]

The metaphor is constructed based on the similarity between the skin color of black people and the fur color of animals. *Black ape* and *black baboon* imply a black person, and these terms often cause great discomfort and offense to hearers. This is called "racial discrimination" in language.

In the subgroup of birds as the source domain, typical bird behaviors are mapped onto men's character and behavior. However, the notions of freedom and aspirations are not activated, illustrating the hiding nature of metaphors. For example:

(3) *How can we endure these scavengers in our midst with their varnished boots when our boys are tramping barefoot into battle?* [A02]

Scavengers eat dead animals, so they metaphorically represent opportunists. This metaphor highlights negative characteristic traits of opportunistic and greedy persons jumping at every single opportunity to "eat" their fellows who are in agony to benefit themselves.

b) The subordinate conceptual metaphor the appearance of men is the shape of animals

The shape of animals with recognizable and closely observed properties, is used to depict men's unattractive appearances. The ugliest parts of certain species, such as *wolf's face*, *monkey's eyes*, *wolf's fangs*, and *bull's thick neck*, are used to portray the image of ugly men. This metaphor is constructed

based on the similarity in the shape, size, weight, and color of body parts between animals and men. These are familiar expressions, demonstrating that perceiving human appearance through biological form of animals is a common experience in American culture. For example:

(4) *His back was to us, but I could see his broad shoulders and **bull-thick neck**.* [A03]

c) The subordinate conceptual metaphor CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN ARE PROPERTIES OF ANIMALS

The use of conceptual metaphors has helped to concretize men's characteristics, giving him typical animal attributes such as *wild*, *feral*, *fishy*, *slick*, *predatory*, and *venomous*. Most of these metaphorical expressions have negative connotations. This can be explained from cultural and cognitive perspectives. In the Great Chain of Being, animals are a lower form of life compared to humans, thus they serve as a suitable domain or tool for describing humans' undesirable behaviors and attributes. For example:

(5) *There was a **wild, animal** vitality about him, of which everyone is scared.* [A04]

In example (5), *wild, animal* refers to a ferocious nature that makes others wary of the man. Through this mapping, the perception of men's characteristics becomes clearer.

d) The subordinate conceptual metaphor activities of men are activities of animals

A multitude of linguistic expressions for describing animal activities are projected onto activities and traits of men in the target domain. This is understandable since humans and animals are the only entities on this planet to have a motor nervous system and conditioned reflexes. This shared similarity facilitates the conceptualization of men in terms of animal activities in language. Based on behavioral characteristics, this group can be further divided into three categories: (1) movement activities with metaphorical linguistic expressions like *gallop*, *trot*, *waddle*, *swoop down*, *hover*, *fly*; (2) sound-producing activities: *roar*, *snarl*, *howl*, *bark*, *grunt*, *cluck*, *purr*, *sing*, *hiss*; and (3) self-defense and survival activities with such metaphorical words as *bite*, *sting*, *attack*.

As for group 1, Americans observe animal movement activities using their embodiment experiences to describe men's corresponding behaviors. Metaphors in this group are mainly constructed through visual experiences. For example:

(6) *He **waddled** away.* [A06]

A duck has a plump body, short legs, and typically

moves with its toes turned inwards. Therefore, *waddle* in example (6) projects the image of a slow, clumsy gait of an overweight, short man.

In contrast, metaphors in group 2 are mainly formed through auditory experiences. Activities of wild animals are mapped onto the target domain of men to describe instinctive behaviors such as anger, which stem from the inability to control oneself. Conversely, when being conceived as a pet, the man is visualized to have many feminine traits such as fussy and noisy.

(7) *It is not with fatigue, though the distance which he has covered in the last twenty minutes is almost two miles and the going was not smooth. It is the **snarling** and malevolent breathing of a fleeing **animal**.* [A01]

(8) *As he fussed over her, **clucking**, she gave herself up to the luxury of being taken care of. It was nice to have a man fussing and **clucking** and scolding.* [A02]

Snarling and *clucking* are sound-making activities of wild animals and chickens. When viewed in terms of these animals' properties, the target domain of men takes on a lot of similar characteristics, such as the instinctive behavior of wild animals and the noisiness of a flock of hens. With just a few impressive words, a vivid and general picture of the target domain is portrayed.

e) The subordinate conceptual metaphor activities with men are activities with animals

The metaphorical words in this group can be divided into three subgroups: (1) hunting, attacking activities such as *hunt, prey, bait, trap, ensnare, trace, catch, tear*; (2) domestication activities: *herd, handle, shackle, whip*; and (3) slaughter activities: *butcher*.

Hunting and attacking activities are often used for wild animal group, while domestication and slaughter activities are typically associated with domesticated animals. For example:

(9) *Here in Firetown, the girls were dull white cows and the boys narrow-faced brown goats in old men's suits, herded on Sunday afternoons into a threadbare church basement that smelled of stale hay.* [A05]

Herd literally means "to shepherd livestock and poultry and keep them under control" [2, p. 192]. When used figuratively, *herd* means taking care of Christians' souls. To Christians, Jesus Christ is a *shepherd* who protects, shelters, and cares for his obedient *lambs*. A *lamb* is a young *sheep* which is under one year old. Obedient and innocent, it is used as a symbolic image of pure and innocent Christians. However, in this example, a *goat* is used instead of a *lamb* to metaphorically represent a devout Christian.

This usage illustrates the extension mechanism of metaphor in literature. Some traits in the source domain which are often not activated because of a community's habits of language use are employed by writers to construct new notions. This makes the language more appealing and impressive.

f) The subordinate conceptual metaphor THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT OF MEN IS THE HABITAT OF ANIMALS

The animal habitat with typical properties is also used to conceptualize men. All the metaphors in this group convey negative connotations, showing the speaker's negative attitudes toward the addressed subject.

(10) *Soon we'll be having male nigger judges, nigger legislators - **black apes** out of the **jungle**. But now, Michael Moretti had changed all that. This was his **jungle**.* [A04]

In this example, the men are referred to as *black apes* living in the *jungle*. These animals are hated, so they are often associated with bad personalities in men such as wild and difficult to control. In addition, the use of *black apes* also shows a deep racial discrimination against black people.

5. Conclusion

The conceptual metaphor men are animals is built based on a mapping mechanism from the source domain of ANIMALS to the target domain of men. This metaphor has six subordinate metaphors, including men are types of animals, the appearance of men is the shape of animals, characteristics of men are properties of animals, activities of men are activities of animals, activities with men are activities with animals, and the living environment of men is the habitat of animals. The basic attributes of the source domain are selected to be projected onto the target domain, reflecting American national thinking and culture.

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