METAPHOR IN CREATING FEMALE IMAGES (BASED ON AMERICAN SONG FOLKLORE)

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Abstract. The article describes the use of metaphor in creating female images in American folk songs. The purpose of the author is to investigate how metaphor intensifies female image, which function in the text. Considering the fact that American folk songs are rich in stylistic devices, metaphor proves to be one of the best to evoke feelings and convey emotions in connection to the relevant image. It also appears to be a powerful interpretation means forming the background of the female image. The research results demonstrate that specific negative historical background can stimulate appearance of new metaphors especially in times of political crisis.

Keywords: metaphor, stylistic device, female image, song folklore, American culture.

1 Introduction.

Many researchers have paid considerable attention to metaphor issues, though there still are new horizons to challenge and bring new understanding of the linguo-cultural synergy. The topic in question has been of an increasingly high interest with Max Black (1955), Gilles Fauconnier (2008), Mark Johnson (1980; 1981), Zoltán Kövecses (2010), George Lakoff (1980; 1989; 2008), Ivor A. Richards (1936), John R. Searle (1979), Mark B. Turner (1987; 1989; 2008) and many other distinguished scientists throughout decades. Being an integral part of any language metaphor remains its basic element creating new ways to image perception. This is not surprising, since bright images are necessarily built with stylistic means and figures of speech, which emphasise, impact, enrich or hide certain features of theirs (Panasenko, 2014). Folklore is rich in stylistic devices and therefore opens many a way to feel the spirit of the whole ethnos through words (Сташко, 2014b; Сташко, 2015a; 2015b). Metaphors of different types convey key thoughts and impressions made by historical or cultural events and cannot be neglected if the latter require accurate interpretation. As female images in American folk songs lie in the sphere of my interests (Сташко, 2014a), metaphor analysis may significantly facilitate understanding the influence route which can be figuratively called *folk > words > images*.

2 Research background

My research deals with metaphor usage in American folk songs in depth with the focus on female images creation. The selected folk songs embrace 1800-1950 historical period of America mainly because America is a comparatively young country, which was born in the 18th century. Its folklore is also "young"; at the beginning it was just a replica of folk songs from Britain, Ireland, France and other countries the emigrants from which came to America due to different political, religious or personal reasons (Сташко, 2014c). With time there appeared local versions of famous and

favourite songs adapted to American realities. Besides, new emotions and lifestyles contributed to brand new songs and therefore typically American images. Moreover, American song folklore is also unique as quite a number of folk songs have authors. It is generally accepted that songs may be traditional, whose author is unknown, and popular, written by the author. The notions of traditional and folklore songs differ in different cultures (Панасенко, 2002), though, roughly speaking, they are synonymous in American song folklore.

The analyzed American folk song corpus with female images is taken from song collection books and almanacs (Appleby, 1991; Osman, 1993; Raph, 1986). The most prominent examples with metaphor used as a means to create female images are given hereunder.

3 Metaphor: definitions, research theories, functions and types

Before moving on to the research results discussion, we need to focus on some core definitions of the term *metaphor*, which shaped my position.

The English word *metaphor* derived from the 16th century Old French word *métaphore*, which comes from the Latin *metaphora*, "carrying over", in turn from the Greek μεταφορά (*metaphorá*) meaning "transfer".

The literature on metaphor shows a variety of approaches and theories to its research. For instance, *The Encyclopedia of Linguistics* says that "metaphor is defined from the "classical" perspective as a figure of speech, in which one word is used to indicate something different from the literal meaning, so that one thing or idea is likened to a different thing or idea. The classical view confines metaphor to ornate, flowery language, and assumes that the interpretation of any metaphorical use of language can be wholly reduced to literal meaning, which is its "real" meaning" (Strazny, 2005: 677-678). Max Black, with his interaction theory, claims that "metaphor is the result of a semantic interaction or tension between a metaphorical term and its context" (Ortony, 1993). Paul Grice and John Searle, representing the pragmatist position, believe that metaphor has to be reduced to the "literal" meaning by applying a series of pragmatic principles of conversation, like conversational maxims (Ortony, 1993). Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) started a new era of metaphor studies and encouraged a wave of cognitive linguistics. The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor enables people to understand new, complex, or abstract areas of experience ('domains') on the basis of more accessible domains, which are understood in their own terms. Therefore, metaphor is not just a matter of language use but also, and fundamentally, a matter of thought, which makes it immediately comprehensible.

Russian scholar Iliya R. Galperin generalised the definition to the one, in which metaphor is considered "the stylistic device based on the principle of identification of two objects… with transference of some quality from one object to another (1971: 139). Metaphor becomes a stylistic device when two different phenomena (things, events, ideas, actions) are simultaneously brought to mind by the imposition of some or all of the inherent properties of one object on the other which by nature is deprived of these properties. Such an imposition generally results when the creator of the metaphor finds in the two corresponding objects certain features which to his eye have something in common… But identification should not be equated to resemblance… Therefore it is better to define metaphor as the power of realising two lexical meanings simultaneously" (1971: 140).

As follows from the abovementioned definitions and theories applied to metaphor studies, this stylistic device has been in focus of scientists for many decades and still evokes new discussions. Speaking about gender and metaphor issues in complex it is possible to assume that any theory or approach a researcher uses to investigate images may bring expected and unexpected results, which can later extrapolate to new findings and interpretations.

Moving on to the key functions that metaphors play in creating female images in folk songs it is important to mention the following: they form new understanding of the concept, object, or character described comparing it to an item that may be more familiar; they create an image that has some positive/negative features and thus produce the effect initially implied with reference to historical, social or cultural contexts; and they help visualise and reproduce the image description. For these reasons, folk songs are rich in metaphor or at least in similar stylistic devices.

Having all these specific points in mind it is necessary to provide the existing types of metaphor and define the ones that could be appropriate when implied in song folklore studies. If classified according to the degree of unexpectedness, metaphors can be **genuine (fresh)** or **trite (dead, hackneyed)**. *The mind was thirsty* and *the foot of the mountain* are respective examples. Dead metaphors may get revived due to context, then they are called **sustained** or **prolonged** (*I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent*). Traditional classifications also include **absolute, burlesque, complex, conceptual, conventional, creative, extended, grammatical, mixed, orientational,**

primary, root, structural, submerged, visual, etc. **Personification**, as a kind of metaphor, endows a thing or a phenomenon with features peculiar of a human being.

Folk songs may contain any metaphor type, but the present research shows only those, which most contributed to image creation. Besides, the metaphors found in the analyzed songs may be classified as those, which help create female images and those, which create the background.

4 Discussion

Let us consider the cases of metaphor usage in the selected songs and ponder over their impact on creating female images. The first thing that needs to be mentioned is metaphoric song naming. There are bright examples to illustrate phytonymic metaphors, as *"Lily of the West"*, *"The Yellow Rose of Texas"*. It is noticeable that the idea behind such metaphors is to create romantic images, the words-indentificators (lily, rose) bear positive meaning and evoke feelings of love and tenderness, the ones we have gazing at beautiful flowers. These points to spot are deeply embedded in the American culture. To strengthen the first impact *"Lily of the West"* contains several cases of using this metaphor: The name she bore was Flora, the Lily of the West; Betrayed was I by Flora, the Lily of the West; I love my faithless Flora, the Lily of the West. Even being betrayed, the man is still in love with this woman. *"The Yellow Rose of Texas"* exhibits similar cases: *There's a yellow rose in Texas, that I am going to see; She's the sweetest rose of color this darky ever knew; the Yellow Rose of Texas beats the belles of Tennessee; the Yellow Rose of Texas shall be mine forevermore*. From these metaphors it is clear that the girl is not his. If, on the one hand, it can be said that phytonymic metaphors with names of flowers immediately emphasise tenderness and beauty, the same is true for one more integral characteristic: flowers differ in their vulnerability. While lilies are tender and soft, roses are beautiful and spiniferous and thus independent or difficult to reach.

The "flower" theme is present in the other song called *"Sourwood Mountain"* with a positive female image (*My true love's a blue-eyed daisy*).

The further analysis of the American song folklore corpus revealed several bright metaphors that directly create positive, romantic and cordial female images: *So listen, my honey, listen to me* (*"A Man Without a Woman"*); She's the joy of my life (*"Billy Boy"*); Lives fond Evelina, the sweet little dove, the pride of the valley, the girl that I love (*"Dear Evelina, Sweet Evelina"*).

In contrast to this, there are metaphors that create negative female images. As we see in the song *"On Top of Old Smoky"* the line *A false hearted lover is worse than a thief* explains the well-known statement and thus creates an image of a dishonest girl. And the song *"The Farmer's Curst Wife"* depicts the wife who makes her husband suffer comparing her with bane and torment (for she's the bane and torment of your life).

Referring to genuine and trite metaphors, it is possible to make the following assumptions: trite metaphors (*My true love lives at the head of the holler* in *"Sourwood Mountain"* and One night when work was finished just at the close of day in *"Cowboy Jack"*) describe nature background only and are not in the scope of deep interest to image creation issues. While genuine metaphors are most often found in folk songs and contribute to visualization of images. Its examples are present in such songs as *"You Are My Sunshine"* (*So I hung my head, and I cried*), *"Enraptured I Gaze"* (My heart is so fix'd that it never can rove), *"I'll take you home again, Kathleen"* (I always feel when you are near*; That life holds nothing, dear, but you; Thy loving heart will cease to yearn where laughs the little silver stream), *"Annie Lisle"* (*Down where the waving willows, neath the sunbeams smile, shadow'd o'er the murm'ring waters dwelt sweet Annie Lisle*).

The song *"The Rich Lady Over the Sea"* requires a bit of background explanation. It depicts "The Boston Tea Party", a historical and political event in 1773, when Britain (*the Rich Lady*) imposed taxes on everything they sent to the British Colonies in America (*the Daughter*) causing resentment there. The final straw was a tax of three pence per pound on tea, which resulted in protests and throwing the chests of tea into the waters of Boston. This act became known as "The Boston Tea Party" and led to the Revolutionary War. It is possible to believe that this historical fact must be considered in detail as it demonstrates the link to Lakoff's cogitations on metaphor in revolutionary times (Metaphor in Politics, 1991; The Political Mind, 2008). The expressed reasoning states that problem or crisis times provoke appearance of metaphors, which, in their turn, influence the process of making decisions. Thus it goes obvious that the number of metaphors is supposed to increase in times of socio-political and economic crises. Christ'l De Landtsheer (1991) conducted a study on the use of political metaphors in the Dutch political discourse in the period from 1831 to 1981. The study results proved that the use of metaphors as well as appearance of new ones correlated with the periods of crises. Another experiment was carried out on the material of Russian political discourse during 1998

crisis by Aleksandr N. Baranov (2003). And again the findings proved that the relative frequency of the use of metaphors increased sharply during the peak of the crisis.

These experiments have shown that the impact of metaphors in the decision-making process is valid, because in times of crisis society needs an intensive search for solutions of the existing problems. It confirms the hypothesis that metaphors influence the human thought.

It is now clear from these observations that the song **"The Rich Lady Over the Sea"** will undoubtedly contain metaphors, which make the female images milder but anyway ironically sharper:

> There was a rich lady lived over the sea,
> And she was an island queen,
> Her daughter lived off in the new country,
> With an ocean of water between.
>
> You shall, cried the mother, and reddened with rage,
> For you're my own daughter, you see,
> And it's only proper that daughter should pay
> Her mother's a tax on the tea. }3 times

To continue the presented topic it is worth analysing the metaphor *Katie Cruel is a roving jewel* in the song **"Katie Cruel"**. The song got popular in 1775-1783, known as the Revolutionary War and the contrasting combination of *jewel* and *roving* demonstrates the hypothesis of decision-making. *Jewels* stand for a smart and beautiful girl who appeared to be under negative external circumstances (*roving* during the wartime). She still has a chance to change to the better if she gives up her roving lifestyle. But the name of the song **"Katie Cruel"** hints at an opposite scenario.

"Go Tell Aunt Rhody" is actually a European song, but it appeared popular among Afro-Americans only in America in the 18th century when the times left much to be desired. The image of the aunt is generalised and other names (Abbie, Mandy, Nancy, etc.) might substitute Rhody. Though there is no direct description of the aunt, her features are depicted indirectly. The song is actually about the death of a grey goose that was a serious problem in 18th century America as geese provided food and feather (Osman, McConochie, 1993: 11-12). The poetic text contains two personifications (*the goslings are crying; the gander is weeping*), and they refer to the illustration of the mourning procedure itself. However, due to this the image of Aunt Rhody gains new characterictics: poverty, despair, drama and frustration. All these are typical of troubled times. Do they evoke decision-making? Surely yes, as next time she might think how to anticipate such situations.

5 Conclusions

In the form, in which the cases of metaphor usage were analysed, it is possible to conclude that metaphors are a powerful key to emphasize certain features in creation of female images in folk songs. Regardless of their type, they generate a complex picture of a woman. Developed associations are able to create images and reveal the tiniest particles of the image reflection. Furthermore, the given examples of the research illustrate that culture-folk communication is much dependent on stylistic devices, and metaphors appear very helpful.

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