

Comparative Semantic-Functional Characteristics of Metaphor in American and Uzbek Literature

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АННОТАЦИЯ:

This article compares how metaphor works in American and Uzbek literature, looking at both meaning (semantics) and purpose (function). It focuses on two masters of the short, exact sentence: Ernest Hemingway in the United States and Abdulla Qahhor in Uzbekistan. The article asks which images each writer prefers, what these images stand for, and what job they do in a story. Short comparisons with Whitman, Dickinson, Uzbek proverbs, and national poetry give the wider background. The study shows that both writers use simple, everyday pictures to say what is hard to say directly, and that both prefer economy to decoration. The differences lie in manner and function. Hemingway's metaphor is cool and often structural, and it leaves feeling under the surface. Qahhor's metaphor is warm, humorous, and sharp, and it often carries social meaning in a very small space. The article closes with notes for teachers and translators.

Introduction

When we say that time is running out, or that a friend is a rock, we do not mean it literally, and yet everybody understands. Metaphor is one of the most ordinary things language does. It is also one of the most powerful, because it lets us talk about the unseen through the seen: grief through weather, courage through the sea, a false hope through a mirage.

This article compares metaphor in American and Uzbek literature through two writers. Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) and Abdulla Qahhor (1907–1968) lived far apart and never met, but both are remembered for a prose in which every word has to earn its place. I look at their metaphors from two angles. The first is semantic: what is the picture, and what does it stand for? The second is functional: what work does the picture do for the reader? My hope is that the comparison can teach us something about both traditions, and about how to read and translate them.

2. Theoretical background

Modern work on metaphor begins with the idea that a metaphor carries meaning from one area of experience, the source, to another, the target. Richards (1936) and Black (1962) described this as an interaction between two ideas, and Ricoeur (1977) stressed that a living metaphor creates new meaning instead of only repeating old meaning. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) took the next step and argued that metaphor is part of thought itself: we understand life as a journey because our minds work this way. Kövecses (2010) adds that many such metaphors come from the human body and are shared widely, but cultures choose and develop them differently (Kövecses, 2005).

For the functional side, I use four simple groups. Metaphor can be *cognitive*, helping us understand something abstract; *emotive*, carrying feeling; *aesthetic*, giving beauty and surprise, which is close to what Jakobson (1960) called the poetic function; and *structural*, organising a whole text around one central image. These groups often overlap, but naming them helps us see what a writer is really doing.

3. Metaphor in American literature: Hemingway

American poetry before Hemingway liked bold, open images. Whitman, in *Song of Myself*, answers a child's question about the grass with guess after guess, calling it "the flag of my disposition" (Whitman, 1855), and Dickinson (1955) turns hope into "the thing with feathers." In both cases the metaphor is announced and enjoyed. Hemingway chose a different path. He wanted a plain surface, and he explained his method with a metaphor of his own: the dignity of an iceberg, he wrote, comes from the fact that only one-eighth of it is above the water (Hemingway, 1932). The writer leaves the rest unsaid, and the reader feels its weight.

This "iceberg" idea explains much of his figurative language. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, the old fisherman Santiago thinks of the sea as *la mar*, a woman who gives or withholds great favours, and he calls the marlin his brother even as he fights it (Hemingway, 1952). The sharks that eat the fish are not described as symbols, yet readers feel them as the forces that take away what a person has earned. Santiago's dreams of lions on an African beach carry youth and strength without a word of explanation. The famous line that a man can be destroyed but not defeated is plain, and the plainness gives it force. Here the metaphor is cognitive and structural: the whole story becomes a single extended picture of human courage.

Other works show the same method. In *A Farewell to Arms*, the rain keeps returning, and Catherine admits she is afraid of it because she sometimes sees herself dead in it (Hemingway, 1929). Rain is never explained as death, but by the end of the novel it has become so. In the short story "Hills Like White Elephants," two people talk about the hills across the valley and never name the real subject, and the white elephant becomes a picture of something unwanted and impossible to ignore (Hemingway, 1927). In each case the emotive load is hidden, and the reader must finish the thought.

4. Metaphor in Uzbek literature: Abdulla Qahhor

Abdulla Qahhor is one of the great masters of the modern Uzbek short story, and he is known above all for compression. His sentences are short, his scenes are small, and his language grows out of the living speech of the neighbourhood (*mahalla*) and the market. Because there is so little space, each metaphor has to do a great deal. A single comparison, a proverb-like phrase, or a sharp turn of humour can show a whole character, and a smile often hides a serious judgement of human weakness and pride.

His titles show this skill clearly. *Sarob* (“Mirage,” 1948) uses one word to speak of false hope: something that shines from far away and disappears when you come close. *Qo’shchinor chiroqlari* (“The Lights of Qo’shchinor”) places light in the centre, and light is an old and warm picture of a new life reaching a village. *Tobutdan tovush* (“A Voice from the Coffin”) is bold in a different way: it names a voice that comes from a place where no voice should be, and the strangeness promises satire before the story has started. In each case the title is more than a label. It is a small metaphor that tells the reader how to look.

Metaphor of this shared, folk kind lives outside books too. The national anthem, with words by Abdulla Oripov, shows the homeland as golden valleys under a bright sun, and everyday Uzbek proverbs are full of pictures. *Til — dil tarjimoni* calls the tongue the translator of the heart, and *Bir gul bilan bahor bo’lmas* says that one flower does not make spring. These sayings show how deeply metaphor is built into ordinary Uzbek speech, and they form the soil from which Qahhor’s plain and witty language grows.

5. Comparison and discussion

Table 1 gathers the main points. It is a simplification, because both writers are richer than any table, but it shows where the weight tends to fall.

Table 1. Metaphor in Hemingway and Qahhor: a short comparison

Aspect	American literature (Hemingway)	Uzbek literature (Qahhor)
Favourite source domains	The sea, the fish, the iceberg, rain, hills, a river	Village and neighbourhood life, a mirage, lights in the dark, folk sayings
Typical targets	Courage, loss, pain that is not spoken	Illusion, social change, human weakness and pride
Leading functions	Structural and cognitive; feeling is left under the surface	Cognitive and satirical in a very short form, with a warm emotive layer
Manner	Understated and cool: the image is shown and the reader finishes the thought	Compact and warm: sharp humour and folk speech carry the image

Aspect	American literature (Hemingway)	Uzbek literature (Qahhor)
Proverbs and speech	Idioms such as <i>a bumpy road</i> or <i>a dead end</i>	Many proverbs, such as <i>Bir gul bilan bahor bo'lmaz</i> (one flower does not make spring)

The two writers share a great deal. Both choose simple pictures from daily life, such as water, light, and the village or the sea, which supports Kövecses's point that many metaphors grow from shared experience. Both trust a short image to carry a large meaning, so that the iceberg and the mirage do their work in very few words. And both ask the reader to take part: the one who reads Hemingway must finish the thought, and the one who reads Qahhor must catch the smile and the judgement behind it.

The main difference is temperature. Hemingway's economy is cool. His metaphor is a hard, short image, and its emotion stays underneath. Qahhor's economy is warm. His metaphor lives in the voice of ordinary people, in humour and proverb-like speech, and its emotion shows through a smile. Their functions differ in the same way: Hemingway's images tend to be cognitive and structural, a single picture that holds a whole story together, while Qahhor's images tend to be cognitive and satirical, a quick picture that exposes a human or social truth. Neither way is better. They are two ways of loving language, each shaped by the culture it grew in.

6. Conclusion

Metaphor is one of the places where two literatures that never met can still understand each other. Hemingway and Qahhor both look at one thing through another, and both do so because direct words are sometimes too thin for human experience. What changes is the choice of picture, the temperature of the voice, and the job the image does.

This has practical value. Translators should ask not only what an image means, but also what it does and how much of its cultural background the new reader will have. Hemingway's silence may need care in Uzbek, so it does not sound cold, and Qahhor's humour and folk phrases may need special care in English, because they depend on the sound and the habits of the original speech. Teachers can place paired images side by side, for example the iceberg and the mirage, and ask students to compare both meaning and function. Future studies could use more works by both writers, and could add other authors, to test the patterns suggested here.

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