

THE ENGLISH-AMERICAN FABLE THROUGH MENTAL SPACES

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A fable or apologue seems to be, in its genuine state, a narrative in which beings irrational, and sometimes inanimate, are, for the purpose of moral instruction, feigned to act and speak with human interests and passions.

The fable is distinguished from the myth, which grows and is not made, the spontaneous and unconscious product of primitive fancy as it plays round some phenomenon of natural or historical fact. The literary myth differs from the fable in so far as it is self-interpreting; the story and the moral are intermingled throughout. Between the parable and the fable there is no clear line of demarcation. But the soundest distinction is: in the fable human passions and actions are attributed to beasts; in the parable the lower creation is employed only to illustrate the higher life and never transgresses the laws of its kind. Lastly, we may point out the close affinity between the fable and the proverb. A proverb is often a condensed or fossilized fable, and not a few fables are amplified or elaborated proverbs.

The history of the fable goes back to the remotest antiquity, and Aesop has even less claimed to be reckoned the father of the fable than has Homer to be entitled the father of poetry. The fable has its origin in the universal impulse of men to express their thoughts in concrete images, and is strictly parallel to the use of metaphor in language.

G. Chaucer, the greatest English medieval writer and forerunner of the English Renaissance, has given us the fable, in his Nun's Priest's Tale, which is an expansion of the fable by Marie de France. This genre of literature is not yet extinct and is capable of new and unexpected developments. It is survived in J. Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus and R. Kipling's Jungle Book, J. Gay's poetic Fables and A. Bierce Fantastic Fables, J. Thurber's fables and G. Ade's Fables in Slang, G.W. Carryl's Fables for the Frivolous and H.W. Phillips's Fables for the Times, B. Mandeville's The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turn'd Honest and W. Saroyan's fables. The new millennium faces M. Kington's Updated fables for the 21st century.

With the fable, as we know it, the moral is indispensable. As La Fontaine puts it, an apologue is composed of two parts, body and soul. The body is the story, the soul is the morality. This is as for the fable's composition. But we introduced a new term – “compositional structure” of the fable and considered it to be a

linguistic and cognitive constructual which depicts such a way of comic sense formation in the English-American fable that reflects knowledge about the world and a human being within it. The ways of comic sense organization are exposed through the conceptual analysis of the stylistic means of humour, satire, irony and sarcasm manifestation.

The described above constructual is a basis of creating the generalized image of a human being of a definite cultural and historical epoch. The generalized image of a human being is represented by ambivalent, imperative, paradoxical and grotesque types of images. They are singled out while constructing conceptual system of the comic.

The peculiarities of the English-American fable compositional structure are revealed through the analysis of the fable's dominant genre features and the character of interaction of two frames – A HUMAN BEING WORLD and THE WORLD OF ANIMALS.

The applying of the theory of mental spaces gives an opportunity to explain how the violation of causative-consecutive, logic and associative ties between generic and emergent mental spaces happens. This is a ground for discrepancy of situational idea in the fable between the interactions of two characters one of which is a generalized image of a human being.

Within a theory of conceptual integration proposed by G. Fauconnier and M. Turner [2] blending is in principle a simple operation. It operates on two Input mental spaces to yield a third space, the Blend. The Blend inherits partial structure from the Input spaces and has emergent structure of its own. Here are some of the conditions which are satisfied, when two Input spaces I1 and I2 are blended [2, p. 269]:

- 1) **CROSS-SPACE MAPPING:** there is a partial mapping of counterparts between the input spaces I1 and I2;
- 2) **GENERIC SPACE:** there is a generic space, which maps onto each of the inputs. It reflects some common, usually more abstract, structure and organization shared by the inputs, and defines the core cross-space mapping between them. A generic space does not have to be available prior to the construction of a network. It is often constructed and elaborated along with the other spaces and connections;
- 3) **BLEND:** the inputs I1 and I2 are partially projected onto a fourth space, the Blend;
- 4) **EMERGENT STRUCTURE:** the Blend has emergent structure not provided by the inputs. This happens in three ways:
COMPOSITION: taken together, the projections from the Inputs make new relations available which didn't exist in the separate inputs;

COMPLETION: knowledge of background frames and cognitive and cultural models allows the composite structure projected into the Blend from the Inputs to be viewed as part of a larger self-contained structure in the Blend. The pattern in the Blend triggered by the inherited structures is ‘completed’ into the larger emergent structure;

ELABORATION: the structure in the Blend can then be elaborated. This is “running the Blend”. It consists in cognitive work performed within the Blend, according to its own emergent logic.

In this paper we’ll try to describe conceptual integration network of mental spaces based on the fable “The Fairly Intelligent Fly” by J. Thurber [3]. We think that the first step towards the formation of comic sense is the title itself, where via the epithet fairly intelligent the insect (the fly) acquires a human being’s feature. It turns to the effect of deceived expectation as deeply rooted in our consciousness attributive comparisons like sly as a fox, mighty as a lion are contrastive to explicit textual characteristics - the fairly intelligent fly. The given example is ironic because of the word fairly which performs the stylistic function of hyperbole.

The conceptual analysis of the fable shows that the network of mental spaces consists of input spaces I1, I2 and I3, the counterparts of which belong to domains of fly, spider and flypaper (see Figure 1).

The structure of knowledge verbalized in words fly, intelligent, clever, spider, web, catch, devour, entangled, trap is associated with a number of language units connected with this sphere of knowledge. Thus, the domain of fly (Input 1) is composed of denotative and connotative meanings of the word itself: fly – insect, knowing, smart, intelligent, cunning, careful [1, p. 458].

The Input 2 (the domain of spider) is structured by constituents connected with the package of knowledge about spider and trap: spider, trap, trouble-maker, catch [1, p. 1145]. The domain of flypaper (Input 3) may be presented by such unpacked knowledge: man’s innovation, trap, sticky, poisonous, danger [1, p. 458].

The Input 4 contains the words tied with a human being itself: human being, intelligent, inventive. The Blend inherits some roles from each of the inputs: the identity of the fly’s intelligence, the spider’s trap, the flypaper leading to danger, death. In this very mental space the emergent structure appears where the processing of knowledge is fulfilled by cognitive procedures of completion and elaboration. The cross-space correspondences are represented by connectors marked in figure 1 by different lines. Solid lines point out the mapping between the input spaces. Pointers are used to show the mapping features direction within one mental space. Arcs outline the tie between counterparts which are combined. The dashed line represents language units that perform the common role (intelligence, trap, flypaper) – danger.

The comic sense of the fable is revealed via the violation of causative-consecutive ties between generic space, which contains universal knowledge about intelligence and can be presented by conceptual metaphor INTELLIGENCE IS POWER, and new blended space which develops 'emergent' content of its own resulting from the juxtaposition of elements from the inputs. In figure 1 such a violation is depicted with the help of dashed line in bold type.

Without regard to verbal registration of conceptual blending results this cognitive operation contributes to comic sense formation: surplus intelligence leads to death. This sense is reproduced in blended space by combinations of words meanings (intelligent, entangled, trap) revealed through the identity of roles – danger. Such a sense is correlated with the morality of the fable: There's no safety in numbers, or in anything else, but it doesn't correspond to set proverb It is more safety to act together which in the given context has ironical colouring. The ironic effect is achieved by collision of two domains of knowledge – fixed and inference. The dominant conceptual schemes as a basis of irony manifestation are conceptual oxymorons – STUPID vs. INTELLIGENT, SAFE, QUIET PLACE vs. TRAP.

Thus, we tried to illustrate this idea in figure 1 where by means of solid lines in bold type the interaction of words (stupid, safe, quiet place, flies) of the three inputs is shown: one needn't have a lot of intelligence to be caught in spider's web (safe, quiet place) as well as flypaper as a trap for all flies.

REFERENCES

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