

Ella Mintsis
senior teacher, Department of English Philology
Julia Mintsis
teaching assistant, Department of English Philology
Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University

ZOONYMS: CONNOTATION AND EMOTIVE COLOURING IN FICTION TEXT

One of the components of the language world picture is the semantics of zoonyms which reflect the national character and serve as means of describing various kinds of people's qualities [1; 273]. The given paper presents research on the role of zoonyms, words denoting names of animals, birds and insects in describing such aspects of human beings as appearance, behavior, traits of character, movement, state of mind, physical characteristics, etc. The analysis of fiction texts by English and American authors made it possible to trace changes in the connotation of the nouns in question and the emotive charge they add to the discourse.

Among the most commonly used stylistic devices containing zoonyms in the analyzed texts are similes. The most frequently occurring names of animals are the cat, the dog, the rat, the lion, the horse, the bear, the pig, the snake.

When a person is spoken of as an **animal**, it means that their behavior is socially unacceptable and disgusting: *They're like **animals**, living in filth, out of their minds on drugs* [11; 316]; *Months ago he made the decision never to cross Fletcher Coal. He was an **animal*** [10; 318]. But different contexts can break the stereotype and change the connotation of the animal-word making it positive: *Her body in firelight and candlelight was as beautiful as a wild **animal*** [8; 325].

Dogs are favourite pets in the USA, Britain and Ukraine and are considered to be friendly and loyal. But if the word “**dog**” is used metaphorically, it acquires negative connotation and comes to express such feelings as contempt (*You don't get all upset, as you say, if I don't turn up all the time like a little lap **dog*** [2; 518]); anger (*Julie screwed up her face angrily like a **bulldog** chewing a wasp* [8; 46]), etc.

Another favourite pet is a cat. However, few are the cases when the noun “**cat**” is used in a positive sense: *She nodded, her satisfaction hung around her like the warm sent of a stroked **cat*** [9; 179]; *I am as quiet as any sleeping **cat*** [9; 364]. In a number of examples it is used to express negative or ironic attitude such as hostility and anger (*At once Anne whirled round on him and leapt like a **wildcat**. He grabbed her wrists in his hands and wrestled her away from his face* [9; 108]; *For a moment we glared at each other, stubborn as **cats** on the stable wall, full of mutual resentment and something darker, the old sense between sisters that there is only really one room in the world for one girl. The sense that every fight could be to the death*[9; 180]; *The two of them, the young elegant woman from the French court and the wise old woman who had seen her husband leap from next to nothing to greatness, quarrelled like **cats** on a stable roof from morning to night and made each other’s lives a complete misery* [9; 114]; *It was easy to see the boys were like two feuding **cats** put into the same cage. Peace could be broken at a moment’s notice* [13; 146]), fear (*Shot out of the room like a **cat** scalded by a falling pan* [9; 254]. Numerous are the cases when authors use the name of this animal in order to express irony: *More or less forgotten by all, Hercule Poirot leant back in his chair, sipped his coffee and observed, as a **cat** may observe the twitterings and comings and goings of a flock of birds. The **cat** is not ready yet to make its spring*[6; 181]; *When Brian Doyle sent round to know had some fabrics arrived, because young Costello was behaving like a pregnant **cat** over them, Loretto said there was no point in trying to get any answer from upstairs* [2 ;506]; *Loretto Quinn told Rachel that Jack Coyne was like the **cat** that got the cream* [2 ;418], etc. Sometimes we can come across the popular allusion *Cheshire cat* used for describing a personage’s smile: “*And Trisha, how nice to see you again,*” *she said, reaching for Aunt Trisha’s hand and smiling like a Cheshire **cat*** [13; 48].

The word “**bear**” used metaphorically usually implies an angry and dangerous man (*He was as terrifying as a baited **bear*** [9; 285]); a big man (*To Lucy’s eyes he still looked as big as a grizzly **bear*** [11; 173]; a helpless man (*It was the cardinal, the*

*queen's greatest enemy, and he led the ambassador into her room as a mountebank might lead a dancing **bear** [12; 189].*

A **rat** is considered to be a disgusting animal. If this noun is used metaphorically it either shows that the person's behavior is socially unacceptable, or lays emphasis on their cowardice or expresses the feeling of anger and disgust. The word "rat" is used with reference to man rather than woman. In all the examples below it has negative connotation and supports the existing stereotype: *We're just not that kind of people who do everything under the table and run like **rats** when it all goes up in flames [3; 139]; There was something knowing and triumphant about the way the small **ratlike** man kept glancing at him; They were gone with the speed of **rats** in the dark, leaving her lying there in the filth like a piece of sodden rubbish [12 ;347]; He said if Martin stopped me taking anything I wanted, he would not only call the national newspapers and tell them what a **rat** he was but he'd also give him a good hiding [12; 406].*

According to the existing stereotypes strong people are compared to **bulls** and **oxen** (*Petra's ancestors were Angolan, and when people told her she was strong as an **ox** she would smile and say that was to be expected, her ancestors drank ox blood [7; 58]; And that last one was as brawny as a **bull** but just as thickheaded [7; 27]), and spiteful, mean and dangerous – to **snakes** (*A woman with beady eyes and a tongue that shot in and out like a **snake's** tongue. Delivering harsh, critical words every time [4; 157]; I fell into the kings arms as Anne, fast as a **snake**, unpinned my mask [9; 14]; George and I smiled encouragingly the Boleyn smile: a pair of pleasant snakes [9; 99]; "So what?" Ann demanded, like a striking **adder** [9; 103]; "No!" Ann hissed like a **snake** [9; 399]).**

Thus, used in a metaphorical sense zoonyms occur in fiction text to create a character sketch, to point out some prominent features of the personages and express the author's attitude to them. Owing to the influence of the context the connotation of nouns with animalistic semantic component can sometimes change from positive to negative and vice versa, breaking the existing stereotypes. The results of the research can be used in teaching such linguistic courses as Stylistics and Lexicology.

REFERENCES

1. Пелехата О., Пелехата Х. Особливості семантики прикметників з компонентом “тварина” у слов’янських та німецькій мовах. Семантика мови і тексту //Матеріали ІХ міжнародної науково-практичної конференції. – Івано-Франківськ: Видавничо-дизайнерський відділ ЦТІ, 2006. – С. 273.
2. Binchy, Maeve. Firefly Summer. NY: Dell Publishing, 1988. – 662p.
3. Binchy, Maeve. Quentins. NY: Dutton, 2002. – 360p.
4. Binchy, Maeve. The Return Journey.
5. Christie, Agatha. Funerals Are Fatal. NY: Harper Paperbacks, 1992. -
6. Dreiser, Theodor. Sister Carrie. Moscow: Higher School Publishing House, 1968. – 594p.
7. Ferre`, Rosario. The House On The Lagoon. NY: A Plume Book, 1996. – 407p.
8. Gayle, Mike. Mr. Commitment. London: Flame, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000. – 325p.
9. Gregory, Philippa. The Other Boleyn Girl. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002. – 532p.
10. Grisham, John. The Pelican Brief. NY: Island Books, 1993. – 436p.
11. Michaels, Fern. The Nosy Neighbour. NY: Pocket Books, 2005. – 354p.
12. Pearse, Lesley. Till We Meet Again. London: Penguin Books, 2003. – 500p.
13. Steele, Daniella. The Long Road Home. NY: Dell Publishing, 1998. – 439p.