A Stylistic Analysis of Dickens's Dehumanisation Using Metaphors in *Our Mutual Friend*

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0. Introduction

In reading Dickens, one finds his successive use of figu- rative expressions such as simile and metaphor by which a large variety of people are described as animal species or artificial objects by means of dehumanisation.1 His focus on these rhetorical devices is reflected by his so precise and minute observations of the distinctive personalities of his characters or the attributes of artificial substances that his linguistic style is constantly rich in humour and vividness. Thus, most of his tropes include unique symbolic expressions, giving the readers colour- ful images of characters or objects described from every aspect. However, his main concern regarding his dehu- manisation device presented by his figures of speech, is to not only give detailed descriptions of their physical appearances or natural attributes but also reflect that the author’s/the hero’s inner emotion or attitude towards the surroundings can largely influence their life and fortune. Above all, in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens attempts to evoke an association between a human being and a non-human living being/inanimate objects in the reader’s mind by degrading people to less than human beings owing to their unique dispositions. This type of Dickens’s technique is of great value to him in representing how closely the conceptual correlations between human beings and non-human living creatures/artificial substances are established in the author’s narrative eyes. In addition, one can recognise his particular use of meta- phor in this novel, as the ratio of his use of metaphor is higher than that of simile. In other words, by use of metaphor the author attempts to depict a large variety of human characters, for he closely observes complex relationships among them over the financial issues raised by the death of John Harmon, an heir to the large fortune of his father. For this reason, one of the remarkable characteristics of Dickens is that his metaphors include descriptions with negative nuances, as he intends to encour- age his readers to despise characters by depriving them of their humanness.

In this way, the chief concern of my study is to in- vestigate the linguistic mechanisms of various Dicken- sian metaphors by shedding light on their forms, tech- niques or mental processes underlying the conceptual relationship between two different things—human beings and non-human living creatures or objects—that are compared in context, and also elucidate the roles and purposes of his figurative descriptions. Thus, I shall firstly look at Dickens’s typical devices in terms of forms and techniques, and secondly explicate the mechanics of conceptual linkage between topic and vehicle2 so as to discover the grounds of affinities between two referents by considering the author’s/heroes’ points of view and power of imagination. These methods will cast light on the conceptually close relationship between human and animal or human and artefact in Dickens’s animation and mechanisation through metaphor. This criterion will be a crucial key for us to show the linguistic characteristics of Dickens’s metaphors and elucidate the particularity of Dickens’s linguistic style.

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1 According to Meier (1982: 9), this type of device is also called ‘mechanisation’, and Dickens is fond of using it in order to deanimate particular dislikeable human beings into inanimate objects in his novels. In my paper, however, I prefer to use the term ‘dehumanisation’ instead of ‘mech- anisation’ to refer to his method of dehumanising people, whether good or bad, into either animals or objects, for the author tends to character- ise various types of characters in comparison with non-human living creatures or artificial objects. In addition, I purposely italicised ‘dehumanisation’ in order to emphasize the importance of the term.

2 According to I.A. Richards in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), metaphor consists of two parts: the tenor and vehicle, whilst other scholars employ the general terms ground and figure to denote what Richards identifies as the tenor and vehicle. In my paper, I adopt the terms the topic and the vehicle that Goadly (2011) makes use of, substituting the word topic for tenor.
1. Dickens’s Style

According to Brook (1970: 13), Dickens’s language and narrative styles, aiming to strongly appeal to the emotions, were highly regarded in the nineteenth century and above all, metaphor is one of Dickens’s powerful and unique stylistic features. Similarly, Alter (1996: 131) regards Dickens as a preeminent rhetorical performer as in his paper Reading Style in Dickens: ‘Dickens is above all the great master of figurative language in English after Shakespeare, and what I want to concentrate on here is how I focus as a reader on Dickens’s use of figurative language, and what it reveals to me about the world of his novels’. In the process of reading Dickens’s prose, he also focuses on the visionary power of the author’s narrative style and discovers that his precise and careful definition by metaphor of certain qualities of things leads the reader to visualise the scene in his/her mind’s eye.

In addition, other scholars such as Kincaid (1971), Fawknner (1977) and Meier (1982) refer to Dickens’s effective use of dehumanising devices.

Kincaid (1971: 168) examines Dickens’s marked tendency of using dehumanising vocabulary in his literature due to the reason that the author intends to speak of good people as harmless domestic animals and evil people as dangerous predatory beasts. He further remarks, ‘the transposition of animals and human beings suggests a basic and threatening inhumanity’. That is, Dickens aims at not only depriving people of their human quality, but also illustrating the inhuman nature of particular characters in society by comparison with other living creatures.

Similarly, Fawknner (1977: 73) focuses attention on the particular converse process (i.e. dehumanisation) in Dickens as characteristic of his style, and a feather included in the device as he states the following: ‘The reification of human beings was nearly always pejorative in Dickens. The people in the novels who are deanimated do indeed tend to be depreciated in one way or another: they usually seem dislikable, or at least ridiculous’. His statement thus leads us to conclude that the author’s dehumanisation device includes negative connotations in that the people in the novel can be frequently deanimated and depreciated, as they usually seem dislikable or inhuman.

Further, Meier (1982: 61) remarks on Dickens’s device of dehumanisation: ‘Dickens’s metaphors and similes compare not only the animate to the inanimate, but also various species within the animate sphere. Although both animals and humans are living creatures, the barrier between them is generally considered strong enough to permit the creation of forceful and telling metaphors. Therefore, it can be said that Dickens’s animal metaphor for human personality tends to be uncomplimentary or derogatory, reinforcing the barrier between human beings and non-human animal species.

1. 1 Devices of Metaphor in Dickens

This section explicates the linguistic feature and style of Dickens’s use of metaphor, firstly focusing on grammar. Metaphor in general is a device of comparing two things without using terms as ‘like’ or ‘as’ used in similes. For this reason, the descriptive form ‘A is B’ is most frequent as in ‘he is a lion in battle’. Despite its simple structure compared with a simile using ‘like’ or ‘as’, the metaphorical device in this novel plays a significant role for Dickens in delineating particular features of characters or objects elaborately or fancifully. As for Dickens’s metaphors, Alter (1996) mentions the author’s fantastically witty representation of the scenes or persons as well as the fertility of his metaphorical imagination that leads us, the readers, to recognise the dense vision of the world that surrounds him. Therefore, if we apply all the classifications of metaphorical forms presented by Ikeda (1992), Goatly (1997) and Sukagawa (1999), we can see ten types of forms, namely Types I to X, as outlined in the following sections.

1. 2 Word Class and Metaphor

1. 2. 1 Nouns

Goatly (2011: 81) pays attention to word classes on metaphor and the effective force of noun vehicle terms as phrases by saying that they reveal very strongly the clashes between conventional and unconventional reference, which causes noun phrases to be imaginable and recognisable by evoking vivid images of the things in question (i.e. the things referred to by noun phrases) and enhancing memory. His statement is as follows:

Noun V-terms (i.e. vehicle terms) are either more recognisable as metaphors (Steen 2007: 123) or yield richer interpretations than V-terms of other word classes. [...] because they are referring expressions, in the strictest sense, noun phrases reveal very strongly the clashes between conventional and unconventional reference: and as V-terms they can be equated with Topics by the copula, to be, creating a strong sense of contradiction. (Goatly, 2011: 81)
Now, it is significant to shed light on how noun phrases as vehicle terms are employed and can be more easily recognised than vehicle terms of other word classes. In Our Mutual Friend, six types of noun forms, namely Types I to VI are found:

**Type I: (Det) + N**

1. It being now past midnight, the bird of prey went straight to roost. At mid-day following he reappeared at the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, in the character, not new to him, of a witness before a Coroner’s July. (OMF, 30)

**Type II: (Det) + N (Vocative)**

2. But she was here interrupted by her father’s voice exclaiming angrily, ‘Now, Poll Parrot!’ And by her father’s hat being heavily flung from his hand and striking her face. (OMF, 356)

**Type III: N1+ Copula + N2**

3. ‘Ne-never once thought of the way of doing it’ cried Mr. Boffin, smiting the table in his admiration. ‘What a thinking steaminggin this old lady is!’ and she don’t know how she does it. Neither does the ingeini’ (OMF, 100)

**Type IV: N1+ N2 (Apposition)**

4. Mr. Podsnap, with his hair-brushes made the most of; that imperial rocking-horse, Mrs. Podsnap, majestically skittish. (OMF, 120)

**Type V: N1+ of + N2 (Genitive)**

5. As the disappearing skirts of the ladies ascended the Veneering staircase, Mortimer following them forth from the dining-room, turned into a library of bran-new books, in bran-new bindings liberally gilded, and requested to see the messenger who had brought the paper. (OMF, 18)

**Type VI: N1 + of + N2 (Apposition)**

6. ‘Take all the consequences,’ laughed Eugene, ‘and take away my disappointment. Lizzie Hexam, as I truly respect you, and as I am your friend and a poor devill of a gentleman, I protest I don’t even now understand why you hesitate.’ (OMF, 237)

Firstly, Type I to Type VI denotes the typical structures of Dickens’s noun metaphors most commonly used in the novel. Type I, the ‘determiner + noun’ form occurs most frequently as it occurs 173 times. Instance (1) suggests a close affinity between two animate beings (i.e. Gaffer Hexam and the bird of prey) in that the expression ‘the bird of prey’ symbolises its greedy nature. As Gaffer Hexam tries to take some money away from the body flowing on the Thames, one finds a close relationship between their rapacious dispositions. In this way, Dickens describes the man in association with the bird of prey. Next, Type II, namely the ‘determiner + noun’ form denotes a vocative form of noun metaphor, of which there are 8 examples. Pleasant Riderhood is often described as ‘a poll parrot’ from her father’s point of view. Since he once called to his daughter, ‘Now, Poll Parrot!’ as in instance (2), he successively makes this type of metaphor to denote her talkative personality, for he regards her as ‘a poll parrot’ fourteen times in the novel. Type III is the form with a copula as in ‘A is B’. The copula in this case includes a verb such as ‘be’, ‘seem’, ‘appear’ and so on. This type of noun metaphor is the second most frequent as it includes 37 examples. Type IV is effective in linking two nouns together in apposition, although this form is comparatively rare (12 examples). Instance (4) describes the way in which Mrs. Podsnap, a materialistic, wealthy woman, is depicted as ‘a rocking-horse’, as the author is in the habit of dehumanising her as a person lacking in human nature. Similarly, Type V is another way of linking two nouns together, using the preposition ‘of’. This is, however, different from Type IV in that it is rather similar to constructions such as ‘B of A’ or ‘B’s A’. Although this type, of which there are 2 examples, is not so frequent as other types such as Type I and Type III, it is most effective in not only describing the appearance or behaviour of characters itself but also symbolising each character’s inner thought or emotion towards other characters who profoundly influence his/her life and fortune. Instance (5) shows the way in which the ladies disappeared into the upstairs after the dinner in the Veneering’s house. The term ‘the skirts’ as in (5) is a metonymical expression symbolising the ladies’ motion ascending the stairs. There is yet another type of ‘noun + of + noun’ form as in Type VI, which has 10 examples in the novel. This also functions as apposition linking two nouns together using the preposition ‘of’. Instance (6) describes the way in which Eugene Wrayburn, a lawyer,
despises himself as ‘a poor devil of a gentleman’ in front of Lizzie Hexam, whom he is in love with. Thus, this expression is effective in depicting his inner thoughts, as he assumes a self-deprecating attitude to Lizzie, evaluating himself as if a highly unfortunate human being.

1.2.2 Adjectives
Type VII takes the form of ‘adjective + noun’ as in instances (7) to (12). In Our Mutual Friend, 36 examples of this type are found. Although rare as compared with his noun forms of metaphor, Dickens makes good use of this type of adjective metaphor to symbolically depict human beings as if they were animals, supernatural beings, natural objects or artificial objects by means of dehumanisation.

Type VII: Adj + N

(7) He had nothing with him but his boat, and came on apace. A knot of those amphibious human creatures who appear to have some mysterious power of extracting a subsistence out of tidal water by looking at it, were gathered together about the causeway. (OMF, 74)

(8) And this she did with such a successful display of her eight aquiline fingers and their encircling jewels, that she happily laid hold of a drifting general officer, his wife and daughter, and not only restored their animation which had become suspended, but made them lively friends within an hour. (OMF, 134)

(9) And be sure that close to little Georgiana, also under inspection by the same gingerous gentleman, sits Fledgeby. (OMF, 411)

(10) At the fourth tug—vindictively administered by the hammer-headed young man—Miss Lavinia appeared, emerging from the house in an accidental manner, with a bonnet and parasol, as designing to take a contemplative walk. (OMF, 106)

(11) Aware of her enemy, Lady Tippins tries a youthful sally or two, and tries the eye-glass; but from the impenetrable cap and snorting armour of the stony aunt all weapons rebound powerless. (OMF, 121)

(12) Her cherubic father justly remarked to her husband that the baby seemed to make her younger than before, reminding him of the days when she had a pet doll and used to talk to it as she carried it about. (OMF, 755)

(7) illustrates the way in which some people hanging around the causeway are identified with ‘amphibians’. In this context, the adjective ‘amphibious’ is reminiscent of other characters, such as Uriah Heep in David Copperfield and Mr. Drummle and Mr. Pumblechook in Great Expectations. They are all such dull and cruel characters that the author is in the habit of dehumanising these villains as if fish-like animals such as ‘amphibian’, ‘fish’, ‘snail’ and ‘frog’. In this way, he attempts to emphasize the narrator’s fear of and unfavourable impressions towards those characters.

Moreover, regarding Dickens’s metaphor, the animal term ‘amphibian’ tends to be denominated into the adjective ‘amphibious’ with the suffix ‘-ous’ as in the above example. As Goatly (2011: 87-88) indicates, adjective metaphor is likely to be inactive, and its meanings can be weakened in the sense of being less noticeable, and less likely to give rise to interactive interpretations.

Also, as instances (10), (11) and (13) exhibit, it is worth noting that the author is in the habit of using words such as ‘wooden’, ‘stony’ or ‘hammer-headed’ for inanimate metaphors in order to symbolise each character’s mechanical figure or lack of human nature.

Referring to Dickens’s adjective metaphors, it is important to point out that almost all of the metaphors with the ‘adjective + noun’ form are based on dehumanisation devices, which involves the process of transforming human beings into animals, supernatural beings, natural objects or artificial objects. Among all the four patterns of transference, we can find that in Our Mutual Friend the pattern from human beings to artificial objects is the most frequent (11 examples) regarding the collocations of ‘adjective + noun’, whilst the pattern from human beings to natural objects is the least (3 examples).

Further, as in instance (13), you can see another form of Dickens’s adjective metaphor, which is rare in this novel. The adjective ‘wooden’ with the suffixed ‘-en’ form is metaphorical, and lexicalised enough to be inactive, which denotes that the contradiction between the two dissimilar references (i.e. a human and an object) is softened.

Type VIII: N + Copula + Adj

(13) Sooth to say, he was so wooden a man that he seemed to have taken his wooden leg naturally, and rather suggested to the fanciful observer, that he might be expected—if his development received no untimely check—to be completely set up with a pair of wooden legs in about six
months. (OMF, 46)

1. 2. 3 Adverbs
Next, Type IX is the ‘verb + adverb’ form metaphor which includes only five examples, regarding the dehumanisation device. (14) explains the way in which Reginald Wilfer is associated with ‘a cherub’ by means of adverb metaphor. The word ‘cherubically’ is originally a derivation from a denominial adjective, ‘cherubic’. In other words, it derives from a noun ‘cherub’ via an adjectiue ‘cherubic’. This adverbial metaphor is effective in conveying to the readers how Mr. Wilfer has a deep affection for his daughter Bella, for the word ‘cherubically’ evokes a clear image of his chubby figure as well as his adorable personality. This structure therefore plays a significant role in symbolising a certain quality of specific characters in the novel.

Type IX: V + Adv
(14) He then came cherubically flying out without A hat, and embraced her, and handed her in. ‘For it’s after hours and I am all alone, my dear,’ he explained, ‘and am having—as I sometimes do, when they are all gone—a quiet tea.’ (OMF, 604)

Furthermore, instance (14) is a collocational style of manner adverb modifying a verb figuratively, which includes the author’s particular device of dehumanisation. As for the function of adverbal metaphors, Goatly’s theory is stated as follows:

The adverbial –ly suffix can, as with most derivational markers, be interpreted as a signal that metaphorical meaning is involved, and therefore a softener of the incorporated metaphor. […] Adverbs will often derive from denominial adjectives, e.g. sheepishly derives originally from sheep via sheepish. Because of the history of derivation and the lexicalization at two stages in the derivational process, these adverbs have a considerably narrower range of meanings than, for example, their simile counterparts (i.e. like a sheep). (Goatly, 2011: 89)

His statement suggests that the adverb with the ‘–ly’ suffix is less likely to be recognised as metaphorical, or produce rich interpretations compared with a noun, verb or adjective. Moreover, Dickens’s use of this type of adverbial collocation is comparatively rare: the adverb ‘cherubically’ as in (14) appears only four times in Our Mutual Friend and never occurs in his other novels. Besides, the adverb ‘cherubically’ appears only once in the OED and can therefore be recognised as an unusual collocation usage or the author’s particular creative expression.

1. 2. 4 Verbs
Moreover, we can see another type of form with verbs, as in Type X. Examples (15) to (17) include both intransitive and transitive verb forms of metaphor:

Type X: Vi or Vt (i = intransitive / t = transitive)
(15) ‘What are you Poll Parroting at now? Ain’t you got nothing to do but fold your arms and stand a Poll Parroting all night?’ (OMF, 354)
(16) ‘Well,’ said Mr. Riderhood, quailing a little, ‘I am willing to be silent for the purpose of hearing. But don’t Poll Parrot me.’ (OMF, 354)
(17) All such things she would hear discussed, as we, my lords and gentlemen and honourable boards, in our unapproachable magnificence never hear them, and from all such things she would fly with the wings of raging despair. (OMF, 506)

At first, Dickens employs a vocative form of noun metaphor as in (2), ‘Now, Poll Parrot!’ and next shifts it to a verb form as in (15) and (16). This type of metaphor may be generally a rare form in literary works as one can see only one example of word ‘poll parrot’ as a verb in the OED. However, it is one of the most significant characteristics of Dickens’s verb metaphors in that the author (Pleasant’s father, to be exact) tends to treat Pleasant Riderhood as‘a poll parrot’ fourteen times in Our Mutual Friend. Therefore, the pattern of shift from a noun to a verb is one of the particular styles in Dickens’s metaphors.

In the study of conversion from nouns to verbs, Goatly (1997: 92) claims that denominal verbs generally occur as metaphorical clichés, in other words they tend to occur with a narrow range of collocations; metaphorical force is weakened, and the interpretation is less interactive than with the equivalent noun. However, my own

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1 OED refers to the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. In OED, the sentence ‘she cherubically escorted’ is cited, as only one example of the adverb ‘cherubically’ (The OED, cherubically, adv.).
2 The example (15) is cited in OED, as only one example of the verb ‘poll parrot’ (The OED, s.v. poll parrot, v. trans.)
view is that Dickens makes successive use of the verb ‘poll parrot’ in order to embody the image of Pleasant’s talkative nature as well as reveal a close association between Pleasant and a poll parrot in the readers’ mind. Also, what is remarkable in the examples (15) and (16) is that after using the noun metaphor once, he verbalises it over and over again to establish her clear image as ‘a poll parrot’ in the context and at the same time emphasize the offensiveness of her father. Thus, this repetitive use is of great importance in symbolising her talkative personality in the novel. In this way, we can identify a conceptual relationship between the two referents, namely Pleasant as a *topic* and a poll parrot as a *vehicle*.

1.3 Collocations
1.3.1 Adjectives
Moreover, it is fundamental to shed light on another approach to Dickens’s adjective metaphors, a collocational approach to the author’s linguistic styles proposed by Hori (2004: 57), who focuses on metaphorical collocations involving the cohesion of two or more co-occurring words. As for the process by which artificial qualities are applied to various characters, we can find two significant points: firstly, the adjectives ‘wooden’, ‘hammer-headed’ and ‘stony’, all of which refer to the qualities of inanimate, mechanical figures, are frequent in Dickens’s adjectival metaphors (as mentioned in 1.2.2). Secondly, these types of metaphorical collocations include descriptions of each character’s nature or appearance. The adjectives ‘hammer-headed’ are often employed in the ‘adjective + noun’ form, for the author is in the habit of representing a man’s head shaped like that of a hammer but also dullness or stupidity of the man. According to Hori (2004: 61), the suffix ‘-ed’ is very productive of new compound words used as premodifiers in Dickens’s metaphors. In addition, it is worth noting that the author is basically inclined to use words such as ‘wooden’, ‘hammer-headed’, ‘mechanical’, ‘icy’ and ‘stony’ in his novels for inanimate metaphors in order to symbolise each character’s mechanical figure or lack of human nature.

(Animals/Fish)

- *raven* locks (OMF, 10), those *amphibious* human creatures (OMF, 74), a pervadingly *aquiline* state of figure (OMF, 74), her eight *aquiline* fingers (OMF, 134), her *aquiline* hands (OMF, 626)

(Supernatural beings)

- a *ghostly* manner (OMF, 16), a *ghostly* lighter (OMF, 166), a *ghostly* relish (OMF, 635), her *cherubic* parent

(OMF, 664, 665, 671), the *cherubic* legs (OMF, 672), her *cherubic* father (OMF, 755)

(Plants)

- *his gingersome whiskers* (OMF, 123), *a thick gingersome bush* (OMF, 123), the same *gingerous* gentleman (OMF, 411)

(Artefacts)

- *so wooden* a man (OMF, 46), his *wooden* conceit and craft (OMF, 56), the *stony* aunt (OMF, 121), a long *hammer-headed* young man (OMF, 102), the *hammer-headed* horse and man (OMF, 106), the *hammer-headed* young man (OMF, 106, 178, 196, 204), the *stony* lips (OMF, 445), a *wooden* wink (OMF, 659)

1.3.2 Adverbs
Furthermore, the ‘verb + adverb’ form of metaphor, although rare, is found in Dickens’s collocations. Most of the manner adverbs in the following instances modify verbs in a figurative way:

(Supernatural beings)

- she *cherubically* escorted (OMF, 42), the good-tempered cherub, who was often *un-cherubically* employed in his own family (OMF, 454). He then came *cherubically* flying out without a hat (OMF, 604). Which he did, *cherubically* strewing the path with the smiles, in the absence of flowers (OMF, 610), ‘Though I positively cannot tear myself away’, he *cherubically* added, ... (OMF, 670)

As mentioned in 1.2.3, Dickens describes Reginald Wilfer in association with ‘a cherub’ by means of adverb metaphor. The adverb ‘cherubically’ or ‘un-cherubically’ is one of Dickens’s distinctive expressions concerning the pattern of transformation of a human being into a supernatural being. However, in *Our Mutual Friend*, the author makes use of the noun ‘cherub’ (42 examples) far more frequently than the adjective ‘cherubic’ (9 examples) and the adverb ‘cherubically’ (4 examples). The reason for this is that the author attempts to intensify the degree of cherubic appearance and comportment by means of noun metaphor, which is generally more forceful and recognisable as a metaphor than an adjective/adverb metaphor. Particularly, Dickens’s repetitive use of noun metaphor in the form ‘the + cherub’ is effective for him in enhancing the vividness of the readers’ images of the cherubic man.
1.4 Techniques

1.4.1 Contrast

In example (18), one can discover that Dickens makes technical use of metaphor, which involves the contrast of dispositions between the two characters. Contrast is one type of technical device that Dickens is fond of in his figures of speech, although it is rare in his novels. It is above all most effective in describing two opposite qualities in behaviour or appearance among characters, other living creatures or objects that are compared. Dickens exploits the effect of contrast for metaphor in order to express something particular to each narrator’s eye. For instance, it may contrast someone of gentle nature with someone of firm nature or something of soft quality with something of hard quality. Because of this, the readers can not only have a more specific idea or image of the behaviour or appearance of each character, but also can have some impressions of or reactions to the description.

(18) Eugene says this with a sound of vexation in his voice, leaning back in his chair and looking balefully at Lady Tippins, who nods to him as her dear Bear, and playfully insinuates that she (a self-evident proposition) is Beauty, and he Beast. (OMF, 412)

In *Our Mutual Friend*, Lady Tippins considers herself ‘beauty’ and Eugene Wrayburn ‘beast’, for the purpose of intensifying the degree of her contempt for the man as well as suggesting the difference of status between the two. However, there is no more than one example of contrast in this novel, and thus it can be said that this technical device is rare for Dickens’s metaphorical descriptions.

1.4.2 Alliteration

Additionally, Dickens technically exploits alliterative forms of metaphor, which are not merely represented in repeated letters but include some rhythmical sounds. Above all, alliteration is one of the most effective sound techniques in metaphors. Although one can find only a few examples of this type in *Our Mutual Friend*, the author occasionally attempts to delineate a character graphically. The /b/ sounds in the description ‘Boots and Brewer, and two other stuffed Buffers’ as in (19) are effective for Dickens in rhythmically and humorously describing the four characters who spend the dinner time with the Veneering. In this context, the looking-glass above the sideboard at the Veneering’s house reflects Mr. Boots, Mr. Brewer and two Buffers, all of whose names metonymically signify either their professions or personalities.

(19) Lastly, the looking-glass reflects *Boots and Brewer, and two other stuffed Buffers* interposed between the rest of the company and possible accidents. (OMF, 11)

1.5 Frequencies

As outlined in Table 1 we will examine the frequency of these ten patterns of metaphorical forms on Dickens’s *dehumanisation*. First, we can see from the table that the ‘determiner + noun’ form is the most frequent in *Our Mutual Friend* (173 examples), while the ‘noun + copula + noun’ form is the second most frequent (37 examples). What is more, we can find that Dickens has a remarkable tendency to make frequent use of noun metaphors in order to make each appearance of the characters more vivid and colourful. In other words, noun metaphors (i.e. the ‘determiner + noun’ form in particular) include an enormous number of descriptions of characters associated with non-human living creatures or objects by means of *dehumanisation*.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th><em>Our Mutual Friend</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Det) + Noun</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Det) + Noun (Vocative)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1 + Copula + N2</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1 + N2 (Apposition)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1 + of + N2 (Genitive)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1 + of + N2 (Apposition)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj + N</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N + Copula + Adj</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V + Adv</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi or Vt</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 301

1.6 Dehumanising Terms in Dickens

Table 2 shows various types of dehumanising terms classified based on word classes, namely noun, adjective, adverb and verb. Firstly, regarding *Our Mutual Friend*, animal metaphor is one of the most frequent techniques of *dehumanisation* as it includes 94 examples in total.
Noun terms such as ‘dog’, ‘brute’, ‘cat’, ‘beast’ or ‘insect’ are used metaphorically with negative connotations, while ‘bird’ or ‘lamb’ tends to be used with positive nuances. Additionally, the other word classes such as adjective, adverb and verb are rare in Dickens’s animalisation.

Next, as for supernatural beings, though it is rare,

Table 2
Dehumanising Metaphors Based on Word Class in Our Mutual Friend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>birds of prey, crest, cherub-patriarch, old bird, bees, insects, four-footed creatures, Beast, Bull, human ants, cat, puppy, kitten, insect, vermin, water-rat, Ass, dove, featherless ostriches, worm, Poll Parrot, Poll Parrotting, dog, lobster, shell, crust, crocodile, hermit-crab, oyster, wings, canary-bird, brute, black sheep, night-birds, feathers, Wolf, old dog, little Mouse, Viper, Brute Beast, beast, brown bear, lambs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>raven, rhinoceros, amphibious, buzzing, aquatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>creep, pick up, Poll Parrot, fly, flutter, hover, wing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supernatural Beings</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cupidon, cherub, Medusa, Devil, Ogre, devil, Home Goddess, Dragon, divine, fairies, Fury, Angel, Monster, Demon, hobgoblin(s), sphinx, devil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>ghostly, cherub’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>cherubically, un-cherubically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>fly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Objects</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>gingerous, mushroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artefacts</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dinner-furniture, article, boots, buffers, skirts, dumb statue, funnel, steam-engine, statuette, jeweller’s window, hair-brushes, rocking-horse, articles, automaton, pillar of the church, cap, piece of furniture, letter-cart, wall, gold, gold gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>rocking-horse’s, wooden, tarred, hammer-headed, stony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstracts</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reference, apothecary, law, nature, cobwebs, embodiment, Glory, fortune, divinity, Beauty, worthy, old Dust, the irrepressible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dickens is fond of describing a fearful or grotesque person as if he/she were ‘a devil’, ‘dragon’ or ‘monster’, while a sacred or adorable woman like Bella Wilfer is often praised by other characters as if ‘an angel’ or ‘goddess’. This is one of the remarkable characteristics in Dickens’s novels.

What is more, Dickens effectively uses the method of depicting particular characters as if they were natural objects/phenomena, artefacts, or even abstracts by metaphor. We also find from the table that the author tends to mechanise a greedy or cunning character like Mr. Twemlow as ‘a piece of dinner-furniture’, whilst a perverse character like Mr. Silas Wegg is often despised as ‘a wood’. This pattern of mechanising metaphor is the second most frequent in Our Mutual Friend as shown in the table, where you can find various descriptions involving nouns such as ‘article’, ‘jeweller’s window’ and ‘rocking-horse’, which all symbolise each character’s personality trait degraded as ‘less than human’.

2. Conceptual Analysis

Now, in this section, we will consider a conceptual relationship between two referents, namely topic and vehicle, involved in Dickens’s metaphorical statements. As mentioned above, Dickens is in the habit of animalising or mechanising unique characters so that he can explain elaborately their behaviours and appearances and evoke clear image of what is described. We will now focus on the way in which a number of characters are chiefly dehumanised on the basis of their personalities and examine how the reader can interpret these types of dehumanising metaphors.

Referring to a semantic diagram put forward by Bickerton (1980), Way (1991) and Goatly (1997), who attempted to analyse the semantic components used in metaphor, we can elucidate the distance between two features (i.e. topic and vehicle) involved in Dickens’s figurative speech. Figure 1 is a modified version of a tree diagram earlier put forward by these scholars, which will be a fundamental means for us to investigate the semantic mechanisms of his devices. The diagram shows how all phenomena in the world can be categorised into several components based on whether or not they are +concrete, –concrete, +animate, –animate, +human, –human and so on, branching off from the top of the tree. As to the diagram, we add the eight semantic components, namely Behaviour, Senses, Feelings, Natural Phenomena, Substance, Supernatural Being, Animal, and Human at
the bottom of the tree as they are used often in the author’s metaphoric expressions. Each of these components is further categorised into various features branching out their nodes down into the bottom of the hierarchy, and therefore, Animal for example, can be further categorised into Mammal, Fish, Bird, Insect, Reptile and Amphibian, all of which Dickens makes good use of in dehumanisation. Now, we will here apply this tree diagram to Dickens’s metaphors, as this will be a crucial key in explicating the linguistic functions of his devices.

2.1 Conceptual Colligations in Metaphor

Next, we will investigate how to conceive Dickens’s metaphorical expressions by shedding light on the reciprocal influence created by the presence of the topic and the vehicle. The method of investigating the conceptual system of Dickens’s metaphor deals with a metaphorical mapping between the two references, namely the topic and the vehicle, which, according to Kövecses (2010), can be established and tightly connected through a conceptual metaphor.

As Kövecses says, metaphorical linguistic expressions suggest the existence of a number of conceptual metaphors in English, and a ‘Human is Animal’ metaphor, for example, makes it possible for us to understand the meaning of dehumanising metaphors such as ‘Mr. Boffin is a dog’ or ‘Lady Toppins is a crocodile’ and so on. Further, according to Kövecses, most animal-related metaphors capture the negative characteristics of human beings, and therefore, it will be fundamental for us to examine the conceptual meanings of Dickens’s animal metaphors involving the mapping between the two things—human as a topic and animal as a vehicle.

2.1.1 Conceptual Metaphor

In Dickens’s dehumanisation, almost all of the human beings are metaphorically understood in terms of animal behaviours/appearances or inhumanity of artificial objects. Thus, we have two conceptual metaphors: ‘Human is Animal’ and ‘Human is Object/Substance’ to be applied to Dickens’s dehumanisation.

Figure 2 shows the way in which the ‘Human is Animal’ metaphor plays a vital part in the de-personification that involves an animal metaphor. Furthermore, firstly the ‘Human is Animal’ conceptual metaphor is closely related to de-personification, and thus, not only the ‘Human is Animal’ metaphor but also ‘Human is Supernatural/Mythical Being’ and ‘Human is Plant’ all contribute to the dehumanising expressions.

![Figure 2](image-url)

Figure 2  The ‘Human is Animal’ Conceptual Metaphor

Similarly, the ‘Human is Object/Substance’ conceptual metaphor is applicable to various mechanising metaphors, which involves the transformation of human beings into artificial things. As Figure 3 shows, the conceptual metaphors ‘Human is Machine/Implement’ and ‘Human is Commodity’ are concerned with Dickens’s de-personification, and therefore, we will apply these conceptual metaphors to Dickens’s dehumanising expressions so we could analyse the conceptual mechanisms of
his devices.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3 The ‘Human is Object/Substance’ Conceptual Metaphor

2.2 Data and Analysis of Frequency

2.2.1 Animalisation

This section focuses on the way people are dehumanised based on their personalities. It is important to point out that Dickens employs a variety of animal terms for dehumanisation. Table 3 indicates how each character as a topic is transformed into an animal as a vehicle by metaphor. Kincaid (1971: 168) remarks that the main purpose of Dickens’s dehumanisation of various people is to appraise them warmly or coldly so that the author may speak of good people as harmless domestic animals and evil people as dangerous predatory beasts. By looking at the table, we can see that each objectionable male character like Eugene Wrayburn or Mr. Riderhood is often associated with an animal such as ‘a beast’ or ‘a brute’, which is one of the author’s typical means of animalisa-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Characters</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Female Characters</th>
<th>Animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaffer Hexum</td>
<td>the bird of prey (−)</td>
<td>Mrs. Veneering</td>
<td>eagle (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Boffin</td>
<td>old bird (+), beast (−),</td>
<td>Mrs. Boffin</td>
<td>cobweb (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene Wrayburn</td>
<td>four-footed creature (−),</td>
<td>Georgiana Podsnap</td>
<td>dove (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>insect (−), bee (−), Beast (−), Brute Beast (−)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Riderhood</td>
<td>vermin (−), dog (−), Brute (−)</td>
<td>Pleasant Riderhood</td>
<td>poll parrot (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Rokesmith</td>
<td>worm (−)</td>
<td>Lady Tippins</td>
<td>lobster (−), crocodile (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Jew (Lizzie’s brother)</td>
<td>dog (−)</td>
<td>Bella Wilfer</td>
<td>little Beast (−), canary-bird (+), little Brute (−), little Mouse (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley Headstone</td>
<td>night-bird (−)</td>
<td>Betty Higden</td>
<td>bird (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Fledgeby</td>
<td>brute (−), bird (−), Wolf (−)</td>
<td>Miss Lavvy</td>
<td>Viper (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Lammle</td>
<td>brute (−)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Dolls</td>
<td>beast (−)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for female characters, Mrs. Veneering tends to be regarded as ‘an eagle’ in a negative context, while a sacred or adorable woman like Bella Wilfer is often praised by Mr. J. Rokesmith as a supernatural or abstract being in a positive context, which is a marked tendency in Dickens’s novels. In his metaphor, the analogy between human beings and animals is apt to suggest a variety of particular appearances or behaviours of certain characters in his novels.

As a whole, Dickens is likely to represent people of gentle, loving or timid disposition as ‘birds’ in his novels. For example, as for people of good nature, Mr. Chhillp in *David Copperfield* is one of the characters frequently compared with ‘a bird’ by simile on the basis of his gentle disposition. Similarly, Dora Spenlow in *Great Expectations* is dehumanised as ‘a bird’ or ‘a butterfly’, owing to her shy and timid character. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Bella Wilfer calls herself ‘a canary bird’ by metaphor to show her affectionate nature. In the same way, Pleasant Riderhood is often recognised as ‘a poll parrot’ owing to her talkative personality. Although almost all of the animal-related metaphors include negative connotations in terms of human qualities, some domestic or harmless animals such as bird species are used for good or loving people, for especially children or women who are naturally human, warm-hearted, pure or harmless to those around them. This is one of the remarkable characteristics in Dickens’s novels. Thus, Dickens enriches his
world through animal-like people, either of good or bad quality, as he is exceedingly aware of the animal qualities in mankind and attempts to give a colourful and humorous delineation of each character.

2.2.2 Supernaturalisation

In Dickens’s metaphor, female characters like Dora and Agnes in *David Copperfield* are often praised by the hero David as if they were supernatural beings, natural objects or abstractions with words such as ‘fairy’, ‘angel’, ‘star’ or ‘beauty’. Similarly, Bella Wilfer, a sacred or adorable woman, is often praised as ‘a Goddess’. Although this type of expression, which gives us positive nuances, is rare in *Our Mutual Friend*, it is one of the fundamental means of description used by Dickens to symbolise a heavenly character or suggest a good nature and harmlessness to other people. In contrast, objectionable characters such as Eugene Wrayburn, Mr. Boffin and Bradley Headstone tend to be associated with words such as ‘devil’, ‘monster’ or ‘demon’, which is effective for the author to indicate their fearful appearances or villainous dispositions.

2.2.3 Nature Metaphors

There is yet another type of *dehumanisation* by which human beings are transformed into natural objects or phenomena. As this device is very rare in *Our Mutual Friend*, one can recognise only male characters described as either ‘a star’ or ‘a ginger’ in negative contexts.

### 2.2.4 Mechanisation

*Dehumanisation* has a high frequency of use in this novel, as the author focuses on delineating every feature of various characters by degrading evil or fearful people to a ghostly or animal-like state. It also includes a transformation of human beings into lifeless objects, which is far more frequent than that of human beings into natural objects/phenomena or supernatural beings. Additionally, this technique is more often used in metaphor than simile and most effective in attacking and lowering the quality of other particular characters. Because of this, the author gives humorous portrayals of various characters on the basis of their personalities for the purpose of not only appraising them coldly but also insinuating his vision of the mechanised, inhuman society that surrounded him. Table 6 shows various characters dehumanised as objects, like Mr. Twemlow, regarded as ‘a piece of dinner furniture’ or ‘article’ and a female character Mrs. Veneering as ‘a jeweller’s window’. As for Silas Wegg, he is mechanised as if he were ‘wood’. He is so spiteful or cunning a character in Dickens’s eyes that the author attempts to degrade him to a machine-like state. That is, the association between Silas Wegg and wood, not only comically represents his mechanical figure itself but also symbolises his lack of human attributes. In this way, we can identify a conceptual relationship between Silas Wegg as a *tenor* and wood as a *vehicle*.

Moreover, this type of *mechanisation* is reminiscent of other characters like Mr. Wemmick in *Great Expectations*, whose face is associated with ‘a post office’, for his mechanical appearance constantly draws the hero Pip’s attention. Therefore, in Dickens’s novels, this type of *dehumanisation* includes a symbolic effect that suggests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Characters</th>
<th>Supernatural Beings</th>
<th>Female Characters</th>
<th>Supernatural Beings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Analytical Chemist</td>
<td>ghost (−)</td>
<td>Mrs. Poolsnap’s aunt</td>
<td>Medusa (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reginald Wilfer</td>
<td>cherub (+)</td>
<td>Bella Wilfer</td>
<td>Goddess (+), Dragon (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Grompous</td>
<td>Ogre (−)</td>
<td>Lady Tippins</td>
<td>divine (+), fairy (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene Wrayburn</td>
<td>devil (−)</td>
<td>Betty Higden</td>
<td>Angel (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Boffin</td>
<td>Monster (−), Demon (−)</td>
<td>Mrs. Wilfer</td>
<td>Demon (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Rokesmith</td>
<td>sphinx (+)</td>
<td>Miss Lavvy</td>
<td>Angel (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley Headstone</td>
<td>devil (−)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

Supernaturalisation Based on the Main Characters in *Our Mutual Friend*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Characters</th>
<th>Natural Objects or Phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Analytical Chemist</td>
<td>star (−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Lammle</td>
<td>ginger (−)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the non-human artificiality in a civilised society, as the author attempts not only to humourously delineate someone’s mechanical appearance/movement itself, but also to suggest his/her inhuman nature in terms of ‘coldness’, ‘oddity’ or ‘ferocity’, all of which include negative nuances. In other words, the effect of *dehumanisation* is not a mere embellishment of description but a symbolisation of the inhuman and life-lacking qualities of particular characters. In Dickens’s novels, almost all of the instances of *dehumanisation* include negative, rather than positive, nuances, since he has a remarkable tendency toward animalising or mechanising naturally unpleasant and villainous characters.

### 2.2.5 Abstract Metaphors

Furthermore, the method of depicting particular characters as abstracts is noteworthy in Dickens’s dehumanising device. Although rare, the pattern of transforming human beings into abstracts often includes positive nuances in this novel, since the author is likely to praise sacred or divine female characters as if abstract beings such as ‘beauty’, ‘glory’ and so forth.

#### Table 6

Mechanisation Based on the Main Characters in *Our Mutual Friend*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Characters</th>
<th>Artefacts</th>
<th>Female Characters</th>
<th>Artefacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Twemlow</td>
<td>piece of dinner furniture (–),</td>
<td>Mrs. Podsnap</td>
<td>rocking-horse (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>article (–)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Silas Wegg</td>
<td>wood (–), tar (–)</td>
<td>Miss Abbey</td>
<td>funnel (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riderwood</td>
<td>tar (–), stone (–)</td>
<td>Mrs. Boffin</td>
<td>steam-engine (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young man</td>
<td>hammer (–)</td>
<td>Mrs. Veneering</td>
<td>jeweller’s window (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Boffin</td>
<td>statuette (+), Dust (–)</td>
<td>Mrs. Podsnap’s aunt</td>
<td>stone (–), rock (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Podsnap</td>
<td>rocking-horse (–), hair-brush (–)</td>
<td>Miss Podsnap</td>
<td>rocking-horse (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella Wilfer</td>
<td>golden gold (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 7

Abstract Metaphors Based on the Main Characters in *Our Mutual Friend*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Characters</th>
<th>Abstracts</th>
<th>Female Characters</th>
<th>Abstracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mortimer</td>
<td>reference (+)</td>
<td>Miss Abbey</td>
<td>law (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Fledgeby</td>
<td>worthy (+)</td>
<td>Georgiana Podsnap</td>
<td>embodiment (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella Wilfer</td>
<td>glory (+)</td>
<td>Jenny Wren</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Tippins</td>
<td>divinity (+), Beauty (+)</td>
<td>Miss Lavvy</td>
<td>irrepresibility (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella Wilfer</td>
<td>Beauty (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Conclusion

In this paper, I chiefly examined Dickens’s metaphorical statements by which human characters are vividly or symbolically described in *Our Mutual Friend*. Above all, the author makes abundant use of noun metaphor forms for *dehumanisation* in order to depict each appearance or personality of human characters as if they were non-human living creatures or inanimate objects, achieving this by evoking clearer image of those people and enhancing our memory. This method can lead the readers to draw close analogies between the natural attributes or physical appearances of the two things. As his metaphors provide various structures and conceptual meanings to each term, we can conclude that his delineations are continuously rich in humour and vividness, as he is exceedingly aware of the dehumanising qualities in mankind and attempts to give a colourful and vivid depiction of each character. Moreover, we can go beyond the linguistic level and deal with the mental structure where we conceive Dickens’s metaphor, mostly in negative contexts, by means of the mapping of the two concepts be-
tween the topic and the vehicle. As the ‘Human is Animal’ and the ‘Human is Object/Substance’ are fundamental conceptual metaphors applicable to Dickens’s metaphors involving the comprehension of different properties of different human beings. Thus, Dickens’s dehumanisation is effective in clearly enunciating his vision of the life-denying society in the novel, and most of his dehumanising expressions is pejorative as some scholars indicate. It is also worth noting that Dickens’s dehumanisation appears with exceedingly frequency so that he can enrich his expression of his worldview through his unique figurative devices. In this way, his imagination and sense of humour are reflected in his sophisticated use of metaphors.

**Texts**


**References**


