

The Structural Metaphor “WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST” in Wayne Karlin’s Work *Wandering Souls*

Thu Hang Pham

Faculty of Social Sciences & Communication, Tay Do University, Can Tho, Vietnam

Abstract—This paper analyzes the metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST* in *Wandering Souls* by Wayne Karlin, which recounts the memories of an American veteran of the Vietnam War. The study identifies eight projection paths from the source domain *FEROCIOUS BEAST* to the target domain *WAR*, along with forty-five metaphorical expressions depicting the characteristics of a wild beast. The concept of *WAR* is mapped through aspects such as brutality, madness, destruction, and death. The novelty of this paper lies in its approach: instead of focusing on the source domain, as it commonly done, it explores the metaphor from the perspective of the target domain. This analysis provides deeper insight into the war ferocity of war and its enduring consequences for humanity.

Index Terms—conceptual metaphor, conceptualization, war, ferocious beast, mapping

I. INTRODUCTION

This study examines the metaphor “*WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST*” in *Wandering Souls* by Wayne Karlin, emphasizing how the author portrays war as a ruthless and unfeeling entity. Karlin not only conveys the profound human suffering caused by conflict but also reflects on the emotional and moral devastation endured in extreme circumstances.

Through his prose, Karlin suggests that war is not merely a sequence of battles and sacrifices, but a relentless force that corrodes the human spirit. By exploring his characters’ experiences, he offers a deep and nuanced perspective on war, capturing the agony, loneliness, and despair it inflicts.

Beyond its contributions to linguistics and literature, this study encourages readers to reflect on the true nature of war and the value of peace. It calls for a re-evaluation of humanitarian ideals in times of conflict, fostering dialogue centered on peace and unity. Ultimately, this research seeks to draw lessons from the past to help shape a more compassionate future.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Conceptual Metaphor

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize that metaphors are not merely linguistic ornaments but fundamental mechanisms of human thought and experience. They argue that people often conceptualize one idea through the structure of another, thereby rendering abstract concepts more accessible and comprehensible. As they note, “The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5).

Building on this foundation, Kövecses (2002), in *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, explains that conceptual metaphors operate through systematic mappings between two experiential domains—a source domain and a target domain. These mappings enable individuals to understand abstract phenomena by referencing more concrete, familiar experiences. According to Kövecses, “A conceptual metaphor consists of a set of systematic correspondences, or mappings, between two domains of experience” (p. 4).

Gibbs (1994), in *The Poetics of Mind*, reinforces this perspective by asserting that conceptual metaphors are not confined to language but are integral to cognition and perception. He argues that metaphors structure human experience by embedding it within familiar cognitive frameworks: “Conceptual metaphors reflect fundamental ways in which people understand and organize their experiences” (p. 153).

Similarly, Evans and Green (2006), in *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*, contend that metaphor is not merely a stylistic feature of language, but a core cognitive operation. Conceptual metaphors, they maintain, enable abstract reasoning by grounding complex ideas in embodied, experiential knowledge. As they put it, “Conceptual metaphor theory holds that metaphor is a fundamental mechanism of thought, rather than just a linguistic phenomenon” (p. 286).

Extending the theory further, Fauconnier and Turner (2002), in *The Way We Think*, introduce Conceptual Blending Theory, which explores how multiple mental spaces can combine and interact to produce novel meanings. Unlike traditional metaphor theory—which emphasizes direct, systematic mappings—blending theory allows for the dynamic

integration of multiple conceptual inputs. They write, “Conceptual integration, or blending, extends conceptual metaphor by allowing multiple mental spaces to interact dynamically” (p. 40).

In sum, leading scholars across cognitive linguistics have affirmed that metaphor is not a peripheral feature of language but a central mechanism of human cognition. It plays a vital role in how individuals structure knowledge, interpret experience, and communicate meaning.

Summary of Key Theoretical Contributions:

1. **Lakoff and Johnson (1980):** Metaphors are not mere figures of speech but fundamental to human cognition. They allow us to understand and experience one concept in terms of another, shaping how we think and perceive the world.
2. **Kövecses (2002):** Conceptual metaphors arise from systematic mappings between a source domain and a target domain. These mappings enable the interpretation of abstract concepts through familiar, embodied experiences.
3. **Gibbs (1994):** Conceptual metaphors structure cognition by organizing human experience. They are embedded in perception, learning, and decision-making, influencing how people process and respond to the world.
4. **Evans and Green (2006):** Metaphor is a core cognitive mechanism that facilitates abstract thinking and reasoning. It bridges the gap between linguistic expression and cognitive function.
5. **Fauconnier and Turner (2002):** Building on metaphor theory, blending theory explores how multiple mental spaces can interact to generate emergent meanings. This approach accounts for creativity, innovation, and complex reasoning in metaphorical thought.

From Lakoff and Johnson’s foundational insights to Fauconnier and Turner’s dynamic blending model, conceptual metaphor theory has evolved into a powerful interdisciplinary framework. It reveals that metaphor is not a decorative linguistic device, but a deeply embedded cognitive structure—shaping the way humans think, feel, and understand the world.

B. Structural Metaphor

Metaphor is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a fundamental cognitive tool that shapes human understanding of the world. Among various types of metaphor, **structural metaphors** are particularly significant because they enable us to use familiar conceptual domains to comprehend more abstract ones.

Gibbs (1994), in *The Poetics of Mind*, explains that structural metaphors function through mappings between conceptual domains, whereby the structure of one domain is projected onto another. This process allows abstract concepts to be understood in terms of more concrete, embodied experiences. As he states, “Structural metaphors involve the mapping of one complex conceptual structure onto another, allowing us to use the structure of a more concrete or familiar domain to understand a more abstract domain” (p. 154).

Evans and Green (2006), in *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*, reinforce this view by describing structural metaphor as a process in which conceptual structure is systematically projected from one domain onto another. They write, “Structural metaphors involve the projection of structure from one domain onto another” (p. 303).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in *Metaphors We Live By*, emphasize that structural metaphors help individuals understand abstract ideas through the knowledge structure of another concept: “In a structural metaphor, the source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept” (pp. 63–65).

Similarly, Kövecses (2002), in *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, defines structural metaphor as a conceptual process in which one concept is metaphorically organized in terms of another: “Structural metaphors are cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another” (pp. 33–34).

Metaphorical thinking influences not only how people comprehend the world but also how they communicate and act. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert, “Our conceptual system plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If our system is largely metaphorical, then how we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (p. 4).

By framing abstract concepts in concrete terms, metaphors enhance cognitive accessibility. Research in linguistics and cognitive psychology further demonstrates that metaphor serves as a crucial interface between language, thought, and action.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) posits that metaphor is essential to human cognition and perception (Gibbs, 2011). It suggests that abstract concepts are structured through mappings from concrete, sensorimotor experiences (Yin et al., 2013). However, this theory has faced criticism. Bundgaard (2019) argues that abstract cognitive structures do not always retain their metaphorical basis in actual cognitive processing, sparking ongoing debates about the theoretical scope of CMT. Despite such critiques, CMT remains a foundational framework in metaphor research, informing contemporary studies in language, cognition, and conceptual representation (Gibbs, 2011; Yin et al., 2013).

According to Lakoff (1980) and Kövecses (2010), conceptual metaphors can be broadly categorized into three main types:

1. **Structural Metaphor:** One concept is understood through the structured framework of another.
2. **Ontological Metaphor:** Abstract entities are conceptualized as discrete, concrete objects.
3. **Orientalional Metaphor:** Concepts are organized based on spatial orientation (e.g., up/down, in/out, front/back).

Lakoff (1980) concludes, “Structural metaphors involve one concept being metaphorically structured in terms of another” (p. 16). Kövecses (2010) elaborates, “The source domain provides a rich knowledge structure for the target concept through conceptual mappings” (p. 37).

C. *The Role of Structural Metaphors*

Structural metaphors are more than linguistic expressions; they are cognitive tools that shape human understanding by mapping abstract ideas onto concrete experiences. These metaphors reflect cultural and social contexts, influencing perception across language, art, science, and philosophy. Lakoff (1980) and Kövecses (2010) emphasize that metaphors are not merely theoretical constructs but essential components of intellectual and social life, expanding the range of human cognition and expression.

D. *Mapping Schema in Conceptual Metaphor*

A mapping schema, central to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), explains how attributes of a source domain are transferred to a target domain. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that this process follows structured cognitive patterns that guide human reasoning, determining which characteristics are retained, modified, or omitted in the metaphorical projection.

For example, in the metaphor “*WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST*,” attributes of a beast—such as aggression, dominance, and predatory instincts—are mapped onto the concept of war, emphasizing its violent and uncontrollable nature. Predatory behavior corresponds to military aggression, while territorial dominance aligns with expansionist ambitions. Conversely, irrelevant traits such as anatomical and biological features are excluded from the mapping.

Mapping schemas play a crucial role in cognitive linguistics, semiotics, and discourse analysis. In cognitive linguistics, they illustrate how familiar experiential structures help conceptualize abstract ideas. In semiotics, they uncover how symbolic forms evoke conceptual associations. In discourse analysis—especially in media and political rhetoric—they expose underlying ideologies and cognitive framing strategies. Thus, mapping schemas are not merely descriptive tools but fundamental mechanisms that shape how individuals perceive, structure, and communicate meaning.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study of the metaphor “*WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST*” in *Wandering Souls* by Wayne Karlin is approached from two main perspectives, each offering distinct analytical value in illuminating the nature of war and its psychological and social consequences. To conduct this research, I employ the following methods:

A. *Quantitative Method*

This method focuses on linguistic and statistical analysis to identify frequency, usage patterns, and relationships among metaphorical expressions. Quantitative data are collected and processed to detect trends and recurring metaphorical structures within the text.

B. *Qualitative Method*

Emphasizing close reading and contextual interpretation, this method explores emotional nuances, symbolic meanings, and moral implications conveyed through metaphor. It captures subtle dimensions that may be overlooked by purely quantitative analysis.

C. *Textual Analysis*

A comprehensive reading of each chapter is conducted to identify metaphorical imagery and symbolism related to wild beasts, brutality, chaos, and the destructive consequences of war.

D. *Semantic Analysis*

This approach investigates the semantic field of “*FEROCIOUS BEAST*” within the context of war, examining the emotional tone, character responses, and the way human interactions with war are conceptualized.

The combination of these methods provides a multi-layered and comprehensive perspective on metaphor, allowing for a deeper understanding of how language reflects and shapes the experience of war.

E. *Research Materials*

Key references are selected to provide theoretical and contextual grounding for the study. The materials are divided into two main categories:

F. *Primary Work*

Wandering Souls by Wayne Karlin serves as the core text, containing distinctive and recurring conceptual metaphors related to war.

G. *Theoretical Framework*

Scholarly works on conceptual metaphor theory and linguistic mapping—particularly those by Lakoff, Kövecses, and Fauconnier & Turner—are used to explain, categorize, and analyze the metaphorical expressions found in the text.

Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study aims to investigate the intersection of language, metaphor, and wartime experience—ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural dimensions of conflict.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Mapping Schema of the Conceptual Metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST*

(a). Attributes of the Source Domain: *FEROCIOUS BEAST*

The conceptual metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST* positions *WAR* as the target domain and *FEROCIOUS BEAST* as the source domain. In the mapping process, attributes from the source domain are systematically transferred to the target domain to clarify the inherent nature of war.

Wild beasts are inherently dangerous creatures that pose existential threats to human life. When these characteristics are projected onto the target domain, they emphasize the brutality and ferocity of war—portraying it as a violent, destructive, and uncontrollable force. This metaphorical analogy enables readers to perceive war not merely as a military conflict but as a terrifying and dehumanizing force with catastrophic implications for humanity.

The following table illustrates the mapping between key attributes of wild beasts and their corresponding metaphorical representations in the domain of war:

TABLE 1
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ATTRIBUTES OF WILD BEASTS AND THEIR CORRESPONDENCE TO WAR

No.	Element	Species	War
1	Predators	Apex of the food chain, territorial dominance	Invaders, using force to seize control
2	Nature	Determines behavior and survival instincts	Brutality, cruelty, inhumanity
3	Actions	Hunting, migration, self-defense	Military campaigns, conflicts, battles
4	Survival	Adapting to persist	The persistence of war throughout history
5	Frenzy	Uncontrolled attacks	Escalating violence, mass massacres
6	Cunning	Using intelligence to hunt	Military tactics and strategies
7	Attack	Territorial conquest, hunting	Invasion, occupation, imposition of power
8	Destruction	Destroying opponents' habitats	Devastation of the environment, infrastructure, and economy
9	Annihilation	Species extinction if unable to adapt	Extinction of groups unable to adapt

Source: Summarized by the Author

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that key elements such as domination, brutality, fury, strategy, destruction, and extermination are systematically mapped from the source domain to the target domain. In contrast, attributes unrelated to the nature of warfare are omitted from the mapping process.

This suggests that the metaphor functions not merely as a surface-level comparison but as a conceptual selection mechanism. Features emphasizing control, violence, destruction, and strategic aggression are transferred—constructing war as a dangerous, uncontrollable force with devastating consequences for both humanity and society.

(b). Mapping Schema

The mapping schema concretely illustrates how humans conceptualize war through the lens of the source domain wild beasts. The findings indicate that this process reflects deeply embedded cognitive structures concerning the brutal and destructive nature of war.

Based on the analysis of *Wandering Souls*, I outline the following mapping schema:

TABLE 2
CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST* AND ITS MAPPING EXPLANATION

STT	Source Domain (Predators)	Target Domain (War)	Mapping Explanation
1	Predatory species	Invaders	<i>Predators symbolize invaders because they embody wild, dangerous traits and tend to attack, like enemies in war.</i>
2	Actions of predators	War's destruction and massacres	<i>Predators' hunting and killing reflect the destruction and death brought by war.</i>
3	Human actions toward predators	Military strategies in war	<i>How humans hunt, defend against, or counter predators is like the strategies used in war to combat enemies.</i>
4	State of predators	Human conditions in war	<i>When predators are wounded, cornered, or become ferocious, it mirrors the dire, desperate, or frenzied state of humans in wartime.</i>

Source: Summarized by the Author

There are four primary mapping projections from the source domain *FEROCIOUS BEAST* to the target domain *WAR*. Through this process, the nature of war is depicted from multiple perspectives, including ferocity, massacre, madness, cruelty, attack, devastation, and annihilation.

Based on this mapping schema, the survey results identify specific metaphorical instantiations of the conceptual metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST*, including the following:

TABLE 3
METAPHORICAL INSTANTIATIONS OF THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST

No.	Metaphorical Expression	Metaphorical Mapping	Frequency (%)	Mapping Explanation
1	Predatory species → Invaders	Predators Tiger Predator's eyes	1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%)	<i>The image of predators symbolizes invaders in war, representing the aggression, fearfulness, and danger posed by the enemy.</i>
2	Actions of predators → War's destruction and massacres	Tear apart Attack Kill Massacre Destroy Rummage Stalk Ambush Lurk Struggle Bombing	3 (2.82%) 15 (14.1%) 11 (10.34%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 5 (4.7%) 4 (3.7%) 1 (0.94%) 2 (1.88%)	<i>Predators' hunting behaviors reflect the brutality of war, where humans are hunted, attacked, and annihilated.</i>
3	Human actions toward predators → Military strategies in war	Lure Use as bait Drive into	3 (2.82%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%)	<i>The ways humans hunt or counter predators mirror military tactics like baiting, trapping, and ambushing in war.</i>
4	Predators' roar and cries → Fear and human emotions in war	Howl Roar Scream Shriek Resonant lament	1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%)	<i>The cries of predators represent fear, pain, and the psychological state of humans in war, where panic and trauma prevail.</i>
5	State of predators → Human conditions in war	Wait Charge at Hit by a bullet Collapse Hide Eradicate Sweep away Engage in battle Stab into Fling up Pierce through Bloodstain Covered in blood Bloodbath Wounded Seriously wounded Frenzied Deranged Survive	1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 2 (1.88%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 2 (1.88%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 3 (2.82%) 1 (0.94%) 1 (0.94%) 3 (2.82%) 1 (0.94%) 5 (4.7%) 1 (0.94%) 4 (3.7%)	<i>The state of predators when hunted or fighting mirrors the fate of humans in war-wounded, pursued, panicked, or struggling to survive.</i>
		41	94	

Source: Compiled by the Author

(c). Analysis and Comparison of Occurrence Rates

1. Frequency of Each Metaphor Group

Different metaphor groups have varying occurrence rates, reflecting the level of association between predator behavior and war.

TABLE 4
FREQUENCY OF EACH METAPHOR GROUP

Metaphor Group	Number of Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Predators (species, body parts)	3	2.82%
Predator's actions → War massacre	45	42.3%
Human actions toward predators → Military tactics	5	4.7%
Predator's cries → Fear/state of humans in war	5	4.7%
Predator's state → Human situation in war	36	34%

2. Most Frequent Metaphor Group

The metaphorical mapping "Predator's actions → War massacre" accounts for 42.3% of the total instances, indicating a strong conceptual connection between predatory behavior and the brutality of war.

"Attack" is the most frequently occurring expression (15 instances – 14.1%), highlighting the aggressive and relentless nature of warfare.

"Kill" (11 instances – 10.34%) and "Ambush" (5 instances – 4.7%) further emphasize the danger and strategic deception inherent in military conflict.

3. Least Frequent Metaphor Groups

The group “*Predators (species, body parts)*” appears only 3 times (2.82%), suggesting that references to wild animals are rarely explicit and are instead represented primarily through their behaviors.

The mapping “*Human actions toward predators → Military tactics*” occurs 5 times (4.7%), showing that strategies such as luring, baiting, and trapping appear less frequently than direct combat metaphors.

4. Predator’s State → Human Condition in War (34%)

This category reflects the emotional and physical toll of warfare by projecting the internal states of wild beasts onto human participants:

“*Frenzied*” (5 instances – 4.7%) conveys the uncontrollable chaos and emotional volatility of war.

“*Survive*” (4 instances – 3.7%) underscores the existential struggle between life and death.

“*Wounded*” and “*Bloodstain*” (3 instances each – 2.82%) evoke the physical devastation and human casualties inflicted by violent conflict.

B. Linguistic Expressions of the Conceptual Metaphor WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST

(a). Ferocious Beasts as Metaphors for Invaders

Predatory animals, untamed and powerful, are often associated with cruelty. Wayne Karlin (2009) employs this imagery to conceptualize invaders:

“To the PAVN soldiers, it was easier to kill someone seen not only as an invader of their country but also as a mean animal. Inhuman. Meat for bait” (Karlin, 2009, p. 8).

In this metaphor, predators symbolize invaders. Tigers and leopards—fierce, dangerous creatures—are mapped onto ruthless aggressors. The attributes of wildness, instinct, and killing ability reinforce this image. The metaphor is further strengthened by linguistic cues such as kill, invader, and the contrast between human and beastly characteristics (inhuman, meat for bait). This dual mapping highlights both the nature of the invader and the perception of them as a dangerous beast.

During the Vietnam War, the United States is metaphorically mapped onto an apex predator, a dominant creature with superior strength and control over its environment.

- Superior power: Apex predators possess physical advantages, natural weapons (claws, fangs), and exceptional hunting skills. Similarly, the U.S. military had advanced technology, modern weaponry, and vast resources.

- Overpowering prey: Apex predators use speed and brute force. Likewise, the U.S. relied on large-scale bombing campaigns, amphibious assaults, and heavy artillery to overwhelm the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and National Liberation Front (NLF).

1. The Tiger as a Symbol of War

One of his men out in the jungle on a listening post had been seized by a tiger... The tiger, wounded, dropped him and disappeared. The GI was left with its mark: two perfect indentations on either side of his forehead...

Once, on a jungle trail, he had been the tiger. (Karlin, 2009, p. 133)

Here, the tiger metaphor encapsulates the brutality of war. Homer, haunted by the memory of his comrade’s attack, internalizes the predator’s role. When he kills Hoàng Ngọc Đâm, he sees himself as the tiger—relentless, destructive, and driven by instinct. The tiger thus becomes a symbol of both the violence of war and Homer’s psychological transformation.

2. Predator’s Eyes (Mapped on the Gaze of the Invader)

This metaphor draws a parallel between the calculating gaze of predators and the way invaders track their enemies:

“A year later, when I read Mike’s description of Tom Mahoney and saw his photo, then read the PAVN document describing his eyes ‘blue like a mean animal’” (Karlin, 2009, p. 9).

“Blue like a mean animal” carries a dual-layered mapping. It likens Mahoney’s eyes to those of a predator while conceptually aligning the invader with a wild beast. To Vietnamese soldiers, American forces were not just foreign enemies but creatures of aggression and dominance.

This interpretation personifies war through the predator’s image, reinforcing the deep resentment of the Vietnamese toward the invaders.

(b). The Actions of FEROCIOUS BEAST Mapped Onto the Massacre of War

1. Attack

Attack is central to war, representing aggression, destruction, and dominance. Metaphorically, war mirrors the violent instincts of predatory beasts—ruthless, relentless, and driven by survival.

Predators stalk and overpower their prey, just as warring factions strike mercilessly:

The NVA just doesn’t like to tangle with B Company cause we put up too much of a fight. He is always hitting A, C, and D Company, but never hardly ever us. The last time he saw us, we gave him a sound defeat at Dak to without even getting one of us wounded. (Karlin, 2009, p. 56)

Here, hitting conveys more than a mere military maneuver; it embodies the primal aggression of a predator asserting dominance. Karlin's imagery underscores the dehumanization inherent in war, where violence becomes instinctive, trapping soldiers in an endless cycle of brutality.

2. *Tear Apart*

Tear signifies violent destruction. In war, it represents devastation—not just physical but also societal and psychological. War doesn't merely tear apart bodies; it fractures peace, divides nations, and dismantles civilizations.

Predators instinctively tear their prey apart. Karlin employs this imagery to depict war's relentless destruction, where villages vanish, lives shatter, and humanity erodes under unrelenting violence.

The calls from infantry units for support and help poured into his head in a coordinated, fast-paced death dance. His voice, the farmer's son from Bamberg, directed multi-million-dollar aircraft, bringing down millions of dollars of ordnance, shredding flesh he could not see, deep in his sandbagged bunker, protecting flesh he could imagine. He was saving his men. (Karlin, 2009, p. 128)

The phrase "death dance" encapsulates war's paradox—destruction framed as protection. Shredding flesh evokes both physical annihilation and the deep psychological scars soldiers carry long after battle.

A similar image appears in the ambush on Homer's reconnaissance team:

"The column is raked by a burst of AK-47 fire. They shoot back into the jungle on all sides, shredding leaves and branches" (Karlin, 2009, p. 74).

Bullets tearing through the jungle symbolize war's indiscriminate violence. Everything in its path—human or nature—becomes collateral damage, reinforcing the mindless destruction that defines war.

3. *Scouring*

The verb "scour" describes the act of searching thoroughly, rummaging, or probing, often implying an intrusion into a space to track down prey or a target. In the natural world, predatory beasts scour their surroundings to hunt, control territory, or seek essential survival resources. When mapped onto war, this action reflects military operations such as raids, sweeps, reconnaissance, and invasions.

The instinctive behavior of animals scouring for prey has been metaphorically mapped onto the actions of American soldiers as they searched for traces of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA): "They searched the jungle for signs of the NVA. Too often they acted as bait; the enemy was located when it hit them" (Karlin, 2009, p. 70).

This perception not only reconstructs enemy behavior but also conveys a sense of contempt, as the enemy is likened to predatory animals, groping, relying on instinct to act.

The linguistic expression here also contains a blended metaphor, where both "bait" and "prey" are conceptual elements defining the tactics used to detect the enemy. The experiential basis of this perception stems from visual observation, as humans witness how predatory animals track, stalk, and attack their prey in nature.

4. *Struggling*

The verb "struggling" describes the intense, chaotic reflexes of a creature when gravely wounded or trapped in a desperate situation. In the natural world, a wild beast struggles violently when severely injured, displaying a final act of resistance for survival, even when the chances of escaping death are slim. When mapped onto war, this action reflects the painful, desperate reactions of soldiers as they suffer injuries on the battlefield: "This guy, I saw him jerk when I fired. We were close enough that, if I had been looking at his eyes, I would have seen directly into his eyes" (Karlin, 2009, p. 106).

In this linguistic expression, struggling is not merely a biological reflex but also a manifestation of extreme agony in a soldier struck by gunfire. It represents the body's final response before succumbing to death. For an animal, struggling is an instinctive survival mechanism, a desperate effort in its last moments.

This conceptualization maps the struggle of wounded animals onto the scene of human death, emphasizing the brutality of war. With just a minimal linguistic expression, the author captures the sheer savagery of warfare in its entirety.

5. *Stalking*

The verb "stalking" describes the behavior of a predator as it secretly watches its prey, patiently waiting for the right moment to strike. This is a calculated, strategic, and cautious action, reflecting the instincts of hunting and survival in the natural world. When mapped onto war, "stalking" illustrates how soldiers hide, observe their enemies, ambush them, or await attack orders in high-stakes combat situations.

This conceptualization stems from real-life observations: a predator often remains hidden, watches closely, and patiently waits for the perfect moment to deliver a fatal blow.

"The war was somewhere past the edge of the fields, always waiting, but nebulous as the shimmer of heat beyond the vast silences of the paddies" (Karlin, 2009, p. 38).

Here, war is personified as an entity constantly lurking at the horizon, evoking a sense of unease and threat—like a predator stalking its prey.

This perspective not only conveys the latent and unpredictable nature of war but also emphasizes its aggressive and destructive essence. The metaphorical projection relies on the parallel between an animal's hunting instincts and the enemy's attack strategies, making war appear as an invisible but ever-present menace.

6. *Ambush*

An ambush is a common hunting strategy among predators in the wild. It involves hiding, waiting for the prey to enter the attack range, and then striking swiftly and effectively. This action demonstrates calculation, patience, and the ability to exploit the element of surprise to gain an advantage.

When mapped onto war, "ambush" reflects how soldiers hide, wait for the right moment, use terrain to create strategic advantages, and launch sudden attacks or counterattacks to inflict maximum damage on the enemy.

"On October 13, a short-range patrol was ambushed, and Homer recorded his first man killed in action, Private First Class Wayne Elledge, shot just as his patrol was in sight of the fire support base" (Karlin, 2009, p. 59).

In this excerpt, the ambush tactic is illustrated through how the enemy remains concealed and launches a surprise attack, like how a predator stalks its prey before striking.

By mapping a predator's hunting strategy onto warfare, Wayne Karlin creates a vivid and realistic image that helps readers grasp the unpredictable, ruthless, and unforgiving nature of battlefield attacks.

7. *Massacre*

In the natural world, massacre refers to large-scale killing carried out with brutal intensity and without mercy. Some predators do not just hunt for survival but engage in excessive killing beyond their needs. For instance, they may attack entire herds of prey or kill instinctively. This behavior is not solely about survival; it can also demonstrate power, dominance, or a response to environmental factors.

In warfare, massacre goes beyond combat between two sides; it includes mass killings, often targeting civilians, prisoners, or defenseless enemies.

Massacre represents ruthless slaughter, sparing no one, embodying the pinnacle of violence and inhumanity. In life, some individuals commit such acts when primal instincts overpower human reason and morality.

Wayne Karlin (2009) creates a powerful mapping effect, emphasizing the horrifying scale of the massacre:

"After four hours, when they stopped for a lunch break, Calley and the rest of his company had butchered over 500 women, old men, and children, all civilians" (Karlin, 2009, p. 42).

The act of herding villagers into a pit and shooting them, combined with the staggering number of 500 women, elderly individuals, and children, not only quantifies the brutality but also highlights the cold-blooded, inhuman nature of the perpetrators. The interplay between specific circumstances and numerical detail makes the atrocity even more haunting.

8. *Devastation*

Predators leave destruction in their wake—scattered remains, ravaged landscapes, disrupted ecosystems. War, too, obliterates cities, displaces millions, and cripples infrastructure, leaving lasting scars.

Both war and predation are relentless forces of annihilation. In nature, devastation is instinctive; in war, it is systematic. Like a rampaging beast, war spares nothing.

Karlin's depiction reinforces this:

"He is stunned by the amount of damage. Fifty-foot craters pock the still-smoking ground. The stink of burnt foliage and flesh permeates everything. Most of the trees have been splintered or knocked over" (Karlin, 2009, p. 76).

The imagery of bomb craters, scorched earth, and shattered trees captures war's overwhelming ruin—akin to a predator's path of devastation.

(c). *Human Actions Toward FEROCIOUS BEAST Mapped Onto War Tactics*

1. *Luring*

Luring is a hunting strategy—using bait or deception to trap prey. Predators exploit the vulnerabilities of their targets, disguising threats until the fatal moment. In war, armies employ similar tactics, drawing enemies into ambushes, setting traps, or using false information to gain an advantage. Deception is as lethal as firepower, shaping the battlefield before a single shot is fired.

Wayne Karlin (2009) illustrates this brutal strategy:

"To the PAVN soldiers, it was easier to kill someone seen not only as an invader of their country, but also as a mean animal. Inhuman. Meat for bait" (Karlin, 2009, p. 8).

Here, "mean animal" dehumanizes the enemy, stripping them of identity and morality, while "meat for bait" reinforces the ruthless calculation behind war tactics. Soldiers become mere tools in a greater game of survival, where deception dictates who lives and who dies. War, like the hunt, thrives on manipulation, reducing human lives to expendable pieces in a cold, strategic contest.

2. *Herding*

Herding in war mirrors how humans control livestock—removing freedom, enforcing dominance, and often leading to slaughter. Just as animals are corralled toward enclosures with no escape, war forces people into inescapable situations, stripping them of autonomy and subjecting them to the will of their captors. This process does not merely subjugate but also systematically erodes humanity itself.

“He turned to his men and ordered them to herd more of the villagers into the ditch and shoot them, and when some did not obey, he trained his own weapon on them” (Karlin, 2009, p. 42).

The word “herd” is chilling—it portrays civilians as defenseless prey, devoid of individuality. This imagery intensifies the horror—not just in the massacre itself, but in the mindset that enables such brutality. When people are reduced to a faceless mass, killing becomes easier, morality fades, and war becomes an unfeeling machine of destruction. The act of herding does not just facilitate physical violence; it signifies a psychological transformation where empathy is lost, and cruelty becomes normalized.

3. *Bombardment*

Aerial bombing resembles predatory attacks—raining destruction from above, spreading terror, and asserting dominance. Just as birds of prey strike from the sky, unseen and unavoidable, bombers turn landscapes into infernos, leaving behind only ashes and echoes of horror. The randomness of such destruction makes it more terrifying—death can come at any moment, without warning.

“The three sisters, remaining in the village, saw drop bombs on Thai Giang itself, at one point hitting a schoolhouse and killing many people...” (Karlin, 2009, p. 51).

The phrase “drop bombs” evokes torrential rain—but instead of life, it brings death. The relentless bombing flattened homes, erased generations, and engulfed the village in flames. The three sisters, witnessing the devastation, became silent testaments to war’s horrors. The air, thick with smoke, carried the cries of the wounded, blending into the mechanical roar of destruction.

Bombardment is not just about the immediate explosion—it is an enduring scar, a permanent wound in the human soul. Long after the fires die out, the echoes of fear persist, embedding themselves into the memories of those who survive. Even the silence that follows is haunted by the absence of what once was—a landscape forever altered, a people forever scarred.

4. *The Roar*

In nature, wounded or trapped animals roar in pain or call for help—a reflex, a warning, or a final outburst of despair.

Similarly, on the battlefield, wounded soldiers scream in agony, their cries driven by pain, fear, or sheer survival instinct. The scream emerges at the breaking point, an explosion of suffering and helplessness.

Beyond pain, screaming embodies terror. In the wild, hunted animals emit desperate cries as they resist fate. Likewise, soldiers’ screams often go unheard, lost in the chaos of war:

“The country for which it was presumably fighting going about its business, the screams of its sons and daughters on the battlefield distant and unheard” (Karlin, 2009, p. 90).

These cries, echoing across battlefields yet ignored by the world, underscore the isolation of soldiers, abandoned in the storm of war.

5. *Resonant Lament*

In nature, a resonant lament lingers over barren landscapes, evoking emptiness and sorrow. The mournful cries of lost animals, the wind howling through desolate valleys, or the distant echoes of fading life create an eerie, sorrowful atmosphere.

In war, this lament takes on a different form—relentless bombardments, crumbling cities, and the unsettling silence that follows destruction. The remnants of ruined buildings and the hollow echoes of past violence form a haunting soundscape, a lingering presence of devastation.

“Both lieutenants could hear the crackle of gunfire, the roar of outgoing artillery, the banshee wail of parachute flares: the background noise of the new operation” (Karlin, 2009, p. 90).

The “banshee wail” likens flares to death omens, amplifying war’s horror. These sounds are not mere background noise—they foretell destruction, leaving an indelible scar. Even after the battle ends, war’s resonant lament lingers, an echo of suffering that refuses to fade.

6. *The Moan*

Moaning, in both nature and war, signals suffering and desolation. The howling wind through ruins, the groaning of burnt-out tanks, and the heavy silence over abandoned trenches create a haunting soundscape. In the wild, the moans of wounded animals or the mournful sigh of the wind through empty valleys evoke a deep sense of sorrow.

“Both lieutenants could hear the crackle of gunfire, the roar of outgoing artillery, the banshee wail of parachute flares” (Karlin, 2009, p. 90).

Here, moaning transcends mere sound—it becomes a symbol of destruction. The “banshee wail” intensifies the imagery, reinforcing war’s chaos and the lingering echoes of loss. Even in silence, war’s moan persists, an unshakable presence in the memories of those who survive.

7. *Screaming*

Animals scream when threatened, wounded, or dying—a desperate, primal response to imminent death. In war, soldiers' screams mirror this same instinctive terror. These cries cut through the battlefield, a harrowing testament to both physical agony and the overwhelming fear of mortality.

"He was running around screaming and holding his shattered elbow on the other side of our sector, going into shock rapidly" (Karlin, 2009, p. 115).

Yet, even after the battle, the echoes of these screams persist, shaping the psyche of those who survive. War leaves not just visible wounds but also scars etched in sound—haunting and inescapable.

"Back at Enari, Homer's ears rang constantly, a thin scream in his inner ear, like a continuous auditory memory of the shell that had landed in his fighting position" (Karlin, 2009, p. 123).

Screaming is more than a reaction—it is war's lingering voice, an imprint that never truly fades. Whether erupting in moments of terror or replaying endlessly in memory, it embodies the inescapable trauma of battle.

8. *The Whistling Sound*

In nature, whistling is sharp and high-pitched—heard when predators strike or animals sense danger. It is a primal sound, an urgent signal of looming threats. In war, bullets and shells whistle through the air, cutting through silence with terrifying precision, mirroring this instinctive dread.

"At night there was only the banshee whistle of the parachute flares that silvered the constant curtain of rain, the sounds of the war, artillery, the distant pound of a machine gun, the whine of a sniper round homing in on them" (Karlin, 2009, p. 57).

The "banshee whistle" is more than just a sound—it is an omen of death, weaving into the relentless gunfire to form a chilling symphony of destruction. These are not mere noises of war but harbingers of mortality, echoes of violence that never truly fade. Even in moments of stillness, the whistling lingers in the mind, a phantom sound that haunts long after the battle has ended.

(d). *The State of Wild Beasts Mirroring the Human Condition in War*

1. *Going Berserk*

In the animal kingdom, going berserk is a state where a creature loses control, becoming aggressive or panicked. War, in its most brutal moments, drives humans into a similar state—like a wild beast gone mad.

A predator in a frenzy during a hunt acts on sheer survival instinct, indifferent to suffering. Likewise, war strips humans of reason, pushing them into blind violence. Fear fuels this state—animals attack when threatened, and nations wage war out of fear or ambition. The deeper one sinks into conflict, the easier it is to lose control, allowing violence to spiral.

Both phenomena leave devastation. Predators claim lives; war destroys civilizations, leaving lasting scars on individuals and communities.

"He stood and fired his .45 at the enemy like a crazed gunfighter, the NVA bullets kicking up dirt all around his feet" (Karlin, 2009, p. 126).

This image captures battlefield chaos—fear and rage overpower reason, reducing a soldier to pure instinct. Like a predator in a bloodthirsty hunt, he fights without thought, driven only to survive.

War does not merely take lives—it distorts human nature, turning individuals into unfeeling machines of destruction.

2. *Survival*

Survival is the most fundamental instinct. In nature, animals endure by overcoming harsh environments, evading predators, and adapting to challenges. This struggle is relentless.

In war, survival follows the same brutal logic. Armed conflicts arise from power struggles, resource competition, or ideology. Extreme conditions can strip away humanity, forcing choices dictated by desperation rather than reason. Fear, scarcity, and violence reshape moral boundaries, exposing a raw aspect of human nature:

"But the man survived the night, and at dawn, they put the wounded on improvised stretchers and carried them to the LZ, where a helicopter landed to take them" (Karlin, 2009, p. 100).

War is not just a battle between armies but a personal fight for survival. Soldiers risk their lives to save comrades, yet not all choices reflect humanity:

"Others would come to feel, at best, that they had killed only in order to survive, or they would find moral justification in the necessity of that killing to protect or avenge their friends".

This brutal truth highlights how, under extreme conditions, violence becomes necessity. The instinct to live can overpower morality, pushing people toward choices unthinkable in peacetime. Killing is not just self-defense but a way to cope with fear and loss.

War forces individuals into impossible choices—between life and death, morality and survival. Its greatest tragedy is not just the loss of life but the erosion of human values, dragging people into the abyss of their own nature.

V. DISCUSSION

With his sharp and evocative writing, Wayne Karlin offers vivid portrayals of the brutality of war and its lasting consequences. His works not only reconstruct the intensity of battlefields but also delve deeply into the psychological wounds inflicted upon individuals. Karlin's language conveys a raw and unfiltered sense of pain and loss, allowing readers to grasp the invisible scars carried by survivors. He does not shy away from the grim realities of war; instead, he confronts agony, emptiness, and haunting memory directly. These losses are not merely personal tragedies but also reflections of fractures within the collective consciousness of society.

Karlin does not simply narrate stories—he draws readers into an emotionally charged space where individual suffering is interwoven with the broader human condition, offering a deeper understanding of war's far-reaching impact. His work underscores that the responsibility for preserving peace is not the burden of any single actor but a shared moral obligation. A profound awareness of war's devastation becomes the foundation for action, compelling us to prevent history from repeating its most violent chapters. Through the intimate narratives of those caught in the maelstrom of war, Karlin's writing becomes a powerful medium for raising public consciousness about the value of peace and the enduring lessons of conflict.

War, in Karlin's vision, is not merely a clash between opposing forces—it is also an inner struggle between good and evil within each individual. Recognizing the weight of its repercussions forms the core of his message, urging readers to reflect on their own responsibilities in shaping a more peaceful world. He emphasizes that maintaining peace is not a passive ideal but an ethical imperative. This call to conscience compels each individual to reject indifference and embrace a more engaged, compassionate stance in the face of humanity's destructive potential.

To journey through Karlin's work is not only to revisit historical tragedies, but to confront the enduring demands of accountability and moral clarity. These narratives reaffirm the need for collective awareness, inspiring us to cultivate empathy and build a more peaceful society.

In this study, the conceptual metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST* has been analyzed through five distinct projection perspectives. These mappings reveal that, when examined from the standpoint of the target domain, *WAR* encompasses multiple layered and dynamic dimensions. Yet, what other source domains might be projected onto the concept of *WAR*? This question remains open-ended—suggesting a fertile avenue for future research and continued interdisciplinary exploration.

VI. CONCLUSION AND ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS

This study has successfully fulfilled its objective of analyzing the structural metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST* in Wayne Karlin's *Wandering Souls*. By identifying five core predatory traits and mapping them onto the concept of war, the analysis transforms an abstract phenomenon into a vivid and emotionally resonant conceptual framework. These mappings not only clarify the brutal essence of war but also deepen our understanding of Karlin's anti-war stance and the literary sophistication of his narrative craft.

In *Wandering Souls*, Karlin emerges not merely as a storyteller but as a moral witness. His depiction of war transcends historical documentation, offering instead a meditative reflection on human suffering, ethical collapse, and the psychological toll of conflict. The metaphor *WAR IS A FEROCIOUS BEAST* encapsulates the primal, relentless violence of warfare while simultaneously evoking empathy and moral introspection in the reader.

The findings of this research contribute to the broader fields of literature, linguistics, and cognitive poetics by illustrating how conceptual metaphors function as powerful epistemological tools. Metaphors such as *WAR IS A PREDATOR*, *WAR IS FIRE*, *WAR IS A JOURNEY*, and *WAR IS DEATH* offer multifaceted cognitive frames through which the complex realities of war may be understood—ranging from its material devastation to its existential ramifications.

From this vantage point, metaphor analysis is not merely a linguistic or literary undertaking, but a vital mode of engaging with language as a repository of cultural memory and ideological critique. By unpacking metaphorical structures in literary texts, scholars can trace how language encodes trauma, articulates resistance, and shapes collective perceptions of violence and peace.

Accordingly, this study offers meaningful academic implications for interdisciplinary research across metaphor theory, trauma studies, and war literature. It encourages scholars, educators, and students to further investigate metaphorical framings of war across cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts. Future inquiries may deepen our understanding of how metaphor functions not only as a cognitive strategy, but also as an ethical medium through which literature addresses pressing human concerns.

Through such investigations, literature and language will continue to serve as indispensable instruments for expanding humanistic knowledge and fostering critical reflection on the historical, emotional, and psychological dimensions of conflict.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bundgaard, P. F. (2019). The structure of our concepts: A critical assessment of conceptual metaphor theory as a theory of concepts. *Cognitive Semiotics*, 12(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cogsem-2019-2033>
- [2] Chaudhary, V., & Aggarwal, J. K. (1993). A generalized scheme for mapping parallel algorithms. *IEEE Transactions on Parallel and Distributed Systems*, 4(3), 328-346.

- [3] Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [4] Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The Way We Think*. Basic Books.
- [5] Gibbs Jr, R. W. (1994). *The Poetics of Mind*. Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Gibbs, R. W., Jr. (2011). Evaluating conceptual metaphor theory. *Discourse Processes*, 48(8), 529–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2011.606103>
- [7] Kövecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- [8] Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- [9] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. The University of Chicago Press.
- [10] Yin, R., Su, D., & Ye, H. (2013). Conceptual metaphor theory: Basing on theories of embodied cognition. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 21(2), 220–228. <https://doi.org/10.3724/SP.J.1042.2013.00220>

Hang Thu Pham currently works as a university lecturer at Tay Do University in Cần Thơ, Vietnam, where she teaches and conducts research in the field of languages. Ms. Pham is also pursuing a PhD program at Hanoi University of Education, where she continues to expand her professional knowledge and explore new theories in the field of linguistics. In the last 15 years, Hang has written and published several scientific articles on languages, making valuable contributions to the academic community.