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Extended Metaphor in Automobile Fan Discourse

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Abstract This article investigates the use of extended metaphor in automobile fan discourse. It starts out with a definition of extended metaphor as literary, consciously sustained metaphor, and goes on to redefine it as consciously sustained but not exclusively literary; extended metaphor can also be found in consumer discourse. The article proceeds to describe the body of automobile fan discourse, its text types and communicative functions. Next, the article gives an overview of the most frequently used metaphorical concepts by which cars are represented. Particular attention is paid to those concepts that humanize or animate the car. Against this background, a text from the magazine *Car & Driver* that lobbies against safety legislation for sport utility vehicles is then analyzed. It is shown that the author skillfully employs two extended metaphors to argue his cause: CARS ARE CREATURES, THESE CREATURES ARE MALTREATED, and CONSUMER RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ARE MALTREATERS OF CARS. These concepts are sustained throughout the text through both lexical choices and grammatical patterns. It is shown that the metaphorical concept THE CAR IS HUMAN/ANIMATE is a powerful tool of the ideology of automobilism that is consciously drawn upon and reinforced in a specific text.

Since the 1980 publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphor has mainly been studied as a cognitive phenomenon, and everyday language has been concentrated upon.¹ Literary and

I would like to thank Monika Fludernik, Donald Freeman, Meir Sternberg, and an anonymous reader for *Poetics Today* for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

1. The articles in Goossens et al. 1995 and the ordinary-language metaphors studied there provide some recent examples of this focus.

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ordinary-language metaphors have basically been regarded as one and the same phenomenon (see, e.g., Lakoff and Turner 1989). In this view, metaphor is “a mapping of a source conceptual schema . . . onto a target conceptual schema” (Turner 1991: 52). Paul Werth (1994), however, recently argued that there is a difference not only in degree but in kind between literary and ordinary-language metaphors. While the basic machinery and constraints of metaphor are the same for both types, he argues that there are two important differences:

1. Literary metaphor is characterized by “the occurrence of *sustained metaphor* through a single text” (Werth 1994: 84; italics in the original).
2. The producer of ordinary-language metaphor often has no other choice because there is no nonmetaphorical language to express certain abstract facts. The producer of literary metaphor, on the other hand, consciously employs metaphors to embellish the text and to add further meaning, “where using a metaphor allows the topic to be viewed simultaneously from more than a single perspective” (Werth 1994: 84).

“Extended metaphor” can thus be defined as *literary* (as opposed to ordinary-language) metaphors that are *consciously* (as opposed to out of necessity) *sustained* throughout a text or discourse (as opposed to isolated use). Werth (1994: 84) contends that this type of metaphor is an exclusive property of literary texts. He also has a footnote that draws attention to the use of sustained metaphor in advertising. That advertising should make use of sustained metaphor, too, does not come as a surprise, as the similarity between literature and modern consumer advertising has frequently been noted. Guy Cook (1992: 228), for instance, observes similarity along two dimensions: just like literature, many ads “represent fictional situations and scenes, and demand the same technical skills as other arts.”

In the following, I will argue two points: first, extended metaphor is indeed different from ordinary-language metaphor and may be employed to serve rhetorical purposes; second, the use of extended metaphor is not restricted to literature but can also be found in other genres whose communicative aim is persuasive. The genre I will concentrate upon is—like advertising—a phenomenon of modern consumer society: popularized expert-to-non-expert communication, specifically automobile fan discourse. The following example shows that extended metaphor can be found in automobile fan discourse:

Mustang adopts modern V8 . . . Mondeo demand soars
Trad American V8 under threat

Detroit streets *are growing quieter* as the era of rumbling pushrod engines comes to a close. Big capacity pushrod V8s and V6s *are being superseded* by a new generation of overhead cam units. According to a new survey, the pushrod share of the engine market is forecast to decline to 41 per cent by 2000, a drop of 20 per cent over 1994. Even pick-up trucks, the strongest bastion of pushrod engines, *are switching over*. Only GM *is bucking* the trend, arguing that pushrod engines are significantly cheaper to produce, and most customers either do not know or care about the difference. Ford is gambling that buyers do care and is equipping its *Mustang* with a brand-new 32-valve 4.6-litre dohc V8. In contrast GM's *rival muscle car*, the Pontiac Trans-Am, *soldiers on* with a pushrod 16-valve 5.7-litre V8 that dates from the '60s. However, both *kick out a healthy* 305bhp. (McCormick 1995: 9)²

The text's overall metaphors—CARS ARE CREATURES, PUSHROD ENGINES ARE AN ENDANGERED SPECIES—are never overtly expressed, but the individual surface metaphors reveal this “underground metaphor” (Werth 1994: 85): an animal designation is used as the name of the car, *Mustang*. The image of the car as horse is further reinforced by the use of the verb *to buck* (although it is not used for the car itself here). The car name, *Mustang*, is beyond the control of the writer but was actively chosen by Ford's marketing experts. In this particular instance of automobile fan discourse, the writer is drawing on the metaphorical name *Mustang*, which automobile discourse—in the sense of an institutional body of knowledge and practices—has on offer. Unlike a machine, the car is able to act in a way typical of animals or humans: it obviously has free will as it can *adopt* one engine or *switch over* to another, *rival* another car, *soldier on*, and *kick out* brake horsepower. The car is characterized by attributes typical of creatures and is subjected to influences on nature: it has *muscles* instead of parts and may therefore be *healthy*. Being subject to the natural life cycle of reproduction, it is *superseded* by a *new generation*. All these metaphors, even the dead ones in *overhead*, *to buck the trend* and *muscle car*, which is a technical term, contribute to the picture of environmental concern: a creature is *under threat*. That it is a *traditional American* “animal” may be cause for even deeper concern.

The text shows how extended metaphor is skillfully used in automobile fan discourse to present new engines as an environmental concern. The text shows how automobile fan discourse appropriates the ideology (see Fairclough 1989: 2) of the environmental movement. With the automobile as one of the greatest environmental problems, this propaganda feat is an enormous achievement that would be impossible without metaphor. With Paul Ricoeur (1977: 7), I regard metaphor as “the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to re-describe reality.” While I do not wish to endorse the redefinition of the

2. Here and elsewhere: if not stated otherwise, the emphasis in the quotes is mine.

machine car as part of nature myself, this redefinition certainly works in automobile fan discourse.

In this article, I will show that extended metaphor is not only a property of literary texts but also a common feature of consumer discourse—here, the discourse of automobile enthusiasts. In particular, I will show that extended metaphor serves the purpose of furthering the ideological concerns of what in the United States are called “car buffs.” I will first describe the corpus of automobile fan discourse, list the most commonly occurring metaphors for automobiles, and conclude with a detailed analysis of a text on rollover accidents that uses extended metaphor particularly skillfully.

Automobile Fan Discourse

Automobile fan discourse can be loosely defined as any text produced for car aficionados or any people interested in automobiles. It is produced in all kinds of media: television documentaries, usually aired on the various sports channels; radio shows such as the Boston-based *Car Talk* on National Public Radio; books, which are sufficiently numerous in many bookstores to warrant a separate automobile section; Internet sites; magazines; and automobile sections in newspapers. Most of these can be divided into those produced by a certain manufacturer and thus supportive of a particular brand (e.g., www.toyota.com, www.ford.com/global, www.chrysler.com, or magazines like *FordMagazin* or *subaru drive magazin* in Germany, or *Mustang & Fords* in the United States) and those produced by a more general publisher and supportive of automobiles in general (e.g., *Car & Driver* in the United States, *Autocar* in Britain, *auto, motor und sport* in Germany, *Auto-Moto* in France, or *Automotor* in Portugal).

Within these publications the following text types occur:

1. Product information, which may take the form of anything from brief charts with items such as vehicle type, price, engine, accessories, dimensions and capacities, acceleration, handling, and fuel economy, to features on particular cars, to elaborate narratives about road tests.
2. Maintenance information, which is often also product information, not about the cars themselves but rather about spare parts, cleaners, or after-market additions. Maintenance information furthermore includes do-it-yourself repair instructions.
3. Information about automobile racing. These may take the form of news or background features.
4. Background reports on automotive history, celebrities in the field like engineers, race drivers, or collectors, and events of particular interest to automobile fans.

5. Opinion pages that include columns by well-known automotive writers like Brock Yates, the editor's pages, and letters to the editor. Opinions may be expressed on any car-related topic but most often denounce environmental protection efforts that might impact on automobile production and use.
6. Advertisements: the vast majority of ads in these publications will be for certain car brands or models and for automotive equipment products such as tires, stereos, or lubricants. Advertisements for other products are rare and clearly focused on a male target audience: beer, cigarettes, tobacco, recruiting ads for the Navy, Marines, and Air Force. Apart from producers' ads there are often also sections for the ads of retailers and a classified ads section.

Obviously, not all of these text types occur in all of the media outlets. *Car Talk*, for instance, consists almost exclusively of maintenance information. Books typically consist of one text type exclusively: either product or maintenance information, or background reports.

The dominant communicative function of automobile fan discourse is informative. Experts convey information to nonexperts. Rosemarie Gläser (1995: 150) distinguishes three genres of expert-to-non-expert communication: didactic (e.g., schoolbooks, correspondence text of the Open University in Great Britain); popularized (e.g., popularized article, review, nonfiction book); and behavior-regulating text forms (e.g., directions for use, cooking instruction, contract, agreement, treaty, highway code). Most automobile fan discourse belongs to the popularized text genre. Behavior-regulating texts occur but their language use tends to be less sophisticated and therefore only few metaphors occur. The dominant communicative function of automobile fan discourse is supplemented by a persuasive one. Extended metaphors are consciously employed to propagandize for automobiles, an activity that regards cars as a part of nature and therefore describes them in zoomorphic or anthropomorphic terms.

Unlike users of ordinary-language metaphor, producers of automobile fan discourse do have another verbal choice than metaphor. They could describe a machine as a machine. However, in many cases they consciously choose not to do so in order to attain their communicative goals. The metaphors convey information because they make technical details more easily accessible to the nonexpert and they advertise because they answer certain emotional needs in the consumer by depicting the car as something that it is not. Generally, any machine can be personified through metaphor, and they often are (see, e.g., Jakob 1991). The metaphorical representation of cars, however, is more interesting than that of most other machines because of the car's ubiquity and impact on modern life (economy, architec-

ture, environment, social structure, culture, etc.; see Piller 1996: 45–59). I will now discuss the metaphoric representation of cars in automobile fan discourse in general before focusing on the use of extended metaphor in a particular instance of automobile fan discourse.

Metaphors for Automobiles

In a corpus of 634 metaphorical automobile names out of a larger corpus of 2,241 American automobile names, which also includes metonymic and iconic names, the following five metaphorical concepts³ occur (see Piller 1996: 200–247). They are listed in order of frequency of occurrence.

1. The car is a human being (294 names; 46.4 percent):
e.g., *Ambassador*, *Apache*, *Baron*, *Chieftain*, *Dictator*, *Explorer*, *Mariner*, *Marshal*, *Matador*, *Monarch*, *Nomad*, *Pirate*, *Powermaster*, *President*, *Rebel*, *Scotsman*, *Vagabond*, *Warrior*.
2. The car is an animal (123 names; 19.4 percent):
e.g., *Barracuda*, *Blackhawk*, *Bronco*, *Cobra*, *Colt*, *Cougar*, *Eagle*, *Falcon*, *Hornet*, *Impala*, *Lark*, *Lynx*, *Mustang*, *Panda*, *Pony*, *Stallion*, *Superbird*, *Thoroughbred*, *Viper*, *Vixen*, *Wasp*.
3. The car is a man-made object other than a car (99 names; 15.6 percent):
e.g., *Arrow*, *Buckboard*, *Coronet*, *Corvette*, *Crown*, *Cruiser*, *Cutlass*, *Dart*, *Excalibur*, *Gyron*, *Firearrow*, *Javelin*, *Lance*, *Prizm*, *Probe*, *Rocket*, *Satellite*, *Sceptre*, *Torpedo*, *Trident*.
4. The car is an element or phenomenon of inanimate nature (94 names; 14.8 percent):
e.g., *Bolide*, *Comet*, *Cyclone*, *Diamond*, *Galaxie*, *Horizon*, *Laser*, *Meteor*, *Neon*, *Quicksilver*, *Shadow*, *Silver*, *Skyline*, *Star*, *Storm*, *Sun*, *Tempest*, *Thunderbolt*, *Topaz*, *Typhoon*.
5. The car is a supernatural being (24 names; 3.8 percent):
e.g., *Apollo*, *Banshee*, *Centaur*, *Demon*, *Diablo*, *Dragon*, *Fury*, *Golden Spirit*, *Gran Fury*, *Gremlin*, *Imp*, *Phantom*, *Phoenix*, *Spirit*, *Sport Fury*, *Thunderbird*, *Valkyrie*.

Three of the above concepts, the first two and the last one, are based on animist transfers—i.e., the machine car is metaphorically turned into a human being, an animal, or a supernatural being. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish among the three as there may be intentional overlap

3. With Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3–6), I use the term “metaphorical concept” for a cluster of metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, while an instance of such a concept (e.g., I *demolished* his argument) is termed “metaphor.”

between metaphors making the car a human being and metaphors making it an animal. A Jaguar ad, for instance, connects the figure of a leaping jaguar with the lines: “We haven’t sacrificed its beauty. We haven’t *corrupted* its *soul*. We haven’t *crushed* its *spirit*” (Jaguar 1994). While the picture accompanying this text identifies the car as an animal, the text depicts the car as having a *soul* that may be *corrupted* and a *spirit* that may be *crushed*. In total, 441, or 69.6 percent, of the metaphorical car names in my corpus are based on a personification, an animal metaphor, or a designation for a supernatural being. The following examples will show how these metaphors are drawn upon in various text types.

The concept of the (mechanical) car as human being is certainly one of the most well-established concepts in our culture. Indeed, cars can be referred to by means of the feminine personal pronoun instead of the neutral one, as in “Take the wheel of a new De Soto. Pilot *her* out through traffic toward the open road” (1957 De Soto ad in Stern and Stern 1978: 92). In the Stephen King (1983) novel *Christine*, a young man falls in love with a car named Christine, who becomes his substitute for a girlfriend: “This is the story of a *lover’s triangle*, . . . Arnie Cunningham, Leigh Cabot, and, of course, *Christine*. But I want you to understand that *Christine* was there first. *She* was *Arnie’s first love*, and . . . *she* was *his only true love*. . . . Arnie saw *Christine* for the first time and *fell in love with her*. . . . what Arnie saw in *her* that day I’ll never know. The left side of *her* windshield was a snarled spiderweb of cracks” (King 1983: 1, 3, 7).

The automobile may be understood as a lover, friend, or relative. Various kinds of relationship terms occur; those for children, especially *baby*, and for partners seem to be the most frequent ones. Chrysler advertised its cars for some time as *friend[s] of the family* (Flammang 1989: 158). That ads like these have successfully disseminated a sense of the car as creature in the general public is nicely demonstrated by the following text, which is not part of automobile fan discourse: “Like yours perhaps, my life is marked out by marriage and jobs, by births of children and grandchildren, by the deaths of dear ones, by dogs loved and lost. *Yes, and also by cars owned and (mostly) treasured. I remember them all*” (Welch 1993: 16). Normally, we are not friends with machines; we do not typically think of machines in terms of forgiveness and loyalty. But because cars are perceived as human beings, all of these feelings apply: “A deep breath taken before clutch out, *already friends, already forgiving the beautiful Alfa* for what must be lacking. Like a *witty and warm but dangerously drunken friend*. That kind of *loyalty*” (Conway 1995: 33). The “relationships” between cars can also be understood in terms of human families as shown by a Saab 900 advertisement in which the car is placed at the bottom of a family tree with pictures of historic

Saabs and a jet plane as “ancestors.” According to the accompanying text, the new Saab 900 has a *wild uncle*, a *great-grandmother*, and a *father*; it is said to have a *Type-A personality* since its *birth*, and even the company that produces the Saab 900 is personified, because it is said to have *bloodlines* (Saab 1994). An ad for the Oldsmobile Aurora similarly states, “Its *father* was a cruise missile. Its *mother* a concert hall” (Oldsmobile 1995). One for the Jaguar XK8 trumpets, “A new *breed* of *Jaguar* is *born*. Its *soul* was inherited. Everything else is a product of *advanced genetic engineering*. The legacy of a 60-year *bloodline* pumps through its 32-valve *heart*” (Jaguar 1996).

Equally well-established is the concept of the car as an animal. *Pony cars* and *spiders* denote certain car types: a pony car is a small car with a powerful engine that, like the prototypical Ford Mustang, is mainly favored by young adult consumers, while a spider is a sportive roadster. A new car may be announced as “another *horse* for our boss *stable*. . . . Passat wagons are better proportioned than their sedan *stablemates*” (Markus 1993: 134). A car that goes out of production may be advertised as the “last of a magnificent *breed*” (Stern and Stern 1978: 126–27). This slogan headed a picture in which a 1976 Cadillac Eldorado convertible was depicted in a pasture among a number of fine horses. Cars are not only described as horses and draft animals but also as “*Wolf* im Schafspelz” (*wolf* in sheep’s clothing) (Reil 1993: 3) or “*bat* out of hell . . . *mustang* of metal” (1942 Jeep ad in Stern and Stern 1978: 50).

The nomenclature of automobiles also partakes frequently of the supernatural. The most famous car with a name based metaphorically on a designation for a supernatural being is probably the Lamborghini Diablo. The writer of a road test article plays on the notion of the car as devil: “As entertaining as it is, the sound that accompanies the Lamborghini’s *fury* cannot be ignored; the Diablo’s 98 dBA 1st-gear *furor* makes it the loudest car we’ve tested in some time. . . . Fast, *furious* and now all-wheel drive, the Lamborghini Diablo VT is *devilishly* stunning. . . . the car’s *otherworldly* performance . . . The road ahead is never enough for the Diablo’s *fire-breathing* 5.7-liter 48-valve V-12” (Miller 1994: 126, 127, 128). Cars are not only represented as the devil but also as a god—for instance, as in the following article on the Alfa GTV, designated by the author as best car for 1995: “I’ll *preach*, you drive. You’ll see it, you’ll feel it, *you’ll find God in the details*” (Conway 1995: 33).

In many cases, cars are represented as creatures but it is impossible to decide whether these are human or animal. Parts of the car are quite often compared with parts of the human body, or the body of an animal, or clothing. *Body*, *bonnet*, *head*, *hood*, *tailfin*, *wing*, and *wishbone* are examples of such usage, as is *muscle* in *muscle car*. Because the car is interpreted as a

creature, the change from a V-8 to a V-6 engine can be described as a *heart transplant*. With this change completed the car is *more muscular*, the new engine needs more room, and the manufacturer therefore has to extend the *nose* so that it has a *longer schnoz* (examples from Schroeder 1994: 77–78). The engine is not only compared to the *heart* but also to the *soul*, as in “We’ll begin with the engine. After all, that is where the *soul* of the Turbo Z lurks” (Nissan 1993: 84), and to the *lungs*, as in this description of the twin turbochargers on the Porsche 911 Turbo: “With the added set of *lungs*, the flat six’s output vaults to a dizzying 430 horsepower” (*Car & Driver* 1994a: 42). Furthermore, the engine is said to be the *muscle* of the car: “The GTD R42 runs on midship-mounted American *muscle* from the 4.6-liter V8 used in the Lincoln Continental” (*Popular Science* 1995: 17). There may be *flanks*, as in the following quotation: “People approach, glance around, gingerly stroke the *flanks*” (Conway 1995: 33); and to specify technical details of a car one may offer a look “*under the skin* of the new Range Rover” (*Land-Rover 1995 Calendar*: page following December).

Cars not only have body parts themselves, they may actually become a part of a real human’s body when they are regarded as the male sexual organ. Yates (1994: 29) calls a Bugatti EB110 a “*mega-super-hyper-rapido-all-wheel-penis-extender*” (italics in the original).

Because they are metaphorized as creatures, cars can act like creatures, and may be subjected to natural processes. They *guzzle* gas, *eat* their owners (see Phillips 1995: 52, full quote below), or “*swallow* small bumps nearly imperceptibly” (Schroeder 1994: 78). They may *not feel well*, *fall ill*, *die*, and there may even be *life after death* for them:

We bought the car three days before we got married because *our other cars were dying* and we needed to move from California to Texas to go to grad school. *We are both very emotionally attached to the car*, despite the fact that *it is charisma-impaired*. . . . but for the next couple of years we think we can *keep it going with regular oil changes and talk therapy*. We have only had one real problem with *the Lone Ranger*. . . . Let our mechanic use it as a shop vehicle so he could be there when *it died*, which of course it never did. Finally, *it died* and didn’t start and we found it needed a new wire from the starter to the fuel pump and paid \$20 to get it replaced. Whenever *the car isn’t feeling well*, *the way it tells us is to refuse to start or to die* while it’s running. . . . We used to believe that *the car had a soul*, but then *we realized that we would have to give it up someday and that was too painful*. Now *we think it has a soul*—but that *it will be reincarnated* in our next car. (comment on the Ford Ranger at www.cartalk.com/Survey/Results/Ranger.html)

Not only are cars described as if they behaved like creatures, but people also behave toward them as if they were creatures, as is seen in the foregoing declaration of love.

Cars may be described with the help of attributes that only apply to creatures, such as “the finest, fastest, *sexiest* new cars” (*Car & Driver* 1994b). Attributes of vigor abound: the DeTomaso Pantera is “*alive and kicking*” (Goodfellow 1995: 65), or about the Alfa GTV: “You know that it is beautiful, *brave*” (Conway 1995: 33). Sports cars can be introduced as “five *predatory athletes* from five countries, all *with carnivorous appetites*. They’ll eat your lunch, your wallet, possibly you, too” (Phillips 1995: 52).

Also employed frequently is the metaphor of good breeding: “American sports-luxury sedans *challenge . . . blue-blooded* European benchmarks” (McCosh 1995: 76) or “Ferrari . . . has produced a *thoroughbred* car for drivers . . . its *race-bred* brakes and suspension” (Cropley 1995: 37).

Textual Analysis

Having examined the frequently occurring metaphorical concept THE CAR IS A CREATURE in some detail in examples drawn from a wide range of texts, I will now examine more closely the role played by extended metaphor in one particular text.

The following text is from the opinion pages of the magazine *Car & Driver*. The author, Patrick Bedard, has a regular one-page column there. The example text deals with rollover accidents: Bedard investigates the question of whether certain body types such as sport-utility vehicles are more prone to such accidents than others. He argues that rollover accidents are rarely fatal, that the tests conducted at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in order to distinguish between safe and unsafe cars are bogus, and that only drivers are to blame if rollover accidents happen.

It is the aim of the column to lobby against safety legislation for “sport utes,” as these vehicles are called. To reach this goal, Bedard employs two extended metaphors: one about the cars and one about consumer rights activists. The first one is CARS ARE CREATURES, THESE CREATURES ARE MALTREATED. The second is CONSUMER RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ARE MALTREATERS OF CARS. THEY MALTREAT CARS OUT OF BASE MOTIVES. The following text is the beginning of his column. It shows how he employs extended metaphor to prepare the ground for his argument.

1 When Cars Go Belly Up, Who Is to Blame?

2 The Clarence Ditlow Chorus is gonna take this one to the wailing wall. That
3 was my first reaction to Toyota’s high-boy RAV4. Its roofline comes up to my
4 nose; a bowling ball could roll under its high-clearance belly without a *tink*.

5 I can hear the keening and the yawping already, even before the first one

6 gets a license plate. “Rollover!” they’ll cry. “Murderer!” they’ll snivel. “Class
 7 action!” they’ll drool. Remember the TV news tapes adding whoop-whoop to
 8 the charges against the Suzuki Samurai? There was the cringing defendant, up
 9 on two wheels as *Consumer Reports* flogged it through some handling maneuver
 10 never seen outside the dressage ring. This rollover histrionics is prime time stuff.
 11 When the show trials were over, though, the Samurai was acquitted. The ac-
 12 cusers then turned to Bronco II; they bawled longer and louder against that
 13 one, probably because Ford has deeper pockets. Again, no guilty verdict. But
 14 like the anti-smoking beagles, yapping after big companies is what the Ditlows
 15 do for a living. And in the business of threat theater, rollovers are a lot scarier
 16 than secondhand smoke. So there will be allegations against the RAV₄ and
 17 Suzuki’s X90. We might just as well start the investigation now.
 18 (Bedard 1995: 33; italics in the original)

In this text, the car is metaphorically turned into a creature because designations typically used for people are applied to it: *high-boy* (line 3), *murderer* (6), *defendant* (8). One of the cars in question is furthermore personified through its name (over which the author has no choice; see above): a *samurai* (8) is a professional warrior.⁴

Cars in the text have a human body part, the *belly* (1), and, most important in this text, they are subjected to actions and processes that only creatures can be subjected to: they suffer from the unjust *charges against [them]* (8) as demonstrated by their *cringing* (8), and presumably also from being *flogged* (9). Typically, draft animals are subjected to flogging, and therefore it is not surprising that the cars should be put into the *dressage ring* (10) like horses. Typically, political prisoners in a dictatorship are subjected to *show trials* (11), so this should not happen in a democracy—but to really get aggravated by the injustice, readers need to perceive cars as human beings who can feel the injustice. Only human beings can be *acquitted* (11), as only human beings are brought to trial in the first place. The same holds true of the actions of *accusers* (11–12): only a human being with a moral sense can be accused, only a human being can be *guilty* (13) or not. If you thought of a machine as a machine, you could not accuse it of any ill effects it might create, only the designers or users could be guilty of anything. As it is, the car is humanized through being subject to accusations. The metaphor of the trial that personifies the car is further called up with the phrases *allega-*

4. To my mind, RAV₄ (line 3) is also a personification. It is pronounced /'reivə(r)/, and in British English a *raver* is “a person who leads an exciting life of social and sexual freedom” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2d ed.). The 1995 CD-ROM edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* does not have an entry for *raver*, however. This international brand name may nevertheless be perceived as a personification by Americans because of its word formation pattern. The vast majority of English deverbal nouns ending in *-er*, such as *teach-er*, *sing-er*, or *work-er*, refer to people.

tions against (16) and investigation (17). It is the ideological significance of this extended metaphor that “the rights and concerns of the car” are represented as the concerns of any decent person with a moral sense of right and wrong. A car can only be represented as having rights and concerns if it is animated or humanized first.

Not only is the car humanized in this text because it is presented as the victim of a show trial, the case is aggravated by the fact that the accusers are presented as not acting in good faith. They stage *histrionics* (10) because that’s what [they] do for a living (14–15), it’s their business, *the business of threat theater* (15)—in other words, they have pecuniary motives. For subjecting “the poor cars” to this indignity the consumer rights activists are dehumanized as *beagles* (14) and particularly through their repugnant actions expressed through the verbs applied to them: they *wail* (2) like the furies; they *keen* (5) like old women or witches; they *yawp* (5) like an animal;⁵ they *cry* (6) like someone overcome by emotion and no longer capable of rational action; they *snivel* (6) like persons who have no control over fluid emitted from their body, and are thus represented as unable to exert their will; they *drool* (7) like a fool; they *add whoop-whoop* (7) like hunters preying on their game or police sirens near disturbances of the public peace; they *turn* (12) instinctively from one victim to the next like a pack of dogs; they *bawl* (12) like animals or contemptuous persons; and they *yap* (14) like dogs or stupid and noisy persons.

These verbal choices imply two different aspects of the representation of consumer rights activists: on the one hand, they are metaphorically turned into hunters who mercilessly hunt down their innocent prey. Specifically, they are represented as animal hunters, as subhuman, as a pack of dogs on the trail of their victim. The ideological significance of the hunt metaphor is that lobbyists for safety legislation are represented as an unthinking “pack” after an innocent victim. The writer implies that—because the victim’s cause is good and true—it has stood firm so far, and will ultimately prevail (“We might just as well start the investigation now” [17]). As sport utility vehicles are represented as humans fighting the good cause, their height becomes a matter of public interest. What is at issue here is whether a car’s height is just an individual property or makes it more likely to roll over.

5. *Yawp* is not listed in any of the dictionaries I consulted. I am indebted to Donald Freeman for drawing my attention to Walt Whitman’s use of the word, in *Song of Myself*: “The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering. / I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable, / I sound my barbaric *yawp* over the roof of the world” (Whitman 1995 [1855] ll. 1330–32). Whitman uses *yawp* as an onomatopoeia for the hawk’s cry.

On the other hand, however, lexical items like *keen*, *snivel*, and *drool* do not necessarily strip the consumer rights activist of their humanity; rather, they represent them as women⁶ or weaklings without control over their bodily functions. Consumer rights activists are made out to act emotionally, lacking the capability to judge rationally or forgoing rational judgment out of base motives. The significance of the representation of lobbyists for consumer rights as weaklings out of control is that they can be judged as not worth listening to, while Bedard himself purports to rationally weigh the pros and cons of the “sport utes”’ proneness to rollover accidents.

The effect of these lexical choices is reinforced by the grammatical choices made in the text. With the exception of sentences in which the author refers to himself, designations for consumer rights activists occupy the subject position of active constructions throughout. The designations for sport utility vehicles, on the other hand, occupy the object position in those of these constructions that are transitive. In all these cases the subject’s role is that of agent, while the object’s role is that of affected participant. The typical structure of a transitive sentence in the text is as follows: the agent (consumer rights activists) engages in some type of despicable or negatively evaluated action. The constituent affected by that action designates the “sport-utes.” The impact on the image of the consumer rights activists is negative, while the image of the cars receives a boost.⁷ Examples of this type of structure are “*Consumer reports* [subject as agent] flogged [despicable action] it [object as affected]” (9); “the accusers [subject as agent] then turned [negatively evaluated action] to Bronco II [object as affected]” (11–12); or “they [subject as agent] bawled longer and louder [negatively evaluated action] against that one [object as affected]” (12–13). If a designation for a car ever occupies the subject position, it heads a passive clause as in “the Samurai [subject as affected] was acquitted” (11).

These grammatical patterns reinforce the lexical choices that represent consumer rights activists as merciless hunters and sport utility vehicles as innocent prey. The former act, while the latter suffer the impact of that action.

6. Bear in mind that automobile fan discourse is male-dominated and male-oriented, and celebrates the image of the “tough guy.”

7. I take the criterion “impact on image” from the discussion in Kitis and Milapides 1997 of the metaphorical structure of a newspaper text about the relationship between Greece and Macedonia.

Conclusion

Automobile fan discourse is represented by a substantial body of publications. It serves the purposes of information and advertisement and thus takes a rhetorical approach to language. This article focuses on one rhetorical figure, extended metaphor. I start out with a definition of extended metaphor as literary, consciously sustained metaphor (see Werth 1994: 84), and go on to demonstrate that consciously sustained metaphor is not only a literary phenomenon but can also be found in consumer discourse, specifically the popularized expert-to-non-expert communication of automobile fan discourse. It is shown that cars are conceptualized in a limited number of ways only, and one of these metaphors, *THE CAR IS A CREATURE*, is discussed in some detail and exemplified from a wide range of texts. Then, one particular text from an automobile magazine is chosen and its use of extended metaphor is analyzed. In this text, the author skillfully employs two extended metaphors: *CARS ARE CREATURES*, *THESE CREATURES ARE MALTREATED*, and *CONSUMER RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ARE MALTREATERS OF CARS*, *THEY MALTREAT CARS OUT OF BASE MOTIVES*. Both are “underground metaphors” because they are never explicitly stated. Both chains of metaphors serve the communicative goal of the author, which is to denounce safety legislation by the government. Readers are well-prepared for the first metaphor⁸ because it is so pervasive in automobile fan discourse. Its ubiquity makes it a powerful tool of ideology that can be exploited for specific goals. If writers want their readers to buy a car, they will create positive “personalities” carrying overtones of strength, aggressiveness, adventurousness, masculinity, or prestige. If they want to enlist readers in an effort to protect cars from environmental or safety measures, they will appeal to their compassion as in the above text. It is the very pervasiveness of the metaphorical concept *THE CAR IS A CREATURE* that allows these manipulations. As with any ideology (see Fairclough 1989: 33), writers on car-related issues may, on occasion, find it difficult *not* to draw upon the metaphor *THE CAR IS A CREATURE*. In an article on the dangers of off-road wagons in an urban environment, which is clearly *not* fan discourse, the author also draws on the metaphors of automobile fan discourse when he lists “the massive off-roaders’ city *sins*,” deplors “the *growth* of big, clumsy 4WDs,” or denounces their “*aggressive nature*” (McKay 1998: 61).

8. The second metaphor occurs frequently, too, but could not be further exemplified in this article.

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