

# **"Conceptual Metaphors in the Poetry of Man Qatala Mudarris al-Tarikh? (Who Killed the History Teacher?) by Nizar Qabbani Based on Lakoff and Johnson's Theory"**

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## **Introduction**

Cognitive linguistics, with its focus on the fundamental relationship between language, mind, and experience, has transformed our understanding of thought processes. At the heart of this field lies the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which elevates metaphor from a mere rhetorical device to an essential cognitive mechanism. This theory demonstrates how the human mind comprehends complex and abstract concepts (target domains) by drawing upon concrete, tangible experiences (source domains), a process manifested through three types of metaphor: structural, ontological, and orientational. Nizar Qabbani, a prominent contemporary Arab poet, is renowned for his innovative language and creation of original images that embody the thoughts and emotions of his era. His poetry collection "Man Qatala Mudarris al-Tarikh?" (Who Killed the History Teacher?) holds a central place in his oeuvre, reflecting the complex state of history and identity within the Arab social context. This study aims to analyze the cognitive mechanisms underlying Qabbani's poetry by examining this collection. Due to its inclusion of complex, abstract themes such as homeland, tyranny, and social decay, this collection provides a rich field for such analysis. The research problem lies in the fact that previous studies have largely focused on content analysis or traditional rhetoric, neglecting the poet's cognitive system in conceptualizing surrounding crises.

## **Methodology**

This research is fundamental in terms of its objective and descriptive-analytical in nature and method. Data collection was conducted using library research and documentary analysis. The primary theoretical framework is Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which posits that metaphor is a cognitive mechanism for understanding one conceptual domain (target domain) based on the structure and characteristics of another (source domain) through systematic mappings. The analysis procedure comprised four stages: First, selected poems from the collection were carefully studied to identify key concepts and prominent themes such as homeland, tyranny, suffering, identity, and social decay. Second, metaphorical expressions related to these concepts were extracted. Third, these expressions were classified into three main categories of conceptual metaphor (ontological, structural, and orientational). For each metaphorical instance, the source and target domains were identified, and the conceptual mappings between them were examined in detail. Fourth, the ideological function of these metaphors in representing the poet's worldview and social critique was analyzed.

## **Results and Discussion**

The analysis reveals that Qabbani employs conceptual metaphors with a clear ideological function, moving beyond mere aesthetic embellishment.

At the ontological level, Qabbani uses reification and anthropomorphism to embody abstract concepts. For instance, in the line “Thought in our land is cheaper than a shoe,” and “Even God’s garments in our land are sold at auction,” abstract concepts like “thought” and “the sacred” are conceptualized as commodities, exposing the corruption of a system where thought and sanctity are valued less than everyday material objects. Similarly, in the line “Our souls are black, our minds are black... and our favorite color is black,” internal states and collective identity are understood through the material quality of “blackness,” enabling Qabbani to represent despair and decay not as a passing feeling but as an inherent, chosen characteristic. In this poem, “The homeland is tyranny... the official newspapers are tyranny,” and “Because I bring to you in my poetry all the voices of the Arabs, all the curses of the Arabs,” oppression is conceptualized as a pervasive substance, while cries and curses become physical, portable objects, transforming poetry into a vehicle for collective anger.

At the structural level, Qabbani organizes abstract concepts within the framework of other, more concrete concepts. In the line “The face of Qana is pale like the face of Jesus,” and “On every child’s clothes flows the blood of Karbala,” contemporary tragedies are conceptualized within the structure of historical and religious archetypes, granting current suffering mythical dimensions as a repetition of the eternal struggle between truth and falsehood. In the line “And everything that happens in our lives is a series of tyranny,” lived experience is structured as a television series, indicating that dictatorship is a systematic, continuous pattern with a pre-written script, reducing citizens to passive actors. Regarding political solutions, in “We suddenly found ourselves in a garbage dump,” the outcome of compromise agreements is structured as a garbage dump, while “To Palestine, there is only one road that passes through the mouth of a rifle” structures liberation as a physical journey whose sole path is the gun barrel, establishing the hegemony of armed resistance discourse.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that conceptual metaphors in Qabbani’s poetry function as a fundamental cognitive and ideological tool, not merely a rhetorical device. Through ontological metaphors, Qabbani objectifies abstract concepts like tyranny, intellectual decay, and collective identity, making the weight of oppression and the worthlessness of thought tangible. Through structural metaphors, he reconstructs contemporary suffering within the framework of grand historical and religious narratives, revealing oppression as a recurring cycle, and establishes the hegemony of armed resistance discourse while delegitimizing compromise. Through orientational metaphors, he maps a topography of decline using downward vectors and darkness, conceptualizing society as a space of absolute deadlock devoid of any upward, liberating movement. Ultimately, the principal finding of this study is that the conceptual metaphors in Qabbani’s poetry form a coherent, ideological network whose primary function is to expose the mechanisms of repression and render collective suffering tangible.

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