# A Contrastive Study on Conceptual Metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" in 20th-Century Vietnamese and American Literature: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach

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## ABSTRACT

*Conceptual metaphors are a pervasive means through which literature conveys abstract ideas via concrete imagery. In literature, women are often portrayed through supernatural symbolism, reflecting their complex social, cultural, and moral roles. This study adopts a cognitive linguistic approach to examine the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" in 20th-century Vietnamese and American literature. Drawing on 4,000 metaphorical statements, the analysis focuses on 213 statements within the "supernatural forces" domain, identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) across four sub-domains: types, features, activities, and realms. The findings reveal that women are perceived as supernatural entities evoking both positive and negative emotions. They are described in dualistic terms, embodying both extremes of good and evil in appearance, morality, and action. These portrayals depict women as divine or angelic figures symbolising beauty and virtue, and as witches or demonic beings representing ugliness, danger, and malevolence. This duality encapsulates cultural ambivalence— revering women while marginalising them. In both corpora, women appear as sources of enchantment and anxiety, but with distinct cultural orientations. Vietnamese literature, shaped by polytheistic and Buddhist traditions, frames women as spiritualised beings whose strength lies in harmony and transcendence. American texts, grounded in Christian cosmology, construe female agency through moral struggle, emphasising temptation, sin, and redemption. The comparison shows that while both cultures employ a divine–demonic hierarchy to conceptualise femininity, Vietnamese mappings stress spiritual harmony, whereas American ones dramatise moral dualism and inner conflict. These findings suggest that metaphorical cognition shows universal tendencies, yet its expression remains culture-specific.*

*Keywords: conceptual metaphor; women; supernatural forces; literature; contrastive study*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past four decades, metaphor research has shifted from viewing metaphor as decorative language to recognising it as a core mechanism of cognition and communication. Since the introduction of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), scholars have examined how metaphor structures thought, language, and ideology. Recent studies highlight its sociocultural and gendered dimensions (Fludernik, 2019; Gibbs & Siman, 2021; Musolff, 2021) as well as its cognitive role in shaping gendered conceptual structures (Ahrens et al., 2024; Aziz et al., 2025).

Metaphor both reflects and shape collective values, identities, and power relations (Charteris-Black, 2004; Meng et al., 2025; Semino, 2008; Tamil Selvam & Yong, 2025; H. Yu et al., 2025). In literary studies, metaphor functions cognitively and aesthetically, enabling readers to grasp abstract ideas while engaging with the affective and ideological dimensions of a text (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Fludernik, 2019; Steen, 2008). Conceptual metaphors serve as a dynamic site where culture and ideology are negotiated (Gibbs & Siman, 2021; Hryzhak, 2024; Kochman-Haładyj & Kiełtyka, 2023; López Maestre, 2020; Pan, 2023; Zhumasheva & Shokym, 2022). They imbue literature with layered meanings that shape readers' perceptions, extending beyond linguistic ornamentation to reveal how authors construct characters and worldviews. In particular, metaphors surrounding women and femininity expose cultural archetypes and gendered power structures (Semino, 2008).

Despite significant theoretical advancements, few studies have examined how metaphors construct "women" through supernatural imagery. Addressing this gap provides insight into how conceptual metaphors reinforce or challenge social realities and deepens our understanding of the cognitive and cultural foundations of literary meaning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on conceptual metaphors of women across various cultural and historical contexts reveal how metaphorical language has been used to construct, convey, and perpetuate gender ideologies. Traditional narratives and proverbs emphasised obedience and virtue, whereas modern discourses recontextualise these metaphors to engage issues of sexuality, agency, and power (Tarkela, 2016; Zhou, 2017). Women are often metaphorised as animals, encoding sexuality and moral judgment (Ahmed, 2019; Barasa & Opande, 2017; Chin, 2009; Hryzhak, 2024; López-Rodríguez, 2009; Takada et al., 2000; Tarkela, 2016; Turpín, 2014; Zhou, 2017). The plant metaphor links femininity to beauty and fragility (Ahmed, 2019; Chen, 2023; Pan, 2023; Takada et al., 2000; Tarkela, 2016; Zhou, 2017), while the object and food metaphors portray women as possessions or consumable entities within patriarchal economies of desire (Akuno et al., 2018; Chin, 2009; Hulse et al., 2024; Tarkela, 2016; Zhou, 2017). In illness narratives, weapon and war metaphors are used to frame women's experiences of pain and endurance, revealing how bodily struggle is linguistically gendered (Hulse et al., 2024). In political and social media discourses, emerging weapon and violence metaphors construct female authority as disruptive or threatening (Susilowati et al., 2025). Recent cross-linguistic corpus-based research has further systematised these metaphorical patterns. Valipour and Rahbar (2025) identify 24 source domains in Persian colloquial expressions—including social relations, body, nature, and supernatural beings—showing gendered metaphorical mappings as culturally pervasive yet conceptually diverse. These metaphors not only shape perceptions of women but also reproduce hierarchies.

The conceptual metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" has garnered significant attention from scholars in linguistic and cultural studies. It not only reflects societal perceptions of women but also reconstructs cultural and historical values and power-related perspectives through language expression in various contexts.

The source domain *"supernatural forces"* historically symbolises oppression and power limitation. Gothic and Victorian texts often depict women as spectral or cursed beings, symbolising both confinement and tension between virtue and repression (Novosadska, 2020; Wallace, 2009). López-Rodríguez (2009) observes that English and Spanish media discourse often fuses

supernatural and animalistic imagery to depict women as morally deviant or dangerous. Similarly, Bletsas (2020) and Adegbola (2021) trace the persistence of this metaphor across European and African traditions, revealing how mythic and proverbial language sustains patriarchal authority by portraying women as both divine and demonic. Collectively, these works reveal how metaphors of spectral femininity articulate the historical dialectic between fascination and repression, shaping the gendered imagination of womanhood across cultures.

A second research trajectory investigates how supernatural metaphors reproduce negative gender stereotypes in both traditional and digital discourses. Tarkela (2016) notes the prevalence of *witch* and *demon* imagery in online youth magazines, framing women's emotions and sexuality as volatile, excessive, and morally suspect. Jackson (2021) analyses British media portrayals of women associated with the Islamic State, uncovering metaphorical framings of enchantment, possession, and moral threat that draw on supernatural and demonic imagery to construct gendered narratives of danger. In non-Western contexts, Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) show that Yoruba proverbs cast women as evil beings, morally corrupt agents, or mere procreants, thereby sustaining patriarchal hierarchies. Across these discursive domains, the recurrent invocation of supernatural imagery positions women as entities simultaneously feared and desired—figures whose perceived power must be controlled or disciplined. Collectively, these metaphors sustain patriarchal ideologies by portraying women as weak, subordinate, or dangerously powerful. Susilowati et al. (2025) confirm that such imagery persists in social media violence against female politicians, where female authority is construed as transgressive or threatening. Meanwhile, Bratić and Vuković (2017) show how these mythic mappings are commodified in contemporary Balkan media, where divine and demonic femininity is repackaged as spectacle and marketable allure.

Although supernatural metaphors often constrain women's roles, they can also symbolise resistance and empowerment. Kövecses (2002) observes that metaphors drawing on religious or supernatural domains often encode cultural conceptions of morality, power, and danger—a framework that underlies how femininity is metaphorically constructed across cultures. In academic discourse, metaphors like the "labyrinth" describe women navigating complex but surmountable paths to leadership (Carli & Eagly, 2016). This metaphor highlights both the barriers women face and the potential for overcoming them. Recent feminist and cultural studies (Adenuga, 2025) reinterpret supernatural imagery as a site of reclamation— women reappropriating monstrous or divine forms in literature and film to express autonomy and challenge patriarchal representation. Similarly, digital feminist research (Jabłońska, 2024; Verbeek, 2024) shows how online witchcraft movements reframe the witch metaphor as empowerment rather than deviance, extending this reclamation into virtual culture. These metaphors articulate latent strength and subversive identity, aligning with broader movements of feminist agency and narrative control.

Moreover, supernatural imagery often oscillates between extremes of deification and dehumanisation. In some contexts, women are likened to goddesses or divine entities, symbolising power and sanctity—a conceptual association rooted in moral and religious metaphors of elevation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), while in others, they are depicted as witches or malevolent beings, reflecting the cultural ambivalence of reverence and fear (Aragbuwa & Omotunde, 2022; Novosadska, 2020; Wallace, 2009). Bratić and Vuković (2017) also highlight the ambivalent mediation of femininity in contemporary media, showing how divine and demonic traits are aestheticised and domesticated to maintain cultural control—women portrayed as mystical yet manageable, revered yet restrained.

In conclusion, the conceptual metaphor of women as supernatural forces reveals multidimensional perspectives: it is a tool to reinforce societal stereotypes yet has the potential to challenge gender norms. Research by Wallace (2009), Novosadska (2020), Jackson (2021), Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022), Susilowati et al. (2025) and others provides a rich understanding of how language and culture construct women's roles and power dynamics through the image of supernatural entities. These studies suggest that the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is not merely linguistic but serves as a lens through which societal, cultural, and historical values associated with women can be interpreted.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY (CMT)

This theory was pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*. They argue that metaphors are not just linguistic expressions but are deeply rooted in human cognition, shaping how people perceive and interact with the world. A conceptual metaphor connects two domains: the *source domain*, which provides structure to the metaphor, and the *target domain*, which is the abstract concept being described. For example, in the metaphor *"Life is a journey",* "journey" (source domain) provides a framework to understand "life" (target domain).

Metaphors reflect cultural and social values, influencing thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Kövecses (2002) expands this idea, emphasising the role of culture in shaping metaphorical concepts. He introduces the concept of cultural variation, where metaphors are shaped by shared experiences and historical contexts within a culture. Thus, CMT offers a foundation for exploring how metaphor operates simultaneously as a universal cognitive mechanism and a culturally situated phenomenon.

## THE EXTENDED GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

The Extended Great Chain of Being is an elaboration of the classical concept known as the Great Chain of Being, which dates back to ancient Greek philosophy and medieval Christian thought (Lakoff, 1987). The original framework is a hierarchical model that classifies and organises all forms of life and entities in the universe according to a ranked order, starting from inanimate objects at the bottom, moving up through plants, animals, humans, and ending with spiritual beings like angels and God at the top. This system emphasises a linear and fixed order, reflecting the belief that every entity has its predetermined place in the universe.

## THE EXTENDED GREAT CHAIN OF BEING AND CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

One key characteristic of the Extended Great Chain of Being is its relevance in cognitive linguistics and CMT. The chain reflects not only a hierarchy of existence but also a metaphorical structure that underlies human thinking. This structure is deeply embedded in conceptual metaphors, shaping how people perceive and reason about the world. In other words, the chain provides a structured framework that organises entities and concepts by levels of value, existence, and hierarchy. This model extends beyond physical beings to include abstract qualities and social roles, allowing metaphors to capture complex relationships. In the realm of CMT, the chain's hierarchy

underpins metaphors with upward and downward mappings. For example, metaphors like "Goodness is higher" and "Evil is lower" link to the chain's vertical structure, where higher levels align with moral superiority, divinity, and authority, while lower levels correspond to baser instincts. This hierarchical reasoning also informs how people conceptualise power, intellect, and social standing—mapping moral and social values onto spatial hierarchies. By applying the chain to metaphor analysis, we gain deeper insight into how abstract concepts are structured and understood through their metaphorical placement within a cosmic and moral hierarchy.

Together with CMT, the Extended Great Chain of Being offers a cognitive foundation for examining how metaphors encode value judgments, social order, and ideological hierarchies.

## CONTRASTIVE THEORY AND CROSS-CULTURAL METAPHOR THEORY

Contrastive Theory, originating in applied linguistics (Fisiak, 1981; James, 1980; Lado, 1957), proposes that systematic comparison between languages reveals both structural and semantic similarities and differences that reflect deeper cognitive and cultural patterns. In metaphor research, contrastive analysis enables scholars to identify shared conceptual schemas and culture-specific metaphorical extensions across linguistic systems.

Building on this, Cross-cultural Metaphor Theory (Kövecses, 2005; N. Yu, 2008) extends conceptual metaphor analysis into the cultural domain. It argues that while metaphor is a universal cognitive mechanism, its realisation is culturally mediated—shaped by shared beliefs, social practices, and value systems. Thus, metaphors both reflect and reproduce cultural models, serving as key indicators of ideological and cognitive variation.

By integrating these perspectives, Cross-cultural Metaphor Theory bridges cognitive and cultural linguistics, demonstrating that metaphor functions as both a mental process and a sociocultural construct.

Together, these theoretical models illustrate how metaphor operates across cognitive, hierarchical, and cultural dimensions. CMT explains the mental mapping between domains; the Extended Great Chain of Being accounts for hierarchical conceptualisation and moral ordering; and Cross-cultural Metaphor Theory highlights how these mappings are shaped by local belief systems and sociocultural practices.

This study integrates these models to explore how supernatural imagery encodes gendered cognition across Vietnamese and American literature.

## DATA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a contrastive, corpus-based approach examining metaphorical representations of women in 20th-century Vietnamese and American literature. The corpus comprises 98 Vietnamese novels, short stories, and novellas (extracted from anthologies) and 13 American novels and short stories by Vietnamese and American authors, respectively. These works were selected purposively for their sustained focus on female characters and for representing diverse socio-historical contexts across the 20th century.

4,000 metaphorical statements—2,000 in each corpus—were identified, representing diverse source domains such as animals, plants, objects, and supernatural forces. The present analysis focuses on 213 metaphorical statements classified under the *"supernatural forces"* domain, identified in 21 Vietnamese and 11 English literary works. Although this domain is not

pervasive across the corpus, it recurs saliently in these texts, revealing its strong ideological significance.

Metaphors were identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007), which involves close reading to determine contextual meaning, identifying lexical units, comparing basic and contextual meanings, and recognising figurative use. The identified metaphorical expressions were then grouped and analysed for conceptual coherence and thematic salience.

The classification of the *"supernatural forces"* domain was refined into four sub-levels—types, features, activities, and realms—based on frequency, semantic clustering, and interpretive salience across both corpora. These categories represent recurring metaphorical patterns that reveal how supernatural imagery constructs gendered identities and power relations. *Types* include ontological labels (e.g., *witch, angel*) reflecting identity frames; *Features* capture enduring attributes (e.g., *halo, magical power*) indexing essence or temperament; *Activities* encompass dynamic actions (e.g., *bewitch, haunt*) representing agency and behavior; and *Realms* refer to spatial or experiential metaphors (e.g., *heaven, hell*) that evoke emotional and environmental positioning.

This categorisation captures distinct dimensions of gendered cognition—identity, essence, agency, and affective context—and provides a systematic framework for comparing how supernatural imagery encodes women's identities and power relations in Vietnamese and American literary traditions.

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Supernatural forces—entities or powers that transcend natural laws—are often the product of human imagination or belief systems and are associated with extraordinary, mystical, or transcendent capabilities. Based on the attributes of the source domain, four metaphorical mappings are identified as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Mapping diagram of the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Source domain: SUPERNATURAL FORCES | Mapped onto | Target domain: WOMEN |
|---|---|---|
| Types of supernatural forces | ⟶ | Types of women |
| Features of supernatural forces | ⟶ | Characteristics and personalities of women |
| Activities of supernatural forces | ⟶ | Activities or behaviours of women |
| Realms of supernatural forces | ⟶ | Living conditions or feelings evoked by women |

Building on Lakoff's Extended Great Chain of Being, the metaphorical mappings are treated as hierarchical frames that both elevate and otherise women—a dual positioning that simultaneously grants women an extraordinary status and marks them as different. This duality provides the interpretive framework guiding the present discussion.

The mappings operate through two primary cognitive mechanisms: (i) salience transfer, in which prominent attributes of supernatural entities (e.g., *power*, *mystery*) are projected onto female characters; and (ii) frame activation, whereby invoking a supernatural lexical item triggers culturally embedded mental models (e.g., *fairy → purity*; *witch → transgression*). These processes explain how the same metaphorical schema can yield contrasting narrative evaluations—veneration versus demonisation.

The distribution of metaphorical statements, expressions, and their frequencies across sub-domains is summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Statistics of sub-categories of the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Attributes of Source Domain | Vietnamese metaphorical statements | | English metaphorical statements | | Number of metaphorical statements | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Vietnamese | English | Total |
| Types of supernatural forces | 28 | 66 | 18 | 49 | | | |
| Features of supernatural forces | 10 | 17 | 18 | 29 | | | |
| Activities of supernatural forces | 21 | 30 | 6 | 7 | | | |
| Realms of supernatural forces | 8 | 20 | 4 | 16 | | | |
| **TOTAL** | **67** | **133** | **46** | **101** | **116** | **97** | **213** |

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" IN VIETNAMESE

In the Vietnamese corpus, the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" occurs in 116 statements represented by 67 metaphorical expressions with 133 instances, organised into four subordinate metaphors: types, features, activities, and realms.

*First* is the metaphor "TYPES OF WOMEN ARE TYPES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" represented by 28 expressions and 66 occurrences. *Types* such as *tiên (fairy)*, *quỷ (demon)*, *nữ thần (goddess)* reflect ancestral or mythic mental models rooted in animistic cosmology, emphasising lineage, fate, and the interplay between the human and spiritual realms. The diversity of expressions is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Statistics of Vietnamese metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "TYPES OF WOMEN ARE TYPES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| (Con) quái vật Quái vật (Freak) | 10 | Con quỉ cái (She-devil) | 2 |
| Tiên (Fairy) | 6 | Ma (Ghost) | 2 |
| (Con) yêu tinh/ Yêu tinh/ Cái yêu tinh (Demon/ Female demon) | 5 | Hung thần (Fierce God) | 1 |
| Nàng tiên (Fairy) | 4 | Yêu ta (Demon) | 1 |
| Con quỉ/ Quỉ (Demon/ Devil) | 4 | Ma quỷ (Devils) | 1 |
| (Vị) nữ thần (Goddess) | 4 | Bóng ma (Spectre) | 1 |
| Tiên nữ (Fairy) | 3 | Thây ma (Zombie) | 1 |
| (Con) Quỷ sa tăng (Satan) | 3 | Tấm linh hồn phiêu bạt (Wandering soul) | 1 |
| Linh hồn (Soul) | 3 | Mẫu dạ xoa (Mother Ogress) | 1 |
| Bà cô tổ (Ancestral fairy) | 3 | Cô tiên (Fairy) | 1 |
| Tiên nga (Fairy maiden) | 1 | Luồng điện giật (Electric shock) | 1 |
| Nàng tiên cá (Mermaid) | 1 | Phù thuỷ (Witch) | 1 |
| Hằng Nga (Chang'e/ Moon Goddess) | 2 | Ảo ảnh (Phantom) | 1 |
| Thiên thần (Angel) | 1 | Đức Mẹ Đồng trinh (Virgin Mary) | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **28** | **66** |

Metaphorical references to *nàng tiên cá (mermaid)*, *tiên*, and *nàng tiên (fairy)* evoke images of beauty, virtue, and moral grace, positioning women as embodiments of idealised femininity and spiritual purity. Similarly, *Hằng Nga* represents an ethereal archetype of womanhood—graceful, pure, and transcendent. Collectively, these expressions articulate a cultural schema aligned with the upper levels of the Extended Great Chain of Being, where women are conceptualised as celestial or sacred entities occupying a moral and spiritual hierarchy above ordinary human experience. Such upward mappings associate femininity with moral elevation and divine virtue, reinforcing idealised yet unattainable standards of purity.

Conversely, expressions like *yêu tinh (demon)* or *con quỷ (devil), quỷ (devil)*, *con quỷ cái (she-devil)*, and *con quái vật (monster)* embody the opposite frame. These metaphors activate downward mappings within the same hierarchy, locating women at the lower, bestial, or demonic strata—symbolising moral degradation, manipulativeness, danger, and loss of self-control. Notably, demonic and monstrous metaphors appear nearly twice as frequently as divine ones, reflecting a cognitive bias toward moral vigilance and the cultural preoccupation with the perceived threat of female transgression and power.

For example:

(1) Đang ăn cơm trưa, nghe tiếng kêu khóc vật mình vật mẩy của bà chị dâu ở trên gác, Luận đặt bát cơm xuống, thở một hơi dài buồn bực: - *Quỷ sa tăng* hiện hình ở nhà này rồi! (While having lunch, upon hearing the wailing and thrashing of his sister-in-law upstairs, Luan put down his bowl, sighed heavily, and said, "*Satan* has manifested in this house!") (Ma Van Khang, 1985)

In (1), Luan calls his sister-in-law Ly *Quỷ sa tăng (Satan)*—the embodiment of evil and moral decay. Symbolically, Satan signifies spiritual downfall driven by greed and desire. Blinded by material temptation, Ly becomes cruel, domineering, and estranged from her family. Under Vietnam's emerging market economy, she succumbs to materialism, rejecting traditional moral values. As the text asserts, when a woman "departs from morality, she immediately becomes Satan" (*xa rời đạo lý là biến thành quỷ sa tăng ngay*) (Ma Van Khang, 1985). This hierarchical opposition—between celestial purity and demonic corruption—illustrates how the Great Chain cognitively structures moral reasoning about femininity. The metaphor transcends individual characterisation to reflect broader social anxieties about reform-era corruption, positioning the female figure as a moral barometer for collective virtue and decline.

In sum, metaphors of divine and demonic types activate contrasting evaluative frames that both idealise and discipline femininity. They produce a symbolic spectrum where women are venerated as ethereal beings yet constrained by moral surveillance, revealing how vertical metaphorical mappings along the Great Chain mediate cultural tensions between reverence and control within Vietnamese cognition.

*Second*, the metaphor "WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITIES ARE FEATURES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is realised through 10 metaphorical expressions with 17 occurrences (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Statistics of Vietnamese metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITIES ARE FEATURES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ma lực (Magic power/ Magical power) | 6 | Lực lôi kéo (Attractive force) | 1 |
| Sức hút (Magnetic appeal) | 2 | Trường hấp dẫn (Magnetic aura) | 1 |
| Vòng hào quang (Halo) | 2 | Bí ẩn (Mysterious) | 1 |
| Sức mạnh huyền bí (Mystical power) | 1 | Ma quái (Eerie) | 1 |
| Thế lực vạn năng (Almighty power) | 1 | Phép tiên (Magic) | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **10** | **17** |

For example:

(2) Từ bữa ấy mà đi, em đã có một thứ *thế lực vạn năng.* (From that day on, I possessed an *almighty power*.) (Vu, 2005)

*Thế lực vạn năng (almighty power)* refers to an ability that transcends ordinary human limits, echoing the potency of supernatural beings. In (2), Huyen acquires this power after discovering her husband had syphilis, which grants her emotional dominance and moral authority. Similarly, women's *magical power (ma lực)* is portrayed as an irresistible charisma—an aura of enchantment that commands attraction and submission. These metaphors suggest that feminine charm and influence are conceptualised through mystical potency, emphasising women's capacity to affect others in ways that appear beyond rational explanation.

In sum, this metaphor constructs femininity as a site of mystical allure and emotional gravity, where moral and sensual power merge into a force both fascinating and unsettling.

*Third*, the metaphor "WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES ARE ACTIVITIES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" appears with 21 metaphorical expressions and 30 occurrences (Table 5).

TABLE 5. Statistics of Vietnamese metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES ARE ACTIVITIES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hiện nguyên hình/ Hiện hình (Reveal the true nature/ Manifest) | 4 | Ám (Haunt) | 1 |
| Hút (Magnetise/ Draw) | 3 | Hoá thân (Transform into) | 1 |
| Tan biến (Dissolve/ Vanish) | 2 | Quyến rũ (Seduce) | 1 |
| Ám ảnh (Haunt) | 2 | Hồi sinh (Resurrect) | 1 |
| Huyễn hoặc (Illusionaise) | 2 | Ban sự sống (Bestow life) | 1 |
| Đòn phép (Magical trick) | 2 | Ban cho (Bestow) | 1 |
| Vụt hiện hình (Manifest) | 1 | Mê hoặc (Enchant) | 1 |
| Biến hình (Transform) | 1 | Kết thành hình (Take shape) | 1 |
| Chưa tiêu hết (Not fully dissipate) | 1 | Cải lão hoàn (Rejuvenate) | 1 |
| Hiện về (Appear) | 1 | Giời sai xuống (Descend from Heaven) | 1 |
| Giáng thế (Descend to the world) | 1 | | |
| **TOTAL** | | **21** | **30** |

For example:

(3) Nghe thấy tiếng dép phụ nữ đi xuống cầu thang, anh liền chống tay lên háng, quát: - Quỷ nó về *ám* cái nhà này rồi nên giờ nó mới suy đồi đốn mạt đến thế này! (Hearing the sound of the woman's slippers descending the stairs, he placed his hands on his hips and shouted: - The devil's come to *haunt* this house, which is why it's become so degenerate!) (Ma Van Khang, 1985)

Women's actions—described through verbs like *hiện nguyên hình (reveal one's true nature)*, *ám (haunt)*, *mê hoặc (enchant)*, and *quyến rũ (seduce)*—metaphorically construct agency as a morally charged transformation. Most of these activities carry negative or disruptive connotations, far outnumbering benevolent acts such as *ban cho (bestow)* or *ban sự sống (bestow life)*, highlighting a cognitive bias toward framing female agency as dangerous or transgressive.

Such manifestations often involve emotional intensity and moral exposure, where women's actions evoke deep psychological responses and lingering affective effects on those around them, suggesting that female presence, like supernatural power, continues to resonate beyond the immediate moment of interaction.

Overall, this metaphor constructs female agency as performative and transformative—capable of revelation, enchantment, and disruption—yet often disciplined through fear and fascination. It reveals how metaphor cognitively encodes moral ambivalence toward female power, positioning women as both agents of enchantment and sources of peril within the Extended Great Chain of Being.

*Fourth*, the metaphor "THE LIVING CONDITIONS OR FEELINGS EVOKED BY WOMEN ARE REALMS OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is represented through 20 occurrences of 8 metaphorical expressions (Table 6).

TABLE 6. Statistics of Vietnamese metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "THE LIVING CONDITIONS OR FEELINGS EVOKED BY WOMEN ARE REALMS OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| (Cảnh) địa ngục (Hell) | 8 | Thiên tiên (Celestial Realm) | 1 |
| Gò bồng đảo (Divine bosom = The Mound on Bong Lai Island) | 2 | Cung giăng (Moon Palace) | 1 |
| Thiên đường (Paradise/ Heaven) | 13 | Bồng lai tiên cảnh (Bong Lai Fairyland) | 1 |
| Thiên Thai (Fairyland) | 2 | Chốn nát-bàn (Nirvana) | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **8** | **20** |

For example:

(4) (…) đưa quan ông vào *chốn nát-bàn*, thì ai cũng phải thấy một cái hố sâu thăm thẳm sâu như bụng dạ một người đàn bà. ((…) leading the Gentleman into *nirvana*, everyone could see a deep abyss, as profound as the depths of a woman's womb.) (Nguyen, 1934)

*Bồng lai tiên cảnh (Bong Lai Fairyland)* refers to a utopian realm where happiness and fulfilment prevail—an imagined world of eternal pleasure. In the Vietnamese corpus, the expression metaphorically describes a brothel, suggesting an earthly paradise created by women's charm and beauty. Similarly, *thiên đường (heaven)* evokes ultimate bliss, symbolising the sensual and emotional ecstasy associated with female allure.

In (4), *Nát-bàn (Nirvana)* is reinterpreted ironically: instead of spiritual liberation from desire, it signifies indulgence in desire, turning the sacred into satire. This blend of sanctity and sensuality highlights how metaphor transforms female erotic power into a moralised space—simultaneously divine and dangerous. Through this, Nguyen (1934) exposes the moral contradictions of pleasure and desire in modernising Vietnamese society.

Conversely, *địa ngục (hell)* represents the antithesis of these heavenly spaces—a state of torment and degradation. It metaphorically portrays women's suffering, humiliation, and moral imprisonment within patriarchal structures, suggesting that their daily existence becomes a moral and psychological "hell". Through this contrast, the metaphor constructs a polarised cosmology in which women inhabit both exalted and infernal spaces.

In the corpus, heavenly expressions occur far more frequently than infernal ones, revealing a cognitive tendency to associate women with pleasure, enchantment, and transcendence rather than torment. These mythological and eroticised realms recast the female body as a gateway to celestial ecstasy, where sensuality and spirituality intertwine.

Overall, the metaphor maps femininity onto cosmic landscapes that oscillate between transcendence and suffering, revealing how female experience is moralised through the interplay of desire, subjugation, and social control.

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" IN ENGLISH

The metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" appears in 97 metaphorical statements, represented by 46 metaphorical expressions and 101 occurrences, and comprises four subordinate metaphors as follows:

*First*, the metaphor "TYPES OF WOMEN ARE TYPES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is found with 18 metaphorically-used words and 49 occurrences (Table 7).

TABLE 7. Statistics of English metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "TYPES OF WOMEN ARE TYPES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Angel | 9 | Soul | 1 |
| Devilment/ Devil | 8 | Ghost | 3 |
| Monster | 5 | Freak | 3 |
| Saint | 3 | Wizard | 1 |
| Witch | 2 | Miracle | 3 |
| Demon | 1 | Hercules | 1 |
| Virgin Mary | 1 | Legend | 2 |
| Fiend | 1 | Grail | 1 |
| Evil | 4 | A messenger of Satan | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **18** | **49** |

Supernatural forces are broadly divided into two moral poles—good and evil—and women, likewise, are construed along this binary. Beautiful, benevolent or virtuous women are likened to *saints* or *angels*, embodying purity, mercy, and moral perfection. Conversely, women perceived as manipulative, selfish, or destructive are depicted as *monsters*, *fiends*, *ghosts* or *witches*—entities that disrupt moral and social harmony. The imagery of *witches* in particular foregrounds the idea of female influence as simultaneously potent and socially perilous, revealing persistent anxieties about women's agency and transgression. The "good-force" metaphors account for 21 out of 49 occurrences—nearly half—indicating that English literary cognition balances reverence and temptation in its moral framing of femininity. Yet the slightly greater presence of demonic and monstrous references underscores an enduring patriarchal tension between idealisation and fear. This moral dualism reflects the operation of the Extended Great Chain of Being, where women occupy both celestial and infernal strata, symbolising the cognitive oscillation between virtue and vice.

For example:
(5) Now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a *grail*. (Fitzgerald, 1925)

In (5), Daisy is described as the *Grail*, a sacred object of Christian legend representing divine perfection and unattainable desire. The metaphor positions her as a quasi-religious ideal—the object of Gatsby's relentless pursuit yet devoid of reciprocal agency. Her sanctified inaccessibility transforms love into spiritual obsession, revealing the moral paradox of idealised femininity.

Overall, these "type" metaphors mobilise a Christian-mythic schema that moralises femininity, distributing women along a symbolic continuum from salvation to sin, from angelic purity to demonic temptation.

*Second*, the metaphor "CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITIES OF WOMEN ARE FEATURES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is identified with 18 metaphorical expressions and 29 occurrences (Table 8).

TABLE 8. Statistics of English metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITIES ARE FEATURES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Magic | 6 | Herculean | 1 |
| Holy | 4 | Heavenly | 1 |
| Devilish | 1 | Mystery | 1 |
| Disembodied | 1 | Haunting(ly) | 2 |
| Demoniac | 1 | Shapeless | 1 |
| Angelic | 1 | Sainted | 1 |
| Exorcised | 1 | Bewitching | 1 |
| Spell | 1 | Mysterious(ly) | 2 |
| Unnatural | 1 | Legendary | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **18** | **29** |

Characteristics of supernatural forces are mapped onto women, endowing them with attributes that transcend ordinary human limits. They may display divine traits *(holy, heavenly, angelic)*, extraordinary capacities *(herculean effort)*, or mystical allure *(magic, mysterious)*, elevating them to sacred or miraculous status, while others manifest darker energies *(devilish, demoniac, disembodied)*, which infuse them with forbidden power or moral danger.

For example:
(6) In spite of her choked-back tears, Scarlett thrilled to the never-failing *magic* of her mother's touch. (Mitchell, 1936)
In (6), maternal touch is portrayed as a form of moral sanctity and spiritual force, reflecting how feminine virtue is cognitively construed through the supernatural domain.
The predominance of positive traits—around two-thirds of all occurrences—suggests a cultural inclination to sanctify feminine emotion and care, yet this sanctification coexists with anxiety about women's unseen or uncontrollable power. These mappings reveal how cognition oscillates between idealisation and apprehension, constructing femininity as both spiritually exalted and psychologically perilous.

Overall, the metaphor constructs women as embodiments of affective and moral extremes, where tenderness becomes sanctified, and allure becomes perilous. Such imagery renders femininity emotionally charged, morally ambivalent, and psychologically pervasive, sustaining the cognitive myth of women as both angel and enigma.

*Third*, the metaphor "WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES ARE ACTIVITIES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is expressed through 6 metaphorical expressions and 7 occurrences (Table 9).

TABLE 9. Statistics of English metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES ARE ACTIVITIES OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bewitch | 2 | Draw by a force | 1 |
| Haunt | 1 | Obsession | 1 |
| Dissolve | 1 | Incarnation | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **6** | **7** |

Perceived as supernatural forces, women are endowed with powers that transcend rational explanation. They act as agents of enchantment, transformation, and possession, capable of dissolving ordinary boundaries between body and spirit, reality and illusion.

For example:
(7) At his lips' touch, she blossomed for him like a flower, and the *incarnation* was complete. (Fitzgerald, 1925)
In (7), *incarnation* denotes a moment of mystical transformation: the woman becomes a living embodiment of desire and transcendence, turning the mundane act of touch into a sacred or otherworldly experience. The expression *bewitch* conveys women's power to captivate and subdue men's will, mirroring the compulsive influence of magic that overrides reason.

Such expressions conceptualise female actions as performative enchantments—they bewitch, haunt, obsess, and incarnate—suggesting that women's gestures and emotions hold a quasi-magical agency that can shape, dominate, or unsettle the male psyche. These metaphors not only dramatise the irresistible allure of women but also expose cultural anxieties about feminine influence: their affective power is simultaneously desired, feared, and morally charged.

Ultimately, women's actions in this metaphorical frame are not mere social or emotional gestures but acts of supernatural intervention—at once alluring, haunting, and transformative—rendering femininity an arena of emotional intensity and psychological permeability that transcends the boundaries of the human experience.

*Fourth*, the metaphor "THE LIVING CONDITIONS OR FEELINGS EVOKED BY WOMEN ARE REALMS OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES" appears with 4 expressions and 16 occurrences (Table 10).

TABLE 10. Statistics of English metaphorical expressions of the metaphor "THE LIVING CONDITIONS OR FEELINGS EVOKED BY WOMEN ARE REALMS OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES"

| Metaphorical expressions | Frequency | Metaphorical expressions | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hell | 9 | Heaven | 5 |
| Paradise | 1 | Hellhole | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **4** | **16** |

For example:

(8) What I want, I take if I can get it, and so I wrestle neither with angels nor devils. What a merry *hell* you must have made for Ashley! Almost, I can be sorry for him. (Mitchell, 1936)

In (8), *hell*—a place traditionally associated with pain, disorder, and punishment in religious and cultural frameworks—metaphorically represents the turmoil and emotional distress in Ashley's life caused by Scarlett. The metaphor constructs a symbolic realm of suffering in which passion and guilt intertwine, reflecting the destructive allure of feminine influence. Conversely, *paradise* denotes an ideal, utopian place free from pain or conflict, where benevolent supernatural forces prevail, and emotional harmony is restored. In the American corpus, *paradise* often refers to the blissful domestic world women create with their husbands.

The coexistence of *heaven* and *hell* within this metaphorical system articulates a dualistic worldview: women emerge as both creators and captives of these realms—those who can generate emotional "hells" for others yet are themselves entrapped within moral or social infernos. This dual embodiment underscores the recursive nature of gendered suffering and power, where the agent and the victim coexist within the same metaphorical frame.

Ultimately, in this metaphorical frame, women are not merely participants in emotional life but creators of psychological worlds—realms as intense and inescapable as heaven or hell themselves, where moral order dissolves into affective immersion and spiritual vulnerability.

## COMPARING THE METAPHOR "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" IN VIETNAMESE AND ENGLISH

Drawing on Lakoff's (1987) Extended Great Chain of Being, the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is discussed within a hierarchical cultural framework. It metaphorically positions women within the spiritual or divine realm, aligning them with mythic entities while situating them ambiguously between benevolence and malevolence—revered yet feared. This hierarchy symbolically expresses moral reasoning through oppositions of virtue and transgression. The attribution of supernatural traits thus illustrates both the veneration and marginalisation of women as mysterious, unpredictable forces.

A cross-cultural comparison reveals both convergence and divergence in the metaphorical construal of women across Vietnamese and American texts. The metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" in the investigated Vietnamese and American corpora shares some similarities and differences as follows.

*In comparing frequencies*, Vietnamese texts contain more metaphorical statements, expressions, and total instances (116, 67, 133) than American ones (97, 46, 101). This likely stems from Vietnam's polytheistic belief system, where spirituality plays a central role (Tran, 1999, p. 133), leading to more frequent use of the source domain *"supernatural forces"*.

*With respect to mappings*—culturally mediated projections from the source to the target domain—four mapping structures emerge from the metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES": types, features, activities, and realms. These reflect systematic yet culturally distinct projections from the domain of the supernatural onto women.

*Types* define moral and spiritual categories. Vietnamese data (e.g., *tiên, nữ thần, quái vật, quỷ sa tăng*) and English data (*angel, devil, monster, saint*) both encode a divine-demonic polarity, but the Vietnamese corpus displays a stronger coexistence of holiness and danger, often within the same figure, whereas English tokens separate virtue and transgression more sharply, using Christianised binaries such as *angel* versus *witch* or *devil*. Unlike the Vietnamese corpus—where demonic imagery dominates—the English data exhibit a more balanced cognitive mapping between virtue and transgression, reflecting a theological ambivalence deeply rooted in Western moral thought.

*Features* project inner qualities as mystical powers. Vietnamese expressions like *ma lực, vòng hào quang,* and *sức mạnh huyền bí* link feminine attraction to moral virtue and endurance. English words (*magic, heavenly, haunting, bewitching*) foreground mystery and seduction, suggesting fascination mixed with unease.

*Activities* index women's agency. Vietnamese verbs (*ban sự sống, hồi sinh, hóa thân*) depict transformative or nurturing actions embedded in social relations, while English equivalents (*bewitch, haunt, draw*) portray female influence as emotional disturbance or transgression.

*Realms* spatialise emotion and morality. Vietnamese texts favour celestial spaces like *thiên đường*, denoting harmony, devotion, and at times, sensual pleasure, whereas English data emphasise moral polarity through contrasting spaces such as *hell* and *paradise*, evoking either torment or spiritual calm. Unlike in Vietnamese, *heaven* and *paradise* in American texts primarily denote moral comfort and domestic virtue, illustrating how shared spatial metaphors are culturally reoriented to express differing moral values.

Overall, these mappings demonstrate how each culture encodes femininity through its moral cosmology: Vietnamese metaphors privilege relational harmony within an animistic balance, while American metaphors dramatise moral conflict within a dualistic worldview. Both, however, invest women's power with ambivalence—divine yet dangerous, nurturing yet unsettling.

*Regarding cultural features*, the conceptual metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" is employed in both Vietnamese and American literature through a range of similar metaphorical expressions such as *thiên đường/ thiên đàng – heaven/ paradise, thiên thần – angel, sự huyền bí – magic, sự bí ẩn – mystery, quỷ – devil, phù thủy – witch, ma – ghost, quái vật – monster, hóa thân – incarnation, ám/ ám ảnh – haunt/ haunting,* and *địa ngục – hell*. These expressions are used to depict women in dual roles, highlighting both their virtuous and malevolent characteristics, depending on cultural and narrative contexts. For positive depictions: Women as beautiful or good forces, metaphorically-used words like *thiên đường/ thiên đàng – heaven/ paradise, thiên thần – angel* convey the perception of women as beautiful, nurturing, protective, or transcendent beings. These lexical items often emphasise qualities like beauty, purity, kindness, and strength, portraying women as sources of hope or salvation. This association reinforces the idea that physical beauty is a manifestation of inner virtue, grace, or divine favour. On the other hand, for negative depictions: Women as ugly, threatening or malevolent forces, metaphorical expressions like *quỷ – devil, phù thủy – witch, ma – ghost, quái vật – monster, ám/ ám ảnh – haunt/ haunting,* and *địa ngục – hell* depict women as physically unattractive, grotesque, destructive, dangerous, or uncontrollable. These expressions often reflect societal fears of female power or

independence, framing women as threats to established norms. The shared use of the conceptual metaphor "WOMEN ARE SUPERNATURAL FORCES" in Vietnamese and American literature reflects a universal cognitive tendency across cultures, as suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

Despite using a similar mapping mechanism, Vietnamese and American authors exploit different metaphorical expressions, reflecting the distinct thinking patterns of the two cultures (Pham, 2023). Vietnamese people tend to use vocabularies like *tiên* (*fairy*), *tiên nga* (*fairy maiden*), *Hằng Nga* (*Chang'e/ Moon Goddess*), *ma* (*ghost*), *linh hồn* (*soul*), *Cung giăng* (*Moon palace*), *Bồng lai tiên cảnh* (Bong Lai Fairyland), *chốn nát-bàn* (*nirvana*), and *Thiên Thai* (*Fairyland*), as these vocabulary units relate to Eastern mythology (*tiên, tiên nga, Hằng Nga, Bồng lai tiên cảnh, Thiên Thai*), Vietnamese anthropolatry where "the soul becomes the core of belief" ("linh hồn trở thành đầu mối của tín ngưỡng") (Tran, 1999, p. 137), or Buddhism—a major religion in Vietnam (*chốn nát bàn*). Additionally, Vietnamese authors tend to use feminine supernatural forces like *cái yêu tinh* (*demoness*), *nàng tiên* (*fairy maiden*), *vị nữ thần* (*goddess*), *bà cô tổ* (*ancestral fairy*), *nàng tiên cá* (*mermaid*), *con quỉ cái* (*demoness*), *mẫu dạ xoa* (*Mother Ogress*), and *cô tiên* (*fairy*) to describe women. This may be due to the feminine feature of agricultural culture leading to "the predominance of female deities in beliefs" ("trong tín ngưỡng là tình trạng các nữ thần chiếm ưu thế") (Tran, 1999, p. 137). Conversely, metaphorical expressions like *Grail*, *Virgin Mary*, *Angel*, and *Saint* are chosen in American literary works. This is attributed to the fact that in America, "85% of the population is Christian" (Wanning, 1995, p. 178) and God is one of the three sacred symbols for Americans (Wanning, 1995, p. 176), so Americans have a deep connection and belief in their religion. Variations in metaphorical expressions across languages indicate that the conceptualization of women is influenced by cultural norms and values, underscoring the differences in worldview between Eastern and Western cultures (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Sweetser, 1990).

## CONCLUSION

When women are metaphorically compared to supernatural forces, they are often perceived in dualistic terms, reflecting extremes of good and evil. This dichotomy is evident both in their physical appearance and moral qualities. On one hand, women are idealised as divine beings or angelic figures, symbolising beauty, virtue, and benevolence. On the other hand, they are depicted as witches, ghosts, or monstrous entities, embodying ugliness, malevolence, danger, or otherness. Such contrasting portrayals highlight cultural ambivalence, simultaneously elevating women to realms of reverence while marginalising or demonising them through fear and suspicion. These metaphorical extremes underscore the complex societal attitudes toward women.

The findings of this study align with prior research, emphasising both universal and culturally specific patterns in conceptualising women through the image of *"supernatural forces"*. In terms of universality, as posited by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the shared mapping structures—projecting attributes such as power, mystery, and otherworldliness onto the concept of women—demonstrate a common cognitive tendency across Vietnamese and American literature. This supports the idea that metaphors are not arbitrary but are rooted in universal human experiences and cognitive frameworks.

However, significant differences in metaphorical expressions between the two languages highlight the role of cultural and religious values in shaping these conceptualisations. Vietnamese literature, influenced by polytheistic beliefs, Eastern mythology, and Buddhism, employs

metaphorical expressions deeply connected to these traditions, such as *linh hồn* (*soul*), *Bồng lai tiên cảnh* (*paradise*), and *nàng tiên* (*fairy maiden*). In contrast, American literature reflects its predominantly Christian cultural framework, using expressions like *Virgin Mary* and *Grail*, emphasising the role of religion in shaping perceptions.

These results corroborate studies emphasising the dual function of metaphors in reflecting and perpetuating cultural values. For instance, the veneration and marginalisation dichotomy identified in this research is consistent with Wallace's (2009) exploration of metaphors in feminist discourse and Sweetser's (1990) findings on gendered metaphors in literature. By bridging universality and cultural nuance, this study reinforces the importance of metaphors in understanding shared and divergent cultural perspectives on gender. These findings enrich the understanding of how metaphors serve as a bridge between universal cognition and culturally specific expressions.

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Wallace, D. (2009). 'The Haunting idea': Female Gothic metaphors and Feminist Theory. In Wallace, D., & Smith, A. (Eds), *The Female Gothic* (pp. 26–41). Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230245457_3

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Yu, N. (2008). The relationship between metaphor, body, and culture. In R. W. Gibbs (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (pp. 247–261). Cambridge University Press.

Zhou, Y. (2017). Cultural gender metaphors in modern Chinese fiction. *Language and Cognitive Science*, *3*(1), 1–40. Retrieved June 25, 2023, from https://www.sciscanpub.com/uploads/2021/08/19/lcs20211013v3.pdf

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# APPENDIX A

## CORPORA OF LITERARY WORKS

Note.
Works marked with an asterisk (*) contain metaphorical instances belonging to the *"supernatural forces"* source domain.
Works preceded by a plus sign (+) are included in short story anthologies.

## A. Vietnamese corpus

| No. | Vietnamese corpus |
|---|---|
| 1 | Anh Đuc. (1966). *Hòn Đất* [*Hon Dat*]. Retrieved March 15, 2020, from http://downloadsach.com/ |
| 2 | * Duong Huong. (1991). *Bến không chồng* [*Wharf of widows*]. Hai Phong Publishing House. |
| 3 | Duyen Anh. (1970). *Đàn bà (Phiêu lưu ký) [Women (A tale of adventure)]*. Retrieved September 9, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=ddan%20ba%20phieu%20luu%20ky |
| 4 | * Ho Bieu Chanh. (1935). *Lòng dạ đàn bà* [*A woman's heart*]. Retrieved August 8, 2019, from https://www.sachhayonline.com/tua-sach/long-da-dan-ba |
| 5 | Ho Bieu Chanh. (1936). *Đoá hoa tàn* [*The withered flower*]. Retrieved August 10, 2019, from https://www.sachhayonline.com/tua-sach/doa-hoa-tan |
| 6 | Ho Bieu Chanh. (1938). *Bỏ chồng* [*Forsaking her husband*]. Retrieved September 4, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=bo%20chong |
| 7 | Hoang. N. P. (1922). *Tố Tâm (To Tam)*. Retrieved June 22, 2019, from https://www.sachhayonline.com/tua-sach/to-tam |
| 8 | * Khai Hung., & Nhat Linh. (1934). *Đời mưa gió* [*A stormy life*]. Doi nay Publishing House. |
| 9 | * Khai Hung. (1934). *Nửa chừng xuân* [*Halfway through spring*]. Retrieved July 28, 2019, from https://www.sachhayonline.com/tua-sach/nua-chung-xuan |
| 10 | Kim Lan. (1962). *Vợ nhặt* [*Picked-up wife*]. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=vo%20nhat&page=4 |
| 11 | * Ma Van Khang. (1985). *Mùa lá rụng trong vườn* [*The season of falling leaves in the garden*]. Retrieved March 16, 2020, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=mua%20la%20rung%20trong%20vuon |
| 12 | Nam Cao. (2002). *Tuyển tập Nam Cao* [*Selected stories by Nam Cao*]. Literature Publishing House. |
| 12.1 | + Nam Cao. (1941). *Chí Phèo* [*Chi Pheo*] |
| 12.2 | + Nam Cao. (1942). *Nhìn người ta sung sướng* [*Watching others' happiness*] |
| 12.3 | + Nam Cao. (1942). *Trẻ con không được ăn thịt chó* [*Children are not allowed to eat dog meat*] |
| 12.4 | + Nam Cao. *Đón khách* [*Receiving guests*] |
| 12.5 | + Nam Cao. *Từ ngày mẹ chết* [*Since mother died*] |
| 12.6 | + Nam Cao. (1943). *Một bữa no* [*A full meal*] |
| 12.7 | + * Nam Cao. (1943). *Ở hiền* [*The kind-hearted*] |
| 12.8 | + Nam Cao. (1943). *Đời thừa* [*The redundant life*] |
| 12.9 | + Nam Cao. (1943). *Sao lại thế này* [*Why is it like this?*] |
| 12.10 | + Nam Cao. (1944). *Lang Rận* [*The quack named Louse*] |
| 12.11 | + * Nam Cao. (1944). *Nửa đêm* [*Midnight*] |
| 12.12 | + * Nam Cao. (1944). *Truyện người hàng xóm* [*The story of the neighbour*] |
| 12.13 | + Nam Cao. (1944). *Sống mòn* [*A worn-out life*] |
| 12.14 | + Nam Cao. (1946). *Những bàn tay đẹp ấy* [*Those beautiful hands*] |
| 13 | Nhat Linh. (1941). *Bướm trắng* [*White butterfly*]. Retrieved September 17, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=buom%20trang |
| 14 | Ngo, T. T. *Cô Tây Hoén* [*The degenerate Western woman*]. Retrieved November 8, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=tap%20van&page=20 |
| 15 | Ngo, T. T. *Tội trạng cô Vũ Thị Cúc* [*The crimes of Miss Vu Thi Cuc*]. Retrieved November 8, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=tap%20van&page=24 |
| 16 | Nguyen, C. H. (2015). *Tuyển tập truyện ngắn Nguyễn Công Hoan* [*Selected short stories by Nguyen Cong Hoan*]. Literature Publishing House. |
| 16.1 | + Nguyen, C. H. (1931). *Ngựa người và người ngựa* [*The horse-man and the man-horse*] |
| 16.2 | + Nguyen, C. H. (1931). *Thật là phúc* [*What a blessing indeed*] |
| 16.3 | + Nguyen, C. H. (1932). *Kìa! Con ....* [*Look! You there ...*] |
| 16.4 | + Nguyen, C. H. (1933). *Cô Kếu, gái tân thời* [*Miss Keu, a modern girl*] |
| 16.5 | + Nguyen, C. H. (1934). *Bà chủ mất trộm* [*The landlady robbed*] |
| 16.6 | + * Nguyen, C. H. (1934). *Đàn bà là giống yếu* [*Women are the weaker sex*] |

16.7    + Nguyen, C. H. (1934). *Cho tròn bổn phận* [*To fulfill one's duty*]

16.8    + Nguyen, C. H. (1937). *Đào kép mới* [*The new stage couple*]

16.9    + Nguyen, C. H. (1937). *Hé! Hé! Hé* [*Heh! Heh! Heh!*]

16.10    + Nguyen, C. H. (1937). *Oắn tà roằn* [*Rock-Paper-Scissors*]

16.11    + Nguyen, C. H. (1937). *Vợ* [*The wife*]

16.12    + Nguyen, C. H. (1938). *Thanh! Dạ!* [*Thanh! Yes, my Lord*]

16.13    + Nguyen, C. H. (1939). *Người vợ lẽ bạn tôi* [*My friend's concubine*]

16.14    + Nguyen, C. H. (1939). *Phành phạch* [The flapping]

16.15    + Nguyen, C. H. (1939). *Sáng, chị phu mỏ* [*Sang, female miner*]

16.16    + Nguyen, C. H. (1975). *Chuyện của cô ấy* [*Her story*]

16.17    + Nguyen, C. H. *Hai cái bụng* [*Two bellies*]

16.18    + Nguyen, C. H. *Xuất giá tòng phu* [*To marry and follow one's husband*]

17    * Nguyen, C. H. (1935). *Lá ngọc cành vàng* [*A lady of noble birth*]. Retrieved May 5, 2022, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=la%20ngoc%20canh%20vang

18    Nguyen Hong (1937). *Bỉ vỏ* [*The outcast*]. Retrieved November 9, 2019, from www.sachvui.com

19    * Nguyen, T. T. H. (1992), Hậu thiên đường [*After paradise*]

20    * Nguyen, T. T. H. Xin hãy tin em [*Please believe me!*]. Retrieved May 13, 2023, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=xin%20hay%20tin%20em

21    Thach Lam. *Cô hàng xén* [*The grocery girl*]. *Retrieved December* 5, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=soi%20toc&page=3

22    The Lu. (1936). *Một chuyện ngoại tình* [*A story of adultery*]. Retrieved November 8, 2019, from https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=mot%20chuyen%20ngoai%20tinh

23    Tran, V. (1992). *Mùa mưa gai sắc* [*The season of thorny rain*]. *Retrieved June* 5, 2020, from http://dev.kilopad.com/truyen-ngan-c197/doc-sach-truc-tuyen-mua-mua-gai-sac-b8475

24    Various authors. (1999). *Truyện ngắn hay 1999* [*Selected Vietnamese short stories 1999*]. Thai Ha (ed.). Thanh Hoa Publishing House.

24.1    + * Duong Thuy. *Dấu lặng trong điệp khúc* [*The silent note in the refrain*]

24.2    + Han Quang Tri. *Con tim thao thức* [*The restless heart*]

24.3    + Nguyen, Q. T. (1998). *Mảnh tình cuối mùa* [*A love at the end of the season*]

24.4    + * Pham, T. N. L. (1998). *Nhân cách* [*Personality*]

24.5    + * Xuan Cang. (1999). *Một mình ở giữa* [*Alone in the middle*]

25    Various authors. (2015). *Truyện ngắn nữ đặc sắc Việt Nam từ 1986 đến nay* [*Outstanding Vietnamese short stories by women since 1986*]. Đoan, A. D. (Ed. & Intro.). Women's Publishing House.

25.1    + Da Ngan. (1994). *Sợi mành mành* [*The tender vine*]

25.2    + Le, M. H. (1995). *Bài hát cũ bây giờ ai hát nữa* [*Who still sings the old song?*]

25.3    + Vo, T. X. H. (1992). *Nhà có ba chị em* [*A house with three sisters*]

25.4    + Vo, T. H. (1993). *Người đàn ông duy nhất* [*The only man*]

26    Vo, T. H. (1995). *Truyện ngắn chọn lọc Võ Thị Hảo* [*Selected short stories by Vo Thi Hao*]. Writers' Association Publishing House.

26.1    + Vo, T. H. (1988). *Nàng tiên xanh xao* [*The pale fairy*]

26.2    + Vo, T. H. *Làn môi đồng trinh* [*Virgin lips*]

26.3    + Vo, T. H. *Biển cứu rỗi* [*The sea of salvation*]

26.4    + Vo, T. H. *Tim vỡ* [*The broken heart*]

26.5    + Vo, T. H. *Vũ điệu địa ngục* [*The dance of hell*]

26.6    + Vo, T. H. *Người sót lại của Rừng Cười* [*The survivor of the Forest of Laughter*]

26.7    + Vo, T. H. *Người gánh nước thuê* [*The water carrier*]

26.8    + Vo, T. H. *Bàn tay lạnh* [*The cold hand*]

27    Vu. T. P. (2015). *Tuyển tập truyện ngắn Vũ Trọng Phụng* [*Selected short stories by Vu Trong Phung*]. Literature Publishing House.

27.1    + Vu. T. P. (1931). *Chống nạng lên đường* [*Setting out on crutches*]

27.2    + Vu. T. P. (1932). *Con người điêu trá* [*A decitful man*]

27.3    + Vu. T. P. (1936). *Tết ăn mày* [*The beggar's Tet*]

27.4    + * Vu. T. P. (1936). *Hồ sê líu hò líu sê sàng* [*The song of confused voices*]

27.5    + Vu. T. P. (1937). *Cái ghen đàn ông* [*A man's jealousy*]

27.6    + Vu. T. P. (1937), *Lòng tự ái* [*Wounded pride*]

27.7    + Vu. T. P. (1937). *Người có quyền* [*A man of power*]

27.8    + Vu. T. P. (1939). *Một đồng bạc* [*One silver coin*]

27.9    + Vu. T. P. (1939). *Từ lý thuyết đến thực hành* [*From theory to practice*]

27.10    + Vu. T. P. (1939). *Ăn mừng* [*A celebration*]

27.11    + Vu. T. P. *Gương .... tống tiền* [*A case of blackmail*]

28    * Vu. T. P. (1934). *Kỹ nghệ lấy Tây* [*The art of marrying a Westerner*]. Hanoi Publishing House .

29    * Vu. T. P. (2005). *Làm đĩ* [*The prostitute*]. Literature Publishing House.

30    * Vu. T. P. (1934). *Dứt tình* [*Love, severed*], Retrieved May 22, 2022, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=dut%20tinh
31    * Vu. T. P. (1936). *Giông tố* [*Storm*]. Retrieved October 2, 2019, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=gong%20to
32    Vu. T. P. (1936). *Hai chị em* [*Two sisters*]. Retrieved November 3, 2019, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=toi%20tam&page=5
33    Xuan Dieu. *Đoá hồng nhung* [*The velvet rose*]. Retrieved March 7, 2020, from
        http://vanhoc.quehuong.org/viewtruyen.php?ID=6038&cat=13
34    Xuan Dieu. *Phấn thông vàng* [*The yellow pine pollen*]. Retrieved March 7, 2020, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=phan%20thong%20vang#1
35    Xuan Dieu. *Sợ* [*Fear*]. Retrieved March 7, 2020, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=phan%20thong%20vang&page=7
36    Xuan Dieu. (1939). *Toả nhị Kiều* [*The blooming of the two Kieus*]. Retrieved March 6, 2020, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=phan%20thong%20vang&page=15
37    * Y Ban. (1983). *Người đàn bà có ma lực* [*The woman with magical power*]. Retrieved March 15, 2020, from
        https://vietmessenger.com/books/?title=nguoi%20dan%20ba%20co%20ma%20luc
38    Y Ban. (1989). *Bức thư gửi mẹ Âu Cơ* [*A letter to Mother Au Co*]. Retrieved April 1, 2020, from
        https://dembuon.vn/threads/buc-thu-gui-me-au-co-y-ban.6269/

**B. American corpus**

| No. | American corpus |
|---|---|
| 1 | Capote, T. (1945). Miriam. In Many voices literature review (2003), *American short stories - 1920 to the present* (pp. 147–161). Perfection Learning Corporation, America. |
| 2 | * Cofer, J. O. (1993). *The witch's husband.* Retrieved May 18, 2019, from https://www.sweetstudy.com/sites/default/files/qx/16/09/10/05/thewitchshusband.pdf |
| 3 | * Fitgerald, F. S. (1925). *Great Gatsby*. Retrieved January 3, 2019, from http://web.ac-corse.fr/lyc-giocante/docs/Anglais/The%20Great%20Gatsby%20-%20Fitzgerald%2C%20Francis%20Scott.pdf/ |
| 4 | * Henry, O. (1906). *The Skylight room*. Retrieved January 2, 2019, from https://americanliterature.com/author/o-henry/short-story/the-skylight-room |
| 5 | * Mitchell, M. (1936). *Gone with the wind*. The Macmillan Company, New York. |
| 6 | * Morrison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. Retrieved May 9, 2019, from https://books-library.net/files/books-library.online-12222233Xb2Q3.pdf |
| 7 | * Sheldon, S. (1980). *Rage of angels*. Retrieved April 3, 2019, from https://www.pdfdrive.com/rage-of-angels-e193801357.html. |
| 8 | * Sheldon, S. (1982). *Master of the game*. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from https://lifeatback.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/windmills_of_the_gods_by_sidney_sheldon1.pdf |
| 9 | * Sheldon, S. (1985). *If tomorrow comes*. Retrieved May 8, 2019, from https://isach.info/mobile/story.php?story=if_tomorrow_comes__sidney_sheldon&chapter=0000. |
| 10 | * Sheldon, S. (1987). *Windmill of the Gods*. Retrieved May 4, 2022, from https://lifeatback.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/windmills_of_the_gods_by_sidney_sheldon1.pdf |
| 11 | * Steinbeck, J. (1952). *East of Eden*. Penguin Books, America. |
| 12 | Twain, M. (1906). *Eve's diary*. Retrieved January 2, 2019, from https://americanliterature.com/author/mark-twain/short-story/eves-diary |
| 13 | * Wharton, E. (1920). *The age of innocence*. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from https://ebook-mecca.com/online/Edith%20Wharton%20-%20The%20Age%20of%20Innocence%20.PDF |

# APPENDIX B

## SOME TYPICAL VIETNAMESE METAPHORICAL STATEMENTS

(1) Miệng nó cứ ngọt xớt "*Nàng tiên cá* của anh, chim hoạ mi của anh". (His mouth was sweet-talking, saying "My *mermaid*, my nightingale.") (Duong Huong, 1991)

(2) Thì quả nhiên, lát sau một *bầy tiên*, các cô Mường xuất hiện. (Indeed, a moment later, a group of *fairies*, the Mường girls, appeared.) (Xuan Cang, 1999)

(3) *Hằng Nga* giáng thế! (*Chang'e/ Moon Goddess* descends to the mortal world.) (Nguyen, 1935)

(4) Hạnh thấy bơ vơ trên cõi đời này, đi đến đâu cũng bị ông Xung xua đuổi "Cút đi, mày là *loài yêu tinh* quyến rũ thằng Nghĩa. (Hạnh felt lonely in this world, everywhere she went, she was chased away by Mr. Xung, "Get out, you are a *demon* seducing Nghia.") (Duong Huong, 1991)

(5) Nhiều người bị *con quỉ* đó mà hết nhà hết cửa, còn ai dám ngó tới nó nữa, duy có một mình anh gan; anh dám lấy nó đây chớ. (Many people lost their homes because of that *demon*, and no one dared to look at her anymore, except for you; you were brave enough to marry her.) (Ho Bieu Chanh, 1935)

(6) Đang ăn cơm trưa, nghe tiếng kêu khóc vật mình vật mẩy của bà chị dâu ở trên gác, Luận đặt bát cơm xuống, thở một hơi dài buồn bực: - *Quỷ sa tăng* hiện hình ở nhà này rồi! (While having lunch, upon hearing the wailing and thrashing of his sister-in-law upstairs, Luan put down his bowl, sighed heavily, and said, "*Satan* has manifested in this house!") (Ma Van Khang, 1985)

(7) Từ bữa ấy mà đi, em đã có một thứ *thế lực vạn năng*. (From that day on, I possessed an *almighty power*.) (Vu, 2005)

(8) Mà ở cô còn hơn thế nữa kia, đó là *ma lực*! Tất cả bọn họ sẽ bị hút vào cô cho mà xem. (But with her, it's even more than that, it's *magical power*! All of them will be drawn to her.) (Y Ban, 1983)

(9) Bằng những cách mơn trớn kỳ lạ ấy, con người đã *hiện nguyên hình* là con vật. (Through those strange caresses, they *revealed their true nature* as a beast.) (Vu, 2005)

(10) Qua điện thoại, người chủ nhà cho tôi biết cô ta đã dọn đi từ lâu lắm rồi. Lại một *đòn phép* gì đây. (Over the phone, the landlord told me she had moved out a long time ago. Must be some kind of *magical trick* at play again.) (Pham, 1998)

(11) Nghe thấy tiếng dép phụ nữ đi xuống cầu thang, anh liền chống tay lên háng, quát: - Quỷ nó về *ám* cái nhà này rồi nên giờ nó mới suy đồi đốn mạt đến thế này! (Hearing the sound of the woman's slippers descending the stairs, he placed his hands on his hips and shouted: - The devil's come to *haunt* this house, which is why it's become so degenerate!) (Ma Van Khang, 1985)

(12) Một người bạn vào hạng tay chơi bời lão luyện của tôi đã mách cho tôi biết ở phố S.T có một nhà kia là một nơi *Bồng lai tiên cảnh*. (A seasoned playboy friend of mine informed me that there was a house on S.T street that was *Bong Lai Fairyland*.) (Vu, 2005)

(13) Có lẽ *thiên đường* đầy bí ẩn là ở đây, ở ngay bộ ngực non trẻ và làn da mịn màng trên thân thể Hạnh. Riêng đêm nay Hạnh thấy anh không hăm hở tìm *thiên đường* trong ngực Hạnh nữa. (Perhaps the hidden *heaven* was right here, in the young breasts and smooth skin of Hanh's body. Tonight, Hạnh noticed he wasn't eagerly seeking the *heaven* in her chest anymore.) (Duong Huong, 1991)

(14) Người ta tương chiếc bánh dầy đám cưới, ở giữa đặt một quả chuối ngự, và ngay đầu quả chuối, nằm dài hai múi cà chua. Rồi khi hai múi cà chua tách ra để theo nhịp với cặp mắt híp, đưa quan ông vào *chốn nát-bàn*, thì ai cũng phải thấy một cái hố sâu thăm thẳm sâu như bụng dạ một người đàn bà. (People put on the Madame's face a wedding round sticky rice cake, with a royal banana placed in the center and two tomato slices lying at the tip of the banana. Then, as the two slices of tomato parted in sync with her squinted eyes, leading the Gentleman into *nirvana*, everyone could see a deep abyss, as profound as the depths of a woman's womb.) (Nguyen, 1934)

(15) Chị ở *cung giăng* xuống đấy! (She descended from the *Moon Palace* to be here!) (Khai Hung, 1934)

(16) (...) cậu ta lăng lặng chọn một bụi cây trên bờ một nẻo sông khuất vắng và thơ mộng, (...) linh tính mách bảo cậu ta nơi đây sẽ là một chốn *"thiên thai"*. ((...) he quietly chose a bush on the bank of a secluded, romantic river, (...) his intuition told him this would be a *"fairyland"*.) (Xuan Cang, 1999)

(17) (…) giúp cho con thoát khỏi cái cảnh *địa ngục* mà con đã bị sa vào trong hai năm nay, ((…) help me escape from the *hell* I have been trapped in for the past two years,) (Ho Bieu Chanh, 1936)

(18) Tôi vừa bước vào *thiên đường* của đời người mà anh - người đàn ông đầu tiên trong đời đã mở cho tôi và đã dìu tôi vào đó. (I have just stepped into the *paradise* of human life—the one that you, the first man in my life, have opened for me and gently led me into.) (Nguyen, 1992)

## SOME TYPICAL ENGLISH METAPHORICAL STATEMENTS

(1) Now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a *grail*. (Fitgerald, 1925)

(2) The men in the hospitals called her an *angel* of mercy. (Mitchell, 1936)

(3) She's a *saint* and won't see bad in anyone and .. (Mitchell, 1936)

(4) A small *fiend* with a pair of hot tweezers plucked behind Scarlett's eyeballs. (Mitchell, 1936)

(5) Her sister seemed to her a *monster* of selfishness, of complaints and of what she could only describe as pure cussedness. (Mitchell, 1936)

(6) Kate was a sick *ghost*, crooked and in some way horrible. (Steinbeck, 1952)

(7) The one thing that may not be forgiven a *witch* is her ability to distress people, to make them restless and uneasy and even envious. (Steinbeck, 1952)

(8) In spite of her choked-back tears, Scarlett thrilled to the never-failing *magic* of her mother's touch. (Mitchell, 1936)

(9) Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan I had no girl whose *disembodied* face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening my arms. (Fitgerald, 1925)

(10) The *demoniac* Finn brought it in on a tray. (Fitgerald, 1925)

(11) With *enchanting* murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, (Fitgerald, 1925)

(12) Ellen O'Hara was different, and Scarlett regarded her as something *holy* and apart from all the rest of humankind. (Mitchell, 1936)

(13) With a *herculean* effort, Tracy began to wind the uncut rope around the container. (Sheldon, 1985)

(14) At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the *incarnation* was complete. (Fitgerald, 1925)

(15) I have wanted you since the first time I laid eyes on you, in the hall of Twelve Oaks, when you were *bewitching* poor Charlie Hamilton. (Mitchell, 1936)

(16) What I want I take if I can get it, and so I wrestle neither with angels nor devils. What a merry *hell* you must have made for Ashley! Almost I can be sorry for him. (Mitchell, 1936)

(17) Once, the thought of flinging the truth tauntingly in Melanie's face and seeing the collapse of her fool's *paradise* had been an intoxicating one, a gesture worth everything she might lose thereby. (Mitchell, 1936)