



## Instincts Unleashed: A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Maroon 5's Song "Animal"

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the cognitive stylistic features of Maroon 5's song "Animal" through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory and schema theory. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research examines the interplay between metaphorical language and cognitive processes to uncover how figurative expressions evoke imagery, emotions, and conceptual mappings related to primal instincts and desire. The analysis focuses on identifying metaphorical expressions such as hunting and predation, interpreting their cognitive and emotional resonance. The findings reveal that metaphors and vivid imagery in the song not only depict themes of obsession and vulnerability but also activate cognitive schemas, connecting listeners to the raw, instinctual aspects of human nature. This study contributes to the field of cognitive stylistics by providing insights into how language interacts with cognition to construct meaning and elicit emotional responses in artistic texts.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### **Keywords:**

cognitive stylistics;  
figurative language;  
metaphor;  
schema theory

#### **How to Cite in APA Style:**

Elchaira, N. ., Silaban, J., & Rangkuti, R. . (2025). Instincts Unleashed: A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Maroon 5's Song "Animal". *IJLHE: International Journal of Language, Humanities, and Education*, 8(1), 1–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.52217/ijlhe.v8i1.1631>

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### INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for human communication and expression, enabling individuals to convey thoughts, emotions, and complex ideas. Beyond its function as a medium of interaction, language reflects the human mind, mirroring cognitive processes such as perception, memory, and conceptualization. Cognitive refers to these mental processes, which are integral to understanding how language represents and processes human thought. These processes allow individuals to interpret, learn from, and engage with the world around them. Cognitive psychology investigates such functions, including memory, attention, problem-solving, and

reasoning. In this context, cognitive linguistics posits that language is a product of human cognition and that meaning is constructed through conceptual systems (Cronquist, 2004)

Stylistics, a subdiscipline of linguistics, explores variations in language style across different texts—both literary and non-literary. It examines linguistic choices such as diction, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices that contribute to a text's overall effect. According to Haines (2023), stylistics provides a framework for analyzing literary texts in terms of word, sentence, and language style.

Cognitive stylistics builds on this tradition by integrating principles from cognitive linguistics and stylistics. It explores how language interacts with mental processes to construct meaning and evoke emotional responses. As Stockwell (2010) suggests, individuals rely on prior knowledge and experience when interpreting literary compositions. Thus, cognitive stylistics focuses on how readers process and emotionally respond to artistic texts, such as song lyrics, by analyzing the mental representations they construct.

Previous studies in cognitive stylistics and figurative language have examined the cognitive and emotional dimensions of song lyrics. Muhammad et al. (2021) analyzed figurative devices—hyperbole, personification, and repetition—in Maroon 5's lyrics, emphasizing their role in evoking emotional resonance. Similarly, Sirait et al. (2024) examined how metaphors and paradoxes in song lyrics prompt reflection on abstract themes such as time and human experience. Ermatova (2024) highlighted the role of schema and conceptual metaphor in shaping cognitive and emotional responses to literary texts.

However, none of these studies focus specifically on Maroon 5's song *Animal* or explore how metaphor in the song depicts primal and instinctual themes. This study aims to address that gap by investigating how metaphorical expressions in *Animal* interact with listeners' cognitive frameworks to evoke meaning, emotion, and imagery. Although metaphor analysis is a common thread in cognitive stylistics, the unique theme of animalistic desire in this song presents a novel avenue for exploration.

*Animal* by Maroon 5 serves as the primary data for this study. Released on August 25, 2014, as the second single from their fifth studio album *V*, the song conveys themes of primal instinct, desire, and passion, metaphorically expressed through imagery of animals and hunting. The song's vivid depiction of human emotion and impulse offers a rich site for cognitive stylistic analysis using conceptual metaphor theory.

This study is structured into two main parts. The first part lays the theoretical foundation by exploring cognitive stylistics, with emphasis on conceptual metaphor theory and schema theory, to examine how language elicits mental and emotional responses. It also discusses figures of speech, particularly metaphor, as essential tools for meaning-making in creative language.

The second part presents a detailed analysis of Animal's lyrics using three analytical models: (1) coherence among figurative expressions, (2) conceptual mappings and novel image schemas, and (3) vivid figurative imagery that evokes emotional and cognitive engagement. This approach seeks to demonstrate how metaphorical language in the song constructs meaning and stimulates the mind.

Cognitive stylistics bridges linguistics, cognitive science, and literary analysis, offering insights into how language interacts with human cognition. According to Semino and Culpeper (2002), cognitive stylistics provides analytical tools to examine how language evokes emotions, communicates meaning, and shapes perception. It is especially valuable for analyzing texts rich in figurative language and abstract themes.

It argues that cognitive stylistics goes beyond surface-level language analysis by investigating how linguistic features trigger imagination, memory, and emotional responses. Ermatova (2024) describes cognitive stylistics as a framework that combines cognitive linguistics and literary analysis to understand how readers form mental representations of texts.

A central focus of cognitive stylistics is figurative language. Devices like metaphor, simile, and personification activate cognitive schemas, helping readers interpret abstract meanings. For example, Muhammad et al. (2021) explored figurative expressions in Maroon 5's *Nobody's Love*, showing how they enhance emotional depth. Wedayanti et al. (2021) examined personification in John Mayer's lyrics and showed how it fosters vivid imagery and emotional resonance.

Other studies have analyzed how figurative language conveys emotional narratives. Simanjuntak et al. (2023) studied Lewis Capaldi's *Someone You Loved*, emphasizing the coherence of metaphors in expressing themes of loss. Zephanda et al. (2024) explored Taylor Swift's *I Can Do It With a Broken Heart*, highlighting the interplay between vulnerability and resilience. Muhammad et al. (2021) conducted a discourse analysis of Maroon 5's lyrics, uncovering moral messages about personal growth and spirituality.

This study contributes to the growing body of research in cognitive stylistics by analyzing how metaphor in *Animal* elicits cognitive and emotional responses, enriching our understanding of how language conveys instinctual themes.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design to explore the cognitive stylistic features of Maroon 5's song *Animal*. The focus lies in identifying and interpreting metaphorical expressions within the lyrics and examining how they interact with cognitive frameworks, particularly schema theory and conceptual metaphor theory. By integrating insights from cognitive linguistics and stylistic analysis, the study aims to reveal how language evokes imagery, emotion, and conceptual mappings related to themes of instinct and desire.

The primary data consist of the song's lyrics, which are rich in metaphorical language and emotionally charged imagery, making them highly suitable for cognitive stylistic analysis (S, 2024). Secondary data include scholarly journal articles, books, and previous studies discussing cognitive stylistics, schema theory, conceptual metaphor theory, and figurative language. The data collection process involves three main steps: conducting a textual analysis of the lyrics to identify metaphorical and other figurative expressions; reviewing theoretical and empirical literature relevant to metaphor and cognitive stylistics; and categorizing the identified figurative language into conceptual domains associated with instinct, desire, and animalistic imagery.

Data analysis begins with identifying figurative language elements—primarily metaphors, personification, and hyperbole. These expressions are examined through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory (Zephanda et al., 2024) to determine the source and target domain mappings. For instance, metaphors related to hunting or the animal kingdom are interpreted as source domains for abstract target concepts such as human desire, control, or obsession. In addition, schema theory is applied to explore how the lyrics activate cognitive schemas connected to primal instincts, emotional responses, and natural imagery. These schemas, influenced by personal experience and cultural background, shape how listeners perceive and emotionally engage with the song.

The analysis further incorporates cognitive stylistic insights to interpret how linguistic features generate emotional resonance, vivid mental imagery, and conceptual clarity. Emphasis is placed on the coherence among metaphorical expressions, the formation of new image schemas, and the use of vivid, multimodal imagery to cognitively and affectively engage the audience. Grounded in conceptual metaphor theory, which explains how abstract concepts like passion and desire are understood through more concrete, embodied experiences such as animalistic behavior, this study also employs schema theory to examine the mental models triggered by the lyrics' use of wild instinct and animal imagery.

The expected outcomes of the study include a deeper understanding of the cognitive mechanisms involved in interpreting metaphorical language in *Animal*, insights into how conceptual mappings and cognitive schemas influence listener response, and a contribution to broader discussions on the intersection of language, cognition, and creativity in artistic texts. Overall, this methodology provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how metaphor operates in song lyrics, offering a novel perspective on the cognitive dimensions of figurative language.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Maroon 5's *"Animal"*, released as a single from their 2014 album *V*, explores the intense and primal nature of desire, attraction, and emotional vulnerability. The

song blends pop-rock with electronic influences, creating a high-energy, danceable track that pairs well with its raw, emotional lyrics. The lyrics of "*Animal*" center around themes of obsession, power dynamics, and the unrelenting drive of human desire, positioning these emotions as instinctual forces that can neither be controlled nor avoided. The song's metaphor of hunting and predation, combined with animalistic imagery, paints a vivid picture of human longing and attraction that borders on the predatory.

The track's theme was inspired by the feeling of being consumed by desire and the overwhelming impulse to connect with someone, which may at times be driven by deep emotional or physical needs. Adam Levine, the lead vocalist and frontman of the band, is known for infusing his songs with personal experiences, and "*Animal*" is no exception. The song reflects the vulnerability that comes with intense emotional connections, depicting love and desire as forces that, while exciting, are often uncontrollable and overwhelming. The lyrics of "*Animal*" explore the feeling of being irresistibly drawn to someone despite the inherent risks and the emotional toll that such desires can take.

Levine and his bandmates cleverly combine primal metaphors with emotionally charged storytelling to convey a sense of chaos and yearning. As he describes in interviews, "*Animal*" was designed to evoke the feeling of giving in to one's instincts, expressing how it feels when love and attraction consume you. The imagery of being a predator, stalking and consuming the object of one's desire, parallels the emotional state of someone who is infatuated, unable to resist their overwhelming emotions.

The song's driving beat and evocative lyrics resonate with listeners who have experienced similar emotional highs and lows, particularly in romantic relationships. The idea of being unable to escape an emotional connection, even when one tries, is a central theme of "*Animal*". Many listeners can identify with the song's portrayal of desire as something powerful and unavoidable, echoing the way intense emotions can feel like they have a life of their own. Whether the relationship is romantic, physical, or psychological, "*Animal*" speaks to the power dynamics at play when two people become entangled in each other's lives, and the emotional aftermath that often follows when things fall apart.

In summary, "*Animal*" by Maroon 5 uses animalistic imagery and predatory metaphors to explore the uncontrollable forces of human desire, vulnerability, and emotional complexity. The song speaks to the intense emotions people often experience when they become consumed by a relationship or attraction, drawing listeners in with its compelling metaphorical language and relatable themes of longing, obsession, and power dynamics in relationships.

### **a) Patterns of Creativity**

In Maroon 5's song "*Animal*", various uses of figurative language create unique expressions, enriching the meaning and enhancing listeners' emotional experiences.

These include metaphor, personification, hyperbole, repetition, and imagery, each playing a creative role in conveying the themes of primal instincts and desire.

## **The Coherence among Figures of Speech**

### **Personification**

Personification gives human characteristics to non-human objects or abstract concepts, making the lyrics more relatable and vivid.

Data 1

*"Hunt you down, eat you alive"*

This phrase attributes human-like behavior to hunting and eating, painting a vivid picture of intense and raw desire. Hunting and eating are metaphorically linked to uncontrollable human instincts.

Meaning: Represents the speaker's primal drive and consuming emotions, likened to a wild animal.

Data 2: *"Just like animals, animals, like animals-mals"*

In this lyric, humans are personified as animals, creating a metaphor that highlights the connection between human behavior and primal instincts.

Meaning: Suggests that love and desire often mirror the raw and untamed nature of animals.

### **Metaphor**

Metaphors establish implied comparisons between two different things, offering creative new meanings. Below are examples from the song:

Data 3: *"Baby, I'm preying on you tonight"*

This line compares the speaker to a predator stalking its prey.

Meaning: Symbolizes the speaker's intense emotional or sexual desire.

Data 4: *"You can't deny, the beast inside"*

This phrase equates primal instincts with a "beast" within the speaker.

Meaning: Illustrates the internal conflict between rationality and instinctual behavior.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole involves exaggeration for dramatic effect. Examples of hyperbole in the song include:

Data 5: *"Hunt you down, eat you alive"*

Hunting and eating someone alive is clearly an exaggeration.

Meaning: Conveys the overwhelming intensity of the speaker's desire and emotions.

Data 6: *"Like animals, animals-mals"*

The repetition of "animals" exaggerates the comparison between humans and animals.

Meaning: Amplifies the theme of primal instincts dominating human behavior.

### **Repetition**

Repetition emphasizes central themes or ideas within the lyrics. Examples include:

Data 7 : "*Just like animals, animals, like animals-mals*"

The repeated word "animals" creates a rhythmic effect and reinforces the song's main theme.

Meaning: Highlights the focus on primal instincts and human connections to animalistic behaviors.

Data 8 "*You can't deny, the beast inside*"

This line's repetition emphasizes the internal emotional struggle of the speaker.

Meaning: Reminds listeners of the inescapable presence of primal instincts in human nature.

### **Imagery**

Imagery evokes strong mental pictures and emotional responses. Examples from the song include:

Data 9 "*Hunt you down, eat you alive*"

This imagery vividly describes a predator chasing its prey.

Meaning: Reinforces the theme of instinctual drives and raw emotions.

Data 10 "*Baby, I'm preying on you tonight*"

This line creates a visual of a predator in the night, intensifying the emotional and thematic impact of the song.

Meaning: Portrays the speaker's connection to their untamed, wild side.

### **b) New Conceptual Mapping and New Stylistic Framework**

Writers and lyricists continuously seek to develop fresh conceptual images and stylistic frameworks in their works, aiming to enhance creativity and emotional engagement. In Maroon 5's song "*Animal*", the lyrics use animalistic imagery to explore deep themes of desire, passion, and emotional vulnerability. The song employs a new conceptual mapping by blending primal instincts with human emotional complexity. Through this mapping, the song delves into the raw, uncontrollable nature of human desire, presenting it in a way that resonates both emotionally and intellectually with listeners.

One of the key conceptual mappings in the song is the comparison of the speaker to a predator hunting its prey. The lyric "*Baby, I'm preying on you tonight*" equates the speaker's desire to that of a predator stalking its prey, making the act of emotional pursuit both intense and overpowering. This metaphor shifts the listener's perception of human desire, framing it as something instinctual, uncontrollable, and animalistic. Similarly, the repeated phrase "*Hunt you down, eat you alive*" amplifies this idea by portraying desire as a consuming force that "*devours*" the object of affection. This imagery not only suggests the intensity of the speaker's emotions but also hints at the darker, more primal aspects of human love and attraction.

The song also explores the connection between humans and animals through its repeated imagery of animal instincts. *"Just like animals, animals, like animals- mals"* highlights the shared primal nature between humans and animals, underscoring the idea that human behavior, particularly in love and passion, can be as raw and untamed as that of animals. This conceptual mapping serves as a reminder of the untethered emotional impulses that govern human behavior, contrasting sharply with the often-civilized facade of human society.

The stylistic framework in *"Animal"* enhances these conceptual mappings by using repetition, sensory language, and metaphorical imagery to create an immersive emotional experience. The repetition of the phrase *"Just like animals"* reinforces the song's central metaphor, allowing it to resonate more deeply with listeners. This repetition not only emphasizes the idea of instinct but also builds an emotional rhythm that mirrors the intensity of the speaker's desire. Additionally, sensory language such as *"preying on you tonight"* and *"eat you alive"* invites listeners to engage with the song on a visceral level, allowing them to feel the intensity of the emotions conveyed.

Furthermore, the stylistic framework of the song allows for ambiguity, inviting listeners to relate the raw emotions of the lyrics to their own experiences. The metaphorical language used in the song, while vivid, leaves room for interpretation, making it universally relatable. Whether listeners associate the lyrics with romantic desire, personal longing, or passion, the song's emotional depth speaks to a wide range of experiences.

### **c) Extended and Complex Figurative Expression in "Animal" by Maroon 5**

Maroon 5's *"Animal"* employs extended and complex figurative expressions to explore intense themes of desire, primal instincts, and emotional vulnerability. The lyrics create a vivid portrayal of a person consumed by longing and passion, with metaphors and imagery that evoke both raw emotion and physical desire. Below is an analysis of some key extended and complex figurative expressions in the song:

*Data 1: "Baby, I'm preyin' on you tonight"*

This line presents the speaker as a predator "preying" on their target, likening their desire to that of an animal hunting for food. The use of "preying" suggests a sense of control, predation, and obsession. It portrays the speaker as both determined and driven by an instinctual urge, emphasizing the intensity and consuming nature of their desire.

Meaning: The metaphor of "preying" signifies a dominant, irresistible force of desire, highlighting the speaker's emotional and physical attraction as something that can no longer be contained.

*Data 2 : "Hunt you down, eat you alive"*

The metaphor in this line intensifies the predatory imagery by suggesting not only the pursuit of the person but the complete consumption of them. *"Hunt"* and *"eat"*

symbolize a total domination of the target, not just physically but emotionally, with the speaker's desire depicted as something consuming and overwhelming.

Meaning: This line amplifies the metaphor of predation to illustrate how powerful and uncontrollable the speaker's desire is, comparing it to an animal's natural instinct to hunt and devour.

*Data 3 : "Just like animals, animals, like animals-mals"*

The repetition of "animals" in this line extends the metaphor of primal instincts. The speaker emphasizes the shared animalistic nature of both themselves and the person they desire, suggesting that their connection is rooted in basic, raw urges. This extended metaphor reinforces the theme of desire as something instinctual and uncontrollable.

Meaning: The repetition of "animals" underscores the speaker's belief that their relationship is driven by primal instincts, likening their feelings of desire and attraction to those of animals in the wild.

*Data 4 : "Maybe you think that you can hide / I can smell your scent from miles"*

The idea of "smelling your scent" invokes animal-like abilities to detect and track, likening the speaker to a predatory animal capable of sensing their prey from a distance. This figurative expression suggests that no matter how hard the other person tries to escape, the speaker's desire will always find them.

Meaning: The metaphor emphasizes the relentless nature of desire, suggesting that the speaker can sense or feel the presence of the person they desire, regardless of any physical distance.

*Data 5 : "You're like a drug that's killin' me"*

In this metaphor, the person is compared to a drug, highlighting the addictive and dangerous nature of the relationship. The use of "*killin' me*" suggests that while the speaker craves this emotional or physical connection, it is ultimately harmful and destructive.

Meaning: The metaphor portrays the relationship as something that provides temporary relief or pleasure but is ultimately damaging and overwhelming, like an addictive substance.

*Data 6 : "I cut you out entirely / But I get so high when I'm inside you"*

This juxtaposition of cutting someone out and then getting "*high*" when with them presents a complex emotional conflict. It reflects the push-and-pull nature of the relationship, where the speaker simultaneously wants to distance themselves from the other person but finds themselves drawn back in by overwhelming emotional or physical attraction.

Meaning: This figurative expression emphasizes the internal struggle between desire and self-preservation, illustrating the addictive and destructive nature of the speaker's feelings.

*Data 7 : "You can pretend it's meant to be / But you can't stay away from me"*

This line speaks to the inevitability of the speaker's emotional pull, despite the other person's attempts to resist. The metaphor suggests that no matter how much the person tries to deny or escape their connection, the speaker's emotional or physical pull is too strong to ignore.

Meaning: The figurative expression portrays the relationship as one from which there is no escape, emphasizing the power of the speaker's desire and the inevitability of their emotional connection.

## **Discussion**

The analysis of Maroon 5's *"Animal"* through a cognitive stylistic lens reveals how metaphorical language and figurative devices interact with cognitive processes to evoke meaning, emotions, and conceptual engagement. The song's lyrics effectively use a range of figurative expressions metaphor, personification, hyperbole, repetition, and vivid imagery to explore themes of primal instincts, desire, and emotional vulnerability. These elements do not merely enhance the aesthetic quality of the song but also activate listeners' cognitive schemas, allowing them to relate to the raw and untamed aspects of human emotions (Zephanda et al., 2024).

The central metaphors in the song position the speaker as a predator and the object of desire as prey, a framework that illustrates the overwhelming intensity of attraction. Lines such as *"Baby, I'm preying on you tonight"* and *"Hunt you down, eat you alive"* utilize hunting and animalistic imagery to convey the speaker's consuming emotions. These metaphors activate schemas associated with predation, highlighting the instinctual and uncontrollable nature of desire. Furthermore, the repetition of phrases like *"Just like animals"* reinforces the primal theme and creates a rhythmic intensity that mirrors the emotional chaos depicted in the lyrics (Hastomo & Aminatun, 2023).

The study also highlights the conceptual mapping within the song, where abstract emotions such as desire and obsession are mapped onto concrete experiences like predation and animalistic behavior. This cognitive mechanism not only makes the song relatable but also deepens the listener's engagement by prompting emotional and intellectual responses. For instance, the metaphor *"You're like a drug that's killing me"* reflects the addictive and destructive nature of the speaker's attraction, resonating with listeners who have experienced similarly complex emotional states.

The vivid imagery employed in *"Animal"* further intensifies its emotional impact. Lines such as *"I can smell your scent from miles"* evoke sensory-rich experiences, emphasizing the inescapable pull of desire. These figurative elements create a multi-layered narrative that combines instinctual impulses with human vulnerability, bridging the gap between raw emotions and conceptual understanding.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that cognitive stylistics provides valuable insights into the interplay between language and cognition in song lyrics. The analysis of “*Animal*” confirms that figurative language, when paired with schema activation and conceptual mapping, not only shapes meaning but also enhances emotional and cognitive engagement. This interdisciplinary approach offers a nuanced understanding of how artistic texts can resonate deeply with audiences, reflecting the universal aspects of human experience (Putri et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

Maroon 5’s *Animal* presents a complex and evocative exploration of human desire, employing rich figurative language and conceptual mapping to examine themes of passion, primal instincts, and emotional vulnerability. The song utilizes metaphors, personification, hyperbole, repetition, and vivid imagery to construct an intense portrayal of raw attraction, likening the experience to the instincts and behaviors of animals. Through its predatory and animalistic metaphors, the lyrics convey the speaker’s internal struggle with overpowering emotions, blurring the boundaries between self-control and instinct.

The thematic emphasis on desire as a consuming force is reinforced through recurring motifs, such as the predator-prey dynamic and the metaphor of addiction. These stylistic choices underscore the uncontrollable and obsessive nature of attraction, inviting listeners to relate the song’s emotional intensity to their own experiences of longing and passion. The use of animalistic imagery serves to bridge the conceptual divide between human emotion and primal instinct, offering a novel framework that resonates on both intellectual and emotional levels.

In conclusion, *Animal* effectively captures the duality of human relationships—exhilarating yet overwhelming, passionate yet uncontrollable. Its use of extended and intricate figurative expressions heightens the emotional depth of the lyrics, rendering them relatable to listeners who have experienced similar emotional intensity. The song ultimately serves as a poignant reflection on the raw, untamed aspects of human nature that often surface in the context of love and desire.

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