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BOUNDARIES OF SYMBOL IN STYLISTICS

The aim of the article is to determine the place and boundaries of the symbol as a stylistic unit and to offer an adequate and clear definition of this linguistic phenomenon, which is a must for the stylistic analysis of fiction. The theoretical background of the article comprises linguistic theories where distinction of a symbol on the one hand and a sign, metaphor, an image, allegory and a myth on the other are outlined. The outcome of the broader linguocultural enquiry of characteristics and functions of the symbol resulted in outlining the specific features of the symbol as a linguocultural and stylistic unit.

Key words: symbol, metaphor, image, allegory, sign, ethnocultural, structure, multi-layered, stylistic.

The article presented is yet another attempt to draw a demarcation line for a symbol as a stylistic device contrasted with other figures of speech. As literary symbolism was and is, presumably, widespread, setting its boundaries has been a matter of much debate. No sooner do we put the question of defining the symbol than we immediately confront a series of dilemmas.

Though the concept of «symbol» is one of the central in general semiotic lexicon, its boundaries are vague and not clearly set. There is a necessity to specify a symbol, fixing its clear limits in order to distinguish it from contiguous linguistic phenomena, such as a sign, myth, image, allegory and metaphor.

The objective of this article is to provide boundaries of the symbol and to outline its inherent features as compared and contrasted to other rhetorical devices which will enable to suggest a clear definition of the symbol. There is an ongoing intense scholarly debate on the nature of the symbol, so the results of the research will contribute to the linguistic and stylistic understanding of its role in fiction. Theoretical research has been carried out to provide the foundation of the article.

Previous study has connected the nature of symbolism in general and symbol in fiction in particular with such notions as a sign, myth, allegory, metaphor and image. Communicative linguistic studies as well as linguocultural research by such scholars as F. de Saussure, A. Potebnya, O. Florensky, Yu. Lotman, A. Losyev, J. Cuddon, Y. Farino, W. Leeds-Hurwitz provide theoretical context for this article [3; 6–12].

Symbol and sign

Both symbol and sign are of twofold nature. As F. de Saussure sees it, no ideas preexist language; language itself gives shape to ideas and makes them expressible. Signs, in this view, are both material/physical (like sound) and intellectual (like ideas) [6]. According to O. Florensky, as N. Mislér claims, two worlds unite, the one of actuality and the other of the imaginary in the symbol [8]. He explained that the symbol discloses supernatural reality.

Yu. Lotman argued that the symbol should be seen at the same time as both a sign and a text. Therefore, symbol is seen as a text inside another text. Symbol, though included in a text, exists before and beyond it [9].

In fact, most definitions of a symbol spring up from the notion of a sign. Sign is viewed as a starting point for defining a symbol. Structurally we would try to describe a symbol as a multi-

layered sign, where strata of meanings are added in various contexts, but do not fuse together, thus forming a continuity of meanings that ascend to absolute ideas.

Symbol and image

Boundaries of these two notions are quite difficult to define. A. Losyev in his research is convinced that symbolism is formed independently from an image [4]. Another researcher J. Cuddon defines an artistic symbol as «a combination of an image and a notion» [10, p. 887]. He points out that when a symbol is used in the works of fiction we often encounter a concrete image that designates an abstract idea.

It is generally believed that an image should be considered functionally, in connection to the text in its entirety. Sense generated by an image is broader than its literal meaning. Combinations with other images and the entire text produce new, additional senses [13].

Symbol may be characterized in the similar way, but to a greater extent. According to A. Losyev, true symbolism goes beyond the limits of the work of fiction [4]. This approach highlights oppositions between an image and a symbol: an image is a reflection of the author's subjective reality; a symbol absorbs notions, senses and even storylines. In this way the density of a symbol grows substantially. Involving a symbolic image adds weight to the text, because symbol acts as a folded text, and a reader who can unfold the meaning perceives much more than just one image. Chinese symbols have been verified in a number of dictionaries [14; 15; 16].

For instance, *silver* functions in the novels by Pearl Buck as an author's symbol, because the denotative meaning is a reflection of the author's idea, while its stereotypical sense is refracted. Besides the core meaning, «money», another connotation emerges. Contextually this symbol acquires a meaning of grueling work on the land: «Wang Lung sat smoking, thinking of the *silver* as it had lain upon the table. It had come out of the earth, this *silver*, out of his earth, that he ploughed and turned and spent himself upon. He took his life from this earth; drop by drop by his sweat he wrung food from it and from the food, *silver*» [17, p. 35]. As the content unveils, we witness deepening of a symbolic meaning of *silver*. Conceptually *silver* symbolizes protagonist's way to his lifelong dream – being an owner of the land: «He was filled with an angry determination, then, and he said to his heart that he would fill that hole with *silver* again and again until he had bought from the House of Hwang enough land» [17, p. 56]. «And once again Wang Lung did not count the passing of *silver*, which was his flesh and his blood, a hard thing. He bought with it the desire of his heart» [17, p. 70]. «“Nevertheless, I would put the gold and the *silver* and the jewels into good rich lands.” And thinking this, he grew more impatient for the land that was already his. Being possessed continually by this thought of his land, Wang Lung saw as in a dream the things that happened about him» [17, p. 125].

Symbolic image of *silver* is present in the whole story line, it signifies life prospects for the protagonist which may materialize through hard work and the land itself as a source of all life. This multilayered meaning makes *silver* an individual author's symbol.

Symbol and Myth

The mythical way of thought is considered by A. Potebnaya to be the origin of poetry [7]. Yu. Lotman perceives myth as an accumulation of the underlying aspects of collective and national memory which function as a driving force for cultures spiritually and materially at high levels of organization. Functionally, myth and symbol are alike, but diachronically in culture the myth is a forerunner of the symbol. They share a common feature – they signify the concept which transcends its boundaries.

The fundamental difference between the symbol and myth is in the fact that a myth is a narrative told to convey community's traditional wisdom, it is an exterior of the theory of existence, whereas a symbol is above narrative [12]. As Yu. Lotman assumes that whole texts gravitate toward symbolization and turn into symbols. The latter are autonomous from their cultural context and function in culture both synchronically and diachronically [9].

Symbol and Allegory

Many linguists entered upon the discussion of a problem of drawing a distinction between symbol and allegory (Pseudo-Dionysius, H.G. Gadamer, S. Averintsev etc.) [18; 19]. Both symbol and allegory refer to something that does not exist in its external boundaries or the sound-form, but in the significance that lies beyond it [3]. Allegory, belonging to the sphere of logos – language and speech – expresses the sense through more comprehensible means. However,

symbol has evolved from the means of distinction to the degree of the philosophical notion. It does not belong to the language alone, its meaning is not confined solely to the text, hence it cannot be fully perceived.

Symbol is polysemantic and, according to C. Jung, it is endless [20]. Symbol cannot be fully decoded due to its vagueness. Furthermore, in allegory the form prevails over content, whereas a symbol's form and content are in balance. In Goethe's definition presence of an idea in a symbol is critically important. In symbol there is some inner implicit unity of the sign and the thing symbolized, it has become a universal notion of aesthetics [3].

J. Farino believes that symbol unites the world and turns it into system, but allegory analyses the world and turns it into text. Symbol appears to be a conceptual system folded up to one element endowed with the status of a real object [11, p. 97]. Symbol being a unit of the conceptual system accounts for the fact that notion of a symbol is associated with the notion of the context.

The quality of a symbol being a «reduced», or «folded up» system justifies its definition of a text-producing principle. Interpretation of a symbol involves reconstructing the system it comes from. Moreover, in order to turn something into symbol, this «something» must become an element of the system [4].

A cultural component appears equally significant for both symbol and allegory. Symbol comprises the wisdom of culture and the potentiality of the layers of meaning acquired through history. While allegory reveals its conventional character and consequently is interchangeable in different cultures, symbol displays the unconventional character and cannot be replaced in other cultures.

Symbol and Metaphor

Talking of symbol-versus-metaphor relation, could we hope for clear boundaries delineating? Indeed, the notions of metaphor and symbol intersect. Their proximity is based on the range of shared characteristics. Symbols, and especially cultural symbols, are generally based on well-entrenched metaphors in any culture. For instance, a common symbol of life is fire. This symbol is a manifestation of the metaphor life is fire that also appears in mundane linguistic expressions such as to snuff out somebody's life. To understand a symbol means in part to be able to see the conceptual metaphors that symbol can evoke or was created to evoke [21].

In spite of the fact that the critics of literary practice generally tend to extend terms, symbol and metaphor are hardly equal [22]. The notion of metaphor has been studied by scholars and linguists [23; 21; 24].

Since Aristotle metaphor is defined as the substitution of the name of one thing when talking about another. Thus, it directly or implicitly binds together pieces of reality. Symbol, conversely, easily connects facts of reality to ideas, eternal values and spiritual experience. Metaphor creates a more elaborate understanding of the real world, while symbol leads us beyond its boundaries.

Stylistically speaking, functions of a metaphor differ from those of a symbol. Metaphors perform an aesthetic role through their descriptive function. Symbols in certain contexts tend to launch each of their multiple meanings. Symbols trigger the chains of archetypal associations and transfer them to the level of cultural stereotypes connected with traditions and refracted through the author's interpretation [21].

Thus, for instance, some of the individual authors' symbols (such as *orchid*, *lily* or *fox*) can be traced back to folklore and mythology in Pearl Buck's novels on China. The ethnic cultural symbol *tiger* is, on the one hand, grounded upon an implication of the character and appearance of the protagonist in the novel «Sons» and on the other – on one of the principal mythological images of China – an image of a *tiger* as a king of wild animals, the «yang». The intermediate stage of transition of meaning is the outer resemblance and violent temperament of the principal character, whereas the positive connotation in the context of this novel bears evidence of specifically Chinese cultural symbolism of the image: «When he lifted his brows up his eyes seemed to spring out from under them and his whole face opened suddenly as though a *tiger* sprang forth. Then all the men laughed fiercely and they took up the cry and they shouted, „Ha, the *Tiger*, the Black-browed *Tiger!*!"; He looks like a black-browed *tiger*...and so he did look»; «Men ... made a nickname for him and they called him Wang the *Tiger*» [5, p. 87].

Still another difference between a metaphor and a symbol is in the fact that transference from an image to a metaphor commonly occurs as a response to intralinguistic semantic needs,

yet development of an image into a symbol is determined by extralinguistic factors. As A. Losyev observes, the idea pierces through both a symbol and a metaphor, but in the metaphor there is no mysterious object it indicates. A metaphor points to itself, at the same time, a symbolic meaning bears reference to ideal notions beyond its image [3; 4].

Conceptual metaphor and symbol are means of cognition and interpretation, besides, both are the object of interpretation, or decoding. Thus, these two notions are close, but not identical. Their nature is different – metaphor is semantic, but symbol is imperative.

Metaphorical archetypal symbol *flower* is used in the following example «Now Wang Lung is seeking to pluck a *flower* somewhere» [17, p. 191]. Here the symbolism is involved in the extended nominative and verbal metaphor with the transition of meaning: *to pluck a flower* → *to find a lover*. «If she was no longer the lotus bud, neither was she more than the full-blown flower, and if she was not young, neither did she look old, and youth and age were equally far from her» [17, p.180]

Symbol is a universal concept, it is also a universal of discourse, functioning in a wide range of anthropological spheres and its character is interdisciplinary. In the realm of linguo-semiotics, symbol is a sign, in which its primary meaning serves to convey more abstract and general sense. Noticeable features that characterize symbol as a linguistic and stylistic unit are the following: it is a sign, its nature is figurative, it is motivated, complex and possesses a range of meanings and senses, which lead us to the main finding of the article – the multilayered structure of the symbol. Its significant feature is intertextuality combined with and caused by the inexhaustible polysemantic quality of the symbol. Intertextual characteristics of the symbol need further study and within this range its intercultural aspect is of special interest.

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У статті досліджується символ як стилістична одиниця, його місце та межі в лінгвостилістиці. Зроблено спробу запропонувати визначення цього лінгвокультурного феномену через окреслення його специфічних конститутивних ознак. Лінгвістичні дослідження символу дали змогу відмежувати це лінгвокультурне утворення від знаку, міфу, образу, метафори, алегорії. Визначальною рисою символу як комунікативної одиниці є те, що він як об'єкт лінгвістичного дослідження утворює значення та смисли, які співконструюються учасниками комунікації. Вступаючи у безліч зв'язків, символ набуває смислів, які утворюють шарувату структуру. Врахування цих характеристик сприяє адекватному стилістичному аналізу художніх текстів.

Ключові слова: символ, знак, метафора, художній образ, етнокультурний, структура, багатозаровий, стилістичний.

В статье исследуется символ как стилистическая единица, его место и границы в лингвостилистике. Сделана попытка предложить определение этого лингвокультурного феномена путем определения его специфических конститутивных черт. Лингвистические исследования символа дали возможность разграничить это лингвокультурное явления со знаком, мифом, образом, метафорой, аллегорией. Определяющей чертой символа как коммуникативной единицы является то, что он как объект лингвистического исследования образует значения и смыслы, которые соконструируются участниками коммуникации. Вступая в большое количество связей, символ приобретает смыслы, которые образуют многослойную структуру. Учёт этих характеристик способствует адекватному стилистическому анализу художественных текстов.

Ключевые слова: символ, знак, метафора, художественный образ, структура, многослойный, стилистический.

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