

THE LINGUISTIC FRAMEWORK OF POETIC INTERPRETATION (a Case Study: the Poem «Children» by Yuri Levitansky)

The article aims to present an integrated poetic analysis of one of the poems by Yuri Levitansky. The content of the poem is interpreted within the framework of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to the study of lyrics, which is connected with the development of the ideas generated by Kharkiv Philological School. The framework suggested in the article combines the linguistic and literary approaches to the study of poetry, the study of its linguistic and stylistic texture taking into account intertextual and auto-intertextual interactions as well as the poetic tradition, that is, the text “immersed in life”. The article focuses on the characterization of the main symbolic images of the poem, their conceptual transformations and the role they play in Y. Levitansky’s individual style.

Key words: poetic text, poetic discourse, interpretation, Kharkiv Philological School, symbolic image, subject matter, Levitansky.

Скоробогатова О. О., Красовицька Л. Є. Лінгвістична основа поетичної інтерпретації (на прикладі поезії Юрія Левітанського «Діти»). Стаття присвячена цілісному філологічному аналізу однієї із центральних поезій книги «Кінематограф» Юрія Левітанського. Її зміст інтерпретуємо в межах комплексного міждисциплінарного підходу до дослідження лірики, що пов’язаний з розвитком ідей Харківської філологічної школи. Цілісний (комплексний) філологічний аналіз передбачає вивчення мовної організації тексту та ідіостилю з огляду на вирішення того художнього “надзавдання”, яке висуває перед собою автор. Запропонований підхід поєднує лінгвістичний і літературознавчий вектори дослідження поезії, вивчення лінгвістичної організації тексту з урахуванням інтертекстуальних та автоінтертекстуальних взаємодій і поетичної традиції, тобто дослідження тексту, що “занурений у життя”. Інтерпретацію поезії здійснено на основі аналізу мовної будови тексту, місця ліричного твору в художньому просторі, який створений автором, у поетичному дискурсі, і це дає змогу зануритися в змістове наповнення твору, у процес формування його поетичного смислу, передбачити можливу читачку аперцепцію. Схарактеризовано основні образи-символи твору (**дерево, птах, небо, дім, дим**), динаміку смислових трансформацій (**птах – небо, дім – дим, війна – дим**), встановлено зв’язок тематики та проблематики поезії з іншими творами книги поезій «Кінематограф». Розглянуті метонімічні переноси, характерні для поезії Левітанського цього періоду. Сформульовано гіпотезу, згідно з якою поезія «Діти» виступає як пролог до книги поезій «Листи до Катерини...», у якій послідовно

розкривається тема дитинства. Стверджується, що образи-символи поезії, проаналізованої в роботі, є ключовими словами поетичного ідіостилу Юрія Левітанського. Лінгвопоетичний аналіз створює доказову базу для характеристик символічного кола, основних мотивів, тематики й проблематики лірики поета.

Ключові слова: поетичний текст, поетичний дискурс, інтерпретація, Харківська філологічна школа. образ-символ, тематика, Левітанський.

Introduction

This year we commemorate the 100th anniversary of Yuri Levitansky's birth, a poet whose literary works have etched an ineffaceable impression on the minds of more than one generation of his readers and have inspired literary critics and linguists to explore the hidden secrets of his poetry.

The depth and strength of his worldview is impressive, his style is easily recognizable; one can imitate his manner of writing, yet no one has been able to write "like Levitansky". His unique poetic style is characterized by a specific "lengthy line", his "free verse" and the experiments with a large poetic form which led the poet to create the "book of poems" as an artistic unity. The author's individual style can be described as a certain combination of common linguistic resources, general poetic devices, individual expressive means and artistic techniques. The poet's individual linguistic worldview, created in the artistic space of poetic discourse, can be outlined by means of the poetic analysis of separate literary texts as well as by investigating his individual style as a whole. One of the frameworks of the poetic analysis is the study of textual construction of meaning and its actualization in the poem which is highly characteristic of Levitansky's lyrics. His poetry has already been the object of some linguistic and literary studies. The music motif in Levitansky's lyrics has been analyzed by A. Kozlova (Kozlova, 2019), D. Koloda has explored the syntactic texture of the poet's verse and its role in creating a cinematic effect (Колода, 2010; Колода, 2011). However, it is only through the integrated analysis of language, interpretation, context, and cognition that we can account for the experience of literary reading of Levitansky's poetry. So, the research aims to analyze the linguistic texture of the poem *Children*, taking into consideration the place of this work in the author's literary output, to characterize the main symbolic images and to explore the intertextual connections of this work with other poems of the author.

In this article, we analyze the poem *Дети (Children)* (Левитанский, 1987: 63–64) from the poetry book *Кинематограф (Cinema)*. This book of poems like other books of the poet (we do not use the term “collection” deliberately), is a compositionally integral poetic text and it serves as the embodiment of a single artistic concept. The theme of the book is the search for meaning in life by a self-responsible person who concerns about other people, the understanding of their epoch and what makes their own life fulfilling.

The poem examines the very idea of childhood and the sense of meaning and purpose in life; poems from many books and a poetry book *Письма Катерине, или прогулка с Фаустом (Letters to Katerina, or a Walk with Faust)* (1981) are also about it (Левитанский, 1987: 207–320) (the choice of anthroponyms in the title of the book is significant, since the poet puts together his daughter’s name and the precedent name Faust, which is strongly associated with the idea of meaningfulness of life).

Research Methods

The poem is interpreted within the framework of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of poetry, which encompasses the insights and legacy of the Kharkiv Philological School. An integrated poetic analysis involves the study of the linguistic texture of the poetry and the author’s individual style in order to answer the question about the literary “overriding goal” set by the poet himself. This approach necessitates, firstly, the combination of linguistic and literary aspects of the text analysis, and secondly, the study of the stylistic organization of the text taking into account intertextual and auto-intertextual interactions and the poetic tradition of a certain period, that is the study of a text “immersed in life”. Some insights of cognitive poetics (e.g. the importance of the interactions between the language of a text and a reader of that text in exploring the literary effect and value of a particular text) are also incorporated and applied in our research.

The Main Material

The interpretation of the poem entails the analysis of its linguistic and stylistic texture, its place in the artistic space created by the author. We also examine the role which the poem under analysis plays in the Russian poetic discourse. This enables us to penetrate deeper into conceptual meanings of the literary work and meaning-making processes (Гулак, 2019:

43). The proposed interpretation suggests possible perspectives for readers' and researchers' apperception.

ДЕТИ

*Дети, как жители иностранные
или пришельцы с других планет,
являются в мир, где предметы странные,
вещи, которым названья нет.*

*Еще им в диковину наши нравы.
И надо выучить все слова.
А эти звери!
А эти травы!
Ну, просто кружится голова!*

*И вот они ходят, пометки делая
и выговаривая с трудом:
– Это что у вас? – Это **дерево**.
– А это? – **Птица**. – А это? – **Дом**.*

*Но чем продолжительнее их странствие –
они ведь сюда не на пару дней –
они становятся все пристрастнее,
и нам становится все трудней.*

*Они ощупывают переборочки,
они заглянуть стараются за.
А мы их гиды,
их переводчики,
и не надо пыль им пускать в глаза!*

*Пусть они знают, что неподдельно,
а что только кажется золотым.
– Это что у вас? – Это **дерево**.
– А это? – **Небо**. – А это? – **Дым**.*

(Левитанский, 1987: 163–164).

The poem is divided into two parts, each of which ends with a semi-stanza consisting of three questions and three answers. It is worth noticing that the form of direct dialogue between the characters of a lyrical work is quite rare in the 20th century poetry, but it is highly characteristic of Yuri Levitansky's lyrics. This 'question – answer' pattern is exploited in some of his poems and their fragments. Moreover, the keyword *dialogue* is present in the poem titles (for example, *Диалог у новогодней елки* (*A Dialogue at the Christmas tree*). The questions in the poem are repeated (the first one is complete, the second and third ones are elliptical), and two of the three answers differ from each other.

In our opinion, they are explicitly connected with the philosophical idea of the poem. The first part of the poem is the poet's reflections on the essence of childhood, its wow-moments, his thoughts about how children are learning about the world, and how important it is for them to rely on adults' knowledge. The understanding of the world goes through words, and here it is worth mentioning that the poet was born and spent his childhood in Ukraine, where a baby is called *немовля* (*netovlya*) – 'one who cannot speak'. Perhaps, that is why the children here look like *иностранные жители и пришельцы с других планет* (*foreign residents and aliens from other planets*), the things around them do not yet have names, and all the words have yet to be learned. We can clearly see the child's surprise, even its amazement while learning the world: *А эти звери! А эти травы!*, (*And these animals! And these herbs!*). These emotions are expressed by existential nominal exclamations with interjections (the first two ones), and then is verbalized by the periphrastic exclamation: *Ну, просто кружится голова!* (*Well, The head is spinning!*)

The third stanza begins with a lyrical narrative and ends with a dialogue between a child and an adult. Here, the poet enumerates the objects which a wide-eyed child asks adults about: *дерево, птица, дом* (*a tree, a bird, a house*). They can be construed as symbols representing the harmonic structure of the universe (*дерево* (*tree*)), a person's pursuit of their dreams and aspirations (*птица* (*bird*)) and human community, reliability, security (*дом* (*house*)).

The poetic text is extremely compressed; in some fragments it may be hardly noticeable, but in this case, it is quite evident. The turns in the dialogue embody symbolic meanings which go far beyond the plot of the poem, its theme, or motifs.

It should be pointed out that the answer-words constitute a complete paradigm of the grammatical category of gender, which, in the Russian poetic language, conveys the idea of spatial (objective) all-inclusiveness (it corresponds to the pronoun *весь, всё, вся, все* (*all, everything*), we analyzed it in (Скоробогатова, 2012: 410–421; Скоробогатова, 2021), as well as the temporal paradigm expresses the meaning of temporal all-embracing entity (correlates with the adverb *всегда* (*always*)). Everything which is really important in the world is located in space and time in local and temporal supremeness. The pronoun *все* (*all*) in the word combination *все слова* (*all words*) actualizes a motif of completeness (fullness) in the poem.

Children have to learn all the words, and the first objects they point their index fingers at are the main ones in their perception of the world.

The second part of the poem tells us about the process of cognition, a close awareness of the world: *Они ощупывают переборочки, / они заглянуть стараются за...* (*They feel the bulkheads, / they try to look behind ...*). The use of the verb *ощупывать* (*to feel, palpate*), which means ‘пощупать со всех сторон с целью осмотра, исследования’ (‘to feel from all sides in order to explore’) (Ожегов, 1984: 419) the reduplication of the formant *за* (as a prefix morpheme of the verb *заглянуть* and as a preposition) and the empty nominal position (*заглянуть можно за что-то*) emphasize the general meaning of this fragment. We understand the meaning of a lyrical work as a unity that determines the meaning of its constituents, and is not reduced to the mere combination of their separate meanings (Рупташ, 2015: 154). So, as we see it, the meaning of a poem is not the sum of the meanings of the linguistic units used by the author, but a result (derivative) of their textual realisations and discursive links).

The position of the preposition at the end of the verse is noteworthy. By means of aposiopesis as a stylistic device, the semantically empty preposition *за* is transformed into a semantically full one, thus, foregrounding the philosophical sense of world understanding. A person is always keen to *Заглянуть за...* (*look behind ...*) the visible Universe, be it a child exploring the world, an artist creating their artworks, or a mature person seeking the purpose and significance of life.

The poet defines the role of adults as guides and interpreters, and the line *и не надо пыль им пускать в глаза!* (*do not throw dust in their eyes!*) sounds like a desperate poetic appeal to them. Everyone has to figure out what is *неподдельно* (*genuine*) and *что только кажется золотым* (*what*

just seems to be golden) (the symbolic meaning of the word *golden* in Y. Levitansky's poetry is an area for further investigation).

The poem ends with a question-answer chain, in which the poet suggests what is really important in person's life. Here, the answers to the question: *Это что у вас?* (*What is it with you?*) are changing. The poet names the key words related to human existence, they are meaning-making in terms of understanding life: *Дерево. Небо. Дым.* (*Tree. Sky. Smoke.*).

As we have analyzed above, the first part of the poem contains the words that are significant for both a child and an adult in making sense of the world: *Дерево. Птица. Дом* (*Tree. Bird. House.*) And the fact that they have changed in the second part of the poem, in our opinion, is explicitly related to its theme and the main idea.

The image of a tree as a symbol of peace is foregrounded in both fragments. As M. Epstein claims "trees in Russian poetry play an exceptionally important role", which is attributable to "natural factors and folklore, and ritual traditions, and the centuries-old rural lifestyle" (Эпштейн, 2007: 40). In addition, the tree as a metaphorical image of everything that exists is a basic mythopoetic concept. V. N. Toporov states that the image of the world tree embodies the universal concept of the world and serves as a model of human culture as a whole (Топоров, 2010). Apart from that, in Russian poetry, it often "acts as a system of spatial and spiritual coordinates connecting heaven and earth, up-and-down, right-and-left orientation, all cardinal points" (Эпштейн, 2007: 40). The tree in Yuri Levitansky's poetry is a symbol of utmost importance which is associated, first and foremost, with the motif of life and love, although sometimes, it might be linked with the motif of injury, separation and even death (see, for instance, the poem *Кто-нибудь утром проснется сегодня и ахнет...* (*Someone will wake up this morning and gasp...*) (Левитанский, 1987: 202). Moreover, in Levitansky's poetic worldview, the symbolic image of a tree is connected with verbal creativity (*Слова – они, наверное, корнями, / как деревья, / уходят в глубину...* (Ю. Левитанский. «Откуда вы приходите, слова...») (*Words – they are probably the roots, / like trees, / go into the depths...* (Yu. Levitansky. "Where do you come from, words...") (Левитанский, 2011: 7) and with a child (in the poem «Нет, не бог всемогущий...» из книги «Письма Катерине...» "No, not God Almighty..." from the book "Letters to Katerina..." (Левитанский, 1981: 88) in which the image of Christmas trees refers to the images of the poet's daughters).

The image of a tree is a constant one in the poem *Детю* (*Children*). Its constancy is the basis of faith in life traditionally passed on to a child.

The second word *небо* (*sky*) is used to replace *птиця* (*a bird*) in the first fragment. Both words are metonymically related to each other at the conceptual and linguistic levels (for the relationship between conceptual and linguistic, see: (Степанченко, 2013)). *Птиця* (*the bird*) is an object which associatively correlates with our biggest aspirations in life (*Отчего люди не летают!* <...> ...отчего люди не летают так, как птицы? (А. Островский «Гроза») *Why don't people fly!* <...> ...why don't people fly like birds? (A. Ostrovsky *Thunderstorm*). In our minds the word *небо* (*sky*) is connected with the real space and with the spiritual life of a man, and with their desire for something more fulfilling. The relationship between these objects, the bird and the sky, is poetically stable (*Дивлюсь я на небо та й думку гадаю: / Чому я не сокіл, чому не літаю?* (*I look at the sky and think: / Why am I not a falcon, why do I not fly?*) (М. Петренко) (Петренко); *Счастлив будь, Сурок в норе! / Будь спокойна, Птица в небе!* (Б. Окуджава «Жизнь охотника» (*Be happy, Marmot in the hole! / Be calm, Bird in the sky!* (B. Okudzhava *Life of a Hunter* (Окуджава, 2004: 212) and etc.). *Птица в небе* (*a bird in the sky*) is a poetic symbol deeply rooted into the national linguistic and cultural traditions. In the Russian artistic worldview, the sky is also *небо Аустерлица* (*the sky of Austerlitz*), in the depths of which you can see what is *за* (*beyond*): beyond the human's understanding, beyond the limits of everyday life. The poem captures the transition from specific visible objects to symbolic images and then to the categorical concepts in the course of child's development, and the image of the sky evokes a string of culturally related associations in the reader's mind.

Finally, the third word in the analyzed line is *дым* (*smoke*). It is used to substitute *дом* (*a house*) in the first fragment of the poem and their relation can be described as a paronymic attraction (Сюта, 2009). Since these relations imply a semantic convergence of elements on the basis of sound similarity, our task is to specify the trajectory this convergence can follow in readers' minds.

There are two metonymical patterns. The first one is PHYSICAL PART FOR WHOLE which is represented by the pair *дом* – *дым* (*a house* – *smoke*). Smoke is one of the mythopoetic attributes of the house: *дом* (*a house*) represents protection and warmth, whereas *печь* (*a stove*), which usually

occupies the central part of a house, serves as one of the main symbols of warmth, food and security and, therefore it is deeply etched in the Eastern Slavic consciousness (Стаценко, 2017: 22–27). *Дым* (*smoke*) in Slavic folklore and in the author's poetry, including children's verse, often symbolizes housing, warmth, and security (*Это что за теремок! / Из трубы идет дымок!* (С. Маршак «Теремок») (*What kind of house is this! / Smoke is coming from the chimney!* (S. Marshak *Teremok*) (Маршак, 1985: 422)). This cultural phenomenon is also fixed in children's pictures as they often draw a house with the smoke coming out of the chimney.

The second association SMOKE STANDS FOR WAR, which represents the metonymical relationships RESULT FOR AN EVENT, derives from Levitansky's personal war experience and is deeply ingrained in the cultural and mythopoetic consciousness of the poets of his generation: smoke is closely related with war, fire, devastation. *Эх, война, что ж ты, подлая, сделала: / Вместо свадеб – разлуки и дым.* (Б. Окуджава «До свидания, мальчики!») (*Eh, war, what have you done, vile one: / Instead of weddings – separation and smoke.* (B. Okudzhava *Goodbye, boys!*) (Окуджава, 1989: 44). This correlation is likely to be significant for the author's intention and can be realized in the readers' apperception. It's worth mentioning that Yuri Levitansky is a war poet who saw many burnt houses, including those ones in Chernihiv and Kyiv, where he spent his childhood and adolescence. The illusory nature of security and reliability is what the poet wants to warn us against. In addition, the word *дым* (*smoke*) is associated not only with *дом* (a house), but also with *небо* (*the sky*), where the smoke rises.

The poem *Детю* (*Children*) follows the poem *Воспоминание о Нибелунгах* (*Memories of the Nibelungs*), which describes the time before the Second World War and an adolescent's naive perception of the German film: *и мы хохотали, / когда белокурый красавец Зигфрид / умывался кровью дракона...* (*we laughed / when the fair-haired handsome Siegfried / was washing himself with dragon's blood...*) And a few lines later the poet remarks bitterly: *Оставалось несколько месяцев / до начала этой войны, / с которой мы возвращались / долгие годы, / с которой не все мы вернулись, / мы, / от души хохотавшие / над этой отличной шуткой – / Зигфрид умывается кровью дракона...* (*There were a few months left / before the start of this war, / from which we returned / for many years, / from which not all of us returned, / we, / laughed heartily / at this excellent joke – / Siegfried washes himself with dragon's blood...*) (Левитанский, 1987:

159–160). The naive joy of youth and the bitter comprehension of the future military reality in this poem are close to the warning in *Дети* (Children).

Finally, the last association, which is inextricably linked with the previous one, goes beyond the metonymic relationship and involves ‘metaphorical extension’: the smoke correlates with lost (burnt, destroyed) hopes. This association is suggested by the context, and based on the reader’s world knowledge: *дом* (a house) as a material object can be interpreted as evidence of its unreliability, temporality in contrast to the eternal *небо* (sky) and a permanent *дерево* (tree). Transformation of *дом* (the house) into *дым* (smoke) is a fundamental existential symbol and, perhaps, one of the motifs of both the poem under analysis and the poetry book it is included in. The poem *Старая женщина с авоськой* (An old woman with a string bag), which is followed by the poem *Дети* (Children), shows *явление грусти бесконечной* (the occurrence of endless sadness): an old woman is in the city which is in a hurry *на свадьбы, / на рожденья, / на поминки...* (for weddings, / for births, / for wakes)... (Левитанский, 1987: 65–66). Three successive poems describe three stages of life – youth, childhood, old age – and the idea of lost hopes and disillusionment is a recurrent motif in each of them.

In the poem of the same book *Сон об уходящем поезде* (A Dream about the Departing Train), the word-image *дым* (smoke) is associated with memory, as it is evidenced by the lyrical plot of the poem, the predicate *сладок* (is sweet) and the further development of the image: *Мне сладок этот дым, встающий высоко над всем пережитым* (This smoke, which rises high above everything experienced, is sweet to me) (Левитанский, 1987: 101). And finally, in the poem *Как мой дом опустел, все уехали...* As my house was empty, everyone left... (Левитанский, 1981: 84–85) which is included into the later poetry book *Письма Катерине* (Letters to Katerina), the images of a house, smoke, a train running to the past and the theme of unfulfilled dreams emerge all together.

Conclusions

The poem begins with a lyrical reflection on children’s understanding of the world. The second part is structured as a “child – adult” dialogue. The system of images is represented by three symbols *дерево, птица, дом* (a tree, a bird, a house), which are replaced by the triad *дерево, птица, дым* (tree, bird, smoke). This transition indicates the illusory security of the world which children are born to live in.

The analysis of the intertextual connections of Y. Levitansky's poem *Дети (Children)* enables us to argue that it is a kind of prologue to the book of poems *Письма Катерине... (Letters to Katerina ...)*, in which the theme of childhood is the central element and gradually developed throughout the book by adding new subtleties of the meaning to common concepts and elaborating fresh associations. In addition, the symbolic images of the poem, are, in fact, the key concepts of Y. Levitansky's individual style.

The multiplicity of possible interpretations is a characteristic feature of understanding the world by the 20th century poetry. Its language is symbolic and often admits semantic uncertainty. Despite its ambiguity as a poetic phenomenon, Yuri Levitansky's verse is characterized by thematic and artistic consistency. Its deeper understanding is based on combining different contextual associations rather than selecting one from their cluster. The stylistic and poetic analysis provides sufficient data for identifying and describing the symbolic texture, main motifs, themes and ideas of his poems.

Yuri Levitansky's poetic heritage is worth large-scale research within the framework of the multidisciplinary approach that involves classical methods of stylistic and literary analyses and innovative developments of cognitive stylistics, cognitive poetics and cultural linguistics.

LITERATURE

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Скоробогатова Олена Олександрівна – доктор філологічних наук, доцент, професор кафедри зарубіжної літератури та слов'янських мов імені проф. Михайла Гетманця, Харківський національний педагогічний університет імені Г. С. Сковороди; вул. Валентинівська, 2, м. Харків, 61168, Україна.

Tel.: +380509027291

E-mail: skorobogatova.elena@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0214-1889>

Skorobohatova Olena Oleksandrivna – Doctor of Philological Sciences, Docent, Professor at Mykhailo Hetmanets Foreign Literature and Slavic Languages Department, H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University; 2 Valentynivska Str., Kharkiv, 61168, Ukraine.

Красовицька Лада Євгенівна – кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри англійської філології, Харківський національний педагогічний університет імені Г. С. Сковороди; вул. Алчевських, 29, м. Харків 61002, Україна.

Тел: +380931623686

E-mail: krasovitska@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8870-2351>

Krasovytska Lada Yevhenivna – Candidate of Philological Sciences (Ph.D.), Docent, Associate Professor at the English Philology Department, H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, 2 Alchevskykh St., Kharkiv, 61002, Ukraine.

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