



STYLISTIC DIVERSITY IN CREATION OF THE POETICS OF A LITERARY WORK FOR CHILDREN (BASED ON T.S. ELIOT'S *OLD POSSUM'S BOOK OF PRACTICAL CATS*)

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Abstract

The article represents the results of stylistic and literary critical analysis of T.S. Eliot's poems selected from *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). There was shown that the alternation of speech elements had conditioned the special generic palette of the verses, the variety of their perception by different aged readers, and thus the book could evoke the new wave of interest to animalism in literature.

Introduction

"To recognize poetry's multi-dimensionality is to realize that an audience of children and adults do not mutually exclude each other, even if the adults are literary scholars." (Stone, 2013). Language of poetry for children in any national literature is to be well-organized by expedient selection of such artistic and linguistic means as rhythm-melodics, metaphors, epithets, poetic lexicon or phraseology. Therefore the child would reveal wisdom of the world through language that is actually the most universal form of expression for this wisdom.

According to Tamara Denysova, T.S. Eliot was usually considered a 'serious' poet because of uncovering the important philosophical problems in his verse works – either epic or lyro-epic. This is why the 'unexpectedly eccentric' mood of a poetic collection entitled *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* had conditioned the less attention of researchers. Otherwise, the capacious and hardly perceptible works like *The Waste Land*, *The Hollow Men*, *Ash Wednesday*, *Murder in the Cathedral* and others had been studied thoroughly, even in a shape of separate monographs like *T.S. Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets* by J.C. Cooper (See Cooper, 1995).

Old Possum's Book, just as well as the significant amount of T.S. Eliot's writings, is marked by a dialogue between various realia, cultures, mythologies, and plots. If to look at these poems more attentively, we can see not only their thematic similarity to 'adult literature,' but also some common ways in poetics, stylistics, and versification. This would be one more evidence of integrate nature of the poet's artistic individuality.

The objectives of this article is to confirm the specifications of functioning of diverse linguostylistic elements and elucidate their role in establishing the compositional, generic, and problematic uniqueness of T.S. Eliot's verse works with obvious modernistic style paradigm, which are gathered in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*.

Method

We used the traditional methods of linguistic, firstly stylistic, analysis to examine the transformation of animal images into self-dependent semantic conceits and their functions as specific poetic imagery. The method of close reading was used to study the esthetical functions of different stylistic means (colloquial, scientific, artistic, confessional, public et al.) in creating the special picture of the world in poems by T.S. Eliot, related to children's poetry.

Results and Discussions

Cats' theme had occupied the special place in world animalistics. The authors of the outstanding philosophical or art works dedicated to cats (or creators of the most brilliant images of the latter) are Ch. Perrot and Ch. Baudelaire in France, brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Ludwig Tieck, Ernest Theodore Amadey Hoffmann in Germany, Carlo Collodi in Italy, Louis Carroll and Rudyard Kipling in Great Britain, Natusume Soseki in Japan; in Slavic literatures Alexei Tolstoy, Mikhail Bulgakov, Eduard Uspensky, Vasyly Holoborodko, Lyudmyla Petrushevs'ka and others (See also Gandler, 2008).

Children's literary bestiary shows evident heterogeneity in both generic and stylistic sense. It is English literature where a great deal of profoundly 'childish' writings about animals is presented. *Old Possum's Book* is surely one of the most attractive among them, unless it was sometimes estimated as 'a secondary work' in the shadow of Eliot's philosophical searches. However, it helped the poet get the remarkable position in the world showbiz (as an author of the synopsis for *Cats*, the musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber).

It was not a long time ago when Ukrainian artists and critics paid a tribute to Eliot's unique work. In 2008, 'Grani-T' Publishers in Kyiv issued *Old Possum's Book* in complete Ukrainian translation by Ivan Andrusyak; right after that, there were published several articles and reviews, including *For Adult Children and Childish Adults* by Yulia Dzhuhastrians'ka, and *The Sources of Animalistic Imagery in T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats and E.T.A. Hoffmann's Cat Murr* by Olena Panova.

Picturing human life with a help of animal images is the very first task for an author of bestiaries. Though, according to Yevheniya Chernokova, 'it may disturb a writer to concentrate upon descriptive phenomenology' (Chernokova, 2011), one should not conduct a 'pure' naturalist, as one has got a right to use artistic fiction to transform an object (a live entity and the word to name it) into an image. In other words, the writer can complete an object by its internal form that would allow comprehending a phenomenon wholly.

One of the prominent artistic markers in T.S. Eliot's book is widely used capitalizing, for example:

*The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games;
You may think at first I'm as mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.
First of all, there's the name that the family use daily,
Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo or James,
Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey –
All of them sensible everyday names (The Naming of Cats. Eliot, 1939).*

Even in this quoted work, first in a row, the speaker appeals to different aged audience with a philosophical instruction. We can see here an allusion to *Genesis*, the Biblical book that tells about naming all of the plants and animals by Adam (Genesis 2 : 10). Selecting just three names – one of them 'the name that the family use daily,' another 'fancier [name that sounds] sweeter,' and the latter 'ineffable effable Effanineffable' – is supposed to be an echo of Ayurvedic tradition to give a child (indeed cats are children as well) several names – as mascots.

Sincere and limitedly undone speech has a colloquial style expression with elements of exquisite word game, embellished by infinitives and modal verbs:

*But above and beyond there's still one name left over,
And that is the name that you never will guess;
The name that no human research can discover –
But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess (The Naming of Cats. Eliot, 1939).*

The next verse is merely a portrait of an archetypal pet, 'The Old Gumbie Cat':

*I have a Gumbie Cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;
Her coat is of the tabby kind, with tiger stripes and leopard spots.
All day she sits upon the stair or on the steps or on the mat;
She sits and sits and sits and sits – and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat! (Eliot, 1939).*

This cat has got a sophisticated three-component name (Jenny – any – dots), and hence she behaves like both a quotidian way (*All day she sits upon the stair or on the steps or on the mat*) and a little weird – she does not catch mice but teaches them play music, and also cooks food for them:

*...She sets right to work with her baking and frying.
She makes them a mouse--cake of bread and dried peas,
And a beautiful fry of lean bacon and cheese (Eliot, 1939).*

The first impression of this poem is a fairy-tale; along with that, the dualistic philosophical conceit ‘day / night’ is brightly re-created in this narration. Observations of night life usually lived by cats allowed the speaker – and therefore a reader – to see a lot of magic in behavior by a simple animal.

Leading intonation of an entire poetic collection is game. Previously it lasts on the linguostylistic level, particularly in combination of composite words – nouns, names and adjectives; this is the way many scientific terms were created (like philology, biography, lily-of-the-valley, woodcock etc.)

Word combination in everyday communication (including infant speech) is a perfect way to comprehend the etymology of initial words and otherwise an attempt to give them the very new meaning. In Eliot’s book, such words are often the names for cats (Mungojerrie, Rumpelteazer, Growltiger, Tumblebrutus, Lady Grizzlebone), peculiar for verse narrations about adventures, which are favorite for the majority of children: *Growltiger's Last Stand, Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, Of the awful battle of the Pokes and the Pollicles: together with some account of the participation of the Pugs and the Poms, and the intervention of the Great Rumpuscat.*

The well-known game that may be called ‘wrong way round’ is embodied in *Rum Tum Tugger*:

*The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat:
If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.
If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,
If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house.
If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,
If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse (Eliot, 1939).*

To show better the essence of the ‘curious’ cat, the speaker used to deviate from the language norms:

*Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat –
And there isn't any use for you to doubt it:
For he will do
As he **do do***

And there's no doing anything about it! (Eliot, 1939).

The poem *Macavity: The Mystery Cat* is a sample of a detective story and simultaneously a verbalized game of ‘hide-and-peek’ or ‘policemen-and thieves’:

*Macavity, Macavity, there's no on like Macavity,
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.
His powers of **levitation** would make a fakir stare,
And when you reach the scene of crime – Macavity's not there!
You may seek him in the **basement**, you may look up in the air –
But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's not there! (Eliot, 1939).*

This poem seems to be more attractive due to oxymoron combination of dominant antique meter (2nd peon) and syncope – for example, in a word ‘levitation’ in which the last syllable gets stressed and the additional stress occurs on the second syllable (both of the cases are marked by bold script in an above quotation). Another example is pronunciation of ‘basement’ as a spondee foot (both of the syllables are stressed), which allowed accentuating this word as the tag – the only place where a mystery cat has to be looked for first of all.

No less than ‘hide-and-peek,’ children like to role-play the railway and the train. The verse *Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat* gets the audience acquainted with everyday life of station workers and the smallest nuances of their profession:

*In the watches of the night he is always fresh and bright;
Every now and then he has a cup of tea
With perhaps a drop of Scotch while he's keeping on the watch,
Only stopping here and there to catch a flea.
You were fast asleep at Crewe and so you never knew
That he was walking up and down the station;*

*You were sleeping all the while he was busy at Carlisle,
 Where he greets the stationmaster with elation.
 But you saw him at Dumfries, where he speaks to the police
 If there's anything they ought to know about:
 When you get to Gallowgate there you do not have to wait –
 For Skimbleshanks will help you to get out!
 He gives you a wave of his long brown tail
 Which says: "I'll see you again!
 You'll meet without fail on the Midnight Mail
 The Cat of the Railway Train" (Eliot, 1939).*

Old Possum's Book is finally a specimen of children's poetry; meanwhile, its 'adult' philosophical and reflexive style dominants are quite powerful. Upon studying the linguostylistic diversity of this collection, we should pay proper attention to traditions of literary bestiary which are profoundly interpreted by T.S. Eliot.

Showing human life through the prism of cats' manners and habits allowed the poet to represent the new view of usual things, figures, and events, enriched with combination of various linguistic and artistic means. Eliot's modernistic poems collected in *Old Possum's Book* have the following stylistic features: domination of Simple Present and Simple Past verbs; refrains based on chiasms; semantically marked alliterations and assonances; inversions and parcellations used in order to aesthetically impact the reader; extraordinary final and internal rhymes; variations in stanza patterns and graphic forms of a verse; and largely used intertextual motifs.

The stories of *Old Possum's Book* are interesting for children (Ukrainian as well, in both original and translation) as the fairy-tales or adventure novels about cats – pirates, magicians, actors, aristocrats and criminals; meanwhile, grown-up recipients see any image of a cat a reflection of a certain man's character, in juxtaposition of a manner of a cat's behaviour with human one. This is why **the unique image of the speaker** is the first result of interactions between stylistic elements within a separate story and in the entire book.

Another prominent result of stylistic synthesis is **the generic diversity** of Eliot's book. There is a wide array of genres presented: the fairy-tale (*The Old Gumbie Cat*), the song (*The Song of the Jellicles*), the detective (*Macavity: The Mystery Cat*), the adventure story (*Growltiger's Last Stand*), geographic reference book or voyage diaries (*Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat*), theatrical review (*Gus: The Theatre Cat*), article which might be issued in a glamour magazine (*Bustopher Jones: The Cat About Town*) and so on.

The third moment of correlations between stylistic elements in the analyzed book is **intertextuality**. The speaker succeeds in including the quotations, allusions, and reminiscences into a verse narration to give them a new notion – sometimes parodying, but mostly respecting them, making up the so-called workbook to enrich the reader's esthetical experience. Despite quite simple (yet not simplified) language the poems are written in, the recipients should have the fundamental philological and culturological education to apprehend and interpret them well.

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