

FANTASTIC BINOMIAL, A CONCEPTUAL IMAGE-MAKING METHOD FOR CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN FREE VERSE

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Abstract

Metaphor as one of the conceptual tropes got a lot of subordinate conceits for its description throughout all the literary history. In the 20th century, one of them was thoroughly formulated in Gianni Rodari's *Grammar of Fantasy* (*La Grammatica della Fantasia*) as a *fantastic binomial*, a clause which contains a noun and a verb (or an adjective) that a priori are not tied with logical ties and further set up a base for a fairy-tale story. This is the main difference of a fantastic binomial from a usual metaphor. In this paper, we confirmed the mentioned kind of metaphor as a conceptual image-making way in contemporary Ukrainian free verse that is particularly outstanding thanks to its lapidary form.

Introduction

Scientists who studied the free verse form in synchronic or diachronic aspects mentioned *non-metaphoric shape* as its main feature. They were united in a thought that free verse (*vers libre*) is merely an everyday speech organized in verses (Look Fraser, 1970, p. 58). Yet it is possible to declare: if a free-verse work is completely freed from metalogical images (like symbols, allegories, metaphoric combinations etc.), it would become a metaphor itself, depending on its main idea and leading motifs.

This question elucidates one of the ultimate purposes for our research into topic of image-making in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Our research seeks to redress a gap in the research literature, and to represent the variety of possible alternative readings of the contemporary poetry, particularly written in free verse form and thus encapsulating the entire macrocosmos in metaphorical expression.

As any other elements of artistic language, metaphors exist in a poem awaiting (Foss, 1996, p. 47; Ingarden, 1972, p. 353) to be revealed by recipient using one's esthetic experience. Even if a poem does not contain metaphorical expressions, it can become itself a metaphor. Taras Shevchenko's *Sadok Vyshnevyi Kolo Khaty* (A Cherry-Garden around the House) used to be considered the wide-known example of this like metaphor of freedom. Further, in the 1st third of the 20th century, the verse *To the Cathedral* by Pavlo Tychyna became a metaphor of religiosity expressed in human's personification of nature. Its narration is based mostly on binomial images:

The path to the garden

Sings.

A pumpkin beneath leafy parasols

Contemplates the sun...

Sunflowers are ablaze...

– a bee buzzes like a string –

Butterfly duets...

– honey on its legs –

A daisy? "Greetings to you!"

She whispers back: "I greet you too."

The earth resonates

Like organ (Tychyna, 2000, p. 77: transl. by Michael Naydan).

In the middle of 20th century, surrealistic 'dazzling metaphor' became a specific emblem for the union of conscious and subconscious (Antoniuk, 2004, p. 9). This kind of metaphor in unexpected and enigmatic; moreover, the metaphorical junctions of words reveal their hidden potential in constant image-making. Being multiplied to a binomial plot, it makes up a story developing in 'fourth dimension,' where we can see a visual image turning into a mosaic of symbolic meanings.

From the 1960s, this process is plain to see in the poetry by Ihor Kalynets'. It can be shown in a poem like *Belonging to Genealogy*, whose leading philosophical motifs are the world seen by a speaker as a trinity, search for a new deity, and the attempt to restore the broken ties of generations:

We're dreaming

The white waters of childhood

So long ago they have been purified

On the ninth stone

*And now the ornaments of mould
Upon the silted sources*

Lo, our wedding's celebrated

*Without a candle girl
The virgin*

*And without a sword
Crowned with a candle* [Kalynets', 2004, p. 165-166; transl. by the author of a paper].

Interestingly, this kind of image making allows the literary critics to confirm the 'baroque' of Kalynets' free verse: first of all, his baroque poetic has the complicated (dazzling) metaphor for the crucial feature. Multi-level metaphor, based on binomial juxtapositions of separate words, leads to the great deal of alternative perceptions of the same verse or an entire poem. In wider context, it can be compared to a Chinese hieroglyphics: the limited number of simple characters (so-called keys) in different combinations makes up all the variety of Chinese lexicon. This is why we can speak about a hieroglyph as a poem. Otherwise, the contemporary Ukrainian poems themselves can be considered hieroglyphs, especially those which do only map out the narration with a few words in fantastic binomial composition. So that it is clear that such a way of poem and image making is presented tremendously bright by the artistic practice of Kyiv School poets.

Metaphoric Viewpoints of Kyiv School Poets

Free-verse writings of Kyiv School poets brought the folk life's dramatic intonations into modern Ukrainian poetry. The Slavic myth-poetic consciousness gets consequently restored in a word, and the ways of poetic thinking turn back to the initial sources of being. This has conditioned the appearance of new genre forms which were unknown before: chronicle poem (*Rus' Chervlena* (Gilded Rus), *Sarkofah: storinka majbutniogo litopysu* (Sarcophagus: a Page for a Future Chronicle) by Viktor Kordun; *Lito litopysuje* (Summer Sums the Chronicles) by Vasyl' Holoborod'ko, *Sporudzhennia khramu* (Building a Temple) by Mykhailo Hryhoriv), drawing poem (*Khlopchyk maliuje lito* (A Boy Drawing the Summer), *Kolekcioner kolyorovykh olivtsiv* (Colored Pencils Collector), *Zustrich ptashok* (Birds' Meeting) by Vasyl Holoborod'ko), exorcism poem, decorative art poem, and simultaneous poetry connecting conceits of all arts. Talking about Kyiv School, it can be interpreted in several aspects: (1) a purely poetic phenomenon with freedom of creation for the main sign; (2) a group of young non-conformists that recognize freedom in all of its displays; (3) an experimental psychological endeavor to live another way than the previous generations did; (4) a brotherhood of creators whose main goal was poetry itself. This is why the free verse became not only the versification dominant for Kyiv School poets, but also a conceptual symbol of freedom.

Vasyl Holoborod'ko, Viktor Kordun, Mykola Vorobyov, and Mykhailo Hryhoriv – the four main representatives of Kyiv poetic school, upon declaring the conception of mythological poetry by their creativity, intended to undergo the momentum of Aristotelian *mimesis* to the favor of Platonic one, in other words – to present the constructive ways of building the new reality where the principles of high arts would be prominent. The active transformation of chaos into cosmos was accompanied by the method of *ostrannenie*, which would allow omitting an element *as* or *like* from a simile.

For Kyiv School poets, the most conceptual point was *how a verse work is made*, not *what has been said in it*. The poets formed their own unusual, wondrous idiolect with multi-level associations and sensually condensed thoughts; otherwise, their purpose was to reduce the priority of rational denotates that would water down the artistic speech. Therefore, the metaphoric image opened the place for motional 'internal form' of a word, confirmed about one hundred years ago by Alexander Potebnya, for intuitive insights, and thus for actualization of unconsciousness' resources. Spontaneously approved esthetical principles of modernism were the credo for Kyiv School. Metaphysical lyrics by Kordun, Vorobyov, Hryhoriv, Holoborod'ko etc. kept the style dominants of 1960s' poetry that were individual free-verse rhythm of world perception opposed to the socially engaged writings; the idea of history as existence beyond society; universal view of many-dimensional human being; transformation of chaos into poetic cosmos (Kovaliv, 2007, p. 474).

Special attention was paid to complicated associations and unexpected tropes, to 'metaphor the God,' by Vasyl Holoborod'ko. Besides cultivation of metric verse forms, the poets of Kyiv School developed the free verse that was conditioned by the need of

exquisite modulation of consciousness stream rhythms with language stream, when metaphorical images that are peculiar and integrate to unconsciousness as well as to dream, does not stand the

artificiality that loosely comes together with a poem, and verse that needs a rhyme (Ruban, 2003, p. 147).

The representatives of Kyiv School aspired not only to create their own metaphoric world, but also to give it an impulse to the constant movement (look Kovaliv, 2007, p. 475), – to turn a word into an unstoppable *perpetuum mobile* for thinking and emotions.

Visible Holiness by Viktor Kordun

Every poet of Kyiv School embodies one's poetic world as seen at first time (in terms of *ostrannenie*, as it was described by Viktor Shklovskyi in his widely known *On the Theory of Prose*). For instance, lyrics by Viktor Kordun gets closer to meditative discourse and reflexive metaphors and consequently becomes a representation of philosophical meditations open to intensive dialogue and cognition of poetic cosmos connected to nature. 'Hues, glamour, and aromas' (look Dudarenko, 2004, p. 8) are the main features of Kordun's style. They express the variety of words and worlds, speaker's anxious adoration of divine harmony as 'unity in plurality' told by Hryhoriy Skovoroda. This is why Kordun's poetic world is full of light and divine illuminations; however, it is not deprived of internal dramatics and even providential tragic.

This can be illustrated by a poem *Rus Chervlena (Gilded Rus)* from debut book, *Zemlia natkhnenna (Inspired Earth)*:

*Oh, death is not blossoming,
Blood's transiency is human now,
Horses got silent,
And whiteness of snows is not girls' as well,
But only from clouds* (Kordun, 1984, p. 25; Kordun's poems are hereinafter translated by the author of the paper).

As it is well-known, the ancient Rus chroniclers used exquisite metaphors – even with binomial sense thanks to the method of poetic gradation – to describe skirmishes, warriors' death and funerals (the most popular metaphor was *blossoming death*). Anti-war intonations of Kordun's poem turn into the speaker's anxiety about the language slowly losing its metaphorical meanings, and about history slowly losing its trustworthiness.

A constantly renewed metaphor is evident in all Kordun's books. Particularly, *Trava nad travoju* (The Grass over the Grass), last in his lifetime, represents the cycle of poetic cameos, where the gems are hidden metaphors for all the subjects of natural and material world:

*The sun fell down on a purple maple –
It's burning scarlet never burning out –
Unspoken
God's word –
So silently the wind murmurs
In resigned sadness of the leaves
That's listening so naively:
To what? (2nd Cameo. Kordun, 2005, p. 109)*

This poetic cameo that is supposed to be made of cornelian (Naumenko, 2010, p. 400) presents the binomial metaphor-making in colors for red as a dominant one. Here red maple leaves swayed by wind are another symbol of 'unspoken God's word,' a conceit that is leading for all Kordun's lyrics.

Obviously, the numerous biblical allusions, started from *Inspired Earth* (1984), become fantastic binomials interpreted through Ukrainian view of the world – 'dahlian Christ' who washes flowers with dew; 'Magdalene Bee' as symbol of Christ's blood shed for redemption; 'bush of fire' as a synonym for Old Testament 'bush that cannot be scorched'; 'Megiddo and Dnieper cliffs' as a place of the last war between good and evil; secluded Last Supper with oneself; Hutsulshchyna 'painted on an Easter egg'.

Child's vision of world is expressed in Kordun's poetic icon-painting signed by "binomial" action:

*For dahliance – / dahlian Christ
raking off the ground / from dahlias' roots / with his little palm... (Dahlian Christ. Kordun, 1990, p. 51)*

The development of an iconic image allows us to declare the poem cited above as an allusion to Saint Matthew's Gospel – according to it, resurrected Christ appeared to Magdalene in the guise of a gardener (Matthew, Part 42). Viktor Kordun embodied this theme in Christian symbol of a garden, a synonym to spirituality, and thus Christ the Gardener shows the unity of Masculine and Feminine in a single human being:

*Dahlian Christ – / from Source of Water / takes some water on his face –
And washes each dahlia / petal by petal / with kisses*

Binomial conceits of Kordun's lyrics are concealed in traditional Ukrainian symbolism, including Easter attributes (so-called *krashanka*, one-colored egg, or *pysanka*, many-colored ornamented egg). *Pysanka* embodied in word, except of a national cultural symbol, grows into a specific genre marker of contemporary poetry. The image of Hutsulshchyna, the geographic and cultural area in West Ukraine, is created on the base of *mandala*, spherical picture symbolizing infinity:

*With the flat sun,
Flat deer and three-winged little churches,
All painted on an Easter egg,
Hutsulshchyna is rolling forth
Amongst the mounds –
And disappears in grasses (Hutsulshchyna. Kordun, 1990, p. 95).*

Binomial as Child's Perception in Vasyl' Holoborod'ko's Verse

Vasyl' Holoborod'ko, the author of maybe the greatest quantity of high-artistic free verse works in modern Ukraine, has invented his own definition for a metaphor:

Metaphor is not the simple sum of its components; it cannot be read the reversed way and thus differs from a riddle. So that metaphor is like a cluster of light cast on a recipient who is either able to open one's soul towards the poem or deals with the perfect apparatus criticus. The real poetry is not presented to a reader in all completeness of possible readings to be understood and apprehended (cit. after Lyba, 2007, p. 13).

Holoborod'ko's poems that require the active reading and puzzling bring a reader the special pleasure – if one succeeds in biting the hard nut. However, the rightness of an answer to a riddle is unnecessary; the main purpose of a poet is to induce a reader to united creativity. For instance, the poem *Nytianyj Zajets' (A Hare of Threads)* represents such a riddle with plain answer:

*A hare of threads, / so long hare of threads, / ran out of a cloud.
The hare of threads is jumping / over the spikes embroidered with summer.
The hare of threads is drumming / at bottoms of buckets hanging on the fence.
The hare of threads is rolling / non-countable suns / along the road... (Holoborod'ko, 2005, p. 26).*

Metaphoric (and therefore binomial) show of a subject or an entity takes the geographic names, natural objects, or different kinds of home ware in a riddle. So that Vasyl Holoborod'ko has made his unique metaphor of *rain* (the hare of threads) and entered it to Ukrainian landscape, where the metaphor got finally turned into a hidden fantastic binomial of ancient dialogue with rain:

The hare of threads has brought / millet for green hens, / rainbow for slated roofs, / and red poppies of laughter for children.

On the other side, Holoborod'ko's binomial can make up a so-called 'reverse riddle':

A bottle of birch juice / wrapped in a tattered newspaper, / with some twigs of used-up green birch switch / put in its neck / and with bottom sewed up to the ground by white threads... (Holoborod'ko, 2005, p. 205).

The tree is described by details 'bottle' (a trunk), 'newspaper' (bark), 'green birch switch' (twigs), which shows the speaker's ironical attitude to those who do appreciate nature only by utilitarian criteria; it is expressed in the last line, the answer to the riddle, "This is a birch."

Some of Holoborodko's verse works follow the Gospel statement 'to be like children to see the Kingdom.' This is why many of them have a child for a speaker, and use the conceits of child's view of the world, one of which is a fantastic binomial presented in synthesis of poetry and drawing:

*The roosters roll
Green watermelons
Along the yellow thread
That's pulled under a cherry tree
With a lonely bird rocking on the tree top*

The coloristics of the poem is determined by four bright colors – green, yellow, red and white (those two last mentioned are metaphors hidden in the next line: *The cherry drops / have sprinkled the wall of a hut*). The position of lines shows the contrasting transfer between color hues, which is proper for a child's drawing. Ostrannenie is also evident in a riddle-like metaphor 'the yellow thread... under a cherry-tree' (a path).

Two-dimensional space on a child's drawing, interpreted in words, gets animated thanks to the moving detail 'a bird rocking on the tree top.' The microcosmos of Holoborod'ko's poem involves the wider range of intertextual motifs: 'roosters rolling the watermelons,' similar to Mykola Vinhranovskyj's 'hares rolling cabbage heads along the kitchen-gardens'; 'lonely bird' evoking preliminary associations with Walt Whitman's 'solitary the thrush,' does further become the solar symbol for Holoborod'ko's speaker:

*And to and fro
The solitary bird is rocking,
Casting his bead-like eye down on the ground,
Where roosters roll
Green watermelons* (Holoborod'ko, 2005, p. 68-69).

Another Holoborod'ko's poem, *At the Feast Table*, shows a notion of a child's painting, on which a visual image, together with an unusual predicate, gets involved into the cosmic movement by metamorphosis:

*Our table hath felt the feast
And turned into a magic tree:
It put out sprouts
And blossoms bloomed from them
(oh, there were so white blossoms
as big as plates)
and right at those glazed blossoms
the apples grew* (Holoborod'ko, 2005, p. 84)

Even the people at the table are taken by metamorphosis: *Our hands with fingers spread wide / flew over the table like birds / and gathered somewhere in the middle / and rang together*. The contextually provoked moment of mourn (*the table knows that we were six in family*) is contrasting to the moment of preparation to wedding (*the sixth apple is for my wife, mummy*).

Binary opposition *mortality / immortality* brings Holoborod'ko's poems an element of metamorphosis in Sufi interpretation, which is a key point for Omar Khayyam's *rubaiyat* – clay left after human's death and a pot made of this clay furthermore (look Naumenko, 2010, p. 405). One of the most specific interpretations of this motif is a poem *Listen, I tell just a ballad for you*:

*Once there was a pot in a well
which has fallen in love with water

It hated lips
which kissed the water

It hated hands
which broke intimacy

It got scared when the water was taken
out of his embrace*

The pot and water are eloquent symbols of two young people in desperate love (like Farhad and Shirin embodied in medias res). The ballad conceit of suicide (or metamorphosis as its variety) is verbalized in the following binomial construction:

*The pot decided to get drowned
and the water has fallen in love with another pot* (Holoborod'ko, 2005, p. 153).

Holoborod'ko's poetry is throughout associative, filled with abstract notions making up the real sense. His free verses, based on binomial metaphors, are unique due to creative interpretations of traditional, sometimes

forgotten images and literary genres which grow into the metaphors of modern times. As we have said before, such an interpretation needs just a free-verse form giving a reader an impulse to co-authorship.

Binomials Growing Into Polynomials in Mykola Vorobyov's Lyrics

Poetic sense of Mykola Vorobyov's lyric is clear and incognizable at the same time, first of all – due to lapidary free-verse expression and exquisite play upon words. The key genre of Vorobyov's poetry is landscape lyrics, and a prominent idea is life of the nature and search for unique moments of everyday being, like:

*A girl who's always pink and blue
With green belt on her waist,
Looks at herself –
At water.
And the ground is hot around.
Tractor like a tent,
And a boy's making a nest*

From two branches bent (Vorobyov, 2007, p. 16. Vorobyov's poems are hereinafter translated by the author of the paper).

As well as in other poets analyzed above, image making in Vorobyov's poetry is supposed to be based on the fantastic binomials as described by G. Rodari (Rodari, 1997, p. 21). They are two or more randomly chosen words (mostly a noun and its indication expressed by an adjective or action expressed by a verb or a participle) which make up a plot and, moreover, a subtext for a poem: *pink and blue* girl, *tractor like a tent*; a boy *making a nest* etc. Besides, metaphorical definitions for Vorobyov's poetic style are also composed this way, like *servant for a peony* (by Vorobyov himself), or *the conductor of a deceptive orchestra* (by Anna Kharchenko. Look Kharchenko, 2007, p. 27), or *a trustee for violets and water* (by Volodymyr Morenets'), or *fantasy grammatician* (by the author of a paper).

Besides the term 'fantastic binomial', Lyudmyla Dudarenko who conducted an integrate study of the poetics of Kyiv School representatives, uses the term 'symphora', and defined it as a method to realize the poetic imagination, which is not subordinated to regular semantic rules of choosing and connecting non-metaphorical words. Symphora appears as a result of decoding the numerous combinations of natural objects (Dudarenko, 2004, p. 114-115). Otherwise, we tend to declare 'symphora' an antithesis to metaphor: particularly, this is not only transferring the properties of something to another one, but also correlation of those mentioned in restoring their initial syncretism.

Upon setting up the fantastic binomials, either on juxtaposition or on antithesis, Mykola Vorobyov has created single poems and entire poetic collections with 'binomial' titles like *Wild Dog Rose Moon*, *Silver Hand*, *Servant to a Peony*, up to *Deceptive Orchestra* where fantastic binomials sound in harmony with antique hexameter epics, Plato's dialogues, Confucius's aphorisms and Japanese zuihitsu, like this:

*Look at the falling leaves, falling even from the highest trees.
It would all fall down in an hour. Everything that was high would be low.
Leaves do not sing, because emptiness can be adorned only with return –
Emptiness as completeness of non-existence.
The golden song is contained in neither birds nor nests* (Vorobyov, 2007. p. 606)

Such a metaphor is adding new features to the notion of poetic style of contemporary Ukrainian poets in Vorobyov's *Deceptive Orchestra*. Fantastic binomial is a part of a poet's word portrait, in which a poet makes some strange action or sets up a simile of two non-juxtaposed words:

Hryhoriv:

– *It is impossible to describe convolvulus exactly
Just because it is impossible to predict the spring flood's rhythm* (Vorobyov, 2006, p. 110)

Yet, talking about Hryhoriv's poetic style, we can accent his unusual manner to change the rhythm of poetic narration (or, according to Vorobyov, 'to predict the spring flood's rhythm') by taking some words or clauses in parentheses, like this:

*the trees / are swayed / by titmice
(obedient speech of a glade? / hardened roof of a bee?)
(amongst the mauve – / the storm of waste lands / is sucking / in a hidden / closet)* (Hryhoriv, 1992, p. 89)

The parenthetical constructions in the second and third passages are supposed to be recited more quickly than the first line, which introduces a theme to a reader (in other words, how can the reader imagine a vision of swayed trees); it is even possible to predict that a reader would add some more lines in parentheses according to one's own associations. This can be also defined 'an infinite polynomial', seen in two following poetic portraits:

Kordun:

*As you pass by the tenth peak
And you wish to turn back
But all what you'd see is the same space
And **noise of a chase** in it* (Vorobyov, 2006, p. 116)

Illya:

*How clear is the sky
Just such a **sky could hide the ships*** (Vorobyov, 2006, p. 116)

Binomial is extremely efficient in Vorobyov's poetic landscapes like this:

Lavra:

*Blue clay of the moon
Lysheha digging it with stone knife
Lysheha: shadowiness of a park unites white stones
Semenenko: black poppy attracts the stars
Vorobyov: who's not the grass – let him not talk about the grass* (Vorobyov, 2006, p. 118)

or this, in which the consequence of binomials is built in poetic gradation, as anadiplosis:

*my chariot got stuck among the garden
it's gold but its gold is separated from it
pears with wasps fussing among them
wasps passing the cold streams of shadowy winds
shadows feeding with blue plums
blue plums waiting for the fog
fog burying my chariot* (Vorobyov, 2006, p. 97).

That is why we do declare Vorobyov's image making method developed from fantastic binomial to fantastic infinite polynomial (Naumenko, 2010, p. 148).

Conclusion

The poetry of Kyiv School is just a particular representation of metaphorical view of the world by Ukrainian poets. It is well accepted that metaphor is one of the most ancient evidence of human perception of the world, either in Aristotelian or in Scandinavian comprehension. As for Merab Mamardashvili, famous Georgian philosopher, "a metaphor connects the words which are non-connectable without metaphor." Not surprisingly, individual metaphorical view of the world, started from childhood, will never extinct, but only develop into an integrate world picture.

"Non-metaphoric" nature of free verse poetry, declared in different times by Ukrainian and foreign literary scientists, has great potential to turn a concrete poetic work into a metaphor. Everything depends on a poet's mind and emotions and one's ability to show them in synergetic correlation, where metaphor would not obscure a recipient, but help to create one's own vision. Poets of Kyiv School (Vasyl Holoborod'ko, Viktor Kordun, Mykola Vorobyov, Mykhailo Hryhoriv and tutti quanti) declared metaphor their God, and poetry its worship. Metaphors based on 'fantastic binomials' make explicit this complexity in creating the macrocosmos out of the everyday expressions and actions. At this point in our research, we are sure that binomial as so-called 'moving metaphor' is drastically conceptual to modern poetry, appreciating lapidary forms.

Finally, we are in agreement with the assertion by Yuriy Kovaliv (2007) that Kyiv School, despite its amorphous name, the absence of theoretic program, and the visible eloquence, respectably kept the traditions of early Ukrainian modernism, particularly with *Moloda Muza* and *Ukrayins'ka Khata* groups, Pavlo Tychyna's 'clarinetism', polystylistic poetry by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, and so on, building up its own centripetal cosmos with metaphor for a centre of the poetic galaxy. We are tending to define this cosmos with a term 'ethnosymbolism' that connects the poets' creative interpretations of Ukrainian folklore symbolism on the base of free verse form, involving symbols into the endless movement thanks to its irregular rhythm; so that Gianni Rodari's 'fantastic binomial' as the impulse for a fairy-tale story got its new embodiment in Ukrainian literature.

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